

PENTECOSTAL EDUCATION

A JOURNAL OF WAPTE
the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education

2022 Pentecostal World Conference Special Issue

In Memory of
Rev. Dr. David Yonggi Cho

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Aims and Scope

Pentecostal Education (formerly The Pentecostal Educator) semiannually e-publishes scholarly and practical articles related to theological education within the Pentecostal tradition to encourage the continuing maturation of Pentecostal theological education. It is intentionally practical, applied, and international.

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In Memorium

Rev. Dr. David Yonggi Cho
(1936-2021)



**For his Global Leadership and Statesmanship for the Pentecostal
Movement**

Which includes

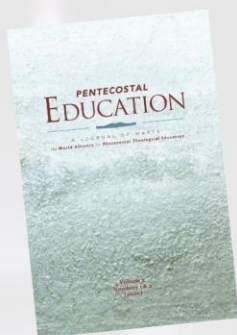
**Hosting of the Pentecostal World Conferences (1973, 1998) and
Serving as a long-time member of PWF's Honorary Advisory Committee**

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A JOURNAL OF WAPTE
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Editorial

There are several reasons why I find this edition of *Pentecostal Education* appealing. Let me explain. This edition will largely coincide with the Pentecostal World Conference that will be convened in Seoul, Korea, in October 2022. This event takes place in different locations around the world every three years. A gathering of Pentecostal people from multiple fellowships and nations is always a profitable time. Due to the event being convened in Korea, it is appropriate to include a dedicatory essay on the significant role that the late Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho played in global Pentecostalism. Dr. Wonsuk Ma is particularly well qualified to write this essay. Additionally, we offer a scholarly contribution by Younghoon Lee entitled “David Yonggi Cho: A Statesman for Global Pentecostalism.” These two excellent pieces not only honor this outstanding individual but combine to offer a useful model that could be effectively emulated in recognizing the valuable role played by this generation of Pentecostal leaders many of whom are passing on to their eternal reward.

Fittingly, the introductory section of this edition includes a thorough overview of the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF), “The Pentecostal World Fellowship: Its Past, Present, and Future,” written by William M. Wilson who is the current Chair of the PWF Steering Committee.

You will also find in this edition perhaps one of the most comprehensive compilations of articles on Pentecostal Education ever published. True to the mission of the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education (WAPTE), in general, and in this journal in particular, these articles will offer much insight. Noted Pentecostal scholars and leaders combine their experience and scholarship to offer a valuable overview. These articles are divided into three categories.

- The General Superintendent of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, Dr David Wells, provides helpful insight into the work of the Christian Unity Commission of the Pentecostal World Fellowship. I recently co-chaired an event in which we dialogued with friends from the Global Anglican Communion. Dr Wells is well equipped to be giving leadership in this area. Both Cecil Robeck and Jean-Daniel Pluss have spent many years in ecumenical dialogue. These articles, along with a response from Karla Ann Koll, mark the important work of Pentecostals being actively involved in ecumenical dialogue. My hope is

that Pentecostal educators will read these articles carefully and incorporate them into their curricula wherever possible.

- In my view the current assault on religious liberty is possibly the most preeminent issue facing Pentecostal education. No longer is this a matter in which we need to show solidarity with persecuted Christians in difficult parts of the globe. This is an issue that faces Christians everywhere, and educators are on the forefront of dealing with this challenge. Hence, we have included two valuable articles on this highly relevant subject. Again, it is my hope that Pentecostal educators will become proactive both in the administration of programs and the leadership of institutions in order to effectively combat the insidious forces that seek to destroy religious freedom.
- Finally, this edition seeks to further the work of WAPTE by providing its succinct history and casting a vision of Pentecostal education for the future.

I commend our editorial team for their excellent service. It is our hope that this journal becomes increasingly influential in the large and varied world of Pentecostal Education. To each educator, hold fast to your calling. To the wider Pentecostal constituency, I appeal for greater support and involvement in the high calling of training future generations of Pentecostal leaders.

Paul R Alexander
Senior Editor, WAPTE Chair

***Pentecostal Education* Serving the Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Family: Guest Editorial**

The Fall 2022 issue of *Pentecostal Education* (PE) is prepared to celebrate the 26th triennial conference of the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) in Seoul, Korea, on October 12-15, 2022, with the theme, “Pentecostal Revival in the Next Generation.” This gathering is unique in that Empowered21 (E21), a global network of Spirit-empowered communities and leaders, is joining the meeting. While the PWF is organized primarily among classical Pentecostals, E21 consists of a broad spectrum of Spirit-empowered churches and organizations from classical/denominational Pentecostals and Charismatics to a wide range of what is called Neo-Charismatics or Independents.

PE is the academic journal of the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education (WAPTE), which serves the PWF as the Education Commission. On this occasion, the journal is organized to facilitate the conference by introducing the PWF and its four Commissions. Thus, this particular issue of the journal can be a handy resource book for the PWF, introducing the delegates to the gathering and informing everyone about the ministries of the Fellowship.

In guest-editing this issue, I am grateful to Dr. William Wilson, PWF Chairman, for supporting this initiative and contributing a historical review and prospect of the Fellowship. The heroes of this project, however, are the Commission Chairs, who not only provided overview essays but also presented relevant studies to showcase the work of their Commissions.

The editors enthusiastically agreed to dedicate this Conference issue of PE to the global leadership and statesmanship of the late David Yonggi Cho. The PWF owes what it is today to his visionary foresight and contributions. For this reason, we are also grateful to Rev. Dr. Younghoon Lee, Senior Pastor of Yoido Full Gospel Church (the host of the Conference) for providing the dedicatory essay.

Although seldom recognized, the editorial team of PE dedicate countless hours to produce each issue. I want to especially acknowledge the work of Miguel Alvarez, Chief Editor, for his leadership, and Doug Lowenberg, Associate Editor, for carefully proofreading and copyediting each entry.

In reading these valuable contributions, please be aware that 1) the essays are arranged by the Commissions, and 2) the dedicatory, overview, and rejoinder essays do not come with keywords and abstracts. This also applies to the document produced corporately.

This fruit of the corporative work bears the marks of the Holy Spirit's empowerment. Thus, we pray, "Come, Holy Spirit, empower, and send us to bring your life to the dying world. Amen!"

Wonsuk Ma
Guest Editor

[Dedicatory]

David Yonggi Cho: A Statesman for Global Pentecostalism

Younghoon Lee

Introduction

It is my honor to be invited to contribute to *Pentecostal Education* as its editors reached a timely decision to dedicate a whole issue to the reflections on the life and ministry of my predecessor, the late David Yonggi Cho (1936-2021), the founding pastor of Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea, as well as a world-renowned revivalist.¹ As the title suggests, the editors asked me to present Cho as a “statesman” for the global Pentecostal movement.

David Yonggi Cho

The story of David Yonggi Cho’s life and ministry is deeply embedded in the story of the global Pentecostal movement. Starting as a revival movement with a special emphasis on world evangelism, Pentecostalism had to grow worldwide and the validity of its claim to be God’s special outpouring before the end time depended on the actual fruit of its expansion. It turned out that Pentecostalism has indeed brought about a revival on a global scale with a renewed understanding and experience of the Holy Spirit.² In that process, there have been global champions of

¹ For an autobiography, see David Yonggi Cho and Wayde Goodall, *Faith: Believing in the God Who Works on Your Behalf* (Racine, WI: BroadStreet Publishing, 2017). See also, Younghoon Lee, “The Life and Ministry of David Yonggi Cho and the Yoido Full Gospel Church,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 7.1 (2004): 3-20; Nell L. Kennedy, *Dream Your Way to Success: The Story of Dr. Yonggi Cho and Korea* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1980).

² About history and basic characteristics of the Pentecostal movement, see Vinson Synan, *In the Latter Days: The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Twentieth Century* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1984); W. J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997); Allen Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); “The Origins of Pentecostalism and Its Global Spread in the

Pentecostalism's explosive growth, David Yonggi Cho being one of its most prominent leaders. In other words, the life and ministry of David Yonggi Cho is a proof that Pentecostalism is really what it claims to be: a worldwide revival and harvest. So, although the sheer fruit of his worldwide ministry is conspicuous enough regardless of any other considerations, his Asian background is also of great importance: Cho is both an example of the Asian fruit of global Pentecostal expansion and at the same time an Asian fruit-bearer for the whole world. This essay shall review this innate relationship between Cho's ministry and global Pentecostalism and present Cho as a "statesman" of global Pentecostalism with his immense influence, leadership, and contribution.

But what do I mean exactly when I call him a "statesman" in this regard? Why isn't David Yonggi Cho just a pastor rather than a statesman? Further, what are the differences between a statesman and a politician?

Four Qualities for Statesmanship

J. Rufus Fears, a noted scholar specializing in classical studies and the history of freedom, stressed four essential qualities of a true statesman which included a bedrock of principles, a moral compass, a vision, and the ability to build consensus to achieve that vision.³ Without these qualities, one may be a politician but not a statesman and true leader. I shall elaborate those qualities and examine whether they are true of Cho's ministry and leadership.

One may ask if we are justified in applying a historian's observance of the world of politics to the ministry of pastors. Could Fears' criteria of true statesmen in history function as our standard by which to evaluate Cho's activities as a statesman for global Pentecostalism? Working as a statesman on a national or international level is one thing while engaging in the international ecclesiastical activities is quite another. Nevertheless, I think we certainly can borrow from Fears'

Early Twentieth Century," *Transformation* 22.3 (2005): 175-185; Nils Bloch-Hoell, *The Pentecostal Movement* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964); Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (Reading, PA: Addison-Wesley, 1995); Gastón Espinosa, *William J. Seymour and the Origins of Global Pentecostalism: A Biography & Documentary History* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2014).

³ J. Rufus Fears, *The World Was Never the Same: Events That Changed History*, 2 vols. (Chantilly, VA: Teaching Company, 2011); *The Wisdom of History* (Chantilly, VA: Teaching Company, 2007).

insights. It should also be mentioned that Fears himself attributed a vast array of historical and political events to the religious beliefs held by the people involved in those events. His four qualities themselves are in accord with Christian virtues found in the Bible as well as among the best leaders in church history.

The first quality is a bedrock of principles. A true statesman is not a seeker of political gain, but a pursuer of principles. Politicians may be opportunistic, but statesmen hold fast to their principles. Even when statesmen change strategies and methods in response to challenges and circumstances, they are expected to do so without diluting their original principles and values. On some occasions, it may not be explicit which belongs to the changing strategies and which to the core principles. Only time will tell if a statesman truthfully guarded his principles. In ministry, a success without principle amounts to disobedience and spiritual decay. Keeping the principles, therefore, is vital for the statesman in the ecclesiastical endeavors. Below the reader will see how Cho's principle, classical Pentecostalism, remained intact amid his own persistent effort to contextualize his message. Cho cherished this principle in the face of prejudice, misunderstanding, and mistreatment.

The second quality is a moral compass. Fears goes on to stress the presence of a moral fabric in the leadership of true statesman. A sense of right and wrong instead of public opinion polls is the guiding light for their decisions. A true statesman is neither a moral relativist nor a nihilist. He has a clear moral compass and is explicit about it. Furthermore, a true statesman puts his moral compass into effect in the country he serves. As a statesman for global Pentecostalism, Cho was quite mindful of moral standards in his doctrine of blessings and his ministerial undertakings towards women and lay people. Cho's Pentecostal ministry rose to the level of international leadership and influence because he was adamant and uncompromising about his moral compass. I shall cover this aspect of his statesmanship below.

The third quality is a vision. A statesman must have foresight for the future of his country. Rather than just maintaining *status quo* or managing the existing conditions, a statesman should present a vision toward which the country may march so that the communal life of its citizens does not fall into mediocrity. It has some ideals to pursue. Cho is well known for his charismatic vision-setting ability. His God-given vision included going out to the world to preach the gospel. As that vision came true, he shared the vision of church growth and revival as a mentor for many pastors around the world. Cho's unique power to persuade half-hearted skeptics to embrace the vision of church growth is

well-known. More will be said about this aspect to Cho's global statesmanship.

The last essential quality for a true statesman is the ability to build a consensus to achieve the vision he presents for the country. Without this ability, his principles, his moral compass, and his vision will be to no avail. He needs to get the people to support his principles and moral compass and agree to his vision, then act upon it. An idealist and commentator may have a principle, a moral compass, and a vision. That does not make the person a true statesman. The last step requires the power to persuade others, that is, the power to get things done along with other people. As a statesman in the international Pentecostal scene, how did Cho win the hearts of so many people and get them to agree and follow his vision? I think the secret lay in his authenticity as a person of vision. We shall see his influence at the Pentecostal World Fellowship and other international communities.

Cho's Statesmanship related to Fears' Four Essentials

Bedrock of Principles in Classical and Contextual Pentecostalism

Cho was a thoroughly Pentecostal Christian and pastor, and Pentecostalism was the principle in his personal faith and ministry. When he first started his ministry in 1958, Korean churches were not familiar with Pentecostalism.⁴ So, Pentecostalism was something Cho had to secure through considerable personal sacrifice, sometimes even within the Korean Assemblies of God. Before his ordination in 1962, Cho was temporarily disqualified after being summoned and questioned by the leaders of the Korean Assemblies of God about his healing ministry and exorcisms. He insisted that those ministries were firmly rooted in Jesus' ministry as well as the Pentecostal faith of the Assemblies of God. He was still chastised for being shamanistic and disqualified from his own denomination. Nonetheless, Cho never compromised in his Pentecostalism. In fact, his famous healing of a crippled boy took place while he was excluded from Assemblies of God membership.⁵

⁴ About the Holy Spirit movement in Korea, see Younghoon Lee, *The Holy Spirit Movement in Korea: Its Historical and Theological Development* (Oxford: Regnum, 2009).

⁵ David Yonggi Cho, "Have a Desire for Revival." <http://www.cgntv.net/player/home.cgn?vid=43938&pid=43> (accessed July 5, 2022).

Later, during the middle phase of his ministry, Cho's Pentecostalism was heavily criticized by the pastors of another Korean denomination who were primarily motivated by narrow-mindedness concerning denominational differences. If only he downplayed or diluted his Pentecostal message, Cho would have been freed from vicious attacks. He did not choose that path, however. He intended for Yoido Full Gospel Church to engage in a serious defense and discussion with the critics about Pentecostalism rather than the church deny its Pentecostal identity. I myself was deeply involved in this process of theological and doctrinal defense as the director of International Theological Institute of Yoido Full Gospel Church.⁶ As a result, the critics of Cho and Yoido Full Gospel Church soon dropped all charges. Cho's influence and leadership in global Pentecostalism was fruit of such persistence and dedication to the principles of Pentecostalism.

Cho's Pentecostalism is characterized by the contextualization of the husk and preservation of the kernel. "The husk" refers to the parts, aspects, and nuances in his message that are subject to modification for the purposes of rendering the gospel intelligible and attractive to the people in each culture or setting-in-life. Cho was a tremendously effective preacher in this regard. It is now a well-known story that when his regular evangelistic message was refused with aggressive hostility by a poverty-stricken woman, young David Yonggi Cho reevaluated his message and, after much prayer and re-reading of the Gospels, changed the focus of his message from heaven and hell to God's help and blessings in the present life.⁷ He always adjusted his message to best suit the needs of the people and his version of Pentecostal messages was a highly contextualized one with a special emphasis on hope.⁸

At the same time, however, Cho was equally successful as a preserver of the heart and soul of classical Pentecostal faith. "The kernel" refers to the unchanging essence of classical Pentecostalism. His Pentecostalism had no trace of "other sources" such as indigenous religious beliefs and practices, which is often found among many Pentecostal preachers worldwide. Born and raised a Buddhist in a rural area of southern Korea

⁶ International Theological Institute, ed., *Faith and Theology of Yoido Full Gospel Church* [in Korean], 2 vols. (Seoul: Seoul Logos, 1993).

⁷ International Theological Institute, ed., *The Pastor of Yoido* [in Korean] (Seoul: Seoul Logos, 2008), 275-83.

⁸ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "March forward to Hope: Yonggi Cho's Pentecostal Theology of Hope," *Pneuma* 28.2 (2007): 253-64.

where Christian evangelism had not yet reached, Cho before his conversion had virtually no preunderstanding of Christianity, let alone a Pentecostal version. Such a *tabula rasa* background allowed him to absorb classical Pentecostalism solely from American Pentecostal missionaries and their books.⁹ When some people wrongly accused Cho of being under the influence of shamanism, they failed to present any objective evidence that substantiated their claims. To the contrary, church historian Myung-soo Park argues that ample historical evidence revealed that Cho's Pentecostalism was formed in close relationship with American Pentecostal missionaries.¹⁰

Principles cannot be overemphasized. David Yonggi Cho remained faithful to his principles throughout his ministry, and his status as a respected statesman for global Pentecostalism came from such faithfulness and consistency.

A Moral Compass against Irresponsibility and Isolation

In this section, I shall describe two examples of Cho's moral compass pertaining to his work as a statesman for global Pentecostalism: the ethical backbone of his "gospel of blessings"¹¹ and his efforts to raise up female lay leaders against the social and ecclesiastical customs of his time. The former commitment was to overcome the deep-seated selfishness and irresponsibility in the hearts of some blessing-seekers; the latter was driven by his concern over the isolation of women both in the church and society.

First, the gospel of blessings is Cho's creative addition to the traditional Pentecostal doctrine of the fivefold gospel. Cho left out the

⁹ For an example of the influence of Oral Roberts on David Yonggi Cho, see Younghoon Lee, "Oral Roberts and David Yonggi Cho: A Life-Long Relationship in Theology and Ministry," *Spiritus* 4.1 (2019): 5-16.

¹⁰ Myung-soo Park, *A Mighty and Violent Wind: Pastor Yonggi Cho, Yoido Full Gospel Church, and Pentecostal Movement* [in Korean] (Seoul: Seoul Logos, 2014). Also see "Korean Pentecostal Spirituality as Manifested in the Testimonies of Believers of the Yoido Full Gospel Church," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 7.1 (2004): 35-56.

¹¹ The gospel of blessings consists of Cho's characteristic teaching of holistic blessings or the threefold blessing for the soul, body, and circumstances. For Cho's threefold blessings, see Paul Yonggi Cho, *Salvation, Health and Prosperity: Our Threefold Blessings in Christ* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 1987).

doctrine of sanctification¹² and added the gospel of blessings to his version of fivefold gospel.¹³ The gospel of blessings has sometimes been misunderstood to be only about receiving blessings for selfish gain. The truth is, however, that it is well supported and balanced by Cho's moral compass. In preaching and spreading the gospel of blessings, Cho did not espouse a selfish desire for wealth and health. Some people may wrongheadedly seek blessings for blessings' purposes and at the cost of a robust Christian sense of responsibility and common good. However, Cho's gospel of blessings had nothing at all to do with such a distorted and selfish notion of Christian blessings and morality. Cho did not downplay the need for hard work, conscientiousness, and personal and social responsibility, that is, Christian moral vision from his doctrine of blessings.¹⁴

Furthermore, Cho never failed to stress that all blessings are not just something good that happens to one's life, but they flow from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was utterly consistent in presenting the gospel of blessings as something belonging to salvation provided by Jesus Christ. Just as the traditional Pentecostal doctrine of "healing in the atonement" is primarily a doctrine about the meaning and effects of salvation, rather than healing *per se*, Cho's doctrine of blessings was primarily an explication of the connotation of the salvific work of Jesus Christ.

In other words, his gospel of blessings retains both a sound ethical stance and doctrinal content. A powerful teaching of blessings combined with a strong calling for Christian morality with a robust proclamation of the centrality of the salvific grace of Jesus Christ is something precious if not rare. Cho consistently and untiringly explored and proclaimed this well-balanced gospel of blessings. Part of Cho's international leadership among Pentecostals sprang from his moral

¹² Stanley M. Horton, "Pentecostal Perspective," in Melvin E. Dieter, et. al. eds., *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987).

¹³ About the development of the fivefold gospel and the fourfold gospel, see Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987). Also, see Mark J. Cartledge, "The Early Pentecostal Theology of Confidence Magazine (1908–1926): A Version of the Five-Fold Gospel?" *The Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 28.2 (2008): 117–30.

¹⁴ For a biblical view of blessings and prosperity, see Younghoon Lee, "The Case for Prosperity Theology: Biblical Teachings on Prosperity Theology," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 20.1 (January 1996): 20–32.

compass which kept him from falling into some wildly unbiblical and populist distortion of the notion of Christian blessing.

Second, from the very early stages of his ministry, Cho raised up lay people, especially women, to be leaders of his church. In the 1960's, when he first trained and invited female members of his congregation to the position of lay leadership, Korean society used to confine the role of women to that of housekeeping. It took moral courage to go against such a social atmosphere. However, Cho firmly believed that the isolation of women was not only unbiblical but also immoral in that women both forfeited their opportunity to take part in church leadership and were not able to acknowledge their God-given dignity. Identifying and fighting moral flaws and limitations prevalent in one's own culture and generation is not an easy task. Curing them is by far harder. Notwithstanding opposition and difficulties, Cho continued to motivate and train female lay leaders, and Yoido Full Gospel Church's innovative stance towards the contribution of women made a great impact on Korean churches as well as Korean society.

A Vision for World Pentecostalism

One of the most famous stories of David Yonggi Cho as a person of vision comes from the earliest years of his ministry. The young Cho was a pastor of a tent church in the slum area on the outskirts of Seoul. Church members were living in dire poverty from hand to mouth, and Cho's life was not much different from that of his members. One night, Cho was staying up all night praying alone in the empty tent church when he was suddenly inspired to stand up, stretch his arms, and walk through the tent like an airplane flying in the sky. He thought he was being foolish and did not understand why he was doing this in the middle of his prayer session. But he somehow could not help doing it. Then the Holy Spirit told him that he would fly to the whole world on silver wings to preach the gospel. He thought he was being ridiculed and did not believe it was from the Holy Spirit considering his poverty and the situation of the church. There was no chance, he thought, of going to foreign countries in the first place because the Korean government would not issue him a passport. Getting a passport, except for some urgent national or business matter, was unimaginable in Korea in the 1960's. Against all odds, however, he continued to walk with his arms stretched out. It was only several years later that this vision of the Holy Spirit came true. In 1964, the Assemblies of God (USA) invited him to its 50th anniversary, and he spent two months in the United States preaching at different churches. Since then, Cho has traveled around the

world more than 120 times and shared the gospel of Jesus Christ, guiding over one hundred thousand people into the life of faith.

Following the vision of the Holy Spirit was not easy, however. After preaching his first sermon to 2,000 people on his first tour to the United States, Cho was approached by an elderly lady who hesitantly asked, “Pastor, I was thinking, perhaps Korean is much like English?” Cho asked, “Why do you think so?” She said, “I’m asking because as I was listening to your sermon, you seemed to speak a foreign language quite like English. But it was not English. Have you mixed up Korean and English? I had a hard time understanding your sermon.” At first, Cho suspected she had a hearing problem. But he decided to check it with her pastor. Cho asked, “Pastor, did my sermon today have some problems with English language, like in my expressions and sentences?” The pastor was embarrassed and said, “Pastor Cho, I believe this was your first English sermon in the United States. It was wonderful for the first one.” Cho asked, “All right. Then, how much did you understand my sermon today?” He answered, “I understood about half of your sermon.” Cho was shocked and at a loss. He was so ashamed that he rushed back to his hotel. He wanted to come back to Korea. The vision of flying to the world and preaching to the multitude faded away in his heart. He was so disappointed and wept for a while in prayer. Then his heart became calm and there was a voice in his heart saying “Prepare your sermons with all your life. I will be with you.”¹⁵ The rest is history.

This story tells us that Cho started to embrace his vision of world evangelism through the inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit from the very early phase of his ministry and against all odds. It was a God-given vision, and God had encouraged him to achieve it even when he almost gave in. A statesman in the world may have to embrace a vision, but a statesman for God’s work must march forward with a God-given vision. Cho set an example of how one could be used for the kingdom of God with a clear vision from God.

Consensus-BUILDER: Cho in the Pentecostal World Fellowship

David Yonggi Cho had tremendous power to inspire and motivate individuals and organizations to unite and follow a cause to achieve what was formerly considered impossible. His ability to unite people from different walks of life and put a cause into effect is manifest everywhere in his ministry: the growth of Yoido Full Gospel Church, the formation

¹⁵ The Pastor of Yoido, 383-85.

of the cell group system,¹⁶ many charity programs that changed the level of parochial social works, the establishment of *Kookmin Daily Newspaper*, the formation of the Assemblies of God World Fellowship, and hosting two Pentecostal World Conferences (PWC) as well as speaking at many more PWC.

Cho was the only Pentecostal leader who hosted PWC at his church twice (in 1973 and 1998). The 26th PWC in 2022 was also hosted by Yoido Full Gospel Church but after his passing away. Cho's leadership and influence were almost the sole factor to attract PWC to Seoul especially for its 10th conference in 1973 when Korea was still a nation with little experience of hosting international conferences. Cho participated in the 9th PWC in Los Angeles in 1970 where he met with many delegates from around the world and presented his vision for Korean Pentecostal churches contributing to global Pentecostalism. He inspired the delegates to share his vision, and that vision turned into reality.

After Seoul was selected for the 10th PWC, Cho, along with elder Ilsuk Cha, persuaded the Korean government and public broadcasting companies to support this great event. His effort to create a consensus like this led to a one-hour live broadcast of the PWC main event at prime time by a national public TV station (when there were only three TV stations in Korea), something unprecedented and quite unimaginable in the history of the PWC. Furthermore, Cho managed to involve Chief Justice Bokee Min of the Korean Supreme Court and the former Chairman Duho Baek of the Korean National Assembly as advisors to the PWC. He also had the mayor of Seoul deliver a welcome address.¹⁷ Cho proved to be a statesman for global Pentecostalism with the ability to exert influence on other sectors of society to come together for a higher cause.

Cho was one of the most sought-after speakers at Pentecostal World Conferences. He delivered the opening address for the 23rd PWC in Kuala Lumpur in 2013 and at many other PWC events. Cho's great influence on Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) has been vividly captured in some interviews. When I interviewed him at the 22nd PWC in Stockholm in 2010, former Chairman of PWF, James Leggett (2005-2010), said, "The greatest contribution of David Yonggi Cho is that he

¹⁶ David Yonggi Cho with Harold Hostetler, *Successful Home Cell Groups* (Newberry, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2018).

¹⁷ *Korea JoongAng Daily*, "Pentecostal World Conference" [in Korean], Feb. 3, 1973.

has awakened the importance of the Holy Spirit movement in the hearts of the Christians in the world.” He went on to say, “The Holy Spirit movement of Yoido Full Gospel Church is both the mainstream spiritual movement in the PWF and a major movement within the evangelical world also. Korean churches should function as leaders helping Christian churches all over the world just like David Yonggi Cho has done.” Another former PWF Chairman, Prince Guneratnam (2010-2019), said, “In fact, I have been directly influenced by David Yonggi Cho. Even my chairmanship of the PWF was made possible by his help. He introduced me to the Pentecostal movement and gave me direction. He has had a pivotal role in the world Pentecostal movement. There is a great number of people who have been influenced by him and are now active in proclaiming the gospel in the world. I am deeply grateful for the ministry of David Yonggi Cho.”¹⁸

Not only did Cho’s vision and leadership contribute to the development of the PWC, Cho himself was inspired and shaped by the PWC. During the 10th PWC in Seoul in 1973, Cho sensed a strong calling to evangelize the whole world in a more organized manner. This clearly had an influence of the PWC. Two years later in 1975, Cho founded the Full Gospel World Mission Association at Yoido Full Gospel Church to facilitate world evangelism and the planting of churches worldwide. In 1976, Cho went on to establish Church Growth International (CGI) through which he raised up church leaders globally and interdenominationally and shared his hard-found keys to church growth.

Cho’s global leadership was also instrumental in establishing the Assemblies of God World Fellowship (AGWF). There had been the need for a united organization for this large group of national Pentecostal denominations on a global scale. It was Cho who first proposed to form a worldwide fellowship for Assemblies of God leaders at the Decade of Harvest Conference in Springfield, Missouri, on July 13-14, 1988. His proposal quickly created a consensus, and a provisional committee was appointed with Cho being unanimously added to it. The founding of AGWF was for the following purposes: 1) Promote and facilitate world evangelization; 2) Coordinate world relief; 3) Coordinate the use of media and other technological resources to promote the cause

¹⁸ “Pastor Younghoon Lee meeting up with the current and former chairmen of PWF: ‘Pentecostal spirituality has already entered the heart of Christian spirituality’” [in Korean], *Kookimin Daily News*, Aug. 31, 2010.

of Christ in a way pleasing to Him; 4) Provide a strong international platform to speak out on behalf of the suffering and persecuted church; 5) Coordinate theological education; and 6) Produce an international directory of Pentecostal churches, missions, and other Pentecostal agencies to help share information.¹⁹

It takes a statesman, not merely a pastor, to achieve these kinds of goals. That statesman must have a clear vision and the ability to build a consensus to achieve that vision. David Yonggi Cho was primarily a pastor of a church. However, that was only a part of the whole extent of his ministry. He was also a vastly effective global statesman for the Pentecostal movement as we have reviewed. Furthermore, his leadership was not confined to the Pentecostal world but spilled over to evangelical and ecumenical streams of world Christianity.

Cho's strong international influence became evident once again in the process of voting for the host city for the World Council of Churches' (WCC) 10th Assembly. As one of the co-moderators of the Assembly, I witnessed Cho's video message asking to vote for Busan, Korea, as the location of the gathering which exerted great influence on WCC delegates. It was largely Cho's contribution that Busan was selected to host the 10th Assembly. Cho was certainly persuasive in that video, but his persuasiveness was the accumulated impact from decades of ministry on the scene of world Christianity. We have not seen many Pentecostal figures with such an extended influence at the WCC.

Conclusion

The Global Pentecostal movement has long benefited from Cho's leadership and contributions. He was not only a prominent pastor within global Pentecostalism, he was also a superb statesman with all of the four essential qualities of a true statesman suggested by J. Fears. In terms of sociologist Max Weber's famous analysis, Cho's global leadership would be categorized as "charismatic leadership."²⁰ For Weber, charismatic leadership is only for a small number of special people. After the period of charismatic leadership, therefore, comes a period of institutionalization. Institutions may have their right place in

¹⁹ William Molenaar, "The World Assemblies of God Fellowship: United in the Missionary Spirit," *Assemblies of God Heritage* (March 2011), 40-47. Quoted from "History of WAGF." <https://worldagfellowship.org/Fellowship?History-of-WAGF> (accessed July 5, 2022).

²⁰ Max Weber, "The Three Types of Legitimate Rule," trans. by Hans Gerth, *Berkeley Publications in Society and Institutions* 4:1 (1958): 1-11.

global Pentecostalism. However, we cannot afford to do God's will without his abundant *charismata*, that is gifts. So, we cannot stand behind and spend our time just remembering and celebrating the charismatic life and ministry of David Yonggi Cho. Now is the time for us to rise and continue what God allowed Cho to do – not by might, nor by power, but by his Spirit.

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The Pentecostal World Fellowship: Its Past, Present, and Future

William M. Wilson

An Introduction to Pentecostalism

The beginning of contemporary Pentecostalism is documented to have been inaugurated on January 1, 1901, in Topeka, Kansas. Charles Fox Parham conducted classes in the Bethel Bible School, and he assigned the students to research biblical evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and report on their findings.¹ The students reported in unison that there were various occurrences when followers of Jesus received the Holy Spirit, but each occasion recorded the instance of speaking with other tongues.²

Though birthed with inauspicious origins in the early twentieth century, Pentecostalism soon rapidly spread primarily due to the efforts of William J. Seymour, the key leader of the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles from 1906 to 1909.³ The influence of the Azusa Street revival extended to other urban areas of the USA, which, by the early 1910s, covered most of the USA, Canada, and Northern Mexico.⁴ Because of its revival beginnings, Pentecostalism transcended culture, race, economics, and beliefs, manifesting the work of the Holy Spirit throughout the world.

While the USA was the epicenter of the twentieth-century outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Pentecostal movement was not limited to North America. There were also several other spontaneous

¹ Sarah E. Parham, *Life of Charles F. Parham* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985), 52.

² Gary B. McGee, *People of the Spirit: The Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2004), 55.

³ Tony Cauchi, "Charles Fox Parham (1873-1929)," accessed July 20, 2022, https://www.revival-library.org/revival_heroes/20th_century/parham_charles_fox.shtml.

⁴ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2001), 6.

outpourings of the Holy Spirit around the world at the beginning of the century from India to Wales to Australia.⁵ Soon after the launch of the Azusa Street Revival, Pentecostal missionaries planted churches in at least 50 countries.⁶ In addition to the host of regular and irregular publications in the United States,⁷ Pentecostal publications in indigenous languages appeared in Norway, Germany, China, Japan, Palestine, and Brazil. Historical accounts followed the spread of the movement in Canada, the British Isles, India, Denmark, Central Africa, Egypt, and South America.⁸ Within a century, Spirit-empowered Christianity was the fastest-growing movement in the world.⁹ David du Plessis was the first to provide an estimate of Spirit-empowered believers in the world in 1948, placing the number at 12 million.¹⁰ While explosive growth occurred, the movement lacked coordination and harmony. The first effort toward unity was in May 1947 when Swiss pastor Leonard Steiner, David J. du Plessis, J. Roswell Flower, and Donald Gee organized a conference for Pentecostal leaders.¹¹

Development of the Pentecostal World Fellowship

The inaugural Pentecostal World Conference (PWC) was held in Zurich, Switzerland, with three thousand in attendance. From the initial gathering, the purpose of the Conference was to create an opportunity for Pentecostal groups to join in mutual information, support, and

⁵ See, for example, Allan H. Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), particularly 43-50.

⁶ D. William Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 188.

⁷ *Apostolic Faith* [Oregon], July- August 1908, 1; *Apostolic Faith* [Texas], October 1908, 2.

⁸ Stanley H. Frodsham, *With Signs Following: The Story of the Latter-Day Pentecostal Revival* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1926).

⁹ Vinson Synan and William M. Wilson, *As the Waters Cover the Sea: The Story of Empowered²¹ and the Movement It Serves* (Tulsa, OK: Empowered Books, 2021), 28.

¹⁰ David du Plessis, *The Spirit Bade Me Go* (Alachua, FL: Bride-Logos, 1970), 5.

¹¹ Pentecostal World Fellowship, “Our History,” assessed July 20, 2022, <https://www.pwfellowship.org/about-us>.

edification.¹² David du Plessis noted the event provided a “better understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit around the world, more recognition, and a deeper appreciation of one another as leaders.”¹³ The World Conference united the Pentecostal movement, despite doctrinal and governance distinctives, through the recognition of how the Holy Spirit was moving and working through and in each individual group.

In 1948, the founding committee of the Conference requested that du Plessis convene the next event in Paris, France. According to Gary McGee, “Du Plessis resigned his position with the Apostolic Faith Mission to focus on the assignment without the benefit of office space or salary.”¹⁴ Under du Plessis’ visionary planning, the PWC would convene in Paris, London, Stockholm, and Toronto. The PWC leaders noted the growth of Pentecostalism in South America, notably Chile and Brazil, and the strong missionary efforts from Spirit-empowered churches. This opened opportunities for the growth of the Pentecostal message within historic ecumenical congregations.

The triennial conferences continued. In 1961, the celebratory event was officially named the Pentecostal World Conference. The primary objectives remained true to the founding vision to connect Spirit-filled networks, recognize Spirit-empowered leaders, and foster support for global evangelization. The PWC desired to serve as a cooperative fellowship for Pentecostal theological institutions to promote the development of education and leadership training. Coordinated prayer was a bedrock to address the challenges of persecution and build cooperation for humanitarian relief. In May 1999, the Executive Committee voted to change the name to the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF). The PWF mission statement is identified as “To unite and mobilize the global Spirit-filled family in completing the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.”¹⁵ The change of name reflected a change of purpose from one simply chairing a PWC every three years to functioning as a service agency in the following ways:

- 1) To uphold one another in prayer.
- 2) To support and encourage one another in the task of missions and evangelism.

¹² Pentecostal World Fellowship, “Bylaws,” 1.

¹³ Du Plessis, *The Spirit Bade Me Go*, 5.

¹⁴ McGee, *People of the Spirit*, 368.

¹⁵ Pentecostal World Fellowship, “Our Mission Statement,” accessed July 20, 2022, <https://www.pwfellowship.org/about-us>.

- 3) To promote Christian fellowship and cooperation among Pentecostal people throughout the world.
- 4) To provide means of consultation and cooperation among the members and related agencies.
- 5) To share mutual concerns and insights relating to any crucial spiritual and temporal issues of the church.
- 6) To administer relief in times of crisis.
- 7) To promote the exchange of personnel in special areas of ministry.
- 8) To disseminate helpful information and up-to-date statistics for the benefit of the church.
- 9) To be a voice to the world and governments in defense of the faith, social justice, and persecuted believers.¹⁶

The PWC has been conducted in major cities in the world:

1947	Zurich	1985	Zurich
1949	Paris	1989	Singapore
1952	London	1992	Oslo
1955	Stockholm	1995	Jerusalem
1958	Toronto	1998	Seoul
1961	Jerusalem	2001	Los Angeles
1964	Helsinki	2004	Johannesburg
1967	Rio de Janeiro	2007	Surabaya
1970	Dallas, Texas	2010	Stockholm
1973	Seoul	2013	Kuala Lumpur
1976	London	2016	Sao Paulo
1979	Vancouver	2019	Calgary
1982	Nairobi		

The 2022 PWC will be held in Seoul, Korea, with the theme, “Pentecostal Revival in the Next Generation.”¹⁷ The Conference was originally scheduled for June 2022. But because of the Covid-19 global pandemic and travel restrictions in Korea, the meeting was rescheduled.

Vital to the PWF, the role of the Chairperson has been filled by Dr. Thomas Zimmerman (1967-1969, 1971-1989), Dr. Percy Brewster (1970), Dr. Ray Hughes (1989-1998), Dr. Thomas Trask (1998 -2005), Bishop James Leggett (2005-2010), and Dr. Tan Sri Prince Guneratnam (2010-2019). In 2019, Dr. William M. Wilson, President of Oral Roberts

¹⁶ PWF, “Bylaws.” 3. Also, Pentecostal World Fellowship, “Our Objectives,” accessed July 20, 2022, <https://www.pwfellowship.org/about-us>.

¹⁷ PWF, “26th Pentecostal World Conference,” accessed July 20, 2022, <https://www.26pwc.org>.

University and Global Chairman of Empowered21, was elected as Chairman.

The Pentecostal World Fellowship Today

The PWF continues to develop unity among the historic Pentecost movements and denominations as well as to include new Pentecostal expressions in the fellowship. The gathering of Pentecostals from across the globe is a homecoming for Pentecostal believers to network, train, and encourage one another in testimonies of how God is fulfilling His purpose in their nations. Participants in the Conference recognize the importance of coming together, sharing insights, and hearing from God, recognizing what the Holy Spirit is speaking around the world. The movement continues to embrace diversity with the commonality of the Spirit-empowered life that flows from the Person of the Holy Spirit.

The triennial PWC provides a platform that is central to Pentecostalism as expounded in Acts 2: meeting together to meet with God. The PWC has been held twenty-five times in twenty-two major cities and impacted global renewal for over seventy years. These events are part of the continuing renewal of provided by the Holy Spirit which is essential to be effective in the twenty-first century.

The Silver Anniversary of the PWC was held in Calgary, Alberta, in 2019. Although international delegates encountered some difficulty gaining entrance into Canada, the overall program exhibited great unity of the Spirit and enthusiasm for the future. Dr. Prince Guneratnam was recognized for his years of service to the PWF and added to the Honorary Advisory Committee, joining Dr. Jack Hayford and Dr. David Yonggi Cho. Dr. William Wilson was chosen to lead the PWF, with David Wells as the vice-chair, and Dr. Doug Beacham as the secretary. Four members were chosen to serve on the Executive Committee: Bishop Dag Heward-Mills, Rev. Pelle Hornmark, Dr. Younghoon Lee, and Rev. Dominic Yeo.

The PWF has created four distinct commissions to carry out the purposes of the fellowship. These are the Christian Unity Commission, the Education Commission, which is also known as the World Alliance for Pentecostal Education (WAPTE), the Pentecostal Commission on Religious Liberty, and the World Mission Commission. A primary focus of the PWF is to unite in efforts to complete the Great Commission. In 2020, the PWF adopted an Ambassador Program to establish a PWF Ambassador in every nation to foster unity, connectivity, and renewal among Spirit-empowered communities.

The PWF is presently comprised of sixty-five representative groups from thirty-four countries. Membership is open to organizations subscribing to the PWF’s Statement of Faith and desire to cooperate in the mission of the PWF. Applicants are subject to the approval of the Advisory Committee. The Executive Committee consists of the chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, and four committee members. The Advisory Committee includes twenty-three members and two honorary members.

It is important to note that the Spirit-empowered movement is currently the fastest-growing religious and Christian movement on earth. Johnson and Zurlo estimated there were “644 million Spirit-empowered Christians in 2020.”¹⁸ This computation extrapolates that roughly 26% of all Christians identify as Spirit-empowered. From 1900 to 2020, the movement grew at a 5.97 percent growth rate, faster than both Christianity and the world’s population. Some maintain that it is the fastest-growing Christian movement ever. Just over 114 years after the Azusa Street Revival, these results are nothing short of supernatural. According to Johnson and Zurlo, the top ten nations that have the most Spirit-empowered adherents are:

Table 1. Countries with the most Pentecostal/Charismatics, 2020.¹⁹

Country	Pentecostal/ Charismatics 2020
Brazil	108,000,000
United States	65,000,000
Nigeria	60,000,000
Philippines	38,000,000
China	37,000,000
Democratic Republic of the Congo	28,000,000
South Africa	27,700,000
India	21,000,000
Mexico	17,450,000
Kenya	17,300,000

¹⁸ Todd Johnson and Gina Zurlo, *Introducing Spirit-empowered Christianity: The Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement in the 21st Century* (Tulsa, OK: ORU Press, 2020).

¹⁹ Johnson and Zurlo, *Introducing Spirit-Empowered Christianity*, 31.

The expectation is that the number of people who have experienced the Holy Spirit will reach one billion by 2050.²⁰ The Pentecostal World Fellowship and its focus on unity within the Spirit-empowered community remain vital to the work of the Holy Spirit and the future of the Pentecostal movement.

Pentecostal Revival in the Next Generation

As noted in the book, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, Spirit-empowered believers, sociologists, and scholars have often used the concept of three waves to describe major outpourings of the Holy Spirit, beginning before and continuing after the Azusa Street Revival. The first wave, known as classical or historic Pentecostals, flowed out of the Azusa Street Revival and led to the establishment of numerous Pentecostal denominations and churches. Beginning in the 1960s, the second wave, known as Charismatics, saw millions of church members outside the historic Pentecostal circle also encounter supernatural renewal in the Holy Spirit, including those involved in the Methodist, Episcopal, Baptist, Anglican, Presbyterian, Mennonite, Lutheran, and Catholic Churches.

The third wave, known as Neo (New)-Pentecostals and Neo (New)-Charismatics, was first named by Peter Wagner in a 1983 interview for *Pastoral Renewal Magazine*. He used the third wave label to denote new expressions of Spirit-empowered Christianity taking place later in the twentieth century. He said,

I see historically that we're now in the third wave . . . I see the third wave of the eighties as an opening of the straight-line evangelicals and other Christians to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that the Pentecostals and Charismatics have experienced, but without becoming either Charismatic or Pentecostal. I think we are in a new wave of something that now has lasted almost through our whole century.²¹

These new, third-wave churches did not exactly fit with either the historic Pentecostal denominations or traditional Charismatic groupings, though there were similarities to each. Many of these new, independent, and “networked” churches were apostolic in their leadership models. They exploded toward the conclusion of the twentieth century and have continued to expand in number and influence during the first part of the twenty-first century. According to the study of Todd Johnson and Gina

²⁰ Johnson and Zurlo, *Introducing Spirit-Empowered Christianity*, 9.

²¹ C. Peter Wagner, “A Third Wave?” *Pastoral Renewal* (July-August 1983): 1.

Zurlo, the following numbers of adherents were identified in each of the three waves.

Table 2. Total Number of Pentecostal/Charismatics by Wave (2020).²²

Wave Number	Total Number, as of 2020
First Wave	123,688,000
Second Wave	268,288,000
Third Wave	252,284,000

Many believe that a fresh Pentecostal revival may be in the beginning stages with new generations. This revival could become a fourth wave which will once again change Spirit-empowered Christianity and the world in significant ways. There are several characteristics this Pentecostal revival for the next generations will exhibit. The attributes of this fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit will include unprecedented unity, worship, the connection between supernatural wonders and compassionate works, unashamed boldness, and persecution.

Unity is critical for present times, yet it is also important to recognize that divergence and diversity have served a divine purpose within the Spirit-empowered movement over the last century. Like a mighty river diverging into multiple streams, the movement has blessed billions of people. Each subsequent diverging stream of the movement brought new people into God’s Kingdom and extended the reach of the Spirit’s work. The Spirit-empowered movement is diverse, with multiple expressions and streams across the earth.

Yet, as we move into the future, there is a growing sense in new generations that convergence is now needed more than divergence. A church moving from diversity toward unity will have a spiritual effect similar to the physical effect of moving from the use of atomic bombs to hydrogen bombs. Atomic bombs work using a principle called fission which causes atoms of certain heavy metals to split, resulting in incredible energy. When fission works completely, 2.2 pounds of uranium-235 can create as much energy as would be produced by 34 million pounds of TNT. This principle was behind the devastating power of the atomic bomb used toward the end of World War II. In

²² Todd Johnson and Gina Zurlo, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), 936.

Hiroshima, the atomic bomb released 13 kilotons of force, killing more than 200,000 people either directly or indirectly.²³ The power of fission is certainly astounding, but the power of fusion is even greater.

Hydrogen bombs are much more powerful than atomic bombs because they unleash the multiplied power of unity. The principle of fusion is that a release of energy occurs when the atoms of certain heavy metals converge instead of split. When these atoms converge (or unite), it releases amazing energy. Hydrogen bombs are capable of producing an effect 1,000 times more powerful than that of an atomic bomb. Even so, the power of unity brings multiplied effectiveness and will release overwhelming spiritual power when compared to the power of diversity in the days ahead.

For several decades now, a worship revival has been taking place in the earth, and it shows no signs of abating anytime soon. Technology has helped move this worship explosion into a global phenomenon as millions of young believers all over the world connect through song. Every continent has experienced a fresh wind of praise. Stadiums have been packed, YouTube channels have been energized, and album and song sales have grown exponentially. The desire of this generation to experience God personally and hear his voice in worship has been unlike anything Christianity has ever witnessed. Through worship, this generation can express themselves and individually experience God's presence without needing anyone or anything else. An individualized, customized experience, even in the midst of a crowded arena or sanctuary, is a dream come true for many young believers. Every Christian movement in the world has been affected by this worship revival, with even the most liturgical groups embracing new songs and new forms of worship. This has especially been true in the Spirit-empowered and Pentecostal movements where worship bands have overtaken preachers both in popularity and in the number of lives being reached. This generation sees the experience of worship becoming even more integral to their Christian experience. Indeed, a worship revival may be one of the key signs of this new revival.

²³ Curtis LeMay and Paul Tibbets, "Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – 1945," *Atomic Heritage Foundation*, June 5, 2014, accessed July 19, 2022, <https://www.atomicheritage.org/history/bombings-hiroshima-and-nagasaki-1945>.

Generation Z, people born from 1995-2012, are now considered the largest generational group on earth.²⁴ One of their generational passions is to make a practical, tangible difference in the world by serving the underserved and those suffering from injustice. Gen Z consistently desires a stronger connection between wonders and works. They fully believe that this new move of God will contain an increase in the miraculous but also are committed to greater ministry among those who are poor and broken. There is a growing sense that we will experience gifts of the Spirit making a tangible difference among marginalized populations and bringing cultural impact. This is due to the fact that newer generations see no competition between social ministry and supernatural ministry; instead, they see the horizontal and vertical dimensions of Spirit-empowered living intersecting to bring the greatest good and reveal Jesus' love in new ways. Perhaps this is why among these young people, 26 percent between ages 16 and 19 volunteer on a regular basis, 60 percent say they want their work to make a difference,²⁵ 30 percent have already donated to some organization, and 1 in 10 say they want to start a charity to help the marginalized.²⁶

Members of Generation Z use the word “unashamed” to describe the type of boldness their generation will exhibit to spread this new revival. They will not be afraid to let the world know who they are in Christ. In a generation filled with more self-publishers than consumers, this is fantastic news. The possibility of young men and women using every platform available for witness brings an enormous amount of hope for the future. With this hope, this generation also recognizes that pressure and persecution will be even more normative as part of their Christian witness. Courage and boldness will certainly mark this revival in new generations.

The fourth wave of Spirit-empowered Christianity or new Pentecostal revival in the twenty-first century is on the horizon. We will see greater unity in the church than we have ever known, worship

²⁴ William M. Wilson, *Generation Z: Born for the Storm* (Tulsa, OK: Empowered Books, 2021).

²⁵ Sylvan Lane, “Beyond Millennials: How to Reach Generation Z,” Mashable, August 20, 2014, accessed July 20, 2022, <https://mashable.com/2014/08/20/generation-z-marketing/>.

²⁶ Aimee Meade, “‘Philanthroteens’: Young People Who Use Their Pocket Money to Change the World,” *The Guardian*, June 19, 2015, accessed July 20, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2015/jun/19/philanthroteens-young-people-who-use-their-pocket-money-to-change-the-world>.

encounters will continue to escalate across the globe, works and wonders will move together bringing practical and supernatural hope to the disadvantaged and the marginalized, and an army of unapologetic evangelists and missionaries will rise to use every available platform to make Jesus known no matter the personal costs.

As we move into this revival, it is important to help new generations embrace the Holy Spirit. First and foremost, we must determine to live a Spirit-empowered life ourselves, unashamedly depicting for the next generation how the fruit of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, and spiritual language are all demonstrated in biblical ways.

Second, we must understand that coming generations are watching our actions more than they are listening to our words. When a person who has lived with integrity before younger generations is unashamed of the work of the Holy Spirit in his or her life, it verifies Scripture and helps new generations overcome the hypocrisy argument. As president at Oral Roberts University, I've seen the truth of the power of a consistent example lived out on our campus. Students who vehemently questioned speaking in tongues or prayer language as freshmen often become strong proponents of it by the time they graduate. Their embrace of the Spirit's work in their personal lives most likely occurred as a result of rubbing shoulders with a Spirit-empowered friend who served as a spiritual guide for them on this subject. People learn best from experience and examples.

Third, the Spirit-empowered church must reacquaint itself with the basic teachings that have led multiplied millions to experience the Holy Spirit in the dynamic of tongues over the last century. Even just a simple walk through the five occasions of Spirit baptism in the book of Acts identifying the who, what, when, where, and how will help those who are sincere about receiving this gift.²⁷

Fourth, the Pentecostal movement needs to reimagine our vocabulary in a way that connects with new generations. We must build bridges and not barriers by the words and terms we use. During the Charismatic Renewal, vocabulary around the experience of Spirit baptism shifted from the terminology of "speaking in tongues" to the use of terms like "praying in the Spirit." It seems that this shift allowed new audiences to more readily embrace the work of God without any perceived baggage. Both of these statements are biblical; it is just that one better connected with newer generations than the other at that time.

²⁷ There are at least five occasions where people are baptized in the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts: 2:1-4; 8:14-17; 9:17-19; 10:44-48; 19:1-7.

New vocabularic bridges must be built that will help this generation cross into this powerful experience.

New generations are hungry. They desire the supernatural. They long to know and experience God. They want the truth and the Spirit of truth. We can help them encounter him in profound and personal ways. The aim of the 26th PWC with the theme, “Pentecostal Revival in the Next Generation,” is to turn all of our hearts toward new generations. God’s promise is sure: “For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants” (Isaiah 44:3).

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The development and role of the Christian Unity Commission

David R. Wells

Keywords: Christian Unity Commission, Pentecostal ecumenism

Abstract

The formation of a Christian Unity Commission by The Pentecostal World Fellowship's Executive and Advisory Committees in August 2019 at the Pentecostal World Conference in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, was a historic moment. It was the culmination of both an internal process within Pentecostals and the external appeal and influence of other Christian communions. Aspects of this process and the resulting development and role of the PWF's Christian Unity Commission is presented in this essay.

A Historical Overview

The minute from the August 27, 2019, Advisory Committee of the Pentecostal World Fellowship reads very simply, "The Chair presented the Christian Unity Commission. After discussion and recommendations regarding how the Commission would proceed forward, the CUC was adopted."¹

The process to achieve that decision had not been so simple. Pentecostals had been involved in ecumenical dialogues and conversations for decades previously. An example is that of the Catholic/Pentecostal International Dialogue which is currently in its 7th Session. In July 2022, the 50th anniversary of this dialogue was commemorated. The reports of this and other dialogues involving Pentecostals have usually carried wording like this: "The Report published here is the work of the Catholic/Pentecostal International Dialogue between the Catholic Church and some Classical Pentecostal

¹ Advisory Committee of the Pentecostal World Fellowship, minutes, August 27, 2019.

Churches and Leaders. It is a study document produced by the Dialogue members.”²

Through the years primarily Pentecostal scholars augmented by ecclesiastical leaders have participated at the tables of conversation and dialogue with other Christian communions. These have included David du Plessis, Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., Bernice Gerard, Miroslav Volf, Wonsuk Ma, Opoku Onyinah, David Daniels, Jacqueline Grey, Harold Hunter, Jean-Daniel Plüss, Teresa Chai, and David Han, to name but a few.

At times some participants found themselves facing reactions from their Pentecostal bodies that ranged from questioning and mistrust to condemnation and ostracization. Some served with full blessing from their immediate credentialing body, others with somewhat muted support. The value of being at these tables of dialogue and relationship was evident to most, but the question of how to solidify a more encompassing authorization from the Pentecostal community remained.

The other Christian communions were also intensifying their call for a structured, member-based, global Pentecostal organization to step forward and provide an authorized body to relate to regarding Christian unity initiatives and dialogues. A deliberate step was taken by the World Council of Churches and several world communions, to ensure the growing Pentecostal, Evangelical, and majority world “independent” movements were provided an open space to gather with the various Christian communions. The Global Christian Forum was developed with a calling to be “an open space wherein representatives from a broad range of Christian churches and inter-church organizations . . . can gather to foster mutual respect, to explore, and to address together common challenges.”³ This context has proven to appeal to a wider range of Pentecostals with its style of being “testimonial, relational, and missional.”⁴

For the past two decades Pentecostals have, in an ever-increasing manner, taken part in regional and global Christian unity activities, including those of the GCF, which now recognizes the PWF as a “pillar” group. This, combined with the ongoing involvement of Pentecostal scholars and ecclesiastical leaders in various dialogues

² The report of the Sixth Phase of the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (2011–2015).

³ Larry Miller, Editor, *Let Mutual Love Continue, Report of the Third Global Gathering of the Global Christian Forum* (Bonn, Germany: VKW, 2021), v.

⁴ Huibert Van Beek, ed., *Revisioning Christian Unity, The Global Christian Forum* (Oxford: Regnum, 2009).

(Reformed, Lutheran, RC) and other ecumenical activities, enhanced the openness for Pentecostals, and more specifically the PWF, to consider the formation of an official representative group. It grew evident that along with its Chair and Officers, a commission of the PWF could provide formalized representation of Pentecostals with other Christian communions and faith communities.

An initial proposal for the formation of a CUC-style body was presented to the PWF Executive and Advisory in 2010 at the Pentecostal World Conference (PWC) in Stockholm, Sweden, by Dr. Mel Robeck at the invitation of Bishop James D. Leggett who, as general superintendent and presiding bishop of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC), also served as chair of the Pentecostal World Fellowship. Bishop Leggett had been actively engaged with the Global Christian Forum and Christian Churches Together (CCT) in the USA and was a catalyst for inviting representatives from the broader Christian community to participate at Pentecostal events including the 2010 PWC.

While not immediately acted upon, Dr. Robeck was later invited by the next PWF Chair, Dr. Prince Guneratnam of Malaysia, to reintroduce the proposal. A fuller proposal was considered at the PWC in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 2016, but it was decided to have PWF's official representation with other Christian communions and activities remain as a function of the PWF's Chair and designates. Dr. Guneratnam as Chair, Dr. David Wells as Vice-Chair, and other designates regularly represented the PWF at activities of the GCF, the WCC, the Anglican Communion, and other bodies at that time.

The other Christian communions maintained their call for the PWF to provide a structured, authorized body for Pentecostal ecumenical activities. Noting this, as well as the ever-increasing opportunities for engagement by the PWF, Dr. Guneratnam as chair indicated to a joint meeting of the PWF's Executive and Advisory Committees in June 2018, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, that he would "further consult and provide a proposal regarding the possibility of a PWF appointed Christian Unity Commission. Commission members would provide authorized representation of the PWF alongside of current Pentecostal members/scholars at the various dialogues occurring between Pentecostals and other Christian communions."⁵ It was this proposal for

⁵ Joint Executive and Advisory Committees of the Pentecostal World Fellowship, minutes, June 26, 2018.

a PWF Christian Unity Commission with suggested Terms of Reference which was adopted in August 2019 in Calgary.

Formation and Structure of the Christian Unity Commission

With the appointment of Dr. William Wilson as PWF Chair in Calgary, he and the officers of the PWF immediately moved to implement the formation of a Christian Unity Commission. By January 2020 the officers had invited David Wells to assume responsibility for the further development of the Christian Unity Commission including providing a Terms of Reference document for the Commission and a list of proposed members based on the criteria in the August 2019 proposal.

Wells drafted the initial Terms of Reference for the PWF's Christian Unity Commission drawn from the proposals given to the chair and the PWF executive and advisory boards (2014-19), correspondence received from Pentecostal participants (2016-19) and from the minutes of presentations given, and decisions made (2017-19) by the PWF Chair and the executive and advisory committees. After further consultation with the chair, the officers approved the Terms of Reference document for presentation to the Executive.

The purpose and responsibilities were identified as key components of the PWF CUC Terms of Reference:⁶

The Christian Unity Commission (CUC) of the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) is a collegial body of Pentecostal, ecclesiastical leaders and scholars who facilitate the authorized representation of the PWF in inter-communion dialogues, forums, and conversations.

Members will:

- Provide PWF representation at inter-communion dialogues, forums and conversations and appoint moderators or facilitators in consultation with the PWF Chair for the Pentecostal group where appropriate. Due to the historic nature of the Pentecostal-other communion dialogues currently taking place, it is understood that not all Pentecostal/Charismatic personnel involved in existing inter-communion dialogues will necessarily be CUC members or PWF appointees.
- Facilitate the engagement of other qualified Pentecostal, ecclesiastical leaders and scholars to represent the PWF in inter-communion dialogues, forums, and conversations.

⁶ The Pentecostal World Fellowship Christian Unity Commission, "Terms of Reference" (adopted June 4, 2020).

- Serve as a resource for PWF member organizations and leaders in matters related to inter-communion and multi-faith representation and dialogue through consultation, training, and communications.
- Cooperate with the PWF's World Missions Commission and the Educational Commission (WAPTE) on initiatives of mutual interest.
- Provide presentations and resources at PWF related conferences and events as requested by the organizers.

Other areas covered in the Terms of Reference include are:

Membership and Expertise, Accountability and Reporting, Work Plan, and Funding

A motion to approve the Christian Unity Commission Terms of Reference and individuals to be on the Commission, including formalizing David Wells as Chair, was passed on June 4, 2020, by the PWF Executive Committee.

The initial membership of the PWF CUC consisted of:

David Daniels	Church of God in Christ International/McCormick Theological Seminary
David Han	Church of God, Cleveland TN/ Pentecostal Theological Seminary
Harold Hunter	International Pentecostal Holiness Church
Victor Lee	President of the Bible College of Malaysia (AG Malaysia)
Wonsuk Ma	Oral Roberts University/Empowered 21
Opoku Onyinah	The Church of Pentecost, Ghana
Jean-Daniel Plüss	Pentecostal Assemblies of Switzerland
Cecil M. Robeck, Jr.	Fuller Seminary/Assemblies of God USA
Elizabeth Salazar-Sanzana	Comunidad Teológica Evangélica de Chile
David Wells	CUC Chair, Vice-Chair PWF, General Superintendent Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada

Each member was authorized to serve on the commission by their credentialing body.

Due to the Covid-19 global pandemic the first meeting of the PWF CUC took place on July 14, 2020, via Zoom. Some members met for the very first time on the call. The initial meeting allowed for the members to review the Terms of Reference, to receive updates on the status of various dialogues, forums, and consultations, and to discuss possible shared projects such as a location for archival documents from various dialogues, forums, and conversations.

Activities and a Future Trajectory

As noted previously, Pentecostal scholars and ecclesiastical leaders had been very involved in ecumenical activity in previous decades providing beneficial insight and materials for theological discussion, education, and to provide equipping for ministry. With the formation of the PWF CUC, what had been advocated for during those years immediately became evident. Not only was the engagement with inter-communion dialogues, forums, and conversations that previously existed reinforced, there arose even greater interest and extended invitations for Pentecostals to “be at the table.”

A summary of current activities and future initiatives gives evidence of both strengthening the existing functions while pioneering new opportunities:

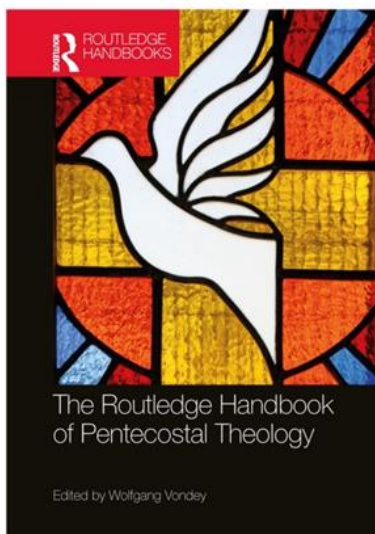
- Ongoing Orthodox-Pentecostal Conversations regionally and internationally with exploration regarding a formal dialogue.
- Participants in preparing for the global gathering of Global Christian Forum scheduled in April of 2024.
- International and regional Roman Catholic-Pentecostal dialogues including the 50th anniversary of the international dialogue.
- Providing CUC-led seminar sessions at the 26th Pentecostal World Conference in Seoul, Korea.
- Contributions such as this to the PWC 2022 issue of the *Pentecostal Education Journal* and other publications.
- Providing representation on the Global Council of Lausanne bringing African and Pentecostal perspective to the work of the Council.
- Participation with the *We Are One* movement related to mission in South America, and involvement with the Symposium on Pentecostalism and Human Rights of the Latin American Network of Pentecostal Studies.
- Circulation of the report of the Third session of the Reformed-Pentecostal Dialogue, initial planning for a Fourth session, and PWF greetings to the WCRC Executive Committee meetings.
- Finalizing the first report of the dialogue between the Lutherans and Pentecostals and initial planning for the next dialogue, and PWF greetings to the Lutheran World Federation Executive Committee meetings.
- Continue the development of the International Pentecostal-Anglican communion dialogue following the initial meeting in 2022.
- Participation in a WCC webinar with the Lutheran and Anglican communions regarding bi-lateral dialogues.

- Participation by the chair, committee members, and a PWF delegation at the WCC General Assembly in Germany.
- Representation on the World Council of Churches Central Committee virtual meetings in 2021 and 2022.
- Continuing involvement in the WCC's Faith and Order Commission and Joint Consultative Group.
- Providing ongoing Pentecostal representation at "Faith and Science" consultations related to climate change/creation care while continuing to link and strengthen the global network of Pentecostals engaged in creation care and Pentecostal eco-theology.
- Assist in the reviving of the Asia Pentecostal Society with the goal is to see it become a platform for Pentecostals in Asia to fellowship as well as become a point of interface for other denominations.

While this is not an exhaustive list, it does convey not only high levels of activity but also contexts to experience, in grace and truth, the mutual love and faith Pentecostals and fellow Christians share. Rooted in our faith in Christ and life in the Spirit, we have freedom to come to the table of the broader Christian community and experience the life and truth of Christ in many we meet there. It is a veritable feast in which the Christian Unity Commission of the PWF is privileged to share and facilitate for others. We have only just begun, and the goal is to facilitate many younger Pentecostal women and men in their experience of contributing to "the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."⁷

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⁷ Ephesians 4:3



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Growing Opportunities for Pentecostal Ecumenical Engagement

Cecil M. Robeck, Jr.

Abstract

Few people know that Pentecostals have been engaged in ecumenical activities since 1920, when the Assemblies of God joined the Foreign Missions Conference of North America. Their ecumenical engagement received greater visibility among many Pentecostal leaders from the mid-twentieth century through the work of David du Plessis and Donald Gee. This article follows their legacy through the opening of the International Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue, which this year celebrates its 50th anniversary, to the development of the Global Christian Forum. Between these two initiatives, it reviews Pentecostal participation in dialogues with Reformed and Lutheran churches, and with the World Council of Churches. It points to the advances that are now possible at the global level through the work of the Commission on Christian Unity of the Pentecostal World Fellowship.

Keywords: ecumenism, dialogue, World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, David du Plessis, Donald Gee, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

For many Pentecostals, the idea of participating in the Ecumenical Movement is still a foreign if not dangerous idea. There are several reasons for this. First, while Pentecostals were not present until three centuries after the Protestant Reformation, they have grown up in a world influenced by Protestants, many of whom still view the Catholic Church through 16th century Reformation eyes.¹ Second, when early Pentecostals tried to share their new experience of baptism in the Spirit

¹ Philip Jenkins, *The New Anti-Catholicism: The Last Acceptable Prejudice* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2003, 1-66) provides a sophisticated look at this problem along with its political aspects throughout American life in the late 20th Century.

with the churches that had initially brought them to faith,² many were judged, ridiculed, and disfellowshipped.³ These actions have left scars. Third, by the time the Protestant and Anglican worlds got around to organizing the first substantial ecumenical organization, the World Council of Churches (WCC), two fears dominated much of Pentecostal thinking. One was the beginning of the Cold War and the troubling world events that it spawned. The other was the fact that most Pentecostals had embraced a dispensational form of eschatology that fed off these new realities.⁴ The dominant position that most Pentecostals took regarding ecumenism was that their participation would inevitably lead Pentecostals to compromise their beliefs and values⁵ and worse, it would likely pave the way for the Antichrist.⁶ Ecumenism was something Pentecostals needed to avoid.

At the same time, there were always Pentecostals who saw something else in ecumenism. They saw in it the possibility of overcoming centuries of animosity between churches in the East and churches in the West, between the ancient churches, both Catholic and Orthodox, and the Reformation churches, between all of these churches and the newer churches and movements that had come into existence since the Protestant Reformation. They fancied the possibility that ecumenism might bring about a clear and singular witness to the power of the gospel to transform and reconcile not only individuals, but also, entire segments of the church to one another. Some of them even believed

² “It is not our desire to tear down churches but to make new churches out of old ones. We pray for God to send the Pentecost to every church.” Untitled item, *The Apostolic Faith* [Los Angeles, CA] 1, no. 1 (September 1906), 3-4.

³ C. W. B. [ridewell], “Fanatical sect in Los Angeles Claims Gift of Tongues,” 7, no. 24 (Jun 13, 1906), 5; Phineas F. Bresee, “The Gift of Tongues,” *The Nazarene Messenger* 11, no. 24 (December 13, 1906), 6. See the resolution passed by the Holiness Church in Josephine M. Washburn, *History and Reminiscences of the Holiness Church Work in Southern California and Arizona* (South Pasadena, CA: Press, 1913 / New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1985), 377; David J. du Plessis, *The Spirit Bade Me Go: The Astounding Move of God in the Denominational Churches*, (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1970), 13.

⁴ Gerald T. Sheppard, “Pentecostals and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism: The Anatomy of an Uneasy Relationship,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1984), 5-33.

⁵ Donald Gee, “Pentecostal Future? What about the NEXT Fifty Years?” *Pentecost* 43 (March 1958), 17.

⁶ “Preparing for Antichrist,” *The Pentecostal Evangel* 18, no. 32 (June 18, 1949), 11.

that ecumenism might offer Pentecostals another opportunity to proclaim the gospel in the power of the Spirit by bringing their witness to bear upon these older churches. Both David du Plessis and Donald Gee viewed ecumenism in this way. This article will focus on the continuing Pentecostal ecumenical opportunities at the international level.

While some Pentecostals engaged in limited ecumenical contact for the sake of world mission from 1918 onward, the focus for several Pentecostal denominations soon became a quest for limited acceptance that they found among Evangelicals.⁷ Those who chose to embrace Evangelicalism often found their Pentecostal message and charisms criticized or suppressed when they participated together in joint meetings.⁸ Yet the Pentecostals allowed their distinct message and the exercise of their gifts to be suppressed. Moreover, they soon found that the Evangelicals, many of whom had split from their mainline denominations, pressed them to adopt Evangelical “enemies” as their own, even though the Pentecostals lacked the history that separated these Evangelicals from any historic mainline church.⁹ This meant that those Pentecostals who looked positively at ecumenism were pressured, under the threat of discipline, to avoid the broader form of ecumenical engagement sponsored by the WCC.¹⁰

⁷Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “The Assemblies of God and Ecumenical Cooperation: 1920-1965,” in Wonsuk Ma and Robert Menzies, Eds., *Pentecostalism in Context: Essays in Honor of William W. Menzies*, JPTS Series 11 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 107-150. The Assemblies of God was a constitutional member of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, while the United Holy Church in America, Inc. was not a constitutional member, but contributed to the support of the FMCNA. Among those who joined the National Association of Evangelicals in the USA when it began in 1943, were the Assemblies of God, Church of God (Cleveland, TN), Pentecostal Holiness Church, and Open Bible Standard Churches.

⁸ Edith Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism*, vol. 2 (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), 28-29; Edith Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture*, (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1993), 183-187.

⁹ Typically, the splits took place over the nature of Scripture and the role of the Social Gospel.

¹⁰ *Addresses Presented at the Sixth Pentecostal World Conference, Jerusalem, Israel May 19th to 21st, 1961* (Toronto, Canada: Testimony Press 1961), 55; Bylaws, Article XXIII, Doctrines and Practices Disapproved, Section 16, The Ecumenical

In spite of these limitations, David du Plessis and Donald Gee continued to stand out on the world stage of Pentecostal ecumenism. Perhaps it was the fact that neither was originally from North America that made their embrace of ecumenism possible. They were not captive to the same ecclesial politics that American Pentecostals were, with the Federal [later National] Council of Churches on the one hand and the Holiness Movement, Fundamentalism, and Evangelicalism on the other. Both men relied upon their own wisdom formed from personal reflection on Scripture and a global understanding of the church that was broader than any North American missionary vision. Both welcomed the Ecumenical Movement.¹¹

Gee found his niche as the editor of *Pentecost*, the regular periodical he edited on behalf of the Pentecostal World Conference (1948-1966). He wisely demanded and received the freedom to edit the periodical as he saw fit without any interference from other Pentecostal leaders. He was to be “answerable to God alone.”¹² Du Plessis found his niche through several sources. It came first in a prophecy given to him by Smith Wigglesworth in 1936.¹³ It came from his role as General Secretary of several Pentecostal World Conferences (1947, 1949, and 1955) that gave him international recognition beyond the Assemblies of God. It also came from his exposure to and leadership in the Charismatic Movement among the many individuals and groups who sought his wisdom on how to proceed, once they had received the baptism in the Spirit.¹⁴

Movement, *Minutes of the Thirty-First Session of the General Council of the Assemblies of God Convened at Des Moines, IA, August 25-30, 1965*, with Revised Constitution and Bylaws (Springfield, MO: Office of the General Secretary, 1965), 138.

¹¹ Donald Gee, “Amsterdam and Pentecost,” *Pentecost*, no. 6 (December 1948), 17; Donald Gee, “David J. Du Plessis: A Well-Deserved Tribute,” *Pentecost* 21 (September 1952), 12; Donald Gee, “Pentecost and Evanston,” *Pentecost*, no. 30 (December 1954), 17; David J. du Plessis, *The Spirit Bade Me Go* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1970), 13-15; David J. du Plessis, “Are We Going back to the Churches?” *Pentecost* 34 (December 1955), 17.

¹² Donald Gee, “For Your Information,” *Pentecost* 1 (September 1947), 17.

¹³ David du Plessis, *A Man Called Mr. Pentecost* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1977), 91; David du Plessis, *Simple and Profound* (Orleans, MA: Paraclete Press, 1986), 96.

¹⁴ Richard Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics II*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1983), 60, 91, 93.

Their collaboration, beginning in 1947 and continuing until Donald Gee's death in 1966, opened a number of possibilities for Pentecostals to think about and then enter into a range of ecumenical opportunities. Gee kept the ecumenism in play through his many editorials in *Pentecost*.¹⁵ Du Plessis kept the ecumenism in play by reporting on his speaking engagements in the burgeoning Charismatic renewal,¹⁶ through his organization and participation in the Catholic - Pentecostal Dialogue, and through his articles and books.¹⁷ Together, they developed an ecumenical corpus, a foundation for those who followed their lead. Today, Pentecostal denominations are now members of National Councils of Churches in at least 37 countries, and they are either

¹⁵ Donald Gee, "Burning the Partitions," *Pentecost* 19 (March-May 1952), 17; "What Others Are Saying about Us," *Pentecost* 22 (December 1952), 17; "Centre and Circumference," *Pentecost* 24 (June 1953), 17; "Pentecost Re-Valued," *Pentecost* 28 (June 1954), 17; "Pentecost and Evanston," *Pentecost*, no. 30 (December 1954), 17; "Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal," *Pentecost* 32 (June 1955), 17; "Sparks and Splinters," *Pentecost* 41 (September 1957), 7; "A Striking Message from the World Council of Churches," *Pentecost* 48 (June 1959), 2; "Taking the Pentecostal Movement Seriously," *Pentecost* 49 (September 1959), 1; "A Striking Message from the World Council of Churches," *Pentecost* 48 (June 1959), 2; "Orientation for 1960," *Pentecost* 50 (December 1959), 17; "Institutions Cannot Love," *Pentecost* 51 (March 1960), 17; "Contact Is Not Compromise," *Pentecost* 53 (September – November 1960), 17; "Pentecostal Conferences Makes Holy Land History," *Pentecost* 56 (June – August 1961), 10; "What Manner of Spirit?" *Pentecost* 57 (September – November 1961), 17; "At the Crossroads," *Pentecost* 56 (June – August 1961), 17; "The Pentecostal Revival among the Older Denominations," *Pentecost* 57 (September – November 1961), 8-9; "To Our New Pentecostal Friends," *Pentecost* 58 (December 1961-February 1962), 17; "Pentecostals at New Delhi," *Pentecost* 59 (March – May 1962), 17; "World Presbyterian Alliance to Emphasize the Spirit," *Pentecost*, 60 (June – August, 1962), 2; "Don't Spill the Wine," *Pentecost*, 61 (September – November 1962), 17; "Wheat, Tares and 'Tongues,'" *Pentecost* 66 (December 1963 – February 1964), 17; "The Pentecostal Churches and the World Council of Churches," *Pentecost* 67 (March – May 1967), 1, 16-17; "Ecumenical Pentecostalism," *Pentecost*, 68 (June – August 1964), 2.

¹⁶ David du Plessis left his papers with the David du Plessis Archive located in the David J. du Plessis Center for Christian Spirituality at Fuller Theological Seminary, 135 North Oakland Ave., Pasadena CA 91182. A list of these archival holdings is available at: <https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/findingaids/9/>.

¹⁷ David du Plessis' books were *The Spirit Bade Me Go* (1970); *A Man Called Mr. Pentecost* (1977); and *Simple and Profound* (1986).

associates or observers in six others. Seventy percent of them come from the Global South.¹⁸

Du Plessis began his ecumenical ministry in 1951, when he claimed that the Lord told him to speak to the leaders of the WCC.¹⁹ He traveled to New York where he visited the WCC offices. That visit led to an invitation to attend the International Missionary Conference in Willingen, Germany, in 1952, where other doors began to open. In 1954, W. A. Visser't Hooft, General Secretary of the WCC, invited du Plessis to coordinate the “non-English speaking delegates for radio and television and press conferences” at the WCC Assembly in Evanston, Illinois, USA.²⁰ By 1960, Donald Gee had written a number of ecumenical articles, and that year he joined Du Plessis at a WCC Faith and Order meeting, in St. Andrews, Scotland.²¹ As Charismatic Renewal burgeoned around the world among Protestants and Anglicans, and subsequently among Roman Catholics, both men saw new opportunities, and du Plessis took advantage of many of them. In 1968, he visited the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity in Rome that Pope John XXIII had established to oversee Catholic ecumenical relations. By 1970, David du Plessis and Fr. Kilian McDonnell, OSB, were meeting with Cardinal Bea, President of the Secretariat, to begin conversations about opening an international Roman Catholic – Pentecostal Dialogue. That Dialogue began in 1972.

International Roman Catholic – Pentecostal Dialogue

At fifty years, this is the oldest, most substantial, and most studied of all the ecumenical discussions in which Pentecostals have participated. It has completed six rounds, each of which ran between five and eight years in length.²² The Dialogue began its seventh round in 2019 but, due

¹⁸ These figures may be found in Appendix 1 in Huibert van Beek, Compiler, *A Handbook of Churches and Councils: Profiles of Ecumenical Relationships* Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 2006.

¹⁹ David J. Du Plessis, *The Spirit Bade Me Go*, 13.

²⁰ David J. du Plessis, *A Man Called Mr. Pentecost*, 178. J. Roswell Flower attended as an official “observer.” See Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “A Pentecostal Looks at the WCC,” *The Ecumenical Review* 47, no. 1 (1995), 60-69.

²¹ David J. du Plessis, *The Spirit Bade Me Go*, 20, 23-24.

²² The Reports from the first six rounds appear in multiple languages and in many publications. The first five reports are available in various *Growth in Agreement* volumes published by the WCC between 1998 and 201, and at:

to the pandemic, it only resumed in Rome in July 2022. The first two rounds of the Dialogue were introductory in nature as both teams felt their way into something quite new. While they addressed important topics, the programs included too many papers with too little opportunity to digest them. With the third round, the Dialogue began to focus its attention more narrowly.

In the beginning, the disparate levels of education between the two teams made discussions difficult. Most Pentecostal groups have been slow to recognize the value of the Dialogue and invest in it as part of their ministry. Since 1985, the Pentecostal team has tried to include not only pastors and denominational leaders, but also international representatives with advanced theological degrees in various disciplines, who are capable of entering more nuanced theological discussions. This has enriched the most recent reports.²³ The Pentecostal Steering Committee has worked to assemble its teams representing diversity in the denominations represented, geographical distribution, and growing gender equity. In spite of their efforts, the Dialogue, which conducts its work in English, continues to have difficulty in recruiting participants

<http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/pentecostali/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo.html>.

²³ The following volumes analyze the first five rounds of the Dialogue. They include Arnold Bittlinger, *Papst und Pfingstler: Der römisch katholisch-pfingstliche Dialog und seine ökumenische Relevanz*, SIHC 16, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1978); Jerry L. Sandidge, *Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1977-1982): A Study in Developing Ecumenism* SIHC 44 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1987), 2 volumes; Paul D. Lee, *Pneumatological Ecclesiology in the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue: A Catholic Reading of the Third Quinquennium* (1985-1989) (Romae, Italia: Pontificiam Universitatem S. Thomae in Urbe, 1994); Veli-Matti Kärkäinen, *Spiritus ubi vult spirat: Pneumatology in Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1972-1989)*, Schriften der Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft 42 (Helsinki, Finland: Luther-Agricola-Society, 1998); Veli-Matti Kärkäinen, *Ad ultimum terrae: Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness in the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1990-1997)* SIHC 117 (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang, 1987); Jelle Creemers, *Ecumenical Dialogue with a Non-Institutional Movement: A Systematic-Historical Analysis of Pentecostal Involvement in the International Roman Catholic – Classical Pentecostal Dialogue (1972-2007)* (PhD Dissertation; Lueven, Belgium: Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, 2014); Jelle Creemers, *Theological Dialogue with Classical Pentecostals: Challenges and Opportunities*, Ecclesiological Investigations 23 (London, England: Bloomsberry T & T Clark, 2015); and Karen R. J. Murphy, *Pentecostals and Roman Catholics on Becoming a Christian*, CPCS 28 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2018).

from Latin America because many of them are disadvantaged without access to translation. In most cases, the lack of interest by denominational leaders and pastors, historic animosity towards the Catholic Church, and the lack of financial support have made it difficult to name participants, who must cover their own expenses. It has also been difficult for some participants to obtain the permission of their churches to participate.

The Role of the Secretaries of Christian World Communions (CWC)

Since 1957, the General Secretaries and/or chief ecumenical officers of approximately 30 ecclesial bodies have met together on an annual basis. It is an exclusive forum for developing relationships between church leaders from different church families at the global level. It requires that each representative have the ability to listen and receive as well as to share advice and direction with others. Participants pray for one another, provide mutual support, and share information through short annual reports. They discuss issues of mutual interest, common witness, and allow the exchange of ideas and troubleshoot. The Secretaries have met with political leaders to address issues such as persecution, anti-Christian legislation, the facilitation of visas for international gatherings, and to provide moral support in difficult times. They have sought ways to support countries working to serve the poor, or to promote greater human rights, combating racism, sexism, and other forms of violence.

For many years, the Secretaries regularly sought the participation of the Pentecostal World Conference General Secretary, who ignored them. The Secretaries finally turned to the Catholic Pentecostal Dialogue and invited Justus du Plessis to represent the interests of global Pentecostalism in their meetings. Justus, who succeeded David du Plessis as the Pentecostal co-chair, attended the meeting in 1991 and 1992. The Secretaries invited Cecil M. Robeck to act as an interim representative of Pentecostals until the PWF decided to take its rightful place. After independently representing Pentecostal interests for thirty years and receiving no financial support from any Pentecostal body, Robeck retired in 2021. David Wells, Vice Chair of the PWF and Chair of its Church Unity Commission, became the first global Pentecostal leader to accept the invitation of the Secretaries to join them.

Because the annual meeting of the Secretaries brings together the General Secretaries from a range of communions, it was from this meeting that several other dialogues were opened. The first of these was

with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). The WARC – Pentecostal Dialogue began in 1993. The WARC General Secretary, Milan Opočenský, asked Robeck if he would join him in establishing a Reformed – Pentecostal Dialogue. When Robeck asked why they should begin such a dialogue, Opočenský replied that since we are all brothers and sisters in Christ, we should get better acquainted. Robeck told him that this was not sufficient reason to enter a dialogue given the expenditures they would make. The following year, Opočenský submitted that in Korea, Reformed and Pentecostal churches were engaged in public and heated disputes over Pastor Yonggi Cho’s theology. Churches were being hurt and the gospel was being hindered. Robeck quickly agreed that a dialogue would be beneficial, especially if at some point, it could take place in Seoul, Korea.

After Opočenský received encouragement from WARC to proceed, a preliminary discussion took place at Mattersey, England, July 8-9, 1995. The following year, the Dialogue began in Torre Pellice, Italy, hosted by the Waldensian Church. Abival Pires da Silveira of São Paulo, Brazil, and Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. were asked to serve as co-chairs. Working through Wonsuk Ma, Robeck contacted Yoido Full Gospel Church, which through its International Theological Institute, agreed to host the Dialogue in May 1999. That same week, the Institute hosted a Conference on the Holy Spirit, in which Dialogue participants also took part. In an unprecedented move, the press and local media were allowed to observe the exchanges and interview participants.²⁴

Following the first round of Dialogue (1996-2000), the WARC agreed to a second round. It began in 2001 on the theme of “Experience in Christian Faith and Life.”²⁵ Due to the WARC’s General Council, the

²⁴ “Word and Spirit, Church and World: The Final Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches And Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders 1996-2000,” in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 9-43; in the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 2, no. 1 (January 1999), 105-151; and as “Word and Spirit, Church and World: Final Report of the International Pentecostal-Reformed Dialogue,” *Reformed World* 50, no. 3 (September 2000), 128-156.

²⁵ This document is available in *Reformed World* 63, no. 1 (March 2013), 2-44; Wolfgang Vondey, ed. *Pentecostal and Christian Unity Volume Two: Continuing and Building Relationships* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 217-267; and Thomas F. Best, et. al. eds, *Growth in Agreement IV: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed*

election of a new General Secretary, Dr. Setri Nyomi of Accra, Ghana, appointment of a new Reformed Co-chair, Dr. Joseph Small, from the Presbyterian Church in the USA, and a three-year break due to internal WARC issues, now renamed the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), this round did not complete its work until 2011. The Dialogue completed a third round titled “Called to God’s Mission,” which ran from 2014 – 2020 and was published in 2021.²⁶

This Reformed – Pentecostal Dialogue has produced three significant ecumenical outcomes. First, the Dialogue helped to break down the walls between the Pentecostal and Reformed churches in Korea. The Korean Council of Churches invited the Korean Assemblies of God to join the Council, and it did so. It continues to play an active role. Second, it opened the Korean Assemblies of God to the extent that Pastor David Yonggi Cho produced a video in which he joined others inviting the WCC to hold its Tenth Assembly in Busan, Korea, in November 2013. His successor, Pastor Young Hoon Lee then brought together several hundred Pentecostals to a worship service at the Busan Assembly where he preached.

The third significant outcome was the recognition of “Called to God’s Mission” as representing not only the WCRC but also the Pentecostal World Fellowship as co-sponsors of the report. This is the first time that an international ecumenical dialogue has received public support from any Pentecostal body.²⁷

Dialogue with Lutherans

The Secretaries of CWCs facilitated the beginning of the Lutheran – Pentecostal Dialogue, when Dr. Gunnar Stålsett (Church of Norway), General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) asked Robeck about the possibility of opening a dialogue between Pentecostals and the LWF. When Robeck asked him why he thought this dialogue was necessary, Stålsett quickly responded that the Ethiopian Evangelical Church, the Mekane Yesus, was a member of the LWF though it was

Statements, 2004-2014 (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 2017), 2:111-140.

²⁶ It was published in *The Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 23, no. 2 (2020), 5-41; and in *Pentecostal Education: A Journal of WAPTE the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education* 61 (Spring 2021): 55-86. It is available at: <http://www.epcra.ch/papers>.

²⁷ It was published with this information in *Reformed World* 69, no. 1 (August 2021): 117-148.

not well understood. The denomination with its several million members is Lutheran in liturgy but Pentecostal in practice with many gifts of the Spirit operating regularly along with other spiritual manifestations such as dancing and being slain in the Spirit. Stålsett believed that the LWF could use the counsel of Pentecostals since Pentecostals have a long history of embracing the gifts of the Holy Spirit and other manifestations. Robeck immediately welcomed the idea.

At the same time, the LWF held its Assembly and elected a new General Secretary, Dr. Ishmael Noko. The LWF was preoccupied with concluding the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* with the Catholic Church. As a result, Dr. Sven Oppegaard, Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs, met annually with Robeck to keep the discussion alive. Meanwhile, Theodore Dieter, Director of the Ecumenical Institute in Strasbourg, France, acting on behalf of the LWF, invited Robeck to gather a small group for a pre-dialogue discussion while Dieter gathered several Institute faculty. In December 2004, they met in Strasbourg to map out a five-year plan. Kenneth Appold (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) chaired the Lutheran side while Robeck chaired the initial meeting for the Pentecostal team. Each of them presented an introductory paper regarding their traditions. Participants discussed the papers and quickly agreed that over the next five years they would study the various ways their people encounter Christ. Robeck invited Jean-Daniel Plüss (Swiss Pentecostal Mission) to continue as the Pentecostal Co-chair since the LWF office was in Geneva and Plüss lived in Zurich.

In its first meeting held in Strasbourg (September 11-17, 2005), the topic was “How Do We Encounter Christ?” It was followed by discussions on “How Do We Encounter Christ in Proclamation?” (December 8-14, 2006), “How Do We Encounter Christ in Sacraments or Ordinances?” (January 15-22, 2008), and concluded with “How Do We Encounter Christ in Charisms?” (December 14-19, 2008). The group met in Tampere, Finland (January 23-29, 2010) to complete the report published later that year.²⁸

²⁸ The report of the Lutheran Pentecostal Conversation was published and distributed first to the delegates of the Lutheran World Federation Assembly in July 2010 as a small handbook under the title, *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue* (Strasbourg, France: Ecumenical Institute / Pasadena, CA: David du Plessis Center for Christian Spirituality / Zürich, Switzerland: European Pentecostal-Charismatic Research Association, 2010), 5-21. This 84-page handbook also includes three articles: “Introducing Lutherans to Pentecostals,”

Jean-Daniel Plüss attended the July 2010 Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Stuttgart, Germany, as an ecumenical guest where he gave Pentecostal greetings. The LWF elected a new General Secretary, Rev. Martin Junge (Lutheran Church in Chile), and Dr. Kaisamari Hintikka (Lutheran Church of Finland) was named Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Director for Theology and Public Witness. Kaisamari Hintikka and Jean-Daniel Plüss worked together to set up and determine the direction of the first official Dialogue between the LWF and Pentecostals. Walter Altmann (Lutheran Church in Brazil) became the Lutheran Co-chair while Plüss continued as the Pentecostal Co-chair. The work focused on each of the points that Jesus announced as part of His mission in Luke 4:18-19: “Sent by the Spirit – Identity in Christ,” “God Has Anointed Me to Proclaim,” “Proclaiming Good News to the Poor,” and “To Proclaim Freedom, Recovery and Release.” Participants completed their report in September 2022 with publication to follow.

Other Dialogues Originating with the Secretaries

The General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), Dr. Neville Callam, met Robeck at another meeting of the Secretaries where he proposed a Baptist – Pentecostal Dialogue. When Robeck asked Callam why a dialogue, Callam explained that it was “about time for the Baptist World Alliance to learn about the Holy Spirit,” especially since many Baptist churches throughout the Global South were enjoying charismatic renewal. The two agreed. Robeck contacted Prince Guneratnam, Chair of the PWF, who blessed it, and an exploratory meeting took place at Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Alabama, USA, December 13-15, 2011. While the meeting went very well, and both sides agreed that “the purpose of the dialogue is to examine what it may mean for Baptists and Pentecostals to walk together in step with the Holy Spirit.”²⁹ It soon fell apart due to internal strife over which Baptist leader should lead. With a new BWA General Secretary, it now appears that this dialogue is back on the table.

“Introducing Pentecostals to Lutherans,” and “Lutheran Reactions to Pentecostals: A U.S. Case Study.” The report was subsequently published in Wolfgang Vondey, ed., *Pentecostalism and Christian Unity*, Volume Two: *Continuing and Building Relationships* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 35-47.

²⁹ Bob Allen, “Baptists, Pentecostals Seek Common Ground at: <https://baptistnews.com/article/baptists-pentecostals-seek-common-ground/#.YiOzv5aIbIU>.

Within the CWCs, a number of church families practice “Believers’ Baptism.” They include Baptists, Pentecostals, Disciples of Christ, Churches of Christ, Mennonites, and Brethren churches. Initiative came from the 2011 meeting of the Secretaries of Christian World Communions asking for “fresh thinking and official agreements around mutual recognition” of baptismal theology and practice. Dr. David M. Thompson, representing the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council for many years, convened the meeting in Kingston, Jamaica, January 8-10, 2012. It was a fruitful discussion, with papers presented by each tradition. Dr. Dagmar Heller attended as a consultant from the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. Other Secretaries from the Anglican Church, the Salvation Army, and the Mennonites have also shown interest in opening bilateral dialogues with Pentecostals at the international level.

World Council of Churches

In 1989, the Director of the WCC Commission on Faith and Order (WCCFO) invited Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. to participate in its Plenary Commission meeting in Budapest, Hungary. In 1991, he participated in the Canberra Assembly as a Pentecostal advisor. He and Donald Dayton drafted a series of proposals which were adopted by the Assembly.³⁰ Several months later, the WCC hired Huibert van Beek as Director of Church and Ecumenical Relations, the last proposal to be adopted. In 1991, Robeck was named a member of the Plenary Commission on Faith and Order. Between 1994 and 1997, Hubert van Beek worked closely with Robeck to organize and convene several consultations between Pentecostals and representatives from WCC member churches.

The first consultation took place in Lima, Peru, in November 1994. Latin America seemed a logical choice because since 1961, the *Asociación “Iglesia de Dios”* (Argentina), *Iglesia Cristiana Bíblica* (Argentina), *Iglesia de Misiones Pentecostales Libres de Chile*, *Iglesia Pentecostal de Chile*, and the *Misión Iglesia Pentecostal*, (Chile) had all joined the WCC though their total membership was only 175,000.³¹ Several other Pentecostal groups

³⁰ Michael Kinnamon, ed., *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report Seventh Assembly* (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications / Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 107-108.

³¹ Membership figures are taken from Huibert van Beek, Compiler, *A Handbook of Churches and Councils: Profiles of Ecumenical Relationships* (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC, 2006). The *Missão Evangélica Pentecostal de Angola* with its 75,000 members later joined the Council.

invited included the Assemblies of God, the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, and several smaller independent denominations indigenous to Latin America. Dayton and Robeck participated as well. Recommendations from this consultation included calls for greater North-South involvement between Pentecostals, greater involvement of women, young people, and indigenous peoples, and hope for some kind of forum that would include Pentecostals, Catholics, the WCC, and representatives from the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI).³²

Eighteen months later, a second consultation took place in San Jose, Costa Rica. It was a North/South consultation including participants from the U.S. Office of the WCC, the National Council of Churches in the USA, and several U.S. and Latin America-based Pentecostal denominations. During that week-long consultation co-chaired by Huibert van Beek and Robeck, participants presented several short papers introducing the WCC, their Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry (BEM) process, Scripture and spirituality, spirituality and justice, evangelization and proselytism, and Pentecostalism in Latin America. The sometimes, difficult meeting allowed for the participants to respond to the fears and misconceptions of one another. In the end, the group reflected on the strengths and weaknesses of their respective traditions, acknowledged the need for clearer and less judgmental communication between their respective churches, encouraged ecumenical experiments at the local level whenever that was possible, and acknowledged the need for some form of ongoing discussion.³³

In November 1997, van Beek and Robeck, convened a third consultation at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, near Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting included singing, prayer, Bible study, and discussion. Participants included a few from previous consultations with others from Europe, Asia, and Africa. One afternoon, the group visited the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, and engaged in conversation with the WCC General Secretary, Dr. Konrad Raiser. Raiser explain the “Common Understanding and Vision” process recently adopted by the

³² *Consultation with Pentecostal Churches; Lima, Peru 14-19 November 1994, World Council of Churches* (Geneva, Switzerland: Office of Church and Ecumenical Relations, 1995); *Consulta con las Iglesias Pentecostales; Lima Perú; 14 al 19 de Noviembre de 1994, Consejo Mundial de Iglesias* (Geneva, Switzerland: Oficina para las Relaciones con las Iglesias y la Comunidad Ecu  nica, c. 1995).

³³ Huibert van Beek, ed., *Consultation with Pentecostals in the Americas: San Jose, Costa Rica 4-8 June 1996* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 1996).

WCC and entertained questions. The Pentecostal participants were encouraged by Raiser's vision of an expanded ecumenical table and, while they were clear that they did not plan to join the WCC, they were unanimous in recognizing the need for greater interaction, mutual education, and support of developing closer relations between the WCC and Pentecostals.

The WCC Central Committee met in September 1997 to approve a recommendation to establish a Joint Consultative Committee, that is, a dialogue between WCC members and Pentecostals. Robeck was asked to give testimony to several committees on the significance of such dialogue. The Central Committee then passed the resolution and forwarded it to the Harari Assembly in 1998. The WCC then asked Cecil Robeck and Bruce Robbins, Ecumenical Officer of the United Methodist Church, to co-chair and, by June 2000, the Joint Consultative Group began its work in Hautecombe, France. At that time, the group agreed (1) to search for better ways of understanding one another; (2) to search for new opportunities for mutual learning and action; (3) to share their experiences of Christian witness with one another; (4) to discuss their challenges with the hope of moving beyond them; and (5) to share what they would learn with their respective churches.

The Joint Consultative Group has been a fruitful but sometimes difficult venture. On the Pentecostal side, team members had to overcome their initial fears and stereotypes of the WCC. Most of them now feel much more comfortable with the work but translating what they have learned back to their various churches continues to be a challenge. The WCC faces bigger challenges. The lack of understanding between various WCC members about one another's churches is significant, and the ignorance regarding Pentecostals that the WCC team initially expressed was sometimes difficult to address. Still, the work of the Joint Consultative Group has brought greater understanding and is worth the effort. The Joint Consultative Group has completed three rounds of discussions.

Global Christian Forum (GCF)³⁴

Another important ecumenical initiative is the GCF. In 1998, Konrad Raiser was not satisfied with the "Common Understanding and Vision" statement that the Central Committee approved in its September 1997 meeting. In 1998, he convened a consultation that he hoped would bring

³⁴ The Forum's website is: <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=Global+Christian+Forum>.

Evangelicals and Pentecostals, along with Catholics, to a common table with representatives of WCC churches. Recognizing the many dangers in a postmodern world, he asked the participants to think about how an ecumenical table could be enlarged so that world leaders and others might take more seriously the witness of the whole church. After most of a day in discussion, Robeck offered that the idea would not succeed if Evangelicals and Pentecostals were not part of the group addressing the question. He noted that they needed to have a sufficient number participating that would assure them that their voices would be taken seriously. He insisted that it be an independent forum without membership and never beholden to the WCC. When it came to the program that the forum might follow, some raised questions about who should give the first academic address. Robeck argued that rather than beginning with technical papers, it should begin with all participants sharing either the story of how they came to faith or about their call to ministry. The educational disparity between Pentecostal leaders and other Christian leaders could be a problem if the language of presentations was too academic. Besides, friendships needed to be developed leading to trust, which would enable common understanding and ultimately result in shared witness. The group agreed to Robeck's intervention including his methodology based upon personal testimonies.

Following the consultation, Raiser named a steering committee to take the idea forward. It included Dr. George Vandervelde (World Evangelical Alliance), Msgr. John A. Radano (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity), Metropolitan Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim (Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch), Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. (Pentecostal), Fr. Mikhael Gundayev (Russian Orthodox Church), Canon David Hamid (Anglican), Dr. Musimbi Kanyoro (World YWCA), and Hubert van Beek (WCC), Secretary. The Forum continued to develop through a series of regional consultations in the USA, Zambia, Germany, and Chile before undertaking its first global meeting in Limuru, Kenya (November 2007).³⁵

While some Pentecostal churches have been hesitant to join in the conversation, those who have done so have become enthusiastic

³⁵ For a very helpful overview of the entire process, see Sarah Rowland Jones, "The Global Forum: A Narrative History," Richard Howell, ed., *Global Christian Forum: Transforming Ecumenism*, 1-57; and Msgr. John A. Radano, "The Global Christian Forum: An Initiative for Christian Unity in the 21st Century," Richard Howell, ed. *Global Christian Forum: Transforming Ecumenism*, 58-72.

regarding the process, the experience, and the outcome. The GCF has been highly successful in attracting Pentecostal leaders to the table in large part because of the methodology that begins with personal testimonies. As participants begin to trust one another, new shared concerns and agendas emerge which lead to new types of discussions. The GCF does not take formal actions or offer public statements though issues of persecution and martyrdom, as well as proselytism, have resulted in conferences convened by the GCF Steering Committee. This Forum is a table where Christian leaders from throughout the world can meet as peers with a minimum amount of imposition and a maximum amount of relationship, building new relationships between interested parties. It has convened three international conferences in Limuru, Kenya; Manado, Sulawesi, Indonesia; and Bogota, Colombia. It appears to be the most hopeful ecumenical initiative involving Pentecostal leaders and quite different from the important theological dialogues over the past half century.³⁶

The PWF Christian Unity Commission

The history of Pentecostal ecumenical engagement is one marked by extreme difficulty. Instead of it being a communal exercise with Pentecostal churches involved, it has developed only in the hands of individuals. Over the past 70 years or so, these individuals have appealed repeatedly to the churches for acceptance even as they have spoken prophetically to the unwillingness of Pentecostal leaders to take ecumenism seriously. Two issues stand at the forefront of this separation. The first is fear nurtured by the type of eschatology that most Pentecostals have embraced, a Dispensational theology. The second is ignorance, the lack of knowledge that most Pentecostal people exhibit when it comes to other churches. The third is a lack of trust, that Pentecostals can take the words or actions of other churches at face value.

Recognizing that it was time for Pentecostals as a body to take some ownership of ecumenical engagement, Robeck approached the Executive Committee of the PWF when it met in Stockholm, Sweden, in 2010. He was encouraged to draft a proposal and resolution which he developed with the help of eight colleagues representing seven Pentecostal denominations, and submitted it to the PWF Executive

³⁶ Huibert van Beek, ed., *Revisioning Christian Unity: The Global Christian Forum*, Studies in Global Christianity (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books, 2009).

Committee, January 1, 2014.³⁷ The Executives decided to table the resolution voting unanimously that the resolution “be kept in abeyance for the present time” until its meeting held later that month.³⁸

At the 2019 PWF meeting in Calgary, the Executive Committee picked up the issue once again. Before the Conference ended, it established a Commission on Christian Unity, consistent with its Commission on World Missions and its Commission on Theological Education. Since that time, member churches have named liaisons to the Commission, and the Commission has begun its work of reporting and decision-making regarding future Pentecostal ecumenical interests. The Commission should be able to offer coordination between dialogues, prioritize new requests, offer ecumenical seminars and workshops, and may ultimately provide ecumenical publications for PWF members and their churches. At this time, greater ecumenical participation appears to be promising for the future.

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³⁷ The eight signers of the resolution were: Cecil M. Robeck, Jr; (Assemblies of God, USA) David Cole (Open Bible Churches, David Daniels (Church of God in Christ), Wonsuk Ma (Assemblies of God, Korea, USA), Opoku Onyinah (Church of Pentecost, Ghana), Jean-Daniel Plüss (Swiss Pentecostal Mission, Switzerland), Tony Richie (Church of God, USA), and Simon Chan (Assemblies of God, Singapore).

³⁸ Personal correspondence from Dr. Matthew K. Thomas, Secretary to Dr. Mel Robeck (March 15, 2014), 2.

The Reformed–Pentecostal Dialogue: A Journey in Discipleship

Jean-Daniel Plüss

Abstract

The international dialogue between representatives of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and classical Pentecostals started officially in 1996. Since then, more than a quarter century passed and the history of this dialogue as well as the documents released lend themselves to reflect on the dialogue's developments, the issues raised, agreements found, and more generally the usefulness of such conversations between different church families. This paper will illustrate why ecumenical encounters between different Christian traditions are essential for the life of the churches and their witness in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: World Communion of Reformed Churches, ecumenical dialogue, Christian discipleship, Holy Spirit, Scripture, charismatic gifts, justice, mission.

The Prequel

As it has been previously illustrated by Dr. Cecil Mel Robeck,¹ dialogues are often long in the making. In the case of what would become the dialogue between members of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches² and some classical Pentecostals, one can trace its beginnings to the General Assembly of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) that took place in Seoul, Korea, in 1999. It was then suggested that explorations for the possibility of organizing an international

¹ Cecil M. Robeck, *Growing Opportunities for Pentecostal Ecumenical Engagement in Pentecostal Education* 7, no. 2 (2022).

² The dialogue began between Pentecostals and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). In 2010 the WARC changed its name to World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) after its merger with the Reformed Ecumenical Council.

dialogue with Pentecostal churches should be undertaken. The background to this motion was probably the fact that some Reformed churches in Korea were publicly debating issues about Pentecostal churches, notably the theology of Dr. Yonggi Cho, then pastor of the Yoido Full Gospel Church.³ In the following years conversations began between the WARC General Secretary, Milan Opočenský, and Mel Robeck who crossed paths during meetings of the general secretaries and representatives of different Christian world communions. It was finally decided to convene a preliminary meeting between WARC people and representatives of classical Pentecostals, which took place in 1995 adjacent to a conference held by the Society for Pentecostal Studies in cooperation with the European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association at the Assemblies of God Bible College in Mattersey, England.⁴

As a participant of that meeting, I can vividly remember the first impressions we got as the two parties met on the grounds of Mattersey. There were the proper introductions with a certain amount of British reservedness on the one side and probing hellos from the Pentecostals. Everything was possible at that moment. Would we find ways of fruitfully communicating with each other or was the distance between representatives of a mainline church and those of the relatively young Pentecostal movement too large? There was no hiding it for in some places around the world, Pentecostal and Reformed communities felt uncomfortable with and sometime even antagonistic toward one another. Examples in South Korea, Brazil and South Africa came to mind. The group agreed that some of these tensions were the result of ignorance or could be explained by the historical context of these churches.⁵ As the conversations continued there was the willingness to

³ Mel Robeck, *Growing Opportunities*, 2022.

⁴ *Word and Spirit, Church and World: Pentecostal Reformed Dialogue 1996-2000. Final Report of the International Pentecostal-Reformed Dialogue in Reformed World* 50.3 (September 2000): 128-156.

Present were Hugh Davidson (Church of Scotland), Margaret M McKay (United Reformed Church, UK), Salvador Ricciardi (Waldensian Church, Italy) and Henry Wilson (Church of South India) on the Reformed side; and Richard Israel, Frank Macchia (both Assemblies of God, USA), Jean-Daniel Plüss (Swiss Pentecostal Mission) and Cecil M. Robeck Jr. (Assemblies of God, USA) for the Pentecostals.

⁵ *Word and Spirit*, page 2 of the WARC online version, accessed March 22, 2022, https://ecumenism.net/archive/docu/2000_pent_war_c_word_spirit_church_world.pdf.

address doctrinal questions, but more importantly it was the practical issues between the two church traditions that generated momentum for further talks. So, it was decided that it would be useful to initiate an official dialogue. Only in that way could the groups gain a greater understanding of one another. Three goals were envisaged. First, mutual understanding and respect had to be increased. Second, areas of theological agreement, disagreement, and convergence needed to be identified. Third, various possibilities for common witness had to be explored. It was further “agreed that the members of the subsequent dialogue teams would engage in acts of common prayer and Bible study on a daily basis. And further, they would enter into the parish life of the local community of the team that acted as host. This tradition of common worship and witness has proven to be one of the most significant tools for helping both teams understand one another.”⁶

The Reformed communities subsequently reported back to the WARC office and took it from there. For the Pentecostals it meant that they would be willing to commit personally to such a dialogue as there was at that time basically no association or church that they could officially represent or receive funds from to cover the costs for the meetings. All the same, all left that meeting with a sense of anticipation and hope.

Word and Spirit, Church and World 1996 - 2000

The dialogue officially began on May 15, 1996, at the retreat center of the Waldensian Church in Torre Pellice, Italy. As it was the first time, the full teams met. The co-chairs had planned that each day a paper from each side would be presented covering the themes “Spirituality and interpretation of Scripture,” “Spirituality and justice,” and “Spirituality and Ecumenism.” It quickly became apparent that such a dense program was asking too much from all participants given the time they would have together. Furthermore, and more importantly, various members of the teams lacked adequate understanding of the other tradition. It was important that every member of the dialogue had a solid understanding of his or her own tradition, but it was also important to have a basic understanding of the theology, language, and practices of the other team.

During the second meeting in Chicago in 1997, the focus was on “the role and place of the Holy Spirit in the church.” The teams began to realize that they had much in common but that there were also some

⁶ *Word and Spirit*, page 3 of the WARC online version.

points of difference. In that context the dialogue began to take shape. The third meeting in Kappel am Albis in Switzerland in 1998 gained momentum and the practice was introduced to present only one paper from each side on a common topic. This time it was “the Holy Spirit and mission in eschatological perspective.” Another important realization was that continuity in attendance was greatly helpful to the dialogue. From now on sustained commitment to attendance was emphasized for both teams.

The fourth meeting took place in 1999 in Seoul, Korea, and focused on “the Holy Spirit, charisma, and the Kingdom of God.” Based on the previous regional tensions between Pentecostal and Reformed Christians, care was taken in facilitating exchange between the leaders of the two churches as part of the overall program. Common worship, visits to local churches, and the invitation for some guests to sit in during the discussions proved to be successful in building bridges. The press was also invited to report on the meetings. It was the first time this dialogue intentionally made room for local churches to meet with each other in an open and fruitful setting. Visiting and nurturing contacts between churches of both traditions was also practiced in 2000 when the dialogue took place in Sao Paulo, Brazil. There the teams worked on generating a common document. In the following paragraphs some points will be highlighted that describe the sentiment and fruits of this first round of conversations.

The report on the first round, which was also published by various Pentecostals outlets,⁷ addressed a number of topics that seemed pertinent to the participants. For instance, themes included the relationship between the work of Jesus Christ and the role of the Holy Spirit, the need to develop a deeper trinitarian understanding of the Godhead, the centrality of Scripture, the need for spiritual discernment, the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church, the intersection between the work of the Holy Spirit and culture, God’s mission and the church, the eschatological self-understanding of the church in the world. With regard to these themes initial ground was broken, and those topics would reappear in the discussions that followed during the next rounds

⁷ See the Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, *Pneuma* 23, no. 1 (2001): 9-43 and the website of the European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association, <http://www.epcra.ch/papers.html>, and the Cyber Journal for Pentecostal Charismatic Research <http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj8/WARC.html>, both accessed March 24, 2022.

of the dialogue. In that regard important foundations were laid, especially as points of doctrinal agreement were repeatedly noted in common affirmations.

However, one who reads *Word and Spirit* will notice that there was a strong emphasis on differences. Phrases like “some Pentecostals believe” or “Pentecostals generally advocate” are frequent and contrast with expressions like “Reformed Christians tend to” or “Reformed churches affirm.” The nature of a robust dialogue is of course to point to agreements and differences. The aims are to address issues that affirm a common faith and ask hard questions that need further clarification. But a careful reading of this document, some 20 years after its production, leaves one with an odd feeling that some of the differences mentioned were not really accurate.

To give an example, as the document reports in the section “The church is the community of the Holy Spirit’s leading,”⁸ it states, “The Pentecostal expectation is that the exercise of discernment is distributed throughout the entire congregation.” Certainly, this is a statement that the Reformed would wholeheartedly agree to as well. Or to give another example, “Reformed Christians must proclaim forcefully that it is God who gives the gifts, and not we ourselves.” So do Pentecostals! One could explain that these not-thought-through remarks are the result of a hurried editorial process, but they also reflect that the first report of the Reformed-Pentecostals dialogue reflected a lack of mutual appreciation and understanding. Or to put it positively, the document closed with the remark, “The dialogue had helped its participants realize the critical necessity for ongoing contact between these two vital Christian traditions.”⁹

Experience in Christian Faith and Life 2001 - 2011

The report on the second round of the Reformed - Pentecostal dialogue¹⁰ appeared in a different style than the first. The editorial process had been much more involved and satisfying. There were

⁸ *Word and Spirit*, page 11 and 12 of the WARC online version.

⁹ *Word and Spirit*, page 20 of the WARC online version.

¹⁰ The report is available on the Cyber Journal for Pentecostal Charismatic Research: http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj21/WARC_2011d.html, on the website of the European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association: <http://www.epcra.ch/papers.html>, and in Wolfgang Vondey, ed., *Pentecostalism and Christian Unity*, vol. 2 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 217–266.

thoughtful biblical/theological introductions to each section. The paragraphs were numbered and thus helpful for future reference. This report made a conscious effort to move beyond a comparative theological and ecclesiological method, no longer focusing on contrast and comparison. Whereas the first round of the dialogue “did much to dispel stereotypes and correct misunderstandings” (paragraph 1),¹¹ the second document “engaged in a common exploration of themes that concern both Reformed and Pentecostal churches” (2). The declared purpose of this document was to facilitate the reception of its findings in Pentecostal and Reformed churches (5).

The second round began with a planning meeting that took place in 2001 at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. The first dialogue session was held in Amsterdam in 2002 and focused on worship. The next session was held in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 2003 and looked at the theme of discipleship in Reformed and Pentecostal churches. In 2005 the dialogue met in Detmold, Germany, and explored the process of discernment. The next meeting took place in Louisville, Kentucky, in 2006 and had community as its focus. The least major session was held in Cape Town and Stellenbosch, South Africa, and provided in 2007 an opportunity to look at how the respective churches engage in matters of justice. The drafting of the final report began in 2008 in Scotland and lasted until 2011 due to unavoidable postponements. It is notable that these last two meetings were not only editorial exercises but themselves occasions for deep- and wide-ranging conversations (21).

Regarding the first session that focused on worship (22-43), the two teams came up with a number of common affirmations such as the centrality of the Word of God, the need to proclaim the gospel, the awareness of God’s living presence in worship, and the indispensable role of the Holy Spirit. They also stressed that both Reformed and Pentecostal communities wrestle with the challenge to distinguish between the experience of the triune God, ordinary human experiences, and the need for critical judgment with the aid of the Holy Spirit (34-35). Furthermore, some characteristics of worship that are dear to Pentecostals and the Reformed respectively were mentioned. This section ends with an honest and important declaration:

Clearly, our worship practice does not always match our developed liturgical theology. Our congregations are always in need of re-formation

¹¹ From now on the numbering refers to a specific paragraph in the respective report.

by the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. Participants here in this dialogue present the best we have to offer from our tradition. Fully aware of our own shortcomings, we are able to exercise a degree of charity towards the other. In this way, we call upon both Pentecostal and Reformed communities to renew and deepen their worship of God, for “the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:23a) (43).

Where the document reports on the topic of discipleship, it becomes evident how important the biblical/theological introductions to each section are because they not only lead the reader into the topic but also illustrate how much the two traditions have in common. Apparent differences have less to do with doctrine and more with style or cultural context. For instance, both traditions affirm the importance of leading a life of prayer, but they may differ in the form prayers take (53). The section on discipleship is full of “we” language, especially in paragraphs 55 to 60. This stands in contrast to the language of *Word and Spirit*, *Church and World* and testifies to the progress that this dialogue has made thus far. Regarding the exercise of charisms, there is the common affirmation:

“We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us” (Romans 12:6a). While the natural endowments that individuals bring to the community are greatly appreciated and gratefully put to use, the gifts or charisms of the Spirit are more than natural endowments. The Holy Spirit distributes gifts that build up the body of Christ, equip the community for its work of ministry, and bring us to the knowledge of God and “to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13b) (61).

Notwithstanding common affirmations, dialogue is not a dialogue unless hard questions can also be brought to the table. A call for mutual accountability was raised with regard to our respective practices of admonition and discernment. The document rightly states, “Differences are found not only between us, however, but also within our respective communities” (62).¹² It is noteworthy that the topic of “Mission and our

¹² An illustration of this reality is given just a few pages further on. Paragraph 100 mentions the problem of desacralization in secular societies and mentions Pentecostals as those who continue to embrace a cosmology that is portrayed in the Bible and thus act counter-culturally. It cannot be denied that some people in highly secularized societies have difficulties embracing the sacred, taking demonic activity seriously or believing in miracles. But the issues posed

Call to the World” was discussed in the context of discipleship (66-72). Here we have the beginnings that would eventually produce the theme for the third round of this dialogue.

The chapter on discernment (44 paragraphs) is the largest section in this document. After providing a biblical backdrop to discernment, the document continues with the subtitle, “Sources of Discomfort between Us,” that covers paragraphs 84-102. There was worry by the Reformed team that Pentecostals were too subjective in their use of the gift of discernment and prophecy, and that discernment does not take place on a communal level. As problems were discussed, a number of aspects were mentioned how discerning the voice and will of God functions in the church. “In the end, the debate allowed us to learn from one another and to appreciate the points that each team wanted to emphasize. It opened up new avenues of discussion and agreement” (84). Both traditions have been challenged. The Reformed churches tend to emphasize communal discernment, whereas Pentecostal communities allow more readily for prophetic words being spoken by an individual. “It is through understanding our differences that we might have something new to offer each other” (109). Indeed, this section provides useful impulses to the reader concerned about the need for discernment in the church.

The fourth meeting of the second round of dialogue focused on community. This section of the report begins with biblical and theological insights. The richness of the term *koinonia* is displayed by the variety of translations suggested by the different Bible texts. The experiences and practices of communal fellowship are based on the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 13:13). It is affirmed that “the ‘communion of the Holy Spirit’ in charismatic gifts and offices within the whole fellowship of the church corrects excessive individualism” (121). The section continues to focus on the worshipping community, the need for nurturing communion, and communion as a witness to the world.

The last section of the report is entitled “Experience in Christian Faith and Life: Justice” and reflects the conversations that took place in South Africa. The introduction mentions two often held allegations. One is directed at Pentecostals who are often perceived as spiritualizing the subject of justice. The other is directed at Reformed believers who

here, especially if considered in the light of the development of Christianity in the Global South, relate to all churches.

are tempted to eclipse the theological grounds for the Church's commitment by moralizing justice (144, 145). But when a concrete situation is considered with regard to the topic, much commonality was found. It was recalled that justice is first and foremost a gift of God's grace, and through this grace, God helps us establish justice. Being in South Africa, the participants were reminded that both church traditions were pivotal in promoting reconciliation over retribution in the wake of apartheid. "Reconciliation was a factor in overcoming enmity, fostering new relationships, engendering trust, cultivating friendships, facilitating healing, and securing justice" (165).

This very description is also applicable to the ecumenical vision that nourishes any dialogue between the churches. In that spirit of encounter the conclusion of the document states that

our meetings from 2001-2011 focused more on the "us," who we are together, rather than on those things that distinguish us from one another. Furthermore, we discussed differences in approach or understanding. The inevitable question that followed was, "What does this mean for us?" rather than, "What might this mean for them?" The group also made an effort to think globally, including points of view that hopefully represent our respective communities in other parts of the world. (173)

The second round of dialogue between classical Pentecostals and members of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches had clearly made progress by fostering relationships, engendering trust, cultivating friendships, and finding common ground in the experience of faith and life in their respective churches (174).

Called to God's Mission 2014 - 2020

The third report of the Reformed – Pentecostal dialogue¹³ begins by setting a new tone. "We live in exciting times!" Although past experiences are always a source of information, the emphasis is on the present and extends to the future. The first paragraph displays the

¹³ Called to God's Mission: Report of the Third Round of the International Dialogue Between Representatives of the World Communion of Reformed churches and Representatives of the Pentecostal World Fellowship 2014-2020, accessed March 28, 2022, <http://wcrch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CalledToGodsMission.pdf>. It is also available through *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 42, no. 2 (2020); <http://www.epcra.ch/papers.html>, and http://pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj27/WCRC-Pentecostal_2020.html.

intentionality of the whole text. The question – “How can we engage in God’s mission authentically?” – expresses the desire to be truthful and committed in the God-given task of the Christian’s calling in this world. Instead of a common affirmation, there is a common proclamation: “This document is a testimony to how Pentecostal and Reformed Christians respond together to God’s mission into which we have been called. We are exploring together what we think is important for the mission of the Church today.”

The third round of talks developed along the following premises: a) all theology, including a theology of missions, needs to be dialogical, and b) participants must try to engage each other’s theological language with great care and mutual respect (6). By “great care,” the questions are: what does the other hear when I say this? and, do the churches in my own constituency feel represented and understood in what I am saying? By “mutual respect,” the issues are: a) avoid stereotyping and be honest and transparent in communication; and b) have a willingness to learn from others. Of course, a church always perceives God’s call to mission in a particular context, a particular theological tradition, and within a particular ecclesiastical structure. That is one reason why practices of mission vary widely. But at the same time, it was clear to the participants that God’s mission is always one because God is one. So, while embracing a diversity of missiologies, participants tried to formulate a vision of the mission of God that Pentecostals and Reformed Christians could live out together (8).

A preparatory meeting took place in Berekfürdő, Hungary, in 2014 to plan the coming dialogue. It was agreed that “mission” would be the main theme and major topics would be broached from that subject. In 2015 the dialogue took place in Antalya, Turkey, and the theme was Mission and Salvation. The group next met in 2016 in San José, Costa Rica, to discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in Mission. In Parramatta, Australia, in 2017 the reflections focused on Mission and the Unity of the Church. The next year the dialogue took place in Legon, Ghana, where mission was studied under the notion of eschatology. Each time the encounters were placed under a central question. The questions listed below will guide us through the reflections on the third round.

How does our understanding of the nature and scope of salvation influence the way we think about and practice mission?

It seemed important to both groups that mission was primarily understood as the activity of God, and not merely a human response to God’s wonderful deeds. “By participating in God’s mission, we are

fulfilling our Lord's call on us to be the salt and the light to the world" (10). They again affirmed the contextual nature of mission, be it cultural, economic, political, religious, or social. Furthermore, mission impacts life as a whole, for example, it is often happening in a context of survival. With this in mind, some misunderstandings and stereotypes had to be addressed. For instance, Pentecostals understand mission only in terms of preaching the gospel. On the other hand, it was helpful to reflect on the Reformed understanding of mission in terms of justification and justice. God's justification is both a "declaring righteous" and a "setting right." Along these lines justification and sanctification belong together. The Pentecostals talked about holistic salvation. Although both groups used different vocabulary, much of their theological vision and practical ministry overlap. Hence the dialogue partners emphasized that differences in emphasis do not divide the two traditions. Since many Pentecostal and Reformed Christians may not be aware of this, such common affirmations need to be shared widely.

How do we view the issue of power and the role of the Holy Spirit when we speak about mission?

Central is the affirmation that "just as God has been self-giving in the incarnation of Christ, so also is God self-giving in the gift of the Holy Spirit in Pentecost. Just as Jesus Christ was given to the world (John 3:16-17), the Spirit of God is promised to be poured out upon all flesh (Acts 2:17)" (30). There are both individual and collective responses to the Holy Spirit's leading. Any individual response is embedded in the life of the whole church. So, any sending, gifting, and empowering of God has to be seen in the context of the whole body of Christ. In that light any abuse of power can be confronted whether its source is individual or collective. This is important because empowerment/power language has a mixed record in the history of the church. Another important aspect of the discussions in Costa Rica was that if "God has been self-emptying in the coming of Jesus Christ and the giving of the Holy Spirit, so also the church in mission is to be self-emptying" (38).

In what way does unity of the church impact the nature and effectiveness of mission?

At this point the report has a well-argued section on the nature of the church, and notes that church divisions follow worldly patterns. Many, especially Pentecostal Christians, have a tendency to understand talk on Christian unity in spiritual terms. But because believers are called to manifest their unity in Christ before the world (John 17:24), there is a

basis for common action. “This is why we work toward growing collaboration . . . engage in theological dialogue and cooperate on missional projects . . . to provide aid to the needy . . . support the care and nurture of children, work in peace-making endeavors . . . provide for the care for God’s creation, and many other things” (62). So, in answering the question, does the unity of the church affect the effectiveness of the nature of mission? The answer is, absolutely! “By bearing witness to our unity, we will make a difference in the world” (66).

How do our views of eschatology affect our understanding of mission?

The introduction to this question builds an arch from the expectations of Christ’s imminent return in the first Christian communities to the eschatologically colored upheavals during the Reformation to the vision of the renewal of the church in the last days when Pentecostalism was born. Both church families find their concepts of God’s time being challenged. On the one hand, Pentecostals have, in spite of their expectation of Christ’s soon return, engaged increasingly in holistic mission, investing in building schools, colleges, rescue shelters, and hospitals. They established ministries that serve and empower people on the margins of society. On the other hand, the Reformed have rediscovered the apocalyptic worldview of the New Testament. As an example, they refer in the Accra Confession to the scandalous world that denies God’s call to life for all.¹⁴ “Every move toward justice is an inbreaking of God’s life, a foretaste of God’s just Kingdom that will come into fullness when Christ returns” (77).

The last paragraph of the main body of the report rejoins the proclamation of the very first one that spoke of the exciting times we live in. “God is faithful! Christ is Coming! To live eschatologically is to celebrate God’s new creation of which we are part. . . . We invite others to place their trust in Jesus and to live their lives in service to God’s coming Kingdom to participate with us in fulfilling our call to the *missio Dei*” (79).

Where do we go from here?

The final paragraphs of *Called to God’s Mission* mention commitments on the way ahead and opportunities for further agreement. I would like to take these headlines as an occasion to reflect in my concluding remarks

¹⁴ The Accra Confession (Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth), <http://wrcr.ch/resources/justice>, accessed March 28, 2022,

of the past 25 years of ecumenical dialogue between Pentecostals and Reformed Christians.

There has been an important development in Reformed – Pentecostal relations in the period between the preparatory meeting in Mattersey in 1995 and the final editing of the third report in Hannover in 2020. It was a move from anecdotal information to substantial understanding, from distance to trust. The friendship that began during the first round of dialogue deepened. There was also a development from pursuing private agendas to common witness in word (worship, doctrine, and mission) and deed (from coordinated works of mercy to deepening a common prophetic voice). Furthermore, the dialogue began as one between an institution (WCRC) with some classical Pentecostals. It is to the credit of the Pentecostal World Fellowship that it set up a Christian Unity Commission in 2019. As a direct result the third report could be published as a dialogue with representatives of the Pentecostal World Fellowship, thus contributing much to clarify who was dialoguing with whom.

There is a commitment to promote dialogue among the churches and follow the Holy Spirit's leading in responding to the call of God's mission. That includes discerning the Holy Spirit's work together, building relationships, pursuing discipleship with integrity, and serving one another and others through God-given giftings.

The reader might rightly wonder if there has been some concrete fruit as a result of this and other dialogues. There are three positive developments that come to mind. First, the relationships between Reformed and Pentecostal churches in South Korea have improved. When there are tensions between churches, it takes willingness to meet one another on eye level. Progress may be slow, especially if there are differences not only towards others but within the respective church families themselves. The in-person meetings during the 1999 Reformed-Pentecostal Dialogue in Seoul were a fruitful beginning. At the 2013 WCC General Assembly in Busan, there was a clear demonstration of a good relationship and corporation between the two traditions. The host committee included representation from both sides.¹⁵ Second, the relations between the Dutch Reformed churches and Pentecostals in the Netherlands are another example of improved relationships. Not only

¹⁵ Dr. Samhwan Kim (Presbyterian) was the Chair of the Host Committee, which included Dr. Younghoon Lee of Yoido Church as a leader of the Committee. Private correspondence between the author and Dr. Wonsuk Ma, 27 May 2022.

has there been a wide variety of Pentecostal denominations, but also the Reformed had their share of different churches in Holland. Each group identified by means of being different from the others. Consequently, there was much hearsay and condescension with regard to “sectarian” Pentecostals or “liberal” Protestants. The charismatic renewal movement began to soften the lines of demarcation. In the 1990s a regional dialogue between Reformed and Pentecostal churches began. In 2007, during the centennial celebration of the Pentecostal movement in the Olympic Stadium near Amsterdam, the Secretary of the Protestant Churches in the Netherlands surprised everyone by asking for forgiveness from Pentecostals for the way the Reformed church had treated them. Two months later the head of the main Pentecostal denomination addressed the General Synod of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and on his turn asked forgiveness for the way Pentecostals spoke of Reformed Christians in the past.¹⁶ The relationships have positively developed since then as they took up common challenges; for instance, with regard to engaging migrant churches. The third example relates to Protestants whose faith is enriched by charismatic experience and convictions. Especially in the Global South, there are many pentecostalizing Protestants. The dialogue has helped the traditional Reformed Christians of the North to better appreciate many of their sisters and brothers in the South.

Finally, what should be kept in mind as we are looking toward the future? In my opinion, Pentecostals should intensify ecumenical relations. They are acquainted with the oral traditions in their own history as well as those of their churches of the Global South. They could play the function of translators between the analytical theology of the North and the narrative descriptions of faith common in the Majority World. Akin to this, it would be beneficial if they would share their experience of God’s presence thinking from the margins from which they mostly came rather than trying to accommodate to certain forms of fundamentalist hermeneutics, theology, and politics.¹⁷ The dialogue has witnessed to the value of this prophetic calling. Moreover, dialogues with other churches are beneficial because they push the

¹⁶ Cornelis van der Laan, *Pentecostalism in the Dutch Speaking Countries* in William K. Kay and Anne E. Dyer, eds., *European Pentecostalism* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 108-109.

¹⁷ Frank D. Macchia, *God’s Indwelling Spirit: Reflecting on the Theological Challenges of Pentecostalism in Global Renewal Christianity*, vol. 4 (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2017), 357.

boundaries further. They push Christians to remember their calling beyond their own confines and to engage with others in the global body of Christ to be faithful in God's calling in and to the world.

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The Gifts of Dialogue: A Reformed Response to Jean-Daniel Plüss

Karla Ann Koll

In December of 2015, the participants in the third round of the International Pentecostal-Reformed Dialogue attended an English-language worship service at St. Paul's Cultural Center in Antalya, Turkey, the space where we had been holding our meetings. The pastor introduced our group to the congregation. Afterwards, a woman approached us with a question: "What is this about teams? Are you here for some kind of competition?" We assured her that we had come together for the opposite of a competition; we were engaged in a dialogue to find points of agreement about God's mission. In Turkey, where Christians are a tiny minority of the population, perhaps it did not seem strange that Pentecostal and Reformed Christians gathered together.

Jean-Daniel Plüss has offered a very concise summary of the reports produced over the three rounds of the Pentecostal-Reformed Dialogue. Rather than offer a Reformed perspective on the contents of the reports, I would like to offer a few thoughts on the experience of the dialogue process itself as encouragement toward further engagement.

Undoubtedly, much had changed in the twenty years since the meeting in Mattersey, England, in 1995 that led to the first round of the dialogue. By the time I was invited to be part of the third round in 2014, Pentecostal churches had grown rapidly in many places around the world. As we came together from different contexts around the globe, it was obvious that relationships between Pentecostal and Reformed communities varied greatly from context to context. The boundaries between our respective traditions are much more porous than many leaders are willing to admit. While in Costa Rica, the dialogue met with a group of pastors from the Costa Rican Evangelical Presbyterian Church, a small denomination. Almost all of these pastors came from Pentecostal backgrounds. They had each moved to the Presbyterian Church to find a theology that supported their desire to respond to the needs of their communities. Each of the congregations these pastors led provided meals on a weekly or biweekly basis to children in need. The

testimony of these women and men was a good reminder to our dialogue process that God's mission comes before loyalty to particular theological and ecclesiological traditions.

On two different occasions, the meetings of the third round were hosted by Pentecostal seminaries: Alphacrucis College in Parramatta, Australia, in 2017 and Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio City, Philippines, in 2019. Ecumenical institutions in which member churches of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) are involved, the Latin American Biblical University in San Jose, Costa Rica, and Trinity Theological Seminary in Legon, Accra, Ghana, received the dialogue group in 2016 and 2018, respectively. Theological seminaries have been important to the dialogue process. The question then becomes how this dialogue and other dialogues between Christian traditions can play a part in seminary education. While at Alphacrucis College, professors from there videotaped an interview with Mel Robeck and myself about our dialogue to use in class. We hope and pray the report of our dialogue will find its way into seminary classrooms around the world. If Pentecostals and Reformed Christians are called together into God's mission, as our report affirms, then seminaries need to train future church leaders to respect other Christian traditions and engage in dialogue.

To engage in dialogue with people from other Christian experiences is to encounter one's own tradition in new ways. In our meeting in Australia where our Reformed team gathered to respond to the papers delivered from each tradition on the unity of the church in mission, we asked ourselves what for each of us was the defining feature of the Reformed understanding of the church. Perhaps to the surprise of our Pentecostal colleagues, no one in our group made reference to John Calvin's *Institute of the Christian Religion*. Instead, we talked about our experience of the way we make decisions in our communities, trusting that the Holy Spirit moves through the gathered body and the councils elected by the members. Throughout the third round, our dialogue partners encouraged us as Reformed folks to make more room in our theology and practice of mission for the Holy Spirit to move individuals.

There were many other moments during the dialogue that showed we, indeed, do come from different Christian experiences. When a Pentecostal theologian spoke of discerning God's will through feelings during a morning devotional, I realized again that I come from a tradition that is deeply suspicious of our ability as humans to discern God's actions through emotions. Some of these differences we were able to name and talk through to a common affirmation, such as the one

found in the section of our report on mission and eschatology. “We are called both to lead lives of personal holiness and to challenge both personal and corporate sin as we wait for a new heaven and a new earth (2 Peter 3:8-13).” Dialogue rests on the conviction that the particular emphases of each tradition are gifts that God has given not just to that particular family of churches, but gifts that God is giving through each tradition to the whole church of Jesus Christ. Dialogue allows us to identify and celebrate the gifts we are to each other within God’s redeeming purpose.

At its 26th General Council held in Leipzig, Germany, in 2017, the WCRC expressed appreciation of the many insights that have come out of our bilateral dialogues, including the dialogue with representatives of the classical Pentecostal churches. The WCRC also affirmed a commitment to ongoing dialogues. At the same time, the General Council insisted that “the following principles should guide the dialogues: relevance for the WCRC and its member churches; a global perspective rooted in contextual realities; and the application of methodologies and content of the dialogues in discussions within the communion.”¹ On one hand, the WCRC expressed the desire to make the outcomes of the international dialogues more accessible to the churches through the production of materials. On the other hand, questions emerged about how to encourage such dialogues on regional and local levels. It is indeed good news that the World Pentecostal Fellowship set up a Christian Unity Commission in 2019. I wonder if that body will have interest in and the ability to encourage dialogues at a regional level. In Latin America, the Alliance of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in Latin America (AIPRAL) has expressed interest in such a dialogue in the region, but no dialogue partner has been identified.

The end of the third round of the Pentecostal-Reformed Dialogue coincided with the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. It remains to be seen what will be the lasting impact of the pandemic on our ways of being church. One wonders what the implications might be for ongoing dialogue. Digital technologies make it so much easier for conversations to take place across and between geographical spaces. Yet we lose the experience of being in each other’s physical presence. So much of

¹ World Communion of Reformed Churches, *Living God: Renew and Transform Us*. Proceedings of the 26th General Council, Leipzig, Germany, 29 June to 7 July 2017. Hannover: WCRC, 2017, 244. <http://wcrch/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/GC2017-Minutes-EN.pdf>, accessed May 28, 2022.

Pentecostals Promoting Religious Liberty

Arto Hämäläinen

From the very beginning of the movement, Pentecostals have faced pressure and even persecution in many countries. This persecution often came from other churches in countries with a Christian tradition. On mission fields, it was perpetrated by other religions. There were no structures for defense in place. Church structures often were not very solid or well-developed.

Pentecostals faced opposition and hostility almost everywhere. C. W. Conn describes the reasons for it in this way: “The Pentecostal people were distinct from the world in several ways. They were gentle in nature, nonpolitical, plain of dress, and assertive in their faith.” The early years in America were particularly spiteful and virulent, and believers experienced even physical violence.”¹ Even martyrdom has not been unknown among Pentecostals. The Iranian Pentecostal leader, pastor Haik Hovsepian Mehr, was one of the victims. He was killed in 1994.² In recent times, violence has been experienced, for example, in West Africa. Pentecostal leaders have been imprisoned in Eritrea for over 17 years. Pentecostals still face discrimination, persecution, and even martyrdom in many places.

Gradually, Pentecostals have learned to use existing channels to make their situations of suffering known. They have been working through national, continental, and global organizations which defend religious rights, and are drawing the attention of political leaders and authorities concerning violations of freedom of religion and speech.

WAGF forms a Commission for Religious Rights

In 2002, the umbrella organization of the worldwide Assemblies of God churches, the World Assemblies of God Fellowship (WAGF) decided to

¹ Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas, eds., “Persecution,” *International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 984.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haik_Hovsepian_Mehr.

establish a commission to deal with matters of religious liberty. It was named the Commission on Religious Liberty (CRL). Don Corbin, the then regional director for Africa of the Assemblies of God World Missions, U.S.A., was elected to serve as chairman. The British AG representative, Paul C. Weaver, in the founding meeting, commented that the commission needed to be aware of other Pentecostal groups involved in this kind of work.³ In the 2003 meeting, the chairman suggested the goal of finding a chairman “from a country more neutral than the U.S.A.” Also, “The question of funding for this commission was raised, especially for a full-time officer.”⁴

The desire to find a chairman from a “neutral” country was fulfilled in 2009 when Pastor Max Schläpfer, the chairman of the Swiss Pentecostal Church (SPM), was elected to serve as chairman of the CRL. He continued serving in this role until 2019.

Max Schläpfer describes the need and role of CRL in this way: “The subject of the suffering church needs to be a constant focus. The mass media very seldom mentions it. However, international church organizations like the WAGF have the resources to regularly address the issue. To fight against becoming oblivious to ongoing persecution, this topic should also be constantly raised in the churches.”⁵

PWF Provides a Platform for Religious Liberty Matters

The Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) represents a wide range of Pentecostal churches which include a variety of congregational, presbyterian, and episcopal structures as well as mixtures of them. It was established in 1947.

The PWF has had in its constitution, a Commission for Religious Liberty. However, it has not established it independently. In 2012, in order to have a tool to handle religious liberty matters, the PWF asked the World Missions Commission to take care of such questions.⁶ Max Schläpfer, the chairman of the WAGF CRL, was invited to serve as an advisor in matters of religious liberty for the WMC/PWF.

³ Minutes of the WAGF Executive Committee meeting 2002. WAGF archive, Springfield, MO.

⁴ Minutes of the WAGF Executive Committee meeting 2003. WAGF archive, Springfield, MO.

⁵ Correspondence between Arto Hämäläinen and Max Schläpfer on 20 April 2022.

⁶ WMC/PWF meeting in Siem Reap, Cambodia, 21 May 2012.

A discussion about the possibilities of cooperation between the PWF and the WAGF in religious liberty matters started soon thereafter which then led to the formation of a joint commission in Miami in 2015. There was a common understanding between the WAGF and the PWF which undergirded this collaboration. Earlier in 2015, in Tel Aviv, Israel, the WMC/PWF gathered for its annual meeting. There they again discussed responsibilities concerning religious liberty matters. The PWF and WAGF recognized the need to motivate all the partnering churches for prayer and awareness of religious liberty matters.

The PWF Advisory Committee welcomed the WAGF/PWF collaboration at their meeting during the PWC at *São* Paulo, Brazil, in September 2016. At the same time, it asked the WMC/PWF to form a special task force for religious liberty matters inside the WMC. It was named the Religious Liberty Task Force (RLTF). This was implemented later in 2016.

In 2017 the discussion about the possibility of merging the CRL/WAGF and RLTF/PWF intensified. Both constituencies met in Helsinki, Finland, in November 2017, and formed a future strategy. The reasons for the merger were: 1) that both organizations have the same goals, and 2) merging means more synergy and ability to profit from each other's experiences and expertise. Both wanted to help persecuted Christians and the suffering church, to empower Pentecostal congregations (and ministries) to assist persecuted churches, to bring Pentecostals together globally in partnership with other evangelical initiatives for the suffering church, to maximize resources so as to facilitate awareness and advocacy of persecuted Christians, and to raise the profile of Christian persecution and the suffering church with their respective global bodies.

The joint meeting also made the decision to facilitate the joining of RLTF/PWF and CRL/WAGF and develop a governance model for it. A global office was felt to be an important need as well as creating a budget and funding base. Means of communication were also necessary assets as was a director for actions. Conducting of national conferences in different countries was felt important for creating awareness and actions on behalf of suffering people and churches. For all these things, a strategy was needed.⁷

The merging of the RLTF/PWF and the CRL/WAGF took place in 2019 by the WAGF/EC on 5 August 2019 and in the PWF Advisory

⁷ Minutes of the joint meeting of the Religious Liberty Task Force (RLTF) of PWF and CRL/WAGF in Helsinki 1 November 2017.

Committee on 30 August 2019 by the decision to accept the WMC/PWF report where this action was suggested. The name first used was the CRL (Commission on Religious Liberty), but it was later changed to the Pentecostal Commission on Religious Liberty (PCRL).

PCRL Creates a Strategy

The PCRL strategy document was approved by the advisory committee of the Pentecostal World Fellowship in Dubai on 14 October 2021. The Executive Council of the WAGF accepted it in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on 8 February 2022. The PCRL strategy is stated as follows:

Mission

Fostering and upholding the religious rights of all people while at the same time remembering that the most persecuted religion is Christianity.

Vision

For every Pentecostal church and believer to be inspired, resourced, and challenged to foster and uphold religious freedoms in cooperation with the whole body of Christ as defined by Article XVIII of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Main Activities

We will focus on inspiring and mobilizing the church to: 1) Pray, 2) Take cation, and 3) Advocate. This will require us to:

- 1) Gather and share credible information
- 2) Leverage our influence on behalf of the persecuted church
- 3) Identify opportunities to partner with existing ministries/networks
- 4) Streamline our operations

Commission

It is of paramount importance to establish a firm foundation and working group to launch this strategy effectively. There are to be a maximum of 15 members plus specialists and senior advisors in this group. Members are to represent different regions and genders. The membership composition is to reflect the umbrella organizations of the PWF and the WAGF in a balanced way.

Administration

Alternatives and opportunities are to:

- Establish an office in the Ukraine focusing on that region of the world

- Establish a presence in the PWF organization to serve as a nexus with the WMC and Development Network as well as managing communications and digital presence.

Implementing the Strategy

Concerning the three main activities of praying, taking action, and advocating, small practical steps have been taken. For instance, in 2021, PCRL sent material concerning the International Day for the Persecuted (IDOP) to the PWF and the WAGF denominational leaders inviting them to share the actual prayer goals among their churches. The special focus in 2021 was Eritrea where the Pentecostal leaders have been imprisoned for 17–18 years without any relevant court process.

In theory, PCRL has a constituent base of 100 million Pentecostals. It has been building contacts also with the WEA. The global ambassador of the WEA, Dr. Brian Stiller, is a member of PCRL. The chairman of the WEA, Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher, attended the PCRL meeting at Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany, in November 2021, contributing by giving a speech and in taking part in the discussions. PCRL has built a close connection also to the *Communio Messianica*, the coalition of Muslim background believers by providing presence in their last virtual and in-person gatherings. Three members of the PCRL, Max Barroso, Yuriy Kulakevich, and Brian Stiller participated in the Religious Freedom Summit in Washington D.C. in July 2021.

PCRL has closely followed the court case of the Finnish Parliament member, Mrs. Päivi Räsänen. She was prosecuted for quoting Bible verses in her writing and radio interview that criticize homosexual behavior. This brought great international attention to the case with strong support for Päivi Räsänen. In 2022, the court decided to release her from all accusations. During the process, the PCRL served as a link to some Pentecostal and Evangelical denominations, especially to Eastern European and Slavic churches which were desiring to express their support for Päivi Räsänen.

The PCRL follows religious liberty situations also through international channels and through its own contacts, especially with Pentecostal churches. Some violations and discrimination are taking place in remote areas which then do not reach the international news agencies and human rights organizations. Secular media is not always interested in focusing on news about suffering Christians.

Advocacy is needed to promote religious liberty in the Islamic context. In many countries, an individual cannot officially change their religion. A Muslim remains a Muslim although he has converted to

Christianity. The canonical territory thinking in some Orthodox dominant countries is even causing court cases in Europe in spite of the fact that the EU constitution guarantees full religious freedom with the right to change religion. Militant atheism and secularism are also a threat to religious freedom.

The PCRL is concerned about the increasing manifestations of antisemitism. The sponsoring organizations of the PCRL made the decision to adopt the IHRA's (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) definition of antisemitism. The Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) confirmed this definition in its Advisory Committee meeting in Dubai, 14 October 2021, and the World Assemblies of God Fellowship (WAGF) did the same in its Executive Council meeting in Fort Lauderdale on 8 February 2022.

Strategy and Three-Year Plan⁸

During the last several years, the situation in the world has become worse for Christians and especially for Protestant and Pentecostal believers. Reports have been published by the International Society for Human Rights that 80 percent of those persecuted for their faith are Christians. Open Doors has published information that 139 countries do not adhere to the conditions for human rights stated in the declaration of the United Nations even though they have signed it.

The Pentecostal Commission on Religious Liberty recognizes that the situation continues to worsen for Pentecostal churches and believers. For this significant reason, we find it extremely important to reinforce the structure of the World Assemblies of God and the Pentecostal World Fellowship in support of suffering believers all over the world (*see points A and B in the plan below*). The first step was accomplished during 2018-2021 by uniting the task forces on religious liberty of the WAGF and the PWF at the founding of the PCRL. Now the second step needs to be taken.

We are living in a period when the world is changing faster than ever before. This emphasizes the necessity of being flexible and ready to respond to new challenges as soon as possible. It must be done on the local level where the problems are occurring. These fast changes are influencing the conditions of religious freedom and human rights. To minimize mistakes and avoid tactical failures, we need to decentralize the work to the local level (*see point A*). This is very important during this era

⁸ Accepted in the PCRL Lead Team meeting on 28 January 2022.

when borders are again being built between nations and protectionism is escalating in the world.

Big Red Rooster⁹ has analyzed societies and markets and come to the conclusion that the attention on buying domestic products and services will increase in the future. It will change the focus to local and national goods while at the same time it will have growing reservations regarding globalization and international organizations. This development challenges the PCRL to form units within the regions and to work more on a national level. At the same time, the PCRL needs to use the benefits of cooperation and unity between Pentecostal churches and brotherhoods around the world. It can be beneficial to adapt both the advantages from the national point of view and integrate it to the resources of the WAGF and the PWF which can bring unified support and encouragement for discriminated and persecuted believers (*see A, B, C*).

Limitations on religious liberty are reaching new regions and states. Even in countries with a long tradition of democracy, we can see clear signs of discrimination and persecution among people groups, especially if they belong to an ethnic or religious minority. This emphasizes the need of education regarding international conventions, local religious laws and regulations, especially in countries where the laws are not known by spiritual leaders or where members of churches have more recently experienced discrimination. It is important to provide such necessary training for missionaries who are moving to regions where they are involved in church planting among unreached people groups (*see below*).

Church members and even leaders are not always aware of the increasing threat in the world against religious minorities. This needs to be changed by giving more attention to focusing on informing the public by using articles, blogs, conferences, personal relations, etc. (*see E*).

⁹ Big Red Rooster is a global research, innovation, and development firm working with businesses around the world. Its main offices are located in the United States. See <https://bigredrooster.com/about-us/>.

Important Steps and Plans for PCRL during 2022-2024:

Establish regional offices

for PCRL in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, North and South America. Regional directors from every continent will be members in the Commission of PCRL.

Every regional office will consist of a team, or at least an employed officer coordinating help and support from volunteers,

- 1) who will collect information about cases of discrimination, persecution, or martyrdom and share this information with other regional offices;
- 2) who will coordinate prayer days and campaigns for the suffering churches and believers; and
- 3) who will coordinate advocacy work with appeals, letters, and protests to embassies and politicians, etc.

Establish an Office of Coordination

which will have a serving and supporting role for the offices and people in the regions. It would take the initiative to organize united campaigns and have the responsibility of a website, which would be updated regularly with information from the regional offices.

Start a Sister Country Program.

This program will take on the challenge of finding supporting countries (churches) for each one of the 139 countries where religious and human rights are not observed. The Pentecostal movement/churches could adopt a country with the goal of making contacts, intercession, showing love, sister church relations, projects, visits, etc.

Prepare a Program, or Activities to Inspire Colleges, High Schools, and Christian Universities to Integrate Courses on Religious Liberty

into their educational programs on missions, and to give every missionary some basic knowledge regarding human rights and religious liberty. (Unreached people groups are living in these regions where discrimination and persecution of Christians are at its worst. This increases the need of competence and knowledge about religious liberty.)

Organize Regional Conferences about Religious Liberty

As a support for the suffering church in Africa, America (North and South), Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. This long-term strategy is now in the planning process. It is not yet fully confirmed in every detail,

but the main ideas are grounded on the basic strategy and discussions of the PCRL.

Conclusion

Pentecostals have been, and still are, victims of discrimination and persecution in various places. Even in recent times, martyrdoms have occurred. However, the awareness of a legal covering in the legislation of countries has increased, and thus in recent times, more advocacy is taking place. The voice of Pentecostals is increasingly being heard through national and international religious and human rights organizations. Pentecostals themselves have developed structures in their global organizations including the PWF and WAGF. Since 2019, these organizations have had a common voice, the Pentecostal Commission on Religious Liberty (PCRL) which represents about 100 million Pentecostals. PCRL does not want to limit its influence only for the sake of Pentecostals. All Christians are their concern, as well as those of other religions, any persons whose rights are violated. In this same vein, the PCRL is concerned about the violation of human rights taking place in the form of increasing antisemitism. Besides advocacy, Pentecostals want to emphasize the power of prayer. Prayer has changed difficult circumstances many times throughout history.

Appendix: PCRL Members

Lead Team:

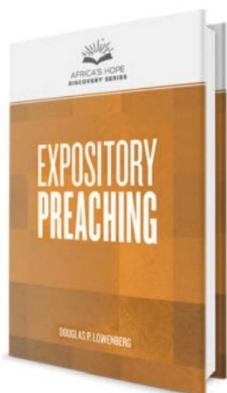
Arto Hämäläinen, Finland, chairman
Rauli Lehtonen, Sweden, secretary
Max Barroso, USA, WMC/PWF
Yuriy Kulakevich, Ukraine
Mervyn Thomas, UK

Other members:

Cesar Casillas, Mexico
Randy Hurst, USA
Harun Ibrahim, Finland, Middle East (Communio Messianica)
Susanna Kokkonen, Finland (Jews)
Peter Kuzmic, Croatia
David Lopez, Colombia
Opoku Onyinah, Ghana
Dikran Salbashian, Jordan
Brian Stiller, Canada

John Vincely, India
Tissa Weerasingha, Sri Lanka
Ihsan Özbek, Turkey

Arto Hämläinen (a.s.hamalainen@outlook.com) serves as Chairman of the World Missions and Pentecostal Commission on the Religious Liberty of the Pentecostal World Fellowship, Adjunct Faculty of Global University (Springfield, MO, USA), Chair of Mission Studies at Continental Theological Seminary (Brussels, Belgium), and Mission Associate of the World Missions Commission of World Evangelical Alliance.



Africa Theological Training Services

Email: info@africaatts.org

We are excited to announce the completion of a new book in our Africa's Hope Discovery Series curriculum! *Expository Preaching*, by Douglas P. Lowenberg, explores the essential aspects of how to become an effective Pentecostal preacher. The course examines the personal character of the preacher and builds the skills required to write an expository sermon. The author provides detailed analysis and examples of how to approach a biblical text exegetically and present the truths learned as an expository sermon. Additional topics such as sermon delivery, evaluation methods, preaching a series, and developing a long-range sermon calendar round out the benefits of this text for those seeking to develop or improve their preaching technique.

Persecution: A Hindrance or Help for the Advance of the Gospel? A Pentecostal-Charismatic View

Arto Hämäläinen and Rauli Lehtonen

Abstract

Christianity has faced persecution from its very beginning. Although persecution has not hindered its growth and expansion, is it really needed for progress to be realized? Are there any theological arguments indicating the necessity of persecution in order to experience growth? On the other hand, we are encouraged to pray for peaceful circumstances. This study reflects on different theological aspects regarding discrimination, persecution, and martyrdom, while at the same time focusing on practical examples which help us learn how to face these difficult circumstances.

Keywords: discrimination, persecution, martyrdom, religious liberty, human rights, suffering, theodicy

Christianity is the most persecuted religion today. Churches need to be prepared for increasing attacks against them. This means more attention to prayer, advocacy, and training of believers and churches for circumstances in which they are or will face suffering. This is a challenge for Pentecostal/Charismatics as well as for all Christian denominations. This study seeks tools for addressing this challenge through theological reflection and learning from the practical experiences of the past. Both qualitative and quantitative aspects are offered

Introduction

Pentecostal-Charismatic churches are the fastest growing segment of Christianity. In this article we will study the role that pressure against these churches has played regarding their growth. Has persecution promoted or hindered their development? We will also study the theological foundations related to this topic. What arguments are connected to this theme? Is persecution a necessity in aiming for

growth? Or does it actually hinder and slow the multiplication of believers?

We will look at these questions through historical and contemporary examples. We aim also to find theological principles related to the suffering church and believers. What kinds of values and policies are directing, or should be directing, the activities of the church in the context of discrimination and even violence?

Classical Pentecostals have two umbrella organizations: the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) and the World Assemblies of God Fellowship (WAGF). Together they represent about 100 million classical Pentecostals. According to Todd M. Johnson, there are 123,668,000 classical Pentecostals and 644,260,000 Pentecostal/Charismatics globally.¹ Since 2019, the PWF and WAGF have formed a joint organization for religious liberty: the Pentecostal Commission on Religious Liberty (PCRL). Earlier, each had their own organization for this purpose. The Empowered21 (E21) organization also connects Pentecostal/Charismatic churches and believers in a loose way emphasizing the vision to reach all people on earth by 2033.

Persecution has taken place throughout the history of the church with an ebb and flow of increase and decrease. According to Johnson, the top five martyrdom situations have been:

- 1) 1921-1950, 15 million Christians died in Soviet prison camps
- 2) 1950-1980, 5 million Christians died in Soviet prison camps
- 3) 1214, Genghis Khan massacred 4 million Christians
- 4) 1358, Tamerlane destroyed 4 million Christians of the Nestorian church
- 5) 1929-37, 2.7 million Orthodox Christians were killed by Stalin.²

Development in recent times indicates that Christians are the most persecuted peoples of any religion. According to *Open Doors*, 360 million Christians live in an area where they experience a high level of persecution; one out of 7 believers face persecution.³ The pressure on Christians can be classified by various levels from discrimination to persecution to martyrdom.

¹ Todd M. Johnson, "Counting Pentecostals Worldwide," *Brill's Encyclopedia of Global Pentecostalism*, ed. Michael Wilkinson (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2021), xxiii.

² Todd M. Johnson, "The Demographics of Martyrdom," in *Sorrow and Blood: Persecution, and Martyrdom*, eds. William D. Taylor, Antonia van der Meer, and Reg Reimer (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2012), 34.

³ Open Doors, "World Watch List Report 2022," accessed on April 20, 2022, <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/2022-world-watch-list-report/>.

Discrimination against Believers

Discrimination against religious minorities is high on the political agenda in many different countries today. Many Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and Buddhists experience difficulties in expressing their faith and religion in many societies where they are located. Investigations show, however, that 80 percent of all people who are persecuted because of their faith are Christians. More and more Christians feel discriminated against, even in Western and democratic societies due to their religious convictions.

North Korea, China and Cuba are examples of communistic countries where atheism formed the foundation of building the community. In 1929, the Soviet Union founded a religious law which gave the right to confess one's belief, but the right to influence others for a change of religion (proselytism) was forbidden as well as mission efforts and evangelism (religious propaganda). This law became a norm for most atheistic countries and limited the practice of Christian faith.

Evangelization outside the registered places for exercising the cult (churches, synagogues, mosques) was forbidden. It was forbidden to organize any special meetings for children, youth, or women; no mission work. Printing of Bibles, Korans, or Christian literature would lead to long imprisonments. After the change of religious laws in many of the old Soviet Republics and in China, it was easy to forget that there still were believers who were persecuted in these countries because of their religious belief.

Since 1989, most discrimination and martyrdoms have shifted to countries with an Islamic context. The contradictions between the West and the Islamic world have intensified after the September 11, 2001 attacks and contributed to significantly more violence against church buildings and congregations. Persecution can even occur in Hindu, communistic, and post-communistic environments, but even in countries with a Christian majority, religious minorities have experienced discrimination.

Persecution of Christians

According to research published by the International Society for Human Rights, 80 percent of those affected by religious persecution are Christians! Gloomy reports testify to the fact that the bloody destruction of Christians and churches by Jihadists happens more and more frequently. A huge portion of all refugees in the world today are leaving their homelands because of the simple fact that they are being persecuted for their Christian faith. Statistics from the International

Society for Human Rights confirm that over 100 Christians are killed because of their faith, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.⁴

Even in Western European countries, the pressure against Christians is increasing. Midwives are losing their jobs if they refuse to perform abortions. Christian organizations are questioned if they talk about the centrality of family values. Priests and churches who deny gender neutral marriages are discriminated against.

Poor Implementation of Religious Freedom

The freedom to practice one's religion is falling short in several countries although it is mandated in their constitutions. Greece still retains its old law against proselytizing which limits the rights of Evangelical Churches. This has caused problems and even court cases, e.g., Pentecostals who have been publicly evangelizing. However, the EU declares clearly in Article 10 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right includes freedom to change religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, and observance.⁵

Limits on these freedoms have been occurring in the Greek Orthodox context because of the principle of canonical territory. Greek Orthodox theologian Petros Vassiliadis states that some Orthodox “take as a legitimate (and ethical?) view to have Proselytism criminalized by law . . . and their majority (Orthodox) Churches consider their jurisdiction as a closed canonical territory.”⁶

Proselytism has been widely understood in the Christian context to mean unethical ways of evangelizing and doing mission work. For many Orthodox Churches, the interpretation is very strict. In practice, it means that they do not welcome other Christians (especially Western evangelicals) into their territories.

⁴ Lars Adaktusson and Hemmets Vän, 18.06.2015, <https://www.hemmetsvan.se/nyhetstexter.jsp?oid=6287&coid=4>.

⁵ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2012/C 326/02, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>.

⁶ Petros Vassiliadis, *ANTILIQPON of Honour and Memory* (Thessaloniki: CEMES Publication, 2018), 126-127.

While we exclude unethical ways and means in doing mission work, we cannot give up religious rights as clearly defined, e.g., in the UN and EU statements. For instance, in our evangelistic activities, we cannot exclude members of another Christian church, deny them access, or direct them to close their ears when we are preaching in an open rally or through mass media. Should not religious freedom be honored by allowing all interested people the possibility to participate and listen? Accusations about “sheep stealing” sound irrelevant. If someone voluntarily wants to change their membership to another denomination, is that not their religious right?

Theological Reflections on Persecution, Discrimination and Martyrdom

Why are Christians hated? What is the right attitude toward those who are persecuting and causing harm to Christians and churches? Should Christians oppose or submit to the violations? or perhaps even desire persecution? or flee and avoid such, if possible? Is persecution the key to spiritual success like the growth of the church or breakthroughs in world missions? What can we learn from the Bible about these things?

Christians Are Hated because of Jesus.

When Jesus met Saul on the road to Damascus, he said to him: “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:5). Saul’s goal was to harm the followers of Jesus, but Jesus revealed to him that his followers were not the real focus; actually, Saul was persecuting Jesus. It was not a matter of a new doctrine, religious system or, like the Jews thought, rejection of their traditions. The nucleus of the matter was the person, Jesus Christ.

Persecution Is a Logical Consequence for the Followers of Jesus.

“If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also” (John 15:20). Paul states the same: “In fact everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3:12). So, it is not something abnormal.

Fleeing Is not Wrong.

“When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another” (Matt. 10:23). The Chinese underground church has trained their missionaries to run and escape if the Lord so leads. They teach their missionaries special skills such as how to free themselves from handcuffs in 30 seconds or how to jump from a second-story window without injuring themselves.

It is felt to be necessary training, especially for missionaries serving in persecution-prone countries.⁷

Advocacy Is the Duty of the Church.

Religious freedom is strongly defined in by the UN, European Union, and in the legislation of many countries. The Apostle Paul was not ashamed to appeal to his rights as a Roman citizen when he was mistreated (Acts 22:22-29). Advocacy should be part of the toolkit of the church.

A church building was burned by vandals in one of the Eastern European countries several years ago. Because of the corruption and weak judicial system in the country, the church was not able to bring the people involved in this vandalism to the court. The church turned to the office of the Pentecostal European Fellowship (PEF). PEF reacted quickly by contacting the government requesting it to honor the religious rights of the church. This contact caused a rapid change in the matter. The criminals were condemned, and the church was given the needed compensation. Christians should not keep silent. Pentecostals/Charismatics need to create sufficient structures in order to raise their voice in addressing discrimination or persecution.

Prayer Is the Key to Intervention for the Suffering Church.

The early church understood the power of prayer. When Christians were persecuted, prayer was their weapon. Prayer opened the prison doors for Peter (Acts 12:6-10); Paul trusted the power of prayer in Corinth (2 Cor. 1:10-11). John describes in Revelation 8:3 how God values prayer. Much incense was added to the prayers of the saints when they came before God. They became the divine nuclear power causing earthquakes, flashes of lightning, and peals of thunder and rumblings (Rev. 8:3-5). Surely, John was encouraged in his state of isolation when he understood that he was surrounded by the power of prayer. Jesus promised that right words will be given in the moment when believers stand accused before rulers and authorities (Luke 12:11).

Persecution Can Serve as a Catalyst for Spiritual Victories.

In its first few years, the early church in Jerusalem grew in an exponential manner. However, it neglected the teaching of Jesus about going to all the world. The believers largely remained only in Jerusalem

⁷ Stephen Panya Baba, "Preparing Church and Mission Agencies for Suffering, Persecution, and Martyrdom," in *Sorrow and Blood*, 347.

and the regions around it. Then persecution expanded their horizon as far as Antioch and beyond where they reached Gentiles, not only Jews (Acts 11:19-21). Someone has said: “Christ’s suffering is for our propitiation; our suffering is for propagation.”⁸

A Balanced Perspective between Immanent and Transcendent

The gravity of believers in times of difficulty turns easily to transcendent matters. It is comforting to think about eternal life which will be without tears from various earthly pains. It is a promise for believers. At the same time, the Bible offers a balanced view of life on earth. Believers are not disconnected. They are blessed by brothers, sisters, mothers, children and owning fields (Mark 10:29-30).

Our Explanations about Suffering Fall Short

The forms and realities which persecution includes lead us to the problem of theodicy. How can a righteous God allow horrible things to take place? How can our Pentecostal brothers and the leaders of the church in Eritrea be imprisoned for 18 years? What a long time to be isolated from their families, churches, and international contacts. The German theologian, Jürgen Moltmann, reflects on the horrors of Auschwitz and Hiroshima. He comes to the conclusion that the question of the justice of God cannot be satisfactorily answered, but it can never be abandoned, and the question of theodicy will remain open until the time of the new creation.⁹ The writer of Hebrews gives helpful perspectives on the lives of the saints. We find models for perseverance. We learn that sometimes hardships promote our growth in faith and ministry (Hebrews 11-12). There still will remain unanswered questions related to suffering. The friends of Job tried to find those answers but failed. Finally, the Creator God silenced them and brought Job to the adoration of His greatness and sovereignty.

We Should not Seek for Persecution and Suffering.

The early church was concerned for those who sought after that kind of experience. They learned that those who had that attitude were usually the ones unable to stand firm through maltreatment (Baba, 344). On the other hand, Peter reminds the believers that they should not be

⁸ Baba, “Preparing Church and Mission Agencies for Suffering,” 344.

⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, “Theodicy,” in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*, eds. Alan Richardson and John Bowden (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 564-565.

surprised if they suffer persecution. It is not something strange that is happening to them (1 Peter 4:12).

God's Desire Is for Peace.

We are encouraged to pray for the leaders of our societies so that we would be able to live peaceful and quiet lives (1 Tim. 2:1-4). The reason for this prayer is that God desires to see all people saved (v. 4). Peaceful circumstances are favorable for the spreading of the gospel although we know that God is not limited even in times of persecution. However, along with persecution, many things become more difficult and even impossible. Remarkable growth has taken place in times of persecution in countries like the former Soviet Union, Romania, China, and Iran. At the same time, the church was not able to grow much in countries like Albania, which was officially declared an atheistic nation, nor in many communist-ruled countries. In many Muslim-dominated countries, restrictive laws have caused major challenges, but in recent times, the peace initiatives in the Middle East have opened surprising new avenues.

Persecution and Revival Take Place in Parallel.

It is interesting to notice how Jesus connects the successful propagation of the gospel with persecution when he spoke concerning the end times. In Matthew 24:9, he prophesies how believers will be handed over to be persecuted, put to death, and will be hated by all nations. In verse 14, he gives a promise that the gospel will be preached to all nations (“ethnic groups” according to the Greek). There are 17,413 people groups according to Joshua Project of which 7,387 are unreached.¹⁰ With about 7,000 languages in the world, ninety percent of people worldwide have at least a portion of Scripture available in their mother tongue.¹¹

Missionaries and Christians in General Need to Be Trained to Face Persecution.

As we have seen, Jesus trained his disciples for times of persecution. He told them about the hardships that might wait for them. This could include even their loss of life. The training included not only fearful scenarios, but also encouraged them to face those times with the right attitude: “When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:31).

¹⁰ “All people groups/Joshua project statistics,” accessed on April 22, 2022, <https://www.joshuaproject.net>.

¹¹ Lausanne Movement, “Progress in Bible translation,” accessed on April 22, 2022, <https://lausanne.org/lgc-transfer/progress-in-bible-translation>.

Persecution Requires Solidarity from the Whole Church.

The essence of the church as a community of believers is unity and the sharing of victories and hardships. This is very clear in the writings of the NT. Paul builds a line from the God of comfort to the believers, who in receiving his comfort can provide comfort to the co-sufferer. Paul talks about overflowing (*perissos* in Greek) comfort (2 Cor. 1:3-6). Although God can give his comfort through the presence of the Holy Spirit in the isolation of a prison or in the absence of friends, we can see a special strength in the unity (*koinonia*) of believers which is created by the triune God and practiced in the congregation, both locally and globally. Therefore, every church should create a structure or channel for collaboration concerning suffering brothers and sisters. Not only should missionaries be trained for Christian solidarity, every believer needs training to work as a comforter of the persecuted in various ways.

A Healthy Balance between Poverty, Prosperity, and Persecution.

Poor people and churches facing poverty are tempted to focus their attention on enhancing their level of affluence. The model of Jesus was the opposite. “Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9). This richness cannot be limited to only material things. It includes the needs of the whole person: spirit, soul, and body. It is a restoration of the paradise *shalom* condition. However, the starting point for that path is to become poor according to the model of Jesus, not to amass wealth and goods but to give. Interestingly, even in times of persecution, God can give material blessings like homes and fields (Mark 10:29-30). However, this is not the main focus in this context. The core value is to be ready to give because of the Lord. Even when God blesses someone with riches, it has a divine purpose: “You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God” (2 Cor. 9:11).

Unfortunately, some pastors in some countries are preaching an “amassing” theology instead of a “giving away” theology. In the “giving away” theology, one is prepared to give his life because of Jesus. That brings hope to the world. It presents the ultimate incarnation theology which is displayed by millions of martyrs in the history of the church. Chinese churches, with their “Back to Jerusalem” vision, offer a touching example. The majority of their first 36 missionaries were imprisoned, although not killed.¹²

¹² Baba, “Preparing Church and Mission Agencies,” 343.

Missions organizations need well-functioning member care.

Zeal and strong vision are not enough for a sustainable missionary-sending structure. We see that member care already existed in the early church. Paul and his co-workers were earnestly concerned about the well-being of their co-workers. The difficulties of their partners were reported by them in their requests for prayer. Material needs were not neglected. Besides the parchments, a cloak was important for Paul who was in a cold prison (2 Tim. 4:13). Meeting Titus, a close fellow-worker, encouraged and created joy for Paul (2 Cor. 7:6). Part of member care is the support of those who are in prison. Absence of that kind of support was surely a disappointment for Paul in some situations. “At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me” (2 Tim. 4:16). The practice of systematic advocacy requires well-planned and well-functioning structures in Pentecostal-Charismatic churches and missions. For the past few years, the Pentecostal Commission on Religious Liberty (PCRL) has been serving both the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) and the World Assemblies of God Fellowship (WAGF) in matters of religious liberty. It has developed its structure and strategy with goals to better serve the Pentecostal family.¹³ Actually, every mission department and mission organization should create a well-functioning member care system in which preparedness for discrimination and persecution is included.

Churches, denominations, and missions need training to better face the challenges of discrimination, persecution, and martyrdom.

In the first centuries of the church, such difficulties were experienced in some form or other. After Christianity gained the status of a state religion, the situation was different. Freedom of religion was not always fully practiced, especially towards revival movements like Valdensians, Huguenots, Anabaptists, etc. Recent times have offered better circumstances in many ways with the UN, EU, and other bodies making declarations which emphasize religious freedom. Even countries with non-Christian traditions have accepted these international declarations, and the freedom of religion is included in their constitutions.

Unfortunately, it is not always practiced, although it exists on paper.

At the same time, Christians are the most persecuted of any religion. Other religions also, especially in the minority, are suffering. New challenges have come from the side of militant atheism and secularism.

¹³ Pentecostal Commission on Religious Liberty, “A Welcome Word,” accessed on April 22, 2022, www.pwfmissions.net/PCRL.

Advocacy is needed in different forms. Every Christian can influence the situation by prayer but also by directing appeals to key leaders and expressing their concern for their suffering brothers and sisters in prison. Even simple postcards and letters to the imprisoned persons mean much.

One special group which perhaps receives too little attention are the children and families of the imprisoned persons. Sometimes, the families have not seen the fathers for many years, nor the fathers their children.

The believers, the churches, and denominations need to provide courses that include:

- the global situation concerning discrimination, persecution, and martyrdom (DPM)
- the theological basis for understanding aspects of DPM
- updated prayer items concerning DPM
- practical tips for helping the suffering Christians and churches.

The theological basis for these kinds of activities is clearly expressed in the Bible: “Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering” (Heb. 13:3).

Discernment of different levels of mistreatment is important.

It is good to learn the spectrum of opposition and violence concerning religious freedom. Taylor, van der Meer, and Reimer identify seven different levels of opposition:¹⁴ i) Total freedom, ii) Tolerance, iii) Discrimination, iv) Harassment, v) Persecution, vi) Violent persecution, and lastly vii) Martyrdom. Why are these seven steps important to know and observe? Because they indicate the level on which the violations take place. The development tends to go from bad to worse. If some lesser signs are ignored, the situation easily worsens, and the stopping of this negative development will require much more effort. If the first signs are disregarded, the danger of escalation grows.

Religious freedom should be a privilege for all religions not only for Christians.

We see in the OT how God is concerned not only for his own people, the Jews and Israel, but for all. Equal rights should prevail among the Jews and the alien people living among them. “The community is to have the same rules for you and for the alien living among you” (Num. 15:15). What if those people do not confess the same religion? Why

¹⁴ William D. Taylor, Antonia van der Meer, Reg Reimer, “Approaching the Final Door of Our Journey,” in *Sorrow and Blood*, 494.

should we as Christians be concerned about the practice of their religion? The reason is not that we would agree with their religious perceptions for nowhere in the OT does God give that kind of model. God does not accept any syncretism. He is not accepting of any other god. The right starting point is that we all are created by God. We have the same origin. We must honor each other as a creation of God although our opinions, religious understandings, values, and principles differ. Because of our identical origin as creations of God, we are equal and because of that we honor each other. As believers we also have another basis. We all are redeemed in the same way. We all are sinners, but Jesus came to save us. We all have redemption in the atonement Jesus provided on the cross. Because of these two fundamental things, we can view every person on the same level without any superiority or inferiority. That is the basis for promoting religious liberty and equality of all human beings. That brings us to love the other – the alien (Deut. 10:9).

We need to accept the status of Jews as elected people of God and fight against antisemitism.

Pentecostals/Charismatics widely love Jews and Israel. They generally do not accept replacement theology but emphasize the promises God gave to the Jews to be a blessing for all nations, and Israel to be the country through which he would fulfill his eternal plans. The Pentecostal Commission on Religious Liberty (PCRL) has adopted the international definition for antisemitism given by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). The IHRA definition of antisemitism is the following: “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”¹⁵ IHRA also recognizes other victims of the Holocaust like the many Roma people who were murdered by the Nazis.

Christians have also perpetrated mutual persecution.

Unfortunately, persecution and discrimination have not always come from other religions or from atheists. Christians have violated the rights of other Christians. This was discussed in the global consultation

¹⁵ International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, “Working Definition of Antisemitism,” accessed on April 22, 2022, <https://ihra2020.diplo.de/ihra-en/-/2310374>.

organized by the Global Christian Forum (GCF) in Tirana, Albania, 2-4 November 2015. GCF is comprised of the Catholic Church, the Pentecostal World Fellowship, the World Council of Churches, and the World Evangelical Alliance. The consultation's message includes a historical repentance statement concerning persecution between the Christian churches. "We repent of having at times persecuted each other and other religious communities in history and ask forgiveness from each other and pray for new ways of following Christ together."¹⁶

Case study: Development in Eurasia

When the Russian Tsar Alexander I issued his religious decree in 1805, his country became open to Evangelical missions and Christian workers from abroad. The first Bible societies were founded in Russia and organizations like the London Missionary Society sent their first missionaries from England, Germany, Scotland, and Sweden to Siberia and to the Volga and Caucasus regions.¹⁷

This brought religious freedom for Evangelical Christians similar to the changes in the 1980s when *glasnost* and *perestroika* were launched in the Soviet Union. Christians were released from labor camps and prisons, and restrictions on distributing religious literature were removed. Evangelism and mission work were allowed across the entire empire. How did this new political development help advance the spread of the gospel? When the monopoly of the Orthodox church was broken, it gave liberty to other denominations. A wave of mission activities was started by Evangelicals, even among the minorities in Central Asia, the Far East, and Central Russia. In the long term, this even influenced the activities of the Orthodox church.

A program for the training of Bible translators, teachers, and missionaries who would be focusing on the different ethnic groups was started in 1853, and a school for such training was founded in Kazan in 1872 by an Orthodox believer, Nikolay Ilminsky. As a result of this work, over 15 ethnic groups received their first-ever portion of the Bible in their own language before the 1917 revolution. This all happened as a direct result of religious freedom which was enjoyed during this period.

¹⁶ Huibert van Beek and Larry Miller, eds., *Discrimination, Persecution, Martyrdom: Following Christ Together. Report of the Global Consultation* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2018), 242.

¹⁷ A. V. Tivanenko, *Istorija Anglijskoj duchovnoj missii v Zabajkale* (Ulan Ude: Tivanenko A.B., 2009).

Without such liberty, it would have been difficult to imagine how these different people groups would have been reached with the gospel.¹⁸

Seeds of Freedom Result in Growth

The first Russian New Testament was printed in 1820, but after the death of Alexander I, fresh waves of restrictions against Evangelicals were again imposed, and Bible printing was hindered. Because of this, it was not possible to finish the translation of the Old Testament into Russian before 1876. This demonstrates how different aspects of Christian activity need favorable circumstances in order to prosper. The translation work of God's Word required conditions of freedom and interaction between linguists, pastors, and theologians to ensure the quality of their efforts.¹⁹

In 1905 the Evangelical movement organized a 100-year-anniversary of the religious decree mentioned above. It was celebrated in Astrakhanka in the Ukraine, where a decision was made to start a Bible school for the training of Evangelical pastors. Despite restrictions by the Orthodox Church, the school functioned well during the years of 1907-1911. Then it was closed and many of the Christian leaders left the country. The restrictions on the training of Evangelical Christians deterred church growth and, in the long term, the lack of education for pastors caused problems for Pentecostals during the entire Soviet period.²⁰

Discrimination against Evangelical Christians has a long history in the various Orthodox countries of Eurasia and Eastern Europe. As long as the Orthodox Church has had the status of a state church, it has considered its jurisdiction as a closed canonical territory within the framework of the state. This has seriously limited the possibilities of believers from other religions to work outside the registered venues for cults. Even proselytism has been limited in many Islamic republics of Eurasia.

When atheists lost power after *glasnost* and *perestroika*, the different religions became equal under the law. Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism received the status of national religions in Russia. Even Evangelical denominations which were in existence for

¹⁸ Rauli Lehtonen, *Kniga narodov SNG* (Gruzii i Baltii, Svet dlja Narodov, 2018), 5-9.

¹⁹ "Russian Synodal Bible," *Wikipedia*, accessed on April 22, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Synodal_Bible.

²⁰ Rauli Lehtonen, *Folksboken* (Solna: Ljus i öster, 2004), 8-11.

more than 15 years were officially registered and respected by authorities.

After *glasnost*, the Pentecostal Union was officially registered with 50 churches in May 1990 and, 10 years later, it had over 1000 churches. Some of the unregistered Pentecostal churches have applied for autonomous registration, and others have just left the movement for other congregations. During the difficult Soviet years, they were growing, but when freedom came, the membership began to decrease.

During the period of 1991-2001, Evangelical churches in the Slavic parts of Eurasia grew faster than anywhere in Western Europe. This was a result of the spiritual vacuum which existed during the communistic period. When freedom came, people were searching for Christian values. The possibility to evangelize and do other mission work led to a spiritual explosion which was unique in Russian history. Even though nationalized religions limited the activities of Christians in some regions, the religious laws of freedom gave space for church planting, and work could continue without serious hindrance until 2016.

The history of the last 30 years shows how important freedom is for evangelism and missions. The value of freedom increases even further if the churches do not have basic elements like God's Word or the possibility of training leaders. The history of the underground church, however, testifies that if church structure and strategies for evangelism have been adapted to function in a society which brings evil forces against faith, then the effect of sudden freedom can have negative effects on church growth. This can be seen in many parts of the Soviet Union after *glasnost* and *perestroika*.

The different conditions for times of revival are often related to both freedom and persecution – in different ways and for different generations. In the Bible schools and training centers for missionaries in Eurasia, churches, denominations, and missions are responding to the challenge of preparing the students for encounters with discrimination, persecution, and martyrdom.

Soviet Period

During the Communistic period of 1917-1989, all types of persecution, which also were experienced by the early church of Jerusalem, could be found. Christians were discriminated against because of their loyalty and focus on the name of Jesus. The media would regularly release articles claiming that Jesus had never existed and that all the stories about him were false.

Keston College documented that in 1975-1989 the number of Christians in Soviet prisons was between 300-350. Almost 50% of the known Christian prisoners were Pentecostals. The unregistered Pentecostals, however, looked at persecutions as a “blessing from God,” so a huge majority of them never became known to the outer world. They thought that persecution was a normal consequence for the followers of Jesus. They suffered in silence and anonymity so the real number of Pentecostal prisoners could possibly have totaled twice the number that was reported.

During the Soviet period, the Pentecostals prayed for political leaders. When their beloved church members were put in jail, they wrote appeals and petitions to Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Kosygin. Despite their painful experiences, they were not hostile to the authorities because they believed that God’s desire was to see all people saved.

During that same period, over 500 Pentecostal churches in Sweden, Finland, and Norway engaged in a prayer crusade. The churches each had their own specific region in the Soviet Union for which they regularly prayed. Still today, there are Christian leaders in the former Soviet Union who say that the breakdown of the atheistic system in Eastern Europe was a result of the prayers during the 1970s and 80s.

Over 200 Pentecostal churches in the Nordic countries were also active in building sister church relations in Russia, the Ukraine, the Baltic States, and the Caucasus. It is interesting to ascertain that less than 20 of the Christian prisoners named above came from cities and villages which were open for tourists and where the churches from abroad had sister-church relations. This shows how important the advocacy and the defense of religious freedom really is when it comes to contacts and relationships with the suffering church. As a result of contacts and increasing freedom, many unreached people groups heard the gospel for the first time in their lives.²¹

It is surprising that church growth in Eurasian church history has not always been the most prosperous during times of freedom. Even periods of persecution have opened unique ways for the gospel. When evangelism and missions were forbidden, it was almost impossible to send out missionaries for work among unreached people groups because authorities limited the juridical and financial possibilities.

Unique possibilities, however, became a reality when Christian prisoners were deported to labor camps in Siberia, Volga, and the Ural

²¹ Rauli Lehtonen, *Viimeinen kamassi* (Kerava: Avainmedia, 2011), 127-129.

area, where many of the ethnic minorities lived. After their time in imprisonment, the “criminals” would be exiled for a certain period of time to Central Asia and other undeveloped regions. So, the first Pentecostal churches were planted in Komi, Mordovia, Yakutia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tuva as a result of Christian heroes in exile.

Many leaders of the underground Pentecostal movement were sent to camps in minority republics. Bishop Viktor Belych was sent to Komi; Ivan Fedotov to Mordovia. Even the wives of the pastors had an important role in educating the children and often were active in missions during the time when their husbands were working in the camps.

Ivan Fedotov’s wife moved voluntarily to the same region in Mordovia to be able to regularly visit and encourage her husband at the labor camp. During that same time, she was able to plant and serve over 20 Mordovian churches as a result of her stay in the Ural. Her husband was able to win huge numbers of souls at the camp. These results never would have been achieved without deportation and punishment!

In the camps, the new believers were trained to face persecution and to become spiritual leaders and missionaries during the exile period. They memorized books of the Bible. They fasted, prayed, and won souls for the kingdom of God in Vorkuta, Kolyma, Yakutsk, and Karakalpakistan.

One of the great revivals among the nationals in Central Asia started in a Pentecostal Church among Uzbeks in Osh – one of the cities in Kyrgyzstan. Over 40 former Muslims became Christians within six months during the 1980s. Some were beaten, others lost their jobs and were persecuted by their relatives. To save their lives, they decided to move from Kyrgyzstan to different parts of Uzbekistan. They took the gospel with them – inside their hearts – and so the kingdom spread to different places like Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan because of the persecution – just as happened in Jerusalem almost 2000 years before.

Ivan Voronayev – Pentecostal Pioneer

One of the founders of the Slavic Pentecostal movement was Ivan Voronayev. In 1907, he received Christ in a Baptist Church in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Persecution in the country was so hard that he had to change his name and move to the USA. In New York he met a family who had received the baptism in the Holy Spirit during the revival at Azusa Street in Los Angeles.

The persecution in Uzbekistan was the main reason why he moved all the way to America. There he was filled with God's Spirit and had a vision to move back with his family to Eurasia. Through Istanbul and Burgas, he moved to Mayakee and Odessa in Ukraine, where he started to preach about the need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.²²

According to Michael Rowe of Keston College, Voronayev founded over 200 churches in the Ukraine during 1920-1927, despite the time of persecution or perhaps because of it! In May 1927, he moved into Russia. First, he lived in a hut deep in a forest. He was involved in church planting until January 7, 1930, when he was arrested and sent to Siberia. Somewhere in a labor camp – nobody really knows where – he was killed by angry, barking dogs and paid the price of martyrdom for his Lord. He was ready to die for Jesus because he knew that heaven was waiting for him.

Voronayev's ministry became the start of the Pentecostal movement in the former Soviet Union. His work was successful during freedom as well as during times of persecutions. As long as he was led by the Lord and filled with the Spirit, his work was blessed and brought results for the kingdom. Today there are more than 6000 Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in the former Soviet Union.

This ultimate way of serving each other has been developed from the early days of the Slavic Pentecostal movement. It has become almost a doctrine to support members living in poverty, to share one's prosperity and wealth, and to take care of those who are suffering and paying a price because of their faith.

Conclusion

The expansion of the church seems to run parallel with pressure towards the church. Discrimination, persecution, and martyrdom are not idealized in the Bible. They are, however, a reality which need to be taken into account. Churches, believers, and missionaries need to be trained to face such circumstances. Strong evidence and experience speak for the importance of prayer as a tool to face difficult circumstances. One out of every seven believers experiences serious limitations of their religious rights. This means that besides prayer, advocacy must be provided. Churches, believers, and Christian workers

²² Osmo Pöysti, "Helluntailiike Ukrainassa, Valko-Venäjällä ja Venäjällä" (2002), a manuscript in Finnish about the Pentecostal movement in Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, accessed on April 22, 2022, <http://opsti.japo.fi/rusit/helluntailiike.htm>.

at home and abroad need training in using the tools of prayer and also of political pressure and influence towards the leaders of nations. Religious freedom should be defended in general, and not only in regard to Christians. Antisemitism and other racial expressions or prejudices are increasing and need the attention of the churches.

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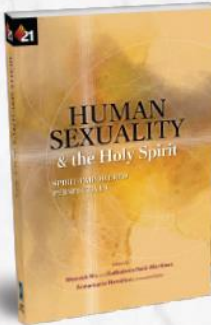
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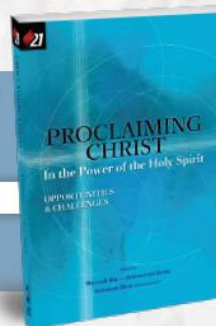
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John F. Carter, Paul R. Alexander, and Barry L. Saylor

Introduction

The growth and development of the Pentecostal movement around the world during the twentieth century is well documented by church historians. Along with its strong emphasis on evangelism and church planting, one of the primary elements that has spurred this phenomenal growth has been the establishment of Bible schools to train Spirit-filled leaders for the emerging church. For instance, the Assemblies of God (AG) in 2020 reported over 3000 Bible schools and extension centers with over 160,000 students studying around the world.¹ In addition, there are many schools associated with other Pentecostal denominations and movements not accounted for in these statistics.

As these schools have grown and matured, both numerically and academically, the desire for recognition and quality certification inevitably arises. Students may wish to pursue further studies in order to better prepare themselves for the leadership roles to which they have been called and to benefit from a broader educational exposure. Many are called to be Bible school faculty and administrators and need additional education for these purposes. In each case, it is necessary to establish the quality of the education they have already received. At the same time, the schools themselves wish to improve the quality of their academic programs and seek to benefit from the expertise of other educators and church leaders through networking and mutual cooperation. All these factors drive the process we know as academic accreditation.

¹ Personal communication with Assemblies of God World Mission (AGWM) Research Office, May 2022.

Development of Regional Theological Associations

In 1990 the Asia Pacific Theological Association (APTA) was established by the AG Bible schools of the Asia Pacific Region to assist their ongoing development through networking, faculty development, theological research and, most importantly, school accreditation.² Other missionary regions served by Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM) that had also developed networks of Bible schools for training national leaders took note of the accreditation function of APTA and, using the APTA documents as a model, began to consider offering accreditation services for their own regions. Africa and Latin America, with their large Pentecostal movements and many Bible schools, were especially active in this regard with the development the Latin America Theological Association or Asociación Teológica de América Latina (ATAL)³ and the Africa Theological Training Services (ATTS).⁴

Although the processes developed by APTA for accreditation,⁵ including the standards and procedures for the school's self-study and an accreditation team visit, have been acknowledged to provide an excellent and credible framework for school accreditation, the main weakness has always been that accreditation by APTA and other AG theological associations has usually been viewed as an "in-house" process. As such, APTA and its fraternal theological associations around the world have lacked the broad creditability that has been enjoyed by accrediting associations operating within the broader Evangelical structures represented by the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) which functions under the auspices of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). However, the Evangelical associations have not always been open to Pentecostal schools, nor, of course, do they encourage the expression of Pentecostal distinctives in the curriculum and programs of the schools they accredit, as do the Pentecostal associations.

² <http://apta-schools.org/>. For a fuller accounting of the development of APTA, see Denise Austin and John Carter, "Shaping Asia Pacific Pentecostal Theological Education: 30 years of Asia Pacific Theological Association," *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, forthcoming.

³ <https://www.atalad.net/>.

⁴ <https://africaatts.org/>.

⁵ See APTA web site: www.apta-schools.org.

The Suggestion that a World-Wide Association Be Developed

John Carter (co-author of this article), who at the time was serving as both the Director of the Asia Pacific Education Office (APEO) for AGWM and as APTA Chairman, was asked to conduct a seminar on accreditation based on the APTA experience for Latin American missionaries and national leaders involved in theological education. This seminar was held in February 2007 and another for African school leaders was conducted in January 2008. Given the emerging development of theological associations in several regions served by AG missions, at the 2008 seminar it was suggested that it would be helpful to have a world-wide association of theological associations to give greater credibility to their accreditation efforts and to provide a framework for cooperation among the regional organizations. Already scheduled for September 2008 was the Seventh APTA General Assembly (GA) to be held in Singapore, and Carter proposed that this would provide an opportunity for other regions to both observe an APTA GA and for a follow-up meeting of interested regional groups to discuss establishing such an organization. Since these meetings involved educational ministries associated with AGWM, John Bueno, Executive Director of AGWM was contacted informing him of these developments and seeking his endorsement of the possible creation of such an organization. His endorsement of the endeavor and that of the AGWM Executive Committee was received just prior to the meeting.⁶

The theological educators who came to the APTA GA represented the European Pentecostal Theological Association (EPTA), Africa Theological Training Services (ATTS), Asociación Teológica de América Latina (ATAL) and the Assemblies of God Association for Theological Education in South Asia (AGATESA). Immediately following the APTA meeting (September 12-13, 2008), these representatives, along with those from Asia Pacific, met for several days to discuss the possibility of creating a global alliance of theological associations. In the discussions it was recognized that the development of global initiatives for training local leaders by national church bodies, the desire for students from national churches to pursue advanced education in the West, and the convergence of educational initiatives across the globe suggested that there was need for a broader cooperation across the existing Bible school networks operating within Pentecostal

⁶ Email from John Bueno, September 11, 2008.

organizations around the world. Those participating in this meeting were: Lazarus Chakwera, Bill Kirsch, Carl Gibbs (Africa); Sam Balius, Gayle Grisbee (Latin America); Jacob Cherian, Lee Alison (Eurasia); Daryl Erickson, William Kay (Europe); and John Carter, Alex Fuentes, Weldyn Houger (Asia Pacific).⁷

During the meeting the concept of developing an umbrella organization to provide greater credibility to the work of the regional associations was enthusiastically supported, and it was agreed that:

- 1) We should pursue the creation of an alliance, tentatively called the Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education and Leadership (APTEL), as a broad, international organization of Pentecostal theological associations operating to facilitate the ongoing development of Pentecostal theological schools worldwide.
- 2) We should continue the work of formulating a constitution and other foundational documents for APTEL at a meeting to be held in Springfield in July 2009.
- 3) We should approach the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) to consider endorsing the formation of APTEL as an organization operating under its auspices in order to give it a broad interdenominational covering.⁸

Springfield Meeting 2009

The meeting in Springfield was set for July 28-30, 2009, and it was agreed that representatives from a variety of Pentecostal groups that sponsor ministry training institutions around the world should be invited to participate. In attendance were those who had met in Singapore plus representatives from the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC), Church of God, Cleveland, TN (COG), International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (ICFG), Alliance for Assemblies of God Higher Education (AAGHE, representing US AG colleges and universities), and Global University (GU) of the Assemblies of God.

During these meetings, the name of the organization was discussed, and various options were considered. Finally, the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education (WAPTE) was formally adopted and the constitution and bylaws, adapted from the APTA governing documents, were also approved. As stated in the Preamble to the Constitution:

⁷ John Carter, “Agenda for Discussion Meeting on Possible Formation of World Association for Pentecostal Theological Education” (September 12-13, 2008).

⁸ John Carter, “Executive Summary: Proposed Creation of the Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education and Leadership (APTEL).”

The World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education (WAPTE) is a global cooperative fellowship of Pentecostal/Charismatic theological associations, denominational offices, and missions agencies that provide educational services to theological and/or ministry training schools. It exists to assist and encourage these organizations in their endeavor to promote the development of Pentecostal/Charismatic theological education and leadership training.⁹

Among the important motivating purposes for the creation of WAPTE was for it to validate the accreditation standards and procedures of its member associations which would ensure the consistency and credibility of their school accreditation decisions and to clearly promote the distinctives of the Pentecostal movement. Thus, included in the WAPTE statement of purposes was the following:

To provide a means for member theological associations to ensure that their endorsement/accreditation standards and procedures are oriented towards promoting within the schools they serve:

- 1) The distinctives of the Pentecostal movement
- 2) Academic excellence
- 3) Effective governance structures and financial management procedures
- 4) Effective student spiritual life development
- 5) Effective and practical leadership and ministry training
- 6) Education and training programs that are developed to meet the needs of the students, churches, communities, and contexts they serve.¹⁰

To fulfill this, an Accreditation and Endorsement Manual was approved (adapted from APTA's Guide to Accreditation) with the stated purpose:

The World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education (WAPTE) has adopted a set of minimum *standards* and *procedures* to be followed by its member theological associations as the basis for recognizing their respective accreditation and endorsement services. These *standards* and *procedures* are intended to ensure that the accreditation or endorsement status granted to schools by one theological association is equivalent to that given by another WAPTE-affiliated association, while also accommodating appropriate regional differences in its approach.¹¹

⁹ WAPTE Constitution.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid.

In addition, it was agreed that WAPTE would encourage research and scholarship that informs the development of theology, leadership, and ministry education within the Pentecostal tradition and organize meetings and consultations to encourage networking among members and create awareness of trends in theological, leadership, and ministry education.¹²

At this meeting a Board of Directors was formally elected, including Enson Lwesya (Africa), Carl Gibbs (USA), Alex Fuentes (Philippines), John Carter (USA), Gayle Grisbee (USA), Pedro Gomez (Dominican Republic), Jacob Cherian (India), Ivan Satyavrata (India), Paul Alexander (United Kingdom), Dan Hedges (USA), Irving Whitt (Canada), Bob Cook (USA), and Miguel Alvarez (USA).¹³ Board officers elected were John Carter as Chairman, Paul Alexander as Vice Chairman, Alex Fuentes as Secretary, and Carl Gibbs as Treasurer. Roland Dudley was appointed as the Executive Director.

Endorsement by the Pentecostal World Fellowship

In September 2009, it was learned that the PWF Executive Committee chaired by Prince Guneratnum (General Superintendent of Malaysian Assemblies of God) was holding its annual meeting in Los Angeles. John Carter requested to meet with the Committee to give an overview of the background and purposes of WAPTE and to request endorsement by the PWF. This request was warmly received and not only was it felt that endorsement by the PWF would be appropriate, it was suggested that WAPTE should become the Education Commission of the PWF. The existence of this commission was already identified in the PWF documents but had never functioned effectively. It was also requested that WAPTE organize the theological consultation for the Pentecostal World Conference (PWC) to be held in Stockholm, Sweden, in August 2010. WAPTE leadership enthusiastically accepted this responsibility. Formal endorsement by PWF for WAPTE to serve as its Education Commission came from the meeting of the PWF Advisory Committee and Executive Committee during the 2010 conference.

¹² “Minutes of July 28-30, 2009 meeting in Springfield, MO.”

¹³ Ibid.

First Board Meeting

The first WAPTE board meeting was scheduled for February 10-12, 2010, at Mattersey Hall College and Graduate School, Mattersey, UK, the national Assemblies of God College, where Paul Alexander (WAPTE Vice-Chairman) was Principal. Executive Director, Roland Dudley, organized the meeting with planning for the PWC Theological Consultation in Stockholm in August 2010 as the main topic. The Board also approved the following for the charter members of WAPTE:¹⁴

Africa	African Assemblies of God Alliance (AAGA)
	Association for Pentecostal Theological Education in Africa (APTEA)
	Africa Theological Training Service (ATTS)
Asia Pacific	Asia Pacific Theological Association (APTA)
	Asia Pacific Education Office (APEO)
Eurasia	Assemblies of God Association of Theological Education in Southern Asia (AGATESA)
Europe	European Pentecostal Association (EPTA)
Latin America	Latin American Theological Association (ATAL)
	Christian Training Network (CTN)
North America	International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (ICFG)
	Church of God, Cleveland, TN (COG)
	Global Education, Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC)
	Alliance for Assemblies of God Higher Education (AAGHE)
	Global University of the Assemblies of God (GU)

The theme selected for the Stockholm consultation was *Equipping Pentecostal Leaders through Theological Education* which was to be conducted over two days on August 26 and 27, 2010, plus two afternoon sessions during the PWC on August 28 and 29. This schedule provided for eight theological paper presentations plus a WAPTE business session and a banquet on the first evening with Jack Hayford as the keynote speaker on the topic “*Why Pentecostal Theological Education is Important.*”

¹⁴ Minutes of Board meeting, Feb 10-12, 2010.

Stockholm Theological Consultation

The Stockholm Theological Consultation was organized following the February Board meeting by Executive Director, Roland Dudley. There was an enthusiastic response to the call for papers which included:¹⁵

Keith Warrington, Regents Theological College, England	“Pentecostal Theological Education—for the 21st Century”
Veli-Mati Kärkkäinen, Fuller Theological Seminary, USA	“Epistemology, Ethos, and Environment”: In Search of a Theology of Pentecostal Theological Education”
Jean Daniel Pluss, European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association	“Varieties...but one God: Challenges to Pentecostalism in a Global Context”
Harold Hunter, Director, IPHC Archives & Research Center	“Pentecostal Mission 100 Years After Edinburgh 1910”
Brenan Roach, Principal, Harvest Bible College, Australia	“Professional Development for Pentecostal Pastors”
Jacob Cherian, Dean of Faculty, Southern Asia Bible College, India	“The Parental Paradigm: A Pauline Model for Pentecostal Theological Education”
Nils Malmstrom, Lund University, Sweden	“How do we succeed as a church in Sweden . . . an African response”
Olga Zaprometova, Eurasian Theological Seminary, Russia	“Losing the Identity: On Pentecostal Theological Education in Russia”

There were 71 registered attendees at the 2-day WAPTE meetings representing 20 countries.¹⁶ In addition, many more were present for the two open WAPTE paper sessions during the main PWC schedule. During the WAPTE Business Session, members were asked to caucus in geographical regions to elect members of the board from their region. From these caucuses, the following were elected:

¹⁵ <https://wapte.org/conference-papers/stockholm-2010/>.

¹⁶ Report of countries and individuals in attendance.

Region	Board Member	Terms of Service
Africa	Enson Lwesya	6 year
	Carl Gibbs	3 year
Asia Pacific	Steve Fogarty	6 year
	Weldyn Houger	3 year
Eurasia	Jacob Cherian	6 year
	Ivan Satyavrata	3 year
Europe	Paul Alexander	6 year
	Ulrik Josefsson	3 year
Latin America	Pedro Gomez	6 year
	Gayle Grisbee	3 year
North America	Dan Hedges	6 year
	Irving Whitt	4 year
Members at Large Appointed by the Board	John Carter, Alex Fuentes, Miguel Alvarez, Bob Cook	

The previous board officers continued to serve in their respective roles (John Carter – Chairman, Paul Alexander – Vice-Chairman, Alex Fuentes – Secretary, and Carl Gibbs – Treasurer).

Annual Board Meetings, 2011-2012

The 2011 meeting of the board was scheduled for April 13–14 in Los Angeles, California, at a venue to be decided. At the invitation of the Foursquare Church, arrangements were later made for it to be held at King’s University, Van Nuys, California. The location for the legal registration of WAPTE as an international organization was a matter of discussion, and it was agreed to register WAPTE in Belgium as an international non-profit organization with the assistance of the Pentecostal European Fellowship (PEF). It was also agreed that the next theological consultation/symposium for the triennial PWC in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, would generally follow the same schedule as in Stockholm with two days of meetings before the PWC and two presentations during the PWC (later it became three presentations when the PWC schedule was published). The theme adopted was “Pentecostal Ministerial Formation.”¹⁷

¹⁷ Minutes of Board meeting, April 13-14, 2011.

The 2012 board meeting was held in Brussels, Belgium, on the campus of Continental Theological Seminary (CTS). It was reported that the registration of WAPTE in Belgium as an International Association for Non-Profit Organization (AISBL) was in process. As provided in its constitution, an important aspect of WAPTE’s purposes was to validate the accreditation processes of its member associations. Following such a review, the accreditation and/or endorsement requirements of APTA, APTEA and AAGHE were approved as meeting WAPTE requirements. Planning was also undertaken for the 2013 PWC in Kuala Lumpur.¹⁸ It was agreed to invite Dr. Lazarus Chakwera, President of the Malawi Assemblies of God and Chairman of the Africa Assemblies of God Alliance, to be the keynote speaker for the WAPTE symposium banquet.¹⁹

Pentecostal World Conference – Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, August 2013

The venue for the 2013 PWC was at Calvary Conference Centre, associated with Calvary Church, pastored by Prince Guneratnam, former General Superintendent of the Malaysia AG and chairman of the PWF. However, since the Conference Centre was still under construction and there were no nearby hotels, WAPTE organized its board meeting for August 24-25 and the two-day theological symposium on August 26-27 at a local hotel.

Following regional caucuses of participants at the WAPTE business meeting, the following were elected to the board:

Region	Board Member	Terms of Service
Africa	John Easter	6-year (2013-19), newly elected
	Enson Lwesya	6-year (2010–16)
Asia Pacific	Weldyn Houger	6-year (2013-19), newly elected
	Steve Fogarty	6-year (2010–16)
Eurasia	William Chelliah	6-year (2013-19), newly elected
	Jacob Cherian	6-year (2010–16)
Europe	Ulrik Josefsson	6-year (2013-19), newly elected
	Pasi Parkkila	6-year (2010–16)
Latin America	Pedro Gomez	6-year (2010-16)
	Gayle Grisbee	3-year (2010–13)

¹⁸ Minutes of Board meeting, May 8-9, 2012.

¹⁹ Ibid.

North America	Marilyn Abplanalp	6-year (2013-19), newly elected
	Dan Hedges	6-year (2010–16)
Members at Large Appointed by the Board	John Carter, Alex Fuentes, Irving Whitt, Mark Williams, Paul Alexander	

Current chairman, John Carter, who had recently retired from AGWM, announced that he did not wish to be considered to continue as WAPTE chairman and declined to be nominated. The officers elected were: Paul Alexander (Chair), Dan Hedges (Vice-Chair), Alex Fuentes (Secretary), Weldyn Houger (Treasurer), Stephen Fogarty (Executive Committee Member).

The symposium was organized following the basic schedule used in the Stockholm conference. The keynote speaker for the banquet on the first evening was Lazarus Chakwera who spoke on *The Importance of Pentecostal Ministry Formation*. During the two-day conference, six theological papers were presented, with three more presented during the main PWC conference. The presenters and topics were as follows:²⁰

Denise Austin, Alphacrucis College, Australia	“The formation and development of the national training college of Australian Christian Churches (Assemblies of God in Australia)”
Ivan Satyavrata, Southern Asia Bible College, India	“Power to the Poor: The Pentecostal Tradition of Social Engagement”
Jean-Daniel Pluss, European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association	“In One Accord . . . Pentecostals and the Yearning for Christian Unity: A Case Study of the Swiss”
Loh Hung Chey, AG Bible College, Singapore	“Pentecostal Mission and Its Initiatives towards Unity in the Spirit”

²⁰ <https://wapte.org/conference-papers/>.

Brendon Roach, Harvest Bible College, Australia	“Spiritual Formation of Ordination Candidates and Online Learning”
Steve Fogarty, Alphacrucis College, Australia	“Transformational and Transactional Leadership in Australian Christian Churches”
Eun Chul Kim, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Philippines	“A Survey of Pentecostal Hermeneutics with a Fresh Pentecostal Approach”
V. J. Davidson, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Philippines	“Pentecostalism’s Potential for helping theological students develop the essential critical thinking skills related to MA and MDiv level studies in preparation for the theory and practice of Pentecostal ministry”
Joel Tejedo, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Philippines	“Religion, Migration and Human Trafficking: A Case of Christian NGOs Working among the Victims of Human Trafficking in the Philippines, Malaysia, and China”

There was a joint meeting of the outgoing and incoming board members on August 28, 2013. At this meeting, Carl Gibbs was added to the list of members at large with an understanding that if a person from Eastern Europe became available to serve, Carl would relinquish his position for that person. Also, the venue for the 2014 board meeting was set for Nairobi, Kenya, on April 10-14, 2014.

Annual Board Meetings, 2014 through 2018

In May 2014, another board meeting took place in Nairobi, Kenya. John Easter and his wife, Cheryl, assisted in hosting. There was a slightly lower level of participation from the board, but constructive meetings were conducted, nevertheless. In general, the issue of caucusing at the triannual meeting in order to populate the board was central to discussions. It was agreed that, because the Pentecostal World Conference tended to have larger numbers of local people attending with a smaller number of international delegates, it would not provide a consistent base for electing board members. It was decided that the

board should continue to be recruited with regions in mind and that an attempt be made to elect a board more representative of the member fellowships of the Pentecostal World Fellowship. Thus, this meeting built constructively upon the detailed work of previous meetings.

Paul Alexander, WAPTE's chairman, commissioned Rick Wadholm in an initiative to launch a journal on behalf of WAPTE. It was called *The Pentecostal Educator*. Wadholm served in the role of Executive Editor of the journal until the spring of 2019. The initial response was positive, and a substantial number of excellent papers were published. The journal was available in an electronic format only. Later, the journal was renamed *Pentecostal Education* and Wonsuk Ma and Miguel Alvarez took on the editorial responsibilities. The impact was immediate. Several hard copies were produced and distributed, and the circulation of the electronic version grew exponentially.

In the meantime, the hard work of keeping the work of WAPTE going continued. The annual meeting of WAPTE took place in Sao Paulo in September 2016. This continued the pattern of the board meeting taking place every three years to coincide with the Pentecostal World Conference. Several workshops were offered through the conference, and these were well attended.

An invitation, at the initiative of Carl Gibbs, was extended to many Brazilian pastors. A dinner was the setting to welcome these pastors, and they were invited to join WAPTE as individual members. This seemed to be a positive development at the time. However, through the years, the participation of individual members has not proven to be a sustainable option.

The board meeting in 2017 took place in Siem Reap, Cambodia, in September. A review of the minutes shows routine business. Matters relating to the collection of dues, the kind of reports to be received by the board, and similar business issues took up the bulk of the meeting.

Annual Board Meeting, 2019

The 2019 meeting of the board took place on January 15-16 on the campus Life Pacific University in Los Angeles, California, at the invitation of the Foursquare Church through WAPTE board member, Dan Hedges. The 2019 meeting marked progress for WAPTE on several accounts. First, after a short vacancy of the position due to Roland Dudley's resignation, Dr. Barry Saylor was named Executive Director. Saylor was re-confirmed in this role at the 2019 Pentecostal

World Conference (PWC) and has served from January 2019 to the present.

Secondly, the board composed a written proposal to the Pentecostal World Fellowship to make official its role as the PWF's "Education and Theology Commission." This relationship was initiated by WAPTE's first chairman, John Carter, in 2009, as WAPTE was named the Education Commission for the PWF. The proposal from 2019 recognized that WAPTE had been occasionally called upon for theological consultation and that our participation in the triennial PWC had established us in this role for the PWF.

Thirdly, the board worked together to refine its constitution and to clarify its role as an alliance to global Pentecostal theological education. One area of emphasis was to ensure active representation from the global regions of WAPTE's constituency. In the early days of its organization, the board was designed with a caucus for representation, but a lack of a central gathering point and financial support for travel for such representation made this difficult. At the 2019 board meeting, it was decided that WAPTE would function as a self-perpetuating board in that "current members of the board shall appoint new members based on the recommendation of a nomination committee to ensure good representation of the membership."²¹ The intention of this change was to ensure active participation of each global region and that the board would nominate those who could best serve WAPTE's mission. It was noted in the meeting that these discussions had been circulated before due the challenges in gathering a global representation, and that these changes would provide a better possibility for such an outcome.

Lastly, the board looked ahead to the 2019 PWC being held in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. The theme for the conference was "Spirit Now,"²² and it was proposed that WAPTE focus on its three "Affinity Group" breakout sessions with the idea of the healing power of the Spirit through theological education and its effect on communities.

Pentecostal World Conference – Calgary, Alberta, Canada, August 2019

The 2019 PWC was held in Calgary and hosted at the Telarus Convention Center by chairman of the PWF, Prince Guneratnam, pastor of Calvary Church, Kuala Lumpur, and former General

²¹ Minutes of Board meeting, January 15-16, 2019.

²² A video recap of the full 2019 PWC can be found at <https://www.pwfellowship.org/calgary-2019>.

Superintendent of the Malaysia AG. WAPTE organized its board meeting for August 27 and its two-day theological “Affinity Groups” on August 28-29.

During the WAPTE business meeting, the following were elected to the board: John Easter and Carol Gibbs (Africa), Weldyn Houger and Alex Fuentes (Asia Pacific), William Chelliah and Jacob Cherian (Eurasia), Ulrik Josefsson and Pasi Parkkila (Europe), John Dahlager (Latin America), John Davidson, Dan Hedges, and Kirk Kauffeldt (North America), and Paul Alexander, Steve Fogarty, and Gary Seevers (members at large appointed by Board).

The officers elected were: Paul Alexander (Chair), Dan Hedges (Vice-Chair), Barry Saylor (Executive Director), Alex Fuentes (Secretary), Weldyn Houger (Treasurer), and Stephen Fogarty (Executive Committee Member).

WAPTE’s four “Affinity Group” theological presentations were organized by WAPTE’s Executive Director, Barry Saylor, following the schedule provided by the organizers of the PWC for breakout groups related to the various arms of the PWF. WAPTE’s presenters were as follows: Ulrik Josefsson (Prorektor, Akademi För Ledarskap och Teologi, Sweden); Estrela Alexander (President, William Seymour College, Lanham, MD); Barry Saylor (Trinity Bible College and Graduate School, Ellendale, ND); and Paul Alexander (WAPTE Chair).

WAPTE was also given time in the main conference hall to present a brief history and vision (presented by WAPTE’s founding chairman, John Carter) and to share a promotional video produced by Africa’s Hope Executive Director, John Easter, regarding the role WAPTE had played in Africa’s Pentecostal theological development. Following these promotional pieces, WAPTE presented a panel discussion on a theological vision for community transformation according to key global theological educational leaders. Panelists were as follows: Carol Alexander (Dean, Graduate School, Trinity Bible College & Graduate School, Ellendale, ND), Simon Peter Emiau (General Superintendent, Pentecostal Assemblies of God, Uganda), Niclas Lindgren (Director, PMU, Sweden), Barry Saylor (Executive Director, WAPTE), and Richard Waldrop (Executive Director, The Shalom Project, Cleveland, TN).

During WAPTE’s business session, John Carter announced his retirement from service on the board after more than a decade of leadership. The board unanimously and ardently expressed their appreciation to Carter for his years of service in the formation and

development of this global alliance and for his service to Pentecostal theological education as a whole.²³

Annual Board Meetings, 2020-2021

The 2020 meeting of the board took place February 3–4 in Honolulu, Hawaii, on the campus of Pacific Rim Christian University. Due to new appointments and board vacancies, the 2020 board meeting welcomed several new members of the board. New members in 2020 included:

- Doug Lowenberg, Executive Director, Association for Pentecostal Theological Education in Africa (Africa)
- Wonsuk Ma, Dean of Theology, Oral Roberts University (Member At Large replacing John Carter)
- Gary Matsdorf, Global Education Coordinator, International Church of the Foursquare Gospel
- David Ramirez, Third Assistant General Overseer, Church of God, Cleveland, TN

In addition, the 2020 meeting of the board reinstituted committees identified in WAPTE’s 2012 board meeting, appointed leadership to these committees, and assigned members. These committees were assigned as follows:

Advancement Committee	Stephen Fogarty (chair), John Easter, Barry Saylor, Gary Seevers
Accreditation & Endorsement Committee	Kirk Kauffeldt (chair), Paul Alexander, Alex Fuentes, Weldyn Houger
Research & Resource Committee	Wonsuk Ma (chair), Jon Dahlager, Ulrik Josefsson, Doug Lowenberg

These committees were tasked with working toward outcomes in fulfilling their roles within WAPTE’s mission, namely in clarifying and broadening membership, exploring the needs of member associations in accreditation and endorsement, and in renewing WAPTE’s commitment to research, namely through WAPTE’s journal, *Pentecostal Education*.²⁴

The 2020 meeting also saw the election of Ulrik Josefsson (Sweden) as Vice Chair, vacated by Dan Hedges who was appointed to a new role within the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

²³ This expression of gratitude was also recorded in the Minutes of Board meeting, August 27, 2019.

²⁴ Both current and back issues of *Pentecostal Education* can be found at <https://wapte.org/resources/pentecostal-education/>.

The 2021 board meeting was scheduled to be held in Costa Rica, but unfortunately the COVID-19 global pandemic made travel untenable. In lieu of an in-person meeting, the board was able to meet via videoconferencing on February 3. Although this meeting was pushed to an online format, it proved to be a particularly momentous gathering with a few important items of business.

First, the board officially welcomed the new editor for the journal, *Pentecostal Education*, Miguel Alvarez (Guatemala), and celebrated the momentum created by the journal's recent publications. Alvarez joined WAPTE at the invitation of Research and Resource chair, Wonsuk Ma, and immediately began to work toward advancing *Pentecostal Education* in substance and in reach.

Alongside this, the Research and Resource Committee, initiated through conversations between Ulrik Josefsson and Barry Saylor at the 2019 Pentecostal World Conference, shared an invitation made by the Pentecostal World Fellowship's World Missions Commission (WMC)²⁵ and the Pentecostal Development and Relief Partners (PDRP)²⁶ for WAPTE to serve as a theological consultancy. At the behest of the WMC, the PDRP began working on a position paper entitled "Biblical Basis for Understanding Human Poverty and Holistic Mission." Reported in this meeting was WAPTE's initial role hosting an online scholarly consortium in January 2021 featuring the following scholars:

- Miguel Alvarez, Missiologist, Church of God (Latin America)
- Isaiah Dau, Systematic Theologian, Sudan Pentecostal church
- Cheryl B. Johns, Practical Theologian, Church of God (USA)
- Ulrik Josefsson, Practical Theologian, Swedish Pentecostal Movement
- Wonsuk Ma, Missiologist & Global Pentecostalism (USA)
- Martina Prosen, Missiologist, Swedish Pentecostal Movement
- Barry Saylor, Practical Theologian & Christian Ed., Assemblies of God (USA)
- Mikael Stenhammar, Systematic Theologian, Swedish Pentecostal Movement
- Amos Yong, Missiologist, Assemblies of God (USA)

This initial meeting led to further consultancy with PDRP that will be discussed in more detail below.

The 2021 meeting also marked a transition for the Accreditation and Endorsement committee as chair Kirk Kauffeldt proposed the idea of

²⁵ <http://pwfmissions.net/home>.

²⁶ <http://pwfmissions.net/development-relief>.

extending WAPTE's role into the area of accreditation. He recommended the following:

- Consolidate the Standards into WAPTE Standards
- Establish WAPTE accreditation and endorsement based on the WAPTE Standards not only recognizing accrediting agencies like APTA and APTEA but also providing accreditation services
- Partner / collaborate with member agencies to deliver accreditation services, not only a regional accreditation but a worldwide accreditation
- Provide accreditation for the broader PWF constituency.²⁷

This proposal was met with enthusiasm noting the opportunity for WAPTE to provide a necessary service for its global constituency while recognizing the challenge in such a task. After an extended conversation, the board recommended that Kauffeldt and the Accreditation and Endorsement Committee explore this possibility and how it might better serve WAPTE's membership.

Pentecostal Development and Relief Partners Theological Consultancy

Following the initial scholarly consortium in January 2021 discussed above, Ulrik Josefsson and Barry Saylor continued to work in conversation with the PDRP to consult on their position paper regarding "A Biblical Basis for Understanding Human Poverty and Holistic Mission." In the January consortium, it was decided that pertinent voices specifically from the Global South would be invited to engage in conversation with the initial scholars consulted for this project. The following presentations were given on April 29, 2021:

- "Theological Foundation for Pentecostal Holistic Mission" by Miguel Alvarez, President, Seminario Bíblico Pentecostal Centroamericano (Guatemala), with Response by Martina Prosén (Sweden),
- "Pentecostal Social Engagement: Challenges and Possibilities" by Kayama Mugambi, Pastor and Researcher at African International University (Kenya), with Response by Cheryl B. Johns (Pentecostal Theological Seminary, Cleveland, TN, USA)
- "Pentecostal Political Theology" by Chammah Kaunda, Zambian Scholar, Professor at Yonsei University (South Korea), with Response by Amos Yong (Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, USA)

Following these presentations and the discussion during the April 2021 meeting, Ulrik Josefsson and Barry Saylor composed a paper on

²⁷ Minutes of Board meeting, August 27, 2019.

“A Pentecostal Theology on Societal Involvement” which was presented at the PDRP summit gathering in Helsinki, Finland, September 9-10, 2021.

The final piece to this project came in the publication of the fall 2021 volume of *Pentecostal Education* (6:2)²⁸ which featured the following related contributions:

- “Pentecostal Social Engagement: Challenges and Possibilities for the Global South” by Kyama Mugambi
- “Response to Kyama Mugambi’s ‘Pentecostal Social Engagement: Challenges and Possibilities for the Global South’” by Cheryl Bridges Johns
- “Theological Foundation for Pentecostal Holistic Mission” by Miguel Alvarez
- “Theological Foundation for Pentecostal Holistic Mission: A Response to Miguel Alvarez” by Allan H. Anderson
- “The Role of the Church as a Political Entity: A Case for Zambia” Naar M’fundisi-Holloway
- “Zambian Political Pentecostalism: A Case for Many Tongues, Many Politics” by Amos Yong

Annual Board Meeting, 2022

The 2022 meeting of the board was held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on the campus of Universidad Teológica del Caribe (UTC) on February 2-3. The board was warmly welcomed by leaders in the Pentecostal movement in Puerto Rico including Richard Ortiz, Administrative Bishop of the Church of God in Puerto Rico and Chairman of the Fraternity of Pentecostal Councils in Puerto Rico; Otilio Roman, Chairman of Universidad Teológica del Caribe Board of Directors; and members of the Administrative Board: Francisco Ortiz (Executive President), Carmen L. Ayala-Rios (Academic Dean), Wilfredo Adorno (Dean of Students), and Frankie Negron (Dean of Administration).

Three new board members were welcomed as WAPTE’s constituency continued to build upon its representation. Those added were: Joseph Castleberry (Assemblies of God Alliance for Higher Education), Michael Reynolds (Church of God, Cleveland, TN), and Randy Tarr (Africa’s Hope).

²⁸ The full PDF of *Pentecostal Education* 6:2 can be found at <https://wapte.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Pentecostal-Education-Journal-Volume-6-2-Fall-2021.pdf>.

Registration papers were signed in order for WAPTE to be officially registered with the Belgian government as a simple non-profit and Kirk Kauffeldt and the Accreditation and Endorsement Committee provided an update on the exploration of WAPTE serving as an accreditor for its global constituency. The board agreed that it was vital for both processes to continue to move forward so that WAPTE could be in a position to better serve the global Pentecostal theological education community.

Conclusion

As one can see in WAPTE's history, much has been accomplished in a short time, however, it is also true that much is still needed in the area of alliance among Pentecostal theological educational institutions. As WAPTE and its board continue to work on behalf of the Pentecostal theological world, our prayer is that our work would be layered in thought and strategic thinking and that it would be empowered by the Spirit who inspired the work in the beginning.

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Pentecostal Theological Formation and Education for Tomorrow (Sec 1)

Part III of “Global Christianity Today, the Locus of Pentecostal-Charismatic Faith, and Theological Education for Tomorrow”

Wonsuk Ma

Abstract

Based on the previous two studies on global Christianity and global Pentecostalism, this last segment takes up the quest of how to shape Pentecostal theological formation and education. The goal is to remain true to its Pentecostal spiritual and theological identity, its unique calling in the context of rapidly changing global Christianity, and its demand to be the cutting-edge spiritual force which inspires the entire church and transforms society. The study identifies six priorities for Pentecostal theological formation/education.

Keywords: global Pentecostalism, theological formation, theological education

Introduction

The first of the three-study series surveyed the historical development of global Christianity with a zoom-in focus on recent centuries. One observation was that there has been a rapid southward leaning with about two-thirds of world Christians now found in the southern continents. The second study revealed the rapid growth of Pentecostal Christianity (the fastest among the major Christian families) and its higher concentration in the global South, more than the rest of world. These findings have serious implications for today's Pentecostals in every area of Christian life and engagement. This final study takes up the future of Pentecostalism by preparing the next generation through theological formation and education. The task of theological formation

and education is to address all the areas of the unique historical functions of Pentecostalism in the larger context of global Christianity. Thus, the training goal is to preserve and even enhance the spiritual and theological identity of Pentecostals, to remain relevant to the rapidly changing global context, and to impact the broader church world through its empowerment theology and ethos. However, before we move any further and elaborate on the study plan, two preliminary discussions will put us on common ground.

Theological Formation and Theological Education

The title of this article includes “theological formation” and “theological education,” which I chose in order to promote discussion. There are other terms commonly used, such as “spiritual formation,” “ministerial training,” and “vocational formation.” Theological formation, as commonly understood, is a larger category referring to the gradual and continual shaping of one’s theology, values, and spiritual practices. This developmental process often takes place at home and church, and often in un- or less structured ways. Theological formation, therefore, is for every believer, and its goal is to prepare for faithful Christian living, for meaningfully function, for service in the faith community, and for the fulfillment of one’s specific call to be Christ’s witness in the place where he or she is “sent.”¹ However, theological education usually is more narrowly defined and traditionally reserved for a formal educational process to prepare professional or vocational clergy for the church. “Ministerial training” or “vocational formation” may also refer to the same reality. Thus, it is limited to a relatively small group of believers, and the process is formed by structure, faculty, curriculum, and formal recognition such as academic qualifications. Understandably, it takes place in institutions such as Bible schools, seminaries, or universities, although nowadays local churches also offer formal theological training. For various reasons, Pentecostal Christianity has adopted traditional ways for theological formation and education but has also experimented with creative ways to prepare believers for service. However, the validity

¹ This comprehensive nature of theological formation is to “educate the whole people of God” by Commission Six of Edinburgh 2010. See “Theme Six: Theological Education and Formation,” in *Edinburgh 2010: Witnessing to Christ Today*, ed. Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2010); “Editorial Introduction,” in *Reflecting on and Equipping for Christian Mission*, ed. Steve Bevens, Teresa Chai, Nelson Jennings, Knud Jorgensen, and Dietrich Werner (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2015), xviii.

of this dichotomy among the Pentecostals is being questioned, particularly based on its democratic nature of Spirit-empowerment and ministry as seen below.

Recent Publications

The appearance of major studies on theological education, particularly on Pentecostal theological education, is encouraging. For the general discussion on theological education, there are four massive handbooks published by Regnum Books: *The Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity*;² *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa*;³ *Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism*;⁴ and *Orthodox Handbook on Ecumenism: Resources or Theological Education*.⁵ I long for the day when the handbook on Pentecostal theological education is published. From the same publisher, a unique volume is available as part of its Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series: *Reflecting on and Equipping for Christian Mission*.⁶ To this growing list, we can add another series dedicated to theological education: Eerdmans' Theological Education between Times. To date, it has five titles. I found *Beyond Profession* by Daniel Aleshire⁷ extremely helpful as it argues for formational theological education, merging theological formation and theological education.

For Pentecostal theological education, Amos Yong's *Renewing the Church by the Spirit: Theological Education after Pentecost* appeared in the Eerdmans' series (2020). Even though the primary audience and context are North American, his passionate plea for Pentecostal theological

² Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, and Namsoon Kang, eds., *The Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2010), 800 pages.

³ Isabel Apawo Phiri and Dietrich Werner, eds., *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2013), 1110 pages.

⁴ Dietrich Werner, Hope Antone, Wati Longchar, and Hyunju Bae, eds., *Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2013), 675 pages.

⁵ Pantelis Kalaitzidis and Thomas Fitzgerald, eds., *Orthodox Handbook on Ecumenism: Resources or Theological Education* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2014), 962 pages.

⁶ Steve Bevans, Teresa Chai, Nelson Jennings, Knud Jorgensen, and Dietrich Werner, eds., *Reflecting on and Equipping for Christian Mission* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2015).

⁷ Daniel O. Aleshire, *Beyond Profession: The Next Future of Theological Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021).

education to take seriously the work of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology) and the role of the church (ecclesiology) in the education/formation process is well noted. The other voice is Daniel Topf, an emerging scholar in Pentecostal theological education. The readers of this journal are familiar with his study published in 2021 and elsewhere.⁸ He listed various priority issues for Pentecostal theological education. His Ph.D. dissertation, which has been published, sets a broad ground for Pentecostal higher education.⁹ Recently APTS Press published what appears to be the first volume of its Pentecostal Theological Education in the Majority World series. The current title focuses on graduate and post-graduate levels.¹⁰ I find many of its ten chapters to be helpful, and some groundbreaking.

This Study

This study plans to discuss six major tasks which global Pentecostal communities are called to uphold and to which they must contribute. The first two are fundamental matters: the unique theological and spiritual traditions of the Pentecostal faith; thus, “internal” issues to the Pentecostals. The next three are “external”: theological formation/education to strengthen the growth of global Christianity so it can serve the wider Pentecostal-Charismatic movement, actively contribute to the life of the wider universal church, and meaningfully engage with the world in the public space. Each will have two parts: the current state of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in the given topic, followed by its implications for Pentecostal theological formation/education. For the last task, I will briefly touch on three

⁸ Daniel Topf, “Ten Characteristics of Pentecostal Theological Education in the Twenty-first Century,” *Pentecostal Education* 5, no. 1–2 (2020): 45–57. Also, Daniel Topf, “Fundamentalism, Marginalization, and Eschatology: Historical, Socio-Economic, and Theological Factors Influencing Early Pentecostal Theological Education,” *Spiritus: ORU Journal of Theology* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 99–119.; Daniel Topf, “Pentecostal Theological Education in the Majority World: A Century of Overcoming Obstacles and Gaining New Ground,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 24, no. 1 (February 2021): 81–96.

⁹ Daniel S. G. Topf, “A Pentecostal Missiology of Higher Education: Establishing a Theological Basis for Pentecostal Colleges and Universities” (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Intercultural Studies, 2020).

¹⁰ Dave Johnson and Rick Wadholm Jr., eds., *Pentecostal Theological Education in the Majority World: The Graduate and Post-Graduate Level* (Baguio, Philippines: APTS Press, 2022).

aspects of training: theological formation, theological education, and research.¹¹ And for the first two tasks, I will add some theological/biblical grounding before exploring the subjects.

Due to the extent of the discussion at hand and the limitation of space, each discussion is intended to serve as the “starter” for reflection and exploration in each socio-cultural context. In this essay, I primarily address the classical Pentecostal constituencies, although “Pentecostal(ism)” may also be used broadly. I also try to be as “global” and “general” as possible, but I will have to confess that my direct involvement in theological education is limited to Asia, Europe, and North America. Thus, this reflection bears my limited exposure.

Fullness in the Holy Spirit

The cardinal belief of the Pentecostal movement in all forms is in the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit. Among the classical or denominational Pentecostal churches, it is commonly expressed as the “baptism in the Holy Spirit.” Charismatics tend to use the “fullness in the Spirit” to loosen doctrinal constrictions. Notwithstanding the debate on its exact nature, modern Pentecostal-Charismatic believers link this unique pneumatic experience with empowerment based on Acts 1:8, “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” (NIV).

Biblical Rationale

To the early Christians, the immediate references to this promise were selected Old Testament figures, upon whom the Spirit of God came, and Christ, although these two are connected. The Spirit’s coming upon the ancient leaders had two commonly recognized functions: to serve as a sign and to empower. It was the “empowerment” tradition on which early Pentecostals centered their pneumatic experience.

First Samuel 11 is significant, where its emphasis is quite different from Saul’s earlier experience with the Spirit (1 Sam 10:10). As Jabesh Gilead faced the impending attack and enslavement by the Ammonites, as soon as Saul learned of this threat, “the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him” (1 Sam 11:6). The ensuing actions point to Saul’s

¹¹ For the task of research, see Josfin Raj, “‘Production of Knowledge’ as a Vocation of Pentecostal Theologians at the Postmodern Turn: Nurturing Research Culture among Pentecostal Theological Educators in India,” in *Pentecostal Theological Education in the Majority World*, 89-115.

military campaign against the enemy: burning with anger (v. 6), cutting the oxen into pieces, and sending messengers throughout Israel to mobilize an inter-tribal army (v. 7). He won a decisive victory so that “no two of them [enemies] were left together” (v. 11). Although people knew of his anointing (v. 12), the successful mobilization of an ad hoc army to “come out together as one” (v. 7) and the complete victory are attributed to the empowering presence of the Spirit.

Similar records are found among several judges. Gideon and Samson stand out. When Gideon was called to be God’s mighty warrior (Judges 6:12) for the purpose of rescuing his people from the oppression of the Midianites, three signs to authenticate God’s call were given (6:17-21, 36-40), but they did not involve God’s Spirit. The coming of the Spirit upon Gideon (6:34-35) resulted in the organization of an eager multi-tribal army. His overwhelming victory recorded in Judges 7, credited to the work of the Spirit, also involved the calling of Israelites from Naphtali, Asher, Manasseh, and Ephraim to pursue the fleeing Midianites. Through this Spirit-empowered victory, Gideon’s leadership was authenticated and established. Samson, for different reasons, experienced God’s Spirit on three occasions (except for the unclear nature of his initial experience in Judges 13:25) to rescue himself from dangers. The Spirit empowered him to overpower the young lion on his way to Timnah (14:6); to kill thirty Philistines to secure the riddle price (14:19); and to free himself to strike one thousand Philistines with a donkey’s jawbone (15:14-15). On all these occasions, the Spirit’s sole function was to empower Samson to save himself from different dangers.

The Gospel writers pick up this long-held Old Testament tradition and apply it to Jesus. For example, Luke records Jesus’ Messianic self-proclamation starting with the Spirit’s presence: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me” (Luke 4:18). In doing so, the Gospel writer credits all the signs and wonders performed by Jesus to the Holy Spirit. Luke, quoting Peter, summarized the life and work of Jesus in terms of the Spirit’s empowerment: “You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him” (Acts 10:37-38). The early church, therefore, understood the reception of the Holy Spirit as an indication of its shared messianic mandate.

Contemporary Pentecostal Experience

This emphasis on the “power” through the Holy Spirit has breathed into the life of the Pentecostal faith to become a high “octane” version of Christianity. Many testimonies point to radical encounters with God, either in their conversion experiences or their struggle with life’s challenges.¹² The common features are God’s greatness and his experiential grace. This experience-based spirituality positively affects the believers’ attitude toward God with a higher level of the expectation of God’s revelation and intervention both for mundane and sacred life. Pentecostals hold an extraordinary balance in their faith in God between his transcendence (or his greatness) and immanence (his closeness). This is well expressed in their “spirited” and “anointed” worship in songs, prayers, testimonies, and the receiving and responding to God’s words. Pentecostal worship is not a cerebral exercise; it involves the whole body with an enthusiastic response to the elements of worship, either verbal, hand, or body movements. Indeed, Pentecostals’ worship involves their whole being as their worship is known for the participants’ uninhibited emotional involvement, restoring the emotive dimension of worship and spirituality.

Various sociological studies confirm that this positive orientation towards God results in the steady improvement of believers’ lives. David Martin traced the process of upward social mobility among Latin American Pentecostals. One’s spiritual (or inner) change positively influenced the lifestyle, family life, and work habits with the overall improvement of their social life.¹³ The same energy (or “power”) now turns them to be God’s agents of evangelism, spreading to others the same good news that the Pentecostals experienced. The Spirit’s empowerment provides, first of all, the content of the good news. Sharing one’s own experience of God is the most relevant and convincing message, and every Pentecostal believer is theologically prepared to do the task of evangelism. The same empowerment also motivates the believers to witness. The baptism in the Holy Spirit theoretically assumes one’s election for God’s work and commissioning

¹² Among Korean Pentecostals, see Myung Soo Park, “Korean Pentecostal Spirituality as Manifested in the Testimonies of Members of yoido Full Gospel Church,” in *David Yonggi Cho: A Close Look at His Theology and Ministry*, ed. Wonsuk Ma, William W. Menzies, and Hyeon-sung Bae (Baguio, Philippines: APTS Press, 2004), 43-67.

¹³ David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

to go to the ends of the earth for witnessing. The signs and wonders performed by Christ and the apostles are also available to them as the same Holy Spirit empowers them. This explains the exponential growth of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity.

This feature has renewed many denominations through the Charismatic Renewal. Many believe that the widespread Charismatic movement within the Catholic Church slowed down and reversed in some places the Church's downward trend. Also, almost all the independent and post-denominational churches from the 1980s, both in the North and the South, are Charismatic, adopting the dynamic feature of the Holy Spirit in their beliefs, worship, and daily life. For example, the Charismatic faith contributed to the rise and shaping of Messianic Jews.¹⁴

In the Frontline of Pentecostal Theological Formation/Education

If the local church is the primary location where theological formation takes place, then church leadership should pay attention to their teaching and practice of the baptism in the Spirit. This should include biblical, theological, and practical layers of teaching. And this orientation and emphasis should be presented for the whole age range, including children's teaching material. Many Pentecostal denominations, such as the US Assemblies of God, produce Sunday school literature that contains the teaching on baptism in the Spirit. For the adult level, the Alpha Course may provide a helpful evangelism and discipleship teaching model, culminating with Holy Spirit baptism. Utilizing the unique Pentecostal practice of testimonies can be an effective teaching tool. This intentional teaching should lead to the experience of the Spirit baptism. After each teaching series, the program organizer should lead a session leading the participants to seek the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Considering the diverse ways people receive the fullness of the Spirit, but mostly with the sign of speaking in tongues, the organizer should provide a conducive environment leading a sustained prayer time with supporters encouraging and assisting the seekers. Some observers agree that children receive this blessing with fewer challenges than adults. Again, sharing selected testimonies would edify others. The leader should also encourage those who did not experience the baptism to

¹⁴ Peter Hocken, *The Challenges of the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Messianic Jewish Movements: The Tensions of the Spirit*, Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology, and Biblical Studies (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009).

continue seeking it. With a set of instructions, a good follow-up plan should be in place.

In formal theological education, similar emphases and provisions are in order. This emphasis should be reflected prominently in the curriculum. Leadership should ensure that the faculty member teaching pneumatology should be the best on the team. In any Pentecostal library, collections on this uniquely Pentecostal doctrine should receive priority attention. It is also critical to facilitate students to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and then train them to lead others in this experience. In both areas, partnership with local churches is critical. The emphasis on “power,” however, has inadvertently yielded extremely destructive moral failures among some “empowered” ministry leaders. Although it is tempted to argue that such failures take place among “non-holiness” Pentecostals, it is hard to verify this theory with the ever-increasing diversity in the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements. Since most of future ministry leaders are prepared through formal theological education, it is imperative to make basic Christian spirituality as the core of the curriculum and community life.

On the research level, institutions are to encourage their faculty members to produce studies on the subject to serve both formal theological training and local church formation. As much as the biblical and theological standard work, reflections on the subject particularly in their socio-cultural and religious contexts should be encouraged.

All Believers’ “Prophethood”

A Bit of Biblical Perspective

The theological and practical consequences of the Pentecostal doctrine of the “fullness in the Spirit” are incredible and serve to mobilize Spirit-filled and -empowered believers for witnessing. Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-39) is based on Joel’s prophecy, and it is not an accident. The eschatological promise of God’s Spirit is for everyone (or “all flesh”) in the community: liberally poured out upon young and old, male and female, and free and slaves (Joel 2:28-29).¹⁵ The main features of its fulfillment on the day of Pentecost are potency: democratization and egalitarianism. The first has been discussed above, and the latter two directly contribute to the wide mobilization of Spirit-motivated believers for evangelism.

¹⁵ Amos Yong, *Renewing the Church by the Spirit: Theological Education after Pentecost* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), 78-79.

This event marks the radical “democratization” of God’s Spirit which was witnessed only upon a small group of chosen vessels in the Old Testament. The Joel passage fulfills Moses’ hope and prophecy pronounced in the wilderness when the seventy elders were filled with God’s Spirit. Two others, Eldad and Medad who were outside the designated sacred place, also began to prophesy under the presence of the Spirit. When Joshua urged Moses to stop them as they had violated the protocols, Moses responded, “I wish that all the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!” (Num 11:29). Incidentally, the passage also implies the “liberation of the Spirit” from the scared-secular religious boundaries. On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell upon the believers in the “upper room,” where the apostles were staying (Acts 1:13). During this time of the feast, when all the Jews were in the designated and sacred Temple area, the Spirit fell on the believers in this “secular” place.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell upon “all” who were “together in one place” (Acts 2:1), as the violent wind filled “the whole house” (2:2) and the tongues of fire rested on “each of them” (2:3). Thus, “all of them” were filled with the Holy Spirit (2:4). There is no mistake that Luke stacked these words to communicate that all of them, without any exception, experienced the fullness of the Holy Spirit on that day. The first believers consisted of the apostles (1:13), “along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers” (1:14), and the “believers (a group numbering about 120)” (1:15). The record implies a large number of followers besides the apostles and those in the inner circle were included. The literary impression is evident that the writer speaks of the liberal and abundant presence of the Holy Spirit upon each and all believers! This “democratic” presence of the Spirit is also egalitarian, crossing gender (women and men), racial differences (representing people from various places), and ecclesial classes (apostles and common believers). When the Gentiles also received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-48) and “some” from Jerusalem for the first time reached out to the “Greeks” (Acts 11:20), the egalitarian nature of the Spirit took another level of meaning.

The democratic promise of the Spirit, found in both the Numbers and Joel passages, also points to the prominence of prophesying as the immediate manifestation of the Spirit’s coming. In the Old Testament, prophesying is found elsewhere as the sign of the Spirit’s presence, such as upon the seventy elders (Num 11:19) and Saul (1 Sam 10:10). This link between the democratic outpouring of the Spirit and its resultant effect of empowerment through prophecy (or prophetic proclamation)

has been termed the “prophethood of all believers.”¹⁶ Taking the Reformer’s restorative vision of the “priesthood of all believers” a step further, Pentecostal theology argues for every believer’s call to proclaim the gospel under the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

Its Contribution

Historically, the exponential growth of Pentecostal Christianity is largely credited to the grassroots mobilization of ordinary believers to be eager evangelists. One example of this democratization potential is the role of women in ministry. In a recent introduction to the global Spirit-empowered movement, Todd Johnson and Gina Zurlo list “Women in Leadership” as the first “pivotal trend.”¹⁷ Examples range widely in geography and time: from Pandita Ramabi (India) and Amy McPherson (USA) to Christie Doh Tetteh (Ghana’s Solid Rock chapter), Jasil Choi (Korea), and many more.¹⁸ Traditionally, in many non-Western societies, women are restricted in ministry, including ordination. For example, in Korea, the Assemblies of God broke this wall in two significant ways. Firstly, it started ordaining women into ministry in the 1970s, a radical move in Korea, and the number of ordained women ministers grew consistently. The second is the famous home cell group of Yoido Full Gospel Church, which has mobilized a large number of lay women leaders to minister in thousands of home cell groups. Indeed, they are the backbone of pastoral care for this largest single congregation in the world. This democratization of ministry has been found everywhere: women church pioneers in townships of Africa, women leaders opening new Christian schools in their homes in urban slums, and women missionaries serving in both home and overseas ministries.

What is often criticized as the “overnight ministers” is also part of this theological vision. Yesterday’s businessman or schoolteacher becomes today’s minister—now establishing a new church in the neighborhood. While their lack of theological education puts them in the hands-on and trial-and-error learning process, it is important to recognize their courageous response to God’s call. These are practical

¹⁶ Not used for the first time, but popularized by Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers: A Study in Luke’s Charismatic Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

¹⁷ Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, *Introducing Spirit-Empowered Christianity: The Global Pentecostal & Charismatic Movements in the 21st Century* (Tulsa, OK: ORU Press, 2020), 147.

¹⁸ Johnson and Zurlo, *Introducing Spirit-Empowered Christianity*, 149-156.

and tangible outcomes of the democratized ministry through the calling and empowering of the Holy Spirit.

However, this encouraging development is not without challenges. Among Pentecostal denominations, particularly in the non-Western world, women are still restricted in ministry, let alone ordination. Even in Yoido Full Gospel Church, whose radical openness to women in ministry we celebrate, there have been only a few ordained women ministers. One of them was Rev. Jasil Choi, the church's co-founder. But recently, its leadership expressed an openness to the ordination of hundreds of women ministers in the church. Meanwhile, the nature and role of women leadership in the home cell system is also questioned. They have no opportunity to shape the ministry philosophy or direction of the church; rather they serve as voluntary assistants to the ministers.

Pentecostal Theological Formation and Education

The main venue for the preparation of God's people for ministry, particularly upon this democratized vision, is the local church. To begin with, the church has various opportunities to prepare all the believers in many areas of service, including worship, listening to the Word, serving in different ministries, and teaching opportunities. They are all critical components in spiritual and ministerial formation. Also, local churches have seen the proliferation of church-based training programs among Pentecostals. They range from new believers' orientation to structured ministerial training. Large churches also set up their own schools to prepare their workers and produce instructional material. For example, Yoido Full Gospel Church has a department which creates curriculum material and a printing facility to publish a weekly church newspaper, Children's Sunday school textbooks, training resources for cell-group leaders, and others. This can sometimes develop competition with formal theological education, but it also presents opportunities to work together.

As the Pentecostal movement develops and matures, it follows the patterns that other churches have established. Theological education is one of them. The initial short-term practical preparation for ministry slowly evolved into Bible institutes, Bible colleges, and theological seminaries. To gain credibility, accreditations and quality control become part of the enterprise. Without knowing it, this increasing institutional development can result in the elitism of theological education and a monopoly on ministerial training. This has to do with the subtle clergyism that has been developing against the very theological foundation of Pentecostalism. One way to break it is to radically expand

the understanding of theological education from professional or clergy training to ministry preparation for any and every believer. This realignment requires the curriculum to be reviewed and revised in a necessary and active partnership with local churches. Dialogue between the school and the local church must be explored, established, and strengthened. There are several positive examples, such as Alphacrucis College of Australia actively partnering with local congregations. Another reality that this Pentecostal orientation has to confront is divided social realities, such as the caste system in India,¹⁹ ethnic tensions in Africa, and religious marginalization and persecution in many parts of the world.

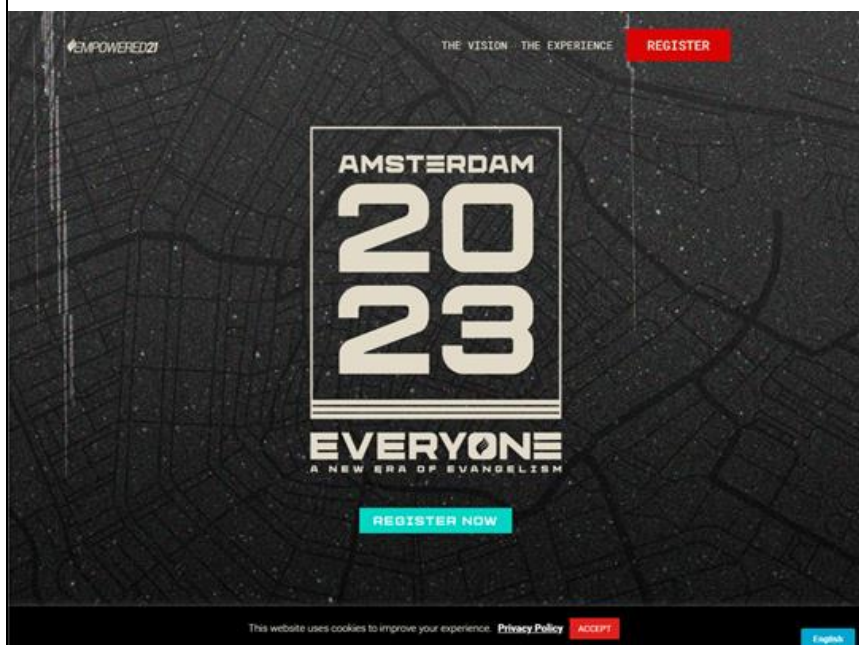
On the research level, in addition to ongoing theological studies, case studies of democratized ministry in various socio-cultural contexts will serve the movement well. This follows the distinct Pentecostal tradition of “testimonies,” freely sharing how the Holy Spirit enabled believers to bridge the church-school divide and break seemingly glass walls. One contextual challenge in advancing this democratization and egalitarian vision is how every grassroots Pentecostal can live a Spirit-empowered life in adverse, conflicted, and even persecuted circumstances. Speaking on behalf of the voiceless masses is the first call of Pentecostal scholarship.

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¹⁹ I found the Bhojpuri Movement as a shining example of Pentecostal formation and mission, crossing the caste divisions. Victor John and Dave Coles, *Bhojpuri Breakthrough: A Movement That Keeps Multiplying* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2019).



**2023 - 2033: A DECADE OF
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Everyone from Anywhere to Everywhere: A Brief Overview of the World Missions Commission

Max Barroso

“This is a time as never before when the baptized saints are scattering abroad everywhere preaching the Word.”¹

Even though such words could be considered a fitting description of the here and now of the Pentecostal movement, this was the opening statement of the September edition of *Apostolic Faith* in 1907. The thrust toward the ends of the earth has always been central to the ethos of the Spirit-empowered church from the accounts in the early Pentecostal periodicals to the reflections of contemporary missiologists. This symbiotic relationship cannot be overlooked. As Allan Anderson (2007) noted in his *Spreading Fires, The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism*, “The theological link between Spirit baptism and missions has always been made in the Pentecostal movement. It is essential to understand the significance of this because just as Spirit baptism is Pentecostalism’s central, most distinctive doctrine, so missions is Pentecostalism’s central, most important activity.”² Such understanding is what Wonsuk Ma identified in the Spring 2022 volume of this journal as “missionally oriented pneumatology.”³

From the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2) to the diaspora (Acts 8), to the missionary beginning outlined in the book of Acts (Acts 13), to the worldwide expansion of the good news after Azusa,⁴ men and

¹ “Everywhere Preaching the Word,” *Apostolic Faith* (September 1907), accessed July 17, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3GvLiOK>.

² A. Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 65.

³ W. Ma, (2022). “Pentecostalism: A New but Big Kid on the Global Christian Block,” *Pentecostal Education* 7, no. 1: 73–91, accessed July 17, 2022, <https://bit.ly/38Jat0i>.

⁴ E. Hyatt, *Fire on the Earth: Eyewitness Reports from the Azusa Street Revival* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2006).

women have answered the call to go and share the good news. One of the challenges to address amid this missional zeal is what Paul Alexander (2012) identified in his contribution to *Together in One Mission* as the awkward relationship Pentecostalism tends to have with institutions due to its origins as a revival movement with a heavy eschatological emphasis.⁵ Arto Hämmäläinen (2005), focusing on the Spirit and structure, asserted the following:

The Spirit and structure tension has existed from the time of the early church. The free flow of charismas has vitalized spiritual life again and again. The Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement in the last century has brought about the biggest revival ever, and it still continues. The routinization which happened to the early church during the first centuries and diminished the spontaneous work of the Spirit, has also threatened the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement during our time. On the other hand, the neglect of structures has led to the streaming of spiritual waters into the Sahara. Such an evaporation of divine gifts and means is deeply regrettable.⁶

As the Pentecostal movement enters its second century of existence, the challenge remains to harmonize the apparent need to embrace the centrality of the great commission with the need for unity, collaboration, and sound operational structures.

Historical Overview

As the global leadership of the Pentecostal Movement was gathering in Johannesburg, South Africa, to celebrate the twentieth Pentecostal World Conference on September 15, 2004, thirteen missions leaders were summoned to consider the constitutional framework of the PWF and explore the potential to “further advance and accelerate the spread of the gospel through cooperation.”⁷ Common conversation items were identified following a fruitful discussion, and an ad hoc task force was established to explore this agenda further. Arto Hämmäläinen (Fida,

⁵ P. Alexander, “Creating Pentecostal Mission Unity through Theological Institutions,” in *Together in One Mission*, ed. A. Hämmäläinen and G. McClung (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012).

⁶ A. Hämmäläinen, *Leadership: The Spirit and the Structure – Missiological Perspectives for Designing Church and Mission Bodies* (South Hamilton, MA: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2005). Hämmäläinen served as chairman of WMC/PWF 2005-2022.is

⁷ G. Mundis, September 2004, Minutes of Missions Executives Ad Hoc Meeting, PWF World Missions Commission Archive, Bethany, OK.

Finland), Mike Larking (Foursquare, USA), Z'Bo Ka Mkhwanazi (Apostolic Faith Mission, South Africa), and Greg Mundis (AG, USA) served in the initial group that laid the foundation for this new expression of cooperation that was emerging.

After this meeting, the PWF Advisory Committee gathered in Sydney, Australia, and considered the language and roadmap envisioned in Johannesburg. On May 25, 2005, Dr. Thomas Trask and Bishop James Leggett, Chairman and Chairman-elect of the Fellowship, notified the ad hoc committee of the affirmative action taken by the Fellowship:

It was moved, seconded, and carried to make this ad hoc committee into a PWF commission with the assignment of missions and relief and development. The direction for the commission should be the synergization of the different relief groups in the Pentecostal World to work together without wasting resources and without taking over. They must find ways to work together recognizing uniqueness of groups and regions and bring together support for disasters as one voice and one impact.⁸

The stage was set, and in conjunction with the 2007 Pentecostal World Conference in Surabaya, Indonesia, the World Missions Commission of the PWF was gathering in person for the first time with 35 leaders from 13 different organizations.⁹ In May 2008, the group held its first Consultation in Helsinki, Finland, where the Lead Team was established, and the official purpose, vision, and guidelines were adopted. Greg Mundis suggested the following preamble to open the document:

The Pentecostal World Fellowship advisory committee, recognizing the needs in our world for the spreading of the gospel, mandated a commission to address the missionary vision and work, as well as relief and development activities of its membership.¹⁰

As the Commission continued to advance, the geographical and institutional diversity expanded with the proactive inclusion and synergy

⁸ Correspondence between Thomas Trask, James Leggett, and Arto Hämäläinen, May 25, 2005, PWF World Missions Commission Archive, Bethany, OK.

⁹ Minutes and notes of the WMC Committee Meeting, August 2007, PWF WMC Archive, Bethany, OK.

¹⁰ Minutes of the WMC Committee Meeting, May 2008, PWF WMC Archive, Bethany, OK.

of the leadership of both PEM and PAM.¹¹ During the 2011 Consultation held in Budapest, Hungary, Grant McClung presented the proposal for *Together in One Mission*,¹² a collection of essays from vital global leaders to testify to the increasing unity and cooperation amongst Pentecostal missions leaders. It was published in 2012 and then followed in 2020 by *To the Ends of the Earth: Building a National Sending Structure*¹³ as a part of the Commission's contribution to missiological and scholarly work.

In 2014, the World Missions Commission and the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education took a significant step. During the Consultation held in Warsaw, Poland, and following a presentation on *The New Context of Mission in the 21st Century*, by Paul Alexander, Chairman of WAPTE, an agreement for increased collaboration was reached by the two bodies of the Pentecostal World Fellowship moving forward. Both bodies agreed to provide a seat for one another in their membership and explore the potential for joint ventures.¹⁴ Starting in 2019 and onward, the synergy between the two has increased even further with a series of collaborative papers, participation in consortiums, and Barry Saylor and Ulrik Josefsson speaking at the Helsinki 2021 Global WMC Consultation and later at the Development and Relief Summit.

A turning point in the Commission's history came during the 2016 Sao Paulo Consultation held in conjunction with the Pentecostal World Conference. Grant McClung presented a memorandum and led to a discussion centered on the alarming demographic trends observed in the missionary force and the leadership of most mission movements. He challenged all commission members to identify younger leaders within their organizations and bring them to the table.¹⁵ At the 2017

¹¹ PEM stands for Pentecostal European Mission and PAM stands for Pentecostal Asia Missions and the overlap of Dr. Hämäläinen in the lead team of all 3 entities facilitated a seamless integration of these continental bodies into the global structure.

¹² A. Hämäläinen and G. McClung, eds., *Together in One Mission* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012).

¹³ A. Hämäläinen and U. Strohschein, *To the Ends of the Earth*, (Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 2020).

¹⁴ Minutes of the WMC Committee Meeting, November 2014, PWF WMC Archive, Bethany, OK.

¹⁵ Minutes of the WMC Committee Meeting, September 2016, PWF WMC Archive, Bethany, OK.

Consultation in Tel-Aviv, Israel, the Church of God Missions, Foursquare Church Brazil, and IPHC World Missions answered the Sao Paulo challenge by each bringing a younger representative. During the consultation, Aubrey Tozer from Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada Missions facilitated a discussion regarding the future of missionary work and the role of the WMC in the changing global landscape. Brad Walz, Chairman of the World Assemblies of God Missions Fellowship, proposed to the Commission electing one of the younger missions leaders present to join the Lead Team in response to the discussions. Rev. Max Barroso from IPHC World Missions was elected.¹⁶

In 2018 the World Missions Commission held its global consultation in Rome, Italy, in conjunction with the World Assemblies of God Missions Fellowship meeting. The joint meeting had a strong focus on unreached people groups which led to the appointment of Michael Dissayeneke from AG Sri Lanka as coordinator for UPG efforts in the PWF WMC. The need to create synergy amongst disaster and relief practitioners was mentioned, and Max Barroso and Jackson Luvizotto were appointed to lead this effort.¹⁷

The 2019 Pentecostal World Conference held in Calgary generated significant momentum toward creating synergy and affirming the emphasis on unity, collaboration, and structure. As the Missions Forum took place, networking clusters from every region gathered to pursue collaboration and bridge-building across movements in localized contexts. At the same time, mission leaders and development and relief practitioners came together to lay the foundations for the Pentecostal Development and Relief Partners Network¹⁸ under the auspices of the World Missions Commission. Hämäläinen also shared his vision to utilize his next triennium in leadership to establish the framework for the many initiatives within the Commission to flourish and make room

¹⁶ Minutes of the WMC Committee Meeting, May 2017, PWF WMC Archive, Bethany, OK.

¹⁷ Minutes of the WMC Committee Meeting, February 2018, PWF WMC Archive, Bethany, OK.

¹⁸ Following a series of correspondence and digital connection points, the Lead Team of the WMC met with representatives from Fida, ERDO, PMU, IPHC People to People, AG Care Ghana, Foursquare Relief, and Convoy of Hope to initiate the process to intentionally collaborate and build synergy amongst Pentecostal development and relief practitioners. These efforts were formalized during the first Development and Relief Summit held in Oklahoma City, OK, January 2020.

for a new generation of leaders to step forward. Rev. Max Barroso was appointed Vice-chairman to be mentored by the chair in preparation for the upcoming transition.¹⁹

As William Wilson was addressing the World Conference for the first time as its seventh chairman on August 29th, 2019, he said, “I personally believe that the Holy Spirit is intensely interested and ready to act on our behalf to help us reach every single person on planet earth for the glory of God.” Everyone on earth hearing the good news of Jesus in the power of the Spirit was once again front and center. Echoes of Azusa reverberated through the room.

Here and Now

Consistent with the intent to continue to maximize collaborative efforts, the composition of the Lead Team was adapted between 2020 and 2022 to better reflect the composition of the Fellowship. The additions of Ted Vail (Vice President for Global Operations for The Foursquare Church), David Ramirez (Third Assistant General Overseer and Executive Director, Division of Education for the Church of God), Niclas Lindgren (Director of PMU in Sweden), and Opoku Onyinah (Chairman of the Church of Pentecost in Ghana) strengthen and add tremendous value to the leadership core of the missions arm of the Fellowship.

The Pentecostal Development and Relief Partners Network gathered for its first Global Summit in January 2020 with key leaders and practitioners from 11 Pentecostal relief and development organizations representing eight nations and four continents.²⁰ Protocols for mutual cooperation were established, working groups addressing various themes were set in motion, and forward steps were agreed upon. This unity was tested two months later as the COVID-19 pandemic began to sweep across the world, and the Pentecostal missions, relief, and development organizations stepped into action. By April 3, 2020, a global webinar for pastors, frontline workers, and missionaries was held. Simultaneously, resources were produced and translated into multiple languages, and Pentecostal organizations assisted in 90 different nations totaling USD

¹⁹ Minutes of the WMC Committee Meeting, August 2019, PWF WMC Archive, Bethany, OK.

²⁰ Summit Report for Participants and Constituents, January 2020, PWF WMC Archive, Bethany, OK.

71,155,450.²¹ That led to a second global summit in 2021, where numerous working groups of practitioners developed resources focused on best practices for development and relief, gender equality in development work, engagement and advocacy, and theological foundations (in cooperation with WAPTE).

A focused and deliberate approach was implemented to create synergy across the different streams within the World Missions Commission networks and beyond. A clear example was the joint meetings held by the Commission and Development and Relief Network in September of 2021 in Helsinki, Finland, where members from WAPTE and PCRL (Pentecostal Commission for Religious Liberties) presented and participated in the program and discussions. In like fashion, a continued strengthening of the partnership with the World Assemblies of God Missions Fellowship has been significant. Participation in co-sponsoring the World Missions Congress, collaboration in joint consultations, and lead team engagements remain a priority in fostering unity.

A sharpening of the emphasis for the future is also taking place in understanding the scope of activity and defining the points of focus for the Commission. In February 2022, the Lead Team of the World Missions Commission gathered in Miami, Florida, to discuss the Commission's current position and outline priorities moving forward²² which include:

- 1) Plan events that are edifying and constructive for all members.
- 2) Create an environment where we learn from each other.
- 3) Provide environments and opportunities to engage key individuals to enlarge their mission vision.
- 4) Equip our Fellowship's members and churches to engage and commit to reaching the Least Reached.
- 5) Give spiritual covering to strategic areas such as the Pentecostal Relief and Development Network.
- 6) Engage our new senders to fulfill their sending potential.
- 7) Provide a voice for the Pentecostals worldwide at strategic places of influence.

²¹ Pentecostal Development and Relief Partners, *Pentecostal Development and Relief Partners Covid-19 Response Report*, September 2020, Pentecostal World Fellowship Missions Commission, accessed July 18, 2022, https://assets.website-files.com/5839890845569b016c4a5cbf/5f691bc470506de19130878b_COVID-19%20Response%20Update.pdf.

²² Minutes of the WMC Lead Team Meeting, February 2022, PWF WMC Archive, Bethany, OK.

Looking Ahead

As the Pentecostal World Fellowship embraces the challenge to see every person on earth hear the good news of the Gospel, the inescapable reality is that 3.3 billion people (42% of the world's population) are unreached.²³ The role of the World Missions Commission is front and center. Moreover, the conversation amongst the Pentecostal missions community is also looking beyond the unreached to consider a second grouping, the *never reached*. Jeff Hartensveld, Regional Director for Asia for AGWM, framed the term in this context:

Looking at the expansion of the Great Commission from Jerusalem with a historical lens rather than an unfinished lens . . . there are people groups that were Christian at some point in their history and then became non-Christian. The never reached are the people that, if we trace them historically, have zero Christian histories or witnesses.²⁴

For the challenge of Everyone 2033 presented by Wilson to be achieved, the movement must understand that missions are no longer from the west to the rest but from *anywhere to everywhere*. The key to accessing closed nations, reaching the never reached, engaging the unchurched, and fulfilling the great commission resides in the global church answering the call, not just the western church.

The sending structures of Pentecostal expressions around the globe have the potential to serve as catalysts for the harvest. However, the potential will only be realized if the traditional senders fully embrace the opportunity to welcome, resource, and empower the new senders around the globe to fulfill their role in world evangelization. Brad Walz, Chairman of the World Assemblies of God Missions Fellowship, said it this way:

In the future, there will be many more workers sent from the Global South than the traditional West. But many changes will have to take place for those new senders to have serious, competent, and mature sending structures. May we all be part of that change . . . the strong

²³ As reported by Joshua Project on their progress report dashboard on July 2022, accessed July 18, 2022, <https://joshuaproject.net/global/progress>.

²⁴ N. Robertson, host, A Conversation with Jeff Hartensveld, Regional Director for Asia, March 10, 2021, *The Antioch Initiative Podcast*, no. 26, accessed July 18, 2022, <https://podtail.com/en/podcast/the-antioch-initiative-podcast/a-conversation-with-jeff-hartensveld-the-regional-/>.

national churches and the Pentecostal missionaries who work among them.²⁵

As the Spirit-empowered movement is focused on the Everyone 2033 goals, the World Missions Commission embraces the challenge to build bridges, equip new senders, cultivate opportunities, innovate across cultures, and serve the Pentecostal movement to ensure that from anywhere to everywhere until Jesus comes, we will go.

Max Barroso (mbarroso@iphc.org) from Argentina currently serves as Director of The Awakening of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church's World Missions. He is the incoming Chair of the World Missions Commission of the Pentecostal World Fellowship.

²⁵ B. Walz, B. "To Advance from 'Talking' to 'Walking': Recognizing the Reality of the New Sending Countries," *International Journal of Pentecostal Missiology* 1 (2013), accessed July 18, 2022, http://agts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Walz_B_Global_Miss_4-11s.pdf.

EPTA Annual Conference 2023

‘The World on Fire’: Pentecostal Eschatology and Ecotheology

Call for Paper

The European Pentecostal Theological Association (EPTA) is seeking proposals for papers to be presented at its 2023 annual conference. The meeting will take place in hybrid form at the Theological Seminary Erzhausen, close to Frankfurt, Germany, and online for those who cannot attend in person. The conference runs from 17 to 19 July 2023 (Monday evening to Wednesday evening). Further conference details will follow in due course at www.eptaweb.org.

The conference theme explores Pentecostal eschatology and ecotheology. Paper proposals can explicitly combine the two themes – for example, by assessing how eschatology has influenced Pentecostal approaches to environmental and creation care – or they can discuss eschatology and ecotheology in their own right. EPTA encourages research on Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in Europe and further afield, and it welcomes theological, biblical, historical, and interdisciplinary presentations. Preference is given to proposals that relate to the conference theme.

Proposals should be 300-500 words in length and include (1) the paper’s title; (2) author’s name, institutional affiliation, and email address; (3) an abstract or summary of the argument; (4) preference for either a 60 minute or 30 minute presentation (the timings include a 20 minute or 10 minute Q&A slot respectively).

Proposals should be sent by 31 January 2023 to Simo Frestadius, Chair of EPTA, at simo.frestadius@regents-tc.ac.uk. Notification of acceptance is expected by 28 February 2023.



Theological Basis for Understanding Human Poverty and Holistic Mission: The Pentecostal Relief and Development Partners

Niclas Lindgren

The following chapter was developed in 2021-2022 as a position paper by the Pentecostal Relief and Development Partners, a network of aid organisations within the global Pentecostal movement. The Drafting Committee consisted of the following: Chad Irons (Australia), Chad Isenheart (USA), Stig Stordal (Norway), Ulf Strohhahn (Finland), Bryan Nix (USA), and Niclas Lindgren (Sweden, chair). The aim of the network and the position paper is to strengthen the global Pentecostal movement's response to human poverty, oppression, and injustice. The document is a joint declaration of our common spiritual foundation, approaches, and aims in development and relief work.

Introduction

We¹ are bothered by the brokenness of our world. People are suffering from poverty and oppression. Injustice and structural racism flourish in many parts of the world. There seems to be no end to conflicts. Those living in war zones experience unfathomable anguish. There is unbearable suffering of children who are victims of human trafficking. The environment is becoming more polluted and is irreversibly destroyed in many places. Yet we can hear a cry for change and for freedom throughout the world. Paul wrote in the letter to the Romans, 'For the creation waits with eager longing . . . to be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of

¹ The Pentecostal Relief and Development Partners represent the development organizations of Pentecostal churches in Australia, Canada, Finland, Ghana, Norway, Sweden, and the USA. This document is a joint declaration of our common spiritual foundation, approaches, and aims in development and relief work.

God” (Romans 8:19, 23). There is no need to whitewash the suffering of so many on this globe, neither can we ignore it. As Pentecostal Relief and Development Partners, we want to be part of the solution for a better world.

Why We Take Action

Our Understanding of God

We acknowledge that God is the primary agent of the transformation we long for. We want to be vessels of His agency, working through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Our initiative and motivation for development cooperation and humanitarian relief arises from our understanding of who God is. God is love and loves all of creation (John 3:16-17).² God is good. He also reveals himself as a God of compassion. “I have observed the misery of my people . . . I have heard their cry . . . Indeed, I know their sufferings” (Exodus 3:7). We want to share God’s loving character with people. He is also revealed as a just God and a God who loves justice (Isaiah 61:8). “‘I am the LORD; I act with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight,’ says the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:24). The Bible reveals to us God’s standards for interpersonal relationships and social order, which are founded in His concepts of righteousness and justice (Psalm 89:14). We also believe in a God of provision. Genesis 1:28 says, “God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’” “This means that God’s first word to human beings is a word of direction; the second word is a word of provision, indicating God’s intention that all of humankind are provided for in their journey of life. Poverty is thus a contradiction of God’s primary intention that the basic living needs of all of humanity are properly provided for.”³

The Biblical Narrative

We hereby state that the Bible holds the key to individual as well as societal transformation. The entire Bible contains a historical drama, which is also known as *salvation history*. The Biblical narrative offers a

² In Greek, the word for world is *cosmos*. God’s love encompasses all that God created.

³ This quote is from Indian Pastor Ivan Satyavrata’s book, *Pentecostals and the Poor* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017).

story of hope and restoration that is experienced, practiced, and lived out by individuals, societies, and all creation. While the Bible cannot be treated as a rule book for social justice, it does offer standards of justice and injustice in people's lives and relationships.

An Eschatological Perspective

As Pentecostals, we believe that we are based in historic events but also live in the light of the future. Also, the dynamic tension between the “already now” and the “not yet” is integral to our understanding of the world. The Kingdom of God is both present and coming. Our worldview is conditioned by the personal experience of the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Spirit affects the way we understand God, live our lives, and look at the world. We believe that God acts today, and that all things eventually will be reconciled and restored. Two passages paint the picture of the future we envision: Isaiah 11:1-10 and Revelations 7:9-12. In Isaiah we read about the branch from Jesse who will judge with righteousness and give decisions for the poor with justice. Isaiah prophesied about an age when no one would be harmed or destroyed for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. And in Revelations, we read about the great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the Lamb and praising Him for salvation.

Creation

In the beginning, God had a vision of what creation and humanity should be like. And so, He created everything, and it was beautiful and in harmony with each other. This initial condition is well expressed with the Hebrew word *shalom*. It is often translated as peace, but more is implied. *Shalom* means to live in reconciled relationships with God, the family, and with neighbors. With *shalom*, humans can reach their physical and intellectual potentials. It also means that there is enough food on the table. A sustained and fruitful environment, like the Garden of Eden, is also implied when talking about *shalom*. Man was placed into that environment with the power to lovingly take care of everything. Holistic relation is not only between different parts in creation though, but also within them, reflecting the identity of God and being a community in perfect harmony. *Shalom* means that every aspect of our life is healthy and well.

Sin

But human beings rejected God's love. Everything was cast into chaos and despair when man defied God's word. The consequences of sin are guilt, separation from God, broken relationships, and a destroyed environment. Hunger, poverty, oppression, and murder followed. By rejecting God's vision, man also destroyed his own potential and the possibility to live with or in *shalom*. Human poverty is the result of sin and the absence of the *shalom* that God intended for the whole of creation. These broken relationships with God, between people, and the rest of creation, have led to injustice and inequality often resulting in poverty for the vulnerable and oppressed. It is thus important to shed light on both individual and structural sin and the structures and systems that keep people in poverty. We must have a holistic understanding of salvation in which all broken relationships are to be restored, not limiting ourselves to a focus on sin and salvation on the individual level.

Jesus

Yet God refused to give up his vision for this world. He sent his son, Jesus, and through him a wonderful way of salvation and restoration has been established. When Jesus introduced his mission, he often spoke about the Kingdom of God. The kingdom spreads wherever people invite Jesus into their lives. During his ministry, Jesus paid special attention to marginalized people in society, including children, women, minorities, the socially excluded, and people living with disabilities. Christ served in both word and deed, which most of the time could not be separated (Luke 7:22). Out of

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” (Luke 4:18-19)

his compassion for the suffering, he fed the hungry and healed countless people. Still, the greatest deed that Jesus did was his voluntary death on the cross. It is there that he broke the domination of sin, and God's power of forgiveness was released (Colossians 1:20). This reverses the fate of our broken world and makes personal as well as societal transformation possible. Jesus made peace between God and man. We believe that permanent and holistic change is realized when people and communities encounter Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. This is based on Jesus being raised from the dead. He is alive and exerting a continuous influence on this world. Through Jesus, God is reclaiming

his creation. “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things . . . making peace through the blood of his cross” (Colossians 1:19-20). In Jesus, God is putting all things together, reconciling the world to himself and reversing the effect of sin and human poverty on the whole of God’s creation (Ephesians 2:13-22; Luke 4:16-21).

The Holy Spirit

God sent his Holy Spirit to enable the church to further spread the Kingdom of God on earth. We believe that the Spirit is the life-giver. He did give life to creation, and he does now. As the Spirit gives life to humanity (Genesis 2:7), so he does for plants and creatures.

We also believe, based on the record in the Acts of the Apostles, that the Holy Spirit is the countermeasure against all prejudice, segregation, and racism. “I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, . . . even upon my slaves, both men and women” (Acts 2:17-18). The book of Acts begins with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, and miracles and in the process, he helps people overcome language and cultural barriers. The Spirit was for all people, uniting those from different cultures, including people from all levels of society and overcoming the economic distinction between the rich and poor. An egalitarian life in the church developed as a result of the Spirit (they shared much of life together, catered for each other, and gave to those in need [Acts 2:44-45]). It demonstrated that the preaching of the gospel and Spirit-filled living resulted in a loving community that met both spiritual and material needs.

Time and again, the Holy Spirit intervenes to reconcile people of different genders, educational backgrounds, ethnicity, and political views with one another. The modern Global Pentecostal Movement bears this testimony in its history. At Azusa Street, it is said that “the color line was washed away in the blood”.⁴ During a time of heavy racial segregation, the leaders of the Azusa Street Revival created a place where everyone would be welcome, and where the walls of race and gender were broken down. All people knelt beside each other, singing, and praying together. The Holy Spirit created an unprecedented dimension of love, brotherhood, and equality, allowing men, women,

⁴ Eyewitness and historian, Frank Bartleman, observed that “the ‘colour line was washed away in the blood.’” F. Bartleman, *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2017), 54.

and children to celebrate their unity in Christ. It also challenged them to go change their neighborhoods, cities, and even nations.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit empowers believers to be steadfast in the face of adversity and persecution. Still today, we see that God works miracles through the Holy Spirit to make the gospel of Jesus Christ known everywhere.

The Church

In the New Testament, spreading the Kingdom of God goes hand in hand with planting new churches. Jesus describes the mission of the church as the continuation of His own ministry: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20: 21). Because of this, we see holistic mission⁵ and discipleship as primary activities of the church. We believe that the church is God’s main strategy in healing the broken world. Churches and their organizational structures in development and relief work can engage in holistic mission that addresses the full scope of human poverty.

Pentecostal churches try to emulate the first congregations of the New Testament. It is striking to see that church was much more than a place of worship for the first Christians. Those believers shared their material goods and the church showed care by feeding the most vulnerable people in the community (Acts 6: 1ff). The first Christians were a counterculture and an alternative society, confident that Christ was working in and through them to reclaim God’s intention of *shalom*. They had a sense of international welfare because congregations in different provinces helped each other by sending funds to the poor (2

“A Church without social ethics rooted in the moral vision of Scripture with its emphasis on justice, mercy, and humility before God (Micah 6:8) is in no condition to avoid irrelevance in relation to the great problems that affect humankind . . . At worst, it will fail to recognize its own captivity to the culture-ideology of consumerism and will be used by the powerful to provide religious legitimization to their unjust socioeconomic and political system.” (Quotation from the Micah Network. For access, see <https://www.micahnetwork.org/visionmission>; 27.9.2020.)

⁵ Integral mission or holistic mission is a term which describes an understanding of Christian mission which embraces both evangelism and social responsibility.

Corinthians 8:1-14). In the same way, we hold that the church has a social responsibility to fulfil on behalf of its own members and to all people who are called “our neighbors” (Luke 10:29-37). The church is commissioned to “learn to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, and plead for the widow.” (Isaiah 1:17).

Christians are also called to live authentic lives and to stand against corruption in society (Matthew 5:13f). The Biblical metaphor of the church as salt and light implies the penetration and permeation of society, which involves active participation in the socio-political world to bring health. God’s people carry a role and responsibility as ambassadors for another kingdom, living according to the values of God’s kingdom.

Transformation

Transformation is holistic and the gospel is a message for whole life and whole society transformation. Transformation is the process of change through which people are reconciled with God, themselves, each other, and the rest of creation. Subsequently, the social, economic, and societal issues, which result from such distorted relationships, can be addressed and peace restored in communities. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the transformational agent of individuals as well as cultural and social realities, and that we as Spirit-filled believers are instruments in this transformational work. We acknowledge that we need to experience this transformation in our own lives and relationships. “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). We also acknowledge that we have been given both an individual and a corporate responsibility to act as agents of reconciliation and transformation. Our commitment to take action is the outworking of the two great commandments: “Love the Lord your God,” and “Love your neighbor as yourself.” We take action through development and relief work because it is essential for holistic mission to address the full scope of human poverty, and it is God’s plan for whole life and all society transformation (*shalom*).

The Understanding that Frames Our Action

A Holistic Approach

The *shalom* which God envisions for humanity targets all aspects of human life. Like Jesus, who took care of people’s physical, mental, and spiritual needs as he encountered them, we, too, believe that our ministry cannot neglect any dimension of human life. In this way, we consider, for example, justice, gender equality, education, farming, and

medical help as essential mission activities. God's plan for transformation and a holistic approach to addressing human poverty seeks to reconcile four sin-damaged relationships:

- Spiritual reconciliation: restoring people to a right relationship with God and reinstating the Lordship of Christ in their lives.
- Personal reconciliation: restoring our self-image and addressing issues of inferiority and superiority so we understand that we are creatures of equal worth and value; reinstating capabilities, wisdom, and dignity; and empowering those who have been oppressed.
- Social reconciliation: restoring people to a right relationship with each other, addressing injustice, inequality, and oppression; and reinstating the responsibility that we have to one another to "love our neighbor as ourselves" (Mark 12:31).
- Material and physical restoration: ensuring that all have the opportunity to participate in the stewardship of creation and to be sustained by it. This requires addressing systemic obstacles that limit people's ability to engage in stewardship and promoting the sustainable stewardship of resources.

The holistic approach will expand beyond the scope of individuals and consider the community as a whole. It seeks to engage the whole community in restorative actions to address the root causes of human poverty. The church consists of both rich and poor, is located in and is part of the community it serves, and has therefore a unique opportunity in serving holistically and reconciling all sin-damaged relationships (see the book of James).

The holistic approach also informs the duration of our involvement. Transformation needs time so we are happy to commit several years for change to take root. On the other hand, natural disasters or other humanitarian crises demand responses that are quick but momentary. While these initial humanitarian aid responses will be quite focused, any ongoing engagement in disasters, risk reduction, and resilience building draw on a holistic perspective.

Recognizing Injustice

Injustice becomes evident in oppressive actions when the way we treat another person fails to meet God's standards of good and right (Ezekiel 22:29; Exodus 23:1-9).

Injustice is also evident in corrupt systems that fail to deliver what is just and right (Amos 5:11-15). It can also be seen in the example of corrupt officials who fail in their responsibility to uphold just standards on behalf of the vulnerable (Isaiah 10:1-2).

The Christian pursuit of justice is about restoring relational balance for all people, with particular focus on recovering dignity for the marginalized and oppressed. Justice seeks to restore the capacity of these members of society so they can independently relate to the structures of society and meet their own needs rather than depend solely on the mercy of others.

The Bible clearly states that meeting the needs of the oppressed is an aspect of seeking justice (Isaiah 1:17). This process must go further and demonstrate that the restoration of God's justice challenges and rebuilds social structures to the right balance and back to God.

Considering the Perspectives of the Marginalized and Oppressed

Ancient Egypt was a kingdom built on oppression where a few people benefited from the oppression of many. The Israelites were first discriminated against and then enslaved by the Egyptians. God took action after being touched by what he saw and heard (Exodus 3:7): "I have heard the cry of my people." The word used for cry is *sa'aq*, which is an expression of pain and suffering. But it also expresses a question: Where is justice? Did anybody see that? Who will come to my rescue? Am I alone here? God's reply is that he sees and hears. And he also acts. God promises to be the redeemer of his people. A holistic perspective is needed when trying to understand the rescuing mission of God. God's way of acting contains a response to every need of the Israelites:

"Is not this the fast that I choose: to lose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?" (Isaiah 58:6-7)

- Freedom in a political situation: being an ethnic minority, former refugees, enslaved, and exploited with no political freedom and no representation.
- Freedom in an economic situation: slaves with no income, no freedom of movement, and bereft of the possibility to own land.
- Freedom in a social situation: the people threatened, gender-discriminated (Exodus 1:16), and personal rights violated.
- Freedom in a spiritual situation: Egyptians ascribed their supremacy to their idols. God wanted his people to be released so that they would be a testimony to his power and would worship and serve him (Exodus 4:22).

In Mathew 25 we read about how Jesus identifies himself with the vulnerable. Jesus was born into a family that couldn't afford the stipulated lamb to be sacrificed when a Jewish boy was born.⁶ Throughout Jesus' life we see that He was on the side of the vulnerable, not only in principle and morally, but he really lived his life there. He belonged to them and not to the powerful and influential. We usually have no problem imagining Jesus identifying with the poor and vulnerable, but he went further: he was one of the vulnerable. God thus entered history as one of the marginalized. The mission of Jesus was to bring light to the darkness, to loosen unjust shackles, and to give the oppressed holistic freedom.⁷

Like Jesus, the church is not only there for the poor; she *is* the poor in many countries. She therefore is the voice *for* and *by* the poor at the same time. The church thus voices the perspective of the poor and marginalized, but can do it even more intentionally on the local, national, and international level. The Biblical narrative defines our approach, targeting underprivileged and marginalized people groups in society (James 2:5). We actively pursue social justice by our advocacy on behalf of and together with the voiceless. Many people are not only unreached by the gospel, but are also void of basic services, education, access to markets, and political freedom because they are despised by the surrounding mainstream public. We seek to partner with those unreached, marginalized, and oppressed groups. We believe that God's compassion extends to those that are most often disadvantaged, for example, women, children, minorities, the aged, and people with disabilities.

⁶ Luke 2:24; Exodus 12:8.

⁷ Luke 4:18-19.

Empowerment and Participation

The marginalized and oppressed, who experience the effects of human poverty most severely, can internalize their poverty and become disempowered and fatalistic over time. And if we, in our response to human poverty, enter the process with limited knowledge and understanding, we might perpetuate disempowerment and unjust systems. “When we limit our understanding of poverty . . . we see ourselves as providers. The poor are passive recipients, incomplete human beings whom we make whole. This unwittingly has two negative consequences; firstly, this attitude demeans and devalues the poor. Our view of them, which quickly becomes their view of themselves, is that they are defective and inadequate. Second, our attitude about ourselves becomes messianic. We are tempted to believe we are the deliverers of the poor and that we make their lives complete.”⁸

The process of empowerment reengages the marginalized and oppressed as active participants in their own transformation. It also corrects our actions and responses from “doing for them” to “doing with them” and ultimately “doing for themselves without us.” This invitation of participation was first extended to all humanity by Christ. It was modelled through his engagement with the disciples on earth and culminated in his commissioning of the apostles and his departure from earth (Mathew 28:1-8-20; Acts 1:8-9). The first disciples were empowered as a necessary precursory step to active and meaningful participation in God’s plan for humanity.

Discipleship is a pathway of empowerment involving active participation and whole life transformation. The role of the church requires it to be an active participant in the holistic transformation of individuals, society, and structures. Our approach to development and relief must also incorporate empowerment and participation if we are to see holistic transformation.

The Church as a Peacemaker

God has entrusted the church with the message of reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ. Jesus said that peacemakers are blessed. The church is thus called to be a peacemaker, a pillar of truth, the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. She is called to be a witness both by word and deed to the new heaven and the new earth in which justice and righteousness dwell, and where broken relationships are restored.

⁸ Bryant L. Myers, “What is Poverty Anyway?” MARC Newsletter 1997.

Power Dynamics

We believe that power dynamics and the distribution of power matters. Empowerment happens when power, rather than just resource or opportunity, is transferred and when the marginalized and oppressed access sites of power and participate in the responsible stewardship of resource and opportunity. And empowerment happens where power takes on the characteristics of service and stewardship rather than dominating power (Matt 20:20-28). Jesus modelled these characteristics of service and stewardship in his exercising of the power given by the Father. And he prepared his disciples to continue as he transferred power and responsibility to them. The promise and delivering of the Holy Spirit to all believers (John 14:15-27; Acts 2) can be characterized as the transfer of access to sites of power. Our approaches to development and relief should factor in the responsible transfer of power to individuals and communities. We must be responsible stewards of power recognizing that it is both a transformative process and a final outcome.

Targeted Levels of Transformation

The gospel of Jesus Christ has the power for giving one a whole life as well as transforming society. The desire to see holistic transformation will lead us to address all forms of human poverty. It requires that we strive to reinstate God's justice in all personal and corporate relationships and to uphold and protect the rights of others through fulfilling our responsibilities to each other. It further requires that we engage in empowering relationships, which follow the model of Christ who empowered and engaged the first disciples. We seek to further follow the model of Christ who engaged within cultures and socio-economic frameworks to bring transformation from within. Jesus was not concerned about the outer layers of culture. How people dressed, what they ate, where they lived, and their political opinions were not his concern. Jesus didn't judge culture. Instead, he used the entire array of cultural elements to make his message understandable. The change he brought happened on a deeper level than culture; it's a people's worldview Christ is concerned with. It's in this area of values, self-concept, and charity that he constantly challenged his contemporaries. The gospel thus confirms a people's cultural identity while at the same

time it aims at systemic changes, e.g., the use of state-sanctioned or domestic violence.⁹

Transformation happens on three different levels:

- Individual level (change within people) so they can move from shame and despair to hope and dignity.
- Societal level (change in the interactions between people) so people can move from oppression and conflict to justice and equality.
- Structural level (change in systems, structures, and laws) so that the benefits of shalom, wellbeing, security, and justice will flow to everyone in society, especially the most vulnerable.

In summary, it is crucial that we take holistic approaches to missions, look for and recognize injustice, and consider the perspectives of the marginalized and oppressed. We must genuinely seek to empower people, resisting the temptation towards overly simplistic solutions. It is also crucial that we frame actions that aim to address the root causes of human poverty and effect sustainable transformation at every level. Proselytization is not our aim. We understand that holistic transformation involves the spiritual dimension of human beings, but God's love is always unconditional, and his offer of salvation can only be accepted voluntarily.

How We Take Action

Serving our Communities

It is our spiritual understanding of God's love that motivates us to help people physically and socially. Jesus "did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45). Nursing the sick, fighting for justice, accompanying the dying, empowering the voiceless and marginalized, teaching in kindergarten, educating farmers, or drilling wells in arid places are activities that have this Biblical mandate. Our churches and organizations use a broad range of poverty eradication measures in diaconal ministries. Christians find through these activities good ways to share the surplus with which God has blessed them. Sharing resources, food with the hungry, providing shelter for the homeless and clothes for the naked are not just acts of kindness between individuals or social groups, but serving extends to creating and influencing structures that facilitate this sharing and reconciling of social divides.

⁹ An example is how Paul in Galatians 3:28 questions the deeply rooted culture of the Roman Empire (since it contradicted the values of the Kingdom of God) and tells the church about the importance of being countercultural.

Churches as Main Agents of Change

The church is a global unit, not we and them, but the one body of Christ. The church also has relationships both to people in power and people in poverty, therefore it is able to mediate and act in dysfunctional relationships. The Pentecostal movement has the potential to play a significant role in the global effort for justice and poverty reduction and in the work of building social capital and a democratic, gender-equal, peaceful, and inclusive cultures. In many countries the church is also one of the main places where people can access healthcare and education and, through its local presence, the church can facilitate fast interventions in the event of a disaster or crisis. The network is also important for communication and advocacy work globally.

Sustainable change is the goal of all development. At a time of shrinking aid budgets, value for money is also of utter importance. Research comparing the cost effectiveness of traditional project approaches with a church and community mobilization approach (CCM) found that CCM had the same level of positive impact on community quality of life but at less than 4% of the cost. It also found that CCM communities were almost four times more confident in solving problems for themselves in the future.¹⁰ Based on this kind of data, we believe in the church as a main agent of change in our communities – be it with external support from international partners, governments, or local authorities, or with resources from within the church itself. The church has the local and cultural competence which is needed in transformational work. In our experience, awareness of, for example, gender equality or climate change countermeasures are easier to introduce in a church setting as compared to traditional, non-faith-based societies.

At the same time while being a major force for transformation, Pentecostal churches also sometimes hold attitudes and behavioral patterns that risk hindering the fight against oppression, poverty, and the pursuit of human rights. Voices that promote social responsibility, justice, gender equality, non-discrimination, inclusivity for people in vulnerable situations, and respect for human rights are thus needed.

Discipleship

The church is unique in that Jesus governs her, holds her together, has gifted her to make disciples, and exists to bring all of its members into

¹⁰ Steffie Kemp, Rob MacLennan, and Rick James, *Sustainable Value for Money – a Glimpse of the Holy Grail?* (Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2020).

maturity in Christ. Discipleship is the process of following and becoming more like Jesus. Disciple-making is something we do to help people become more like Christ. Our advantage lies in the power of the gospel which, first of all, transforms the character of a person. Material and spiritual change go hand in hand. A disciple is a person who is taught within a mentoring relationship. We strive to provide both sound teaching and loving relationships. The process of conversion and discipleship transforms a person's attitudes and behavior. On a deeper level, and with time, values, and worldview change. Discipleship activates people as agents of holistic transformation to impact families, communities, and entire societies. There is research showing that the conversion of an individual can start a societal transformation from below.¹¹

We believe that our understanding of the gospel affects our identity and the societal role we can play. Pentecostals sometime struggle with their holistic identity and deal with poverty as primarily a spiritual thing. Others struggle in their role as societal actors due to the teaching in Scripture about us as strangers on earth and that we therefore don't have to care about the societal challenges and the environment; it is enough to save souls. It is important for all disciples to deepen both their theology and practice around societal and political engagement and to link theological processes to knowledge, other academic disciplines, and (secular) development theory. Believers do not always have the language for a relevant social analysis and need to learn more about society from political, sociological, and economic perspectives. A too narrow and spiritualized understanding of societal challenges might limit both language and understanding and thus make the church irrelevant to today's challenges. In this process we also need to shed light on what might be called institutional or structural sin (the structures and systems that keep people in poverty). Pentecostal churches and movements are sometimes too focused on individual sin and salvation, which make it difficult for them to play a relevant role responding to the challenges of our time.

It is therefore crucial to deepen the discipleship dialogue on a holistic view of salvation in which all broken relationships are to be restored. Christian development work isn't a mere welfare activity. We aim to build people's capacities through the realization of their human dignity. Welfare is often seen as looking down on people, and not recognizing

¹¹ One example is the research conducted by Elisabeth Brusco, "Gender and Power" in *Studying Global Pentecostalism*, ed. Anderson et al (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2010).

their innate capacity to actively participate in improving their own life circumstances. In our work, we emphasize empowerment and capacity building, aiming for transformational change, which means sustainable change in people’s lives as well as in communities.

Sending

As a global network of Pentecostal churches, movements, and organizations, we intentionally send people to various communities and countries in order to strengthen partnerships, share resources, and provide support in transformational processes. This sending has a Biblical mandate found in John 20:21. Our workers feel called by God to assist underprivileged people and to support partner networks.

Advocacy

Advocacy is an extension of our Biblical responsibility to love and care for others by speaking out against social and structural injustices and calling for restoration and change. We advocate from a commitment to love our neighbor and a commitment to identify as equals with the marginalized and oppressed (Hebrews 13:3; Galatians 2:10). Advocacy can be seen in the story of Amos (Amos 5:24), when he prophetically proclaims what society should be like, and when kingdom principles of justice and equality are the foundation upon which every relationship, social structure, and institution are built.

“Speak out for those who cannot speak and for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the poor and needy.” (Proverbs 31:8-9)

The size and the scope of the Pentecostal movement makes its advocacy work very important. We advocate to reinstate fair, impartial, and accessible systems and structures for the marginalized and oppressed, and for equal access to opportunity and resources. This also requires us to temper our own self- interests and to make positive choices about sharing resource so that “the one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little” (2 Corinthians 8:15; Exodus 16:18).

Call to Action

To individual believers

Pray. We believe in the power of prayer and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Can extreme poverty be ended? We believe so but only when the church is mobilized to pray passionately, seeking support, strength, and wisdom from the living God through His Holy Spirit.

“So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.”
(James 2:17)

Learn. We can easily make assumptions about people from different cultures, the marginalized, and oppressed. By embracing a humble attitude of listening and learning, we seek to set aside assumptions and deepen our understanding.

Live. The fight for justice and transformation requires everyone’s support. Some Christian campaigns in the past have been criticized for only lobbying governments to tackle the major social issues of our time while not committing to increase our own efforts. Our way of living, consuming, traveling, and lifestyle choices have an impact. What changes can you make to how you spend and consume?

Give. We encourage you to support development and humanitarian interventions by sharing financial resources. In this way, you can make a real difference and a solid impact in people’s lives.

Go. Holistic missions opens a door to serve others with different practical and professional skills. Some will be challenged to play a direct role in empowering others through capacity building and skill transfer.

To Leaders and Pastors

Embrace the whole gospel including relief and development and drawn from the Biblical narrative. Deepen both theology and practice around societal and political engagement. Link theological processes to knowledge, other academic disciplines, and (secular) development theory. Be empowered by the Holy Spirit and recognize the power of mobilizing the whole church.

Learn more about the state of the world and where we as Pentecostal partners can make a difference. Let’s strategize together. We have a

broad network of churches and organizations through which we all may be engaged in transformational work.

Become an ambassador for justice. There is a need for individuals who can help equip and engage others. This could simply mean engaging your church or small groups, arranging an annual Sunday for global justice at your church, or trying to unite your local congregation in unified calls to action for societal transformation in your own and other communities that are far away.

Leaders and pastors have a responsibility to lead by example as individual believers themselves. They need to challenge and facilitate others to pray, learn, live, give, and go.

To Development and Humanitarian Organizations and Workers

Engage in holistic methods which must include the spirituality of people. Include and engage the church in solutions to address human poverty. Recognize how churches are often key players in communities.

Help individual believers, leaders, and pastors to understand the Biblical basis for holistic approaches to missions. Guide them in understanding the perspectives of the marginalized and oppressed, in recognizing injustice in all its forms, in engaging in empowering actions, and in avoiding overly simplistic welfare responses.

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