

PENTECOSTAL EDUCATION

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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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Index

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Contents

The <i>Pentecostal Education</i> : Chair's Editorial <i>Kirk Kauffeldt</i>	1
Empowered Together: A Collaborative Journey Towards Global Pentecostal Unity and Mission: Editorial <i>Christian Tsekpoe</i>	3
“Go and Make”: Spirit-Empowered Sharing of the Gospel in the Twenty-First Century <i>William M. Wilson</i>	7
From Seoul to Helsinki: Expanding Pentecostal Engagement in Global Christian Unity <i>David R. Wells</i>	15
An Account of Ecumenism and the Pentecostal World Fellowship <i>Cecil M. Robeck, Jr.</i>	29
Spirit of Life: Pentecostals for Earth's Flourishing <i>Harold D. Hunter</i>	45
“And the Spirit and His Church Say Amen”: Contributions for an Ecopentecostal Theology <i>Elizabeth Salazar-Sanzana</i>	59
A Pentecostal Approach to the Teaching of the Common Good of the Catholic Church in the Context of Latin America <i>Miguel Alvarez</i>	75
Biblical Hospitality: Cultural Diversity in the Finnish Pentecostal Movement <i>Juan Javier Castillo Noboa</i>	97
Resonance and Dissonance of the Spirit's Work in Mission Among Buddhists and Muslims: Insights for Spirit-Empowered Encounters <i>John Cheong</i>	115
Reviews	133



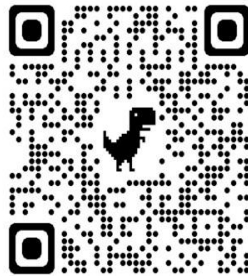
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The Pentecostal Education: Chair's Editorial

We gather this year in Helsinki, grateful for all that has been accomplished by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit in the world of Pentecostal equipping. We look forward with hope and enthusiasm for what God has in store as we move forward. We are keenly aware of the unprecedented effort to work together to reach the whole world with the gospel in the decade ahead. We are seeing the first fruits of this wave of the Spirit, and our hearts are full of anticipation about what is coming. The current regeneration of mission enthusiasm has an impact on the world of equipping.

The World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education serves as the Education Commission of the Pentecostal World Fellowship. It exists to assist, encourage, and promote the development of Pentecostal/Charismatic theological education and leadership training. As an equipping community, we are in a season of looking for new and effective models and for the mandate we steward. It is not an 'in with the new and out with the old' approach but rather a focused and strategic strengthening of what we have so we can innovate, improve access, be relevant, ensuring fruitful impact from the ministry of those we equip. Effective Spirit-empowered equipping is a missiological critical success factor for the task God has called us to.

At this strategic moment in our movement, allow me to celebrate the past and anticipate the future with several significant updates. First, we want to acknowledge the pioneering work of Dr. Paul Alexander for WAPTE. He was chosen to serve as the Chairman of the WAPTE Board in 2013. Paul had been instrumental in the conversations that resulted in the establishment of WAPTE, and he hosted the first Board meeting in 2010, where he was elected as Vice Chair of the Board. Paul is the consummate embodiment of a godly gentleman scholar.

Since that time, Paul has guided the Board in its key operational directives. Notably for this publication as a free resource for global Pentecostal educators, Paul commissioned this journal and served as the Senior Editor. The quality of this journal, evident in the 16 published issues to date, reflects rich contributions from Pentecostal scholars around the world. It is also a testament to Dr. Rick Wadholm and Dr.

Miguel Alvarez, who have served as editors, and the guidance of Dr. Wonsuk Ma. In 2024, the Board appointed Dr. Christian Tsekpoe as the editor for *Pentecostal Education*. We are delighted to have such a respected scholar in this vital role. Since then, we have agreed that the Journal is well established and no longer needs the Chair of WAPTE to serve as its Senior Editor.

One of the last initiatives that Dr Alexander was involved in was to enter into dialogue with the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) regarding WAPTE joining as a member. ICETE is the education commission for the World Evangelical Alliance. Historically, the Pentecostal equipping community was not well embraced by the broader Evangelical fraternity, a reality that provided the impetus for the establishment of WAPTE. It is a new day, and I am happy to report that following extensive dialogue, the creation of a new membership category for an association like WAPTE to become a member of ICETE, and the unanimous decision of the ICETE Board, WAPTE was welcomed into membership. We thank ICETE for their welcoming spirit and the actions taken to ensure we can retain our identity and services as we continue serving our constituency. We are better together, and there is much to celebrate as we collaboratively work together.

Thank you, Paul, for your service to WAPTE and the way you have set us up so that WAPTE can have a fruitful impact in the exciting days ahead. Paul was released from his responsibilities as WAPTE chairman at his request earlier this year. A new chair will be elected at the next Board meeting immediately following PWC Helsinki

Kirk Kauffeldt
Interim Chair, WAPTE

Empowered Together: A Collaborative Journey Towards Global Pentecostal Unity and Mission

The Spring 2025 edition of *Pentecostal Education* (PE) marks a significant achievement of the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education's (WAPTE) scholarly contribution to global Pentecostalism, featuring a special volume for the 27th Pentecostal World Conference (PWC). The PWC is a triennial event that unites global Pentecostal voices and Spirit-filled leaders for a common purpose. The forthcoming conference under the theme, "Go & Make," will take place in Helsinki, Finland, on June 4-7, 2025, with an anticipated 8,000 attendees. This conference seeks to inspire and equip participants to be committed to the fulfilment of the Great Commission using contemporary methods.

In many ways, the 2025 Helsinki conference is reminiscent of the 2022 PWC, which was convened in Seoul, South Korea, in collaboration with Empowered21 and the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF). Similar to the events of Seoul 2022, Empowered21 has scheduled a consultation for the Global Network of Spirit-Empowered Scholars (GNSES) in partnership with WAPTE on June 2-3, 2025, under the theme, "Spirit-Empowered People on the Move and God's Plan for EveryONE." The scholars' consultation is designed to promote scholarly dialogue among researchers and practitioners committed to advancing knowledge in a Spirit-empowered environment. Again, like Seoul 2022, WAPTE dedicates the Spring 2025 issue of its academic journal, *Pentecostal Education*, as a special volume to celebrate the Helsinki conference.

I want to use this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to William M. Wilson, chairman of the PWF and Empowered21, and his esteemed leadership team for promoting this collaboration and contributing a significant article on the Helsinki Conference. I would also like to thank Wonsuk Ma, co-chairman of Empowered21's GNSES and the managing editor for *PE*, for his immense support for this project. Special acknowledgement is warranted for Paul R. Alexander (former WAPTE Board Chair), Kirk Kauffeldt (Acting WAPTE Board Chair), and Barry Saylor (Executive Director for WAPTE) for their continual support for both the collaboration and the journal project. My sincere appreciation is also due to Simo Frestadius, Doug Lowenberg

(Associate Editors), and Gary Matsdorf (Review Editor) for their diligent editorial work, which has contributed to the successful publication of this issue. I sincerely thank the various Commission Chairs and contributors for their dedicated efforts in producing valuable articles for this special issue.

In this issue, the authors present topics that echo the global diversity and unity of Pentecostal voices. In the first article, William M. Wilson, Chair of the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF), highlights the 27th Pentecostal World Conference, and emphasizes the theme “Go & Make,” inspired by the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). Since its establishment in 1947, the PWF has played an essential role in uniting Spirit-Empowered congregations globally to fulfill this mission. The subsequent article by David R. Wells, the Vice Chair of the PWF and Chair of the PWF’s Christian Unity Commission (CUC), discusses the activities of the CUC following its 2022 Seoul conference, where it aimed to facilitate impactful dialogues within the Christian community. Although the youngest among the Commissions, established in 2019, it was immediately challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic, but it has been highly active. The Seoul conference marked a critical point for workshops on Christian unity, with members actively engaging in global forums and fostering discussions with various denominations, including Lutheran and Anglican churches, on theological topics and sacramental practices. From 2022 to 2025, the CUC plans initiatives like the Creation Care Task Force, showcasing an ongoing commitment to inter-denominational relationships.

The next article by Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., provides a historical account of global Pentecostal ecumenism. He acknowledges early Pentecostal leaders, David du Plessis and Donald Gee, who viewed ecumenism positively, promoting a global vision transcending regional concerns. The article highlights the advances that are now possible for Pentecostals through the work of the CUC of the PWF. The fourth article by Harold Hunter addresses the global Pentecostal ecological engagement, noting how the World Council of Churches (WCC) and PWF tend to focus on Northern scholars in ecotheology while overlooking significant contributions from the Global South. The lack of involvement from most PWF member churches in the WCC diminishes international ecological project participation. Despite facing resistance, ecology advocates are rising, rooted in early experiences of engagement that spanned decades.

Similar to Hunter’s work, Elizabeth Salazar-Sanzana discusses Ecopentecostal theology as an ecodiaoconal faith rooted in the Holy

Spirit, which encourages a deep sensitivity to the earth's suffering amid exploitation. She argues that it is a transformative force guiding daily actions towards caring for creation. This theology awakens our conscience and allows us to see reality holistically, inviting us to participate in God's Trinitarian harmony. It emphasizes a renewed sensitivity through Christ's redemptive work, promoting interconnectedness with creation. The article highlights an integral vision for new life, creation, and mission, asserting that the Holy Spirit fosters harmony, sustenance in fragility, and ongoing transformation until fulfillment.

Miguel Alvarez wrote the lead article for the Education Commission/WAPTE section, exploring a formative conversation between Pentecostals and Catholics regarding the common good, solidarity, and unity in Latin America. This initiative seeks mutual understanding between these two growing traditions amidst the region's religious landscape, acknowledging an incipient but promising ecumenical process that could benefit both traditions. The following article by Juan Noboa delves into the Finnish Pentecostal movement's journey from its inception in 1917 to its multicultural identity, illustrating biblical hospitality through community outreach, particularly during the 2015 mass migration crisis. It underscores the movement's evolving identity, characterized by love, service, and integration in alignment with biblical calls to hospitality, ultimately forming diverse cultural and spiritual threads. The final article by John Cheong identifies the rapid expansion of Pentecostal/charismatic (P/C) Christianity in regions like Africa and Asia, examining how P/C theological practices resonate with or distance Buddhists and Muslims from Christianity, and suggests more engaging evangelistic approaches.

This special edition includes three scholarly book reviews by Blessing Ngozi Ukaji, Fidelis Mensa, and Carli Ann Marie Lineberry. Each review offers critical insights and perspectives that contribute significantly to their respective fields of study.

The Spring 2025 edition of *PE* demonstrates the global Pentecostal movement's commitment to unity and collaboration. The upcoming PWC in Helsinki promises to ignite further the passion for fulfilling the Great Commission, gathering diverse voices to share strategies and insights. This issue reflects rich scholarly contributions that highlight the historical and contemporary challenges and opportunities within Pentecostalism, emphasizing inter-denominational dialogues and ecological initiatives. As we move towards this Helsinki conference, we celebrate the spirit of collaboration that empowers our collective

mission, fostering a unified vision for the future of global Pentecostalism.

Christian Tsekpoe
Executive Editor

“Go and Make”: Spirit-Empowered Sharing of the Gospel in the Twenty-First Century

William M. Wilson

Abstract

The 27th Pentecostal World Conference embraces a call to action centered around the theme “Go and Make,” rooted in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). Reflecting on the historical significance of the Pentecostal World Fellowship since its inception in 1947, the conference aims to mobilize Spirit-Empowered congregations worldwide to fulfill the Great Commission. With the goal of ensuring that every person hears the gospel by 2033, leaders are encouraged to leverage prayer, leadership, and resources to reach unreached populations. In light of the rapid global acceleration of knowledge and population, surpassing eight billion, this urgency highlights the need for an accelerated evangelistic mission. Five critical qualities of early Christian disciples: conviction, flexibility, obedience, dependence on the Holy Spirit, and unity. These are identified as essential for modern believers to emulate. The EveryONE Initiative, launched to support these endeavors, aspires to deliver an authentic encounter with Jesus to all by Pentecost 2033. As God’s church unites in this mission, the conference emphasizes collaborative efforts and divine empowerment to confront the injustice of unshared gospel opportunities in today’s world. Ultimately, the collective pursuit is to share the transformative message of Christ, ensuring that no one is left without the chance to know Him.

Keywords: Latino hermeneutics, Spirit revelation, knowledge of the word, community of faith, testimony of tradition, integrative method of interpretation

Introduction

The Pentecostal and Spirit-empowered communities welcome each of you to the 27th Pentecostal World Conference. As we consider the deep roots and historical significance of this gathering, we are humbled by the Lord’s faithfulness to the Pentecostal World Fellowship. Since the first

gathering in May 1947, we have been united by the vision to see our shared efforts in world evangelization bear fruit.

The conference's theme, "Go and Make," directly references the Matthew 28:19 account of the Great Commission. In 2022, as the Advisory Committee met in Seoul, South Korea, the Pentecostal World Fellowship adopted the following resolution calling on Spirit-Empowered congregations across the world to focus on reaching every person on earth:

The Pentecostal World Fellowship encourages its members to work towards fulfilling the Great Commission in this generation. We affirm the numerous 2033 initiatives focused on "Everyone" hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ. We call upon our member congregations to mobilize prayer, leadership, compassion, and resources to contact every unreached person. We believe the next ten years will be the greatest decade of fulfilling the mandate of Jesus as together, empowered by the Spirit, we proclaim the "Good News" and establish new churches.

As the movement comes together in Helsinki, our conversations, prayers, sessions, times of worship, and collaboration will challenge and further equip us to *Go and Make* disciples like never before. May we recommit ourselves to the priority of evangelism and the urgency to see the lost reached. May the global Spirit-Empowered church be known as the primary driver toward the completion of the Great Commission until Jesus returns.

Accelerated by the Holy Spirit¹

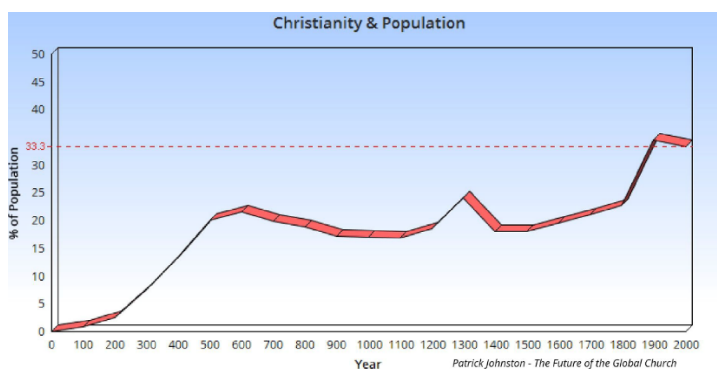
On this day, as we discuss the work of the Holy Spirit, I want to draw our attention to being accelerated by the Holy Spirit. We live in a time of extreme acceleration in our world. Knowledge, technology, invention, science, and the world population are all accelerating. I have a rudimentary graph just to remind us that the world population continues to explode. In 2022, the population of the world topped 8 billion people.²

¹ The original content of this part was presented at the Lausanne 4 Congress, Incheon/Seoul, Korea, September 2024.

² United Nations. *Day of 8 billion*. (2022, November 15). <https://www.un.org/en/dayof8billion>



While the population of the world is growing exponentially, the growth of Christianity as a percentage of the population has remained relatively stagnant. You will see on this graph that we had a great increase in the 1800s, but in the last century, we actually declined in terms of percentage growth in proportion to the total global population. Presently, Christianity hovers around 31 percent of the world population.³



Global Acceleration and the Church's Mission

During this time of global acceleration, we also must have an acceleration of our mission and evangelistic effectiveness. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came as God's supernatural accelerant,

³ Statista, 2023. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/374704/share-of-global-population-by-religion/#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20around%2031.6%20percent,of%20global%20populations%20as%20Hindu.>

energizing the church to rapidly spread the good news of Jesus in Jerusalem to Rome and beyond. The early followers of Jesus had no social media nor mass communication, and yet the gospel covered the known world in the first century like a wildfire of resurrection energy. The Holy Spirit carried the early followers of Jesus to the ends of the earth with amazing effect and speed. The mission of God was supernaturally accelerated through them.

Qualities for Supernatural Acceleration

These early disciples had at least five qualities that positioned them for supernatural acceleration. And if we're going to experience Holy Spirit acceleration in the 21st century, I believe we need these same qualities.

Conviction

They were convinced of the resurrection of Jesus. They believed that the claims of Jesus were exclusive and that He was the only way, the only truth, and the only life (John 14:6). They boldly proclaimed that salvation is in no one else and that there is no other name under heaven given to humankind by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). There was no optional way, no alternative route. Jesus was the absolute answer, and they were completely committed to declaring that good news to the world. They lived and died with this conviction, which fueled the spread of the gospel.

Flexibility

The church moved forward aggressively, but in ways no one could have anticipated. They were the new wineskin for this fresh experience of God, which required them to be extremely flexible (Luke 5:37-38). Seasons of persecution became opportunities to preach. Trials were turned into testimony sessions. Christian killers became Christian missionaries. Deacons became evangelists. Shipwrecks became salvation campaigns. Visions, dreams, and impressions all moved them forward. The unexpected came to be expected. In just one generation, a predominantly Jewish church became a predominantly Gentile church. They were able to experience supernatural acceleration because they were flexible and expandable. New flexibility will be required in the 21st century if we are going to experience an acceleration of our mission.

Obedience

The gospel moved forward as they were unusually obedient to numerous unusual directives. They deviated from established protocols repeatedly to obey the call of God. A Jewish temple became a place for

Christian healing. A jailhouse became a prayer house. They obeyed paradigm-shifting revelations, faced danger, and crossed oceans and racial barriers. They obeyed Christ's commands, irrespective of the implications. One example of this radical obedience was Philip the Evangelist who left an explosive revival of Samaria to enter the desert of personal evangelism just because God said so. This obedience positioned him for supernatural acceleration as the Spirit transported him from his desert to his next assignment in Azotus, 20 miles away (Acts 8:26-40).

Dr. David Paul Yonggi Cho established the largest church in the world in Korea, the Yoido Full Gospel Church. It is now pastored by Dr. Young Hoon Lee and presently has 900,000 members, with attendance on any given weekend of around a half million. When Cho was asked how he built such a large church, he answered simply, "I pray, and I obey."

Dependence

The early church developed a radical dependency on the Holy Spirit, His guidance, His empowerment, and His strength. Simply put, they refused to do God's work without God's presence. They discovered that the Holy Spirit was God's greatest evangelist and that He is moving every single minute and every single second to reach the lost. As they joined and relied on Him, the results were history-making and world-changing.

Unity

The early followers of Jesus experienced the supernatural synergy that comes from spiritual unity. They discovered that one could chase a thousand, but two working together could chase ten thousand. Their unity brought God's favor and positioned them for supernatural acceleration. In Jesus' prayer in John 17, He prayed that we would be one as He and the Father are one. That we would have relational unity, but it would have a missional intent that the world might believe that God had sent Him. Unity, then, must be relational, missional, and spiritual.

The Vision for 2033

In 2013, a group of Spirit-empowered leaders in a relational network called Empowered21 adopted a large vision. The vision is "that every person on earth would have an authentic encounter with Jesus Christ through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit by Pentecost 2033." We believe God was calling us to attempt something so big that no one

movement or denomination could possibly make it happen by themselves. We did not and do not believe in universalism, that everyone will be saved, but we believe that everyone on Earth deserves an opportunity to be saved.

In 2023, we officially launched the EveryONE Initiative and the EveryONE Fund to support frontline evangelistic efforts to reach the lost and the least reached people of the world. Providentially, the year 2033 has captured the imagination of leaders across the Kingdom of God beyond Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. There are now multiple initiatives targeting the year 2033, many of them without prior knowledge of other 2033 efforts.

I believe we are at a historic, Spirit-empowered moment of what could become the most significant effort at Great Commission fulfillment in the history of Christianity. Could it be on the 2,000th anniversary of the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, and the 2,000th anniversary of the giving of the Great Commission and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost at the birth of the church, that together we might do what has never been done in human history? And that is to ensure that every person on Earth has an opportunity to know Jesus Christ. Or at least, by 2033, we might participate in the most pervasive missional and evangelistic thrust since the first century.

The Urgency of the Gospel Mission

We have arrived at a consensus on the need to accelerate the gospel in our time. The eternal destiny of millions depends on it. Every day, 150,000 people or more die on Earth.⁴ If one-third of them, generously speaking, are Christian, then every day, over 100,000 people and every year, over 37 million people, four times the population of Seoul, Korea, face a Christless eternity. That means every single hour, at least 4,000 people perish in the eternal darkness of hell. God's Word says that God is "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9 [NIV]).

Personally, I believe that the greatest injustice of the 21st century is that God's church now has the technology, the manpower, the money, and the capability to reach every person on earth with the gospel, and

⁴ The Medindia Medical Review Team, *World death clock*. (2022, February 23). Retrieved July 27, 2023 from <https://www.medindia.net/patients/calculators/world-death-clock.asp/>.

yet millions have not heard the good news or had an authentic encounter with Jesus.

Conclusion: A Call to Unite and Accelerate

God is now calling His church to unite so we might rectify this injustice in our generation. The Holy Spirit is moving. A fresh vision for reaching the lost and re-personalizing the Great Commission is emerging in the body of Christ. Nothing is as important as this. The main thing must be the main thing. None of us can do this alone. We need each other, and most importantly, we need a fresh encounter with the Holy Spirit that will accelerate the gospel to the ends of the earth.

May God use us all to this end together in unity, and may we rise from here to take the good news of our savior, Jesus, the Son of the living God, to everyone. Amen.

<p>William M. Wilson (wwilson@oru.edu) serves as President of Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA, while leading Empowered21 and the Pentecostal World Fellowship as Chair.</p>

A Visible Unity: Cecil Robeck and the Work of Ecumenism

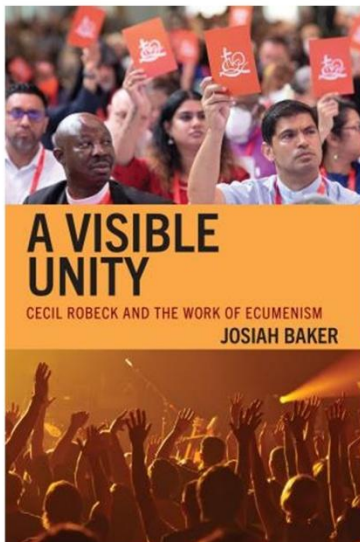
Josiah Baker

New from Fortress Academic, *A Visible Unity* is a study in systematic theology on ecclesiological convergence in the ecumenical movement. Baker studies ecclesiology by telling stories about the Pentecostal scholar Cecil Robeck, known for his research on the Azusa Street Revival and leadership of the international Catholic–Pentecostal dialogue. By narrating Robeck’s activities and analyzing his thought, the book offers a window into the ecumenical movement and the church.

Lexington Books / Fortress Academic | 278 pages

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“[A]n abundance of new insights regarding both the unity and mission of the Church.”

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From Seoul to Helsinki: Expanding Pentecostal Engagement in Global Christian Unity

David R. Wells

Abstract

This article outlines the growing engagement of the Pentecostal World Fellowship's Christian Unity Commission (CUC) from the 2022 Seoul conference to the present. Convened during the 26th Pentecostal World Conference in Seoul, South Korea, the CUC aimed to foster impactful dialogues within the broader Christian community. Although the commission was established in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic limited in-person interactions until 2022. The Seoul conference marked a significant milestone, allowing CUC members to host workshops on Christian unity and solidifying their role in international discussions. Following the conference, members actively participated in global Christian forums and ecumenical events to promote mutual respect among denominations. The CUC engaged in critical dialogues with the World Council of Churches, Lutheran churches, and Anglicans, exploring common challenges and theological topics like sacramental practices. From 2022 to 2025, initiatives include forming a Creation Care Task Force and enhancing inter-communion unity. The CUC's ongoing efforts demonstrate a commitment to building inter-denominational relationships and advancing Christian unity in a polarized world.

Keywords: Christian Unity Commission, inter-denominational dialogue, ecumenism, Pentecostal World Fellowship

Introduction

When the Pentecostal World Fellowship's (PWF) Christian Unity Commission (CUC) gathered in Seoul, Korea, for the 26th Pentecostal World Conference, there was a strong sense of anticipation and focus. Formed by a decision of the PWF's Advisory Committee on August 27, 2019, at the 25th Pentecostal World Conference in Calgary, Alberta, Canada there had been high expectations of the impact the CUC would have as they represented the PWF in an authorized manner in dialogues and at events involving the broader Christian community.

The impact of the global pandemic in 2020 and the limited ability to gather in person well into 2021 resulted in the CUC primarily engaging online, both as a commission and in their representation to other communions. The year 2022, therefore, became a welcomed transitional year where in-person meetings and gatherings began to occur. At the 26th Pentecostal World Conference in Seoul, many of the CUC members were able to meet in person and host a track of workshop sessions focused on Christian unity.

As the PWF CUC continued its work following Seoul 2022. Its members were:

- David Wells (Chair), The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and PWF Vice Chair
- David Daniels, Church of God in Christ and McCormick Theological Seminary, USA
- Jacqui Grey, Australian Christian Churches and Alphacrucis College, Australia
- David Han, Church of God and Pentecostal Theological Seminary, USA
- Harold Hunter, International Pentecostal Holiness Church
- Tat Yan (Victor) Lee, Assemblies of God in Malaysia and Bible College of Malaysia
- Wonsuk Ma, Assemblies of God and Oral Roberts University, USA
- Opoku Onyinah, The Church of Pentecost and Pentecost University, Ghana
- Jean-Daniel Plüss, Pentecostal Assemblies of Switzerland
- Cecil (Mel) Robeck, Assemblies of God and Fuller Theological Seminary, USA
- Elizabeth Salazar-Sanzana, Comunidad Teológica Evangélica de Chile

Since 2022

The foundation of representation provided by the CUC members, along with the involvement of the PWF chair, Dr. William Wilson, and the staff at the PWF office, has evidenced a rapid expansion of the PWF CUC's role and influence between the World Conferences in Seoul and Helsinki.

Global Christian Forum

Immediately following the 26th World Conference PWF members were well represented as part of the Seoul Global Christian Forum (GCF) Committee meeting and the coinciding GCF Asian Regional meeting hosted by Myungsung Presbyterian Church. Pentecostals were included

as speakers at the Sunday services of the Myungsung church along with other GCF leaders, including Dr. Casely B. Essamuah, who serves as Secretary to the Global Christian Forum. Since being inducted as the GCF's Secretary in 2018, Casely has continued the practice of warmly welcoming and diligently securing the PWF's active engagement as one of the "Four Pillars" of the GCF. PWF CUC members who have regularly participated with the GCF Committee to ensure the continuity of Pentecostal engagement include Dr. Mel Robeck, Apostle Dr. Opoku Onyinah, Dr. Jean-Daniel Plüss, Dr. Tat Yan (Victor) Lee, Dr. David Han, Dr. Wonsuk Ma, and Drs. Wilson and Wells.

This was illustrated at the GCF's Fourth Global Gathering (GG4) in Accra, Ghana, on 16-19 April 2024. Participants included representatives of all the leading Christian church families and their international organizations. They gathered under the theme "That the World May Know" with 230 participants from 49 countries. Whether as plenary and panel speakers, engaged at table conversations, or meeting as a caucus Pentecostals were well engaged in this forum context established "to foster mutual respect, to explore and address common challenges together." Dr. David Han was responsible for identifying and issuing invitations for Pentecostals to participate in the 2024 GCF in Accra. He also invited David Cole to collaborate with him, and he was conscientious about welcoming a diverse group of Pentecostals in terms of denomination, geography, ethnicity, and gender.

Pentecostals played a key role in assisting with the budget so that all the gathering participants could travel for a day trip to the Cape Coast Castle and walk in the footsteps of millions of enslaved, dehumanized African men, women, and children and then enter in a service at the Wesley Cathedral, where they were reminded through our worship of Christ's call for lamentation, for healing, and for reconciliation.¹

The PWF CUC has continued its participation as members of the GCF global committee at the April 2025 meetings at the Communauté de Taizé in France. This inter-communion platform to share faith stories and focus on commonalities is viewed as a viable model to enhance inter-communion unity in local, regional, and global contexts.

Creation Care Task Force

The formation of a PWF CUC Creation Care Task Force received affirmation from the PWF Executive and Advisory Committee meetings

¹ GCF's Fourth Global Gathering (GG4) website report
<https://globalchristianforum.org/global-gathering-2024/>.

in Seoul in October 2022. Dr. Harold Hunter, who was instrumental in developing the proposal, continues to coordinate the task force, which has added additional members from various PWF organizations. They meet consistently and are seeking funding so that more expansive initiatives can take place. A workshop in Helsinki will include updates on Pentecostal engagement in creation care.

Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions

The Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions (CSCWC) has been a consistent gathering of leaders who represent the various Christian communions globally. At the invitation of the Christian World Communions, Dr. Mel Robeck provided consistent representation of “Global Pentecostalism” for thirty years until such time as a Pentecostal body sent official representation. With the formation of the PWF CUC, Mel proposed, and it was agreed that David Wells, as CUC chair, would succeed him at the CSCWC table.

COVID had resulted in online meetings until November 2022, when the CSCWC meeting was hosted on behalf of the PWF at Broadway Church in Vancouver, BC, a Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada church that David Wells had served in. Close to 30 Secretaries of the CSCWC were able to join the meeting. These gatherings are specially designed for the secretaries and communion representatives to interact with openness and confidence about common interests and concerns without pressure to form statements or engage in joint initiatives. This laid good foundations for strengthening relationships among the participants and their endeavors for Christian unity.

The 2023 CSCWC meeting was hosted by the World Council of Churches (WCC) at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, Switzerland and at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland. There was broad-based interaction regarding the ecumenical work done by many of the communions on WCC platforms as well as visiting the United Nations facility and reviewing the multinational programs directed from Geneva.

The November 5-7, 2024 CSCWC meeting was hosted by the Organization of African Instituted Churches in Nairobi, Kenya. With the vitality of the Pentecostal churches in Kenya, there was an opportunity to integrate regional perspective and representation into some of the CSCWC’s activities.

World Council of Churches

The PWF and the PWF CUC have regular engagements with the World Council of Churches in various activities, committees, and events

organized or participated in by the WCC. From 2022-2025, there were several developments, including the following:

PWF involvement as observers at the WCC General Assembly, August 31 – September 8, 2022, in Karlsruhe, Germany. Dr. Wilson brought greetings on behalf of the PWF during the WCC General Assembly (GA). PWF members, The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM-SA), was confirmed as full members of the WCC. In his acceptance speech at the AFM-SA, their President, Dr. Henri Weideman, remarked, alongside AFM's General Secretary Rev. Mthokozisi Selby Khumalo, on the organization's progression from the foundational ministry of David DuPlessis to the current leadership of Frank Chikane, who leads the WCC's Commission on International Affairs.

At Karlsruhe, the various communions had the opportunity to join in specific sessions. The PWF, with the assistance of some younger Pentecostal "stewards," gathered a sizable group together who worshipped and interacted together. Many were meeting for the first time.

On behalf of the Faith and Order Commission, Mel Robeck, along with his co-editors, Sotirios Boukas and Ani Ghazaryan-Drissi, introduced their two-volume work, *Towards a Global Vision of the Church* (Geneva: WCC Press, 2023 and 2024) to several large workshops. These two volumes include many Pentecostal voices from Asia, Africa, and Latin America and make a significant contribution to the WCC's emphasis on ecclesiology.

David Wells as an official observer, was appointed to The Policy Reference Committee (PRC), which presents policy recommendations for assembly action related to the reports of the Moderator of the Central Committee and the General Secretary, particularly as they relate to this mandate; recommendations related to membership matters, ecumenical relations, and proposals for amendments to the Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

Joint Consultative Group

One of the key ecumenical relations reviewed by this group is The Joint Consultative Group between the WCC and Pentecostals, which has PWF-related members and is now in its fourth round, chaired by Dr. Jean-Daniel Plüss. The Policy Reference Committee's full motion (#12), which then received approval by the WCC GA reads,

The PRC received with appreciation the Report of the Joint Consultative Group (JCG) between the World Council of Churches and

Pentecostals, which focused on the Holy Spirit, discipleship, and baptism. The PRC commends the clarity of the common mandate and the “best practices” that the JCG has developed.

The Eleventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches:

- To affirm the work already undertaken;
- To endorse the continuation of the dialogue between the WCC and the Pentecostal World Fellowship’s Christian Unity Commission as the parent bodies of the JCG;
- To call for the further development and deepening of this relationship rooted in spiritual commonalities;
- To suggest harvesting the fruits of bilateral dialogue between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals on topics such as the Holy Spirit, discipleship, and Spirit baptism;
- To commend and reinforce the concerted efforts for intergenerational participation and conversations.²

The JCG continues its diligent work and will be meeting in Helsinki in June 2025 while participating in the Pentecostal World Conference. Other engagements between the WCC and the PWF include: PWF World Missions Commission chair, Max Barroso, represents the PWF on the WCC Commission for World Mission and Evangelism.

Other WCC-Related Engagements

After lengthy service with the WCC’s Faith and Order (F&O) Commission as the Commission’s only Pentecostal member, Mel Robeck consulted with the PWF CUC and nominated five PWF-related academics to be appointed. Each one was confirmed as a F&O Commissioner in July of 2023. They are:

- Daniel N. Andrew – Lecturer at the University of the Free State, Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa.
- Jacqui Grey – Australian Christian Churches, Alphacrucis College, Australia.
- Tat Yan (Victor) Lee – Assemblies of God in Malaysia and Bible College of Malaysia.
- Allison MacGregor – The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and The Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and Labrador; Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, USA.

² “Report of the Policy Reference Committee, Document No. PRC 01(REV01),” World Council of Churches, 11th General Assembly. Karlsruhe, Germany, 2022.

- Christian Tsekpoe - Church of Pentecost and Pentecost University, Ghana.

Along with these members of the WCC's Faith and Order Commission, Harold Hunter and CUC chair, David Wells have been engaged with the WCC in ecumenical consultations related to Nicaea 2025, including the World Conference on Faith and Order in Alexandria, Egypt in October 2025 which Wells will attend along with the PWF F&O members and the "Feast of Creation" dialogue in Assisi, Italy in May 2025 which Hunter is attending.

Global Anglican Communion

The year 2022 accelerated the engagement and inter-communion relationship between the PWF and the global Anglican Communion (AC). In June 2019, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, hosted a delegation from the PWF, which included PWF chair, Rev. Prince Guneratnam, to discuss a deeper relationship and an ongoing dialogue between the two communions. A highlight of that meeting was an afternoon seminar with the UK Anglican-Pentecostal Theological Steering Group, including a keynote address from David Hilborn, Principal of Moorlands College, and a response from Paul Alexander of the PWF Education Commission. This was followed by feedback within a panel discussion of representative persons.

The ongoing work of the dialogue that was taking place at that time in the United Kingdom was published in 2023 in the collaborative volume, *Anglicans and Pentecostals in Dialogue*,³ edited by David Hilborn and Finnish Pentecostal scholar, Simo Frestadius.

Another fruit of the 2019 gathering was that the International Pentecostal-Anglican Commission (IPAC) was officially launched June 15-19, 2022, in Rapid City, South Dakota, USA, at Bethel Church (US Assemblies of God). The dialogue was hosted by Paul Alexander, PWF co-chair of the dialogue, President of Trinity Bible College and Graduate School in Ellendale, North Dakota, USA. Perhaps a not-too-theological or spiritual additional reason for hosting the dialogue in this location is that Anglican co-chair William Adam had always had a fascination with the "Wild West" and was very enthused that the group's free time could include a tour of Deadwood... perhaps there are multiple factors that go into developing Christian unity!

³ David Hilborn and Simo Frestadius, eds., *Anglicans and Pentecostals in Dialogue* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2023).

At that time, the group established the theme “Transforming Holiness” with core topics that would guide the dialogue, such as the “Basis of shared faith,” “Worship,” “Discipleship and formation,” “Mission and service,” “Sanctification and holiness” and a final summary of what to “Receive from each other.”

Less than two months later, William Wilson and David Wells were invited guests and participants in the Lambeth Conference in Canterbury, England, a gathering of the Anglican Communion’s Bishops and spouses convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The theme was “God’s Church for God’s World – walking, listening, and witnessing together.”⁴

Wilson, as PWF chair, participated in the conference’s opening services. David Wells, PWF vice-chair and CUC chair, was invited to participate in a plenary panel where he acknowledged, “Unity is hard work.” He also presented to the bishops what Pentecostals bring to our shared journey of “spiritual ecumenism.” He asked them to consider the central core of Pentecostal identity as James K. A. Smith described in his book *Thinking in Tongues*.⁵ These include:

- Refreshing/renewal;
- The Spirit’s intersection with their lives;
- Wholeness/transformation through Christ;
- Divine encounters and signs of the Kingdom;
- The mission of God being expressed through them.

It was with this deepening interaction between the PWF and the AC that the IPAC dialogue continued in both 2023 and 2024. June 10-16, 2023, the dialogue members convened in Canterbury, England, and participated in the Sunday Eucharist at the Cathedral and several Evensong services during the week. In 2022, William Adam was named as the next Archdeacon of Canterbury and Residentiary Canon of Canterbury Cathedral. This allowed several opportunities for the dialogue members to participate in worship at the Cathedral with Adam and to explore the catacombs by candlelight with him.

The dialogue received presentations from papers by both Anglican and Pentecostal members on the subjects of sacramentality, holiness, renewal, and then participated in dialogue to consider a synthesis of the presentations. Assignments were made for the 2024 dialogue.

⁴ <https://www.lambethconference.org/>

⁵ James K.A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

In 2024, the members of the dialogue reconvened at Shikwaru Lodge, near Mokopane, South Africa, on June 8-14, 2024. The Pentecostal World Fellowship hosted the meeting, and the members worshipped on site as well as attended Sunday worship at Celebration Church in Mokopane, which the manager of Shikwaru Lodge pastors.

As indicated by the AC communique, “The Commission heard papers working towards a common statement on holiness, sacramentality and renewal in both traditions. In particular, the focus was on theological education, ministerial formation, discipleship and holiness.”⁶ The meeting concluded with a visit to the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg.

The dialogue members will reconvene June 21-27, 2025, at St Columba’s House in Woking, England, and be hosted by the Anglican Communion. The review of the draft chapters for the final report of the dialogue will take place and be prepared in a manner that the sponsoring bodies can approve for distribution.

Members of the IPAC dialogue from 2023-2025 have included:

[Anglican]

- Royce Victor (Co-Chair), Church of South India
- James Amanze, Church of the Province of Central Africa
- Natalie Blake, Church in the Province of the West Indies
- David Hilborn, Church of England
- Neli Miranda, Church of Central America
- Preston Parsons, Anglican Church of Canada
- Christopher Wells, Anglican Communion Office, Co-Secretary
- Neil Vigers, Anglican Communion Office, Co-Secretary

[Pentecostal]

- David Wells (Co-Chair), Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada
- Paul Alexander (Co-Chair), Assemblies of God, USA
- Glenn Balfour, Assemblies of God, UK
- Simo Frestadius, European Pentecostal Theological Association and Elim Pentecostal Church, UK
- Jacqueline Grey, Australian Christian Churches
- David S. Han, Church of God, USA
- Opoku Onyinah, Church of Pentecost and Pentecost University, Ghana

⁶ https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/517983/240202_IPAC_Communique_en.pdf

Historically, dialogue reports with other communions, such as the Catholic Church would read, “The Report published here is the work of the Catholic/Pentecostal International Dialogue between the Catholic Church and some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders.”⁷ Christian communions involved in dialogues with Pentecostals have been very affirming of the PWF creating the CUC as it provides authorized ecclesiastical and academic Pentecostal leaders to interact with formally as they develop summary reports with suggested actions together.

Dialogue with Lutherans

From 2022 to 2025, in addition to the Anglican Communion, three other communions maintained dialogues or prepared for new sessions in their dialogue with the PWF CUC. The First Round of the International Lutheran-Pentecostal Dialogue released a Communiqué titled “The Spirit of the Lord Is Upon Me,” which was published by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and released in 2023. The Editors were: Dirk G. Lange, Pauline Mumia, Jean-Daniel Plüss and Sarah Hinlicky Wilson.⁸ The document has been widely read and well received.

The LWF and PWF CUC steering group, led by Lange and Plüss, moved forward in the planning for the Second Round of the dialogue. Dialogue members met for February 22-26, 2025, at the Faculdades EST, in São Leopoldo, the main Lutheran Theological Seminary in Brazil. This round of the LWF–PWF Dialogue will continue to focus on Christian worship and formation with the intention to bring practical insights into the life of our churches as we can learn much from our respective traditions.

Dialogue with Reformed Churches

Mel Robeck has provided an overview of The Reformed–Pentecostal Dialogue, which began in 1996 following talks between then General Secretary of the World Alliance (now Communion) of Reformed Churches (WCRC), Milan Opočenský, and himself. Since that time, it has completed three reports: “*Word and Spirit, Church and World*” in 2000, “*Experience in Christian Faith and Life*” in 2011, and “*Called to God’s Mission*” in 2020.

⁷ “Report of the Sixth Phase of the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (2011-2015),” 1.

⁸ <https://lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/20230810%20Lutheran-Pentecostal%20dialogue%20EN.pdf>

The working title of the next dialogue is: “*Being Church Together*,” and all participants commenced in the Spring of 2025 to study the sections on the understanding of the church in the previous reports. Initial meetings are being held on Zoom.

Dialogue with Roman Catholics

The longest-standing bilateral dialogue globally for Pentecostals has been between the Roman Catholic church and “some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders.” The First Phase, which took place from 1972-1976, demonstrates the impact of Vatican II and the Charismatic movement on not only the Catholic church but also on the broader Christian community, including Pentecostals.

The present phase, the Seventh, has met consistently and done its work from 2022 to 2025. With the theme “*Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*” (“law of prayer is the law of faith”) the dialogue had commenced in Springfield, MO., USA in July 2018 and though delayed in holding in-person meetings the participants met twice online to prepare for the second session on the topic “Kerygma/ Proclamation and the Christian Life.”

Dialogue focused on that topic for the meeting in Rome, Italy, on July 8-14, 2022. Cardinal Kurt Koch, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, hosted a dinner in the Vatican to mark the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Dialogue. He also read the message that Pope Francis sent to the members of the Dialogue for the golden jubilee, which was received with gratitude.

The Dialogue held its third meeting of the seventh phase of dialogue in Millennium City (near Kasoa), Ghana, at the Pentecost Convention Centre of the Church of Pentecost, from July 13 to 18, 2023. Since its initiation in 1972, this was the first time the dialogue took place in the Global South, allowing the participants to experience the vivacity of the local Christian, Catholic, and Pentecostal communities. Two papers were read on “Worship/Prayer and Christian Life,” and the dialogue focused on those topics, aided by the interactions with Ghanaian Catholic and Pentecostal churches and their leaders.

The fourth meeting of the seventh phase of the Catholic – Pentecostal International Dialogue met in Lisbon, Portugal, on July 6-12, 2024, at the Center of Spirituality, Alfragide, and discussed “Sacramentality and Christian Living.” The discussion was aided by Jean-Daniel Plüss presentation of the Pentecostal paper “Conformed to the Image of Christ: Pentecostal Spirituality, Sacramental Practices and Daily Living.” And Marcial Maçaneiro S.C.J. presentation of the

Catholic paper “The Sacraments and Sacramental Life: A Catholic Perspective.” The visit to “Our Lady of Fatima Shrine,” where the participants attended Sunday Eucharist at the main square, was an occasion for exchange, dialogue, clarification, and reflection. It significantly marked this session in light of the topic discussed.

The fifth session of the seventh phase will be hosted by The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PWF) in Quebec City, Quebec, Canada, on July 12-16, 2025, where the summary report of the dialogue will be the focus.

The past two years have also seen the enhancement of the relationship between the Catholic and Pentecostal communities by initiatives the Vatican has made through its Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity to receive input on primary subjects related to Christian Unity. In a booklet that Pope Francis authorized, *The Bishop of Rome*, the ongoing role of those who hold that office is described and explored. It was distributed to ecumenical colleagues, including the PWF CUC for responses on behalf of the Pentecostal World Fellowship. Mel Robeck, having had a lead role for many years in the international dialogue, provided a first draft, which was reviewed by other commissioners before finalizing a letter of reply to Cardinal Koch and the Dicastery.

The Catholic church, as part of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (2021-2024), with a desire for synodality to be evident, invited an ecclesiastical leader from within the PWF to attend the Synod in October 2023 and 2024 as a fully participating observer. Opoku Onyinah, Church of Pentecost, Ghana, agreed to graciously offer his time and service to the Synod on the PWF’s behalf. His participation and influence were of impact and deeply appreciated by those within the Catholic community. PWF Chair William Wilson was also present to participate with Pope Francis and other leaders of Christian communions in the opening session of the Synod in October 2023. Following the Synod, an invitation was received from Cardinal Kurt Koch to provide ecumenical reflections on the subject of “An Enquiry on Synodality/Primacy in the Life and Mission of the Churches.” With the oversight of David Cole (The King’s University, Texas, PCCNA⁹ CUC), a response was developed and forwarded to Koch’s office.

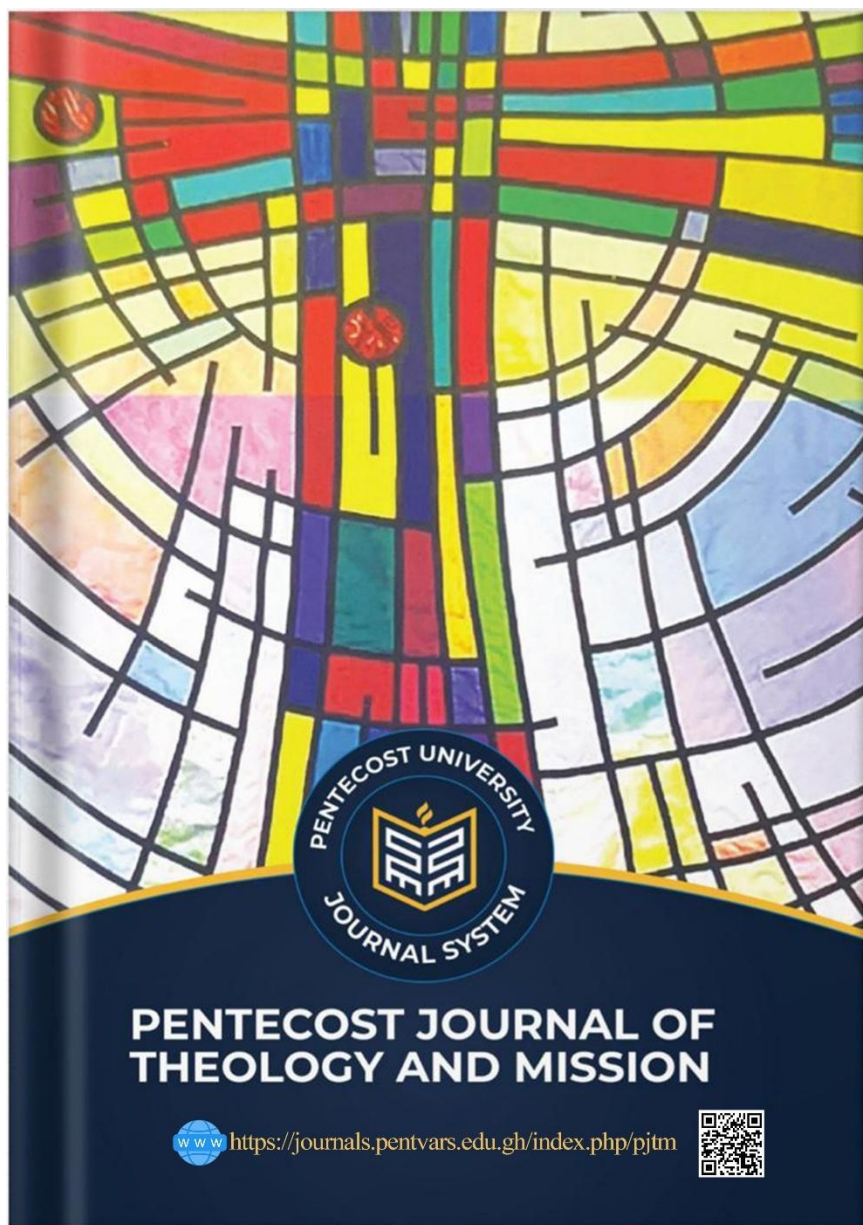
⁹ Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches in North America (PCCNA)

Conclusion

On 20 January 2025, Opoku Onyinah participated in a webinar entitled “Fraternal Delegates’ Experience of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops” organized by the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome. Observations noted were that participation in the Synod fostered a rewarding experience centered on prayer, dialogue, and listening to diverse voices, including laity and bishops. Participants built trust and created a safe atmosphere for honest exchange, emphasizing shared discernment. It highlighted the importance of inclusive communal decision-making, safe spaces for faith growth, and the potential for synodality to inspire dialogue and strengthen community bonds, promoting ecumenical interactions and valuing diverse perspectives.

The “Bishop of Rome” and the response related to “Synodality” clearly mark a deepening mutuality of influence within ecumenical circles. In these and the other contexts noted, it is clear that the three years between Seoul 2022 and Helsinki 2025 have been very significant for the PWF and its Christian Unity Commission. The journey continues.

David R. Wells (David.Wells@paoc.org) has served as general superintendent of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada since May 2008. He also serves as the Vice-Chair of the Pentecostal World Fellowship, President of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches of North America, and on the executive of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship.



An Account of Ecumenism and the Pentecostal World Fellowship

Cecil M. Robeck, Jr.

Abstract

David du Plessis and Donald Gee were among the first Pentecostals to view ecumenism positively. They shared Jesus' global vision, while many others were focused only largely on regional concerns. At the heart of ecumenism is the Household of God. Viewed this way, it opens up new ways of thinking about the Church universal. It can lead to a visible unity that the world can see. Other Pentecostals have joined these two leaders in various ecumenical encounters. This article describes what these leaders have accomplished in building better relations with other churches and challenging them to greater openness to Pentecostals. It points to advances that are now possible at the global level through the work of the Christian Unity Commission (CUC) of the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF).

Keywords: Ecumenism, dialogue, David du Plessis, Donald Gee, Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF), World Council of Churches (WCC), Secretaries of Christian World Communions (CWC), Global Christian Forum (GCF), Christian Unity Commission (CUC)

Early Pentecostal Engagement with Ecumenism

Many Pentecostals have opposed ecumenism through the years, even though Jesus prayed that His followers would all be one, just as the Father and Son are one. The reason that Jesus made this request of the Father, however, is one with which Pentecostals around the world resonate strongly. It involves mission (John 17:20-23)! It anticipates that if we actually were one, the world would come to believe that the Father had sent Jesus into the world. Sadly, our behavior in dismissing ecumenism so quickly, violates both Jesus' prayer and Paul's assertion that one part of the Body cannot claim, "I have no need of you" (1 Cor. 12:21) when speaking of another part of the Body. Yet each of our denominations as well as independent churches have formed their own mission agencies, essentially saying, "We do not need anyone else. We can do it better alone!"

Whatever the refusal to consider ecumenism might be, in the end it is nothing more than a selfish demonstration that we do not love all others

who claim to be followers of Christ, because as the Apostle John proudly put it, *they do “not follow with us”* (Mark 9:38-40; Luke 9:49-50). We have chosen to ignore Jesus’ desire, violating His commandment to love one another, and choosing not to love others as He has loved us (John 13:14). The Third Century North African theologian, Tertullian, noted that the law of love became the hallmark of early Christians. Even those who plotted to persecute them were impressed by “how they love[d] one another.”¹

The ecumenical history of the Pentecostal Movement is a short one. While there were a few antecedents in the United States,² global Pentecostal participation in ecumenism really began with the formation of the Pentecostal World Conferences, now known as the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF).³ Support for ecumenism came in large part at the initiative of two men, the South African pastor and Apostolic Faith Mission executive, David J. du Plessis, who would later immigrate to the United States, and the British Assemblies of God pastor, teacher, and writer, Donald Gee. They were both visionaries who played significant roles in the founding and development of the PWF.

The initial vision for the first Pentecostal World Conference came from its organizing secretary, Leonard Steiner, a Swiss Pentecostal Mission pastor in Zürich, Switzerland. The meeting convened May 4-9, 1947, in Zürich, sixteen months before the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) convened from August 22 to September 4, 1948, in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Du Plessis joined Steiner and moved to Zürich, where he served on and off as the General Secretary of the Conference from 1947 to 1958. At the first Pentecostal World Conference, leaders invited Donald Gee to edit *Pentecost*, the official magazine of the Pentecostal World Conference. Recognizing the political realities that often-divided Pentecostal leaders, he accepted the job on one condition. They had to grant him complete freedom to

¹ Tertullian, *Apology* 39.7.

² Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “The Assemblies of God and Ecumenical Cooperation: 1920-1965,” in Wonsuk Ma and Robert Menzies, eds., *Pentecostalism in Context: Essays in Honor of William W. Menzies*, JPT Supp 11 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 107-150.

³ From its inception, participants named an executive committee, but the group simply organized conferences, with the name, Pentecostal World Conference (PWC). In 2001, it became the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF). I have chosen to use PWF throughout.

publish what he believed needed to be said, without interference from any Pentecostal church or leader. They agreed!⁴

Defining Pentecostal Ecumenism

Pentecostals typically think of ecumenism as only taking place between churches of widely differing church families, for example, Catholics with Reformed, the Orthodox with Methodists, Anglicans with Baptists, Lutherans with Anabaptists, and so forth. We tend not to think of a gathering or an assembly of different types of Pentecostals, for example, Church of God (Cleveland, TN), International Pentecostal Holiness Church, Church of God in Christ, Assemblies of God, International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, and Open Bible Church as an ecumenical gathering. Yet that is exactly what it is. It is an ecumenical gathering. The Pentecostal World Fellowship is an ecumenical body.

The Greek word for a “house” is οἶκος (*oikos*). The word οἰκουμένη (*oikoumene*), from which we get the word “ecumenical” comes from that root. We find other related words in Galatians 6:10, where the Church is called the “household of faith” (οἰκίους τῆς πίστεως / *oikeious tes pisteos*), and Ephesians 2:19, where the Apostle describes that Church as the “household of God” (οἰκεῖτοι τοῦ θεοῦ / *oikeioi tou theou*). The most common image that ecumenists give to these related words today is that we are all members of a single household. All those who follow Jesus Christ are of the same Christian household.

Both Donald Gee and David du Plessis understood this. That is why only three months after the organizing Assembly of the WCC, Donald Gee wrote his first ecumenical editorial in *Pentecost*. He lamented that no Pentecostal had attended that Assembly.⁵ In light of Jesus’ prayer in John 17, he concluded, “it would be churlish...not to welcome...[the] progress” of the Council. He pointed out that, “‘Unity of the Spirit’ is not an escape from outward unity,” that is, visible unity is a significant mark of our love for all Christians.⁶

In March 1952, Gee wrote another ecumenical editorial, this one aimed at intra-Pentecostal ecumenism, which he titled “Burning the Partitions.” Recognizing that turf wars and other arguments continued to divide Pentecostal denominations and churches even within the PWF,

⁴ Richard Massey, *Another Springtime: The Life of Donald Gee, Pentecostal Leader and Teacher* (Guilford, Surrey, England: Highland Books, 1992).

⁵ Donald Gee, “Amsterdam and Pentecost,” *Pentecost* 6 (December 1948), 17.

⁶ Donald Gee, “Amsterdam and Pentecost,” 17.

he challenged his readers with a vision of unity, concluding with the line, “It is time to burn the partitions – not one another.”⁷

That July, David du Plessis and Samuel Nyström, a well-known Swedish missionary to Brazil, attended the International Missionary Conference (IMC), the missionary arm of the WCC, in Willingen, Germany. Du Plessis maintained that the Lord had told him to “Go and witness to the leaders of the World Council of Churches,” and when he was invited to do so, he went.⁸ That meeting opened the door to further cooperation between the WCC and du Plessis, then serving as Secretary to the PWF. Gee published a tribute to David du Plessis later that year, praising him for “His contacts with outstanding religious leaders in ecumenical circles [that] have provided a real asset to the Movement,” and he noted that du Plessis “pursued the cause of world-wide Pentecostal unity under a deep sense of a burden entrusted to him from the Lord.”⁹

Over the next two decades, Donald Gee and David du Plessis worked together, writing articles and providing reports to the readers of *Pentecost* that focused on what was happening within the Pentecostal world, what was taking place in the Church around the world, and how God was working in the ecumenical world outside the PWF. Some Pentecostal leaders chafed at these reports, but given that the Executives of the PWF had given Gee a free hand as editor of their magazine, *Pentecost*, they continued to allow him to be the final arbiter.

Pentecostal Participation in the World Council of Churches

In 1954, W. A. Visser’t Hooft, the first General Secretary of the WCC, invited David du Plessis to serve as a member of his staff at the Second WCC Assembly, held in Evanston, Illinois. DuPlessis worked with the non-English speaking media. J. Roswell Flower, General Secretary of the Assemblies of God in the USA, and the (Acting) Secretary for the 1955 Pentecostal World Conference attended the Assembly for five days. Both men came away from the Assembly with very positive reviews.¹⁰ Flower found the global experience in the WCC to be surprisingly

⁷ Donald Gee, “Burning the Partitions,” *Pentecost* 19 (March-May 1952), 17.

⁸ David J. du Plessis, *The Spirit Bade Me Go* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1970), 13.

⁹ Donald Gee, “David J. Du Plessis: A Well-Deserved Tribute,” *Pentecost* 21 (September 1952), 12.

¹⁰ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “A Pentecostal Looks at the World Council of Churches,” *The Ecumenical Review* 47:1, (1995), 60-69.

“evangelical,” or “conservative,” and he reported that Evangelicals and Pentecostals could dominate the WCC if they chose to do so.¹¹

Donald Gee published Du Plessis’ report of the Assembly in *Pentecost* in December 1954, claiming that the “influence of evangelicalism was stronger than that of liberalism” there.¹² The “repeated and humble confessions of repentance” and the “sincere hunger for the fullness of God that is in Christ” that he heard and sensed, had moved him.¹³ Du Plessis closed his report with the opening lines from the Assembly’s “Message to the Churches.” “We affirm our faith in Jesus Christ as the hope of the world, and desire to share that faith with all men. May God forgive us that by our sin we have often hidden this hope from the world.” The message continued, claiming that “Only at the Cross of Christ, where men [and women] know themselves as forgiven sinners, can they be made one.”¹⁴ In his editorial on the same topic, Donald Gee observed that, “we lie and do not tell the truth if we do not confess to a consciousness that among these brethren in the WCC there is a real love for Jesus Christ and a sincere faith in Him as Saviour and Lord.”¹⁵ In spite of these testimonies from these three Pentecostal leaders, others refused to accept their testimony as true. Among those who refused the testimony of Gee and du Plessis was Thomas F. Zimmerman.

In 1961, Zimmerman was serving simultaneously as the General Superintendent of the General Council of the Assemblies of God, the President of the National Association of Evangelicals, and the Chairman of the PWF. While he was unable to fire Donald Gee because of Gee’s mandate from the PWF, or silence David du Plessis, who seemed to be witnessing to the power of Pentecost everywhere, Zimmerman addressed the Jerusalem Conference, citing Ephesians 5:8 and 5:11,¹⁶ in

¹¹ J. Roswell Flower, “A Report Covering the First Week of the Second Meeting of the World Council of Churches, Opened at Northwestern University at Evanston, Illinois, August 14-31, 1954,” 5. This unpublished report may be found in the Flower Heritage Research Center of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, MO, USA.

¹² David J. du Plessis, “The World Council of Churches,” *Pentecost* 30 (December 1954), 10.

¹³ David J. du Plessis, “The World Council of Churches,” 10.

¹⁴ David J. du Plessis, “The World Council of Churches,” 11.

¹⁵ Donald Gee, “Pentecost and Evanston,” *Pentecost* 30 (December 1954), 17.

¹⁶ “⁸ For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: ⁹ (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth:) ¹⁰ Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.¹¹ And

terms later described by one journalist as “fiery words.” It was obvious that many others agreed with him for they repeatedly applauded him, while Zimmerman charged his audience with the words, “these are not days for compromise.”¹⁷ Zimmerman continued,

Those who would compromise on these positions, or would join hands with those who do compromise are being unwittingly used as tools against us, not for us. We have been commanded, “Come ye out,” and “Be ye separate.” This is our calling. This is God’s answer to compromise.¹⁸

In response, Donald Gee wrote a hard-hitting editorial titled, “What Manner of Spirit?” He agreed that this was not the time for Pentecostals to compromise. The question, however, was not as simple as Zimmerman might suggest. “True,” exclaimed Gee, “but compromise with whom, and with what?”

These...are days for deep searchings of heart, and perhaps for reassessment of some things we have cherished in earlier days, when we could afford the luxury of denominational strife and division, with all its resultant weakening of our resources, and causing of stumbling blocks before the world. The Spirit of Christ will lead us to examine very carefully the things that separate us from our fellow Christians.¹⁹

The following year, when the Second Vatican Council opened in 1962, Robert C. Cunningham, editor of the weekly paper of the Assemblies of God, the *Pentecostal Evangel* wrote,

There are two kinds of unity developing in the ranks of Christendom today. One is a visible unity consisting of denominational mergers, state councils of churches, national councils, and a world council. The other is a spiritual unity, which binds the hearts of truly born-again Christians

have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:8-11).

¹⁷ Arthur Gilbert, “Pentecost among the Pentecostals,” *The Christian Century* 78:26 (June 28, 1961), 794-796.

¹⁸ Addresses Presented at the Sixth Pentecostal World Conference, Jerusalem, Israel, May 19th to 21st, 1961 (Toronto, Canada: Testimony Press 1961), 55.

¹⁹ Donald Gee, “What Manner of Spirit?” *Pentecost* 57 (September–November 1961), 17.

together in Christian love even though they may be affiliated with different religious organizations.²⁰

Cunningham feared that the WCC would ultimately unite those who he labeled as *apostate* Protestants, with some of the Orthodox churches and with the Catholic Church, into a compromised world church. “True Christian unity is a ‘unity of the Spirit.’ It is an invisible unity produced not by human organizers but by the blessed Holy Spirit who spreads God’s love abroad in our hearts and draws us together in Christ.”²¹ Donald Gee and David du Plessis saw it very differently. Neither man doubted the validity of spiritual unity, but they also did not doubt that there was a role for visible unity as well. After all, was not the PWF a work of the Spirit leading to a visible manifestation of unity within the Pentecostal Movement? How else would the world know what God wanted unless they had a visible representation in a Church that was united? David du Plessis would later ask some penetrating questions,

When the Protestants came together in 1948 to form the World Council of Churches at the first Assembly in Amsterdam, I heard it said, “This is the work of the devil. This is an attempt to begin a super-church.” I was greatly puzzled, for I could not believe that God would allow the Protestant world to become the instrument of the devil. *Why should Pentecostal unity be of God and Protestant unity be of the devil? Was it not the Lord who was moving us to unity in both movements?* These questions kept troubling me until I began to pray earnestly about His purpose.²²

While some Pentecostal leaders opposed any Pentecostal participation in the Ecumenical Movement, that did not stop Gee from writing about it, or du Plessis from speaking about it or continuing to participate in it. Until his death in 1966, Donald Gee wrote various articles asserting the need for Pentecostals to be open to ecumenism. Du Plessis continued to speak and minister in and praise mainline churches as they entered into the Charismatic Movement. He did the same, praising the work of the WCC, and in 1972, with the help of Fr. Kilian McDonnell, OSB and others, he led the way into an international dialogue between the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the

²⁰ Robert C. Cunningham, “Scriptural Unity,” *The Pentecostal Evangel* 2526 (October 7, 1962), 3.

²¹ Cunningham, “Scriptural Unity,” 3.

²² David J. du Plessis, *The Spirit Bade Me Go*, 13. Italics mine.

Vatican, and Pentecostals.²³ That dialogue has successfully completed fifty years of discussions, and it will release its seventh report later this year.²⁴

Pentecostal Representation in Global Ecumenical Dialogues

In 1957, a new ecumenical group, composed of General Secretaries of various church families, was formed. It began an annual meeting called the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions (CWC). Its purposes include prayer, fellowship, and daily devotionals offered by various General Secretaries. These annual informal meetings provide opportunities for each person to apprise the others about important events taking place in their Church or confession, and to provide updates on the various ecumenical dialogues and events in which they are involved. As an informal group, it does not take minutes nor does it take official actions, but on occasion, the group does meet with heads of State to discuss the concerns of all the churches such as issues of persecution, of gross human rights abuses, to encourage accountability, and to offer prayer and assistance when invited to do so.

During the 1960s, the CWC became aware of the PWF and began to invite the PWF Secretary to join them. For years, the Secretary of the PWF chose to ignore their invitations. David du Plessis attended a single meeting, but he did not join the group, likely because he was already over-committed. In 1984, David's brother, Justus du Plessis succeeded him as the Pentecostal Co-chair of the International Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue. Because the General Secretary of the PWF had ignored repeated invitations from the CWC to participate in their meetings, they turned to Justus du Plessis. Justus finally attended the annual meetings of the CWC in 1990 and 1991. He retired from the Dialogue in 1990, and upon his recommendation, the Pentecostal team elected me to succeed him as the Pentecostal Co-chair of the Dialogue beginning in 1991.

Shortly after I became the Pentecostal Co-chair of the Dialogue, the Secretaries of the CWC, through their General Secretary, Dr. Bert Beach

²³ The Secretariat has undergone two name changes since. From 1987 until 2022, it was known as the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. In 2022 in another reorganization, it became the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity.

²⁴ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "Fifty Years of Catholic – Pentecostal Dialogue, 1972-2022: A Pentecostal Assessment," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 44 (2022), 220-250.

(Seventh Day Adventist) invited me to join them as a representative of the PWC. I was not sure what I should do. They then asked Msgr. John A. Radano, from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, to invite me once again, on behalf of the Secretaries. I explained that I was ordained with the Assemblies of God, that I was a full-time professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, and that while I had been working ecumenically since 1985, I had no position with the PWF and as such, I could not represent it. They insisted that I come anyway. They told me that they were desperate to include a Pentecostal, since Pentecostal churches were growing so quickly around the world.

I contacted Jacob Zopfi, the Secretary of the PWF and asked if he had received an invitation to participate with the Secretaries. He told me that he had, but that he saw no reason to accept it because he did not view them as Christians. He judged them to be spiritually dead. I then turned to Rev. Ray Hughes, who was Chairman of the PWF at that time, and explained the situation. I explained that I was not interested in officially representing the PWF in any way. I thought that because of my growing experience with ecumenists around the world, I could raise the consciousness of other church bodies about us. If he granted me permission to accept their invitation, I might be helpful to the churches of the PWF. I could explain to them who we Pentecostals are. I could show them what is important to us, and what motivates us to engage in mission around the world. Hughes agreed with my participation on the condition that my General Superintendent, Rev. G. Raymond Carlson also approved.

Subsequently, I met with Brother Carlson. I explained the situation and he agreed that I should go. In 1992, I began participating with the Secretaries of CWC as a kind of *Pentecostal placeholder*, noting each year that I represented no official body, but would do my best to represent all Pentecostals fairly until the PWF chose to send an official representative. I maintained that place for the next thirty years. Rev. David Wells, Vice-Chair of the PWF took the rightful place with the CWCs as the first official representative of the PWF, in 2022.

Following Zimmerman's condemnation of ecumenism in 1961, David du Plessis ignored his plea and at the invitation of the WCC, he attended its 1961 Assembly in New Delhi, India, in which several Pentecostal churches from Chile joined the WCC. David also attended at least one meeting of the WCC's Commission on Faith and Order. I first became engaged in the Ecumenical Movement in 1985 when the National Council of Churches (NCCUSA) invited me to join their Commission on Faith and Order. Before I agreed to join, I asked for

permission to do so. Thomas Zimmerman and my District Superintendent, William O. Vickery set down some basic rules, and I was free to participate. That same year, David du Plessis invited me to join the Steering Committee of the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue. The NCCUSA recommended me to the WCC, and in 1989, I was invited to serve as a Pentecostal Advisor to its Faith and Order Commission meeting in Budapest, Hungary.

My participation in that meeting led to an invitation for me to attend the WCC Assembly in Canberra, Australia in 1991, where I was asked to help draft a resolution that would enable the WCC to know how best to reach out to Pentecostals.²⁵ In the end, the Assembly adopted the recommendations, and within six months, the WCC began officially to study and reach out to Pentecostals. That meeting led to my election by the WCC Central Committee to serve as a member of the Plenary Commission on Faith and Order. I continued to serve as the sole Pentecostal member of Faith and Order through the 2022 WCC Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany.

The Commission on Faith and Order is limited to a maximum of sixty members. In 2023, upon my retirement from the Commission, the WCC Central Committee voted to invite five Pentecostals from five countries to replace me! The PWF Commission on Christian Unity provided the names of these candidates, and they now represent their different Pentecostal churches and through them, the interests of the PWF. One of them came from the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, the latest Pentecostal church to join the WCC as a full member. Throughout my tenure on that Commission, I made it clear that I had no right or authority to represent any Pentecostal organization, however, I promised as I had to the CWC that I would offer honest advice and critique as one deeply rooted in the Pentecostal Movement. As such, they invited me to serve as the primary editor of and contributor to a

²⁵ “Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements,” in Michael Kinnamon, ed. *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report, Seventh Assembly, Canberra, Australia, 1-20 February 1991* (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications / Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 107-108, including ten recommendations. Donald W. Dayton—a member of the Wesleyan Church [Holiness], a past president of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, and a close friend—and I crafted these recommendations together. It took several months before the WCC named Huibert van Beek of the Office of Church Relations, to work with me on a subsequent series of consultations held around the world.

two-volume work titled, *Towards a Global Understanding of the Church*,²⁶ which has been very well received.

The Assembly's adoption of the resolutions regarding Pentecostals resulted in a series of consultations held over several years, and on various continents in which I participated, where we searched for other Pentecostal partners. By 1998, we had identified a sufficient number of Pentecostals from PWF member churches globally, who were willing to engage in dialogue with representatives from WCC member churches, to form a Joint Consultative Group (JCG). The Harare, Zimbabwe Assembly of the WCC approved the JCG, and in 1999, I Co-chaired its first meeting. Since that time, we have completed three rounds of dialogue, and in 2024, Jean-Daniel Plüss of the Swiss Pentecostal Mission became its latest Pentecostal Co-chair.

The fact that I participated in the annual meeting of CWC led to several of the secretaries inquiring about the possibility of beginning ecumenical dialogues with them. The first to approach me was the outgoing General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Gunnar Stålsett, in 1992.²⁷ When I asked him why he thought we should open a dialogue, he responded by telling me about the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. It is Lutheran in its theology, but it is completely Pentecostal in practice, manifesting all the gifts that Pentecostals have manifested for a century. Today, it has 9.3 million members. Many other Lutheran denominations were unsettled by the Pentecostal practices of Mekane Yesus believers. Dr. Stålsett thought that a dialogue with Pentecostals, who had experienced these gifts or charisms for a century, could help the churches of the LWF gain a

²⁶ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotiris Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Eds., *Towards a Global Vision of the Church, Volume I: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Faith and Order Paper No. 234 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022); *Volume II*, Faith and Order Paper No. 239 (2023). These volumes may be downloaded from the WCC website. Rev. Dr. Boukis is a theologian and pastor of the Greek Evangelical Church [Reformed] in Thessaloniki, Greece. Ani Ghazaryan Drissi is New Testament scholar and a member of the Armenian Apostolic [Orthodox] Church. She is now a member of the WCC Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation. She teaches at the WCC Ecumenical Institute Bossey, Switzerland.

²⁷ Stålsett was both a politician and a theologian. He served as the head of Norway's Democrat Party, later as the head of the Centrist Party, and as a member of the Norwegian Parliament, representing Oslo. He was a member of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee. From 1998-2006, he served as Bishop of Oslo for the Church of Norway.

greater understanding and appreciation for what Mekane Yesus believers stood for. “Would you help us?” he asked. I readily agreed!

Because of changes in LWF leadership and the priority of their ongoing work on the “Joint Declaration on Justification by Faith” on which they were in discussions with the Vatican, it took over a decade to get an official dialogue established.²⁸ Before the LWF approved the dialogue, in 2004, I began work with the LWF Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasburg, France, to establish a preliminary discussion of several years. I invited Jean-Daniel Plüss to serve as the Pentecostal Co-chair. In 2010, it released a report titled, *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*²⁹ that was distributed at the 2010 PWF meeting in Stockholm, Sweden. In 2014, the LWF approved a formal international dialogue, which began in 2016. It issued its first report in 2023, titled “The Spirit of the Lord Is upon Me,” co-published by the Lutheran World Federation and the Pentecostal World Fellowship.³⁰

In 1993, Milan Opočenský, a minister of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren and General Secretary of the World Alliance [now Communion] of Reformed Churches, approached me about the possibility of an international Reformed–Pentecostal Dialogue. I asked him why he wanted it, and in 1994, he came back concerned about the animosity between the Reformed Churches and Pentecostals in Korea.³¹

²⁸ The “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” is an extremely important ecumenical document. Cardinal Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Faith and by Martin Junge, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation signed it together in 1999. Subsequently, it has been adopted by the Anglican World Communion, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and the World Methodist Council. A copy is available at: https://lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/joint_declaration_2019_en.pdf (accessed 11/18/2024).

²⁹ *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together* (Strasbourg, France: Institute for Ecumenical Research / Pasadena, CA: David du Plessis Center for Christian Spirituality / Zurich, Switzerland: European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association, 2010).

³⁰ This report is available online at: <https://lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/20230810%20Lutheran-Pentecostal%20dialogue%20EN.pdf> (accessed 11/18/2024).

³¹ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “Yoido Full Gospel Church and Ecumenism,” Wonsuk Ma and Robert Menzies, eds., *The Spirit, Spirituality, and Leadership: Essays in Honor of Younghoon Lee* (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books, 2024), 240-248, tells the story of the impact the dialogue has had on this situation.

I recognized that same problem based upon student interaction in my classes at Fuller, and I agreed that a formal dialogue would be useful.

We met for an exploratory conversation with a small team in 1995, in England at the Assemblies of God's Mattersey Hall. I agreed to serve as the Pentecostal Co-chair during the first round of dialogue (1995-2000), and the following year we met in Torre Pellice, Italy, home of the Waldensians. We next met in Chicago, then in Kappel am Albis, Switzerland, in Seoul, Korea in 1999, and we wrote the first report in São Paulo, Brazil in 2000.

In 2001, David D. Daniels III, a Church of God in Christ minister, and professor of World Christianity at McCormick Theological Seminary, a Presbyterian school in Chicago, became the Pentecostal Co-chair for the second round (2001-2011). I returned as the Pentecostal Co-chair for the third round (2014-2020). This report was titled, "Called to God's Mission," published in 2020 by the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the Pentecostal World Fellowship.³² A fourth round of this dialogue will begin in 2025 on the topic of the Church, as a Divine initiative, a historical community, the People of God, and its role in the world. It plans to make its report available in 2029.

Almost immediately after the PWF Vice-Chair, David Wells, joined the annual meeting of the CWCs, the Anglican secretary spoke with him about beginning an Anglican-Pentecostal Dialogue. Such a dialogue had been discussed sporadically over the previous two decades, but the only discussion to emerge was a dialogue between members of the Church of England and British Pentecostals.³³ Wells now serves as the Pentecostal co-chair of the International Pentecostal-Anglican Commission, which began a five-year dialogue in 2022 on the subject of "Holiness" as understood and practiced in their respective churches.

Other General Secretaries have explored possibilities for opening international dialogues as well. They include representatives of the Baptist World Alliance, which met with Pentecostal representatives in 2011. Due to internal Baptist issues regarding Baptist leadership, the opening of a dialogue has been postponed, though it is still on the table. The Salvation Army, as well as the Mennonite World Conference and the Methodist World Council, have also shown interest in possibly opening dialogues with Pentecostals.

³² A pdf is available at: <https://wcrf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CalledToGodsMission.pdf>.

³³ David Hilborn and Simo Frestadius, eds., *Anglicans and Pentecostals in Dialogue* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2023).

The Formation of the Global Christian Forum

In 1998 and in 1999, Dr. Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the WCC, convened two small consultations in Bossey, Switzerland to inquire about another possibility for engaging Pentecostals as well as Evangelicals in dialogue with the World Council of Churches. The discussion resulted in the formation of the Global Christian Forum. The Forum is unique; there is nothing to join. It involves a very small staff, and hence, very little overhead. It brings together leaders from four organizations – the World Council of Churches, World Evangelical Alliance, Pentecostal World Fellowship, and the Roman Catholic Church, and a committee from each of these four pillars provides ongoing direction.

For this Forum to succeed in attracting Pentecostal and Evangelical participation, the group decided that half of the participants would come from ecumenical churches, while the other half would come from Pentecostal and Evangelical churches. Given the disparity in the educational levels of various church leaders, the group decided that the method of ecumenical engagement would begin with participants sharing testimonies of their personal spiritual journeys with Jesus Christ. From that beginning, unanticipated relationships formed between participants from different spiritual traditions, and out of those relationships, new encounters have taken place with a growing ecumenical life of their own. The many Pentecostal leaders from PWF member churches, who have participated, have found it both refreshing and challenging as they rethink their ecclesial boundaries. The Forum is not an end in itself, but rather, a beginning to greater ecumenical exchange.³⁴ In places like the USA, France, Switzerland, and elsewhere, the Forum has extended into regional and local manifestations of genuine Christian unity.

A Personal Call to Ecumenical Engagement

In 1983, the Lord called me to work in the ecumenical world through the only vision I have ever experienced. I asked for help with a problem, and this was the Lord's response. He even called my name. Given the Bylaws of the Assemblies of God, and given that I was an ordained minister of that Fellowship, I was afraid to proceed, but the Lord was

³⁴ Huibert van Beek, ed., *Revisioning Christian Unity: The Global Christian Forum* (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2009); Richard Howell and Casely B. Essamuah, *Sharing of Faith Stories: A Methodology for Promoting Unity* (Gurugram, Haryana, India: Caleb Institute, 2022).

insistent, appearing and speaking to me three times. I finally relented. I soon began to receive invitations to speak, and later to lead in various ecumenical discussions. I have never sought a single ecumenical opportunity. They have all come by invitation, for which I have asked and received permission from my superintendents to participate, and who have been both gracious and generous in allowing me to accept them.

While no Pentecostal organization, including the Assemblies of God, has ever paid any of my expenses, three successive Presidents of Fuller Theological Seminary, David Allan Hubbard, Richard J. Mouw, and Mark Labberton, understood and supported God's ecumenical call on my life. They provided encouragement, space, and funding for me to serve as "Fuller's ambassador to the global Church." At the request of Richard Mouw, the faculty promoted me to serve as Professor of Church History and Ecumenics and Special Assistant to the President for Ecumenical Relations.

While I have served my Pentecostal sisters and brothers faithfully, I have always understood that I was only called to build ecumenical bridges for a season, and I had to work alone to establish a solid footing for others to follow. I hoped to gather those who also saw the Church through hopeful eyes, as I thought about how best to engage the various Pentecostal organizations. Until quite recently, individuals have carried on the work of ecumenism on behalf of the member churches of the PWF. Unity, however, is not intended to be the work only of individuals; it is rightfully the work of churches.

In 2010, I asked to meet with the Executive Committee of the PWF in Stockholm, Sweden, hoping that Pentecostal ecumenism might find a permanent home there. In that meeting, I presented each member with a copy of a written report on all the major ecumenical dialogues in which Pentecostals participated or were ongoing. I asked for permission to develop and present a proposal for the founding of a Christian Unity Commission (CUC) by the PWF. They granted me permission to develop such a proposal, and with input from eight other Pentecostal theologians representing various churches and continents, I gave it to the PWF Chairman, Rev. Prince Guneratnam, for consideration in 2011. George Wood told me that it received a very brief discussion but was set aside with no action taken. It remained dormant until the PWF Calgary Conference in 2019, when Billy Wilson and David Wells picked it up, and the Executive Committee amended and adopted the proposal.

Institutionalizing Pentecostal Ecumenism

Following the Calgary Conference, the PWF established a Christian Unity Commission (CUC), chaired by David Wells. With the advice of others, Wells solicited names from the various member churches of the PWF, and a group of Commissioners, representing the doctrinal and governance breadth found in the PWF denominations and churches drawn from around the world was established. This CUC brings the PWF full circle to the vision of its earliest leaders, especially Donald Gee and David du Plessis. It has adopted “Terms of Reference” and is now responsible for making recommendations regarding dialogue participants, overseeing the ongoing work of the various dialogues, and providing wisdom to the PWF on next steps.

Conclusion

My hope is that as PWF member churches study the reports of these dialogues, they will gain a new appreciation for the Pentecostal scholars who have worked to make the Pentecostal voice heard, appreciated, and respected in all churches with which they have had conversations. Without our scholars providing leadership alongside church leaders, these encounters could become politicized, and in the end, the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ would fail to live up to its calling to be one in any visible sense, and the world would never see the unity for which Jesus prayed.

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Spirit of Life: Pentecostals for Earth's Flourishing

Harold D. Hunter

Abstract

This article takes one on a journey around the world to witness Pentecostal ecological engagement. The World Council of Churches (WCC) and Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) ecumenical partners too often know only select Global North Pentecostal scholars who publish about ecotheology in English, most of whom come from North America. However, a bigger story emerges when looking to Pentecostals in the Global South, locating publications regardless of language, and listening to indigenous peoples. Only one member church of the PWF belongs to the WCC, which diminishes opportunities to participate in international ecological projects. The PWF Creation Care Task Force (CCTF) suffers from a lack of funding, not from a lack of activists. Even though one can face stiff resistance in their native communities, the number of ecology advocates continues to increase. One adventure began with the 1980s seminary lectures followed by an article published in South Korea in 2000 that accounted for close surveillance while traveling to 90 countries. This study started at the request of the PWF as a participant in the 2021 “Global Faith Leaders of all Religions and Scientists” selected by the Vatican, among others, working “Towards COP26” that culminated in Glasgow, November 1-12, 2021.

Keywords: PWF Creation Care Task Force, ecotheology, environmental restitution, flourishing, Nicaea 2025, Feast of Creation, ecumenism



Introduction

The Pentecostal tradition has been known to speak of dreaming dreams, having visions, and prophesying. The PWF Creation Care Task Force (CCTF) seeks to bring to life the ingredients on display in the “Peace with Creation: Season of Creation 2025” treatise.¹

Pentecostals worldwide are actively involved in climate justice issues and Nicaea 2025 projects. One illustration is the expert merging of the Season of Creation with all three articles of the Nicaea Creed by ORU School of Religion ecotheology expert, Jeffrey S. Lamp. His 2025 book, *Geoliturgy and Ecological Crisis*, takes no prisoners in our crusade for environmental righteousness.²

Lamp’s visionary and incisive exploration reimagines ecological hermeneutics. Lamp creates an ingenious geoliturgy narrative that remaps the global discussion around ecotheology with insights into anthropology culled from the opening of the Hebrew Bible and the Pauline Corpus. The timing is exquisite in that using the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed to frame relevant science and faith issues provides fodder for Nicaea 2025 projects and the 2025 global launch of the ecumenical Season of Creation. Lamp wields a golden pen that links “Green Patriarch” Bartholomew and Pope Francis in a way that well serves all faith actors from the Eastern Orthodox to the Pentecostal.

When the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA)-United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Dialogue meets at Xavier University of Louisiana in late September 2025, Lamp will read a paper addressing the theme, “Clean Water: Environmental Racism.” This follows the trajectory set out in my 2024 paper at the Society for Pentecostal Studies titled “Climate Justice Demands Shelter for Climate Refugees and Justice for Victims of Environmental Racism.” I will rehearse the intersection of the Feast of

¹ “Peace with Creation: Season of Creation 2025” is available at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1mtRJJaW6owTLagJJX8PFZspjru8gC88OG/edit>. I am a member of the Season of Creation Advisory Committee: <https://seasonofcreation.org/about/>. See WCC 9/1/24 webinar: <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/global-faith-communities-unite-for-season-of-creation-2024-with-new-celebration-guide>. Harold D Hunter’s email to Younghoon Lee (7/5/24) was about making Yoido Full Gospel Church aware of these festivals. This was a follow-up email to an in-person conversation in Atlanta a few days earlier (6/26/24).

² Jeffrey S. Lamp, *Geoliturgy and Ecological Crisis: The Spiritual Practice of Caring for Creation* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2025).

Creation to Nicaea 2025 with a workshop on June 6, 2025, at the Pentecostal World Conference meeting in Helsinki, Finland.³

Origins of PWF Creation Care Task Force

Establishing the genesis of the PWF Creation Care Task Force (CCTF) requires a look at my journey with the PWF. My first Pentecostal World Conference (PWC) was the 1989 meeting in Singapore. What I saw there convinced me to initiate a campaign to bring scholars and ecumenists to the PWC as presenters and partners. There were high points like the 1998 conference hosted by the Yoido Full Gospel Church, where Pastor Younghoon Lee allowed Wonsuk Ma and me to organize an adjacent conference.

A major step forward was the creation of the PWF Christian Unity Commission (CUC) during the 2019 PWC held in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Here is part of the backstory of how the CUC came together. Cecil “Mel” Robeck submitted a written proposal to the PWF executive committee on January 6, 2015, to organize an ecumenical board. On March 15, 2014, Matthew K. Thomas, PWF Secretary, wrote on behalf of the executive committee, ultimately denying this request on the grounds of internal polity implications.

I worked with the PWF executive committee on academic and ecumenical concerns for many years. After the 1989 PWC in Singapore, I wrote to Ray Hughes, PWF Chair, and eventually other PWF leaders, trying to get them to better incorporate Pentecostal scholars into their events. This was accomplished in a minor way with Jerusalem 1995; the best early result was Seoul 1998; a glimmer of hope at Los Angeles 2001; and then mixed results until WAPTE had academic papers at Stockholm 2010 and Kaula Lumpur 2013. In the meantime, I had conversations about ecumenism and the World Council of Churches with Pastor Paul Yonggi Cho and Pastor Younghoon Lee, along with other top leaders from PWF member churches.

³ Harold D. Hunter, “Climate Justice Demands Shelter for Climate Refugees and Justice for Victims of Environmental Racism,” Society for Pentecostal Studies, March 16, 2024, Chandler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, GA. Lois Olena, “Pentecostals on the Move,” Presidential Address, Society for Pentecostal Studies (SPS) meeting at Northwest University, March 15, 2025, referred to Pentecostals confronting environmental racism and receiving climate refugees. I submitted a proposal to the SPS executive committee to create an Interest Group dedicated to ecology to be in place for the 2026 SPS conference hosted by Baylor University.

I shared breakfast with the PWF vice-chair, AFM President Isaak Burger, and talked to Prince Guneratnam (Malaysia) when in Brazil during the 2016 PWC promoting the idea of a PWF CUC. I had talked to Guneratnam during WCC Central Committee meetings starting in Crete 2012 in addition to the WCC General Assembly known as Busan 2013. I sent a basic proposal by email to Guneratnam in 2018 shortly after we were together in Geneva for the 50th anniversary of the WCC. Guneratnam slightly modified my core proposal and then submitted it to the PWF leadership by email. This proposal was approved by the PWF executive committee and advisory board meeting during the 2019 PWC. Before the actual PWC in Canada, I kept members of the PWF executive committee informed about the meaning of the proposal, including Billy Wilson, when Guneratnam was still the PWF chair. I had no prior knowledge that Wilson would emerge as the new PWF Chair in 2019, nor that David Wells would chair the new PWF CUC.

Further details about the launch of the PWF CUC that I have recorded elsewhere can be reviewed at a different time.⁴ However, it was not unusual for me to write the PWF executive committee before the 2022 PWC in Seoul, South Korea, proposing the creation of the PWF CCTF. The CCTF was approved by both the PWF executive committee and the advisory boards.

Feast of Creation Links to Nicaea 2025

The WCC hosted an online meeting on February 3, 2025, that brought together representatives from the Christian World Communions. David Wells and I were online on behalf of the PWF. We reported on the following Nicaea 2025 international events involving the PWF.

Five Pentecostals were among the many contributors to the “Towards Nicaea 2025” conference that convened in Bossey, France, on November 4-8, 2024. These papers will be published in an edited volume slated to be released in time for the Faith & Order conference in Egypt. My paper contrasted those Pentecostals who expelled Nicaea as Empire to those Pentecostals who clearly affirmed Nicaea and the first four ecumenical councils.⁵

⁴ Harold D. Hunter, “Global Pentecostal Models of Ecumenism” (PhD course at ORU School of Religion, Summer 2024).

⁵ See <https://www.oikoumene.org/events/towards-nicaea-2025-conference>. The Faith & Order Tables of the National Council of Churches, USA, will publish papers on Nicaea 2025, including one written by Robby Waddell, who currently serves on the executive committee of the Society for Pentecostal Studies.

“The Centenary of Nicaea & ‘Creation Day’” advertised as the 2nd Ecumenical Council about the New Liturgical Feast, will convene at Assisi, Italy, from May 4-8, 2025. I will represent the PWF at this major ecological ecumenical event and participate in a panel discussion that will allow me to introduce the PWF CCTF.⁶ While the Roman Catholic Church did not officially co-sponsor the Feast of Creation event in Assisi 2024, it participated through various Vatican observers (i.e. Dicastery for Divine Worship, but also other dicasteries) and with contributors to the systematic theology panels (Dicastery for Doctrine of the Faith and International Theological Commission), as well as various continental bishops’ conferences.

The PWC, which was hosted by Yoido Full Gospel Church in 2022, will go to Helsinki in early June 2025. My proposal for a session dedicated to Nicaea was not adopted. However, I will do a workshop where I build on the Assisi conference and link the Feast of Creation to Nicaea 2025.⁷

The Pentecostal–Catholic Dialogue in the USA is working with the theme, “Waters That Unite: Waters That Divide”. The topic for the October 2-4, 2024, meeting hosted by the Pentecostal Theological Seminary, Cleveland, TN, was “Washing the Saints’ Feet.”⁸ As mentioned earlier, the water theme for 2025 will turn toward environmental issues that engage Nicaea 2025.

David Wells will represent the PWF at the Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order. There are at least five Pentecostal scholars who will make their way to Egypt for this historic event. One of the panel discussions will include Victor Lee (Malaysia) and another Jacqui Grey (Australia).⁹

The most symbolic event regarding Nicaea 2025 would be Ecumenical Patriarchate Bartholomew and Pope Francis going to Nicaea (Izmir, Turkey) in early May 2025. This would not be a multilateral event but a one-day affair with travel to and from Constantinople. When I took a Pentecostal team to Constantinople for informal talks with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew sent me to Nicaea in 2010. Despite my years of work with

⁶ See <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CLUKIuWw8vFuj-p0kIsV7x1DnQl4MdAZ9D3JSxBfwCg/edit?tab=t.0>

⁷ See <https://pwc2025.fi/>.

⁸ “PCCNA–US CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS DIALOGUE PRESS RELEASE,” *PCCNA Communique* (October 2024).

⁹ See <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/world-conference-on-faith-and-order-in-2025-will-mark-anniversary-of-the-council-of-nicaea>.

the Vatican and Ecumenical Patriarch, I will not be invited. However, as this article is being written, it is unclear if Pope Francis's health complications would preclude travel to Turkey in May.

It is unclear to me if PWF-type Pentecostal leaders will directly engage the issue of a common date for Easter/Pascha or the filioque issue. My view is that Pentecostals should resist inserting filioque into the 325 CE Nicene Creed while awakening to the fact that a lack of a common date for Easter/Pascha means Pentecostals do not have a common day for celebrating Pentecost Sunday. The year 2025 is an exception as both the Gregorian and Julian calendars converged for these key liturgical landmarks.¹⁰

Pentecostal Climate Activists around the Globe

There has been an ecological awareness for Pentecostals in the USA made public since at least the 1950s. The environmental mandate unveiled at Brighton '91 awakened the consciousness of many emerging Pentecostal ecologists.¹¹ However, it was left to a Lutheran activist who was raised Pentecostal to launch the first Earth Day originally recognized by the UN.

Founder of the original Earth Day recognized by the United Nations, John Saunders McConnell, Jr., was raised a Classical Pentecostal. His father, J.S. McConnell, was an Assemblies of God minister and was on hand in Hot Springs, Arkansas for the 1914 "birth" of the Assemblies of

¹⁰ During the SPS conference held at Northwest University, March 13-15, 2025, the Ecumenical Interest Group organized a panel about Nicaea 2025. Among the issues discussed were a common date for Easter, filioque and the 325 CE Nicene Creed, Empire and anti-creedalism, in addition to various canons although with little attention to ecclesiology. There was no such discussion during PCCNA 2025, nor will there be at the Pentecostal World Conference 2025.

¹¹ See Harold D Hunter, "Pentecostal Climate Justice: Ecological Activism Meets Restitution," *Pentecostal Missiology & Environmental Degradation*, edited by Eugene Baron and Amos Yong (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global, 2025), 27-50. The Brighton '91 climate paper was the handiwork of the late UNISA Professor ML Daneel. See ML Daneel, "African Independent Church Pneumatology and the Salvation of All Creation," *All Together in One Place: Papers from the Theological Section of the Brighton Conference on World Evangelization*, edited by Harold D Hunter and Peter D Hocken (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019), reprint with a new introduction. The first academic article by a PWF-type Pentecostal was published in South Korea as "Pentecostal Healing for God's Sick Creation?" in *The Spirit and the Church* 2:2 (November 2000), 145-167, by Harold D Hunter.

God. His grandfather, T.W. McConnell, attended the famed Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles. The early ministry of his father was filled with “signs and wonders” as they traversed the USA. It was John McConnell who launched the original Earth Day sanctioned by the United Nations. John would drink from the same wells as his Pentecostal family by seeing a divine mandate in moving forward on this critical front.”¹²

The 2021 Faith and Science project brought together global faith leaders of all religions. David Wells and I, representing the PWF, met with Pope Francis on October 4, 2021, at the Vatican to deliver a message to COP26. All of these faith actors are aware that climate refugees as well as environmental racism are impacted by the food we eat, the clothes we wear, transportation, seeking to be carbon neutral, supporting biodiversity, divesting from fossil fuels, and striving to achieve an economy for thriving. Pentecostals who have long embraced restitution as a biblical concept are emerging as partners in these conversations not only involving scholars and activists but also official church positions. This project propelled me to launch what is now the PWF CCTF.¹³

The October 4, 2021, “Joint Appeal” came from “Global Faith Leaders of all Religions and Scientists” selected by the Vatican, among others, working “Towards COP26” that culminated in Glasgow, November 1-12, 2021. This statement by these global faith actors, who have been advocating to keep the global temperature from exceeding another 1.5 C through various means, must consider the imposing holdings of faith communities while also engaging respective governments. The Roman Catholic Church has the largest holdings of any religious group on the planet. Speaking from the COP28 Faith

¹² John McConnell, *Earth Day: Vision for Peace, Justice, and Earth Care* (Eugene: OR: Resource Publications, 2011), chapter 5. I first introduced McConnell in a paper for an Edinburgh 2010 Centennial commission that was later published as “Pentecostal Social Engagement: Excerpts from Around the World,” in Afe Adogame, Janice McLean, and Anderson Jeremiah, editors, *Engaging the World: Christian Communities in Contemporary Global Societies* (Oxford, Regnum Books International, 2014).

¹³ See Harold D Hunter, “An Emmaus Walk with Ancient Fathers and Mothers: From the Sawdust Trail to the Ecumenical Patriarchate,” in *The Holy Spirit, Leadership, and Spirituality*, edited by Wonsuk Ma and Robert Menzies, 2024 volume honoring 70th birthday of Younghoon Lee (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2024), 311.

Pavilion sponsored by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), Iyad Abumoghli offers these details:

- Six billion people (84% of the world's population) have a faith, religion, or values system
- Faith groups run more than 1.5 million projects globally to address climate change
- Faith groups own and are responsible for more than 8% of the earth's habitable land
- Faith groups own and are responsible for more than 5% of all commercial forests on the planet
- More than four in ten health services (40%) in some countries are operated by faith groups
- Half of schools worldwide (50%) are owned or operated by faith groups, rising to 64% of schools in sub-Saharan Africa
- 10% of the world's financial institutions are faith-related, making faith institutions the world's third-largest investor. Research shows that "faith-aligned" impact investment capital is valued at \$5 trillion worldwide.¹⁴

It surprises many when Pentecostal ecology activists can be identified in all parts of the world. The PWF CCTF's gender ratio was 55 (female) to 45 (male), with two indigenes, five continents, seven languages, and various churches. They are: Rev. Emmanuel Awudi (Ghana), Anita Davis (Australia), Harold D. Hunter (USA), Benjamin Jacuk (Alaska Dena'ina traditional lands), Angela Maringoli (Brazil), Karen Reed (Canada), Daniela Rizzo (Australia), Elizabeth Salazar Sanzana (Chile), Joel Tejedo (Philippines), Sanna Urvas (Finland), and Johannes Widlund (Sweden).

The CCTF Mission Statement was released in 2023:

¹⁴ Iyad Abumoghli, "Call to Action/Sign-up! COP28 Faith Pavilion calls for more ambitious agreements from summit negotiators," (December 12, 2023), email. Joe Ware, "World faith leaders point at richer countries to solve the climate crisis," *Church Times* (October 4, 2021) at <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/8-october/news/uk/world-faith-leaders-point-at-richer-nations-to-solve-the-climate-crisis> quotes chief executive of Faith Invest, Martin Palmer: "Faiths are key stakeholders in the planet. Globally, faiths run two-thirds of schools, provide significant health services — the Catholic Church alone runs a quarter of the world's health care — and manage eight per cent of the habitable land surface of the planet, including five per cent of commercial forests."

To form an international coalition of Pentecostal environmental advocates that amplifies voices—especially Indigenous and the Global South—toward engaging Pentecostals around the world to care for creation, enabling our Movement to contribute toward change globally.¹⁵

The CCTF will amplify our mission by using a *LinkedIn* Profile and include information not in this article due to space limitations. A forthcoming book on ecology edited by Amos Yong and Eugene Baron includes articles by PWF CCTF members Sanna Urvas (Finland), Anita Davis (Australia), Emmanuel Awudi (Ghana), Daniela Rizzo (Australia), and Harold D Hunter. Other notable contributors are Jacqui Grey (Australia), Jeffrey S Lamp (ORU), and AJ Swoboda (Foursquare).¹⁶

The awakening of Pentecostals in all parts of the world to climate issues can be illustrated by a quick look at select members of the PWF CCTF. We will go to Brazil and Ghana, but let's start with Joel Tejedo in the Philippines, a charter member of PWF CCTF. Tejedo is Indigenous, a member of the APTS faculty, and a pastor. Tejedo practices the eco-farming of several acres, recognized by the government, that feeds the poor. In turn, he has lectured at Harvard University and Oxford University along with several remote Asia-Pacific islands.

Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (APTS) professor in Baguio, Philippines, Joel Tejedo faithfully leaves the seminary behind and returns to his province doing what he calls ecofarming or agroecology at his farm (e.g., planting rice, coconut, and other fruit-bearing trees, tilapia farming, etc.). His team is currently developing a living model that will integrate all forms of livelihood and livestock within their farm, which will help local communities survive the global effects of the pandemic. Once they complete qualitative research by interviewing some practitioners, then perhaps they can acquire some contextual theologies and practices of a robust Pentecostal ecotheology in the Philippines.

Tejedo gave this report to the CCTF in July 2024:

We are pleased to report that this year alone we organized two important activities in our seminary to create a social awareness about the importance of caring for the creation: 1. My class on Perspective on Pentecostalism is spearheading a dialogues and forum for eco-creation attended by tens of students coming from 12-15 countries and 2. The

¹⁵ Karen Reed email to Harold D Hunter (August 25, 2023).

¹⁶ *Pentecostal Missiology & Environmental Degradation*, edited by Eugene Baron and Amos Yong (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global, 2025).

Institute for Church Action on Poverty Studies last May 24 with a theme of “Greening the Faith, Greening the Planet.”

But we do not only theologize and socialize Creation Care but using our farm as a platform for Creation Care, we planted hundreds of trees, bananas, lemons, coconuts, umbrella trees, mahoganies to shade the environment, caring for goats, pigs, rabbits, ducks and chickens so that farmers will live. We partner with the Bureau of Plants and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to assist us in our endeavors. The success rate of our endeavors is not 100%; sometimes, it is disappointing due to climate change, but we never stop doing so because of our love for our common home. However, there is a need to install a solar water pump to water down these trees and plants so that they will continue to grow and flourish.¹⁷

Daniela Rizzo recently completed a PhD articulating a unique intersection between Pentecostals and animal theology. Her research aims to explore the value of non-human creatures to God and their place within the theological landscape. This thesis centers on developing a pneumatology of animals, structured systematically across several thematic chapters: Covenant & Creation, Predation & Sin, Soteriology, and Glossolalia & Eschatology.

The Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics is an independent, scholarly organization dedicated to promoting the ethical treatment of animals through academic research, education, and public discourse. Founded in 2006 by Andrew Linzey, a prominent figure in animal theology, the Centre aims to advance understanding of the moral status of animals by fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and encouraging academic studies related to animal ethics. In August 2024, Rizzo presented at the Centre’s recent conference held at Merton College. Her paper, titled “Jürgen Moltmann: Pioneer of Animal Eschatology,” was well received, with many attendees expressing their appreciation for the research presented.

I [Rizzo] have recently been approved for membership with A Rocha Australia. As a committed advocate for compassionate conservation, I actively participate in the Australasian Animal Studies Association and serve as an advisor to the Warrnambool Environment and Sustainability Committee (affiliated with a city council located on the Great Ocean Road). My work focuses on addressing overdevelopment along the South-West coast of Victoria and the resulting threat to the local koala

¹⁷ Joel Tejedo email to Harold D Hunter (July 10, 2024).

population, as well as opposing offshore gas mining due to its detrimental impact on the marine environment.¹⁸

Emmanuel Awudi, an ordained minister with the Church of Pentecost and a lecturer at Pentecost University, offered this abbreviated report on eco-care activities within the year 2024:

- January 2024: My article, “Building Creation Care Culture in the African Church: The Role of the Pulpit” was published in the *Journal of African Christian Thought*, volume 26, issue 2.
- February 27-28, 2024: Attended and presented a paper at the Southern African Society of Pentecostal Studies (SASPS) Conference at the University of South Africa (UNISA) in February 2024.
- June 4, 2024: I was a panelist at a forum organized by the University of Environment and Sustainable Development, Semanya in Ghana, to discuss how to mitigate the impact of climate change
- June 5, 2024: I organized the students at Pentecost University to plant 2,500 trees at Gomoa Fetteh, Ghana, as part of the World Environment Day celebration
- June 21, 2024: I presented a paper on the Integration of Eco-mission into the Mainstream mission of African Pentecostals at the 2nd Pan-African Pentecostal Symposium organized by the Alliance for Black Pentecostal Scholarship in partnership with Pentecost University in Accra, Ghana on 21 June 2024
- July 8- 13: I taught the Ministerial Students of the Church of Pentecost, Ecotheology and issues on Climate Change.
- September 2024: My article, “Pentecostal Eco-Mission Maturing: Tensions Between Economic Benefits and Promotion of Environmental Sustainability in the Illegal Mining Sector in Ghana,” was published in the journal *Missionalia*, volume 52.
- November 8, 2024: I presented a paper on the “Holy Spirit a Climate Action: A Pentecostal Engagement of Climate Change?” at the James McKeown Memorial Lecturers, which attracted over 3000 participants.¹⁹

Echoes of the late Church of God in Christ Bishop, George D. McKinney,²⁰ are heard in Brazilian Professor Angela Maringoli’s

¹⁸ Daniela Rizzo, “Animal Theology”, unpublished document (10/6/24).

¹⁹ Emmanuel Awudi report to PWF CCTF (11/12/24).

²⁰ See the stunning article on environmental racism by George McKinney, “A God of Justice,” in *Reconciliation* 1, 5, edited by Harold D Hunter and Cecil M

Amazônia: Entre a crise e a teologia which she translates as *Amazonia on Fire*²¹ These together with the cries of Pentecostal pastors in Nicaragua who are economic victims of climate change constitute “integral ecology.” This links us to economic justice lauded by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, endorsed by the “Green Patriarch” Bartholomew, and various World Council of Churches conciliar documents.

Maringoli recently passed on this update:

I am part of a WhatsApp group that is also present on Instagram and Facebook, called *Renovar o Nosso Mundo* (Renew Our World). The group is Ecumenical and includes people who were connected to the NGO, “A Rocha,” as well as well-known names in academia linked to Integral Mission, the Ultimato Magazine, Lausanne, and the evangelical community, such as: Werner Fucks, Raquel Arouca, Phelipe Reis, Timóteo Carriker, Regina Sanches, Valdir Stanauergel, people from World Vision, and Tearfund who are supporters of the group.

Renovar o Nosso Mundo also has a LinkedIn and works closely with churches all over Brazil, especially in Amazonas and Pará. On the group’s bio, you can find photos of the work we do alongside churches and communities. I would also like to mention that Oikos Escola para-Vida (Instagram: @Oikosong1) is another NGO that works with

Robeck. Bishop McKinney also sponsored the 2013 Church of God in Christ General Assembly Resolution #042013-7 dedicated to the church’s responsibility for climate change. This is an official policy adopted by the Church of God in Christ General Assembly. So, David D Daniels III email to Harold D Hunter (June 30, 2022). One document is identified as “Resolution Committee: General Assembly: Call Meeting 2013,” Resolution #042013-7: Climate Change.

²¹ Angela Maringoli. *Amazônia: Entre a crise e a teologia* (São Paulo: Recriar 2020). See Angela Maringoli. *Teoambientologia: Um Desafio para a Educação Teológica* (São Paulo: Editora Recriar; 2nd Edition, 2019). Also see Maringoli, “The Feminine Evangelical Pentecostal Identity in the Preservation of the Environment in Latin America and Brazil and Its Empowerment,” 50th Anniversary Society for Pentecostal Studies meeting March 18-20, 2021, in Dallas, Texas at King’s University. Marina Silva, a well-known Brazilian political and climate activist was raised a Pentecostal. According to Rick Waldrop’s Facebook post (September 28, 2021): “Marina Silva converted to Pentecostalism (Brazilian AG) earlier in life but continued her pioneering environmental work (with Chico Mendez) and became a major National politician with the Workers Party (Socialist) and a top contender for the presidency.”

environmental and integral education, and Ângela Maringoli is the manager of Oikos.²²

Stockholm+50 ran in the first week of June 2022. Johannes Widlund, who did a paper at the 2022 PWC hosted by Yoido Full Gospel Church, was quite busy those days due to the PMU involvement in this important celebration of the first UN event on climate change some 50 years prior in Stockholm. Those present in person and online witnessed a session moderated by a Pentecostal, Esther Florres Sedman, from Sweden, that included a presentation by Festus Mukoya from the Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya (FPFK). Both were representing PMU (Pentecostal Mission Development Corporation/Sweden).

The only two Pentecostals to travel to Glasgow for COP26 (2021) were Mikael Jägerskog and Johannes Widlund. They continue to advance a global network of Pentecostal ecology activists. Jägerskog is Head of Policy, Advocacy and Learning, PMU, an active member of the PWF World Missions Commission. Widlund is an environmental advisor for PMU and a member of the PWF CCTF.

Thanks to Mikael Jägerskog (PMU, Sweden), there has been some positive movement toward improved relations with the UNEP. Mikael accomplished this during one of his routine trips to Kenya. Jägerskog met with the head of UNEP, Iyad Abumoghli, who traveled to Sweden and met again with Jägerskog and others at PMU. David Wells and I got to know Iyad Abumoghli during the 2021 Faith and Science series. PMU's base in Africa is Kenya, which is also the UNEP HQ's location. Abumoghli previously told me I could not send anyone from the CCTF to a UNEP conference in Kenya because the PWF, unlike the WEA and our ecumenical partners, is not accredited by the UN.²³

Mikael Jägerskog went to COP29 in Azerbaijan with PMU status as a sponsor of the interreligious Faith Pavilion, then took on elevated administrative duties. As of November 2024, he now serves on the steering committee of UNEP, initially under the umbrella of SMC Global, not PMU. Jägerskog will anchor the much-anticipated explosion of Pentecostal participation when COP30 (November 2025) goes to the Amazon in Brazil.

²² Angela Maringoli, PWF CCTF Chat, WhatsApp (1/29/25).

²³ The lack of UN accreditation is also problematic for the PWF World Mission Commission network of Relief and Development Partners. See Mikael Jägerskog, "Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF)/Pentecostal Relief and Development Partners (PRDP) advocacy update, December 2023," email sent December 7, 2023.

Conclusion

After initial attempts to organize the PWF were delayed by two World Wars, the PWF beginnings were linked to relief work for those suffering from the devastation of war. The surge of Pentecostal ecumenists cries out for a climate justice table that welcomes everyone. It is right to remember the ongoing plight of the marginalized who are ravaged by climate change, which should thereby affirm the theme of the 1991 WCC General Assembly influenced by Pentecostals in Latin America: “Come Holy Spirit, Renew Thy Whole Creation!” Pentecostals often self-identify as the second-largest Christian family in the world, but with those numbers come responsibility for ecological restitution.

<p>Harold D. Hunter (hdhpctii@gmail) is Chair of the PWF Creation Care Task Force and Liaison to the Greater Christian Community for the International Pentecostal Holiness Church.</p>
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“And the Spirit and His Church Say Amen”: Contributions for an Ecopentecostal Theology

Elizabeth Salazar-Sanzana

Abstract

Ecopentecostal theology is an ecodiaconal theology and praxis, fruit of the Holy Spirit. This spirituality not only embraces us and pushes us beyond our understanding but also manifests itself as a mobilizing grace of spirituality that deeply sensitizes us to the suffering of the earth and creation, which groans under the weight of exploitation and deterioration caused by human ambition. From this point of view, ecopentecostal theology constitutes a transforming force that orients daily action towards the care of creation. This Spirit awakens the conscience, opens the eyes with eye salve (Rev 3:18), allows us to perceive reality from a holistic perspective, and invites us to participate in the harmony to which the Trinitarian work of God summons us. Likewise, this ecopentecostal theology gives a central place to a renewed sensibility, given by the redemptive work of Christ, which unites us to creation, promoting a holistic interconnectedness. This article emphasizes an integral vision of the new life, creation, and mission to which God entrusts us. In this framework, the Holy Spirit - present in both creation and redemption - grants harmony in diversity, sustenance in the midst of fragility, and continuous transformation until the fullness of time.

Key words: ecotheology, ecopentecostal, creation, Holy Spirit, ecodiaconia

Introduction

Decades ago, we were called upon by science regarding climate change. The call to ecological awareness quickly transcended the boundaries of science and took root in all social and religious organizations. The climate crisis and the diaconal demands for the consequences of this scourge on creation profoundly demanded our faith and ethics on a macro and micro level. It was no longer an option to remain in our sacred or ecclesial spaces. As Christians, we were moved by the Holy

Spirit to prophesy and act amid these times of environmental disasters and their consequences. We know that indifference has taken hold among many, and there are those who have opted for silence, even denialism, but this only makes them complicit in the grave deterioration of our oceans, mountains, and atmosphere. In this situation, we firmly believe that it grieves the work of the Spirit among us.

Eco theologian Neddy Astudillo has long worked with the Green Faith, raising awareness on the subject among Christian churches and faith-based organizations. Speaking of the divine stewardship given to humankind, she says that from the earliest passages of Scripture to the final verses—Genesis to Revelation—we hear a call and a warning to care for creation (Ps 24:1). When this call is disregarded, it leads to the suffering of all creatures, who experience the consequences of this disorder (Jer 14:2-7). Based on her experience on the subject, she warns that there are certain obsolete theologies, as they begin from the principle of dominion over the earth and understand environmental disasters as signs of the end times, without considering the harmonious order under which God created life. I quote in this regard.

A theology like this, which interprets the environmental and climate crisis as good news, expresses itself as a discourse about God and the divine in the service of death; this is evident when contrasted with the promise of abundant life embodied by the coming of Jesus (Jn 10:10) and his clear call: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” (Mk 16:15)¹

The great environmental and climate crisis has also been an opportunity to look at things that previously could not be appreciated due to religious indifference and fragmentation. It has led the Christian Church to recognize this situation and assume its social responsibility to humanity. Several ecumenical dialogues arose because of the climate crisis, primarily in Europe, although there are traces of awareness in more than one ecumenical meeting. In 1971, the Church’s World Conference on Peace and Justice was held in Geneva, Switzerland, and although the issue was not exclusively addressed, social justice and environmental protection were raised. The 1992 Earth Summit in Brazil was the most significant event that broke this indifference. Various Christian churches participated in this event, and Agenda 21, which

¹ Nelly Astudillo, “Narrativas eco teológicas para un planeta en código rojo,” in D. Berós and M. Strizzi, eds., *Manual internacional de eco diaconía y cuidado de la creación* (Buenos Aires: la Aurora, 2022), 63.

included ecological principles, was signed. In 1997, the World Council of Churches (WCC) reflected on the issue, as did the Vatican.² It was one of the most significant moments for the Christian churches in the context of ecology and social justice. This was repeated in 1989 at the WCC and in 2002 at the Earth Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, and in the churches of Asia.³

A major contribution has been the 2015 Catholic encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. It is a call to comprehensive action to protect God's creation and promote greater social justice. It calls pastorally for changes in global habits and policies that favor global ecology. It proposed an ecological "conversion," whereby people, their communities, and institutions would change their attitude toward nature, rethinking lifestyles, consumerism, and their relationship with creation.⁴

In 2022, the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches was held in Germany, and a comprehensive theological work on the topic was presented. From these, Latin American texts were compiled in Spanish, becoming an exegetical, theological, and pastoral tool. This manual on ecodiakonia was the work of several theologians, including some Pentecostals, who recognized the need to listen to the Earth (Rom 8:22-24). The reflections focused on the care of creation and diaconal service based on their traditions.⁵

Building on these emphases of Christian theology, some highly valued texts from Pentecostal theology have been added, contributing to theological reflection on how the action of the Holy Spirit can be related

² WCC, *Caring for Creation: Theological and Ethical Perspectives* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997). This ecumenical report examines the relationship between Christian faith and ecology, offering in-depth reflection on how churches can work together to preserve creation by building on a 1990 document, Cf. *Ecology and Justice* (Geneva: WCC, 1997).

³ *Church and Ecological Justice* (Seoul: Asian Conference of Churches, 1991).

⁴ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (Vatican, 2015). https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

⁵ Daniel Beros and María Strizzi, *Manual internacional de eco agonía y Cuidado de la creación. Contribuciones de América Latina y el Caribe* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 2022). Cf. Daniel Beros, Eale Bosela, Lesmore Ezekiel, Kambale Kahongya, Ruomin Liu, Grace Moon, Marisa Strizzi, and Dietrich Werner, *International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2022).

to environmental care and ecological justice.⁶ In other words, with specific theological writings, the Pentecostal approach to creation care is recent, emerging only in recent decades, and is linked to stewardship of creation.⁷

The establishment of a Pentecostal Creation Care Commission within the PWF is understood to be the result of individual ecodiakonia efforts in our Pentecostal congregations and theological institutions in Africa, Asia, Europe, and America. It is, with the efforts of Harold Hunter and his research, one of the prophetic instruments for ecopentecostal reflection.⁸

Jesus Christ taught us to serve and, with the Holy Spirit's help, transform our reality. We must take up his work in such a way that we preach and await, with living hope, "A new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells." (2 Pet 3:13). Thus, our mission is none other than to preach the gospel of redemption, which does not deny his creative work, for it is the same God who loves his creation.

From this, I want to discuss some points that can help us in the mission of the Pentecostal Church in the face of what is happening to the environment. We still have time to reflect on our mistakes and the changes that must be made. Leonardo Boff, an eco-theologian, invites

⁶ Amos Yong, *The Spirit of Creation: Modern Science and Divine Action in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Imagination* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011); Mitzi J. Smith and L. Jayachitra, eds. *Teaching All Nations: Interrogating the Great Commission* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014); Amos Yong, *Renewing Christian Theology: Systematics for a Global Christianity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014); Matthew Tallman, "Pentecostal Ecology: A Theological Paradigm for Pentecostal Environmentalism," in *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth: Pentecostal Forays in Science and Theology of Creation*, ed. Amos Yong (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 147–48; Tony Richie, "Radical and Responsible: A Wesleyan-Pentecostal Ecotheology," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* vol. 23, no. 2 (2014), 216–235; Anita Davis, "Pentecostal Approaches to Ecotheology: Reviewing the Literature," *Australasian Pentecostal Studies* vol 22, no. 1 (2021), 4–33

⁷ Harold D. Hunter, "Pentecostal Ecotheology from the Margins," *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 27 (July 2020). Angela Maringoli, *La educación teológica pentecostal en sus núcleos temáticos y el diálogo con la teoambientalología* (Santiago: Revista Protesta y Carisma, Unap, 2003).

⁸ Harold Hunter works on Pentecostal eco-theology. Cf. Harold Hunter works on Pentecostal eco-theology. Cf. Harold Hunter, "Vem Espírito Santo: renova toda a tua criação?: Ecoteologia Pentecostal das Margens," in *Experiencia Pentecostal na America Latina*, edited by David Mesquiati de Oliveira and Kenner Terra (Sao Paulo: Editora Recriar RELEP, 2023).

us to view this issue of ecological injustice from a spiritual perspective, with the devastation of ecosystems and the imbalance of the earth. He calls us to an integral ecology that integrates spirituality.⁹ This is why we understand that from Pentecostal spirituality, which has been given to us as a specificity in our Christian journey, we can contribute a practical message, from the experience of being grassroots faith communities.

This reflection addresses pneumatological action, which is transcendent for Pentecostal theology. Specifically, in Latin America, there is a broad Pentecostal presence, and the reflection, felt, lived, and embraced, is from the spirituality of the experience of our ancestral cultures. The indigenous peoples, who comprise a high percentage of Pentecostal congregations, are attached to the earth (Pachamama—Mother Earth) and its care. As Latin American reflection is being called, this feeling of thinking is ecological theology, with a profound pneumatology developed daily, which we will call ecopentecostal theology.

We also recognize the concern regarding the challenges we face as Latin American Pentecostals. A sector of our churches has begun to lose its character of simplicity, turning toward a pursuit of economic prosperity as a supposed sign of God's goodness.

At the opposite extreme, critical positions have also emerged regarding this ecodiaconal awareness, arguing that what is truly relevant is "life in the Spirit." This view has led to a theological dissociation between the fundamental aspects of the work of the Triune God—creation, redemption, sanctification—which should be understood as an integral unity. Escapism, understood as the belief that the center of life lies exclusively in the afterlife, reinforces this separation. It is perceived that this world is doomed to perish, without considering the sufficiency of God and his all-sustaining power, which calls for an alternative way of living, distinct from the world's model and its indifference to creation.

We understand that Pentecostal theology that assumes its ecodiaconal reflection, namely ecopentecostal theology, is a theology and a practice that embraces us, impels us even beyond our understanding (Matt 25:31-46). It is a grace of mobilizing spirituality, which shakes us and simultaneously makes us sensitive to the earth and its suffering, to the creation that groans and is sacrificed more and more each day to selfish behavior and the ambition of global capital. It is that

⁹ Leonardo Boff, *Liberar la Tierra: Una eco teología para un mañana posible* (España: San Pablo, 2018).

force, from everyday action, that drives us today to raise our voices for the care of creation, that places eye salve of conscience in our eyes, to see what is happening, even without understanding this holistic harmony to which the triune work of God calls us.

We will work on this ecopentecostal theology, placing importance on a renewed sensitivity, given by the work of Christ, that recognizes nature as sacred and values interconnection with it. We want to emphasize some fundamental points of a comprehensive vision of life, creation, and the mission to which God calls us. The Holy Spirit, who in his grace is in creation and redemption, bringing harmony in diversity, care, sustenance, and transformation. These are points worked on reflectively at different times, and which lead us to the same diaconal action:

Holy Spirit of Grace in Creation and Redemption

Genesis is the first poem we have in sacred writing, which reveals God's sovereignty in his own creation. The Genesis narratives were told in the tradition of Israel to illustrate real and profound experiences with God. When we read Genesis today, we forget the long oral process that began with God's revelation and the confession of faith, which led to the writing of these narratives of the beginning. It is very important to consider this, as it speaks of a lengthy process, a slow walk, that gathered the wisdom and faith of those united in communion as a people and wanted to confess their faith in God, creator of heaven and earth. This is a divine revelation, a process that captures the experience of the walk of faith with God, the creator of all things, even in proximity to other distant traditions and cultures that recounted creation in their myths.

The people of Israel recognized that God, in his will and freedom, created, and therefore, that word-action was intimately connected with those who confessed him in their daily lives. We have great prayers, songs, and poems about this in the Psalms (Ps 8). This word of God that we recognize in Genesis is the same word revealed as the Creator Father, and how it relates to his Son Jesus Christ, our Savior, in John 1:1. Likewise, the gospels are words and actions and from the orality of Jesus' ministry, transmitted by the apostles, they have been inherited to us. That is to say, the experience with God in each of us is testimonial, inhabited within our very core, just as what happened with the angel's announcement to Mary (Luke 1:26). It is in the oral tradition that the community preserved these deeds and sayings of the Master, and then they become Scripture-sacred word, of community authority.

Experience was a decisive element in the history of Israel, and the same applies to the nascent Church. God, in his will and loving grace,

created the world. Creation is the result of God's very essence; his goodness and love are reflected in his actions. His work is the very revelation of his essence, his love, and that is why we embrace the redemption given by Jesus Christ from this same creative force. The theologian Juan Stam insists that creative and redemptive work are the same sovereign force of love.¹⁰ With this, we can measure the love that he showed (John 3:16), to get involved in such a way that he became incarnate and gave his life, to give us eternal life. For, as the Gospel of John says, "All things were made through him" (John 1:3), these are actions of the Triune God.

Stam, from the power of saving grace, viewed creation in the same way; he said that creation was a work of "pure grace."

God's grace toward us did not begin with Jesus' birth or death on the cross. Nor did it begin with Abraham and Sarah. It began with the creation of the world.... In creation, we discover the presence of the same sovereign grace that called Abraham and Sarah to a plan of life and blessing and that freed the people from oppression. The God who created the universe is the same one who freed the people.¹¹

The grace of God became text, confession, and poetry, because our sacred texts are the sources, of tradition and worship, for speaking of grace. Creation is the result of this goodness of God. He is the loving Creator, in whom we observe the very essence, divine, creation and creator, perfectly intertwined in their holiness and freedom. That is why the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament becomes part of the announcement of his goodness (Ps 19:1). As the psalmist sings, "the earth is full of the grace of God" (Ps 33:5 and Ps 119:64). When we read Wesley's sermon, he emphasizes divine complacency in his work, showing us the greatness of the redemptive work, in the same way that we see his recognition of creation as the goodness inherent in the essence of God.¹²

Luther, in his vision of the divine presence, exemplified by the "grain of wheat" and the containment of divine majesty, like Calvin, who in his work *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, relates creation and

¹⁰ Juan Stam, *Las Buenas Nuevas de la Creación* (Barcelona, España: Kairos, 2003).

¹¹ Juan Stam, "La sobreabundancia gracia de Dios," in Israel Batista, ed., *Gracia, Cruz y esperanza* (Quito: CLAI, 2004), 29.

¹² Juan Wesley, "Sermón 56: El beneplácito de Dios por sus obras, 1872," in Thomas Jackson, ed., *Obras de Juan Wesley* (Estados Unidos: Kessinger, 2004), vol. III.

redemption, mentioning that God is known not only as creator of the world, author and ruler of everything there is, but also as redeemer in Jesus Christ; they are not two separate works.¹³ It is precisely this foundation of Protestant theology that helps us emphasize the theme. Luther asks himself:

How can reason tolerate that divine majesty is so small that it can be substantially present in a grain? ... and how can reason tolerate that this same majesty is so great that neither this world nor a thousand worlds can contain it and say, "look there it is?"¹⁴

Combining this reflection of Luther and this reality of the sacred in creation itself, Johnson says:

Seen in the light of this continuous divine presence, the natural world, rather than being divorced from the sacred, takes on a sacramental character. The theology of the sacraments has always taught that simple material realities (water, oil, bread, wine) can be bearers of divine grace. It is now clear that this is so only because, to begin with, the entire physical world is the matrix of God's gracious indwelling. Matter bears the seal of the sacred and has a spiritual glow. In turn, the divine presence is sacramentally mediated in and through the incarnation in the world, not necessarily or absolutely, but graciously and truly.¹⁵

Holy Spirit of Harmony in Creation and Redemption

This *I am* of God is nothing other than revealing himself through his own creation; as we already mentioned, being and doing go hand in hand. We must remember that in the creation myths we find in other cultures, the universe always originates in the gods' struggles. In Genesis, we see grace expressed in order, light, and harmony. It is God's faithfulness manifested in his creation, his exalted work, recognized in all its harmony and beauty (Ps 8:2).

Ruach, a Hebrew word that we translate as breath or spirit, shows us the presence of God in the world, as a creative and life-giving force. This presence first brings about harmony, in an order in which diversity remains and is intertwined with divine beauty. This should lead us to

¹³ Juan Calvino, *Institución de la Religión Cristiana* (Barcelona: FELiRé, 1994), 24.

¹⁴ Martin Lutero, *Dr. Martin Luther's Sammtliche Werke 1843* (Dheli: Facsimile Publisher, 2015), 4-36.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Johnson, *La búsqueda del Dios vivo*, (Santander: Sal Terrae, 2007), 243.

equity in diversity, as with the issue of gender justice. Harmony in Creation will direct us to this equity of justice.

In Genesis, we find two accounts of the same event, both of which are testimonies of the same creative power. They are two confessions of faith, one more particular and the other more universal, which complement each other. These narratives help us understand that human beings and creatures come from the same creative source and therefore, as we mentioned, they are in direct relationships, however different they may be, with one another.¹⁶

Let us remember that Israel had discovered the Holy Spirit's action in the prophets' experiences before they reflected on creation. An action in nature can be measured and determined as wind and storm, but this action is conceived as the action of God himself, who orders and harmonizes. God created the world and human beings, which Israel and the neighboring peoples accept; therefore, there is no doubt about it.

Anyone who has understood this understands that the first chapter of the Bible is not exactly intended to be a description of the origin of the world, such as might be found in a biology textbook. The entire chapter is a testimony of faith and aims, of course, in illegible images, to narrate what by nature is totally invisible: namely, the action of God that we will never be able to capture in our definitions, whether mathematical-scientific or dogmatic theological propositions. It is the wind of God or the spirit of God that underlies the making of creation.¹⁷

Reflecting on the harmonizing action of the Spirit in the midst of creation is ecological theology. Johnson, already cited, insists that the Spirit of God hovers over the void, breathes his breath into the chaos, energizes and liberates, blesses and continually creates the world, it is his own creative work.¹⁸

It is seeing God as the creator, but going beyond modern theism that places God at the top of the pyramid. It is to understand him, from a profound spiritual perspective, as a temple inhabited by the Spirit and present in everything that surrounds us. This is what we have proposed as an ecopentecostal reflection, which places the Holy Spirit at the center of creative action, in holistic union with his work of redemption. It places him in this holistic relationship that is renewed every day, but

¹⁶ Elisa Estévez, "Convertir el universo en una casa solidaria," *Ribla* vol. 21 (1996), 103-114.

¹⁷ Eduar Schweizer, *El Espíritu Santo* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 2002), 29.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Johnson, *La búsqueda del Dios vivo* (Santander, España: CLIE, 2007), 243.

that does not deny his own suffering of his work, due to the environmental chaos, in these times. Let us remember that the cry of nature is heard by the spirit (Rom 8:22).

Humanity inflicts deadly damage on nature that completely unbalances life and its diversity. One of the biggest problems is consumerism, rampant production, and the indiscriminate use of chemicals that threaten biodiversity, all to exploit resources without considering their finite nature. It is consumed, without considering its care, as a vital support for the earth, sea, and air. For example, every year, 20% of the Earth's population in wealthy countries uses 75% of the world's resources, producing 80% of the planet's waste. This is even more alarming when we understand that this ecological devastation is linked to social injustice. This overexploitation of the earth's resources is impoverishing our population. Poor countries, lacking regulatory plans, are the ones that suffer the most from environmental degradation.

The destruction of human health and the earth are proceeding at the same pace, due to the disorder caused by humankind, which lacks an understanding of this holistic connection with all creation.

Holy Spirit, the Guardian and Sustainer of His work

The Gospels reveal the experience of the human being when he understands himself as a creature of God, in communion with all creation (Matt 6:25-34; Lk 12:22-31). God is the one who gives life and sustains it throughout the universe; his concern for meeting needs is not limited solely to human beings. In fact, Jesus teaches his followers that they should not obsess over daily sustenance, because, just as the entire universe depends on God's loving care, they too must trust that he will provide what they need (Mk 6:26-28, 29).

Understanding God as creator and sustainer is manifested in the call to contemplate the lilies and the birds of the sky. The fact of living in a common house (Oikos) invites us to understand the message that the Gospel transmits (Matt 6, 25-34): we are sustained and supported by the Triune God, who even before we ask, already knows our needs. Paul Tillich, reflecting on faith, said that it was the dynamic of ultimate concern, that when all other concerns that condition existence (food and shelter or clothing) are left aside, faith springs forth.¹⁹ This is where the work of the Holy Spirit lies, guiding human beings to feel like a fundamental part of the creative and redemptive work. Thus, Paul

¹⁹ Paul Tillich, *La dinámica de la fe* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1976), 7.

questions: Do you not know that you are the temple of the Spirit? (1 Co 6:19)

Holy Spirit in the Diversity of Creation and Redemption

God's revelation in creation brings us back to Wesley's thinking. Creation is understood to be an indication of God's infinite, inexhaustible life, of his faithfulness, his glory, his goodness, and his wisdom. It is the same creation, which we observe, that bears witness to the Creator. If there is any possibility, for the ignorant human being, to see the greatness of God, it is through the beauty of creation. This is precisely what can be perceived in Job's response (Job 12:7-10).

In the New Testament (Acts 17:22-31), Luke tells of Paul's speech at the Areopagus in Athens, in which he tells them that God, in the order of nature, offers human beings the possibility of recognizing him and that he is the one who gives everyone life, breath, and all things. That is to say, creation in its spectacular diversity also reveals this unique work to us.

In Wesley's *Compendium of Natural Philosophy*, he says:

The world around us is the mighty book in which God explains himself. The book of nature is written in a universal language that every man can read in his own language.... Perfection is the greatness, power and wisdom of the creator, his goodness, but also his anger can be read and understood from nature. This means that every part of nature points to God, the god of nature.²⁰

Since the earliest communities, recognizing the value of diversity as a gift has been a great step forward, from creation to redemption in Christ. God's invitation to be his followers with this new reality, a diversity granted by the Triune God (Gal 3:28), and as an enrichment inherent in the Spirit's task of making us one (Jn 17:21). There is fear of the polyphony of sounds and diversity of gifts, for it is an exercise that forces us to understand that, through that mercy in the multiform grace of God, I am part of the body of Christ as a perfect work of unity in diversity.²¹

²⁰ John Wesley, *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation: or a Compendium of Natural Philosophy* (1777), cited by R. Burtner and R. Chiles, eds, *A Compendium of Wesley's Theology* (Estados Unidos: Abingdon, 1954), 36.

²¹ Cf. Elizabeth Salazar-Sanzana, "Sinodalidad, la comunión en la iglesia que soñamos," in Elias Wolf and E. Salazar-Sanzanam eds, *O Magisterio do Papa Francisco na AL. Uma recepcao ecuménica* (São Paulo: Recriar, 2025).

Holy Spirit, Transforming in Creation and Redemption

Isaiah 65 affirms that God is the creator and transformer of the universe and history, acting in the midst of his work, recreating or renewing the heavens and the earth. That is, it is the work of the Spirit himself, which is transmitted for the hope of his people. In this text he tells us: “Pay attention, for I am going to create new heavens and a new earth”. The use of the partial form of the verb to create in the original Hebrew text, brings divine creative activity into the present tense. His work is transformed and redeemed; he even says that *they will no longer remember the bad*. This is very important, because here the creative work is transformed through God’s relationship with his people, his creation. People will enjoy the fruits of their own labor and live long lives on earth. Human beings, plants, and crops will be healthy, with a quality of life. The intimacy between God and human beings will be transformed like the cosmos itself, reversing the natural order of violence between the wolf and the lamb or the lion and the ox, paving the way for harmony.

The transforming power of God has to do with the fact that there is no difference between the Creator God and the transforming sovereign God. He alone creates and recreates.

This relationship, which we have through the Spirit, is found in our understanding that the Creator, its owner, is the one who can give us spaces of peace, fill us with confidence and hope, and tell us that this disorder and evil that surrounds us is not part of his plan. The transforming power of God is not only a physical power, which makes us tremble, but also a spiritual force by which everything he touches is transformed, for the good and dignity of his work.

Holy Spirit, Creator and Redeemer, and Ecodiakonia

The vulnerability of people and ecosystems is an opportunity for the Church to raise its voice, empowered by the Spirit of life. To advocate against what is happening to our countries and our natural resources. Through the Word of God, we can find solid foundations for responsible stewardship and educate our congregations in ecodiakonia, for this dead consciousness is not appropriate for those who recognize him as God, sovereign and master of all, and who hold us responsible for everything. (Job 12:9-10; 1 Pet 1:17)

I heard a rabbi recently calling us to return to humanity, specifically speaking about the war in Gaza. Environmental problems and rising fundamentalism have caused so much damage, as diaconal action is

lacking. This reminded me of this ancient text by the philosopher Savater who, without being a believer, calls us to a profound ecodialogical spirituality. In a decades-old article, he calls for a return to humanity, saying:

Seek humanity as the seat of what we share, but above all, as a bulwark against selection, determinism, and human equality, against the arguments of inequality, against a return to living in tribes rather than in proximity, that is, in tribes of identical people who separate themselves from others and face them as equals under the law.²²

We understand that we are part of this world and recognize that we are dust and to dust we shall return (Gen 3:19), according to the second creation account (Gen 2:4-25). Although it is an older text than Genesis 1 and comes from a nomadic context, this text offers us a conception of the human being very different from what the priestly sources mention (Gen 1). The human being is Adam, the first man, whom some translate as red or referring to the color of the earth. The discernment of genders only comes with the creation of woman (Gen 2:21) and the designation as *isbeisha* (Gen 2:23-26). Speaking of Adam as the first human being means that he is a being of the earth or of the ground. The earth is the primary substance of which the human being is composed according to Scripture (Gen 2:7). If we follow the story, we realize that God said it was not good for the human being to be alone and will provide him with a similar help (Gen 2:18-20). If we pay attention here, the created beings, the animals, are similar to the human being, as a work created in love to be united. We are the image of God, without a doubt, but also, like other living beings, children of this earth, as the preacher says, we are creations of the Creator himself. (Eccl 3:18-20)

Here, it is worth mentioning Francis of Assisi in his praise: “Praise be to my Lord, through our sister earth, who sustains and governs us and produces various fruits with colorful flowers and herbs.” Franciscan spirituality gives us very valuable elements to understand what the relationship of human beings with God, with their fellow human beings, with themselves, and with the cosmos means. Spirituality is expressed in practical and concrete aspects of daily life; therefore, having the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the humility of feeling part of this dance, of all that God has created, sprouts within. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord, alleluia!

²² F. Savater, *El retorno de lo humano*, Revista Universidad de México N° 20 (Ciudad de México: UNAM, 2005), 15.

We read in John Wesley, speaking of human responsibility in creation:

We are now stewards of God. We owe him everything we have. A steward is not free to use what has been entrusted to him as he pleases, but as his Lord pleases... We do not own any of these things, but they have simply been entrusted to us by another... now this is exactly the case with everyone with respect to God.

Conclusion: Called to Ecopentecostal Ecodiakonia

The dominion of human beings over creation breaks this holistic harmony; it breaks the spirituality that is characteristic of the intimate relationship with God. That is why the call to ecodiakonia is inherent to the mandate of the Spirit. As Claudio Oliveira mentions:

Such a spiritual perspective creates space for social awareness, otherness and co-existentiality, cordiality, humanization, and cosmic integration. It is the empowerment of life—not only human life, but life in all its diverse forms of manifestation—and it reveals itself as indispensable for the future of humanity and of the Earth, especially in the face of the commercialization, financialization, and reckless exploitation of nature.²³

The hope of a new heaven and a new earth is also presented as the possibility of continuing in living hope, that God will guide us there, while we continue sowing good. “The core of Christian hope is the expectation of being received into full communion with God.”²⁴ The fundamental thing is to live in the full joy of faith, in that hope of renewed harmony, of perfect coexistence, of all creation, together with all creatures. It is a clear image of the life-giving presence of God, where there will be no suffering, tears, or death. It is not only a promise for the people of God, but for all humanity that inhabits God’s creation.

Eco spirituality is intrinsic to the new being, which is proposed in the Pentecostal regenerative work²⁵, united with the fruits of repentance (Gal 5:16-25). The experience of transformation includes mysticism, charismas, bodily fervor, where everything is transformed by the power of God (Gal 3:28).

²³ Claudio de Oliveira Ribeiro, “Espiritualidad integral y ecología,” in Daniel Riveros and Marisa Strizzi, eds., *Manual internacional de eco diaconía y cuidado de la creación* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 2022), 81.

²⁴ Walter Klaiber and Manfred Marquardt, *Viver a graça de Deus* (São Bdo. do Campo: Editeo Cedro, 1999), 195.

²⁵ Cf. Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901–2001* (Estados Unidos: Thomas Nelson, 2012).

One of the most hopeful elements we see in our Pentecostal communities is that, even amidst what is happening to the environment, with the disasters caused by climate change, and the crisis of local resources for immediate sustenance (water, agriculture, fishing), there are constant calls to faith in Jesus Christ and his promise of a “new heavens and a new earth.” It is hope against all hope, and seeds continue to be saved, and fruit trees planted every year, even in the face of drought or flooding. It is the Holy Spirit who guides us to follow the “perfect goal of our vocation,” like light and salt on the earth.

Although the reading of Isaiah 65:17-25 and its rereading in 2 Pet 3:10-11 is recurrent, we observe the announcement of good news, in hope. Many leaders help their congregations understand what it refers to, showing the evil of the world and that the integral mission of the Church must continue to be fulfilled. As Luther said, he would plant apple trees in his orchard, even when faced with the announcement that tomorrow the world will end. Pentecostal theology, of the rebirth of the Holy Spirit, believes in the integral work of God and establishes that creation was sustained by hope (Rom 8:19-23). We must be confident and cling to perfect hope, because the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans too deep for words.

It is precisely this hope, in the re-creation of the entire universe, that constituted for the first Christians the support for their endurance amid afflictions (Rev 21:1). In this new world, what has been the longing of God’s people from the beginning will finally be realized: a world where justice and peace reign will be where God reigns sovereignly, and evil is eternally defeated.

Until this happens, the Pauline text tells us: “where the Spirit is, there is freedom” (2 Cor 3:17), and it is there that we believe he acts in this creative way, raising awareness of looking at God’s creation in an integral way, including where racism, xenophobia, and gender violence are overcome. The work of the *Ruach*-Holy Spirit, in the gracious creation of the Triune God, is manifested in the consciousness of the new being, where a way of looking at nature, one’s neighbor, and all of creation develops in these times, understanding that they are part of the same divine creative work.

In this freedom, evil is not called good, and humanity’s selfish, arrogant, and thoughtless actions in the face of climate change and the destruction of ecosystems are courageously rejected. We understand the creative and redemptive work through the Spirit who dwells within us. The gift of the Spirit helps us to pursue our goal, and we will not be ashamed, for God’s love is poured out in all of us (Rom 5:5). The

renewal that human beings experience through the Spirit is, therefore, only the beginning of God's full action, which includes the renewal of the world. The Spirit of God not only places the beginning of hope in our hearts but also instills in us hope against all hope.

In this way, we clearly see the loving presence of the Spirit at Pentecost, harmonizing the men and women present, uniting them in one spirit. The renewed birth of the new covenant that leads all of us who confess him in spirit and truth to be part of this new, full life. I remember on more than one occasion that people who experienced spiritual birth and confronted the landscapes that surrounded them daily in the following days, were amazed by the beauty. Through this new spiritual eye salve in their eyes, they could see the beauty and harmony of creation. This new life in Christ visibly unites us with his creative work. I remember the experience of a woman who, upon receiving Christ into her heart and bearing witness to her baptism in my church, said that it was not possible to continue the same behavior with the animals in her care. She could not mistreat those animals; it was, according to what she testified, an inner voice that constrained her in such a way that she asked those flocks for forgiveness. No one told her; it was the Spirit who gave her that fruit of holistic reconciliation. The same thing happened to a businessman who stopped planting trees that destroyed native flora, and the business leaders in his field called him a madman and a religious fanatic. A new life in Christ entails an ethic of the holistic Spirit.

For this reason, ecopentecostal theology is the logical response to the salvific and sanctifying work. For those who live in communion, in a spiritual life, this action of awareness of creation will be an intrinsic part. That is, being born again of water and spirit is a birth into reconciling communion with God, with one's neighbor, with oneself, and with the entire cosmos. We are guided to see the Triune God not at the apex of the pyramid of being or above it, but rather, we understand him as enveloping all his work with his glory, welcoming each of us with the spiritual breath of his love.

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A Pentecostal Approach to the Teaching of the Common Good of the Catholic Church in the Context of Latin America

Miguel Alvarez

Abstract

This presentation contains some observations made by a Pentecostal scholar committed to the best interest of the body of Christ in Latin America. It intends to initiate a dialogue between Pentecostals and Catholics with regard to the teachings of the common good, solidarity, and unity. Yes, several Catholic authors have been cited, which is necessary to accomplish the goal of the article. The purpose is to find a way to access a dialogue that may bring forth mutual understanding between two traditions that have grown significantly in the region—this is the religious reality of Latin America. Obviously, this process is incipient but there is a possibility that ecumenical voices may be heard and considered by both traditions for the ecclesial benefit of the continent. So, to this goal, we turn.

Keywords: common good, Christian ethics, solidarity, subsidiarity, ecumenical dialogue, ecclesiastical cooperation

Introduction

The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) has been in Latin America for more than 500 years since its establishment. Since then, this Christian tradition has been predominant in the culture, spiritual formation, traditions, and mindset of most Latin Americans. So, it may be fair to suggest that by having that RCC background in their formation, some Latin American Pentecostals can also understand the ideas held in common, to which Catholic teachers adhere and appeal for the solution of most socioeconomic, political, and spiritual struggles of the region.

In Latin America, when Catholics become Pentecostal, they still carry with them important components of their previous Catholic background. This is evident in their general approach to life and

religion.¹ Such RCC flavor can be observed in most religious practices and congregational activities. Even when Pentecostals become critical of the RCC, this background is shown in different forms of ethical and spiritual behavior.

The Common Good

Historically, the RCC has guarded the teaching of the “common good to which every aspect of social life must be related if it is to attain its fullest meaning, stems from the dignity, unity, and equality of all people.”² According to Leonardo Boff, “The common good indicates the total sum of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.”³

According to Rubem Alves, in recent years, there has been a fine line between what was theologically ideal and what was politically inclined to socialism.⁴ The Catholic theology of the common good came close to the point of sharing the same ideal with the philosophy of socialism, although it is fair to say that socialism comes in different forms and guises.⁵ Catholic scholars like Leonardo Boff argued in the early 1980s:

The common good does not consist in the simple sum of the goods of each subject of a social entity. Belonging to everyone and to each person, it is and remains common, because it is indivisible and because only together is it possible to attain it, increase it and safeguard its effectiveness, which is also tied to the future.⁶

¹ Oscar Corvalán, “Pentecostalismo, Ecumenismo y Cristiandad,” in Daniel Chiquete and Luis Orellana (eds.), *Voces del Pentecostalismo Latinoamericano* (Concepción, Chile: RELEP, 2011), IV, 368.

² Leonardo Boff, “Comunidades Eclesiais de Base e Teologia da Liberação,” *Convergência* 16:145 (1981), 430-40.

³ Boff, “Comunidades Eclesiais de Base,” 436.

⁴ Rubem Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope* (Washington, DC: Corpus Books, 1985), 64.

⁵ Jon Sobrino, *Jesús en América Latina* (Santander, España: Editorial Sal Terrae, 1997), 47, 82; and Juan Luis Segundo, *Masas y Minorías* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Editorial La Aurora, 1993), 34.

⁶ Leonardo Boff, “Comunidades Eclesiais de Base e Teologia da Liberação,” *Convergência* 14 (1981), 145-56; and Jon Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor: Prophetic-Utopian Essays* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008), 23-38. See also Jon Sobrino, *Challenge to Christian Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008), 62-79.

Sergio Bernal also argued, “Just as the moral actions of an individual are accomplished in doing what is good, so too the actions of a society attain their full stature when they bring about the common good.”⁷

The common good, in fact, can be understood as the social and community dimension of the moral good. Pentecostals realized then that if they wanted to remain active in their service to every person, they also had to keep the common benefit of the gospel active in the community as one of the main goals for all members.⁸ The human person cannot find fulfillment in isolation from others. For instance, Cecilia Loreto Mariz states, “This is a truth that has to be lived in community, and Pentecostals instill it in every individual not only to seek his or her own benefit but also the good of other members.”⁹ This is also expressed in the communities where Pentecostal life and ministry take place.

From RCC theology, we learn that “no expression of social life can escape the issue of its own common good, in that this is a constitutive element of its significance and the authentic reason for its very existence.”¹⁰ Except for the political implications included by the RCC scholars, this notion is very close to what Pentecostals teach about being together in one accord and serving one another.¹¹ As a matter of fact, this is the condition among believers that propels the outpouring of the Holy Spirit who enables believers to serve the community using the charismatic gifts in their service.

Responsibility for the Common Good

The demands of the common good will depend on the dynamics and social conditions of a community. These conditions are connected to the levels of respect for all people and the integral promotion of humanity

⁷ Sergio Bernal Restrepo, *La Iglesia del Brasil y el Compromiso Social: El Paso de la Iglesia de la Cristiandad a la Iglesia de los Pobres* (Rome, Italy: Pont University Gregoriana, 1986), 33-39.

⁸ See for instance, David Bueno, “The Struggle for Social Space: How Salvadoran Pentecostals Build Communities in the Rural Sector,” *Transformation* 18:3 (2001), 6-14.

⁹ Celia Loreto Mariz, “Perspectivas Sociológicas Sobre el Pentecostalismo y el Neopentecostalismo,” *Revista de Cultura Teológica* 3:13 (1995), 7-16.

¹⁰ Marcelo de Carvalho Azevedo, “Opción por los Pobres y Cultura Secular en América Latina,” *Razón y Fe* 10:2 (1983), 147-61.

¹¹ George W. Harper, “Philippine Tongues of Fire? Latin American Pentecostalism and the Future of Filipino Christianity,” *Journal of Asian Mission* 2:2 (2000), 225-59. Also, Harold D. Hunter, “Full Communion: A Pentecostal Prayer,” *Ecumenical Trends* 37:1 (January 2008), 1-7.

intentionally designed by the leaders of the community. Concerning this matter, Ruben Alves states:

These demands concern above all the commitment to peace, the organization of the state's powers, a sound juridical system, the protection of the environment, and the provision of essential services to all, some of which are at the same time human rights: food, housing, work, education, access to culture, transportation, basic health care, the freedom of communication and expression, and the protection of religious freedom. The common good therefore involves all members of society, no one is exempt from cooperating, according to each one's possibilities, in attaining it and developing it. The common good must be served in its fullness, not according to reductionist visions that are subordinated by certain people to their own advantage; rather it is to be based on a logic that leads to the assumption of greater responsibility.¹²

Likewise, Pentecostals have their own theology of the common good, which corresponds to the highest redemption of life for the common good of all members of the community.¹³ Juan Sepúlveda realized that this common good is very “difficult to attain because it requires dedication to holiness and love to develop the constant ability and effort to seek the good of others as though it was one's own good.”¹⁴

¹² Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope*, 13.

¹³ Darío López Rodríguez, *La Misión Liberadora de Jesús* (Lima Perú: Ediciones Puma, 2006), 78. The author makes a practical application to the needs of the community in Peru, where Pentecostals are invited to share public responsibilities for the sake of society.

¹⁴ Although Pentecostal scholarship does not seem to be interested in the teachings of the common good as stated by RCC, scholars such as Juan Sepúlveda and José María Mardones have shown interest in the theme. See Juan Sepúlveda, “Overcome the Fear of Syncretism: A Latin American Perspective,” in Lynne Price, Juan Sepúlveda, and Graeme Smith (eds.), *Mission Matters* (Frankfort: Peter Lang, 1997), 157-68. See also José María Mardones, *Nueva Espiritualidad: Sociedad Moderna y Cristianismo* (México City: Universidad Iberoamericana, 1999), 16-24. Also, some non-Latino scholars have written about the matter. One of them is Lynne Price, *Theology Out of Place: A Theological Biography of Walter J. Hollenweger* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002). The other scholar who sees the teachings on the common good in the Pentecostal tradition is Scandinavian theologian Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen. From his teaching post at Fuller Theological Seminary, he has observed Latino Pentecostalism at both the USA and Latin America. See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Culture,

Responsibility of Civil Authority

Both Pentecostal and Catholic scholars agree that the “responsibility for attaining the common good, besides falling to individual persons, belongs also to the state, since the common good is why the political authority exists. So, the state must guarantee the coherence, unity, and organization of the civil society of which it is an expression, in order that the common good may be attained with the contribution of every citizen.”¹⁵ In this case, the individual or family group may not be able to obtain their full development by themselves. Hence, it requires community efforts to help them to be in position to live a dignified human life.

This need creates the necessity to develop political institutions with the purpose of providing opportunities to help a person’s progress. This helps those who are limited with spiritual, material, cultural, and moral goods. Through these teachings, Pentecostals are now learning that the goal of life is to provide every individual with the opportunity to avail themselves of the good of society in a way that is deemed fair to every person. This is also God’s goal for humanity, and He takes pleasure in the wellbeing of every individual.

Governments have the duty to design and apply specific regulations to ensure every citizen’s access to the good of society. This action must harmonize with laws that implement assistance and justice for all. The proper action to reconcile the interests of individuals and particular groups is one of the most difficult and delicate tasks of the public authority. Therefore, some liberation theology scholars, like Jon Sobrino, insist,

The state must not forget that in democracy, where decisions are usually made by the majority of representatives elected by the people, and those responsible for government are required to implement the common good of their country. Not only according to the guidelines of the majority but also according to the effective good of all the members of the community, including the minorities.¹⁶

Now, for Pentecostals, the common good of society is not an end in itself. It has value only in reference to attaining the ultimate ends of the

Contextualization and Conversion: Missiological Reflections from the Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1990–1997),” *Journal of Asian Mission* 2:2 (2000), 262-75.

¹⁵ Kärkkäinen, “Culture, Contextualization and Conversion,” 262-75.

¹⁶ Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor*, 64.

person and the universal common good of the whole of creation.¹⁷ For Pentecostals, “God is the ultimate end of his creatures. The common good may not be deprived of its transcendent dimension for any reason. It moves beyond the historical dimension while at the same time fulfilling it.”¹⁸ Therefore, this teaching becomes increasingly relevant to the faith in the sacrifice of Jesus. It offers a clear understanding of the rights of every human to the common good that God made available to them.

Pentecostals also think that human history begins and ends in Jesus. Thanks to him, every reality, including human society, can be brought to its supreme goal and fulfillment by means of him and in light of him.¹⁹ Thus, a purely historical and materialistic vision would end up transforming the common good into a simple socio-economic wellbeing. Pentecostals look towards the supernatural empowerment of the Holy Spirit to overcome human limitations. The same Spirit fills them with love to care for the common good of the people they serve.²⁰

The Principle of Subsidiarity

Another matter of revision between Pentecostal and Catholic scholars is the issue of subsidiarity. For Catholic scholars, the principle of subsidiarity is one of the most constant directives of social responsibility to the community of faith. For them, it is impossible to promote the dignity of the person without showing concern for the family, groups, associations, and local territorial realities. To this, they add social, cultural, recreational, professional, and political expressions by which

¹⁷ López, *La Misión Liberadora de Jesús*, 84. See also Daniel Chiquete, “Healing, Salvation and Mission: The Ministry of Healing in Latin American Pentecostalism,” *International Review of Mission* 93 (2004), 474-85. This opinion, however, has been affected by the context of a dialogue between Catholic and Pentecostal scholars, which takes place at the international level, but it reflects, in part, the intention of finding a common ground in the approach to the common good. See also J. Reginaldo Prandi, *A Realidade Social das Religiões no Brasil* (São Paulo, Brasil: Hucitec Edusp, 1992).

¹⁸ Guillermo Cook, “Informe: Consulta Pentecostal Sobre la Teología de la Liberación,” *Pastoralia* 7:15 (1985), 107-19.

¹⁹ López Rodríguez, *La Misión Liberadora de Jesús*, 78-86.

²⁰ Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), 92-97, highlights the power of love, which operates through believers full of the Holy Spirit. The integration of both power and love is what makes the gospel effective.

effective social growth and transformation of the culture are made possible.²¹

Moreover, “this is the realm of civil society, understood as the sum of the relationships between individuals and intermediate social groupings, which are the first relationships to arise, and which come about thanks to the creative subjectivity of the citizen.”²² Therefore, this network constitutes the basis of a true community. This level of corporate relationships strengthens social responsibilities, making it possible for individuals to recognize one another in higher standards of social work and activity.

Based on this principle, communities of a higher order would have the opportunity to adopt healthy attitudes to assist with respect to the lower socioeconomic levels of people who are part of their societies. Concerning the need for respect to those at a lower level, Jon Sobrino argues, “In this way, intermediate social entities can properly perform the functions that are entrusted to them. They are not required to give them up to social entities of a higher level. That way the intermediate social entities do not suffer the risk of being absorbed or substituted and, in the end, being denied their dignity and essential place.”²³

Latin American Pentecostals do not have a teaching of subsidiarity as the RCC. However, in their ethics and actions on behalf of the community, they seem to practice similar principles. Hence, in the interest of the well-being and progress of the community, Pentecostals add a spiritual dimension that enhances the ethics and moral values of the people. It is only when they overemphasize the spiritual dimension to the detriment of social participation that Pentecostals fail to fulfill the purpose of a holistic gospel.

Public Service

Pentecostals have taken a different approach to the teaching of subsidiarity compared to Catholics. They acknowledge the need to protect people from the abuse of social authority, but they are willing to communicate with those in authority to assist people. However, they do not seem to be passionate about making significant efforts to force the issue of social justice with authorities. Latin American Pentecostals

²¹ Leonardo Boff, *Jesucristo y la Liberación del Hombre* (Madrid, España: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1995), 285. The author argues that regardless of the political affiliation or the religious identity, if a person looks for the good of the other, he or she is manifesting the works of the Redeemer.

²² Boff, *Jesucristo y la Liberación del Hombre*, 260.

²³ Sobrino, *Jesús en América Latina*, 82.

longingly pray that government officials will practice fairness and equality in their endeavors. They understand that this principle is necessary because every individual, family, and group have something good, original, and unique to offer for the benefit of the community. Therefore, they must be respected and appreciated for that.²⁴

Pentecostals may very well realize that by neglecting the principle of subsidiarity, they limit the freedom and the genuine initiative of people. This is perhaps one of the perils Pentecostals now face. They cannot continue to grow without coming to an understanding of their social responsibilities to the community. Pentecostals tend to remain indifferent to the world and its unjust powers. However, their growth has permeated practically every group in Latin American society. This pronounced visibility imposes a delicate and crucial responsibility on behalf of the people they serve. Furthermore, they seem to have taken steps to collaborate with the civil authorities, the educational system, and cultural entities.

In RCC circles, the principle of subsidiarity is opposed to certain forms of centralization, bureaucratization, welfare assistance, and the unjustified presence of the state in public mechanisms. Gerard Hughes argues, “By intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility, the state’s social assistance leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies. They are dominated more by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients, which are accompanied by an enormous increase in spending.”²⁵ He also adds that an insufficient recognition of private initiative and the failure to recognize its public function contribute to undermine the principle of subsidiarity as monopolies do as well.²⁶

For Pentecostals to practice the principle of subsidiarity, they would have to assume responsibility for the need to promote social justice and respect for every family in their own right to develop spiritually and socioeconomically. They must appreciate local associations of individuals and intermediate organizations that are expressing their choices. Pentecostals are learning to encourage the power of private

²⁴ A report on this matter appeared in Jean Pierre Bastian, *La Mutación Religiosa de América Latina: Para una Sociología del Cambio Social en la Modernidad Periférica* (México, DF: Fonda de Cultural Económica, 1997), 21-33.

²⁵ Gerald J. Hughes, *Authority and Morals: An Essay on Christian Ethics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 32.

²⁶ Hughes, *Authority and Morals*, 56.

enterprise and initiative.²⁷ They are recognizing every entity that remains committed to serving the common good of the people. These individuals and organizations have their own distinct contributions to the common good and deserve to be respected. They are recognizing that the presence of socioeconomic pluralism is necessary in society. Its vital components are indispensable to the function and stability of the community. They are also learning to safeguard human rights and the rights of minorities.

Balance is necessary in the public and private actions of civil service. These decentralized methods help citizens become more responsible and actively involved in the political and social reality of their country. These principles of subsidiarity offer vision and viable methods that generate Christian participation in social, economic, and political matters that affect the community. In any case, the common good correctly understood is to defend the promotion of humanity and the way this is understood in the community. It must preserve the objective of making social decisions connected with the principle of subsidiarity. This RCC contribution is causing Pentecostals to revisit their principles related to the promotion of the human individual and social justice.²⁸

Within the context of subsidiarity, there are some significant differences between Catholics and Pentecostals. The discrepancies are mostly observed in the moment of execution. Catholics are guided by pragmatic actions, while Pentecostals tend to examine the biblical and spiritual principles that determine their actions.

For RCC scholars, the characteristic implication of subsidiarity is public participation, which is essentially expressed in a series of activities by which the citizen, either as an individual or in association with others, contributes to the cultural, economic, political, and social life of the civil community to which he belongs, either directly or through

²⁷ Some Pentecostals do not seem interested in running for office and working on behalf of the community in the public arena. See Darío López Rodríguez, *Pentecostalismo y Transformación Social* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ediciones Kairós, 2000), 46-53.

²⁸ In reference to the enhancement of humanity, see Cecilia Castillo Nanjarí, “Imágenes y Espiritualidad de las Mujeres en el Pentecostalismo Chileno,” in Daniel Chiquete and Luis Orellana (eds.), *Voces del Pentecostalismo Latinoamericano* (Concepción, Chile: RELEP, 2009), III, 183-98; Also, see Pablo A. Deiros, *La Acción del Espíritu Santo en la Historia: Las Lluvias Tempranas* (Miami, FL: Editorial Caribe, 1998); and Juan Sepúlveda, “Reflections on the Pentecostal Contribution to the Mission of the Church in Latin America,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1:1 (1992), 4-14.

representation.²⁹ For instance, Ignacio Ellacuría sees public participation as “a duty to be consciously fulfilled by all, with responsibility and with a focus on the common good.”³⁰

However, Pentecostals are now seeing that public participation is not restricted to certain individuals or community groups. The utility of information and the value of culture are significant areas of growth amongst the masses. Public officials are therefore called upon to guard the integrity and transparency of these valuable and dynamic instruments.³¹ For Pentecostals, it is important to work in cooperation, whereby all people become involved in the building of a strong community that preserves and defends the principle of subsidiarity. With this principle in mind, Edward Cleary suggests that it is necessary to encourage Pentecostal public participation amongst the most marginalized and disadvantaged people.³²

It is also important to rotate political leaders to preserve and forestall the establishment of unhealthy privileges. Sepúlveda also adds that “strong moral pressure is needed from Pentecostals so that the administration of public life will be the result of the shared responsibility of each individual with regards to the common good.”³³

Participation in Democracy

Involvement is one of the pillars of all democratic orders and a major guarantee of the democratic system’s permanence.³⁴ According to Koson Srisan, a democratic government is primarily defined by the distribution of power in the interests of the people. This power is exercised in their regard and on their behalf. Therefore, it is clearly evident that every democracy must be participative.³⁵ Ideally, this means that the different subjects of civil community at every level must be informed, heard, and

²⁹ An extensive analysis of Christian participation in the cultural, economic, political, and social life appears in José Míguez Bonino, *Toward a Christian Political Ethic* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 112-18.

³⁰ Ignacio Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh: The Mission of Christ and His Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 41-42.

³¹ Juan Sepúlveda, “Future Perspectives for Latin American Pentecostalism,” *International Review of Mission* 87 (1998), 189-196.

³² Cleary, Edward L., and Juan Sepúlveda, *Power, Politics, and Pentecostals in Latin America* (London: Routledge, 2018), 97-121.

³³ Sepúlveda, “Future perspectives for Latin American Pentecostalism,” 192.

³⁴ Koson Srisan, *Perspectives on Political Ethics: An Ecumenical Inquiry* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006), 143.

³⁵ Srisan, *Perspectives on Political Ethics*, 142.

involved in the exercise. For both Catholics and Pentecostals, “Citizens are called to freely and responsibly exercise their civic role with and for others in the community context of different functions.”³⁶ However, this is still a struggle for Latin American Christians.

Some Catholics find it appropriate to act on behalf of freedom, whereby they could go to the streets to combat sinful structures responsible for poverty and social evils.³⁷ Some Pentecostals think it is better to pray about the circumstances and to look for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to determine whether or not it is right to participate in the democratic processes of their countries.³⁸

The next discussion on this matter is about how both Catholics and Pentecostals foster participation in all the different fields of relationships between people and civil institutions. To understand this issue, special attention must be paid to the historical context and the social relationships that have been built up in the community. According to Hughes, “The overcoming of cultural, juridical, and social obstacles that often constitute barriers calls for work in the areas of information and education.”³⁹

In relation to this matter, Pentecostals still seem to be disadvantaged for they still show limited resources pertaining to information and education. However, they are now encouraging enabled citizens to practice informed participation in public service.⁴⁰

Solidarity

Another matter of concern in Latin America is the understanding and appropriation of the principle of solidarity by Catholics and Pentecostals. The second half of the twentieth century witnessed the participation of Christians from both backgrounds in the social, economic, and political life of Latin America. Liberation theology and the II Episcopal Conference of Medellín in 1968 provided the basis for RCC scholars to encourage solidarity with those who suffer.⁴¹ However, Pentecostals have made some isolated efforts that have led them to start

³⁶ Srisang, *Perspectives on Political Ethics*, 143.

³⁷ Hughes, *Authority and Morals*, 52.

³⁸ Hughes, *Authority and Morals*, 49.

³⁹ Richard Waldrop, “The Social Consciousness and Involvement of the Full Gospel Church of God of Guatemala,” *Cyber Journal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* (1997). <http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj2/waldrop.html>. Accessed 10 October 2009.

⁴⁰ Bueno, *The Struggle for Social Space*, 10.

⁴¹ Gutiérrez, *Teología de la Liberación*, 57.

looking at their society with a more proactive attitude and to create programs of evangelization and transformation on behalf of the poor.⁴²

Equality and Dignity

For the purpose of this study, solidarity focuses on the “social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights, and the common path of individuals and peoples towards an ever more committed unity.”⁴³ This can be accomplished thanks to the current expansion of technology and the rapid use of live communication. The extraordinary advances in computer technology as well as the increased volume of commerce and information exchange bear witness to this possibility. For the first time, since the beginning of human history, it is now possible to establish relationships between people who are separated by great distances.⁴⁴

However, for both Catholic and Pentecostal scholars, even in the “presence of the current phenomenon of interdependence and its constant expansion, there persists stark inequalities between developed and developing countries.”⁴⁵ These inequalities are stoked by different forms of oppression, exploitation, and corruption which produce destructive attitudes in the life and behavior of many communities.⁴⁶ Juan Sepúlveda insists, “The acceleration of interdependence between persons and people’s needs must be accompanied by equally intense efforts on the ethical and social plane, in order to avoid the dangerous consequences of perpetrating injustice on a global scale.”⁴⁷ Missiologists from both RCC and Pentecostal traditions concur that this would carry very negative repercussions not only in some underdeveloped countries but also in those societies that seem to be socioeconomically advantaged.

Solidarity as a Social Principle

In the 1980s, Enrique Russell studied the principles of solidarity in the social context of Costa Rica. He found that the “new relationships of interdependence between individuals and peoples, which are forms of

⁴² John Dart, “Charismatic and Mainline,” *The Christian Century* 123:5 (March 7, 2006): 22-37.

⁴³ Srisang, *Perspectives on Political Ethics*, 140.

⁴⁴ Srisang, *Perspectives on Political Ethics*, 143.

⁴⁵ See for instance, Bueno, *The Struggle for Social Space*, 10; and Kärkkäinen, “Culture, Contextualization and Conversion,” 266.

⁴⁶ Bueno, *The Struggle for Social Space*, 9.

⁴⁷ Hughes, *Authority and Morals*, 49.

solidarity, have to be transformed into relationships tending towards genuine ethical-social solidarity.”⁴⁸ RCC scholars see this as a moral requirement inherent within all human relationships. Thus, “Solidarity is understood under two complementary aspects: that of a social principle and that of a moral virtue.”⁴⁹

This principle of solidarity has served as a foundation for liberation theology. Its exponents saw its value and moral virtue as determinants in the order in which institutions operate. Thus, based on this principle, these structures of sin must be overcome. They cannot continue to predetermine or condition the relationships between individuals or groups in society.⁵⁰ Moreover, institutional structures “must be purified and transformed into structures of solidarity through the creation or appropriate modification of laws, market regulations, and juridical systems.”⁵¹

Ministry and the Common Good

According to these ideas, Pentecostals are looking at solidarity as a moral virtue and not as “a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far.”⁵² To some extent, they attach the notion of the common good to their practice of ministry. The principle of “solidarity rises to the rank of fundamental social virtue since it places itself in the sphere of justice.”⁵³

⁴⁸ E.D. Russel, “Un Análisis Contextual de la Iglesia Católica en América Latina,” *Pastoralia* 2.3 (1989), 32-44.

⁴⁹ Russel, “Un Análisis Contextual de la Iglesia Católica en América Latina,” 44.

⁵⁰ Alfonso López Trujillo, “Medellín: Una Mirada global,” *Medellín Reflections en el CELAM* (Madrid, España: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1997), 12; also, José Míguez Bonino, “El Nuevo Catolicismo,” in C. René Padilla (ed.), *Fe Cristiana y Latinoamérica Hoy* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ediciones Certeza, 1994), 91.

⁵¹ David C. Kirkpatrick, *Gospel for the poor: Global Social Christianity and the Latin American Evangelical Left* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 15-32.

⁵² See Carmelo Álvarez, *Pentecostalismo y Liberación: Una Experiencia Latinoamericana* (San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 1992), 50; Benjamín G. Gutiérrez, *En la Fuerza del Espíritu; Los Pentecostales de América Latina: Un Desafío de las Iglesias Históricas* (Ciudad Guatemala, Guatemala: CELEP, 1995), 58-67; and Carlos Tapia, “Adiós a las Armas: La Guerra del Fin del Mundo,” *La República Lima, Perú* (1994), 23.

⁵³ Edith González Bernal, “La espiritualidad en la producción teológica de Gustavo Gutiérrez” *Franciscanum. Revista de las Ciencias del Espíritu* 51.151 (2009): 275-309.

Solidarity can be taken as “a virtue directed to the common good and is found in a commitment to the good of one’s neighbor with the readiness, in the sense of the Gospel, to lose oneself for the sake of the other.”⁵⁴

Human Growth and Transformation

The social doctrine of solidarity of the RCC shows that there is a close relation between solidarity and the common good, between solidarity and the universal destination of goods, and between the common good of the people and solidarity. It is only through the basis of equality that people care for each other and work for peace in the world.

Hugo Assmann views the term solidarity as “the need to recognize the ties that unite men and social groups among themselves and the space given to human freedom for common growth in which all share and participate.”⁵⁵ Thus, the commitment to this goal is translated into the positive contribution of seeing that nothing is lacking in the common cause.⁵⁶ When this action and attitude are transferred to the will of people, then they will realize the importance of working towards the good of the neighbor. In the case of Pentecostals, this attitude of service may go beyond the interest of an individual or a group.

Currently, the Pentecostal approach to this principle of solidarity prompts men and women to exercise a spiritual awareness that they are debtors of the society of which they have become part. They are debtors because of those spiritual conditions that make human existence livable, and because of the indivisible and indispensable.⁵⁷ Additionally, they are spiritual debtors in their influence over culture, science, and knowledge, whether they are material or immaterial goods that the human condition has produced.

⁵⁴ Samuel Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos, and Liberation* (JPTSUP 14; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 22-30.

⁵⁵ Hugo Assmann, *Opresión-Liberación: Desafío de los Cristianos* (Montevideo, Uruguay: Tierra Nueva, 1991), 79.

⁵⁶ Assmann, *Opresión-Liberación: Desafío de los Cristianos*, 82.

⁵⁷ Pentecostals are quick to evaluate social, economic, and political scenarios. They tend to offer spiritual explanations to most phenomena that happen in society. Part of this discussion is found in Eldin Villafañe, *El Espíritu Liberador: Hacia una Ética Social Pentecostal Hispanoamericana* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 52-61.

Healing and Reconciliation

Both Catholics and Pentecostals agree that the unsurpassed apex of the perspective of mission is the example of the life and ministry of Christ Jesus. He is the New Man united with God but with such humanity that he suffered death on a cross.⁵⁸ In Jesus, it is possible to understand transcendent love and recognize that he is the living resource for humanity to obtain healing and reconciliation with God and fellow individuals. His atoning sacrifice is sufficient to overcome the weaknesses of humanity, and it is strong enough to bring about faith and love for those who believe and follow Him.

Life in society can also be rediscovered despite human contradictions and social ambiguities. There is hope for those who receive him as Lord, Savior, and Redeemer. That is a provision of grace continuously granted to those who repent. It also invites to participate in higher levels and forms of sharing in fraternal love as the Holy Spirit indwells the believer.

Catholics and Pentecostals agree that Christ Jesus makes the connection between solidarity and fellowship. The Holy Spirit illuminates the entire meaning of this connection. “When solidarity operates with faith, it could go beyond itself. It could change society with the Christian dimensions of total gratuity, forgiveness, and reconciliation.”⁵⁹ Catholics and Pentecostals see their neighbor not only as a human being who has his or her own rights, but also a living image of God the Father, once that individual has surrendered his or her life to Christ. He or she is now placed under the continuous action and protection of the Holy Spirit. “So, one’s neighbor must therefore be loved, even if an enemy, with the same love with which the Lord loves him or her. And for that person’s sake, one must be ready for sacrifice.”⁶⁰

Spiritual Values

This comparative study between Catholics and Pentecostals ends with an overview of the virtues of truth, freedom, and justice. Catholic scholars argue that besides the principles that constitute the foundations of society, there are social responsibilities that also indicate some foundational values on the part of the community of Christians.

⁵⁸ Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos and Liberation*, 30.

⁵⁹ Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos, and Liberation*, 22-30.

⁶⁰ Villafañe, *El Espíritu Liberador*, 52-56.

Thus, the reciprocity between Christian principles and sound human values determines the level of relationships held in society.⁶¹ For instance, Julio de Santa Ana states that in social values, there is “an expression of appreciation to be attributed to those specific aspects of moral good that these principles foster. These principles serve as points of reference for the proper structuring and ordered leading of life in society.”⁶² However, this practice requires that the principles of social life and personal virtue become associated with healthy moral attitudes to strengthen these values.

Meanwhile, Pentecostals understand that social values are part of the dignity of the individual whose human development is fostered by the work of the Holy Spirit. These values are known as freedom, truth, justice, and love. A person may obtain spiritual and social perfection by putting them into practice.⁶³ These values constitute the indispensable point of reference whereby public authorities will identify their call to promote the good of economic, political, cultural, and technological structures and the necessary changes in institutions.⁶⁴ Pentecostals are also learning that respect for the autonomy of earthly matters leads the community of believers into healthy relationships. They are also satisfied to have the opportunity to pray for their authorities and those in public office.

The Truth

RCC scholars and Pentecostals also agree that men and women, as members of their communities, have the responsibility to seek, learn, and move towards that which is truthful. Therefore, they show respect for others and creation. They bear responsible witness to all of these. Leonardo Boff states, “Living in the truth has special significance in social relationships. In fact, when the coexistence of human beings within a community is founded on truth, it is ordered and fruitful, and it corresponds to their dignity as persons.”⁶⁵ He also adds, “The more people and social groups strive to resolve social problems according to

⁶¹ Hughes, *Authority and Morals*, 56.

⁶² Julio de Santa Ana, *Protestantismo, Cultura y Sociedad* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Editorial La Aurora, 1990), 125-26.

⁶³ Bernardo Campos, *De la Reforma Protestante a la Pentecostalidad de la Iglesia* (Quito, Ecuador: CLAI, 1997), 32-43.

⁶⁴ Campos, *De la Reforma Protestante a la Pentecostalidad*, 32-43.

⁶⁵ See Leonardo Boff, *La fe en la Periferia del Mundo* (Santander, España: Editorial Sal Terrae, 1981), 145; and Sepúlveda, “Reflections on the Pentecostal Contribution to the Mission of the Church in Latin America,” 93-108.

the truth, the more they distance themselves from abuses and act in accordance with the objective demands of morality.”⁶⁶

Twenty-first century reality calls for intensive educational efforts and strong corresponding commitments practiced intentionally by all involved so that those who are seeking truth will not be ascribed to a simple sum of opinions that may become confusing. This matter involves the community of faith and the world of public communications as well as those who control the economy. These areas may fall under an unscrupulous use of wealth and may raise even more pressing questions. Therefore, it demands transparency and honesty in personal activity and social involvement. Both Catholics and Pentecostals are working now to affect Latin America with the benefit of the truth as taught by the gospel.

Freedom

Catholics and Pentecostals value freedom as a sign of progress. Freedom is God’s divine image inherited by humanity, so it is considered a sign of dignity for every person. Freedom is exercised in relationships between human beings. Every individual has the right to be accepted and recognized as a free, worthy, and responsible person.⁶⁷

The right to exercise freedom, especially in moral and religious matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of humanity. The meaning of freedom must not be restricted, considering it from a purely individualistic perspective and reducing it to the arbitrary and uncontrolled exercise of one’s own personal autonomy.⁶⁸

Freedom exists where there are reciprocal bonds, which are governed by justice and truth, and these are the links that connect people with one another. For Catholics, understanding freedom becomes far deeper and broader, especially when this affects the social level involving different dimensions.⁶⁹ Furthermore, for Pentecostals, according to Angela Pollack, the term becomes deeper and broader when believers are filled

⁶⁶ Boff, *La Fe en la Periferia del Mundo*, 145.

⁶⁷ On a general approach to human freedom, see Jürgen Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 79.

⁶⁸ Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society*, 77.

⁶⁹ Heinrich Muhlen, *Espíritu Carisma Liberación* (Salamanca, España: Don Bosco Verlag, 1974), 275.

with the Holy Spirit and enabled to serve efficiently under the guidance of the Spirit.⁷⁰

Both Catholics and Pentecostals respect the uniqueness of humanity in the expression of freedom. Both agree that every individual of the community must have the right to fulfill his or her personal potential and vocation. Every individual must seek the truth and have the right to profess his or her faith as well as cultural and political preferences. Members of society should have the freedom to express their opinions concerning government and have the liberty to decide on their state of life and line of work.

They should be free to pursue initiatives of an economic, social, or political nature. This must take place within a strong juridical framework, within the limits imposed by the common good and public order, and, in every case, in a manner characterized by responsibility.⁷¹ Most Pentecostals, however, are still learning about this value of faith. Their discourse is not strong enough to be heard in the circles of socioeconomic and political powers.⁷² Nevertheless, this notion of freedom continues to grow in the community of faith.

Freedom is also expressed as “the capacity to refuse what is morally negative, in whatever guise it may be presented. People must have the capacity to distance themselves effectively from everything that could hinder personal, family, or social growth.”⁷³ Catholics see the fulfillment of freedom in the capacity of the individual to decide for the good. Pentecostals see this fulfillment of freedom when believers live in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit guides them to genuine peace, goodness, and freedom.

Justice

RCC theologians take justice as a value that shows one of the virtues of moral integrity. Justice is the firm and continuous will that recognizes God’s sovereignty and the fulfillment of all human rights. “From a subjective point of view, justice is translated into behavior based on the will to recognize the other as a person, while, from an objective point of

⁷⁰ See Angelina Pollak Eltz and Yolanda Salas de Lecuna *El Pentecostalismo en América Latina entre Tradición y Globalización* (Quito, Ecuador: Docutech, 1998), 116. This work is very important for it calls for a sincere dialogue between two permanent residents of Latin America, Catholics and Pentecostals.

⁷¹ Hughes, *Authority and Morals*, 62.

⁷² Bastián, *La Mutación Religiosa de América Latina*, 24.

⁷³ Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society*, 78.

view, it constitutes the decisive criteria of morality in the inter-subjective and social sphere.”⁷⁴

Historically, Catholics have called for the most classical forms of justice to be respected: commutative, distributive, and legal justice. They have given greater importance to social justice, which represents a real development on justice in general, which regulates social relationships according to the criterion of observance of the law.⁷⁵

They see social justice as a requirement always related to social questions. Social justice today is a worldwide matter in its scope and demands. It concerns the socioeconomic and political affairs of society, “together with the structural dimension of problems and their respective solutions.”⁷⁶

In the case of Pentecostals, some scholars agree that the practice of justice is important. They recognize the individual value of the person. Human dignity must be protected and promoted against exclusive criteria of utility and ownership.⁷⁷ Justice requires an authentic meaning in Christian anthropology. Justice is not merely a simple human condition that demands attention. What is known as just is not determined by simple human laws but by an inherent deep understanding of the identity of the human being with what is right and just.⁷⁸

Conclusion

Latin American Pentecostals are participating in ecumenical dialogues where RCC scholars are also present. A dialogue between Catholics and Pentecostals has taken place since 1972. Some Pentecostals from Latin America have been invited to participate on a personal basis. They have begun to develop awareness about the need to extend the Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue for Latin America. However, no action has been taken toward this purpose. Such ecumenical initiatives could help them to find grounds for common understanding. They may set principles for peaceful coexistence in a large but promising continent.

⁷⁴ Robert D. Lupton, *Compassion, Justice and the Christian Life* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007), 55.

⁷⁵ Daniel G. Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice: Navigating the Path to Peace* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 26-27.

⁷⁶ Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice*, 27

⁷⁷ Anthea Butler, “Facets of Pentecostal Spirituality and Justice,” *Consultation with Pentecostals in the Americas* (San José, Costa Rica: WCC, 1996), 28-44.

⁷⁸ Butler, “Facets of Pentecostal Spirituality and Justice,” 32.

We have approached social responsibility and its influence on church mission. During the study, I realized Pentecostals are often asked about their participation in the development of society. They are also prompted to respond to issues related to peace and justice. Hence, I decided to explore the recent history of Pentecostal participation in social action and concerns particularly in Latin America. I even investigated their participation in social work during the days of the Cold War as this took place in Latin America.

Pentecostals did not seem to have a solid theology of integral mission. That was the main reason for having ambivalent opinions and theological positions toward socioeconomic, cultural, and political participation. Consequently, at some point they refrained from participating in these fields perhaps for not having adequate knowledge about mission theology in times like these or for not having adequate training for significant participation in social action. Other Pentecostals, especially the most conservative, spiritualized the matter and decided that it was not biblical to become involved in the affairs of the world. The reaction varied from church to church for they did not appear to have a common consensus in their role as agents of change in society.

Since most Pentecostals in Latin America are former Catholics, I also decided to explore the influence of the theological principles of social responsibility, as proposed by the RCC, on the Pentecostal understanding of social action. Most Catholic schools in Latin America teach the RCC teachings of the common good, political participation, solidarity, and the fundamental values for social life. Moreover, as I studied these principles, I found that Pentecostals in Latin America also tend to look at these principles as valid models for responding to social concerns.⁷⁹

Therefore, in the dialogue between Pentecostals and RCC theology, I found that in the back of their minds, Pentecostals favor most of these teachings, although in their shift toward Pentecostal theology, they have become more biblically oriented in their approach to mission. Pentecostals recognize the validity of public participation in democratic processes. They may not have the proper training for it, but they support Christians who become involved in public service.

I arrived at the same conclusion in matters that work on behalf of the equality and dignity of the human being. Although Pentecostals will not recognize it publicly, it is evident by their teachings that they still

⁷⁹ Guerrero Bravo, *El Fruto del Espíritu: El Carácter del Cristiano y la Misión de la Iglesia* (Lima, Perú: Ediciones Puma, 1997), 86-92.

support the RCC teaching of solidarity for the common growth of humanity. Of course, Pentecostals are strict in observing the values of truth, freedom, justice, and love to foster the common good. They want to make sure all these principles fulfill the purpose of God for society. Subsequently, they preach and teach about staying faithful to the principles of the gospel to accomplish these purposes.

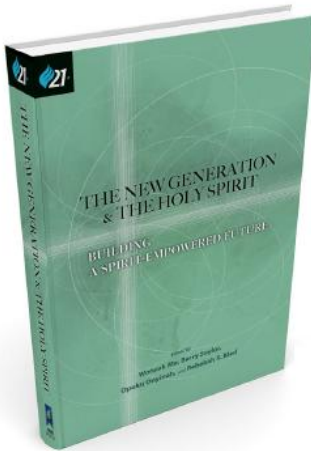
What is very significant here is the possibility of a dialogue between Pentecostals and RCC theologians in Latin America. Both streams have common concerns for the development of society and the common good of people. Both traditions have embraced the historical responsibility for the human growth and transformation of Latin American societies. Pentecostals and Catholics are against violence and social injustice. These fields of common interest could serve as future scenarios for a significant dialogue between these streams of Christianity.

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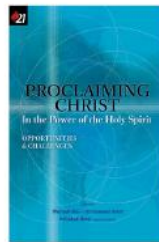
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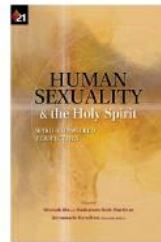
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Biblical Hospitality: Cultural Diversity in the Finnish Pentecostal Movement

Juan Javier Castillo Noboa

Abstract

Finnish Pentecostalism's history is culturally diverse. The impact of Finnish Pentecostal missionary work back in the homeland is not the only source of cultural diversity of this Nordic Pentecostal movement. This essay demonstrates through the history of the Finnish Pentecostal movement that it has always reached beyond monocultural borders within its own country. I present a brief history of how two cultural minorities have been part of the Finnish Pentecostal movement from its early stages. Despite their rejection by the main population, Roma and Sàmi people were welcomed in Pentecostal churches, but not without some tensions. I also summarize the response of the Finnish Pentecostal movement to the first mass migration of the twenty-first century. The Finnish Pentecostal movement has shown biblical hospitality to Roma people by reaching out and creating space even when the main population was not willing to do so. The same has happened with Sàmi people as Finnish Pentecostals avoided colonial approaches to evangelism. In the last couple of decades, Finnish Pentecostals have published several literary works to empower intercultural work at all levels. Because of Finnish Pentecostals' own interpretation of the Bible and because of their own history of rejection by the main population, approaching those on the margins has been a natural response that could be described as "biblical hospitality."

Keywords: Finnish Pentecostalism, Roma People, Sàmi People, mass migration, biblical hospitality

Introduction

In this essay, I attempt to summarize the development of the multicultural work of Finnish Pentecostalism. I start by summarizing the historical context of Finland as a nation and the birth and development of the Finnish Pentecostal missionary work. Interestingly, both the nation and the movement were born in the same decade. This narrative

allows a glance over the difficulties that the nation has gone through in its growth as well as the reactions of Finnish Pentecostals that were called to do missions immediately from the beginning of their history.

I will present also the history of the integration of two minority cultures into the Finnish Pentecostal movement, even when these communities were rejected by the main population. For the first time, the history on how Finnish Sámi people encountered the hope of Christ in Pentecostalism will be told. These two stories tell how Pentecostalism encountered multicultural challenges and blessings in its development. There are traces of biblical hospitality in each story, even at the expense of the movement's respectability in front of Finnish society. In this way, the history of the Finnish Pentecostal movement is not the history of one language and one people alone, but it is the dance between Finnish, Swedish, Roma, and Sámi languages, and later, with the arrival of mass migration, the dance invited a larger number of languages.

I also summarize the efforts of the Finnish Pentecostal movement in educating its churches and members on how to work with foreigners after the first mass migration that arrived in Finland in 2015. Different publications were launched to accompany churches in the process of reaching out to new people who arrived despite extreme weather conditions. The Finnish Pentecostal movement reacted with biblical hospitality, calling their churches, their churches' leadership, and their churches' volunteers into action through each publication.

This essay answers these questions: how has the Finnish Pentecostal movement grown to be a multicultural movement? What challenges, difficulties and reactions can be pointed out in this historical process? There are plenty of theological nuances waiting to be discovered in the history of the Finnish Pentecostal movement whose current motto is "with words and actions."

Historical Background

Despite Finland's small population, the Finnish Pentecostal Movement has made its own historical mark in global Pentecostalism. Finnish missionary efforts are well known worldwide for effectively mirroring the already known fame of Finland as a country that champions areas such as education and welfare.

Sending missionaries has been a clear characteristic of Pentecostals, along with important doctrines such as the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the second coming of Christ. The Finnish Pentecostal movement sent its first missionary in 1912. Emil Danielson, a sailor who had just returned from Africa to Finland, received a prophecy that encouraged

him to be a pioneer missionary in Kenya.¹ Previous to Danielson, in 1905, Maria Björkman of Finnish nationality living in Los Angeles, received a missionary call while attending the Azusa Street revival. She went to China supported by her brother who also lived in the United States.²

The Finnish Pentecostal missionary efforts grew regardless of the nation's own challenges with independence from Russia in 1917, followed by a civil war in 1918. Pentecostals, a clear minority, focused on preaching the gospel, planting churches, spreading the revival, and sending missionaries. By the beginning of 1945, Finland had 32 missionaries around the world of which 20 were women.³ Missionaries were supported by their local churches and their local networks as well as by their own skills in the mission field.

As Finland changed from being under Russian influence to being under German influence, it had to fight against the Soviet Union again for its independence in 1945. Finland struggled economically from both the civil war and the end of the Second World War which cost the young country greatly. Pentecostals focused on bringing their missionaries back to Finland, who were waiting to return but were unable because of the political situation in Europe. The main problem faced by the mission at that moment was money. Yet in 1946 in a conference held for all Pentecostals, enough funds were collected to restart the collective effort of missions. In 1948, churches were encouraged to organize a “missions Sunday” on which an offering would be destined to missions. This tradition has been kept until today in Pentecostal churches. One Sunday a month an offering is dedicated to missions. (Later in this essay I will describe how this “missions Sunday” is changing to be a “multicultural Sunday” in many churches without losing its missionary heart.)

The years after the wars were years of building. Finland focused on developing its welfare system while it had to maintain a positive relationship with the Soviet Union. President Urho Kekkonen led the country from 1956 to 1982 (reelected on several occasions) to develop a state of welfare inspired by Nordic politics. Different prime ministers progressively led the country's policies to develop towards a social

¹ Samuel Ruohomäki, *Suomen Helluntaiseurakuntien Lähetystyö 1912-2012* (Keuruu, Finland: Aikamedia, 2013), 22-24.

² Ruohomäki, *Suomen Helluntaiseurakuntien Lähetystyö 1912-2012*, 21.

³ Ruohomäki, *Suomen Helluntaiseurakuntien Lähetystyö 1912-2012*, 142.

system that aimed to take care of the most vulnerable citizens (veterans, widows, children, youth, stay-at-home people, handicapped, etc.).⁴

Missions during these years grew as well as the Pentecostal movement experienced its greatest expansion with churches being built in practically every town in the country. During this time, Finnish missionaries understood the importance of theological training, and missionary work reached the furthest corners of the world such as Sri Lanka, Uruguay, Ethiopia, and Mexico. Local churches grew as well, and evangelists were eager to proclaim the gospel in every locality possible. In 1960, the movement attempted to publish a compilation of the churches planted until then, but the project failed. Nevertheless, Selim Suomela's efforts in compiling historical documents are stored in the archive of Ristin Voitto.⁵ Eight "brothers" were actively planting churches in North Finland and Lapland during this period. They went from town to town by train, bicycle, and foot even during the extreme weather conditions of winter.⁶

Between 1980 and 2010, Finland experienced economic growth as well as political stability. Social structures were placed to assure the wellbeing of citizens. With stability and the prospect of a safer future based on the Nordic model of welfare, Finland's goal was to provide as good a welfare system as possible. The goal can be summarized in Prime Minister's Paavo Lipponen words from 1999:

The point of departure for the government's social policy is the maintenance of the Nordic welfare state. The goal is to develop a society that guarantees all people the opportunity to manage their own lives and actively participate. A core field of government emphasis will be to promote measures by which serious poverty problems, marginalization, and a pileup of disadvantages are prevented and reduced. The quality and availability of social and health care services will be guaranteed in all parts of the country.⁷

Finnish Pentecostal missions grew accordingly with the economic and political stability of Finland between 1974 and 1999. This meant

⁴ Monni M. Hellman, CME, and A. M. Alanko, "Declaring, Shepherding, Managing: The Welfare State Ethos in Finnish Government Programmes, 1950-2015." *Research on Finnish Society* 10 no 1 (2017), 13-14.

⁵ Lauri Lundelin, *Helluntaituulia Varsiais-Suomessa* (Turku, Finland: Karisto Oy, 1994), 7.

⁶ Jussi Jokisaari, *Esko ja seitsemän veljet* (Pietarssaari, Finland: Ab Forsberg Rahkola, 2013).

⁷ Hellman, et al., "Declaring, Shepherding, Managing," 15.

that Finnish Pentecostal missionaries were now involved in developmental work through medicine and education. Pentecostal missionaries were involved in flying airplanes to remote areas providing help, the gospel was translated into different languages, and Bible schools were planted.⁸ Finnish Pentecostals reacted accordingly to the possibility of reaching people in their own culture. In the 1970's the first programs of missionary developmental work were brought forth. In the 1980's there were efforts to reach pioneer projects among Muslims, atheists, Jews, and migrants from different countries. In the 1990's a new landscape of missions opened with the fall of the Iron Curtain. The Balkans and especially Albania were a focus for Pentecostal missions.⁹

Before tackling the current period, I would like to tell the story of two cultural minorities that have also experienced the power of the gospel in Finland: the Roma and Sàmi people.

Sàmi Culture and Pentecostalism

The Sàmi people are recognized as indigenous people of Europe yet their history is filled with violence towards their identity. Their identity has been based on nomadic culture around the herding of reindeer. For centuries Sàmi people have been under harsh conditions both socially and politically due to their nomadic culture.¹⁰ In Finland, different kingdoms and rulers as well as governments have favored the business of settlers rather than the nomadic lifestyle of Sàmi people. In Norway and Sweden, there are clear reports of the usage of colonialism as a tool to erase Sàmi culture whereas Finnish history has been slightly different.¹¹ The difference between the relationship between Sàmi people and the kingdoms of Sweden and Norway, and their relationship with Finland, is that Finland has also shared the feeling of being under the ruling of Sweden and Russia. Nevertheless, the Finnish government also invested great efforts in the assimilation and therefore the deletion of Sàmi identity.

It was not until the 1970s when the Finnish government took a softer approach towards Sàmi culture and showed some efforts to

⁸ Ruohomäki, Suomen Helluntaiseurakuntien Lähetystyö 1912-2012, 259.

⁹ Ruohomäki, Suomen Helluntaiseurakuntien Lähetystyö 1912-2012, 260.

¹⁰ Johanna Erholtz, et al., *Selvitys: Psykososiaalinen tuki Saamelaiden totuus- ja sovintokomission työn aikana* (Lapland, Finland: Lapin Sairaalanhoitopiiri, 2020), 14.

¹¹ Veli-Pekka Lehtola, "Sàmi Histories, Colonialism, and Finland," *Arctic Anthropology* 52, no. 2 (2015), 23.

preserve the Sàmi lifestyle.¹² Christianity has been used as a source of hope, but also as a tool to assimilate Sàmi culture. Sàmi people have suffered the challenges of evangelization before modern times and even persecution if someone did not convert. On the other hand, Christian missionaries and evangelists have become advocates of Sàmi culture and its preservation. One great example is Alma Halse in Norway, who committed her life to the care of orphans and the evangelization of Sàmi people. Halse was one of the early advocates of Sàmi culture and criticized how other missionaries and evangelists painted an unfair negative picture of Sàmi people in the south of Norway to gather funds for their mission in the 1940s. Halse was rewarded by the Norwegian government for her efforts. Her story can be read in the book, *Empowered Voices: Scandinavian Women in Early Pentecostalism*, edited by Rakel Ystebø Alegre.¹³

Pioneers

Urho Salmio and Alfred Lahtinen were the first Pentecostals to reach Sàmi people with the gospel. They came from an area in south Finland called Satakunta. They visited some Sàmi cottages in 1923 during the wintertime when temperatures reached up to -40° Celsius.¹⁴ The first encounter happened through music. Salmio sang songs, and the Sàmi youth gladly gathered around to hear the songs. At his return, Salmio began to gather funds to send evangelists to Lapland. In 1927, evangelists Lauri Mömmö and Eino Manninen were sent to the north.¹⁵ The earliest known written report on how Sàmi people were reached by Finnish Pentecostals is from an article on the subject in the Pentecostal magazine, “Ristin Voitto,” in May 1929. The article celebrates the quick expansion of the young movement in Finland. It also remarks that Lapland and its inhabitants had not yet been reached. The following quote encapsulates the spirit of the evangelists and their method of doing missions in northern Finland:

For us to take the Gospel to those nomadic Sámi, we must be there where they are, at the riverbends, in the wilderness, at the mountains

¹² Lehtola, “Sámi Histories, Colonialism, and Finland,” 23.

¹³ Kristina Undheim, “Alma Halse,” in *Empowered Voices: Scandinavian Women in Early Pentecostalism*, edited by Rakel Ystebø Alegre, et al. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2024).

¹⁴ Lauri K. Ahonen, *Suomen Helluntaihistoria* (Hämeenlinna, Finland: Päivä Osakeyhtiö, 1994), 164.

¹⁵ Ahonen, *Suomen Helluntaihistoria*, 164.

and valleys of Lapland. We must accustom ourselves to that life that they live themselves. We force ourselves to dress in the attires they dress too. But who wants to go wander after herds of reindeer? Who wants to quit civility and sacrifice their lives altogether for the Sámi's good? Is it possible to find someone at all? But even if that would not happen, we should at least get to the point where we could send a couple of preachers to them for a few months and in that way, we could see a blessed beginning. The fruit will be that the Gospel will start reaching even deeper in Lapland. Oh, if God could save even one of these Sámi, who could preach to their tribe, what a blessed result that would be!¹⁶

In 1935, Evangelists Otto Koivukangas and Jorma Alopeus visited different areas up to Ivalo.¹⁷ In 1938, women evangelists traveled all the way to Utsjoki, the northernmost location in Finland. Ida Kyrö, a local woman from Ivalo, served in the Pentecostal church as an evangelist for many years.¹⁸ Two young woman evangelists, Aila Astren and Irja Lehtonen, arrived in Ivalo in 1952 and visited every home of the town, sharing the gospel with all of its inhabitants.¹⁹

The Gospel Bears Its Fruits

In the area of Enontekiö, a young reindeer shepherd called Joonas Kelottijärvi (1938-2017) was raised up to be one of the most important evangelists in Lapland. His calling came after he came to Christ, having felt that alcohol and sin would ruin his life. Kelottijärvi, who got his last name because his family was located at a certain moment in life by the lake called Kelottijärvi, decided to be an evangelist almost at the same time he was converted. He called his neighbors and told them that he will organize a “seura” meeting, a term commonly used by Laestadians, a Christian Lutheran revival that spread widely in the north of Finland. As his neighbors gathered, Kelottijärvi preached without having any experience or training, yet his message got through to many who called others to come for the next meeting.²⁰

As for today, Sámi people have become part of Pentecostal churches, though there has not been any effort to produce Pentecostal material in

¹⁶ Urho Salmio, “Lappalaiset ja muut Perä-Pohjoilaiset asukkaat,” *Ristin Voitto* 10 (May 1929), 8-9.

¹⁷ Ahonen, Suomen Helluntai-herätyksen historia, 192.

¹⁸ Kai Antturi, et al., *Helluntaiberätys tänään* (Vantaa, Finland: Ristin Voitto, 1986), 53.

¹⁹ Pentecostal Church of Ivalo, *Historiamme*, in: <https://ivalonhelluntaisrk.fi/seurakunnan-historiaa/> accessed March 4, 2025.

²⁰ Reijo Ruotsalainen, *Ajan Fakta: Lappin profeetta*, directed by Reijo Ruotsalainen (Helsinki: Taivas TV7, episode 22, duration: 20 min, 2009).

the Sàmi language. Finnish has been used as the main language to communicate with the Sàmi people of Finland. People from Sàmi background have served as evangelists, pastors, and elders in church leadership. There has not been special attention given to Sàmi culture as such, for the unifying factor has been the gospel. Yet, there has been influence of the Sàmi culture in music and worship, as well as some Sàmi background Pentecostals have participated in important projects to protect Sàmi culture, such as the newest translation of the Sàmi Bible.²¹

Tuomas Magga, a Pentecostal residing in Oulu, was the head of the project of the newest translation of the Sàmi Bible. The process took 20 years to complete, and in Magga's words, "It created a common base for Sàmi language in Norway, Sweden, and Finland."²² Magga is the first known Sàmi to graduate with a doctorate in Finland and has worked at the University of Oulu as a lecturer of the Sàmi language since 1972.²³

Roma Culture and Pentecostalism

Historical Background

Finland as an independent nation is young in comparison to most European countries yet its culture and governance has a long history. The Roma people first settled in what was then the Kingdom of Sweden-Finland in the early sixteenth century. In the seventeenth century, the Roma were forced to relocate to the eastern part of the realm, which now forms Finland.²⁴ By this time, the Lutheran Church had forbidden priests to serve or evangelize Roma people to the extent

²¹ *Pohjoissaamen raamatunkäännös huomioitiin* - Tuomas Maggalle kunniamerkki. Ristin Voitto,

https://www.ristinvoitto.fi/uutiset/pohjoissaamen_raamatunkaannos_huomioitiin_-_tuomas_maggalle_kunniamerkki/index.pl accessed on April 7, 2025.

²² *Suomen Pipliasura Mikael Agricolan risti Tuomas Maggalle pohjoissaamen raamatunkäännöstyöstä*, published 23.3.2020

<https://www.piplia.fi/ajankohtaista/mikael-agricolan-risti-tuomas-maggalle-pohjoissaamen-raamatunkaannostyosta/> accessed March 4, 2025.

²³ Karoliina Rauho-Pokka, *Erämaakylästä suureen maailmaan*, Uusitie: 27.5.2020, <https://uusitie.com/eramaakylasta-suureen-maailmaan/> accessed on March 4, 2025.

²⁴ Minority Rights Group International, "Roma in Finland," accessed February 27, 2025, <https://minorityrights.org/communities/roma-6/>.

of punishing with excommunication those who would reach out in charity or evangelism.²⁵

At the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, the official policy was to assimilate the Roma into the Finnish population. Roma children were frequently separated from their parents, and the Kale language was banned. However, since the 1960s, the goal has been to integrate the Roma into Finnish society while still respecting their wish to maintain a distinct identity. In 1995, an amendment to the 1919 Constitution guaranteed the Roma, along with Sámi and other minorities, the right to retain and develop their own language and culture. Accordingly, the Kale language in Finland now has the status of a non-territorial minority language, and Finland's Roma community is recognized as a national minority under the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.²⁶

The discrimination and racism that the Roma people have suffered in Finland were not only political, but it was also religious. The Roma people were often forgotten by the compassionate works of the church. At the same time, their culture and their language were purposefully discriminated against with the goal of eradicating them from Finland. Under the excuse of assimilation, after the Second World War, the Roma people were placed in forced labor camps, forbidden from speaking their own language, and their children were often taken into foster care into families that spoke only Finnish, despite them serving in both wars.²⁷

Roma People and the Free Church Movement

The Pentecostal movement in Finland and the rest of the Free churches, such as Methodists, Baptists, and Free Churches, worked with the Roma people and reached out with charity and the gospel. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland established its first ministry towards the Roma people in 1995.²⁸ Oskari Jalkio was a Free Church missionary who began to minister to the Roma people after feeling guilty for

²⁵ Mäkinen, Jukka, Elämä ja Valo 50 Vuotta: Romanian, hengellisen romanityö ja Elämä ja Valo historiaa (Sastamala, Finland: Vammalan Kirjapaino Oy, 2014) 38.

²⁶ Minority Rights Group International, "Roma in Finland," accessed February 27, 2025, <https://minorityrights.org/communities/roma-6/>.

²⁷ Suvi Keskinen, "Kolonialismin ja rasismin historiaa Suomesta käsin," in *Rasismi, valta ja vastarinta: Rodullistaminen, valkoisuus ja koloniaalisuus Suomessa* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2021), 69-84.

²⁸ Mäkinen, Elämä ja Valo 50 Vuotta, 40.

discriminating against a Roma child in need of help in 1902. Jalkio built the network for the first association of Roma people that would later represent this minority in political affairs.²⁹ He began the magazine, *Kiertolainen*, which means “nomad,” “wanderer,” or “traveler.” Nevertheless, the desire to assimilate Roma people into Finnish culture was a motivator behind Jalkio’s ministry, and the Roma people were given little to say about their own future.³⁰ Later, Jalkio’s association distanced itself from the Free Church to align itself with the Lutheran Church, which provided more resources and better political status. In 1996, the association celebrated its centenary by pointing out that it was finally directed by Roma people and served Roma people. The name of the Association was changed from “Mustalaislähetys” which means “blacky mission” (the term “black” in Roma context is referred to their clothes, not to their skin color yet the term has charged with racism), to “Romano Missio.”³¹

Roma People and the Pentecostal Movement

In 1930, Pentecostal evangelist and entrepreneur Ernst Mattson organized revival meetings in Alavus, South Ostrobothnia. The meetings were not particularly organized to reach Roma people but many of them came to the meetings and received the gospel. Mattson is called the spiritual father of the Roma people.³² Mattson used his own resources, such as a car, in the service of the Roma people to minister around South Ostrobothnia. Mattson died in an airplane crash coming back from Sweden. He was traveling back to celebrate his birthday with a revival meeting, this time focused on the Roma people. His son, visiting the accident area, found a hymn book in the Roma language that Mattson carried in his pocket, thus opening a path for cultural integration rather than assimilation.³³ Irja Nylund, of Roma origin, continued the work Mattson had started. Nylund faced difficulties within her Pentecostal church. The Roma people were forbidden to participate in communion, so Irja brought bread and grape juice to a home meeting where Roma people were praying together. The elders of the church were skeptical of Irja’s work to the point that they sometimes were found spying on the meetings outside Irja’s house. After a lifetime

²⁹ Mäkinen, *Elämä ja Valo 50 Vuotta*, 45.

³⁰ Mäkinen, *Elämä ja Valo 50 Vuotta*, 46-47.

³¹ Mäkinen, *Elämä ja Valo 50 Vuotta*, 51.

³² Mäkinen, *Elämä ja Valo 50 Vuotta*, 72.

³³ Mäkinen, *Elämä ja Valo 50 Vuotta*, 73.

of work, Irja Nylund declared that “finally Roma people are not just some group in the church, but they are part of the church.”³⁴

The Roma people have integrated in the Finnish Pentecostal movement, and they are a vital part of church life. The Summer Conference, where more than 25,000 people gather to celebrate Jesus every year, gathers a great number of Roma people. The Roma people participate as pastors and evangelists, with music, testimonies, and practical service. The IK-Opisto is a Pentecostal folk high-school for adult education in Finland, offering courses on practical ministry, vocational training, and personal development courses. The Roma people are actively participating in the development of the Pentecostal movement through their own Christian association, *Elämä ja Valo*, that oversees the spiritual development of the Roma people. They freely participate in the administration of churches as pastors and elders to the point that Finnish Pentecostalism would not be what it is without the influence of Roma people.³⁵

Finland and Migration

Finns experienced two world wars in their own flesh. On one hand, Finnish independence brought 33,000 Russian immigrants, while Jews and Tatars received automatic Finnish nationality.³⁶ On the other hand, many Finns migrated out of Finland seeking for a peaceful environment. It is not a surprise that the first Finnish Pentecostal church in the United States began its work in 1925 in New York. The same happened in Toronto in 1930. It is neither a surprise that it was not until 1950 that 12,000 Finns moved to Sweden. In the decade of 1960's, the number grew, and people migrated to Australia, Canada, the United States, and South America. Finnish Pentecostalism travelled with them in the form of the “Ristin Voitto” magazine that was a way to keep contact with the spiritual developments that were happening in Finland.³⁷

Another wave of migration to Finland came after the Winter War where Finland was forced to draw new borders with the Soviet Union. Over 430,000 people were moved inside the new Finnish borders from

³⁴ Mäkinen, *Elämä ja Valo* 50 Vuotta, 77.

³⁵ Rainer Frisk, “Romanit suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa ja seurakunnassa,” in *Kaikkien Kansojen Koti*, ed. by Jorma Kuitunen (Keuruu, Finland: Aikamedia, 2019), 407-409.

³⁶ Pirjo Raunio, “Kansainvälinen muuttoliike, maahanmuuttajat ja Suomi,” in *Kaikkien Kansojen Koti*, 192.

³⁷ Tapio Sopanen, “Aaltoliikkeiden vuosikymmenet,” in *Yhteyttä sadan vuoden ajan: Ristin Voitto 1912-2012* (Keuruu, Finland: Aikamedia, 2013), 174-178.

the Soviet Union. Some of these displaced people went back to the Soviet Union, for example those living in Viipuri or Lapland, but those who left Karjala stayed in Finland. The first refugees that Finland received were people from Chile in 1973 and then from Vietnam in 1979.³⁸ In 1984, Finland passed the first migration law where the rights of refugees were taken into consideration from the standard viewpoint of international law.³⁹ In the 1980's and 1990's, the main source of migration were Finns coming back from Sweden. Some refugees from Somalia and Yugoslavia arrived during those years. It was not until 2015 that Finland experienced the first mass migration walking across the border with Sweden in the north of Finland. During that year, Finland received 32,500 people, most of them from the Middle East.⁴⁰

Europe's challenges with migration are therefore not unknown to Finns, but they are considerable fresh when comparing them with countries like France, Germany, or Spain. The history of the Pentecostal movement shows that it has grown with its nation. The Pentecostal movement has embraced cultural minorities that the main population objectively rejected, and through charity and pastoral care, the Finnish Pentecostal movement has been a step ahead in dealing with multicultural issues.

The current political atmosphere in Finland is a reaction to the mass migration of 2015 as well as to the war in Ukraine in 2022. The current government aims to cancel work permits in the event of unemployment lasting longer than three months to reduce access to welfare benefits for students and migrants, and it plans to halve the quota for refugees, issuing asylum for a maximum period of three years and extending the requirements for permanent residence and citizenship.⁴¹

Churches have reacted as well, yet the Christian reaction has been one of hospitality rather than hostility. Nevertheless, the responses and challenges to mass migration in the Finnish Pentecostal movement require special attention. The political landscape in Finland has not seemed to develop during the drastic changes when taking into consideration current global tensions. In the next section I will dive into the response of the Finnish Pentecostal movement to the mass migration of 2015 and the refugee crisis from Ukraine.

³⁸ Raunio, "Kansainvälinen muuttoliike, maahanmuuttajat ja Suomi," 192.

³⁹ Raunio, "Kansainvälinen muuttoliike, maahanmuuttajat ja Suomi," 192.

⁴⁰ Raunio, "Kansainvälinen muuttoliike, maahanmuuttajat ja Suomi," 193.

⁴¹ Emilia Palonen, "Finland: Political Developments and Data in 2023," *European Journal of Political Research: Political Data Yearbook* 63 (2024), 148.

Biblical Hospitality

The Response of the Finnish Pentecostal Movement to Mass Migration

Pentecostal churches in Finland have been each independent and each has carried its own responsibility before local authorities and the government. Even though this is still the case in the sense of self-governance, the Finnish Pentecostal movement organized itself as one institution that could represent better the common interests of Finnish Pentecostals. The Finnish Pentecostal Church is the institution that brings forward several tasks that only a unified movement can achieve. One of the tasks has been to respond to the mass migration phenomenon of 2015. The Finnish Pentecostal Church formed quickly a committee to help churches navigate the new challenges.

The task of this committee was to provide information and networking for churches while at the local level hundreds of young Iraqi men were converting, getting baptized, and becoming members of local Pentecostal churches. During this time, in our local church in Oulu, we received hundreds of men from Iraq and Syria. They were disappointed with their home country, their culture, and their religion, so they were open to hear the gospel in a way that missionaries to the Middle East never experienced. Sadly, we had little information and resources to face this situation effectively.

Churches became reception centers where compassionate work and discipleship happened at the same time. The language barrier was great, and the lack of translators made the work difficult. There were in Finland few Arab speaking church workers, but these few suddenly felt their workload rise significantly. Muayad Namrood, International pastor at Saalem Pentecostal Church in Helsinki, writes about the year 2015:

The first time we had a training for volunteers to work with Arab speaking people, we received double the audience we expected. People from our movement and also from different church backgrounds attended the training. Many had started to work with Arabs without any information or training on Islam or Arabic culture.”⁴²

The lack of cultural sensitivity caused several challenges. Despite of the challenges, the Pentecostal movement reacted with hospitality, first by participating in the compassionate work of receiving asylum seekers in each city and town. Pentecostal church gathered clothes, food, and

⁴² Muayad Namrood, “Työ arabiakielisten keskuudessa – havainnot ja kokemuksia,” in *Kaikkien kansojen koti*, ed. by Jorma Kuitunen (Keuruu, Finland: Aikamedia, 2019), 385.

hygiene products, and organized activities for the asylum seekers so their days could be productive. At the same time, churches offered the gospel in many ways. I want to focus on the main publications that the Finnish Pentecostal Movement brought forth between 2015 and 2019. These books speak clearly about the multicultural nature of the church.

Kuin Kotona Suomessa

This publication from the Pentecostal movement came out in 2015: *Kuin kotonaan Suomessa* was published by Aikamedia in cooperation with the Finnish Pentecostal Church and Fida International. It's a book with instructions on how to reach out to different groups and cultures in Finland. The book was edited by Jorma Kuitunen and Outi Mannila. The focus of the book was to provide churches with tools for ministering to foreigners of different backgrounds. Different writers offered perspectives from Christian counseling, cultural integration, a biblical theology of compassion, and basic information on the world's biggest religions.⁴³

Different Christian tools were used by Pentecostal churches to evangelize and discipline people at the local level. One of the courses was the Al Massira course that offered many the opportunity to hear the gospel in their own language and culture.⁴⁴ The challenge with Al Massira was that it did not take into account the status of asylum seekers of the participants and therefore many of the conversations prepared for each lesson were left aside to take care of more urgent matters such as residence permits, persecution for converting to Christianity, or cultural integration in Finland.

Kaikkien Kansojen Koti

A few years later in 2019, the Finnish Pentecostal Church published a monumental work with almost 600 pages of theological articles, testimonies, instructions, and advice on how to do ministry among foreigners. Edited by Jorma Kuitunen, this work is unique and has been received positive feedback from other denominations and churches that have used it in their own work as well. The book, *Kaikkien kansojen koti*, which means, “a home for all peoples,” was the common effort of 31 writers to compile a work that would serve as a reference volume when working with migrants.

⁴³ Outi Mannila and Jorma Kuitunen, *Kuin kotonaan Suomessa* (Keuruu, Finland: Aikamedia, 2015).

⁴⁴ “Al Massira,” <https://almassira.org>, accessed on Feb 27, 2025.

Finnish Pentecostal theology has always been multicultural. It originated with the British Norwegian Pentecostal pioneer, Thomas B. Barrat. It has also been influenced by Swedish Pentecostal pioneers such as Lewi Pethrus. The development of Pentecostal doctrines in Finland has also been influenced by North American theologians and by the missions work made by Finnish missionaries, who have brought new ideas to their home country to challenge the movement. *Kaikkien kansojen koti* was written as an act of biblical hospitality, responding in unity as a movement to a new challenge that the whole country had never experienced before.

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen provided information on the Global South and how Christianity is growing at a rate higher than in Europe. Esko Mattikainen, the CEO of the Finnish Pentecostal Church, provided biblical foundations that represent the movement when it comes to its multicultural identity. Pastors offered their experiences and advice on how they encountered the challenge in their local churches. Pentecostal background professionals in migration and cultural integration offered tools on how to integrate and help asylum seekers in their context by first responding to their human needs. The book, *Kaikkien kansojen koti*, represents the Finnish culture and how it has responded, through education and literature, to one of its biggest challenges in its history. Thanks to this effort, Finnish Pentecostal churches are welcoming foreigners constantly, and their representation in the Pentecostal movement is not a question of cultural integration but an act of hospitality.

Helluntailainen DNA

Also in 2019, Arto Härmäläinen's *Helluntailainen DNA* was published. In it, he summarizes the theological roots of the Finnish Pentecostal movement in conversation with three Finnish Pentecostals: Walteri Hoppala, Sanna Urvas, and Pekka Perho. Härmäläinen gives a chapter to the intercultural work of the local church and how important that work is for its future. For Härmäläinen, the apostle Paul's attitude towards culture, where he switches from Hebrew to Greek, or the way he uses Jewish rhetoric or Greek rhetoric to evangelize, speaks of the way Pentecostals do their work today. Criticizing colonial powers that used Christianity for its own purposes, Härmäläinen explains the success of Pentecostalism in Africa: Pentecostal missionaries cared about the everyday condition of people as well as the opportunity to see the power of the Holy Spirit in action in a supernatural way to solve their needs. Härmäläinen then proceeds to give practical advice to churches on how

to relate to cultural problems such as hierarchy, shame, or contextualization.⁴⁵

Vibrant Church 2035

In 2021, the Finnish Pentecostal movement published its strategy called *A Vibrant Church: Finnish Pentecostal Churches 2035*. The project took two years to be completed, and it offers a common objective, a primary mission, biblical values, and strategic goals. This strategy is worthy to mention because it's the common effort of all the Pentecostal institutions that worked together to unite the movement in vision and mission. The *Vibrant Church* strategy takes into consideration that churches are multicultural and offers church leadership, pastors, and elders the opportunity to discuss among themselves guiding questions on how to help their local church respond to their own social context.⁴⁶

Suomen Helluntailiike Opetuksia

The Finnish Pentecostal Church launched a series of books that is still ongoing on which the main statements of faith of the Finnish Pentecostal Church are discussed from a theological perspective by different theologians and teachers of the Pentecostal movement. In this series I was asked to write two articles, so far, on Christology and Pneumatology from a multicultural perspective. In these articles, I present how Christ relates to culture in different ways: Christ beyond culture, Christ in culture, Christ challenging culture, Christ and culture in opposition, and Christ enhancing culture. Then I proceed to explain how Jesus relates to different religions present in Finland.⁴⁷ In the second article I write about the presence of the Holy Spirit working outside of the church. The goal of this article is to demonstrate the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit as God and explain how everything good comes from Him. This gives a tool to look at the pneumatology of different religions and philosophies.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Arto Härmäläinen, *Helluntalainen DNA* (Keuruu, Finland: Aikamedia, 2019), 182-189.

⁴⁶ Pentecostal Church of Finland, "Strategy for Churches 2035: 'Vibrant Church'," <https://www.helluntaikirkko.fi/strategia> accessed April 7, 2025.

⁴⁷ Juan Castillo, "Silla niin Jumala on maailmaa rakastanut – Kristus ja kulttuuri," in *Jeesus Kristus – Jumala ihmisena*, ed. Heikki Salmela (Keuruu, Finland: Aikamedia, 2022), 279-312.

⁴⁸ Juan Castillo, "Rakkaus on vuodatettu – Hengen työ kristillisen seurakunnan ulkopuolella," in *Pyhä Henki – eläväksi tekijä*, edited by Veera Hug, Leevi Launonen and Heikki Salmela (Keuruu, Finland: Aikamedia, 2024), 283-320.

Conclusion

For a few years, Finland has been ranked as the happiest country in the world.⁴⁹ At the same time, several studies have determined that Finland is one of the countries where foreigners perceive racism the most.⁵⁰ Pentecostalism arrived in Finland a bit before its independence from Russia in 1917. Thomas B. Barrat travelled a few times to Finland to preach a message of love, baptism in the Spirit, and unity that was experienced in the Azusa Street revival. Finnish Pentecostals know well what it means to be in the margins of society and what it means to be discriminated against.

At the same time, Finnish Pentecostals have shown biblical hospitality in different stages, not without questioning itself as a movement and while trying to avoid making mistakes. Yet that hospitality, that is the hospitality of Jesus, Paul, and the apostles, the same hospitality that early Christians showed to each other regardless of their cultural background, is still present in the ethos of the Finnish Pentecostal movement. It is present in its history of missions and in its passion to reach the unreached. It is present in the integration of cultural minorities rejected or persecuted by the main population, such as Sàmi and Roma people. It is present in the constant advocating for multicultural churches and cultural integration.

In some areas of the world, Pentecostalism is growing as a geopolitical power in different forms. In Finland, a small minority of people strongly believe in the Full Gospel. This minority position is not necessarily a weak position. Finland is a country where welfare and equality, as Christian values, have been treasured even though the nation is walking more and more towards secularism. Nevertheless, the traces of Christianity are still holding the country accountable for how it treats its residents.

Finnish Pentecostals tell their story through actions and through their literature, which is seldom translated into English. This essay attempts to capture the biblical hospitality that characterizes the Finnish Pentecostal movement and that is shared with the global fellowship of

⁴⁹ “Happiest Countries in the World 2024,” *World Population Review*, accessed February 28, 2025, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/happiest-countries-in-the-world>.

⁵⁰ Mikander, Pia, “Racism in Finnish School Textbooks: Developments and Discussions” in *Finland’s Famous Education System*, edited by M. Thrupp, P. Seppänen, J. Kauko, S. Kosunen (Singapore: Springer, 2023), 289-302.

Pentecostals that aim to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ in a relevant way to their local communities. Finnish Pentecostals are exemplary in their passion to reach the nations with Christ's love in the power of the Spirit through missionary work that empowers local communities. Finnish Pentecostals are also working hard to integrate foreigners into their churches and to empower them in the calling that God has given them.

There is a path ahead on which Finnish Pentecostalism will expand its borders within the nation to reach out even further to different peoples that have arrived from countries where the preaching of the gospel is forbidden or where Christians are persecuted. Despite the difficulties of intercultural work among asylum seekers and the challenges that political winds might bring, the Spirit calls Finnish Pentecostals into action to take the Great Commission further, letting Christ transform Finland to enhance its beautiful culture for God's glory.

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Resonance and Dissonance of the Spirit's Work in Mission among Buddhists and Muslims: Insights for Spirit-Empowered Encounters¹

John Cheong

Abstract

In the twenty-first century, Pentecostal/Charismatic (P/C) Christianity has expanded the fastest in many regions of the world, particularly in Africa and Asia. In such cases, Buddhist and Muslim conversions or accommodation towards Christianity have grown due to particular theological or missional practices found in the P/C approach that resonate with them. However, there are also specific P/C elements that distance Buddhists and Muslims from Christianity. This proposal examines specific modes of the Spirit in P/C theology and practices that resonate or dissonate with practices in Buddhism and Islam to propose more fruitful paths of engaging them for future evangelistic and missional encounters.

Keywords: interreligious encounter, pneumatology, incarnational, proclamation, power

Introduction

In the twentieth century, Pentecostal/Charismatic (P/C) mission and engagement with non-Christians were always marked with an evangelistic zeal born out of the conviction that the end was near with the coming millennium of the year 2000.² The passion to evangelize the world for Christ was also marked by a strict emphasis on a radical dichotomy of good and evil — that Christianity was good while other

¹ The study is to appear in Wonsuk Ma and Opoku Onyinah, eds., *Among Other Religions: Spirit-Empowered Engagement for Authentic Living and Witness* (Tulsa, OK: ORU Press, 2026 forthcoming).

² Allan Anderson, "Signs and Blunders: Pentecostal Mission Issues at 'Home and Abroad' in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Asian Mission* 2, no. 2 (2000): 193-195.

religions were evil.³ Consequently, if there were spirits or other forces present in other religions or cultures, P/C believers were to bind them and cast out such spirits.⁴ God's power, through his Spirit, was powerful to save, heal, and deliver people from sin, sickness, and demons.

In recent decades, research and discussions on the understanding and role of the Spirit in mission and evangelism, especially in relation to other faiths, have brought a broader but more nuanced and deeper understanding of how the Spirit works in the missional encounter besides the traditional P/C approaches.⁵ Such discussions, however, have also sparked controversy. For example, Timothy Tennent has critiqued those who proposed ambiguous criteria to discern the Holy Spirit from the spirits that exist in other religions.⁶ Kirsteen Kim has seen Christians who have indulged in a syncretistic acceptance of other spirits,⁷ while Andrew Lord has lamented some who have written of an impersonal understanding of the Spirit.⁸

This paper will not address those issues. Rather, I shall survey specific modes of the Spirit in Scripture and in select branches of Christianity to outline the multifaceted ways in which the Spirit inhabits,

³ Michael Northcott, Michael, "A Survey of the Rise of Charismatic Christianity in Malaysia," *Asia Journal of Theology* 4, no.1 (1990): 276.

⁴ Weng Kit Cheong and Joy K. C. Tong, "The Localization of Charismatic Christianity among the Chinese in Malaysia: A Study of Full Gospel Tabernacle," in *Global Chinese Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity*, edited by Fenggang Yang, Joy K. C. Tong and Allan H. Anderson (Boston: E.J. Brill, 2017), 309-328.

⁵ See Kirsteen Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010); Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003) and *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

⁶ Timothy C. Tennent, "Review of *Beyond the Impasse: Toward A Pneumatological Theology of Religions*, by Amos Yong," *Missiology* 32, no. 3 (July 2004): 387.

⁷ Kirsteen Kim, "Spirit and 'Spirits' at the Canberra Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1991," *Missiology* 32, no. 3 (July 2004): 349-365. For discussions on how Christians might commune with other spirits, yet avoid syncretism, see Cheong Weng Kit, "Communion with Ancestor Spirits: Radical Syncretism or a Missing Element in the Theologising of Christian Spiritual Formation and Mission?" in *Communion of Saints in Context: Theological, Pastoral and Missiological Perspectives from Asia and Oceania*, edited by Eric Trozzo, Cheong Weng Kit and Joeferick Ating (Oxford: Regnum, 2020), 57-76.

⁸ Andrew Lord, *Spirit-Shaped Mission: A Holistic Charismatic Missiology* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2005), 100.

infuses and impresses its presence, proclamation and power in the way that He operates. In the second half, I shall relate these strands to two major world religions (Buddhism and Islam⁹) to examine the ways in which specific Spirit-filled approaches resonate or dissonate with these religions in missional encounters. Lessons for a wiser and wider Spirit-filled and Spirit-empowered mission for P/C believers will conclude the discussion.

Modes and Moves of the Spirit in Scripture

When one surveys Scripture,¹⁰ we see the following modes and moves of the Spirit in:

- participating in creation and creating people (Gen 1:2; Job 26:13; Isa 32:15);
- giving life to people and animals (Gen 2:7; Ps 104:29-30);
- “striving” with sinners (Gen 6:3) and convicting the world of sin (Jn 16:8-11);
- empowering God’s people for his works (Num 27:18; Judg 3:10; 6:34; 13:25; 1 Sam 10:9-10);
- “inspiring” or filling God’s people with skills to design and build (Ex 35:30-35), to prophesy (2 Sam 23:2; Isa 11:2; Ezek 2:2; Luk 1:67), be holy (Ps 143:10; Ezek 36:27) and to proclaim God’s word (Act 4:31);
- resting on people to give wisdom, counsel, knowledge and fear of God (Isa 11:2-3);
- anointing people to proclaim God’s words and heal people (Luke 4:18);
- interceding for believers (Rom 8:26);
- inspiring Scripture so that it is “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16).

Though not an exhaustive list, from the above, we can recognize and categorize three main modes and movements of the Spirit as that of *presence*, *proclamation* and *power*. A careful examination of these expressions of the Spirit can be correlated to specific spiritual practices and related outcomes in the table below.

⁹ These two are chosen as they constitute the two largest blocs of non-Christian religions of the unsaved in the world.

¹⁰ For an in-depth discussion of how the Spirit is understood in church history and across denominations, see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit in Biblical Teaching through the Centuries and Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013).

Expressions of the Spirit as	Examples in Scripture	Practices
Presence (in incarnational living and witness)	<p>The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of <i>wisdom and of understanding</i>, the Spirit of <i>counsel</i> and of might, the Spirit of the <i>knowledge and fear of the Lord</i>—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord (Isa 11:2-3)¹¹</p> <p>So I say, <i>walk by the Spirit</i>, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh... (Gal 5:16-17)</p> <p>But the <i>fruit of the Spirit</i> is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <i>Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.</i> (Gal 5:22-25)</p> <p>Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, <i>be filled with the Spirit</i>... (Eph 5:18)</p> <p><i>Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up</i> according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And <i>do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God</i>, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice (Eph 4:29-31)</p> <p>... the Lord has chosen Bezalel son of Uri ...and <i>he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills— to make artistic designs for work</i> (Ex 35:30-35).</p>	<p>Wise advice, understanding, counseling, knowledge and fear of God</p> <p>Holy living</p> <p>Exhibiting virtuous character</p> <p>Holy living in eating and drinking</p> <p>Holy living in talk and encouragement</p> <p>Holy wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and skilled creativity in work</p>

¹¹ All Scripture are quoted from the New International Version.

Proclamation (in evangelistic witness)	The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to <i>proclaim good news to the poor</i> . He has sent me to <i>proclaim freedom for the prisoners</i> ... (Luke 4:18a)	Proclaiming
	After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And <i>they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly</i> (Act 4:31).	Preaching
	All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for <i>teaching, rebuking, correcting and training</i> in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16).	Teaching, apologetics, correction, training
Power (in supernatural witness)	The Spirit of the Lord is on me to proclaim ... <i>recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free</i> (Luke 4:18b).	Healing, deliverance/exorcism
	For the kingdom of God is <i>not a matter of talk but of power</i> (1 Cor 4:20).	Healing, deliverance/exorcism
	And <i>pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests</i> . With this in mind, be alert and <i>always keep on praying</i> for all the Lord's people (Eph 6:18).	Prayer
	Zechariah was <i>filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied</i> (Luke 1:67)	Prophetic words/prophecy

The expressions of the Spirit in these three categories (presence, proclamation and power) overlap with what I believe are key theological values and expressive modes found among three specific strands of Christianity: Eastern Orthodoxy (the presence of God), Evangelicalism (the proclamation of God) and Pentecostalism (the power of God).¹² These modes can be visualized in the following diagram.

¹² Paul Hiebert, "Notes in Worldview and Evangelism Course" (Deerfield, IL: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2007). Catholicism is omitted, but it is noted that all three ministry modes are also found in this Christian strand.

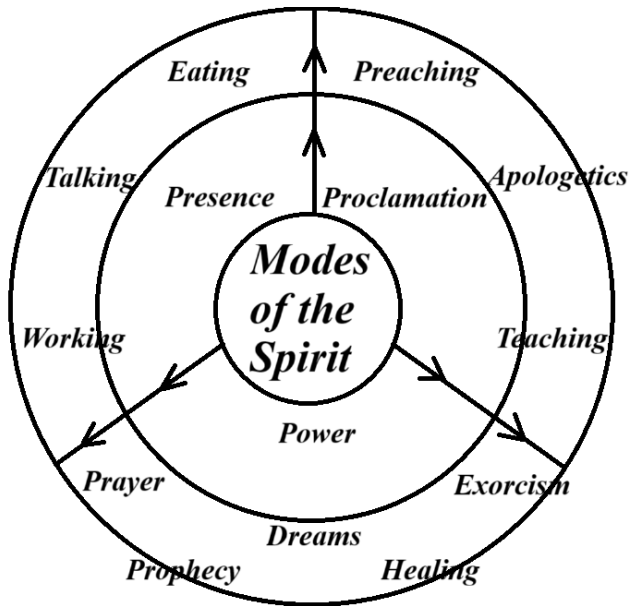


Diagram 1: The Three Modes of the Spirit and its Ministry Expressions

Modes of the Spirit in Presence Ministry

In Eastern Orthodox Christianity, one must “live the dogma expressing a revealed truth, which appears as an unfathomable mystery [and] look for a profound change [as] an inner transformation of spirit, enabling us to experience it mystically.”¹³ In Eastern Orthodoxy, the Church is called by God to the presence of the Trinity and sent out by the Triune God to bear God’s embodied presence and glory in the world.¹⁴ For them, the ultimate goal of mission is the fullness of God’s presence — “to acknowledge, promote and participate in the glory of God.”¹⁵ This “presence” approach in which believers are bearers of God’s glory is embodied in “being” there, in the spaces and places where they inhabit and live out their lives incarnationally among unbelievers.¹⁶ Some ways in which Eastern Orthodoxy embodies this are in the expression of mystery and where spiritual practices such as silence, reflection, and meditation are emphasized, as well as in eating, talking, and working.

¹³ Benz, as cited by James J. Stamoolis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986), 10.

¹⁴ Stamoolis, *Eastern*, 94.

¹⁵ Stamoolis, *Eastern*, 52.

¹⁶ Stamoolis, *Eastern*, 74-75.

According to James Stamoolis, “the Church, which has been called by God to the presence of the Trinity — a presence celebrated by the Communion in the body and blood of Christ — is ... sent by God to the world.”¹⁷ These aspects of the life of the Church in the habits of eating, talking and working seem common and very ordinary (or non-miraculous) but if we understand them in the light and presence of the Spirit, such modes of presence are actually powerful points of witness, but in a different way.

Eating, Talking and Working among Buddhists and Muslims

Buddhists strive for a simple lifestyle in what they eat, talk, and go about in their dealings. What drives Buddhists toward such emphases is a desire to detach oneself from attachments in life that cause suffering and forestall *nirvana*. Among the most devoted, shaving one’s head, wearing robes, becoming a vegetarian (and possibly pursuing priesthood or monkhood) are common. Simplicity in speech and thought, which cultivates wisdom and enlightenment, is prized. Ideally, they seem simple to take on, but practically, most Buddhists are too busy working in order to put food in their mouth or to care for their family. Most simple Buddhists are satisfied with basic provisions and a trouble-free life. Even so, where possible, Buddhists are some of the kindest and compassionate people, because cultivating compassion and showing it gains them merit.¹⁸

For Muslims, the path to right living goes through Islam’s five pillars, the *Hadith* (book of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad), the *sirat* (the life of Muhammad) and the *sharia* (Islamic law). They are too numerous to describe here, but generally, to follow the principles and examples that are modeled by Muhammad’s teachings and life is how Muslims must live. The most pious strive to enact and follow *Sharia laws in all aspects of their life, which includes the food they purchase and eat*, and their business dealings.¹⁹

For both Buddhists and Muslims, the shared drive and concern to achieve these ends are rooted in their *personal* efforts to do so in daily life. Here, a Spirit-filled life informed by a theology and ministry of

¹⁷ Stamoolis, *Eastern*, 94.

¹⁸ Rory Mackenzie, *God, Self and Salvation in a Buddhist Context* (Kuala Lumpur: Wide Margin/Asia CMS, 2017), 148.

¹⁹ Johan Fischer, *Proper Islamic Consumption: Shopping Among the Malays in Modern Malaysia* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2009); Patricia Sloane-White, *Corporate Islam: Sharia and the Modern Workplace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

presence greatly expands our Christian sense and mode of mission to relate to them. Firstly, the heart of any Pentecostal engagement with others is Pentecostal spirituality.²⁰ In this respect, it is quite common to see Pentecostals *exhibit passion* in their prayers to God, show love in healing others, and express zeal in sharing their testimony and devotion in worship. Some of these aspects of P/C practice are so powerfully attractive that even worship and joyful singing has been noted to draw Muslim seekers to Christianity.²¹

However, in emphasizing such modes of expression, Pentecostals must not ignore how the Spirit is also the one who gives wisdom and counsel (Isa 11:2), compassion and love (Lk 4:18) to people in life. Smith notes that if Christians *live wisely* and *speak with wisdom* (versus the foolish use of the tongue in James 3), it resonates well with Buddhist spirituality and life, making it an attractive expression of Christian witness.²²

Even Christian simplicity towards eating (“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” [Rom 14:17]) and work (“So whether you eat or drink or *whatever you do*, do it all for the glory of God” [1 Cor 10:31-33]) connect to Buddhist concerns. A life led by the Spirit in such ways enables us to avoid the sensual attachments of the flesh or drunkenness (Gal 5:16; Eph 5:18) and allows the glory of God to shine through our lives for Buddhists and even Muslims to see. For Christians to demonstrate how we eat, talk and work in ways that show godly peace and contentment (Phil 4:6-7, 1 Tim 6:6) contrasts against the Buddhist concern to *detach* themselves from these things in order to achieve a similar kind of peace and contentment. To be able to do all three with wisdom and moderation is to exhibit a witness of one’s life that is properly filled with the same Spirit that filled Christ (Isa 11:2-3).

With Muslims, a key to demonstrating the presence of the Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life among them is to relate aspects like praying, giving, eating, and working as expressions of deep Christian spirituality

²⁰ Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010).

²¹ John Cheong, “The Socio-religious Identity and Life of the Malay Christians of Malaysia” (PhD diss, Trinity International University, Deerfield, 2012), 240; Eric Sarwar, “Finding Harmony through Psalms with Muslims,” Fuller Studio, accessed November 17, 2018, <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/finding-harmony>.

²² Alex G. Smith, “Family Networks: The Context for Communication,” in *Faith and family in Asia: The Missional Impact of Social Networks*, edited by Paul de Neuvi (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2010), 67.

and holiness.²³ A simple way to envision this is by asking: when Muslims see us eat, do they see God's *presence* and *holiness* in the way we do it or is having a meal merely a moment to quench one's hunger? Do we pray reverently over a meal in their presence? Do we pray for God's *actual* presence and blessings to come over all who join with us to eat? In our work, can Muslims see any sense of God's glory and presence in our labor? Can they see how difficulties and challenges illuminate the light and life of Christ in the way we experience them? Do they witness some expression of Christian grace and patience when working with people? In each of these ways, if Muslims can see God's presence manifest in some ways in Christian holiness, reverence, blessing, and grace in the things we do, the expression of the Holy Spirit touches them in these ways.

Lastly, the mode of the Spirit must not just lead to more works but to the authentic fruit of the Spirit in one's life (Gal 5:22-23). In this way, the Spirit-filled life is not just about having spiritual power (Jn 15:26) but incorporates spiritual formation and character growth. The expression of the Spirit-filled life leads not merely to power but to our lives being transformed into the presence of Christ and the glory of God. In this way, flowing in the tide of the Spirit's presence leads to a life of power and proclamation in Christian mission where spiritual witness is intertwined with spiritual formation.²⁴ If we take the vision and expression of such a presence-filled life that is shared with Buddhists and Muslims in our interactions with them, the Spirit's presence can shine through us in these ways.

Modes of the Spirit in Proclamation Ministry

Another branch of Christianity, Protestant Evangelicalism, has often stressed the ministries of the word such as preaching, teaching, and apologetics (Matt 28:19; Acts 5:42; 2 Tim 4:2; 1 Pet 3:15).²⁵ The proclamation of the word in preaching and apologetics in Christian witness, evangelism, and in missions is so central to its endeavours that

²³ John Cheong, "Relating Islamic Spirituality and Christian Spiritual Formation Practices as Forms of Witness in Christian-Muslim Encounters," *Muslim-Christian Encounter: Torch Trinity Center for Islamic Studies Journal* 16, no.1 (March 2023): 7-48.

²⁴ Cheong, "Relating Islamic Spirituality."

²⁵ David W. Bebbington, *The Evangelical Quadrilateral: Characterizing the British Gospel Movement* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2021).

it is typically prioritised over social justice ministries.²⁶ Even the Spirit's role in preaching, especially when working with translators, is foundational.²⁷

Such ministries of the Word are so commonplace as forms of evangelistic and missional encounters in the history of the church and mission, with stories of success, that they are innumerable.

Preaching and Teaching in Buddhism and Islam

In Asian Buddhism, preaching does not occur in the typical sit-down setting with pews or chairs found in Christian churches.²⁸ Rather, they may involve a short exhortation or talk by the priest or monk in a temple where devotees may be standing, and then in short order, released to offer their prayers (usually with a burning incense stick placed in a pot) before a *bodhisatva* or Buddha statue at a temple. In Islam, preaching is closer to a Christian church model where an imam delivers a message from the Quran for around twenty to thirty minutes before the congregants, who silently listen. The latter, however, sit on a small personal rug (or on a carpeted floor) in a mosque.

With regards to teaching, Buddhists and Muslims usually do this in a separate space from the main hall, usually in a classroom of a temple or mosque. In more formal settings, Buddhists and Muslims have erected special school buildings located next to the temple or mosque that can sit students from as few as twenty to as many as a thousand, staffed and run by Buddhist or Muslim teachers who may also be priests or imams. In recent decades, Buddhists have borrowed the Evangelical Sunday school teaching model and mimicked a teaching format that delivers lessons on Sundays, especially in Malaysia and Singapore.

When Buddhists or Muslims have *visited churches* to listen to Christian preaching, few have come to Christ for many reasons. Among them, the church is a religiously foreign environment — Buddhists are not used to sitting down in a pew to listen to a message for forty minutes. Rather, their faith is accompanied by rituals of burning joss-sticks or offering food or material to the *bodhisatva* or priests.

²⁶ David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2005), 117-139.

²⁷ John Cheong and Rochelle Scheuermann, "The Character of the Incarnation in Preaching with Translators," in *Communication and Mission: Global Opportunities and Challenges*, edited by Marcus Dean, Scott Moreau, Sue Russell, and Rochelle Scheuermann (Littleton, CO: William Carey, 2022), 15-27.

²⁸ American Buddhism has, however, contextualized itself to resemble such church settings.

Muslims, on the other hand, avoid going to churches under the notion that they are *haram* (forbidden). Some Muslims are even warned that attending such places may make them impure or that (as told to me) a Christian demon may attack them upon entering! Even if missionaries (in the majority Buddhist or Muslim settings) take to the streets to preach the gospel, few have seen them come to Christ through this approach.

Interestingly, Christian teaching embedded in more formal education settings, such as a semi-private or public school, has brought more of them (especially Buddhists) to Christ more successfully. This is because when Christian schools were first established in Southeast Asia, they were the first to formally introduce English, modern mathematics, and science, all of them being sources of attraction and prestige. After all, Buddhists saw them offering their children a ticket to life in a modern society emerging in the early twentieth century.²⁹

By enrolling in such schools, Buddhists could learn to read and write and do so in English. It was a key way to find jobs in the modern world when filling forms and writing resumes, interviewing in English, and then conversing and working with Westerners in the Western-dominated economy of the twentieth century was increasingly the norm. Consequently, Christianity and the gospel collaterally benefited when Buddhists entering such schools were exposed to the life of Christian teachers and weekly school assemblies where a short Bible message was preached or taught to students. However, even though Muslims also attended such schools, very few came to Christ because they were warned by their parents to avoid listening to such heresy from the Bible and received exemptions from the principals to attend such Christian classes.

Pentecostals teaching in mission schools have also reaped the benefits of this system, but these came later in their mission strategy. The earliest Pentecostal mission approach tended to overemphasize the power and supernatural dimensions of the Spirit by praying for healing and expelling demons from unbelievers, believing that the Spirit's infilling and empowerment of tongues enabled them to speak the "language of nations" in overseas missions. However, the noted Pentecostal historian Allan Anderson writes that they "did not and ... could not" do so — a major blunder in Pentecostal mission history still worth relearning today.³⁰ Early Pentecostal *neglect* of this mode of the Spirit in inspiring Scripture and gifting people with knowledge, wisdom,

²⁹ Cheong and Tong, *Localization*, 312-314.

³⁰ Anderson, "Signs and Blunders," 195-199.

and skills to learn new languages of the world (Isa 11:2-3; Ex 35:30-35) harmed their early endeavors in preaching and teaching in cross-cultural settings.

Apologetics in Buddhism and Islam

Alongside preaching and teaching, apologetics has been a mainstay in Evangelical witness to unbelievers. Another form of Word ministry, it centred on logic, persuasion, and argumentation to argue against philosophical or truth claims in the Quran or the Lotus Sutra. In such encounters, apologetics has usually occurred at the academic level (among university students), missionary encounters (as challenges to local Buddhist priests or the Muslim *ustaz*³¹) or among enthusiastic lay Christians confronting their friends with such arguments. Whether at the high or lay levels, some (but not many) have come to Christ. One reason is that the typical apologetic encounter introduced by Westerners to the Asian setting is based on face-to-face confrontations, which Asians generally dislike. Another is that the apologetics approach is seen as relationally “cold.” In my early days of engaging Buddhists, I often presented and *argued* for the truths and the merits of the gospel by trying to expose the contradictory logic in Buddhist beliefs. However, despite many such attempts, my approach did not win them over, nor came to Christ.

Here, understanding the concept of *upāya* in Buddhism can help us better communicate with Buddhists. *Upāya* is a skillful use of means of communication in Buddhism that is “gentle in that it evaluates the capacities of the listener and adapts its presentation so that it can be understood and received.”³² Here, a Scripture comes to mind: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. *But do this with gentleness and respect*” (1 Pet 3:15, italics mine). The missiologist Matthias Zahniser suggests that a meekness (not weakness) approach towards non-Christians helps us to trust in the Spirit’s works “to open our minds, our lives, and ourselves so we can learn more from [Buddhists and] by doing so, both their lives and ours will reach a point of unity where we can begin to understand,

³¹ A formal Muslim teacher.

³² Russell H. Bowers, Jr., “Gentle Strength and *Upāya*: Christian and Buddhist Ministry Models,” in *Sharing Jesus Effectively in the Buddhist World*, edited by David Lim, Steve Spaulding and Paul de Neui (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2005), 147. We should note that Bowers discusses this in the context of Thai Buddhism.

love, and help each other” in a “close encounters of the vulnerable kind.”³³

While not many Pentecostals are drawn to apologetics as a form of outreach, they would do well to learn this way of engaging with the world religions, even if few come to Christ. If we are doubtful, scattered and individual testimonies of Buddhists and Muslims coming to Christ do occur (e.g., notably the Muslim convert Nabeel Qureshi). Due to the popularity of such prominent stories in the public sphere, they continue to generate great interest to this mode of ministry. Here is an important theological point — Pentecostals must be open and discerning as to how the Spirit moves to see how God may draw unbelievers to Christ in different ways that we do not originally envision because we are told that “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (Jn 3:8).

If few Pentecostals are interested in apologetics, fewer have expressed interest in textual engagements (such as the Quran or Lotus Sutra) with the world religions. Here, Pentecostals can learn from Evangelicals, with their interest in Word ministries, who excel in engagements with the Quran as an example.³⁴

Last but not least, while more Evangelical Christians have engaged in dialogue with Buddhists and Muslims,³⁵ fewer Pentecostal/Charismatics have done so.³⁶ A main reason is that the P/C sensibility is “strongly suspicious of non-Christian religions,” preferring to evangelize the unsaved and expel the demonic in unbelievers.³⁷

³³ Bowers, “Gentle Strength,” 152.

³⁴ See Gordon D. Nickel, *The Quran with Christian Commentary: A Guide to Understanding the Scripture of Islam* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020).

³⁵ See the “A Common Word Between Us and You” at <https://www.acommonword.com> and the Fuller Seminary dialogues with Muslims at <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/christian-muslim-dialogues/>

³⁶ Among the exceptions are Amos Yong and Kang San Tan (a Malaysian mission theologian, who is a Baptist). See Amos Yong, *Pneumatology and the Christian-Buddhist Dialogue: Does the Spirit Blow Through the Middle Way?* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2012). However, when Malaysian or Indonesian Pentecostals have dialogued with Muslims or Buddhists, they do so to foster understanding and space for religious freedom whilst living in a context of Muslim sociopolitical domination.

³⁷ Northcott, “A Survey,” 276.

Modes of the Spirit in Power Ministry

The mode of power in and through the Spirit is well recognized in Scripture (Zech 4:6; Luke 4:18; Acts 1:8) and in P/C ministry compared to all other strands of Christianity as evident in ministries of prayer, prophecy and healing within local churches, as well as overseas missions.³⁸ This mode is expressed most typically in prayer, healing and exorcism but it also emerges through believers or prophets who have been gifted the ability to prophesy (Acts 11:27-28) or interpret dreams for unbelievers (Dan 2:47; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17).³⁹

Prayer in Buddhism and Islam

Among Buddhists and Muslims, there is always a search for power to obtain healing, good fortune or seek protection from malevolent forces. Buddhists see prayer as a form of devotion or search to empty and “find” oneself or seek help from Buddha or a *bodhisatva* in order to gain more merit to become enlightened.⁴⁰ On the other hand, Muslims pray in order to fulfill one of the pillars of Islam (i.e., pray *five times daily*) and gain favour with Allah. By doing so, they become better Muslims.

However, a deeper examination shows that while Buddhists and Muslims use prayer as a *tool* to achieve desired ends or to fulfill a (personal) devotion, the root of Christian prayer is Matthew 22:37, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” We are to seek God first and foremost to worship and to love him before seeking to get one’s desires fulfilled.

If Christians begin with this central focus, our engagement with Buddhists can center on helping them to find meaning in *giving over* or *losing oneself* to Christ instead of them merely emptying one’s self. With this understanding of prayer, we can relate similarities but also dissimilarities in relation to Buddhism’s notion of self-emptying. By voicing one’s prayers to God before Buddhists and inviting them to do likewise, we invite them to understand and experience what true

³⁸ Allan H. Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 145-170; Rick Love, *Muslims, Magic and the Kingdom of God: Church Planting Among Folk Muslims* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2000).

³⁹ John Cheong, “Dream Encounters in Christian and Islamic Societies and its Implications for Christian Ministry and Mission,” *Global Missiology* 1, no. 3 (October 2005): 1-20.

⁴⁰ Keith Yandell and Harold Netland, *Buddhism: A Christian Exploration and Appraisal* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 110.

salvation and enlightenment means in prayer: “For whoever wants to *save their life* will lose it, but whoever *loses their life for me* will find it” (Matt 16:25); “For me to live is Christ and *to die is gain*” (Phil 1:21). Here, prayer is more than a tool to achieve something, but a way to find true one’s true self and rest in the worship of Christ.

For Muslims, their prayer practices have mostly been done in to fulfilling a religious duty. In reality, it is common to see Muslims only praying once or a few times (instead of five times) daily. When duty, not love, drives Muslims to pray, it becomes an obligatory chore. However, Christians who can display and live out a life of prayer that displays how a love for God drives Christian prayer, it becomes a powerful statement and demonstration of faith. In addition, when we also pray *for them* over their needs, prayer becomes a powerful connection of love as well.⁴¹ In fact, stories abound of Muslims who have come to Christ through Christians who have lovingly prayed for them and found that God does indeed answer prayers. In this way, prayer *for* Muslims and *with* Muslims is not merely a petition to God to hear us, but collaterally functions as a form of evangelistic witness when we pray openly for them. By praying *all the time* (1 Thess 5:17) (and not merely five times a day in Islam) and showing our trust in God, we show Muslims how God relates to us in real ways — to love, bless and grow us.

Healing and Exorcism in Buddhism and Islam

Among Buddhists and Muslims (particularly among the folk religionists), prayer is also done for healing, good health and spiritual protection. One particular concern has been to seek protection or escape from demonic spirits that harass them.⁴²

In Buddhism, there is no notion of good nor evil demons — all entities are in search for a better karma. Thus, Buddhists should neither worship nor fear them though demon stories and imagery are often evoked in daily conversions to compel Buddhists towards a better life.⁴³ Consequently, Buddhists live with a mindset they are benign but with existential tensions of them.

⁴¹ Cheong, “Relating Islamic.”

⁴² Bill Musk, “Angels and Demons in Folk Islam,” in *Angels and Demons: Perspectives and Practice in Diverse Religious Traditions*, edited by Peter G. Riddell and Beverly Smith Ridell (Nottingham, UK: Apollos, 2007), 190-206.

⁴³ Gail Hinich Sutherland, “Demons and the Demonic in Buddhism,” *Oxford Bibliographies*, accessed September 2, 2024, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780195393521/obo-9780195393521-0171.xml>.

In Islam, the devil and its demons are considered real, as well as *jinn*s (spirits that can cause harm or good).⁴⁴ It is not uncommon to hear ordinary Muslims speak of such spirits troubling them or for Muslims to be demon possessed, leading them to seek protection (or to be exorcised) from them.

In addition, prayer for healing from sickness are commonly found among Buddhists and Muslims as well. In Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, it is common to see churches holding prayer and healing rallies where many Buddhists have come to Christ.

All of the above show us that Christians who trust in the name of Christ and the power of the Spirit to deliver non-believers from evil spirits or for protection have in almost all cases led to many Buddhists and Muslims toward Christ as Savior. This defining ministry feature in Pentecostalism is perhaps one of the strongest reasons why many in Majority World settings have turned to Christ because such prayers for healing and deliverance highly resonates with them. Christians who thus minister accordingly will continue to find fruitful grounds for evangelism and mission.

Conclusion

This article has endeavored to show how understanding the modes of the Spirit among different strands of Christianity informs a more expansive Spirit-empowered mission with a wider sense of engagement with the world religions. While Pentecostalism has seen great growth and many miraculous transformations and conversions among unbelievers in the world, its overreliance on the power mode can limit the full breadth of how the Spirit can flow through different ministries and their expressions. I have also attempted to explain reasons for such success as well as its failures when use of some specific modes dissonate with the world religions.

If we can understand how Buddhists and Muslims practice their faith in specific ways and seek to engage them in ways that resonate with them in the above ways, new inroads will occur. However, even though we now better understand how some modes of engagement resonate while others dissonate with Buddhists or Muslims, wisdom and trust in the Spirit's leading is always necessary to discern the best approach lest we reduce everything to a formula.

⁴⁴ Bill Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam: Sharing the Gospel with Ordinary Muslims at Street Level* (London: Monarch, 2004).

A final lesson from this discussion is that P/C believers will benefit by learning from the theology and practices of fellow believers from different strands of Christianity. This paper has also shown how even though different denominations emphasize different modes of the Spirit, they are no less Spirit-filled or Spirit-led. There is sometimes a tendency among P/C Christians to assume that the best and fullest expressions of the Spirit are found among ourselves but this article shows how other branches of Christianity and their ministry modes are places where the Spirit flows in specific ways that are also powerful and enabling of God to work unbelievers for the purpose of his mission. The sooner that P/C Christians can learn from and incorporate these elements into its own, the less triumphalistic, the more humble and charitable we can work with others in the unity of the Spirit (Eph 4:4) so that unity itself becomes another form of Christian witness to unbelievers (Jn 17:21-23).

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Jun Kim is a Korean Pentecostal scholar and currently serves as the Academic Dean at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary and Vice-president of the Asia Pentecostal Society. Since 2004, he and his wife, Jane C. Kim, have been missionaries in the Philippines.



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Reviews

Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies, eds. *The Holy Spirit, Spirituality and Leadership: Essays in Honor of Younghoon Lee*. Oxford: Regnum Books, 2024. 313 pp.

The book comprises twenty essays from twenty-one distinguished scholars and Christian leaders around the globe honoring Younghoon Lee for his years of service to the Lord. It highlights his spiritual formation, challenges, ministerial training, Spirit-empowered leadership, and his impact on global Pentecostalism. Holy Spirit, spirituality, and leadership form the three main themes, but the editors divided them into leadership and spirituality, with the Holy Spirit as Lee's influencer. Part One has twelve essays focusing on the Holy Spirit and Spirituality, but an excerpt from Myung Soo Park preceded it. Part two has eight essays focusing on the Holy Spirit and leadership.

Myung Soo Park's excerpt on "Younghoon Lee and Korean Christianity" begins with the emergence of Yoido Full Gospel Church (YFGC), Yonggi Cho's stepping down, and Younghoon Lee's succession. He discusses Lee's ministerial training, past experiences, theology, relationship with Pastor Yonggi Cho, the church's expansion, ministry influence, challenges, and the principles that guide his leadership, including his global involvement and strong connection with Pentecostal scholars and seminary schools. This is followed by the "Bibliography of Younghoon Lee," compiled by Ho Sung Kim, comprising Lee's preaching and Academic books, other books, articles, and presentations.

Section one addresses Younghoon Lee's personal testimony, "The Void Pastor David Yonggi Cho Left, Too Large to Be Filled." It begins with his father's introduction to Cho by his grandfather, his experience serving under him, Cho's resignation, and his election to replace him. Lora Angeline Timenia's essay on "The Spirit and Moral Fortitude: Understanding the Spirit's Role in Luke's Temptation Narrative" follows. Timenia explains Luke's theology of the Holy Spirit, asserting that Luke's Spirit narrative on Christ's temptation signifies that the Spirit grants "prophetic anointing and reinforces moral fortitude." Next is Michael Welker's essay on "The Realism of the Working of God's Spirit

and the Revealing Power of the Biblical Book of Acts.” He explains the work of the Holy Spirit beyond the boundaries of the church, his perception of Younghoon Lee’s book on the Spirit movement in Korea, his reflection on the book of Acts in relation to the Holy Spirit, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the twentieth century.

The essay, “The Challenge of Demythologizing the Devil,” by Frank D Macchia, highlights the importance of the Pentecostal practice of casting out demons and the need to exercise caution with this practice. In “Simultaneous Prayer: A Pentecostal Perspective,” Robert Menzies discusses the powerful effect of Pentecostal simultaneous prayer and its impact on Yoido Full Gospel Church and Korean Christianity. Julie Ma presents “An Analytical Study of Holiness and Spirituality: Biblical and Practical Features,” describing the biblical foundations of holiness, its relativity to the Trinity, and various ways believers manifest their holiness and express their spiritual activities through worship, relationship, and healing. In his essay titled, “Digital Pneumatology: Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit in the Metaverse,” Alex Guichon Jun discusses the experience of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the digital world as well as in Live meetings.

In Opoku Onyinah’s essay, “The Church as a Healing Community: An African Perspective,” he expresses concerns over African healing communities’ embracing some unhealthy beliefs and practices of African Traditional religion, especially linking sicknesses to a supernatural cause, encouraging them to incorporate modern medicine with their divine healing. Hanna Larracas presented a study on “Pentecostal Glocal Ethics,” defining glocalization as a subset of social science and its distinctiveness from globalization within Pentecostalism. Amos Yong’s “Community Engagement after Pentecost: Apostolic Forays Then and Now” focuses on the book of Acts and how the Apostles stayed engaged with the disciples, the Hellenists, and all believers. In his “Divine Healing as a Characteristic of the Holy Spirit Movement in Korea,” Jun Kim asserts that Korea’s spiritual worldview enables Korean Christians to understand and embrace divine healing. J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu’s essay in “Contending for the Faith: Pentecostalism and the Reshaping of World Christianity” explores the impact of Pentecostalism in the church and its contribution to reshaping the Christian world today. Hwa Yung’s essay “Revival in the Borneo Jungles” describes multiple miraculous signs resulting in significant church growth.

Section two begins with Philip Jenkins’ essay, “Megachurches in Global/World Christianity: North and South,” describing the rise of

megachurches, their geographical location, and impact on global Christianity. Casley B. Asamoah and Jean-Daniel Plüss's essay titled, "Christianity Moving South-Walter Hollenweger's Propositions Revisited: A Conversation," addresses the shift of the heart of Christianity to the global South. In her essay, "The Significance of the Voice of the Spirit in Pentecostal Spirituality and Leadership in the Malaysian Assemblies of God," Eva Won Suk Kyun discusses the Voice of the Spirit (VOS) effect on Pentecostal spirituality and leadership in Malaysia's Assemblies of God and its contribution to church growth.

In his essay titled, "Asian Pentecostalism as a Growth Engine for Global Christianity: Potentials and Challenges," Wonsuk Ma highlights the significant role of Asian Pentecostalism in fueling the growth of Christianity worldwide and warns of the potential threats from "competitors," especially atheists, and agnostics. In his composition on Korean "Pentecostalism, Shamanism, and Intercultural Theology," Allan Anderson argues that the influence of beliefs and practices of traditional religion over Korean culture plays a significant role in Koreans' attraction to Pentecostalism. Cecil Robeck's essay "Yoido Full Gospel Church and Ecumenism" highlights the importance of continuous dialogue between Pentecostal and ecumenical denominations for the church's unity as one body of Christ. Ivan Satyavrata, in his article, "The 'Power Paradox' in Spiritual Leadership," warns of abuse and misuse of power in Pentecostal and Charismatic leadership, emphasizing that church leaders can use their power to impact others positively or negatively but must be mindful of accountability to God. The last contribution, "An Emmaus Walk with Ancient Mothers and Fathers: From the Sawdust Trail to the Ecumenical Patriarchate" by Harold D. Hunter, addresses dialogues between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Classical Pentecostals in an effort to unite both Pentecostals and the mainline denominations.

These are excellent contributions. Myung Park identified Younghoon Lee's Christian family background, his spiritual formation, ministerial training, four spiritual principles, connection with the mainstream Korean church community, and his established relationship with his predecessor as the key to his success in ministry in addition to being deeply rooted in the Korean mainstream church which made him a representative of the Korean church. Lora Timenia and Michael Welker's contribution signifies the Holy Spirit's guidance and empowerment, and Lee's determination to break denominational walls to bring Pentecostal and traditional Christianity into fellowship as one body. The works of Frank D Macchia, Robert Menzies, Julie Ma, and

Alex Guichon reflect Lee's belief, experiences of the work of the Holy Spirit, and practices of the Spiritual gifts. The essays of Opoku Onyinah, Amos Yong, Ju Kim, Hwa Yung, and Eva Suk Kyun reflect Lee as a Spiritual leader, prophet, healer, revivalist, and servant community leader. Alex Guichon Jun's essay reflects how technology has played a major role in Lee's ministry. Wonsuk Ma, Cecile Robeck, and Harold Hunter's essays reflect Lee's impact on Korean Christianity, the global Christian community, and his effort to reach across the aisle to unite the Christian community as one body in Christ.

The book's major strength is the diversity of contributors, which reflects the unity of faith much needed in Christianity today. Also applaudable is the hearing of female voices at the global level of Christianity. The selected topics speak to both the spiritual and physical aspects of Christianity. The essays are an excellent resource for learning and training ministers, students, and scholars aspiring to grow in their fields of service or study. It presents Younghoon Lee as a Spirit-empowered leader possessing multiple qualities worth emulating by other ministers. The content gives an insight into Pentecostal leadership and provokes scholarly discussions on the themes raised. The book demonstrates Younghoon Lee's Spirit-empowered servant leadership style. It is an excellent resource for anyone seeking to understand Pentecostalism and its intercultural identity. The diversity of the contributors showcases Pentecostal adaptability to every nation and tribe and is evidence of a Spirit-empowered movement.

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Douglas Petersen, Kong Hee, and Byron D. Klaus, eds. *Voices Loud and Clear*. Oxford: Regnum Books, 2024. 327 pp.

The book is a collection of contributions from multiple authors, compiled and edited by Kong Hee, Byron D. Klaus, and Douglas Petersen. The editors provide structure and guidance, with chapters written by various scholars and practitioners. The preface and introduction indicate that the book is a product of the Global Pentecostal Summit, drawing from voices within the Pentecostal movement. Kong Hee is a seasoned pastoral leader and the founder of City Harvest Church in Singapore. Byron D. Klaus, former president of

the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, MO, has contributed significantly to Pentecostal theology and global mission studies. Douglas Petersen is a distinguished scholar in Pentecostal studies with experience co-editing influential works on global Pentecostalism. Their combined expertise ensures a well-informed compilation of insights from the 2023 Summit held at City Harvest Church.

The book comprises reflections and theological expositions drawn from the Summit. It is structured around key themes in contemporary Pentecostalism, addressing missions, theology, and leadership globally. The editors present voices of Pentecostal leaders from various parts of the world, emphasizing the movement's growing influence beyond Western Christianity.

The introductory section provides a background on the Global Pentecostal Summit and the rationale behind the book's publication. The editors stress the importance of hearing from the Majority World Pentecostals and engaging in theological reflection that serves contemporary Church needs. They highlight Singapore's strategic location as a symbol of global Christianity's shifting center and underscore the influence of Pentecostalism in the Global South. By focusing on these regions, the book challenges traditional Western theological narratives and invites readers to appreciate the dynamic nature of Pentecostal thought and practice. The introduction emphasizes the Holy Spirit's role in guiding Pentecostalism while preserving its spiritual principles. It also reflects the Summit's intention to foster dialogue between scholars and practitioners, ensuring academic inquiry is grounded in lived Pentecostal experience.

The first section, "Words of Wisdom for Global Pentecostals," features sermons from the Summit's morning sessions. Brian Stiller and Paul Bendor-Samuel reflect on faith, unity, and the Holy Spirit's role in shaping Christian identity. Stiller's exegesis of Hebrews 11 underscores the tension between being rooted in the world and living as 'resident aliens.' He warns against becoming too comfortable in earthly structures and calls Pentecostals to maintain prophetic distance from political entanglements. Bendor-Samuel, drawing from Acts 2, discusses Pentecost's transformative power and its implications for mission and cultural diversity. He argues that the Church must embrace its role as a heterogeneous body reflecting the human experience.

The second section, "Foundational Considerations for Global Pentecostalism," addresses theological and leadership challenges. Frank Macchia's chapter on the Atonement and Pentecost argues that

Pentecost is the fruit of the Cross, where Christ's sacrifice makes the Spirit's outpouring possible. This theological link reinforces Pentecostal spirituality as characteristically missional and rooted in redemption.

Wonsuk Ma critiques the dominant, charismatic leadership model often seen in Pentecostal circles. While acknowledging its pioneering effectiveness, he warns of authoritarianism and a lack of accountability. He proposes a Spirit-empowered leadership model that prioritizes servant leadership, ethical integrity, and communal discernment.

Chapter 17 explores economic justice and Pentecostalism's role in social transformation. Contributors argue that Pentecostal churches, especially in the Majority World, are vital in advocating for equity, supporting marginalized groups, and driving sustainable development through faith-based initiatives.

"The Power of Testimony in Pentecostalism" underscores the importance of personal narratives and divine encounters. Testimonies function as evangelistic tools and strengthen faith. Contributors provide examples of how Pentecostals use storytelling to validate their spiritual experiences. The chapter also critiques over-reliance on personal experiences and urges doctrinal grounding to complement experiential faith.

Another chapter, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Social Justice," examines how Pentecostals engage with justice and advocacy. The authors show that the Holy Spirit empowers believers for community transformation. Examples include Pentecostal organizations involved in anti-trafficking and refugee advocacy. The chapter refutes the idea that Pentecostalism is solely spiritual and affirms its engagement with real-world injustices.

A standout chapter, "Empowered Women: Why and How the Full Participation of Women in Spirit-Empowered Ministry Strengthens Global Christianity," by Jacqueline Grey, addresses the role of women in ministry. It examines historical and contemporary dynamics, showing how Pentecostalism provides leadership opportunities for women despite cultural and theological barriers. Case studies illustrate the complex relationship between gender roles and leadership in different contexts.

The book's final chapters address ministry applications, including church growth, interfaith dialogue, and digital evangelism. These discussions emphasize Pentecostalism's adaptability in a changing world while maintaining theological integrity. The book concludes with reflections on the movement's future, encouraging a balance of continuity and innovation in faith practice.

The book enhances Pentecostal studies by amplifying Majority World voices and promoting contextually relevant theology. It bridges academic and practical ministry, addressing issues like justice and gender inclusion, and serves as a key resource on Pentecostalism's global impact. By fostering new conversations, the book helps shape the future of Pentecostal thought and practice. Ultimately, it affirms the significance of Spirit-led engagement with contemporary global challenges. It also deepens inquiry into Pentecostal studies and sparks new conversations about the movement's future and international influence.

One of the book's greatest strengths is its diverse authorship. Scholars and practitioners from various backgrounds provide rich insights into Pentecostalism's development. Each chapter contributes to a coherent narrative addressing theological and practical concerns.

The book is accessible to a broad audience. It maintains academic rigor while remaining readable for pastors, students, and lay leaders. Including sermons and reflections adds a pastoral dimension, making the work relevant beyond the educational field.

A potential weakness is that some chapters assume prior knowledge of Pentecostal theology. Readers unfamiliar with the field may find certain sections dense. Additionally, although the book centers on Majority World voices, it could have included more African Pentecostal scholars, given Africa's significant role in the movement's global expansion.

This book is an essential contribution to Pentecostal studies. It comprehensively views the movement's theological, social, and missional dimensions by gathering insights from global leaders and scholars. Its scope ensures relevance for academics, pastors, and laypeople alike. The book bridges academic study with ministry practice and reflects on Pentecostalism's direction in the modern world. It reinforces the importance of theological depth, social engagement, and Spirit-led leadership. This book is essential for anyone invested in Pentecostal thought and its continued development.

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Wonsuk Ma, Barry L. Saylor, Opoku Onyinah, Rebekah Bled, eds. *The New Generation and The Holy Spirit: Building a Spirit-Empowered Future*. Tulsa: ORU Press, 2024. ix-410 pp.

This volume was inspired by the 2022 annual Scholars consultation of Empowered21, which witnessed the unity of Pentecostal-Charismatic ministries from two prominent global networks. In light of the global change in the political and social landscape, the collected studies analyze the role of the Holy Spirit in the new generation within the “information age.” The volume’s editors include Wonsuk Ma, Opoku Onyinah, Barry L. Saylor, and Rebekah Bled. Ma is a Distinguished Professor of Global Christianity, the Executive Director of the Center for Spirit-Empowered Research at Oral Roberts University, and a Co-Chair of the Global Network of Spirit-Empowered Scholars. Onyinah also serves as Co-Chair, President of the Bible Society of Ghana, and instructor at Pentecostal University. Saylor is a senior researcher at OneHope, the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education Executive Director, and a Southeastern University faculty member. Bled is a PhD student at Oral Roberts University and serves in ministry.

An impressive collection of contributors is assembled from around the globe, such as Randy Clark, founder of Global Awakening; Clayton Coombs, Academic Dean of Planetshakers College; Ron Luce, whose ministry has reached over 80,000 youth across the globe, and various other authors with unique perspectives of the new generation. The volume is segmented into three parts to establish themes of foundational teaching, preservation and outreach of the new generation, and formation and empowerment.

Part one lays the foundation for Spirit-empowered ministry to the new generation. Randy Clark begins with his Keynote Address. He argues that God has used young people in each generation to bring revival and urges his audience to focus on Holy Spirit-empowered ministry. He supports his claim through biblical, historical, contemporary, and personal examples. Barry Saylor and Patricia Savage advocate in chapter three for expanding youth culture research beyond the West to gain a broadened understanding of the ‘global generation.’ Their study collects data from thousands of global teenagers to analyze habits, struggles, and influences.

Part two includes themes of preserving and reaching the new generation. Caroline Polly Tjihenuna begins by analyzing the Pentecostal movement and its contextualization in Namibia, specifically amongst the Born-Free generation. She notes the role of social engagement in

meeting physical and spiritual needs. Ulrik Josefsson and Fredrik Wenell analyze the changing landscape of Christianity within Swedish society and how young adults within conservative and charismatic congregations relate to the observed shift.

Part three explores the formation and empowerment of the new generation. Antipas Harris argues that despite their opposition to religion, Gen Z has a “spiritual hunger” searching for spiritual, technological, social-psychological, and personal-communal meaning. An analysis of four cases in the Netherlands, USA, Ghana, and Singapore suggests the complexities of the current faith crisis while supporting the potential of Gen Z to engage in a revolution of faith. Caleb Nyanni analyzes the formation of a new type of Pentecostalism amongst second-generation Africans in the West, discussing its nature and contributions to the change of global Christianity. Charles Prempeh continues in chapter twelve to argue for the reinterpretation of the covenant within social environments while maintaining the covenant’s integrity. His claim is supported by a socio-historical study of the Church of Pentecost and the Onyinah reformation.

Chaa and Michio Ogino analyze the phenomena of *bikikomori* within a local Pentecostal church in Japan to understand supportive efforts and problems while utilizing 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 to develop a theory and practice. Tan Seow How and Cecilia Chan present a unique perspective of Generation S and the characterization of generations using a three-to-five-year age gap. They draw upon their two decades of ministry experience to convey its effectiveness in cultivating a strong and young church. Alexander Stavnichuk and Jean-Daniel Plüss advocate for shaping theology based upon Christian creativity, innovation, and embracing the world. Stavnichuk’s analysis is developed by an ecumenical theology that encourages daily sensitivity to the Holy Spirit and uses Plüss to assess European contributions to the reformulation of Pentecostal theology.

The study brings together diverse perspectives from around the globe that reflect the changing religious landscape from the Global North to the Global South. It is significant for scholars and practitioners, contributes a global perspective of the complexities of the new generation, and advocates for the necessary adjustments that need to be made by the church to progress into the future and stay relevant. Based on lived experiences, the study gives practical applications for the global church to reverse the decline apparent in the Global North and support the rising efforts of the Global South.

The array of scholarship is notable and presented through a cohesive progression of articles that correlate common themes of the intersection of Pentecostalism and the rising generation. Each author's expertise is highlighted throughout each article and conveyed through well-written and articulated explanations and claims. However, the collection could have more thoroughly highlighted the importance of social engagement to the new generation by including contributions from prominent movements such as anti-trafficking, #metoo, and racial reconciliation. The collection also could have included a contribution from a student within a Pentecostal University, such as Oral Roberts University, to amplify the generation's voice and perspective, further illustrating the themes of the volume. However, despite these missing contributions, the collection presents a strong argument and challenges leaders within the Spirit-empowered movement to engage the new generation through the power of the Holy Spirit to advance the Kingdom of God.

The diversity of scholarship within the collection is representative of global Christianity and promotes the voices of Christians from all regions of the earth. Its practical applications are relevant to today's leaders. They should be read by anyone wishing to reverse the decline of Christianity in the West and appreciate its advancement in the Global South. Globalization is rapidly impacting the present political and social landscape. Ministers must understand these changes so their ministries can adapt to an ever-progressing future. Further study could be done to compare the present generation to that of the Jesus Movement, which also experienced a world characterized by chaos and desired a revolution of faith.

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