

CATHOLICS AND PENTECOSTALS: TROUBLED HISTORY, NEW INITIATIVES

THOMAS P. RAUSCH, S.J.

Catholics and Pentecostals in their various expressions—classical, charismatic, and Neo-Pentecostal—constitute about 75 percent of the total number of Christians today. And Pentecostals continue to grow in number. While the relations between the two traditions have often been troubled and serious theological differences remain, particularly in the area of ecclesiology, Pentecostals are beginning to show a new interest in ecumenism, and new initiatives on both sides are promising.

A “NEW REFORMATION” is how Philip Jenkins in his *The New Christendom* has referred to the amazing expansion of Pentecostal communities across the southern hemisphere.¹ Some speak of a third wave in the history of Christianity.² If the first wave is represented by the historic churches of the first millennium, the second wave is constituted by the confessional churches of the Reformation, while the third wave is represented by the evangelical, charismatic, and, above all, Pentecostal communities. In the process of this expansion of Pentecostalism, much of the dynamism of Christianity is moving to the Southern Hemisphere.

Pentecostal Christians grew from 74 million in 1970 to an estimated 497 million by 1997, an increase of 670 percent.³ According to Pentecostal historian Cecil Robeck, the Pentecostal Movement today in its various

THOMAS P. RAUSCH, S.J., received his Ph.D. from Duke University and is now the T. Marie Chilton Professor of Catholic Theology at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles. Specializing in ecclesiology, Christology, and ecumenism, he has recently published three monographs: *Educating for Faith and Justice: Catholic Higher Education Today* (2010); *Pope Benedict XVI: An Introduction to His Theological Vision* (2009); and *I Believe in God: A Reflection on the Apostles' Creed* (2008). He is currently researching the relationship between liturgy and ecclesiology.

¹ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: University, 2002) 7.

² Walter Kasper used this term to describe evangelicals, charismatics, and especially Pentecostals in his “The Current Ecumenical Transition,” *Origins* 36 (2006) 407–14, at 411.

³ See Robert J. Schreiter, “The World Church and Its Mission: A Theological Perspective,” *Proceedings of the Canon Law Society of America* 59 (1997) 47–60, at 49–50.

expressions—Classical Pentecostal denominations, Second Wave Charismatics, and Neo-Pentecostals, among them the African Instituted Churches—represents roughly 25 percent of the world's Christians.⁴ Estimates for all those associated with Pentecostalism range from 500 to 600 million.⁵ Of the world's 2.1 billion Christians, Roman Catholics number over one billion. That means that Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, and Charismatics together amount to close to 75 percent of the total number of Christians in the world. And Pentecostals continue to grow.

What is this Pentecostal movement, flourishing from homes and storefronts to mega-churches across the globe? I will consider here the origins of Pentecostalism in the Azusa Street Mission in 1906, the often troubled relations between Pentecostals and Roman Catholics, especially in Latin America, and the question of Pentecostals and ecumenism, including some new Pentecostal initiatives.

THE AZUSA STREET MISSION

The modern Pentecostal movement traces its origins to a revival that grew out of a largely African-American prayer group in Los Angeles in early 1906, though there were earlier expressions of Pentecostal charisms in Topeka, Kansas, and Houston, Texas, where Charles Parham had been ministering.⁶ On April 9 at the home of Richard and Ruth Asberry at 214

⁴ Cecil M. Robeck Jr., "The Holy Spirit and the Unity of the Church: The Challenge of Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Independent Movements," in *The Holy Spirit, the Church, and Christian Unity: Proceedings of the Consultation held at the Monastery of Bose, Italy, 14–20 October, 2002*, ed. Doris Donnelly, Adelbert Denaux, and Joseph Famerée (Leuven: Leuven University, 2005) 353–82, at 354; Robeck, "The Holy Spirit and the Unity of the Church: The Challenge of Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Independent Movements," *Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium*, Series 3, 181 (2004) 353–81, at 354; see also Harding Meyer, "Pneumatology in Bilateral Dialogues: Attempt at a Descriptive Presentation," *Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium*, Series 3, 181 (2004) 177–97; and David B. Barrett and T. M. Johnson, "Global Statistics," in *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements*, ed. S. M. Burgess (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002) 286–87.

⁵ The number 600 million comes from Michael E. Putney, "Commentary on the Report," *On Becoming a Christian: Insights from Scripture and the Patristic Writings; with Some Contemporary Reflections; Report of the Fifth Phase of the International Dialogue between Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and the Catholic Church (1998–2006)*, PCPCU Information Service 129 (2008/III) 216–26, at 216. *On Becoming a Christian* is available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/eccl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20060101_becoming-a-christian_en.html (accessed May 13, 2010).

⁶ See James R. Goff Jr., *Fields White unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 1988).

(now 216) North Bonnie Brae Street, members of this group led by William Seymour, a former student of Parham's, who had recently arrived in Los Angeles, suddenly began to speak and sing in tongues. Those present were convinced that they had been visited by the Holy Spirit. The group began attracting new members and within a few days moved to an abandoned African Methodist Episcopal Church at 312 Azusa Street.⁷

Thus was born the Azusa Street Mission. It was extraordinary in a number of ways. First, those coming to the Mission rejoiced in extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, including an ecstatic form of worship. Second, though it originated in an African-American prayer meeting in a still segregated Los Angeles, the congregation was soon interracial, with blacks and whites praying and singing together. Third, from its beginnings the movement spread like wildfire. Within six months, members and others interested in the Azusa Mission had founded several new congregations in Los Angeles and its environs. Its participants held meetings in neighboring communities, often in tents or rented storefronts. By September its evangelists had traveled from San Diego to Seattle, by December they were active across the country, and at least 13 missionaries had been sent to Africa. In the next two years the movement spread to Mexico, Canada, Europe, Africa, even to Northern Russia.

Naturally the movement was controversial, with its emphasis on miraculous healings, prophecy, and speaking in tongues. Robeck cites a not very sympathetic article from the *Los Angeles Herald* at the time:

All classes of people gathered in the temple last night. There were big Negroes looking for a fight, there were little fairies dressed in dainty chiffon who stood on the benches and looked on with questioning wonder in their baby-blue eyes. There were cappers from North Alameda Street, and sedate dames from West Adams Street. There were all ages, sexes, colors, nationalities and previous conditions of servitude. The rambling old barn was filled and the rafters were so low that it was necessary to stick one's nose under the benches to get a breath of air.

It was evident that nine out of every ten persons present were there for the purpose of new thrills. This was a new kind of show in which the admission was free—they don't even pass the hat at the Holy Rollers' meeting—and they wanted to see every act to the drop of the curtain. They stood on benches to do it. When a bench wasn't handy they stood on each other's feet.⁸

Mainline Protestant pastors also denounced the movement, one of them publicly declaring that the mission's adherents were nothing more than “a

⁷ See Cecil M. Robeck Jr., *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2006) 64–69.

⁸ *Ibid.* 1.

disgusting amalgamation of African voodoo superstition and Caucasian insanity” that would soon pass away.⁹

The pastor of the Azusa Street Mission, William Joseph Seymour, was born in 1870 and baptized in the Roman Catholic Church. Exposed to various traditions growing up, he was an African American, the son of former slaves. As a young man he traveled to Indianapolis where in 1905 he became involved in the Wesleyan Holiness Movement, studying briefly with Charles Parham, the founder of the Apostolic Faith Movement. Sitting in the hallway because the segregation laws of the time would not allow him inside, Parham taught Seymour about “baptism in the Holy Spirit” as a new empowerment and later coached him in his preaching. When Seymour was invited to Los Angeles to pastor a small storefront mission at 1604 East Ninth Street, Parham originally tried to dissuade him from going, but Seymour insisted and arrived in Los Angeles on February 22, 1906. When his initial sponsor, uncomfortable with his emphasis on baptism in the Spirit, rejected him, he was invited to stay with Edward and Mattie Lee in their tiny home, where he prayed with them and drew others to what became a prayer meeting. By the middle of March the rapidly growing meeting moved, first to the home on Bonnie Brae and then to the building on Azusa Street.

Though Pentecostals argue that ecstatic phenomena such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, and healing were common in the early church, a more recent antecedent to Pentecostalism was the Wesleyan Holiness Movement, which had influenced Parham. He is credited with the doctrine of tongues as evidence of baptism in the Spirit, but he was later rejected by most North American Pentecostals because, among other reasons, he taught that tongues were really foreign languages (*xenolalia*), given for the sake of mission. There were other antecedents as well. Some point to Britain in the 1830s and Scottish Presbyterian pastor Edward Irving, who started the Catholic Apostolic Church, and to other eruptions of the charismatic gifts in Wales, India, Korea, the United States, and elsewhere in the late 19th or early 20th centuries.¹⁰

As the movement spread it gave birth to new denominations. In the Los Angeles area the West Angeles Church of God in Christ, the Cathedral of Faith, the City of Refuge, Faithful Central Bible Church, and the Church on the Way trace their origin to the Azusa Mission. Others include the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church, the Church of God in Christ, the Church

⁹ “New Religions Come, Then Go,” *Los Angeles Herald*, September 24, 1906; cited by Robeck, “The Holy Spirit and the Unity of the Church” 353.

¹⁰ See Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University, 2004) 19–38; for a history of Pentecostalism see Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997); Donald W. Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury, 1987).

of God (Cleveland, Tenn.), the Pentecostal Holiness Church in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, the Free-Will Baptist churches (which, by embracing tongues and miracles, became Pentecostal Free-Will Baptist churches), as well as later churches or denominations such as the Assemblies of God (now with more than 50 million members), the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, the United Pentecostal Churches, the Vineyard Christian Fellowship, Victory Outreach, La Asamblea Apostólica de la Fé en Cristo Jesús, and the Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ.¹¹

The movement's influence has been felt around the world. It has exploded in Latin America, drawing hundreds of thousands of Catholics into its congregations. In South Africa during the apartheid era, blacks and "coloreds" looked to the racial equality of the Azusa Mission (though unfortunately its inclusivity did not last long). Today many African churches are Pentecostal or charismatic in practice. The African Instituted Churches are strongly Pentecostal, many of them with Pentecostal founders, or are offshoots of churches founded during the colonial period in the classical Pentecostal tradition. And in Asia, the fastest growing churches in South India, Indonesia, China, South Korea, and the Philippines are Pentecostal.¹²

As the movement grew it took on different expressions, though how they should be characterized is not always apparent.¹³ D. B. Barrett and T. M. Johnson speak of three waves of the Pentecostal renewal: classical Pentecostals, Charismatics, and Neocharismatics.¹⁴ First wave Pentecostals, represented by the classical Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God, place a priority on conversion, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the charismatic gifts, especially tongues, traditionally seen as "initial evidence" of Spirit baptism. The second wave is represented by Christians from non-Pentecostal denominations involved in the Charismatic Movement, beginning with Pentecostal influences appearing in some mainline Protestant churches in the 1950s and in the birth of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in 1967.¹⁵ Without rejecting conversion and the charismatic

¹¹ See Robeck, *Azusa Street Mission* 10–11.

¹² See Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang, *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 2003) 13.

¹³ Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism* 10–15.

¹⁴ Barrett and Johnson, "Global Statistics" 290–91; see also C. P. Wagner, "Third Wave," *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements* 1141.

¹⁵ On the Catholic Charismatic Renewal see Thomas P. Rausch, "The Azusa Street Revival and the Historic Churches," in *The Azusa Street Revival and Its Legacy*, ed. Harold D. Hunter and Cecil M. Robeck Jr. (Cleveland, Tenn.: Pathway, 2006) 349–62 at 350–51; also Edward L. Cleary, "The Catholic Charismatic Renewal: Revitalization Movements and Conversion," in *Conversion of a Continent: Contemporary Religious Change in Latin America*, ed. Timothy J. Steigenga and Edward L. Cleary (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University, 2007) 153–73.

gifts, second wave Charismatics place more emphasis on healing and—especially in Latin America—exorcisms. They are also more likely to participate in politics.

The third wave, referred to as Neo-Pentecostal or Neocharismatics, includes evangelicals and other Christians who no longer identify with the Pentecostal or charismatic renewals but stress Spirit empowerment and other Pentecostal phenomena; this wave also embraces independent and indigenous churches that do not identify themselves as either Pentecostal or charismatic. Concerned with a struggle against evil spirits and the devil, they stress miraculous cures, exorcisms, and many preach the “prosperity gospel.” Some offer the faithful anointed objects said to have miraculous healing powers; others stress tithing, sacrifices, or making “pacts” with God in order to receive divine blessings.¹⁶

Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, after a four-year study of global Pentecostalism in which they visited 20 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe, identify five types of Pentecostalism, though they acknowledge that the distinctions are not always clear-cut in practice. Classical Pentecostalism includes denominations such as the Assemblies of God, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, the Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.), the Church of God in Christ, and many smaller Pentecostal denominations. A second type is indigenous denominations without any connection to North America, such as the Winners’ Chapel in Nigeria and the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Brazil. A third expression is constituted by independent Neo-Pentecostal churches that frequently resist becoming denominations. While their pastors often lack seminary training, they are often charismatic and use market-savvy techniques to attract teens and young adults who did not grow up in the Pentecostal tradition. Miller and Yamamori see such pastors as representing the cutting edge of the Pentecostal movement. A fourth expression is identified with the charismatic renewal, whether Protestant or Catholic, and includes churches associated with the Vineyard Fellowship. Finally, a fifth category includes those “proto-charismatic Christians” who lack roots in traditional Pentecostalism but affirm many of the experiences central to the lives of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians.¹⁷

Some theologians argue that these Neo-Pentecostal churches or “neo-Pentecostals” spreading in Latin America have little connection to classical Pentecostalism or the historic Protestant tradition, with little or no

¹⁶ R. Andrew Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil: The Pentecostal Book and the Pathogens of Poverty* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University, 1997) 80–84; Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism* 73.

¹⁷ Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Los Angeles: University of California, 2007) 25–28.

emphasis on Reformation principles such as *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide*.¹⁸ Many use business strategies and mass marketing techniques to reach their goals as well as “the offer of material prosperity, help so that people will ‘feel good’, and the emphasis on entertainment,”¹⁹ and they are often the first to incorporate aspects of contemporary culture into their worship and managerial style.²⁰ Jean Pierre Bastian calls them “a religious mutation of Protestantism which took the shape of a popular religion of an emotional type.”²¹ Milton Acosta speaks of them as a “new form of post-, neo-Christianity” based on a convergence of popular Catholic religiosity with popular Protestant religiosity.²² Similarly the “New Pentecostal Churches” in Africa, with their prosperity message, tap deeply into traditional African religions that stress malevolent powers and the efficacy of ritual action; “when prosperity is lacking, African church leaders most commonly explain it by pointing to demonic forces, curses, and witchcraft rather than to an individual’s sin.”²³

In their study Miller and Yamamori challenge three myths about Pentecostalism. First, Pentecostal worship services are not for the most part chaotic expressions of enthusiasm, but are usually carefully orchestrated. Second, despite Pentecostalism’s origins among lower class, marginalized people, today the movement is attracting the more affluent and educated as well. Third, not all Pentecostals are so “heavenly minded” that they are unconcerned about this world. Miller and Yamamori find that an emergent group of Pentecostal churches with a growing middle class is concerned with community-based social ministry. This means that Pentecostal eschatology is changing, moving away from expectations of the imminent return of Christ, and some have begun to think about social issues structurally.²⁴ The two researchers focused on these progressive Pentecostals, excluding those in the prosperity gospel movement or aligned with right wing governments.

¹⁸ Milton Acosta, “Power Pentecostalism: The ‘Non-Catholic’ Latin American Church Is Going Full Steam Ahead—But Are We on the Right Track?,” *Christianity Today* 53.8 (August 2009) 40–42; among those who see little connection between these “neo-Pentecostalism” and historic Protestantism, Acosta includes Arturo Piedra, José Míguey Bonino, and Jean-Pierre Bastian.

¹⁹ C. René Padilla, “The Future of Christianity in Latin America: Missiological Perspectives and Challenges,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 23 (1999) 106.

²⁰ Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism* 217.

²¹ Jean Pierre Bastian, “De los Protestantismos históricos a los Pentecostalismos Latino-Americanos: Análisis de una mutación religiosa,” *Revista ciencias sociales* 16 (2006) 38–54, at 38.

²² Acosta, “Power Pentecostalism” 40.

²³ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, “Did Jesus Wear Designer Robes?” *Christianity Today* 53.11 (November 2009) 38–41, at 40.

²⁴ Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism* 20–22.

They suggest somewhat tentatively that these progressive Pentecostals may at least partially fill the void left by a moribund social gospel movement and the declining influence of liberation theology. They note that while liberation theologians tend to use images of opposition, conflict, and struggle, reflecting the movement's Marxist origins, Pentecostal imagery tends to be more organic in tone, stressing that Christians are part of one body and that the kingdom of God will be realized as people purify their conscience and discover God's purpose for their lives. They repeat a comment often heard in Latin America, that "Liberation Theology opted for the poor at the same time that the poor were opting for Pentecostalism."²⁵ According to Paul Freston, both liberation theology and base communities are on the wane, while the Catholic charismatic renewal is often larger than the base communities.²⁶

PENTECOSTALS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS

Much of the remarkable Pentecostal growth has come at the expense of the Catholic Church, particularly in Latin America where Pentecostals constitute about 75 percent of non-Roman Catholic Christians. It is estimated that some 8,000 to 10,000 Catholics leave their church every day to join Pentecostal churches.²⁷ According to Harvey Cox, there are more Pentecostals at church on any given Sunday morning in Brazil than there are Catholics at Mass.²⁸ Allan Anderson says that present growth rates indicate that some Latin American countries could have a majority of "evangelicals," mostly Pentecostals, by 2010.²⁹ In nominally Catholic Cuba, Assemblies of God churches have increased from 90 ten years ago to 3,000 today.³⁰

²⁵ Ibid. 215; see also 4.

²⁶ Paul Freston, ed., *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Latin America* (New York: Oxford University, 2008) 13. Richard Shaull, a Princeton Theological Seminary theologian whose work anticipated the central themes of liberation theology, argued shortly before his death that the vitality of Christian base communities in Latin America is less evident today, and they seem to have lost their capacity to reproduce themselves, while Pentecostalism is able to transform the religious lives of the poor and marginalized by providing an experience of faith that makes them subjects, increasingly involved in various forms of social action. See Richard Shaull and Waldo Cesar, *Pentecostalism and the Future of the Christian Churches: Promises, Limitations, Challenges* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000) 210–12.

²⁷ See Brian H. Smith, *Religious Politics in Latin America: Pentecostal vs. Catholic* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1998) 2.

²⁸ See Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1995) 168.

²⁹ Allan Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism* 63.

³⁰ Jeremy Weber, "Cuba for Christ *Ahora*," *Christianity Today* 53.7 (July 2009) 20–29, at 22.

The U.S. Catholic Church has also seen significant losses. A recent study on Hispanic churches in the United States confirms Andrew Greeley's findings that one out of seven Hispanics left the Catholic Church in less than a quarter of a century, and that as many as 600,000 may be leaving every year. While the massive influx of Catholic Hispanic immigrants keeps the total number of Hispanic Catholics slightly above 70 percent, numbers among first-generation immigrants largely from still-Catholic Mexico drops from 74 percent to 72 and 62 percent in the second and third generations respectively. The percentage of Latino Protestants and other Christians increases from less than one in six (15 percent) among the first generation to one in five (20 percent) and almost one in three (29 percent) among the second and third generations.³¹

Evidence suggests that many Latino Catholics who convert to Pentecostalism later leave and end up not practicing any religion at all. According to Kurt Bowen's study on evangelicalism and apostasy in Mexico, 43 percent of adults in the second generation were no longer part of the evangelical world; while some returned to Catholicism or took up another faith, the great majority (41 percent) were simply nothing (*nada*). The dropouts were highest among Pentecostals.³² David Martin reports data from Chile indicating similar losses among evangelicals.³³ Though more research is needed on this question, if it is true that many who join Pentecostal communities eventually end up practicing no religion at all, it might make more sense from an evangelical perspective for Catholics and Pentecostals to try to support each other rather than work in competition.

This Pentecostal growth has led to considerable tension between the two communities. In addition to inherited prejudices and unhelpful stereotypes, one finds Catholic suspicion about an emphasis on divine interventions and miraculous healings, differences about evangelization, the nature of the church, and the role of tradition. Pentecostals frequently do not recognize

³¹ Gastón Espinosa, Virgilio Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda, "Hispanic Churches in American Public Life: A Summary of Findings," *Interim Reports* 2003.2 (March 2003) 15; latinostudies.nd.edu/cslr/research/pubs/HispChurchesEnglishWEB.pdf (accessed May 8, 2010); see also Andrew Greeley, "Defections among Hispanics," *America* 159.3 (July 30, 1988) 61–62; and Greeley, "Defections among Hispanics," *America* 177.8 (September 27, 1997) 12–13.

³² Kurt Bowen, *Evangelism and Apostasy: The Evolution and Impact of Evangelicals in Modern Mexico* (Buffalo, N.Y.: McGill-Queen's University, 1996) 70–71; the single most important factor in these "defections" was mixed marriages with Catholics (72); see also Gastón Espinosa, "The Impact of Pluralism on Trends in Latin American and U.S. Latino Religions and Society," *Perspectivas*, Hispanic Theological Initiative Occasional Paper Series 7, ed. Renata Furst-Lambert (Princeton, N.J.: Hispanic Theological Initiative, 2003) 14, 23.

³³ David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2002) 113.

the saving value of the Catholic Church and the sacraments and complain about what they experience as Catholic privilege. In addition, the diverse Pentecostal movement in Latin America embraces some anti-Catholic elements.

One point of tension is the question of where evangelization ends and proselytism begins. Many Pentecostals aggressively seek converts from those Catholics they regard as nominal Christians, baptized but neither really evangelized nor active in the life of the Church. Catholics respond that such attitudes are unfairly judgmental; they accuse Pentecostals of not honoring Catholic baptism, stressing instead the more experiential baptism in the Holy Spirit. At the same time, the Catholic Church in Latin America counts as Catholics the total number of persons baptized. The statistics suggest serious problems. While 85 percent of the Continent's inhabitants call themselves Catholic, only 70 percent are baptized, and only about 15 percent attend Sunday worship.³⁴ Thus scholars like David Martin contrast an established but no longer vital Catholicism with Pentecostalism, along with evangelical Christianity, which can be seen as "a first incursion of Christianity understood as a biblically-based and personally appropriated faith, propagated by a distinct body of committed believers."³⁵

Cardinal Walter Kasper argues that the challenge represented by Pentecostalism should move the Catholic Church toward a self-critical approach, asking why so many leave it and what they find in Pentecostal congregations.³⁶ Renate Poblete, a Chilean Jesuit, attributes the effectiveness of the Pentecostals to their emphasis on a subjective experience of God, something he says that Western theology has long lost sight of.³⁷ Miller and Yamamori point to Pentecostalism's worship as the engine driving the movement.³⁸ Walter Hollenweger ascribes its success in developing countries to its oral character, with its narrative theology and witness, ability to bring dreams and visions into worship, and maximum participation in public prayer and decision making.³⁹ Andrew Chesnut argues that "the dialectic between faith healing and illness in the conversion process is key

³⁴ Renato Poblete, "The Catholic Church and Latin America's Pentecostals," *Origins* 27 (1998) 717–21 at 718.

³⁵ David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1990) 289.

³⁶ Walter Kasper, "The Current Ecumenical Transition," *Origins* 36 (2006) 407–14, at 412.

³⁷ Poblete, "The Catholic Church and Latin America's Pentecostals" 719–20.

³⁸ Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism* 23–24.

³⁹ Walter J. Hollenweger, "The Pentecostal Elites and the Pentecostal Poor: A Missed Dialogue," in *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture*, ed. Karla Poewe (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1994) 200–14, at 201.

to understanding Pentecostalism's remarkable success among the poor" in Brazil and much of Latin America.⁴⁰

Yet, rather than learning from each other, Catholics and Pentecostals in Latin America have for too long engaged in polemics, relied on stereotypes, or simply ignored each other. Catholics too easily dismiss Pentecostal denominations as "sects,"⁴¹ accuse them of aggressive proselytism, and claim that they accept money from U.S. government sources. Pentecostals reject the Catholic Church as apostate and accuse Catholics of syncretism, even idolatry,⁴² a confusion aided by the use of *adorar* instead of *venerar* for the veneration of Mary and the saints in popular Spanish.

The causes for these tensions are deeply rooted and complex. Pentecostals often complain, not without reason, that they have long been persecuted by the Catholic Church and that in many Latin American countries the Catholic Church is privileged at the expense of Pentecostal and other Protestant communities. Catholic institutions and schools are often subsidized (Paraguay) or granted tax exempt status, while Protestant institutions are taxed (Nicaragua); public schools teach Catholic doctrine and morals (the Dominican Republic) or offer Catholic religion classes (Columbia and Chile), and national constitutions mention the special place of Catholicism (Bolivia). In Argentina and Chile, Catholic bishops have sought to have the state require legal registration of all non-Catholic churches because of the growth of Pentecostal churches. A 1992 initiative to amend the constitution in Bolivia to separate church and state and recognize all denominations as equal before the law was opposed by the official newspaper of the Archdiocese of La Paz.⁴³ Today the separation of church and state is increasing. According to Paul Freston, only Bolivia, Argentina, and Costa Rica still have an official religion, though Protestant churches in several other countries do not enjoy the same legal rights as those of the Catholic Church.⁴⁴

Catholics complain that many Pentecostals in Latin America are reluctant to recognize Catholics as Christians, claim that they belong to a false church, and aggressively proselytize them. One of the more extreme examples, *La Ingreja Universal do Reino de Deus*—IURD (the "Universal

⁴⁰ Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil* 23.

⁴¹ See Alta/Baja California Bishops, "Dimensions of a Response to Proselytism," *Origins* 19 (1990) 666–69, at 666.

⁴² See Luisa Jeter Walker, *Peruvian Gold* (Springfield, Mo.: Assemblies of God, Division of Foreign Missions, 1985) 19–20.

⁴³ See Smith, *Religious Politics in Latin America* 60–63; and Espinosa, "Impact of Pluralism" 41–42.

⁴⁴ Freston, *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Latin America* 16.

Church of the Kingdom of God”), the largest denomination in Brazil after the Assemblies of God, infuriated Catholics in 1995 when one of its bishops, Sergio von Helde, on Brazilian TV, kicked and desecrated a statue of Our Lady of Aparecida, Brazil’s patroness. Like some other “third wave” Neo-Pentecostal churches in Latin America and Africa, the IURD is an example of the “health and wealth churches,” preaching a radical prosperity gospel, and is said to be the fastest growing movement within Pentecostalism.⁴⁵ Now present in Europe, Southern Africa, and the United States, the IURD is syncretistic, mixing classic and modern Pentecostal beliefs and practices, emphasizing dramatic miracles and collective exorcisms (*libertação*), and integrating elements of both sacred and secular culture.⁴⁶

Pentecostal spokespersons argue that the Catholic Church should not confuse mainstream Pentecostal communities with more extreme expressions such as the IURD. But the autonomous and diverse character of the Pentecostal movement means that such movements remain under the broad Pentecostal umbrella. Furthermore, until recently the majority of Pentecostal pastors have not had formal theological training.⁴⁷ Prizing the priesthood of all believers and the Spirit’s empowerment, Pentecostals prepare charismatic leaders as pastors through apprenticeships, without long educational programs in seminaries or accredited Bible institutes; this helps explain the remarkable ability of the movement to rapidly plant new churches. Today this pattern is changing. Classical Pentecostalism has developed its own academic societies, journals, and a new generation of Pentecostal and Charismatic academics who struggle to integrate critical exegesis, academic theology, and social concerns into the life of their churches without succumbing to a Western rationalism that loses a sense for the pneumatological. Many of these scholars suggest that Pentecostal theology in this new century needs to be “contextual.”⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Milton Acosta, dean of a biblical seminary in Medellín, points out that even today more than 60 percent of Pentecostal pastors in Latin America lack theological education or have “doctoral” degrees from institutions without an accredited master’s degree or a research library.⁴⁹

Thus, given the diversity of Pentecostalism in Latin America, it is difficult to convince many Catholic bishops to regard more responsible Pentecostals as members of ecclesial communities. Because they continue to

⁴⁵ Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism* 29; see Simon Coleman, *The Globalization of Charismatic Christianity: Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity* (New York: Cambridge University, 2000).

⁴⁶ See Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil* 45–47.

⁴⁷ See Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism* 243–49.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 247.

⁴⁹ Acosta, “Power Pentecostalism” 42.

proselytize Catholics and rebaptize them,⁵⁰ many bishops persist in dismissing Pentecostal churches as sects. Pope John Paul II did this himself, causing considerable offense when, in his remarks at the Fourth General Conference of Latin American Bishops at Santo Domingo in 1992, he implicitly included Pentecostals among the sects, which he characterized as acting like “rapacious wolves,” devouring Latin American Catholics and “causing division and discord” in Catholic communities.⁵¹ Since then, both Cardinal Edward Cassidy and Cardinal Walter Kasper, past presidents of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), have stated publicly that they are not to be treated as sects.⁵²

Catholics and classical Pentecostals hold much in common. They find more agreement with each other on many issues related to the beginning and ending of human life, sexuality, and marriage than they do with many historic Protestant denominations. They both take the biblical witness seriously and are committed to the historical doctrines of Christianity, including the divinity of Christ and his bodily resurrection.⁵³ Both are concerned for spiritual growth and Christian living, Catholics through the importance they attach to spirituality, Pentecostals through their emphasis on conversion and life in the Spirit. Pentecostals welcomed the 2000 declaration, *Dominus Iesus*, from the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) for its clear affirmation of the universality of Christ’s salvific work.⁵⁴

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) forms a potential bridge between Pentecostals and Roman Catholics. By the early 21st century the Renewal has grown to nearly 120 million participants, with more than 60 percent of them in Latin America. The Pew Forum survey on Latino

⁵⁰ Five years ago at an international meeting of Jesuit ecumenists in Ireland and later during a seminar in the Philippines for pastoral workers from all over Asia, I heard complaints about representatives of Pentecostal churches. A Jesuit colleague working in Guyana close to the border with Brazil said that Pentecostals typically invite Catholic parishioners to common prayer services, only to attack their faith, using abusive rhetoric (“all Catholics are going to hell,” “the pope is the anti-Christ”) and “all sorts of inducements,” including money and other gifts such as bicycles, to encourage conversion. Priests and pastoral workers from a number of Asian countries told similar stories.

⁵¹ Edward L. Cleary, “John Paul Cries ‘Wolf’: Misreading the Pentecostals,” *Commonweal* 119.20 (November 20, 1992) 7–8, at 7; the pope’s remarks can be found in his “Opening Address to Fourth General Conference of Latin American Episcopate,” *Origins* 22 (1992) 321–32, at 326.

⁵² See Edward Idris Cassidy, “Prolusio,” *PCPCU Information Service* 84 (1993/III–IV) 117–23, at 122.

⁵³ Those known as “Oneness” Pentecostals, perhaps about 20 percent of the movement, are not classical Trinitarians but more modalist in their theology.

⁵⁴ Margaret O’Gara, “Ecumenism’s Future: What to Look for under Benedict XVI,” *Commonweal* 7.15 (July 15, 2005) 11–12, at 11.

religion (2007) states that a majority of Hispanic Catholics in the United States (54 percent) are charismatic.⁵⁵ While they “report holding beliefs and having religious experiences that are typical of Pentecostal or spirit-filled movements” (rather than discarding Catholic teaching in favor of Protestant Pentecostal doctrines), they appear more likely to incorporate renewalist or charismatic practices without displacing their Catholic identity and core beliefs, and most do so without formal participation in Catholic charismatic organizations.⁵⁶ According to Timothy Matovina, the most widespread manifestation of the CCR among Hispanics is the thousands of prayer groups that meet in parishes or homes, a practice rooted in the home-based religion of Latino popular Catholicism.⁵⁷ Yet he observes:

Despite its size and national organization, the CCR is not only one of most understudied phenomena in Latino Catholicism but also the most unmentioned in official ecclesial documents. It was never a major point of discussion in the National Hispanic Pastoral Encuentros, the U.S. bishops’ pastoral letter on Hispanic ministry, or their National Pastoral Plan. Indeed, despite consistent attention to proselytizing and the loss of Latinos to Pentecostal and evangelical churches, often in these venues the CCR is not even mentioned in passing. While the CCR was still evolving as a vibrant force among Latinos during the Encuentro decades of the 1970s and 1980s, it is most striking that not even the 2002 document *Encuentro and Mission* specifically addresses the Charismatic movement.⁵⁸

For the Catholic Church in the United States, CCR is an underused resource.

Theological Differences

Serious theological differences continue to divide Roman Catholics and Pentecostals, particularly in the area of ecclesiology. Roman Catholics, like the Orthodox and some within Anglican and Lutheran churches, stress an ecclesiology of continuity. Though they nuance it differently, Catholics see the Church as a visible, historical community founded by Christ with an unbroken succession in faith, sacraments, church order, and authority.⁵⁹ Pentecostals generally follow a restorationist ecclesiology with its roots in

⁵⁵ Pew Forum Survey, “Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion” 29, pewforum.org/newassets/surveys/hispanic/hispanics-religion-07-final-mar08.pdf (accessed May 8, 2010).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 32.

⁵⁷ Timothy Matovina, “Latinos in U.S. Catholicism,” <http://cara.georgetown.edu/Symposium.html> (accessed May 8, 2010).

⁵⁸ Timothy Matovina, from a chapter in a book, tentatively entitled “Becoming Latino: The Transformation of U.S. Catholicism,” under review with Princeton University Press.

⁵⁹ See Jeffrey Gros, “The Church in Ecumenical Dialogue: Critical Choices, Essential Contributions,” *Journal of the Wesleyan Theological Society* 39 (2004) 35–45, at 37–38.

the Anabaptist judgment that the post-Constantinian Church had “fallen” and needed to be restored on the basis of the New Testament Church. Thus discontinuity became more important than continuity. In the words of Pentecostal theologian Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “the essence of Pentecostalism is to go back to the faith and experience of apostolic times, to live in consistency with the New Testament church.” Pentecostals “have claimed continuity with the church in the New Testament by arguing for discontinuity with much of the historical church.”⁶⁰ While many are ready to recognize confessing Catholics as Christians, they are often reluctant to accept the Roman Catholic Church as part of the church.

What holds the Pentecostal movement together in all its diverse expressions is the *experience* of empowerment in the Holy Spirit, particularly in worship. Thus the outpouring or “baptism” in the Spirit, normally accompanied by the gift of tongues, is central to Pentecostal theology. Yet there is considerable disagreement among Pentecostals and charismatics today as to whether tongues constitutes the initial evidence of Spirit baptism (“consequence”), a theological link many attribute to Charles Parham, or that Spirit baptism is a distinct experience following conversion (“subsequence”). Kilian McDonnell and George Montague, after surveying evidence from the first eight centuries, argue that baptism in the Spirit with the full expectation of charisms should be the effect and expectation of every adult baptism; for a church that practices infant baptism, it can be a new level of awareness and experience for a person of what was received at baptism.⁶¹ Thus Catholic charismatics prefer to speak of a release of the Spirit given in baptism, thus joining the experience of the Spirit to a more traditional sacramental theology.⁶²

According to the PCPCU’s Msgr. Juan Usma Gomez, “many people consider Pentecostalism as the last fruit of the Reformation. Its minimal ecclesial structure, missionary zeal, doctrinal simplicity and openness to the ‘supernatural,’ as well as its cultural flexibility, strong emotional connotation and ability to give rise to religious experiences, give it a special character of its own.”⁶³ Pentecostal theologian Cheryl Bridges Johns suggests that the emergence of Pentecostalism signals an end to the Protestant era, pointing toward “a re-enchanting not only of Christianity, but of the

⁶⁰ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “The Apostolicity of Free Churches: A Contradiction in Terms or an Ecumenical Breakthrough,” *Pro Ecclesia* 10 (2001) 475–86, at 483.

⁶¹ Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1991) 337–38.

⁶² Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism* 191–95.

⁶³ Juan Usma Gomez, “Catholics and Pentecostals: A Historical Overview,” *Zenit* (July 20, 2006), <http://www.zenit.org/article-16638?l=english> (accessed May 8, 2010).

natural world.”⁶⁴ Donald Dayton describes “the basic *gestalt* of Pentecostal thought and ethos: Christ as Savior, as Baptizer with the Holy Spirit, as Healer, and as Coming King.”⁶⁵ With its dynamic church-as-event character, Roger Haight sees Pentecostalism as providing a new, free-church movement that is “almost preeclesiological in any academic sense.”⁶⁶

Given their different ecclesiological starting points, Catholics and Pentecostals have different understandings of apostolicity. Because Catholics stress the visible, historical nature of the church, they have traditionally emphasized apostolicity in terms of succession in the historical episcopal office. Most Pentecostals see the real nature of the church as spiritual, and thus invisible. This gives them a very different approach to the “marks” of the church. As in the Free churches, Pentecostals generally “understand the holiness of their churches primarily in the holiness of their members, the oneness of the church as ‘spiritual unity’ of all born-again Christians, the apostolicity as faithfulness to the apostolic doctrine and life, and the catholicity consequently as self-evident fact.”⁶⁷ Pentecostals in particular have defined apostolicity in terms of the restoration of the apostolic gifts of the New Testament churches—tongues, prophecy, and miraculous healing. Like those in Charismatic, Independent, and African Instituted churches, Pentecostals see the recent emergence of their churches as testimony to the Spirit’s activity in the world; they claim to take Pneumatology seriously. They wonder why the episcopal office should be so privileged, when the New Testament seems to offer many models of church.⁶⁸ Some Catholics would argue that Pneumatology cannot be so easily separated from Christology. For example, *Dominus Iesus*, which came from the CDF under Joseph Ratzinger’s prefecture, rejects the view of an economy of the Holy Spirit more universal in breadth than that of the Incarnate word, crucified and risen.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Cheryl Bridges Johns, “Of Like Passion: A Pentecostal Appreciation of Benedict XVI,” in *The Pontificate of Benedict XVI: Its Premises and Promises*, ed. William G. Rusch (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009) 97–113, at 111.

⁶⁵ Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1987) 173.

⁶⁶ Roger Haight, *Christian Community in History*, vol. 2, *Comparative Ecclesiology* (New York: Continuum, 2005) 477; on Pentecostal ecclesiology see 463–77.

⁶⁷ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Pentecostalism and the Claim for Apostolicity: An Essay in Ecumenical Ecclesiology,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 25 (2001) 323–36, at 324.

⁶⁸ Cecil M. Robeck Jr., “The Challenge Pentecostalism Poses to the Quest for Ecclesial Unity,” in *Kirche in ökumenischer Perspektive: Kardinal Walter Kasper zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Peter Walter, Klaus Krämer, and George Augustin (Freiburg: Herder, 2003) 306–320, at 318.

⁶⁹ CDF, *Dominus Iesus* no. 12, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html (accessed May 8, 2010).

Catholics and Pentecostals also have different approaches to the notion of tradition. For Catholics, a precondition for the restoration of full communion is the recognition of sharing a common faith, a faith that comes to expression in the ecumenical creeds, the great tradition of the church, including its sacramental and liturgical life, and more recent agreements on issues such as justification, Eucharist, ministry, and apostolicity that have divided the churches since the 16th century. It is difficult for the Catholic Church to recognize “church” in the full sense in a community that does not understand the Eucharist as it was understood in the great tradition, live in visible, sacramental communion with other Christians, or seek communion with the worldwide communion of the *ecclesia catholica*.

Pentecostals have a different approach. They look not to “the tradition,” but to the New Testament. While many Pentecostals accept the trinitarian faith of the Nicene Creed, they remain reluctant to take the creed itself as a standard. They have historically been wary of suggesting that creeds, whether ancient or post-Reformation, might be on a par with Scripture, and they have warned against using creeds as exclusionary faith statements that are less than biblical. They fear that attempts to maintain the apostolic faith through creeds and the *regulae fidei* work against unity.⁷⁰ Robeck argues that

by opening up the possibility that God can choose—today—to use *any individual* in the service of the Church *in any way God chooses to do so*, Pentecostals, Charismatics, as well as many independent denominations have offered a level of personal and corporate empowerment or enablement to their people that seems to be more in keeping with the Apostolic Tradition than that which is held in many other Christian groups.⁷¹

The role of the magisterium or teaching office in the Catholic Church is to maintain the Church in fidelity to the apostolic tradition. Most Protestant churches do not have a formal teaching office. Robeck argues that Pentecostals have a developing magisterium, even though most Pentecostal leaders would deny its existence. “Unfortunately,” he writes, “the teaching magisterium that is emerging is composed of ecclesiastical leaders who themselves are often little more than lay theologians, while their trained theologians are not trusted to play any ongoing role in such a magisterium.”⁷² For example, he observes that the recent requirement of the Assemblies of God’s General Presbytery that all new candidates for

⁷⁰ See Cecil M. Robeck Jr., “Canon, *Regulae Fidei*, and Continuity Revelation in the Early Church,” in *Church, Word, and Spirit: Historical and Theological Essays in Honor of Geoffrey W. Bromiley*, ed. James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987) 65–91.

⁷¹ Robeck, “Holy Spirit and the Unity of the Church” 351–79, at 366–67, *emphasis original*.

⁷² Robeck, “Challenge Pentecostalism Poses” 314.

ministry must answer a new question, “Do you believe that everyone who is baptized in the Holy Spirit speaks in tongues at the time they are baptized in the Spirit?” represents a change in the tradition without a vote of the Assemblies of God’s General Council. He adds that evidence indicates that those who initially speak in tongues at their baptism in the Spirit have diminished to “a currently alleged level in the low 40 percent range.”⁷³

The difficulty, of course, is that unacknowledged teaching offices are generally ineffective; the very lack of definition means that their “authorities” are not really accountable, personal influence is often more important than ordination or theological education, and without formal status they are not really able to make binding decisions on new questions. Thus Robeck sees the Pentecostal movement as challenged to develop its own formal theological position on the subject of tradition and the role of a teaching magisterium, a challenge that could also be directed toward other evangelical communities.⁷⁴

PENTECOSTALS AND ECUMENISM

The vast majority of Pentecostals have not been very interested in ecumenism. There are many reasons for this reluctance. First of all, many Pentecostals simply do not know much about ecumenism, and their leaders and pastors lack personal ecumenical experience. As noted above, many have not had the formal theological education, particularly in church history, that is taken for granted for leaders in other churches. Thus they find themselves at a disadvantage in traditional ecumenical conversations based on the history of theology and the analysis of confessional statements.⁷⁵

Second, the congregationalist orientation of most Pentecostal churches, together with their restorationist ecclesiology, makes them profoundly suspicious of larger ecclesial structures, especially global ones. Believing that the church is already one with a unity that is invisible, they are not interested in joining ecumenical organizations such as the World Council of Churches that have visible unity as their goal. They are reluctant to trust bishops and church leaders whose position seems based more on education and career moves than on evidence of the Spirit’s gifts. They find

⁷³ Cecil M. Robeck Jr., “An Emerging Magisterium? The Case of the Assemblies of God,” *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 25 (2003) 164–215, at 213; “Holding Their Tongues,” *Christianity Today* 53.10 (October 2009) 15–19, explores a diminishing emphasis on tongues in the Assemblies of God.

⁷⁴ Robeck, “Challenge Pentecostalism Poses” 314.

⁷⁵ See Cecil M. Robeck, “Pentecostals/Charismatic Churches and Ecumenism: An Interview with Cecil M. Robeck, Jr.,” *Pneuma Review* 6:1 (Winter 2003) 22–35, at 28.

themselves much closer to evangelicals in terms of theology, emphasis on personal testimony, and they share their disinterest in ecumenism.

Third, Pentecostal churches often have painful memories of rejection by other church communities that are members of the WCC and recall the discrimination or persecution they have suffered in Catholic countries. For example, in Italy Pentecostals were persecuted under Mussolini with the support of the Catholic Church and were allowed by the government to evangelize only after 1987.⁷⁶ Other Pentecostals point to a lack of biblical fidelity in the WCC because of the more liberal churches whose members often lead it. The Report on the Fifth Phase of the International Dialogue between Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and the Catholic Church says that though Pentecostals “recognize the work of the Spirit in other Christian traditions, and enter into fellowship with them, they are hesitant to embrace these movements wholeheartedly for fear of losing their own ecclesial identity or compromising their traditional positions.”⁷⁷

International Pentecostal–Roman Catholic Dialogue

In spite of this lack of ecumenical interest on the part of many Pentecostal denominations, the Roman Catholic Church and some representatives of classical Pentecostalism have been in dialogue since 1972, though the International Pentecostal–Roman Catholic Dialogue is different from other dialogues. Officially known as the International Dialogue between Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and the Catholic Church, it is not between two churches, but between the Catholic Church and some parts of the classical Pentecostal movement. Because many of the Pentecostal members are not officially representing their churches, some have had to come at their own expense.⁷⁸ The goal of the dialogue is not structural unity, but rather “to develop a climate of mutual respect and understanding in matters of faith and practice, to find points of genuine agreement as well as indicate areas in which further dialogue is required.”⁷⁹

About to start its sixth round, this International Pentecostal–Roman Catholic Dialogue is one of the Catholic Church’s oldest. Its founding

⁷⁶ Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism* 97–98.

⁷⁷ *On Becoming a Christian* no. 171.

⁷⁸ Official delegates come from the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, the Church of God of Prophecy, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, the Verenigde Pinkster- en Evangeliegemeenten of the Netherlands, and the Open Bible Churches; see *On Becoming a Christian* no. 22.

⁷⁹ “Evangelization, Proselytism, and Common Witness,” The Report from the Fourth Phase of the International Dialogue 1990–1997 between the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders, PCPCU *Information Service* 97 (1998/I–II) no. 2.

co-chairs were David du Plessis and Kilian McDonnell. Ironically, the initiative for the dialogue came not from the Catholic Church, but from du Plessis, a South African/American Pentecostal minister who had long urged Pentecostals to include in their ecclesiastical associations those in the historic churches.⁸⁰ A member of the Assemblies of God, he was an invited guest at the third session of Vatican II (1964) and attended the six assemblies of the WCC held during his lifetime, from Amsterdam (1948) to Vancouver (1983). But he was to pay a heavy price for his ecumenical involvement; in 1964 he was defrocked by his denomination because of his ecumenical activities, though he was restored in 1980. Another early member of the dialogue who suffered for his involvement was Jerry Sandidge, an Assemblies of God pastor who finished a doctorate in theology at the Catholic University of Louvain while serving as a missionary in Belgium. Ultimately forced to choose between the dialogue and his missionary appointment, he decided to leave Belgium.

The first two rounds of the international dialogue addressed multiple topics as the participants got to know each other. Subsequent rounds focused on a single topic. Over the years it has addressed the relation of baptism in the Holy Spirit to Christian initiation, the role of the charismatic gifts in the mystical tradition, the charismatic dimensions and structures of sacramental and ecclesial life, prayer and worship (two sessions, 1972–1976); speaking in tongues, faith and experience, hermeneutics, healing, tradition, the church as communion, ministry, and Mary (1977–1982); the church as *koinonia*, including the communion of saints, the Holy Spirit, church and sacrament, and baptism (1985–1989); evangelization, proselytism, and common witness (1990–1997); and on becoming a Christian with insights from Scripture and the Patristic writings (1998–2006).⁸¹ The next round is slated to take up some of the controversial issues that have emerged in Latin America.

The 1997 statement, “Evangelization, Proselytism, and Common Witness,” is especially significant. It points to the Reverend Billy Graham as a model whose evangelizing activity respects the ecclesial affiliation of those who take part in his campaigns (no. 96). Unethical proselytizing includes promoting one’s own faith community in ways that are intellectually dishonest; idealizing one’s own community at the expense of another; culpable

⁸⁰ Jerry L. Sandidge, *Roman Catholic Pentecostal Dialogue (1977–1982): A Study in Developing Ecumenism* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987) 23; see also Cecil M. Robeck Jr., “Dialogue, Roman Catholic and Classical Pentecostal,” in *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* 575–82.

⁸¹ The first four reports have been published in Jeffrey Gros, Lorelei F. Fuchs, and Thomas Best, eds., *Growth in Agreement III: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998–2005* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2007; for the fifth report see *On Becoming a Christian* nos. 162–215.

ignorance of another Christian tradition; misrepresenting their beliefs and practices; “every form of force, coercion, compulsion, mockery or intimidation of a personal, psychological, physical, moral, social, economic, religious or political nature”; cajolery or manipulation, including exaggeration of biblical promises; abuse of the mass media; and unwarranted judgments or acts that raise suspicions about the sincerity of others.⁸²

New Initiatives

The International Pentecostal–Roman Catholic Dialogue is not the only one that Pentecostals are involved in. A dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and Pentecostals was established in 1996, a proposal to establish a similar dialogue is currently (2009) before the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and a dialogue with the Orthodox is in the planning stage. In 2000, the first meeting of a Joint Working Group, now called the Joint Consultative Group, between Pentecostals and the World Council of Churches held its first meeting at Hautecombe, France. Pentecostal denominations today are full members of the National Council of Churches in at least 37 countries and associate members in several more.

Particularly helpful has been the participation of Pentecostals from around the world in the Global Christian Forum, an initiative proposed by the WCC’s Konrad Reiser in a 1998 consultation at Bossey, Switzerland, to broaden the ecumenical table by bringing in groups not generally interested in joining the WCC, particularly evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Roman Catholics.⁸³ Rather than the more traditional, theological process of dialogue leading to agreed statements, the Global Christian Forum has stressed building relationships and the oral testimony much more congenial to evangelicals and Pentecostals from the Southern Hemisphere. In the process, the Forum has introduced a whole new group of leaders to ecumenical encounter. And there is hope for greater involvement from Pentecostals in the United States, where several Pentecostal denominations are part of a recent initiative called Christian Churches Together.

Latin America

There are also some encouraging signs of a changing relationship between Catholics and Pentecostals in Latin America. Though the first

⁸² “Evangelization, Proselytism, and Common Witness” no. 93; see also John C. Haughey, “The Ethics of Evangelization,” in *Evangelizing America*, ed. Thomas P. Rausch, S.J. (New York: Paulist, 2004) 152–71.

⁸³ See John A. Radano, “The Global Christian Forum: An Initiative for Christian Unity in the 21st Century,” in *Global Christian Forum: Transforming Ecumenism*, ed. Richard Howell (New Delhi: Evangelical Fellowship of India, 2007) 58–72.

meeting between Catholics and Pentecostals in Brazil did not take place until 2008 (with the Pentecostals coming on their own initiative, not representing their churches), as early as 1989 the Comisión Nacional de Ecumenismo of the Conferencia Episcopal de Chile invited the Chilean Pentecostal, Juan Sepúlveda, to participate with them in a discussion on “Pentecostalismo, Sectas y Pastoral.” The proceedings, including papers and conclusions, were later published under that same title.⁸⁴ From it came a number of commitments from the bishops, to respect what Pentecostals emphasize, to refrain from derogatory comments, and to begin to work toward solidarity with these “separated brethren,”⁸⁵ all in hopes of better relationships.

A much more personal story comes from Cecil Robeck. In 1993, he was invited by Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy, then President of the PCPCU, to Rome to participate as a “Fraternal Delegate” with a group of about 65 bishops and ecumenical officers. In his opening address, after introducing Robeck as a Pentecostal representative, Cassidy went on:

We must be careful . . . not to confuse the issue [of sects and new religious movements] by lumping together under the term “sect” groups that do not deserve that title. I am not speaking here, for instance, about the evangelical movement among Protestants, nor about Pentecostalism as such. The PCPCU has had fruitful dialogue and significant contact with certain evangelical groups and with Pentecostals. Indeed, one can speak of a mutual enrichment as a result of these contacts.⁸⁶

The next morning, Bishop Basil Meeking, a member of the PCPCU, mentioned in his presentation that six or seven Latin American bishops had come to him the night before to protest Robeck’s presence, precisely because he was a Pentecostal and a member of a sect. Cassidy’s response was to tell the Latin American bishops “that if they would go home and begin to talk *with* the Pentecostals instead of coming to Rome to talk *about* the Pentecostals, perhaps things would be different in their part of the world.” He then went on to explain that “the Pontifical Council does not enter into dialogue with sects.”⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Francisco Sampedro N and Juan Sepúlveda, *Pentecostalismo, Sectas y Pastoral* (Santiago: Comisión Nacional de Ecumenismo, Área Eclesial, Conferencia Episcopal de Chile, 1989).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 68.

⁸⁶ Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy, “Prolusio” (given at the meeting of representatives of the National Episcopal Commissions for Ecumenism, Rome, May 5–10, 1993), *PCPCU Information Service* 84 (1993/III–IV) 122.

⁸⁷ Cecil M. Robeck Jr., “Roman Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue: Challenges and Lessons for Living Together,” in *Latin America*, ed. Calvin L. Smith, Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming); see also Robeck’s article, “Lessons from the International Roman Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue,” in *Pentecostalism and Christian Unity*, ed. Wolfgang Vondey (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2010) 82–98, at 97.

In 1997 Chilean Pentecostal Juan Sepúlveda again received an invitation from CELAM, this time to attend the Synod for America as a Pentecostal Observer. An article he wrote describing his experience was very positive.⁸⁸ He was present again in 2007 when the bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean gathered with Pope Benedict XVI for the Fifth General CELAM Conference at Aparecida, Brazil. This time Sepúlveda gave a plenary address to the bishops on Pentecostalism in Latin America and was given full voice in all the discussions throughout the meeting.⁸⁹ Unfortunately, Robeck concluded that most of the movement toward any détente between Catholics and Pentecostals in Latin America seems to have been on the side of the Catholic bishops, not on the side of Pentecostals. Still these initiatives represent more than a beginning.

CONCLUSIONS

- (1) The Pentecostal movement today is playing an increasingly important role among other Christian churches and traditions. The International Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and some Classical Pentecostals is now almost 40 years old. Though only a few Pentecostal groups support it officially, the significance of the dialogue should not be underestimated. Some Classical Pentecostals are in dialogue with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and soon, it is hoped, with the Lutheran World Federation and the Orthodox. There is a Joint Consultative Group between some nonmember Pentecostal churches and the World Council of Churches.

There is more ecumenical cooperation in the United States⁹⁰ and even the Assemblies of God, the largest and most influential Pentecostal denomination, made a small but significant change in 2005 of its bylaws to encourage “fellowship” with other Christians who share their evangelical beliefs. In addition, a new generation of Pentecostal leaders is developing with some experience of ecumenism through their participation in the international Global Christian Forum and the Christian Churches Together movement in the United States.

⁸⁸ See Juan Sepúlveda, “Evangelicals and the Catholic Church: Seeking the Paths of Dialogue,” *Ecumenism* 127 (September 1997) 33–36.

⁸⁹ Juan Sepúlveda, “The Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean,” *Ecumenical Trends* 37.4 (April 2008) 10–12. For a copy of his address at the Conference see, Juan Sepúlveda, “Algunas notas sobre el Pentecostalismo en América Latina,” http://documentos.iglesia.cl/conf/documentos_sini.ficha.php?mod=documentos_sini&id=3531&sw_volver=yes&descripcion= (accessed May 14, 2010).

⁹⁰ Espinosa, “Impact of Pluralism” 38–39.

- (2) At the same time, tensions still remain between the two communities, making clear the importance of expanding the dialogue. Much of the Pentecostal leadership remains generally reluctant to take part in dialogue with the historic churches while the diversity of the movement makes improving relationships difficult. But even in Latin America, despite the hostility that so often exists between Protestants and Catholics, there are some indications of small but growing steps toward ecumenical cooperation, particularly in making common cause for family values and human rights and against corruption and military dictatorships. The increasing religious pluralism in Latin America has led to the disestablishment of Catholicism in most Latin American countries. There is also evidence that Pentecostals, excluding those preaching the prosperity gospel, are increasingly engaged in social ministries, though of a relatively nonpolitical kind. All these are signs of a maturing of the movement.
- (3) Ecumenism begins not with formal theological dialogues, but with personal relationships and friendships. We need to continue building those relationships through sharing our stories and our personal testimonies as well as through more traditional methods. When an opportunity for a meeting or program with Pentecostals presents itself, it is helpful for Catholics to ask, are they open, are they “Catholic friendly”? Similarly, Catholics ought to ask whether their theological schools are open to Pentecostal students. Most are, and some have seen them enroll. Those with long experience of working together have stories to tell of problems solved or situations desensitized simply through honest conversation. Beyond that, our traditions have much to learn from each other.
- (4) Pentecostals present a theological challenge to the historic churches.⁹¹ With their enormous expansion, they constitute today close to 25 percent of Christians worldwide. While their restorationist view of Christian history is problematic, many are vital communities, stressing the charismatic and missionary dynamics of the first Christian communities, energizing their members with their dynamic worship, and transforming lives. Roman Catholicism recognizes them as “ecclesial communities,” that is, as communities of Christians, disciples of Jesus, consecrated by baptism, nourished by the Word, deeply committed to his mission, living in his Spirit, and rich in spiritual gifts and graces.⁹² They should find a home within the fullness of the church.

⁹¹ See Robeck, “The Challenge Pentecostalism Poses” 306–20.

⁹² *Lumen gentium* no. 15; *Unitatis redintegratio* no. 3; in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (New York: Guild, 1966) 33–34, 345–46.

- (5) But Pentecostals will themselves be challenged through the ecumenical encounter to a renewal of their own ecclesial lives and structures. Will they be able to move beyond their doctrine of spiritual unity in one invisible church and their ecclesiological individualism, resulting in more than 30,000 denominations,⁹³ and seek visible communion with other churches in the communion of the church catholic? If they are to live in communion with the Roman Catholic Church, will they respect the validity (thus the nonrepetition) of Roman Catholic baptism, refrain from aggressive proselytizing of Catholics, and enter into dialogue on those questions that continue to remain divisive?

The Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue has only begun to address the difficult ecclesiological differences on baptism, Eucharist, and ministry. *On Becoming a Christian* points to a restorationist view of Christian history, the nature of sacraments or ordinances, and the exercise of church authority as well as varying principles for biblical interpretation as “unresolved issues” that call for further reflection.⁹⁴ As Cardinal Kasper has observed, the Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue “may serve a constructive purpose by pressing the Pentecostal Movement to develop its own formal theological position” on questions such as tradition and the role of a teaching magisterium.⁹⁵ This no doubt lies far in the future. But Catholics and Pentecostals have begun talking to each other. With the two traditions representing so much of Christianity today, it is difficult to deny that the Spirit is involved.

⁹³ The number comes from Robeck, “The Challenge Pentecostalism Poses” 315; Sepúlveda acknowledges this “atomistic tendency” in Latin American Pentecostalism: “In virtually every country, numerous schisms have fractured the Pentecostal movement. The causes of most of these divisions are to be found in the fragile nature of their ecclesial institutions, in internal power struggles, not to mention the divisions that have been engendered by doctrinal and ideological conflicts” (“The Pentecostal Movement in Latin America,” in *New Face of the Church in Latin America: Between Tradition and Change*, ed. Guillermo Cook [Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1994] 68–74, at 70).

⁹⁴ *On Becoming a Christian* no. 283.

⁹⁵ Robeck, “The Challenge Pentecostalism Poses” 314; see Walter Kasper, “Present Situation and Future of the Ecumenical Movement,” *PCPCU Information Service* 109 (2002/I–II) 11–20, at 13.