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The Marks of the Church: A Pentecostal Re-Reading

by Amos Yong

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Introduction—A Pentecostal Ecclesiology?

This paper is motivated by two primary concerns. First, there is the continually growing phenomenon of modern Pentecostalism around the world. In and through this remarkable missionary expansion lies the problem of self-understanding and self-definition. Pentecostalism in all of its variety worldwide subsists as a

convergence of free churches, but has generally not given much thought to why that is the case. This means that there is a problem of 'pentecostalism' reflected in part by the rise of the independent and house church movement, the splintering of Pentecostal denominations, and the emergence of charismatic, Third Wave, Blessing, 'New Apostolic', and other phenomena. One way to begin dealing with this problem of 'pentecostalism' is to engage the task of self-understanding and self-definition. This includes, among other things, giving an account of what it means to be the church. What is the church? How is the church to be recognized or discerned? How is the true church to be distinguished from a false church? These are the questions of ecclesiology. Pentecostals are only now beginning to reflect critically on the doctrine of the church.¹

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¹ The theme for the next annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies—'Pentecostalism and the World Church: Ecumenical Opportunities and Challenges' (to be held at Southeastern College, Lakeland, Florida, on 14-16 March 2002)—is evidence of movement in this direction.

Second, the process of ecclesial maturation goes hand in hand not only with doctrinal reflection but also with theological reflection as a whole. This means that whereas in previous generations Pentecostals theologized for themselves, Pentecostal maturity today requires us to confront the claims and reality of other Christians. No longer can Pentecostals avoid the ecumenical dimension of Christian faith. This includes coming to grips with whatever might be distinctive of Pentecostal ecclesiology vis-à-vis evangelical understandings of the nature of the church. It also includes wrestling with the nature of the church as evidenced in the wider plurality of ecclesial communities today as well as that spread throughout the historical Christian traditions. How do Pentecostals make connections with evangelical and other non-Pentecostal Christians beside proselytizing them (a charge frequently levelled against us especially by the Roman Catholic and Orthodox communities)? More important for the purposes of this paper, how should Pentecostals theologize ecumenically? What are the bridges or points of contact through which Pentecostals can begin to engage other evangelical and even broader Christian traditions amidst the contemporary ecumenical conversation?²

² We are now approaching the end of the first generation of Pentecostal participation in and reflection on things ecumenical, if such is measured by Pentecostal involvement in formal ecumenical dialogue. The Pentecostal-Roman Catholic dialogue has been ongoing since 1972; the Pentecostal-WARC (World Alliance of Reformed Churches) dialogue since 1995. Of course, in all of these, Pente-

My goal is to bring together these two concerns of Pentecostal self-understanding and Pentecostal ecumenical engagement by way of developing a critical Pentecostal ecclesiology in dialogue with the traditional marks or notes of the church. Methodologically, I hope to proceed by briefly defining the marks, making some observations about them in light of Roman Catholic understandings, and suggesting some ways in which Pentecostal convictions, values, and sensibilities can contribute toward a more ecumenical ecclesiological understanding. I am optimistic that this window into the Pentecostal-Roman Catholic dialogue may be illuminating for both the larger ecumenical conversation in general and for evangelical reflection on ecclesiology more specifically.

That Pentecostals have much to learn about ecclesiology from the Christian tradition, there is no doubt. Even to engage in reflection on the marks of the church from a Pentecostal perspective is to acknowledge that these are categorically normative in some way for orthodox ecclesiology. However, in this paper, I am not drawing attention to explicit defects in Pentecostal ecclesiology in light of the historical understanding

costal dialogue participants do not represent their denominations, but only themselves, thus revealing not only something about Pentecostal ecclesiological understanding, but also the wariness of Pentecostal ecclesial hierarchs regarding formal theological and ecumenical involvement. At another level, however, it is noteworthy that Pentecostalism has been ecumenical from its origins at Azusa Street. For a synopsis of that argument, see my 'Pentecostalism and Ecumenism: Past, Present, and Future,' *The Pneuma Review*, 5-part article, 4:1-5:1 (2001-2002).

of the church's marks or vice versa. While either project may be legitimate, my goal here is simply to attempt a more dialectical approach to see how Pentecostal ecclesiology can be enriched by the doctrine of the ecclesial marks on the one hand, even while Pentecostal perspectives can make a contribution to the ongoing discussion on the other.

One final preliminary point. The 'pentecostal' elements in what follows derive from an emerging consensus among recent Pentecostal scholarship regarding the centrality of pneumatology to Pentecostal theology and theological method, the distinctive and eschatologically oriented charismatic (or charismological) dimension of Pentecostal life and praxis, and the Pentecostal 'canon-within-the-canon' of Luke-Acts.³ This is certainly not to dismiss the non-Lukan witness of Scripture, nor does it mean to emphasize the charisms of the Spirit to the neglect

of other issues. Furthermore, it certainly does not wish to ignore the patrological and christological components of Christian theology. Rather, these are simply the perspectives that inform contemporary Pentecostal theology, and that I would hope can enrich, complement, and supplement ecumenical reflection, at least on this topic of the marks of the church.⁴ This is especially the case in so far as Protestantism in general and evangelicalism in particular still have a relatively underdeveloped ecclesiologies vis-à-vis the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox communions.

The Marks of the Church—A Pentecostal Re-reading

Our focus here is not only on ecclesiology as such, but more specifically on the marks of the church: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.⁵ Yet, as

³ For my take on the centrality of pneumatology and charismology to Pentecostal theology, see *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 20 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), esp. chs. 5-7. I develop further a pneumatological approach to theological method in *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective*, New Critical Thinking in Theology and Biblical Studies Series (Brookfield, VT, and Aldershot, Hampshire, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., forthcoming). The eschatological element of Pentecostalism has been treated in depth by D. William Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplemental Series 10 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). My statement regarding the Pentecostal 'canon-within-the-canon' simply reflects the focus on Luke-Acts in Pentecostal scholarship, exegesis and theology, some of which I will reference in what follows.

⁴ For an excellent example of how Pentecostal and charismatic movements both learn from and instruct the Christian tradition, see Carter Lindberg's analysis of the Lutheran charismatic renewal in *The Third Reformation? Charismatic Movements and the Lutheran Tradition* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983).

⁵ Discussion of the marks are widely available, including Catholic treatments such as Hans Küng, *The Church*, tr. Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), esp. 263-359, Francis A. Sullivan, S. J., *The Church We Believe In: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic* (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988), and Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974), esp. pp. 115-29. An Eastern Orthodox perspective is to be found in Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Belmont, MA: Norland Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 58-68. A recent Protestant reappropriation is Thomas C. Oden, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3: *Life in the Spirit* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), pp. 297-365. For Lutheran orthodoxy see Edmund Schlink, *The Coming Christ and the Coming Church* (Philadelphia:

Francis Sullivan points out, the marks have remained an undefined doctrine of faith in the sense that they have been asserted but never elaborated on dogmatically.⁶ And of course, newcomers to the block (such as the Pentecostals) might wonder why that is the case. The implicit response is that one asserts but does not define what seems self-evident. Two comments are in order. First, dogmatic pronouncements without dogmatic commentary invite reflection and understanding. This means that expositions of the meaning of the marks have been proffered throughout the history of the church. Inevitably, such expositions begin with the self-understanding of the patristic church, and rightly so as our own efforts below will seek to follow. Second, dogmatic pronouncement without clear definition frees the church to reflect, ponder, and explore such declarations. Thus, any attempt to understand the marks is an act of traditioning, a participation in the chorus of such efforts over the centuries. The church has and always will wrestle with the marks so long as self-understanding is sought. What follows is a conscious attempt to retrieve, reappropriate, and perhaps reconstruct, all of which are legitimate theological activities in this

case, so long as it is remembered that the last word has never been said (nor will be this side of the *eschaton*).

To set the stage for the following discussion, then, what did the early church mean in declaring the *ekklesia* to be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic? Developments during the second through fourth centuries are pivotal to the development of ecclesiological self-understanding. As a minority group during this period of time, the church was a way of life marginal to the social, political, and economic mainstream. Not infrequently, the church was persecuted as a threat to the interests of society and the reigning government. Besides these pressures from outside, as it were, the church also confronted internal developments which raised questions about discerning truth from falsehood. Marcionism, Montanism, gnosticism, Donatism, etc., were movements that challenged the church to reflect on the apostolic tradition, on the place and role of charisma, on the meaning of morality and ethical rigour, on the nature, function and role of the bishop, and so on. Engaging Praxeas, Celsus, Sabellius, Arius, and their followers provided opportunities for further exploring what has been believed everywhere, always, and by all (Vincent of Lérins' *quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*). Through all of these encounters, the church was forced to ask itself repeatedly: what is the nature of the true church of Jesus Christ, and how is such to be discerned?

The traditional marks of the

Fortress Press, 1968), pp. 119-30. Evangelical overviews include Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), pp. 609-14; and Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, and Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), pp. 853-72.

⁶ Sullivan, *The Church We Believe In*, pp. 211-14.

church emerged amidst such developments. One might begin with the church as the one body of Christ, a body consisting of individual believers and local congregations, all of which constitute the body precisely because of the communion or fellowship they experience with each other both individually and congregationally.⁷ In so far as the churches remain in communion with each other, the church is one; in so far as individuals or congregations remove themselves from such communion, the result is not a division of the church (for those who remain in communion continue to reflect the unity of the body) but rather heresy—withdrawal from fellowship and separation such that one (whether individually or congregationally) no longer can be considered to be of the body of Christ. But what is the source of this communion? Is it not the apostolic witness? Further, how is this communion mediated? Perhaps through the bishops; perhaps through the sacraments; perhaps through the holiness brought about by the Holy Spirit who is the breath of life of the body. Finally, what is the extent of this communion? Is it not to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), to all who actually are in communion with the body of believers?

The underlying concern, as the above shows, is that of discerning

true from false churches—the real body of Christ from what is not the body of Christ. Seen in this light, it is clear that each of the marks presupposes and mutually defines the others. Holiness marks the character of the church as called out and consecrated to Christ and to the work of the kingdom of God. Catholicity contrasts with sectarianism (thus opposing, factionalism, heresies and heretics) and partiality (thus opposing regionalism and elitist claims such as those made by the Donatists during the middle of the third century). Apostolicity points to the authority of the church, her ministry, scriptures, sacraments, teachings, etc., built as she is on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20). Presupposition, however, does not mean subordination. Each of the marks is intrinsic to the church's self-understanding of its nature and definition. To dispense with or subject one to any of the others is to undermine the rest. Apostolicity is the source of ecclesiality. Catholicity is the extent of ecclesiality. Holiness is the means of ecclesiality. Unity is the fact or reality of ecclesiality.

In one sense, what I hope to accomplish in this paper—re-reading the marks of the church from a pneumatological (and charismological) perspective—is nothing new. As Yves Congar points out in his own efforts to develop a pneumatological ecclesiology, 'However far we go back in the sequence of confessions of faith or creeds, we find the article

⁷ So long as we remember that one can begin with any of the other marks and make the same argument with the remaining three. Thus, the church as the one body of Christ is holy, catholic (or universal) and apostolic. Or, the church that is holy is united, catholic, and apostolic. Or, the church that is catholic is united, holy, and apostolic. Or, the church that is apostolic is united, holy and catholic.

on the Church linked to that on the Holy Spirit'.⁸ Thus the Nicene-Constantinopolitan (381) creed reads: 'We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.' The church is the work of the Spirit. The sending of the Spirit, as at the day of Pentecost, resulted in the creation of the church. Thus ecclesiology has always been linked to the third article of the creed, and Congar himself goes on to treat the traditional marks of the church in light of the Spirit who 'animates the Church'.⁹ Congar's pneumatological approach within the Catholic framework will be compared and contrasted with the Pentecostal pneumatological ecclesiology that is outlined in what follows. This is an especially appropriate exercise given that the focus during the third quinquennium of the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue (1985-1989) had a pneumatological ecclesiology as one of its guid-

ing themes.¹⁰

The Church as One (and being made One)

In Congar's discussion, the Holy Spirit is the principle of unity in the church. This is fleshed out in three ways. First, the Spirit is not one because of the church, but vice versa. (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4). The Spirit is the personal reality who makes many individuals into a community of persons. The Spirit is the source of unity amidst diversity, plurality, and difference. Yet such unity does not mean uniformity precisely because the Spirit's unifying power enables the integrity of each one amidst the many. Second, while Christ is the author of the church and the head of the body, the Spirit is 'the subject who brings about everything that depends on grace', and is therefore 'the supreme and transcendent effective personality of the Church'—what the Church fathers called the 'soul of the Church'.¹¹ Thus the church is the one body of Christ, infused with the life of Christ through the Spirit. Lastly, the unity of the church is understood concretely in the everyday lives of believers. Here, the Spirit is the love that is poured out into hearts, resulting in solidarity and practical love (1 Cor. 13:4-5).

In the background of Congar's exposition is the spectre of Roman Catholic self-understanding. In that framework, Rome represents the unity of the church, of the episco-

⁸ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. II: 'He is Lord and Giver of Life', tr. David Smith (New York: The Seabury Press, and London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983), p. 5.

⁹ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Part One. Thomas Oden puts it plainly: 'To say the church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic is to confess the Holy Spirit as the one who unites, cleanses, and sends the church to the whole world' (*Systematic Theology*, 3:297).

¹⁰ See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Spiritus ubi vult spirat: Pneumatology in Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1972-1989)*, Schriften der Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft 42 (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola Society, 1998), esp. pp. 324-27.

¹¹ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:19-20.

pate, the sacraments, the liturgy, the teaching ministry, and so on. As Congar acknowledges, this unity in Roman Catholic Christianity possesses less uniformity than is usually realized since the accent lies on the interiority of the Spirit's life and presence in the church—as the 'soul of the Church'—and less on the exterior manifestations of the Spirit's work. At the same time, it is also undeniable that the diversity of Roman Catholic Christianity finds its cohesion and union in the bishop of Rome. Arguably, any visible unity of the *ekklesia* as might exist is located primarily in the Petrine office: 'full communion means the collegial unity of the heads of the local churches; namely, the bishops, with the Bishop of Rome who exercises the primacy'.¹² Here, the Catholic claim regarding the papacy stands in some ways as a scandal of particularity in the ecumenical church's self-understanding.

Pentecostals certainly would affirm the unity of the church.¹³ They would deny, however, that any one episcopate can adequately represent that unity. Rather, 'Pentecostals tend to view denominations as more or less

legitimate manifestations of the one, universal Church'.¹⁴ Emphasis is thereby placed first and foremost on a spiritual reality that is never fully visible in the concrete structures of space-time. Yet such emphasis on spiritual unity is deceiving if the connotations are that the Pentecostal understanding is abstract and devoid of concrete aspects. Because ecclesial unity is experienced in the fellowship of those who confess Jesus as Lord by the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3), such unity is eschatological on the one hand, but also supremely particularistic, perhaps even in an incarnational or sacramental sense, on the other.¹⁵

By sacramental, I do not mean as pertaining specifically to the mediation of salvific grace through, for example, baptism or the eucharistic meal. Rather, I follow the idea that Pentecostals are convinced that the Spirit who resides within and presides over the church is the same Spirit who 'anointed Jesus of

¹² 'Final Report of the International Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1977-1982),' §48, in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 12:2 (1990), p. 105.

¹³ For Pentecostal reflections on the unity of the Church from an Assemblies of God perspective, see Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., 'Pentecostals and Visible Church Unity,' *One World* (January-February, 1994), pp. 11-14; from the Wesleyan-Holiness trajectory of Pentecostalism, see R. Hollis Gause (Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee), *Living in the Spirit: The Way of Salvation* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 1980), pp. 105-14.

¹⁴ 'Final Report of the International Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1985-1989),' §34,

in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 12:2 (1990), p. 124. For Pentecostal exposition and commentary on this notion, see Kärkkäinen, *Spiritus ubi vult spirat*, pp. 314-23. Kärkkäinen rightly notes that this concession by the Pentecostal representatives to the dialogue obscures the fact that up until recently, most Pentecostals have understood themselves as members not so much of 'denominations,' but of 'movements.' Ecclesial unity thereby has a more personal, spiritual and denominational flavor.

¹⁵ On the importance of sacramentality to ecclesiology, see Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), pp. 112-21. Chan, by the way, is an Assemblies of God minister who is addressing, in this book, a broadly evangelical (including Pentecostal and charismatic) audience.

¹⁶ All scriptural quotations are from the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Nazareth with...power' (Acts 10:38)¹⁶. Furthermore, the Spirit is truly encountered and manifest palpably and tangibly in the life of the church—e.g., through signs, wonders, tongues, healings, the shout, the dance, and so on. So to that extent, the reality of the Spirit is mediated through the particularly embodied experiences of the community of saints.

Thus the unity of the church comes about through the eschatological work of the Spirit: 'And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance' (Acts 2:4, my emphasis). There is, therefore, a unique sort of Pentecostal sacramentality at work, a sacramental logic which does acknowledge the Spirit's being made present and active through the materials of the phenomenal world, but which widens the scope of such to include the materiality of personal embodiment and congregational life.¹⁷ The Word made flesh and the Spirit breathing and making the word real in and through the community of saints are both the one work of the triune God.

Such an account of ecclesial unity as both spiritual and embodied undergirds the distinctively Pentecostal notion of unity in diversity.¹⁸ This is not, however, for diversity's sake, but for the sake of the reconciliation of a broken creation. Pentecostals also sense the pain of disunity and separation. Ecumenically conscious Pentecostals would agree with Gerhard Lohfink who calls disunity the church's 'deepest wound'.¹⁹ But how is such disunity to be overcome? Many Pentecostals have recognized the enormity of the problem and appealed to the eschatological Spirit as the one who mediates visible disunity into invisible unity. Or, perhaps the confession of the unity of the church should also include the confession of the disunity of the church in a manner similar to acknowledging God as present and yet hidden, or understanding the Spirit to represent the divine presence as well as the Shekinah that is absent.²⁰ Either would be a rhetorical move symptomatic of an attitude of resignation

¹⁷ On this point, see Frank Macchia, 'Tongues as a Sign: Toward a Sacramental Understanding of Pentecostal Experience,' *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 15:1 (1993), pp. 61-76, who builds on the work of the Catholic charismatic theologian, Simon Tugwell, 'The Speech-Giving Spirit,' in Walter Hollenweger, et al., *New Heaven? New Earth?: An Encounter with Pentecostalism* (Springfield, IL: Templegate, 1976), pp. 119-60. Cf. also the chapter on 'The Holy Spirit and Unity,' in Paul McPartlan, *Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), pp. 78-96, which is an excellent overview of the emergence of an ecumenical and sacramental ecclesiology intrinsically connected with pneumatology.

¹⁸ On the beginnings of a Pentecostal explication of unity in diversity in the body of Christ, see Jean-Jacques Suurmond, *Word and Spirit at Play: Towards a Charismatic Theology*, tr. John Bowden (1994; reprint, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 189-92, and Kärkkäinen, *Spiritus ubi vult spirat*, pp. 311-13.

¹⁹ Lohfink, *Does God Need the Church? Toward a Theology of the People of God*, tr. Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), pp. 290-308.

²⁰ Thus Ephraim Radner writes that 'the "absence of the Paraclete" from within the Church ought to be constitutive of historical pneumatology (our understanding of the Holy Spirit's life in time) and that Christian division and scriptural obscurity are themselves pneumatic realities of the historical present' (*The End of the Church: A Pneumatology of Christian Division in the West* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], p. 27). Radner's book plays out

before the truly monumental task of experiencing the unity for which Jesus prayed.

I will return later to the ecumenical dimension of Christian unity. For the moment, however, I want to focus on the paradigm of unity-in-diversity as reconciliation and how that is brought about through the pneumat-ic and charismatic intuitions at the centre of both Pentecostal experience and the spirituality of Luke-Acts. My suggestion would be that the Pentecostal experience at Azusa Street which overcame gender, ethnic, racial, and socio-economic barriers present in American life at the turn of the twentieth century simply re-embodied the eschatological out-pouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost and in the life of the early church. The Pentecostal experience, then and now, brings sons and daughters together, menservants and maidservants (Acts 2:17-18)—no small feat for a world ruled by patriarchy. It binds Samaritans, Ethiopians, and other Gentiles together with Jews—again, a major achievement in a world full of ethnic and racial hostilities. It reconciles

into one body those who have and those who do not through various means, whether it be the securing of justice (as in the case of Zacchaeus in Lk. 19:1-10), the redistribution of goods (e.g., Barnabas in Acts 4:36-37, and the widows in Acts 6:1), or the affirmation of the ministry of the well to do among those less well off (e.g., Dorcas in Acts 9:36-43, and Lydia in Acts 16:13-15). The case of the Ethiopian eunuch is particularly noteworthy in this regard (Acts 8:27ff). Not only does the inclusion in the body of Christ of this high-ranking official of a foreign government cut across ethnic, socio-economic, and political lines, but it also emphatically de-marginalizes those who for various reasons were previously barred from the assembly of the LORD (in this case because of emasculation; cp. Deut. 23:1 and Is. 56:4-5).

It is no wonder that the Pentecostal movement of the early twentieth century has since exploded across the world. While beginning, arguably, as a movement among the socially marginalized of American society,²¹ it was and is driven by a spiritual dynamic that erupted in part through the convergence of a diversity of traditions, perspectives, and

the motif of the 'pneumatological abandonment of the Church' which is precisely the Church of Jesus Christ, himself abandoned by the Father's sacrifice of love (pp. 342-43). Yet, Radner needs to follow his thesis through to the new life breathed into Jesus through the Spirit of holiness who also breathes into Jesus' body. The tension between death and resurrection, or with regard to the point at hand, between disunity and unity, must be played out in an eschatological, and therefore thoroughgoing pneumatological, sense. On this point, see D. Lyle Dabney, *Die Kenosis des Geistes: Kontinuität zwischen Schöpfung und Erlösung in Werk des Heiligen Geistes* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997).

²¹ This is the argument of Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

²² Thus Walter Hollenweger's argument for at least five roots of early twentieth century Pentecostalism representing broad streams of the Christian tradition: African-American, Catholic, Wesleyan Holiness, Keswick Reformed, and ecumenical; see his *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997).

experiences.²² Unsurprisingly, those familiar with the origins and expansion of Pentecostalism acknowledge its reality as impossible apart from the ongoing and eschatological work of the Spirit of God. In the meanwhile, those who have continued in obedience to the Spirit's leading and have been sensitive to the church's calling toward unity in Christian faith have also recognized the ecumenical potential of Pentecostal-charismatic spiritually and participated in the reconciling work of the Spirit through the later charismatic and Third Wave renewal movements.²³ Of course, given human fallibility and sinfulness, even the unity of Pentecostal faith and experience was insufficient to keep the movement from splintering into innumerable factions. Ongoing repentance and acts of reconciliation have been and should continue to be normative, as expressed by the dissolution of the all white Pentecostal Fellowship of North America and its reconstitution to include black denominations as the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America at a historic meeting in Memphis, Tennessee, in October of 1994.²⁴

All of this does not deny that Pentecostals affirm spiritual unity over

institutional or structured unity. Yet such spiritual unity is not devoid of concrete manifestations across the spectrum of Christian life, but is, rather, a unity of the Spirit that includes reconciliation and healing in the same Spirit.²⁵ And such unity is to be experienced in the Spirit who brings those otherwise separated together in Jesus Christ in anticipation of the eschatological union before the throne of God. For Pentecostals, then, the church is one even while she is being made one.

The Church as Holy (and being made Holy)

This eschatological emphasis is most pronounced in Congar in his discussion of the holiness of the church. For Congar, the Spirit is both the principle of the church's holiness as such and the sanctifying agent of individuals in the church. This is because the church is the temple or habitation of a holy God, joined as one with God through the mediatorship of the Son who by the incarnation was betrothed to be married to his bride, the church, and now awaits consummation of this wedding at the marriage supper of the Lamb. The Spirit thus indwells the church as the first fruits or down payment of this eschatological event. Meanwhile, however, the church struggles as a collection of sinners even while it is

²³ Cf. Kärkkäinen, *Spiritus ubi vult spirat*, pp. 63-73, and Daniel E. Albrecht, 'Pentecostal Spirituality: Ecumenical Potential and Challenge,' *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* [http://www.pctii.org/cybertab.html], 2 (1997).

²⁴ Cf. Frank Macchia, 'From Azusa to Memphis: Evaluating the Racial Reconciliation Dialogue among Pentecostals,' *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 17 (1995), pp. 208-18; this entire issue of the journal is devoted to this Memphis Reconciliation, as it has been called.

²⁵ Cf. the discussion of the church as a reconciling and healing community by Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition*, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplemental Series* 21 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), pp. 104-06.

declared and is working out its identity as a community of saints—including past, present, and future members of the body of Christ—through participation in the love of the Spirit. The holiness of the church is therefore not a human accomplishment, but a gift, actually and eschatologically, of the pouring out of the Spirit into the body of Christ.

Pentecostals would resonate especially with the dynamism evident in Congar's reflections on the holiness of the church. Thus much overall agreement, among other more minor differences, could be reached between Pentecostals and Catholics on the importance and connectedness of holiness, repentance and ministry.²⁶ Holiness, in other words, is not so much a static category pertinent to Christian identity as it is an energetic, potent and charismatic reality experienced in Christian life. This is especially the case among (but certainly not limited to) those Pentecostals within the Wesleyan Holiness trajectory of the movement who emphasize both the now-and-the-not-yet dynamic of holiness as marking authentic ecclesiality. The Pentecostal perspective thus dovetails well with Thomas Oden's statement that 'the chief proof of the church's holiness, ironically, is that it is found among sinners, redeeming, reaching out, healing, and sanctifying'.²⁷

This said, it is also certainly the case that Pentecostalism includes its

fair share of legalists who understand holiness in a fairly static or essentialist manner. There are also, unfortunately, too many examples of Pentecostals who trade on the gifts of the Spirit, but lack the fruits thereof. In so far as this is the case, however, Pentecostals agree with Congar and the church universal that holiness is, finally, an eschatological mark to be brought about as the Spirit transforms the body of Christ into the image of Jesus. In the meanwhile, however, no Pentecostal (much less Christian) can ignore his or her identity within a community of sinners called to and transformed toward saintliness.

What then might Pentecostals have to contribute to the broader ecclesial understanding of the church as holy? Perhaps through a pneumatologically robust notion of sanctifying transformation. Hans Küng's discussion of the church's holiness highlights the fact that holiness refers first of all to the divine nature, and therefore carries the sense of being set apart or consecrated for the service of God. Rather than pointing to human activity, 'what matters is the sanctifying will and word of God'.²⁸ From the Pentecostal perspective, the Spirit sets members of the body of Christ apart from the world for the work of the kingdom of God. More specifically, of course, the Spirit clothes the believer with 'power from on high' in order that he or she might witness to Jesus and the kingdom 'in

²⁶ 'Final Report of the International Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1985-1989),' §102-08, in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 12:2 (1990), pp. 138-39.

²⁷ Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3:319.

²⁸ Küng, *The Church*, pp. 324-30; quote from p. 324.

Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth' (cp. Lk. 24:49 & Acts 1:8).

There should be more, however, to the witness of the Spirit-filled believer than this dimension of verbal testimony that Pentecostals have long called attention to. More recently, Pentecostals are also observing the intrinsic connection between the kerygmatic witness of the saints and the calling of the church toward participation in the prophetic activity of socio-ethical engagement. The church is, after all, not only a royal priesthood, but also what Roger Stronstad calls a 'prophethood of believers'.²⁹ Luke-Acts shows that Jesus is the eschatological prophet who is mighty in word and deed—indeed, the paradigm for the earliest Christians, including Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, Agabus, Peter, and Paul. And, among other things, prophets are called not only to 'preach the good news to the poor...', to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind,' but also to 'set at liberty those who are oppressed [and] to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord' (Lk. 4:18-19). Thus Jesus' prophetic words and deeds are redemptive regarding the structures of oppression—e.g., the parables of the persistent widow and the Pharisee and tax collector, his raising the

only son of the widow of Nain from the dead, his acceptance of the sinful woman, his treatment of women, his attitudes toward Samaritans, the transformation of Zacchaeus, and so on—even as are the words and actions of the early Christian community—e.g., whether that be the communitarian re-structuring whereby 'all who believed were together and had all things in common' (Acts 2:44), caring for widows otherwise socially vulnerable, the provision of famine relief, and so on. These prophetic actions, it could be argued, are part and parcel of the work of divinely consecrated, anointed and appointed ones—the community of prophetic saints—through whom God 'has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he sent empty away' (Lk. 1:52-53).

It is important to emphasize that the key to this accomplishment of divine restructuring lies not in the word and work of prophets in and of themselves, but in the transformative power of the eschatological Spirit who comes upon them. As Matthias Wenk has recently pointed out, it is precisely the work of the Spirit not only to sanctify or consecrate believers apart for the prophetic word and work of the kingdom, but also to accomplish such transformation in

²⁹ Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers: A Study in Luke's Charismatic Theology*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 16 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999). Stronstad has long been academic dean of Western Pentecostal Bible College in Abbotsford, British Columbia.

³⁰ Matthias Wenk, *Community-Forming Power: The Socio-Ethical Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement series 19 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). Wenk is a Pentecostal pastor and part-time lecturer at the Theologisch-Diakonisches Seminar Aarau in Hindelbank, Switzerland.

and through them.³⁰ Prophetically inspired speech is the medium through which the divine intent is made manifest and the believing community is transformed. The prophetic message of John the Baptist, for example, is the means through which God addresses Israel, the tax collectors, and the soldiers, and which produces in them repentance (Luke 3:1-14). Yet, it was also a message which left a mark on the messenger himself since John could not be a voice proclaiming in the wilderness without having his home in the desert. Spirit-inspired speech thus has transformative effects on both the speaker and the audience.³¹

Elsewhere, the Spirit-inspired speeches in the infancy narratives (Luke 1-2) herald the new, restoring work of God that is about to transpire through Jesus (Luke) and the believing community (Acts). Jesus' ministry of reconstituting a liberated community is itself anointed by the Spirit of God (Luke 4:18-19). Luke's version of what we've come to identify as the Lord's prayer (11:2-4) is the means through which the people of God ask for and receive the life-transforming and community-forming power of the Spirit of God (11:13). Pentecost (Acts 2) is a liberative and sanctifying event of the Spirit that results in the formation of the new messianic community (2:42-47). As already mentioned above,

throughout volume two of Luke-Acts, the Spirit's speech-acts level out socio-economic, ethnic, and gender differences, even while these same speech-acts identify, mark, and guide the people of God. Wenk's exposition thus highlights the restoring, reconciling, and sanctifying work of the Spirit of God that brings human beings into relationship with God and with each other. It turns out that my listening to what the Spirit is saying includes my being open to being transformed by what is said, and not just myself, but all those who claim to be of the Spirit of God and are claimed by that same Spirit.

At the same time, rejected prophecy is not only a rejection of the prophet, or the word of the prophet, but also of the sanctifying work of the Spirit of God. Wenk is able to show, using sources from the intertestamental period, that what previous scholars had claimed was the cessation of prophecy during this time is perhaps better understood as reflecting the unwillingness of the people of Israel to hear, engage, or be transformed by the word of God. In other words, it may not be—either during the intertestamental centuries, the early Christian period, or since—that the Spirit of God has ceased to speak and act; rather, a hard-hearted and hard-of-hearing people have refused to accept the message, the messenger (the inspired prophet), or God (cp. Acts 7:51 and 28:25-28). Arguably then, prophecy never ceases; it is, instead, denied, ignored, neglected, or rejected by the unfaith-

³¹ Congar does mention that so long as the Spirit of God continues to speak through divinely appointed prophets today, then 'the proposal of an objective revelation...implies a corresponding "spirit of revelation" in the subjects who are to receive it' (*I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:30).

ful community resisting the purposes of God and the transformative work of the Spirit of God.³²

Clearly, Christian holiness can no longer be understood in purely individualistic terms. Rather, the *rhema* word of the Spirit of God is formative and transformative, and that precisely for individuals-in-community. The entire church, not to mention the communities of Pentecostal believers around the world, is hereby challenged by the fact that the words of the Spirit go beyond conveying information to transforming those hearers open to what the Spirit is saying and doing. The holiness of the church thus marks not the accomplishments of its members, but the authentic presence and activity of the Spirit of God directed toward the eschatological kingdom when the saints will be finally and fully free from sin and its effects. In this sense, the Spirit of holiness both sets the *ekklesia* apart and transforms her toward the image of Jesus. For Pentecostals, then, the church is not only holy but also being made holy.

The Church as Catholic (and being made Catholic)

The Roman Catholic vision of Congar is informed by the particular and yet universal mission of Jesus (the one anointed by the Holy Spirit) and his followers (anointed also by the same Spirit) to many peoples, tongues, tribes and nations. The church is thereby charismatic,

reflecting the diversity of gifts to these peoples, tongues, tribes and nations by the Spirit. Herein lies the catholicity or universality of the church. It is, after all, the Spirit who brings about the church's universality in and through the illumination of Christ in the whole counsel of the Scriptures, the teaching tradition and ministry of the church, and the liturgy (including the celebration of the Eucharist). More precisely, it is the Spirit who inspires the accommodation or contextualization of the gospel message in the church's missionary work throughout history precisely by enabling the discernment and interpretation of the various places, times, and events in which the gospel is planted and through which it unfolds and bears fruit. In all of these, it is better to understand the catholicity of the church eschatologically, after the eschatological Spirit who continues to accomplish, shape and form the church catholic.³³

Three comments, among others, can be made by way of a Pentecostal response. First, Pentecostals would be the first to say 'Amen!' to the Catholic definition of ecclesial catholicity as signifying the whole faith (fullness or plenitude) belonging to the whole body of Christ for the whole world (a universal vocation). The whole faith, of course, is none other than the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ (to be further discussed below). The whole body includes all who confess 'Jesus is Lord' by the

³² Wenk, *Community-Forming Power*, pp. 112-18 and pp. 122-33.

³³ In what follows, I distinguish between Catholic (capitalized) referring to communion with the bishop of Rome and catholic (not capitalized) referring to the universality of the *ekklesia*.

Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). The whole world refers not only to the eschatological gathering of peoples, tongues, tribes and nations (Rev. 5:9b, 7:9, 10:11, 13:7, 17:15, etc.), but also the continually expanding kingdom of God (cf. the parables of Mt. 13).

Yet along these lines, Pentecostals would be hesitant to affirm catholicity in the sense of universality at the expense of particularity in the sense of locality. Here, Pentecostal charismology informs Pentecostal ecclesiology and vice-versa. The church as charismatic flows from the fact that the manifestation of the gifts through each member serves the common good (1 Cor. 12:4-7). Each member's gifting is essential precisely because together they constitute the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-27). Arguably, individual members constitute local congregations which combine, finally, as the church catholic. All the more important, Pentecostals are quick to insist on remembering the particularity of local congregations and of individual members in understanding both the charismatic giftedness and the ecclesial constitution of the church catholic.

This leads, second, to a consideration of the interdependence of the notions of catholicity (universality) and unity. If Catholicism tends to err on the side of universality, Pentecostalism does so on the side of locality. Therefore, global Pentecostalism has not generally been as concerned with ecumenism at either structural or institutional levels. But what then about the ecumenical movement?

More specifically, what about the relationship between the churches and the Catholic Church, and vice-versa? Is it the case that denominationalism and congregationalism are true expressions of New Testament Christianity as Protestants in general and Pentecostals in particular believe? Hans Küng has raised the issues forcefully: Is it really 'feasible in the light of the New Testament to regard these divisions as an organic development? ... Is it not simply an easy way out of our obligation to work for unity here and now, to bring in eschatological fulfilment? ... We should not justify these divisions, any more than we justify sin, but "suffer" them as a dark enigma, an absurd, ridiculous, tolerable yet intolerable fact of life, that is contrary both to the will of God and the good of mankind.' More importantly, 'The Churches, apart from the so-called "Catholic Church", cannot achieve the necessary unity nor the necessary catholicity of the Church, without first sorting out their relationship to the "Catholic Church," from which directly or indirectly they all stem, and making their peace with her'.³⁴

As before, the initial Pentecostal response would be to affirm Congar's intuition that the church's catholicity must be understood eschatologically.³⁵ Miroslav Volf,

³⁴ Küng, *The Church*, pp. 281, 283, 310.

³⁵ For an exegetical argument for the early church's understanding of being the people God because of their experience of the eschatological Spirit, see Gordon D. Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, and Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2000), pp. 121-46.

himself an evangelical theologian with deep Pentecostal roots, puts it this way: 'The catholicity of the entire people of God is the ecclesial dimension of the eschatological fullness of salvation for the entirety of created reality.'³⁶ In this sense, the catholicity of the church cannot finally be separated from the universality of the kingdom, and both will be manifest fully on that day when the kings of the earth bring the glory and honour of the nations into the city of the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb (Rev. 21:22-26). This means that Pentecostals would affirm catholicity both as a present reality and as an eschatological hope: the church is catholic and being made catholic.

Now, while this eschatological dimension of catholicity should certainly not be denied, yet the present ecumenical situation continues to beg for a more substantive Pentecostal response. Perhaps one way to approach this question from a Pentecostal perspective is to inquire into the experiential reality of global Pentecostalism. What is it that binds South African, Korean, North American, Scandinavian, Malaysian, etc., Pentecostals together? Without discounting socio-economic explanations of this mutuality,³⁷ it could also be argued that the universality of the Pentecostal community is locatable

in large part in the fact that Pentecostalism is first and foremost an ecumenical experience rather than an ecumenical ecclesiology. The ties that bind Pentecostals together around the world are their experiences of Jesus in the power of the Spirit. It is not that Pentecostals are not concerned about Christian unity. Rather, Pentecostals experience Christian unity precisely through the universality of the Spirit's presence and activity that enables the confession of Jesus' Lordship amidst the peculiarly Pentecostal congregations and liturgies.

This universal catholicity raises, thirdly and finally, the means of the church's missionary witness and endeavour. Here again, Pentecostals would affirm Congar's observation that the whole gospel belonging to the whole body for the whole world means that the world receives the gospel in its own idiom, cultural space, and historical time.³⁸ From the very beginning, Pentecostalism has been a missionary movement that has assumed that the outpouring of the Spirit resulting in diverse tongues reveals the heart of God for the evangelization of the whole world. More specifically, from the perspective of Pentecostal experience, the confession of Jesus as Lord is enabled by the Spirit to come forth

³⁶ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 267.

³⁷ E.g., Steve Brouwer, Paul Gifford, and Susan D. Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism* (London: Routledge, 1996).

³⁸ For a discussion of how the themes of mission, evangelization, and culture have played out in the Pentecostal-Roman Catholic dialogues, see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Ad ultimum terrae: Evangelization, Proselytism, and Common Witness in the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1990-1997)*, *Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity*, p. 117 (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

in many different tongues. On the day of Pentecost, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Judeans, Cappadocians, Pontians, Asians, Phrygians, Pamphylans, Egyptians, Libyans, Cyreneans, Cretans, and Arabs all heard the wonders of God in their own languages (Acts 2:5-11). In the words of Vatican II, '(At Pentecost) that union (of all peoples in the catholicity of faith) was (prefigured) by the Church of the new covenant, which speaks all tongues, which lovingly understands and accepts all tongues and which overcomes the divisiveness of Babel' (*Ad Gentes divinitus*, 4). Peter clearly understood this event to be a fulfillment of the prophet Joel whereby

In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. (Acts 2:16-18, in the NIV; cf. Joel 2:28ff)

This outpouring is understood by Pentecostals to have been reenacted at Azusa Street in the early twentieth century, and continued all the way through to the present via the charismatic renewal, Third Wave, and Toronto Blessing movements. Henry Pitt van Dusen long ago called Pentecostalism the 'third force in Christendom' besides the Catholic and Protestant churches, anticipating perhaps the explosion of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity in the

non-western worlds of Latin America, Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa.³⁹ Precisely because the good news belongs to all precisely in their own language, culture, and context, Pentecostal missiology has therefore developed principles of indigenization whereby the message of the gospel and the work of the Spirit is accommodated, acculturated, and assimilated into local contexts.⁴⁰ The ruling assumption is that the gospel belongs to all peoples and that therefore reception of that gospel is better facilitated on their own indigenous terms.

This raises, of course, the issue of syncretism as a possible outcome of indigenization. How is the church catholic to recognize that elements of her confession of Jesus as Lord have been compromised, and that precisely through the translation of the gospel into the language and idiom of the receiving culture? Put positively, how is the church to ensure that her eschatological catholicity is continuous with, rather than discontinuous from, the ecclesial catholicity by which she is marked? This is a concern which is in parallel with the problem of the tares cohabitating with the wheat in the ecclesial kingdom.

⁴⁰ In this regard, see Melvin Hodges, *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1979); Paul Pomerville, *The Third Force in Missions: A Pentecostal Contribution to Contemporary Mission Theology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985); and most recently, Julie C. Ma, *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits: Pentecostal Ministry among the Kankana-ey Tribe in the Philippines*, Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity 118 (New York and Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000).

³⁹ H. P. van Dusen, 'The Third Force in Christendom,' *Life* (9 June 1958), pp. 113-24; more accurate, perhaps, would be to identify the Pentecostal stream as the fourth in Christendom, besides Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Protestantism.

Confession of Jesus should not be equated with an empty 'Lord, Lord,' prophetic intensity, the exorcism of demons in Jesus' name, nor even the appearance of miracles (Mt. 7:22), all of which are distinguishing features of Pentecostal-charismatic spirituality. So, Pentecostals have to be wary even about the appearances of preaching the gospel 'in demonstration of the Spirit and power' (1 Cor. 2:4) since such signs might well be misleading. How then is the church catholic to be discerned? Perhaps precisely by discerning the *ekklesia* as not only catholic, but also one, holy and apostolic. It is surely the case that only such a fourfold criterion is able to better identify the true church of Jesus Christ from a false one.

The Church as Apostolic (and being made Apostolic)

What does a Roman Catholic pneumatological approach to apostolicity look like in Congar? As with the marks of holiness and catholicity, the church apostolic is a gift of the Spirit and an eschatological task of coming into conformity with the apostolic message. The church apostolic is also, further, the means through which the mission of Christ is shared and carried out by the power of the Spirit. Crucial in this regard is the category of testimony whereby the message of the gospel is empowered by the Spirit through words and deeds, even to the point of death. Thus, 'the Spirit is also given to the

Church as its transcendent principle of faithfulness',⁴¹ through whom apostolicity of service, witness, suffering and struggle is disclosed and confirmed. This apostolicity derives first from the apostles themselves, but then appends itself to the *laos* of God in general and the function of the bishops more specifically. The latter represent the ongoing communion of the people of God with the apostolic witness, and thereby with the Father and his Son. Congar therefore goes so far as to say that 'it is, after all, possible to speak of an apostolic succession in the case of all believers, but only in the wider context of the faithful transmission of faith'.⁴² In each act of transmission of the gospel, from that of the *laos* of God to the magisterium, the Spirit is the one who preserves the indefectibility of the church 'so that error will not ultimately prevail (see Mt. 16:18)'.⁴³

With regard to apostolicity, the early twentieth century Pentecostals were driven by the conviction that theirs was the restoration of apostolic faith and practice. More recently, the international Roman Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue agreed that genuine Christian ministry 'lives in continuity with the New Testament apostles and their proclamation, and with the apostolic church. A primary manifestation of this is to be found in fidelity to the apostolic teaching.' The disagreement, of course, lies in the Catholic insistence on episcopal succession focused primarily on the

⁴¹ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:43.

⁴² Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:45.

⁴³ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:46.

Petrine ministry, over and against the Pentecostal emphasis on the Spirit's presence and anointing power providing the endorsement of apostolic faith and ministry.⁴⁴ Are Pentecostals and Roman Catholics, however, as far apart on this issue in light of Congar's discussion?

In a recent paper, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, a Finnish Pentecostal now teaching at Fuller Theological Seminary, proposed a 'conciliar understanding of apostolicity' for consideration by his fellow Pentecostal theologians.⁴⁵ This includes seven aspects which serve minimally as a starting point for Pentecostal-Roman Catholic discussion:

- apostolicity is first and foremost continuity with the faith of the apostles and of the NT Church
- charismatic life and worship are indispensable components of apostolicity
- the missionary proclamation of the gospel is at the heart of apostolicity

⁴⁴ 'Final Report of the International Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1977-1982),' §88-90, quote from §88, in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 12:2 (1990), p. 112. For details of the discussion of apostolicity and apostolic succession which permeated the third quinquennium of the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue, see Kärkkäinen, *Spiritus ubi vult spirat*, pp. 332-58.

⁴⁵ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, 'Pentecostalism and the Claim for Apostolicity: An Essay in Ecumenical Ecclesiology,' paper presented to the annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Oral Roberts University, 8-10 March 2001, and published in *Evangelical Review of Theology* 25:4 (October 2001), pp. 323-336. Kärkkäinen does mention in the first footnote to this paper that its basic argument will be published in slightly different format as 'Apostolicity of Free Churches: A Contradiction in Terms or an Ecumenical Breakthrough,' *Pro Ecclesia* (forthcoming, 2001).

- the Scriptures are the norm of apostolicity

- apostolicity being a dynamic concept means that the issue is one of life and vitality rather than that of juridics

- apostolicity focuses on the whole people of God, not only on clergy or authority

- apostolicity must be regarded as a 'heavily pneumatological concept'.

Is it the case that Kärkkäinen is separated from Congar by a chasm? Would Roman Catholics agree on the Scriptures as *the* norm of apostolicity or insist rather that it is the *primary* norm (*prima scriptura*)? In what ways would Catholics qualify the levelling out of the laity and the clergy in this proposal? Let me respond briefly by looking at the nature of apostolicity and the question of apostolic succession.

First, let us focus attention on the nature of apostolicity in its original context. The twelve were the initially 'sent ones' whose mission was to baptize and make disciples of all nations, to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins, and to witness to the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ (cp. Mt. 28:19-20 and Lk. 24:45-49). Clearly, however, the first two generations of Christians did not understand the apostolic commission to be limited only to the twelve, nor the apostolic message to be confined to the original disciples. Certainly, Paul, Andronicus and Junias (Rom. 16:7), Silas and Timothy (cp. 1 Thess. 1:1 and 2:6), and James the brother of Jesus (Gal. 1:17) were all recognized as sent ones who fulfilled the apostolic func-

tion. Paul himself notes in that signs, wonders and mighty works (miracles) were signs of true apostleship (2 Cor. 12:12).

Pentecostals have therefore generally understood the ongoing apostolic office or function (1 Cor. 12:28 and Eph. 4:11) to be the Spirit-empowered ministry of missionizing, evangelizing, church planting, and discipling. From the Pentecostal perspective, this fulfils all the early Christian requirements, including the charismatic components of authentic apostolicity identified by Paul.⁴⁶ And, of course, how else would Pentecostals understand apostolicity except pneumatologically and charismatically? If in fact apostolicity follows the original twelve in giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead (cf. Acts 4:33), then how is such to be accomplished in succeeding generations except by the same Spirit? Outside of the five hundred plus who saw the resurrected Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5-6), later generations of believers cannot give this kind of first hand witness to the resurrection. Yet witness is certainly given, and that precisely in and through the Holy Spirit who both raised Jesus from the dead and has been given to indwell and

empower the believer (cp. Rom. 8:11 and Acts 1:8).⁴⁷

It is for this reason that Harold Hunter's distinctions between, apostolic succession, apostolic teaching, and apostolic restoration are important.⁴⁸ Building on Lesslie Newbigin's paradigm of ecclesial order, ecclesial faith, and ecclesial experience, Hunter notes the emphasis on order and apostolic succession among episcopal churches, that of faith and apostolic teaching among Reformation churches, and that of experience and apostolic restoration among Pentecostal and charismatic type churches. Clearly each communion of churches under these categories understands the other two aspects to be most adequately understood and practised within their own account of apostolicity. Equally clearly, there are socio-historical reasons why each communion has emphasized one to the neglect of the others in ways that have retarded a fully healthy ecclesiality. Yet the question remains: how do all three dimensions fit together under the one category of apostolicity?

It is here that the claims especially of the papacy to apostolic succession

⁴⁶ 'Classical Pentecostals find an exercise of apostolic ministry wherever through the preaching of God's Word churches are founded, persons and communities are converted to Jesus Christ, and manifestations of the Holy Spirit are in evidence'; see the 'Final Report of the International Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1977-1982),' §79, in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 12:2 (1990), p. 111.

⁴⁷ This portrayal of apostolicity is consistent with the Johannine witness as well. There, a convergence is found between Jesus' glorification and the giving

of the Spirit on the one hand, and Jesus' returning to the Father and the accomplishment of greater work than his by the disciples on the other. The marks of bona fide apostolicity are intimately connected, then with the gift of the Holy Spirit (cp. Jn. 7:39, 14:12, and 20:21-22).

⁴⁸ Harold D. Hunter, 'We are the Church: New Congregationalism—A Pentecostal Perspective,' in Jürgen Moltmann and Karl-Josef Kuschel, eds., *Pentecostal Movements as an Ecumenical Challenge*, Concilium 1996/3 (London: SCM Press, and Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), pp. 17-21, esp. p. 18; Hunter is a member of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church.

may be most challenging. The majority of Pentecostals are not much concerned about their relationship to Roman Catholicism or the Vatican. Yet Roman Catholic charismatics are a nagging reminder that the Pentecostal experience cannot avoid dealing with the ecclesial implications of unity, catholicity and apostolicity, especially vis-à-vis the position and function of the bishop of Rome. Initially, Pentecostals might be tempted to point to the plurality of authorities even within the early church itself. There are not one but four gospels alongside a multitude of apostolic traditions—e.g., Paul's, James', Jude's, and so on. This, however, exacerbates all the tensions between the one and the many, unity and multiplicity, and exclusivity and inclusivity, germane to the discussion of the criteriology needed to discern the church as one, holy, and catholic. If such a move relativizes the authority of the pope, it also relativizes the Pentecostal claim to apostolic restoration as well.

It is here, perhaps, that the pneumatological and charismatic account of apostolicity provided by Pentecostals may contribute to the discussion. The first Jerusalem Council may point the way forward in this regard. The apostolic witness emerges from the convention only after much discussion and heated debate regarding the question of whether or not gentile believers needed to be circumcised. Appeal was made to the Scriptures (James quotes various sources in the Hebrew prophets in Acts 15:16-18), and to the apostolic experience (of

Peter's among Cornelius and the gentiles). Most important for the purposes at hand is the explanation provided by the apostolic council to the non-Jewish churches: 'For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:...' (Acts 15:28).⁴⁹ Apostolic authority to retrieve, reappropriate, and reinterpret the Scripture in accordance with ecclesial experience is sanctioned, finally, by the charismatic leading of the Holy Spirit.

In so far as this is the case, how might Pentecostals come to grips with the claims to apostolicity as defined, symbolized, and constituted ecclesially in the Roman Catholic magisterium specifically and in other episcopal traditions (e.g., Eastern Orthodoxy) more generally? Here, Congar's willingness to locate the narrower sense of apostolic succession as technically connected with the bishop of Rome within the

⁴⁹ For Pentecostal readings of the Jerusalem council germane to this discussion of apostolic authority, see James B. Shelton (who teaches at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma), 'Epistemology and Authority in the Acts of the Apostles: An Analysis and Test Case Study of Acts 15:1-29,' *The Spirit & Church* 2:2 (2000), pp. 231-47, and John Christopher Thomas (New Testament scholar at Church of God [Cleveland, Tennessee] Theological Seminary), 'Reading the Bible from within Our Traditions: A Pentecostal Hermeneutic as Test Case,' in Joel B. Green and Max Turner, eds., *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 108-22. Roman Catholic readings of Acts 15, naturally, tend to emphasize the communal dimension of discernment within the charismatically structured leadership of the church; see, on this point, Ladislav Orsy, *Probing the Spirit: A Theological Evaluation of Communal Discernment* (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1976), pp. 15-18.

broader reality of how apostolic faith is actually transmitted may prove helpful in connecting to Pentecostal sensibilities. Whether or not Pentecostals feel acutely the need to come to grips with the papacy, especially in its present form, certainly they cannot ignore the fact that they have to make their peace with the Catholic tradition since 1500 years of this history is their own. But is it possible that some Pentecostals might be willing to go one step further? In so far as the magisterium is truly led by the eschatological Spirit to serve the body of Christ and to fulfil the task of the church, and in so far as Pentecostals (and other Christians more generally) can recognize such activity as being of the Spirit of God, is there any hindrance to Pentecostals recognizing the *provisional* authority of the pope (or the episcopate) both as a symbolic re-presentation (or even sacramental sign) of apostolic faith and practice and as an eschatological anticipation of the fullness of the apostolic message, the *pleroma* of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:11-13)?⁵⁰

The point, after all, is not that apostolicity resides in abstraction in the church, but that the apostolic message and witness is preserved authentically in ecclesial life and faith as directed toward the impending kingdom of God. How else would such preservation come about except pneumatologically? And, it is

perhaps only from a pneumatological and charismological perspective that the dichotomies between apostolic succession and restoration, between episcopal and congregational structures, between tradition as past and as presently instantiated, between councils/creeds and kerygmatic proclamation, etc., might be overcome.⁵¹ If that is the case, then the church is apostolic not only in terms of its foundation, its authority, and its message, but also with regard to its *telos* around the throne of God (Rev. 4-5).

Provisional Thoughts in Conclusion...

My intention in this paper is not to say something new about the traditional marks of the church. Rather, it should be understood as one contribution—albeit one deriving from a socio-historical location of modern North American Pentecostalism—to a pneumatologically framed ecclesiology which has had its advocates since the time of the early church, and is currently undergoing a revival of sorts. It also provides Pentecostals in general (and this one, particularly) the opportunity to render a dynamic and eschatological account of their experience of the Spirit. Re-reading marks of the church in this framework, then, the church is one even while it is being made one; the

⁵⁰ Evangelical theologians are also beginning to ask this same question as well; see, e.g., Clark Pinnock, 'Does Christian Unity Require Some Form of Papal Primacy?' *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 35:3-4 (1998), pp. 380-82.

⁵¹ As the Eastern Orthodox say, 'Tradition is a *charismatic*, not a historical, principle,' or 'the Councils were never regarded as a canonical institution, but rather as occasional *charismatic events*' (Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, p. 47 and p. 96, italics orig.).

church is holy even while it is being made holy; the church is catholic even while it is being made catholic; the church is apostolic even while it is being given the fullness of apostolic faith. Finally, in so far as Pentecostalism and evangelicalism are related in any way, perhaps the foregoing also serves to provoke evangelical reflections on the nature of that relationship more specifically, and of both to the historical and ecu-

menical church in so far as the ecclesiological question is concerned. *Come Holy Spirit, breathe upon the Church...*⁵²

⁵² I express thanks to the editors of *The Pneuma Review* for allowing me to use some material from my reviews of Stronstad's and Wenk's books published in that journal. Also, many thanks to Glen Menzies of North Central University, Minneapolis, MN, who read and commented on this paper in short notice. Any defects that remain, of course, are my own.

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