

Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity: A Pentecostal Perspective

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Edinburgh and the Pentecostal Movement in 1910

It should come as no surprise to learn that when missionaries from around the world met in Edinburgh, Scotland for the great World Missionary Conference of 1910 they would overlook the Pentecostal Movement completely. The Pentecostal Movement was no more than a decade old at the time, and most Christian leaders thought it was hardly worth noticing. Pentecostals had only begun to enter fulltime missionary service for the first time in 1906.¹ When invitations to the Conference went out, there were very few signs that Pentecostals were here to stay, and there were even fewer signs that they would make any substantive contribution to world missions. If the organizers did notice this tiny movement, they would surely have had little to say about the Movement that was good. What is more, they would have found it impossible to believe the reports that we now have that spell out the impact that this Movement has had over the past century.²

The earliest Pentecostal missionaries were frequently an irritating lot. They were not in the mood to listen to anyone who did not share the experience they called “baptism in the Holy Spirit.” They publicly criticized all those with whom they disagreed, including veteran missionaries. They did not see any need for advanced theological training, or courses in cross-cultural immersion, or even the need for language study. They ignored most modern missionary wisdom, claiming instead that

¹ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “Pentecostalism and Mission: From Azusa Street to the Ends of the Earth,” *Missiology: An International Review* 35:1 (January 2007), 75-92, especially 81-83; Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2007), 320 pp.

² See for example <http://pewforum.org/surveys/pentecostal/> for the report of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals,” (October 2006), 226 pp.

they were being led by the Holy Spirit in a different and powerful way that did not rely upon mere human wisdom. They openly proselytized. And they made outlandish claims!³

It should come as no surprise, then, that when they made their appearance on various mission fields, they were criticized and ridiculed. Their unwillingness to cooperate with veteran missionaries except on their own terms and their swaggering claims that they needed nothing more than the power of the Holy Spirit to spread the Gospel among the “heathen” left them vulnerable to intense criticism. It is not surprising to realize, then, that they should not even have been invited to participate in such a gathering.

Many pastors across the United States predicted that the earliest Pentecostals were nothing more than a flash in the pan. A prominent Baptist pastor in 1906 Los Angeles denounced the Movement from his pulpit as “a disgusting amalgamation of African voodoo superstition and Caucasian insanity.” He went on to predict that they would quickly “...pass away like the hysterical nightmares that they are.”⁴ The following year in Akron, Ohio, the local press reported, “The new sect has been denounced as a fraud by nearly every local minister....”⁵ And the Philadelphia based Presbyterian pastor, Arthur T. Pierson contended that while it was possible to conceive of a genuine gift of tongues being manifested at the beginning of the 20th Century, he was

³ “No provision is to be made for their support, and they are expected to take little or no money, except that required to pay their passage on the ships. They are not to study the languages of the lands to which they go. The claim is that they have received the miraculous gift of tongues and will be enabled to speak without study.” “Disciples of New Sect to Go as Missionaries,” *San Francisco Call* (July 19, 1907), 10.

⁴ From a sermon by Dr. R. J. Burdette, preached at Temple Baptist Church, Sunday, September 23, 1906, and published in “New Religions Come, Then Go,” *Los Angeles Herald* (September 24, 1906), 7; Cf. “Denounces New Denominations,” *Los Angeles Express* (September 24, 1906), 5.

⁵ “Akron Will Fall by Earthquake,” *The Cleveland Leader* (January 9, 1907), 5.

convinced after reading reports of the activities of Pentecostal missionaries in Asia that the Movement was demonic in its origin.⁶

Around the world, feelings about early Pentecostal missionaries ran just as deeply. In June 1909, *The Independent* published a scathing article, likely written by the Alliance missionary S. C. Todd, in which he claimed that two missionaries who had come from the Azusa Street Mission to southern China were unfit for missionary service, A. G. Garr because he was an abrasive proselytizer who publicly condemned the missionaries who had long worked the region, and T. J. McIntosh because he was essentially illiterate.⁷

On September 15, 1908, a group of Pietist-holiness leaders in Germany, published what came to be known as “The Berlin Declaration.” These leaders charged that the Pentecostal Movement was, “not from on high, but from below,” and their judgment would have long-term ramifications for Pentecostals in Europe.⁸ Similarly, Jesse Penn Lewis worked tirelessly to blunt the effects of the Movement in the United Kingdom and Europe. Her book, *War on the Saints*, first published in 1912 was a compilation of articles she had published previously that were intended to expose the teachings of Pentecostalism as demonically inspired.⁹

As he traveled to West Africa in 1908 to serve as a missionary, John Reid wrote that he had been warned by the Methodists to steer clear of the Apostolic Faith people, that is, the Pentecostals in Monrovia, Liberia. That warning only encouraged

⁶ Arthur T. Pierson, “Speaking with Tongues,” *Missionary Review of the World* 30 (July 1907), 487-492 and 682-684.

⁷ “The ‘Tongue’ Movement,” *The Independent* 66 (June 10, 1909), 1288.

⁸ “Die sogenannte Pfingstbewegung ist nicht von oben, sondern von unten.” D. Paul Fleisch, *Geschichte der Pfingstbewegung in Deutschland von 1900 bis 1950* (Marburg: Francke-Buchhandlung GmbH, 1983), 112 and in Dieter Lange, *Eine Bewegung bricht sich Bahn: Die deutschen Gemeinschaften im ausgehenden 19. und beginnenden 20. Jahrhundert und ihre Stellung zu Kirche, Theologie und Pfingstbewegung* (Giessen, Germany: Brunnen Verlag/Dillenburg: Gnadauer Verlag, 1979), 287-290.

⁹ Jesse Penn Lewis in collaboration with Evan Roberts, *War on the Saints: A Textbook on the Work of Deceiving Spirits among the Children of God and the Ways of Deliverance* (Leicester, England: Overcomer Book Room, 1912, Fourth Edition 1925), 343 pp.

him to investigate them for himself. Subsequently, he wrote to the Anglican priest, Alexander Boddy, in Sunderland, England, informing him that the work there was actually very good.¹⁰ Similarly, Congregationalist missionaries from the American Congregational Mission in Doornfontein, South Africa criticized John G. Lake for not limiting 250 natives from praying aloud and weeping in what to them was merely a cacophony of sound and emotion that seemed to violate their idea of proper church order.¹¹

When in 1909 and 1910, the work of the veteran Methodist missionary Willis C. Hoover led to a Pentecostal revival in his church in Valparaiso, Chile, his bishop made it clear that he had to make a difficult choice. He could repent of his actions and the teachings that had led to the revival and continue to minister as a Methodist missionary, he could leave the work in Valparaiso, return to the United States, and be replaced by someone who would bring the revival under control, or he could resign from further ministry in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Hoover chose the latter road and formed *La Iglesia Metodista Pentecostal*.¹² Given this very brief overview of the interaction between the earliest Pentecostals and representatives of historic churches around the world up to 1910, it would be safe to say that neither the fledgling Pentecostal Movement nor the Edinburgh Missionary Conference were ready for one another.

¹⁰ "West Africa: News from Brother Reid," *Confidence* 4.2 (April 1909), 92

¹¹ The actual words are "The missionaries who were with us, as observers, of the starchy churchy order, were amazed and astounded because we did not stop the noise." John G. Lake, "Missionaries for Africa," *The Pentecost* 1:1 (August 1908), 7.

¹² *Historia del Avivamiento, Origen y Desarrollo de la Iglesia Evangelica Pentecostal* (Santiago de Chile: Eben-Ezer, 1977), 30-71, especially 55-71; Willis Collins Hoover, *History of the Pentecostal Revival in Chile* English Translation, Additional Historical Accounts, and a Personal Memoir by Mario G. Hoover (Lakeland, FL: Mario G. Hoover, 2000), 14-97, especially 65-97.

Visible Unity for the Sake of Mission

The call for the churches to work toward greater visible unity that was issued by the World Missionary Council of 1910 is difficult to ignore. It was the entire theme of the study issued by Commission VIII,¹³ and clearly it had a significant impact on the ultimate formation of the World Council of Churches.¹⁴ The Commission made its findings known to the Conference the day of the summer solstice, 1910.¹⁵ It had gathered and assessed information from a range of denominations, missionary sending agencies, regional missionary conferences and associations, missionary founded churches, and missionaries on the status of conversations and projects that fostered visible unity. The Commission studied the contributions being made by comity agreements, the role and promise of conferences and associations developing in various regions of the world, the necessity to foster and the potential fruit to be gained by engaging in joint actions whenever possible, and the obligation of missionaries and their respective sending bodies to cooperate more fully with one another on issues related to visible unity. The Commission included a discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of two fundamental approaches to visible unity, (1) the role of federations of churches that might allow for maximum diversity between ecclesial partners, and (2) the possibility of moves toward greater organic unity that might contribute maximum depth to the resulting relationships.

The care and balance with which the authors of the Commission's report approached their subject is obvious. While the Commission acknowledged in an

¹³ Report of Commission VIII: *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity* with Supplement: Presentation and Discussion of the Report in the Conference on 21st June 1910 (Edinburgh, Scotland: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier / New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1910), 243 pp.

¹⁴ Kenneth Scott Latourette, "Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement and the International Missionary Conference," in Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill, Eds. *A History of the Ecumenical Movement: 1517-1948* 2 Vols; Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 1953, 1967, 1986), I:353-362; C. Howard Hopkins, *John R. Mott: 1865-1955: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 342-382, 684-696..

¹⁵ W. H. T. Gairdner, "*Edinburgh 1910*": *An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1910), 178.

even-handed way the strengths and weaknesses made explicit by differences in perception and thought that arose from regional differences, denominational concerns, and longstanding theological disputes, it did not push its readers into making any specific choice. It made itself quite clear, however, that while no one should be asked to relinquish his or her convictions of truth a way had to be found to reconcile these differences with the “essential unity” that already existed between Christians of different traditions.¹⁶ It confronted its delegates and readers, to take the challenge of visible Christian unity seriously and to act upon it. And it concluded with the passage of a resolution that put into place a Continuation Committee of the World Missionary Conference that would be multi-national and multi-denominational with power to follow up on unresolved issues.¹⁷

Even a cursory examination of the work of Commission VIII quickly reveals that the participants were overwhelmingly representative of historic mainline Protestant and Anglican churches and their missionaries. Furthermore, the delegates were dominantly representative of North American, British and European churches and missionary agencies with missionary input from Asia (primarily China and India) and Africa (primarily from Anglophone countries). Notably absent from the conversation were the ancient Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches. Thus, neither Latin America, which was dominantly Catholic and had been excluded from discussion because it was viewed as a “Christian” region, nor Russia, which was Orthodox, were represented nor were they formally discussed,¹⁸ although some

¹⁶ *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity*, 134.

¹⁷ For a useful summary of the week and the debate surrounding this resolution see, Gairdner, “*Edinburgh 1910*”: *An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference*, 178-214.

¹⁸ It had been agreed beforehand that missions to and among Roman Catholics would be excluded because the focus of the conference was to be on missions to “non-Christians” and “non-Christian countries.” See, Latourette, “Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement and the International Missionary Conference,” in Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill, Eds. *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, I:396.

delegates expressed concern that the absence of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches might be highly significant for the successful implementation of Conference findings.¹⁹ Thus, the Conference was limited by the realities of the East/West split of the 11th Century and it was further limited by the split between Catholic and Protestant/Anglican churches at the time of the 16th Century Reformation. In fact, the absence of any substantial voice from either Latin America or Russia was simply reflective of these same realities and not an unwitting omission on the part of Conference planners.

In the same way, there is no reference to the challenges that Pentecostals were already beginning to pose on the mission field. Clearly, the World Missionary Conference of 1910 was also limited either by its lack of knowledge and experience of Pentecostals on the mission field, or by the unwillingness of its organizers to pursue missionaries across the obvious doctrinal differences and class distinctions that separated the churches present at the Conference from Pentecostal missionaries, in order to hear from this newest Christian movement. As a result, the potential contribution of Pentecostals was completely ignored or overlooked.²⁰

What this meant was that the call to visible Christian unity was limited to those groups that were present at the Conference. It also meant that as important as the World Missionary Conference of 1910 was, and it was very important, it was actually a conference of what would become the representatives of the Christian minority among today's Church. I fully recognize the controversial nature of this claim and I do not mean to call our attention to it in any triumphal way. I would simply remind us

¹⁹ See the comments made in *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity* by the Right Reverend Bishop Brandt (American Episcopal Church), 198-199, the Right Reverend E. S. Talbot, Bishop of Southwark (Anglican), 201-202, and 233-234, and the Reverend R. Wardlaw Thompson (London Missionary Society), 216.

²⁰ Donald W. Dayton, "Yet Another Layer of the Onion or Opening the Ecumenical Door to Let the Riffraff in," *The Ecumenical Review* 40 (1988), 87-110.

that if the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Churches, and Pentecostals, none of whom were present at the World Missionary Conference of 1910, represent the vast majority of Christians around the world today, then by any accounting the churches that were present at the Conference are very much to be reckoned among the minority churches today.²¹ To take it one step further, it has been noted repeatedly in recent years that it is the churches that were not present at the Conference where the most substantial growth is taking place, while many of those groups that were present at the Conference now appear to be in rapid decline.²²

Pentecostal Responses

Given the fact that the emergence of Pentecostalism was not particularly welcomed by the historic churches it should come as no surprise that Pentecostals did not turn to them for acceptance. Though they held much in common with historic churches, acceptance by these churches was not easily found. Like other Christians in 1910, Pentecostals believed in the inspiration and authority of Scripture, the Trinity, and the person and work of Jesus Christ in classical terms. Like most Protestants, they taught the doctrine of justification by faith, they administered baptism, and they observed the Lord's Supper. Like most Methodists and Wesleyan-Holiness Christians, they were

²¹ Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas, Eds. *The International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library/Zondervan Publishing House, revised and expanded 2002), 1278 pp is the single best source for any information having to do with these movements. Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 302 pp. provides the best analysis of how to use Barrett's numbers as well as the best global overview of the movement. The most recent figures from Barrett can be found in his "Global Table 5: Status of global mission, presence and activities, AD 1800-2025," in David B. Barrett, "Missiometrics 2007: Creating Your Own Analysis of Global Data," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 31:1 (January 2007), 32, in which he claims that the total number of Christians in the world today is 2,195,529,000, the largest church is the Roman Catholic Church, with 1,142,968,000 members and Pentecostal/Charismatics number 602,792,000.

²² Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 270 pp.; Konrad Raiser, *To Be the Church: Challenges and Hopes for a New Millennium* (Geneva: Risk Books/WCC Publications, 1997), 101 writes "We have noted earlier that the ecumenical scope of the WCC is limited because its member churches include only a minority – and probably a shrinking one – of world Christianity. This is the case because the Roman Catholic Church on the one hand and most evangelical and Pentecostal churches on the other have not so far seen the possibility of joining the WCC."

concerned about personal integrity, holiness, and what some called the “Higher Christian Life.” Like those who convened the World Missionary Conference of 1910 and like most Evangelicals, they were committed to evangelization and missionary work among non-Christian people. And they did not invent any new polities; they simply adopted those of their forebears, Episcopal, Congregational, and Presbyterian.²³

What separated them from most Protestants were two things. The first was their approach to the Holy Spirit. They insisted that people could be “baptized in the Holy Spirit” at a time subsequent to their regeneration, that this baptism equipped them with power for witnessing (Acts 1:8), and that it would be accompanied by some form of evidence such as speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4). They also insisted that the Holy Spirit continues to distribute charisms upon whomever He chooses (1 Corinthians 12:8-10) regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, color, class, or level of education. That many Protestants linked baptism in the Spirit with conversion and baptism, rejected any notion of evidence, and embraced a cessationist theory regarding certain charisms made things challenging at best.²⁴ These differences led Protestants to reject Pentecostal claims, and because these differences went to the core of Pentecostal identity, they led Pentecostals to distance themselves from many Protestants. This debate ultimately led Aimee Semple McPherson to preach a sermon titled, “Is Jesus Christ the Great ‘I Am,’ or Is He the Great ‘I Was’?” Sister Aimee appealed to the dominant Pentecostal claim that mainline pastors were preaching a Christ who “used to be”, a distant and powerless Christ who had ceased to deal with the problems of the

²³ W. J. Seymour, *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission of Los Angeles, California* (Los Angeles, no publisher, 1915), 95 pp, includes a statement of faith that can be traced back through the *Doctrines and Disciplines* of John Wesley to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church.

²⁴ Benjamin B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles* (London, England: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1918, Reprinted 1972), 24.

contemporary world in any meaningful way, while Pentecostals preached a Christ who was “the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8), a Christ who was deeply involved in the everyday lives of ordinary people, just as He had been when he walked the roads of Israel.²⁵

Those who were absent from the Conference, namely Roman Catholics and the Orthodox, had never embraced a doctrine in which the charisms had ceased to function within the Church. They continued to believe in the contemporary manifestations of the supernatural. But *their* practices suggested that certain charisms were no longer directly available to the ordinary people of God, at least, not in any spontaneous manner. They might be re-defined, and if they were present, they typically found their legitimate expression among those who occupied certain offices.²⁶ Still, it seems clear that Pentecostals held, and may continue to hold, more in common with Roman Catholics and Orthodox believers on this subject, than with some Protestants. Yet it is doubtful that any of these parties recognized that at the time.

The second issue that separated Pentecostals from most Protestants, indeed, from most Christians at that time, had to do with the fact that while most Christians viewed the contemporary Church as standing in continuity with the Church of all previous centuries, most Pentecostals viewed themselves as standing in discontinuity with much of that history. Pentecostals embraced a Restorationist reading of church history and that reading gave a particular spin to their eschatological views.²⁷ God

²⁵ Aimee Semple McPherson, *Divine Healing Sermons* (No city: privately published, circa 1923), 11-22.

²⁶ J. L. Ash, “The Decline of Ecstatic Prophecy in the Early Church,” *Theological Studies* 37 (1976), pp. 227-252, especially 252. Demons are typically expelled by an order of exorcists, healing is accomplished by appeal to a certain sacrament, and prophetic speech now gives way to certain Episcopal pronouncements, the ultimate symbol of which in the Roman Catholic Church are the “infallible” claims attributable to certain *ex cathedra* utterances of the Pope.

²⁷ D. William Faupel. *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* JPT Supp 10 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 326 pp.

had raised up this Pentecostal Movement at the end of the age when it was incumbent upon the Church to evangelize the world. The time would soon come when a universal religion would emerge and it would become the tool of the forces of antichrist. As a result, Pentecostals turned their backs on many discussions regarding visible forms of Christian unity. They feared that such discussions would ultimately lead to disaster. And they focused their attention on bringing all non-Christians to salvation and all believers into the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

That being said, Pentecostals were neither consistent nor generally militant in their treatment of all such discussions because the issue of unity had deep roots in the foundations of the Movement.²⁸ While they tended to emphasize the spiritual reality of their unity in Christ, and thus the invisible character of Christian unity, some early Pentecostals lifted up the challenge of visible unity. Charles F. Parham was troubled by the confusion of denominationalism at the beginning of the century. He came to believe that God had anointed him to be “an apostle of unity.” Unity did not come through the establishment of denominations, which he described as “concentration camps”, but through the work of God among those who were “...baptized by the Holy Ghost into one Body, the gloriously redeemed Church...” He viewed himself as the true Elijah who would lead this redeemed Church into fruitful evangelization in such a way as to result in a single, restored, visible, Pentecostal Church.²⁹

The African American pastor of the famous Azusa Street Mission, William J. Seymour, articulated his stand in his publication *The Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles,

Other Restorationist groups included the Disciples of Christ, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, certain Adventist groups, and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

²⁸ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. “Taking Stock of Pentecostalism: The Personal Reflections of a Retiring Editor,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 15:1 (Spring 1993), 35-60. But see Harold D. Hunter, “Two Movements of the Holy Spirit in the 20th Century? A Closer Look at Global Pentecostalism and Ecumenism,” *One in Christ* 38:1 (January 2003), 31-39. He contends that early Pentecostal understandings were simply triumphalist.

²⁹ Charles F. Parham, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness* (Baxter Springs, KS: Apostolic Faith Bible College, 1902, rpt. 1910), 61-65.

CA) by printing in every issue of this newspaper the fact that “The Apostolic Faith Movement stands for the restoration of the faith once delivered unto the saints – the old time religion, camp meetings, revivals, missions, street and prison work and Christian Unity everywhere.”³⁰

A decade later, Richard G. Spurling, founder of the Christian Union, the group that ultimately became the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) lamented frequently over the “strife and confusion” he witnessed as denominational diversity. “Above all this din of strife and confusion,” he wrote, “I hear Christ praying in John 17:21, that they may all be one.” He knew that some would argue that the answer to Jesus’ prayer had already come. It could be found in the spiritual unity of all Christians. It was something that was essentially invisible. But he argued, “...our reason says not so,” “Christ said the world might believe, but there is not a unity that the world can see. No, it is not the unity which Christ wanted by any means, but a confusion that He does not want.”³¹

In spite of the concern for Christian unity that had been articulated from the beginning days of the Pentecostal Movement, Pentecostals were slow to reach beyond themselves in any form of cooperative venture, even when it came to missionary work among non-Christians. The Pentecostal Missionary Union was the first Pentecostal missionary organization to form. It organized in an Anglican church in Sunderland, England in 1909, just 18 months before the Edinburgh meeting, and it was a small union of Pentecostal missionaries who, in 1925, would become the missionary arm of the Assemblies of God in Great Britain and Ireland.³² The second such Pentecostal

³⁰ *The Apostolic Faith* [Los Angeles, CA] 1.1 (September 1906), 2.

³¹ R. G. Spurling, *The Lost Link* (Turtletown, TN: Farner Church of God, 1920, reprinted 1971), 20.

³² “The Pentecostal Missionary Union,” *Confidence: A Pentecostal Paper for Great Britain* 2:1 (January 1909), 13-15. For an overview of its beginnings see Donald Gee, *Wind and Spirit* (Croydon, England: Assemblies of God Publishing house, 1941, Revised and Enlarged 1949, Revised, Enlarged and Re-titled 1967), 46-49, 131-133.

group to form with world missions at the forefront of its program was the General Council of the Assemblies of God.³³ Broader ecumenical cooperation did not come until 1920 when the General Council of the Assemblies of God in the United States joined the Foreign Missions Conference of North America as a full member.³⁴ The United Holy Church in America, an African American Pentecostal group, became a contributing member of this organization in 1928.³⁵ No other Pentecostal denomination joined it.

The fact that the Assemblies of God joined this organization was not widely known, even among the ministers of the fellowship. The General Secretary of the denomination, J. Roswell Flower, was the first to attend the meetings of the FMCNA, although Assemblies of God mission personnel subsequently took his place. Even the first two denominational Chairmen [now the office of General Superintendent] attended Conference meetings; Eudorus N. Bell attended the 1921 meeting in Atlantic City, New Jersey, but more importantly John W. Welch attended the 1925 meeting in Washington, D.C.³⁶

John R. Mott, the man who had so successfully chaired the 1910 Edinburgh Conference also chaired the 1925 Convention of the Foreign Missionary Conference

³³ The original call that led to the organizational meeting of the Assemblies of God may be found in "General Convention of Pentecostal Saints and Churches of God in Christ," *Word and Witness* 9:12 (December 20, 1913), 1, 5-6. Two of the five arguments for coming together were directed toward the evangelization of the world, conserving resources, assessing needs, and employing practical means of stewardship. It clearly assumed both cooperation and unity on the part of all participants.

³⁴ Edith L. Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism* (2 vols; Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), II:28-29; Through 1961, the Assemblies of God would remain a member of the FMCNA and participate in a number of its programs ultimately included in the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA such as Church World Service. See Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "The Assemblies of God and Ecumenical Cooperation: 1920-1965," in Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies, Eds. *Pentecostalism in Context: Essays in Honor of William W. Menzies* JPTSupp 11 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 107-150.

³⁵ Gregory, Chester W. Gregory, *The History of the United Holy Church of America, Inc., 1886-1986* (Baltimore, MD: Gateway Press, Inc., 1986), 275 pp.; William C. Turner, Jr., *The United Holy Church of America: A study in Black Holiness-Pentecostalism* Gorgias Dissertations 23, Religion Volume 6 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006), 181 pp.

³⁶ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "The Assemblies of God and Ecumenical Cooperation: 1920-1965," pp. 110-120.

of North America. It was as close to the 1910 Conference that any Pentecostal would get. His plenary address, titled “New Forces Released by Cooperation,” echoed the theme of Commission VIII.³⁷ Throughout his message, Mott recalled the lessons learned and the challenges raised by the 1910 Edinburgh Conference, noting that the arguments that had been offered “in favor of cooperation” then, were “now accentuated tenfold.”³⁸ He lamented the divisions that continued to plague the Church and he pointed out the inconsistency of these divisions with Jesus’ prayer in John 17:21 – *unity for the sake of mission*. He also drew from the visions of unity set forth in Ephesians 2 and again in Ephesians 4.

Mott attempted to impart an optimistic vision to his audience for unity and cooperation that he believed would lead to eight contributions enhancing the credibility of the Gospel message around the world. Unity, he believed, would (1) enhance the financial resources available for missionary use, (2) strengthen missionary leadership, (3) develop better statecraft for the Kingdom of God, (4) provide fullness to the Gospel message, (5) deepen spiritual lives, spiritual experience, and spiritual fellowship, (6) increase the apologetic power of the Christian faith, (7) bring about a freshness of power and appeal to young people with all their hope, idealism, and spirit of adventure, and (8) yield a fresh attainment of spiritual power. Mott tied his vision for unity to the spiritual dimension that was so important to him personally and to the Holiness stream of Methodism of which he was a part. Many of these elements should have been good news to Pentecostal ears.

The 1910 Conference had made it clear that there were times when differences in doctrine and polity needed to be set aside or bracketed in order to make progress in

³⁷ John R. Mott, “New Forces Released by Cooperation,” in Fennell P. Turner and Frank Knight Sanders, Eds. *The Foreign Missions Convention at Washington 1925* (New York, NY: Foreign Missions Conference of North America / New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1925), 209-222.

³⁸ Mott, “New Forces Released by Cooperation,” 209.

cooperation and the promotion of unity in missionary matters.³⁹ In 1925, Mott reiterated this point. Repeatedly he called for the delegates to lead the way in setting aside their denominational distinctions in order to bring about unity. “If we can forget that we are Americans, Canadians, British, Chinese, Dutch, French, Germans, Indians, Japanese, Scandinavians,” he began,

or that we are Baptists, Congregationalists, Disciples, Episcopalians, Friends, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans; in the work of making Christ known to people in Asia, Africa, Latin America, or Europe, or of North America, we have gone a great way toward proving to unbelievers who are moved by facts, that the religion of Jesus Christ is the great solvent of the racial and national alienations of the world, and, therefore, is the mightiest force operating among men. The present is the time of times to present this apologetic.⁴⁰

Upon his return to the Assemblies of God headquarters in Springfield, Missouri, Welch gave a report that was ultimately published in the denomination’s periodical, *The Pentecostal Evangel*. Instead of affirming Mott’s message, he made it clear that he did not agree with Mott at all.⁴¹ Welch was clearly opposed to what he termed the “get together” idea. “Satan’s super-man is on the way,” he warned, “the modern church along with the nations, unconscious of what they are doing are leading their efforts directly to the establishment of conditions for the antichrist to take supreme control. This ‘get-together’ idea is nothing other than that.”⁴² He criticized the Conference for expecting denominations to set aside what he saw as their doctrinal commitments, from the discussion. “When they lay aside all of the Methodist

³⁹ “Obstacles to association which are grounded in differences of doctrine or ecclesiastical polity are, perhaps, harder to overcome. Where such differences exist among missionaries or Missions desiring to unite for conference or action, the only terms of practicable association are obviously those adopted by the World Missionary Conference – that questions on which the co-operating bodies so differ shall be ruled out of the discussions of the Association, and that, as a corollary, action based on views of doctrine or polity not shared by all shall be ruled out of its activities. Such a self-denying ordinance does not involve, for any of the parties to it, any sacrifice or depreciation of principle.” *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity*, 50.

⁴⁰ Mott, “New Forces Released by Cooperation,” 218.

⁴¹ J. W. Welch, “The Present Great World Crisis,” *The Pentecostal Evangel* 590 (March 28, 1925), 2-3, 8-9. Cf. Gary B. McGee, *The Gospel Shall Be Preached: A History and Theology of Assemblies of God Foreign Missions to 1959* (2 vols; Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1986), I:120-121.

⁴² Welch, “The Present Great World Crisis,” 2.

doctrine, and the Baptist and Presbyterian, etc., so that there will be no friction,” he protested, “there is nothing left much but a name.”⁴³

He was unwavering in his belief that the Conference erred in calling for the acceptance of missionary agencies from all nations of the world as equal partners. The 1910 Edinburgh Conference had made it clear that the quest for unity was one that was being encouraged by Christian converts who were indigenous to various “non-Christian” regions of the world and they might even provide a way forward in the quest for visible Christian unity.⁴⁴ At the 1925 Conference in Washington, D.C., Mott praised the Edinburgh Conference as “in a measure,” having “illustrated the power of international and inter-racial cooperation.”⁴⁵ He also pointed out that Muslims were demanding the unity of Christians before they would consider the message of the Gospel.⁴⁶

Chairman Welch jumped to the conclusion that the quest for unity was being pressed by Christians and non-Christians alike. That was not good news to him. It was tantamount to inviting “Pagan” nations to enter into the mix with all their paganism. “We are going to try to mix it all up and put it all together,” he declared, “and we hope it will not poison us, and somehow we will be able to avoid these awful things we see in the air.”⁴⁷ But if he thought that this was the concern of the 1910 Missionary Conference or if he believed that this was Mott’s position, he was very much mistaken.

It should be remembered that the first decade of the 20th Century in the United States was one of unprecedented immigration. It was a time of great movement from a rural, agrarian economy to an urban, industrialized economy. Class differences

⁴³ Welch, “The Present Great World Crisis,” 3.

⁴⁴ *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity*, 4-10.

⁴⁵ Mott, “New Forces Released by Cooperation,” 217.

⁴⁶ Mott, “New Forces Released by Cooperation,” 218.

⁴⁷ Welch, “The Present Great World Crisis,” 2.

were becoming increasingly evident. New immigrants tended to come from Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe, bringing with them new religious commitments (often Catholic, Orthodox, or Jewish), and greater cultural and linguistic diversity. The social programs of the United States had not begun to keep up with the needs with which the nation was now being confronted. In 1908, the historic Protestant Churches formed the Federal Council of Churches in the USA in large part to help them develop cooperative social programs to aid those not covered by any other social network. It was quickly dominated by socially active “liberals.” The language regarding the “Fatherhood of God” and the “brotherhood of man” was prevalent in many parts of the Church. The Gospel seemed to be compromised in the process as God’s love and grace were emphasized without due regard for God’s justice and righteousness. Similarly, increasing emphasis was placed upon structural forms of sin while less emphasis was placed upon personal sin. Thus, Holiness Christians, fundamentalists, most evangelicals, and Pentecostals tended to view the Federal Council of Churches in the USA as a threat rather than an agency with promise. During the period between the 1910 World Missionary Conference and the 1925 Foreign Missionary Conference in North America, World War I had been fought. And the League of Nations had organized in 1920.

In the midst of all of this change, John R. Mott and John W. Welch might personally have shared many of the same theological and pastoral concerns. But Mott’s vision was truly global, while Welch’s was much more parochial. Mott was comfortable with the larger stage; Welch was not. Mott was at home in a variety of social situations and he had the respect of church leaders around the world. Welch did not. Mott understood the rhetoric of the event. Welch did not. Perhaps most importantly, Mott had a specific vision of what he wanted to see accomplished. It

demanded that the Church be united so that the world might be evangelized effectively. While Welch shared Mott's desire for world evangelization, because of his Restorationist understanding of the Church and his belief that God had raised up the Pentecostal Movement as a corrective to all that had gone on before, he did not believe that the Church could or would be united apart from an unacceptable compromise in doctrine and practice.

John W. Welch was eight years older than Mott. Originally from Seneca, New York, he had worked with the American Sunday School Union for a number of years and had been a minister with the Christian and Missionary Alliance. After having a Pentecostal experience, he joined the Assemblies of God, and pastored several congregations. that stood on the margins of the larger Church.⁴⁸ And he represented many people who stood on the margins of society. This location on the margins contributed substantially to his feeling that at this missionary conference he was out of place. He described the nearly 5000 delegates who had gathered in Washington D.C. as "intelligent-looking, well-dressed, and sufficient in themselves." He judged them as being delighted with their "reputation of doing a great work in the ends of the world". He complained that they were "...spending other people's money very lavishly." "I saw a lot of missionaries," he murmured, but in his judgment, "none of them seemed to show any evidence that they were willing to sacrifice".⁴⁹ Rubbing shoulders with so many international players, most of whom were educated far beyond him and supported and clothed beyond his means, must have been a challenging experience for him. Welch did not fit in and as a result, he was unable to hear what Mott was actually saying.

⁴⁸ C. E. Jones, "Welch, John William," in Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas, Eds., *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, Revised and Expanded Edition, 2002), 1187.

⁴⁹ Welch, "The Coming World Crisis," 9.

In its passion for pursuing visible unity, Commission VIII called for “apostles of unity,” pointing out that

Men [sic.] are needed with sufficient largeness of mind and breadth of sympathy to understand the point of view of those with whom they cooperate. Most of all, men [sic.] are needed who have seen, and who can lead others to see, the vision of unity; men [sic.] who know that love is the fulfilling of the law, and who have a living faith that God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”⁵⁰

Mott reiterated the essence of that argument, in 1925, noting that the Church would benefit through greater cooperation by “strengthening the intellectual leadership of the missionary enterprise” and “develop a larger and truer statesmanship for the Kingdom of God”.⁵¹ More than that, it would tap into the “power of vision” a factor that he described as a “distinguishing characteristic of youth. While some old people have the power of vision,” he observed, “is it not true that in nearly every instance the visions which command them were imparted to them in the days of their youth?”⁵² John W. Welch would have agreed with Mott on this point, arguing for the role of visions among young men according to Joel 2:28-29, but he clearly did not understand the implications of the message of either Edinburgh or Washington.

Understanding Pentecostal Approaches to Unity

In the years immediately following 1910, Pentecostals had four concerns. The first of these was its core concern for evangelization and world mission. From its beginning, it was clearly a missionary movement. As the Movement expanded and divided, it kept this concern at the forefront of its thinking. As new congregations were established, the number of evangelists who crossed the nations and the number of missionaries who went abroad increased. Soon, further organization would become

⁵⁰ *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity*. 142.

⁵¹ Mott, “New Forces Released by Cooperation,” 213-216.

⁵² “While some old people have the power of vision, is it not true that in nearly every instance the visions which command them were imparted to them in the days of their youth?” Mott, “New Forces Released by Cooperation,” 220.

necessary in order to accomplish with greater efficiency what Pentecostal missionaries were already doing.

Its second concern turned on how Pentecostalism would understand itself. The oldest groups with a Pentecostal self-understanding emerged in the first decade of the 20th Century. They held much in common with the Holiness Movement, though it was clear to both movements that they were different. In point of fact, they shared the identical milieu that had produced John R. Mott., for whom the language of holiness, entire sanctification, and being baptized in the Holy Spirit was quite normal.⁵³ They would have differed largely on the nature of baptism in the Spirit and the role of speaking in tongues.

In 1911, a different version of Pentecostalism emerged with the teaching of William H. Durham. Instead of viewing sanctification in terms of a crisis experience, Durham viewed it as part of the “finished work” that Jesus had accomplished on the cross. Thus, sanctification began at conversion and continued as a process throughout the Christian life.⁵⁴

Again, in 1913, a much more radical teaching began to emerge in part of the Pentecostal Movement. In their quest to be truly “apostolic,” some Pentecostals argued that new converts should be baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ” rather than invoking the traditional Trinitarian Formula. That was the way it had been done by the Apostles throughout the book of Acts (cf. 2:38), they contended. This concern ultimately led to further reflection on the nature of the Godhead, the Name of God,

⁵³ Mott was reared within and remained loyal to the Holiness tradition within the Methodist Church. See, C. Howard Hopkins, *John R. Mott:: 1865-1955: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 816 pp., especially 9-46.

⁵⁴ William H. Durham, “The Great Revival at Azusa Street Mission – How It Began and How It Ended,” *Pentecostal Testimony* [Los Angeles, CA] 1.8 (circa July/August 1911), 3.

and the place of baptism in the Spirit within the Christian life. Thus, by 1913, three major streams of Pentecostalism had developed.⁵⁵

The third concern that the young Pentecostal Movement addressed revolved around its institutional makeup. As the revival spread, new churches sprang up and new missionary fields were opened. It soon became apparent that some form of organization was necessary. This led to the clear identification of some denominations as Pentecostal (e.g. Church of God in Christ, Church of God (Cleveland, TN), and the International Pentecostal Holiness Church), that had existed before the Pentecostal revivals in Topeka, Kansas (1900) and in Los Angeles, California (1906). And it led to the formation of new denominations such as the Assemblies of God, the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, and the United Pentecostal Church. Within a century, Pentecostalism would divide over virtually every issue that it took 1900 years for the rest of the Church to divide, producing a multiplicity of denominations worldwide.⁵⁶

This led to the fourth concern, that of unity. As early as 1911, the Norwegian Pentecostal, Thomas Ball Barratt issued “An Urgent Call for Charity and Unity”. He proposed an international Pentecostal Union. While the form of unity he sought was not accepted immediately, the following year a Consultative International Pentecostal Council was formed in order to provide advice to the growing movement. This council met in Amsterdam in December 1912, and again in Sunderland, England in

⁵⁵ On the early years of this movement see James L. Tyson, *The Early Pentecostal Revival: History of Twentieth-Century Pentecostals and the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World 1901-30* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1992), 169-176.

⁵⁶ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. “Pentecostals and Ecumenism in a Pluralistic World,” in Murray W. Dempster, Byron Klaus, and Douglas Peterson, Eds, *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel* (Oxford, England: Regnum Press, 1999), 340-341.

May 1913 and 1914.⁵⁷ World War I put an end to it until 1921 when once again, it met in Amsterdam. Meanwhile, the question of whether or not Pentecostals stood in unity with one another and what constituted the basis for this unity was being resolved in other ways.

While relationships between the first two streams of Pentecostals with their different perspectives on the doctrine of sanctification were strained, they were not completely antagonistic to one another. At times their rhetoric was strong, but in the end, they recognized each other as legitimately sisters and brothers. That was not true for the understanding that developed between these Pentecostals and those who identified themselves as “Apostolic” or “Oneness” Pentecostals. Questions simmered for several years while Pentecostal leaders in each of these camps tried to find ways to coexist in fellowship with one another. In 1916, that came to an end. The fact that “Apostolics” insisted on the invocation of the “name of Jesus Christ” for a baptism to be legitimate while the others insisted on the Trinitarian Formula might have been managed. But when the Apostolics adopted a modalist position on the Trinity, the older groups, which maintained a classic Trinitarian position, rejected them as legitimate Pentecostal partners. While that break remains in place today, in recent years the Society for Pentecostal Studies has been able to broker a discussion between representatives of the various parties.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Cornelis van der Laan, “The Proceedings of the Leaders’ Meetings (1908-1911) and of the International Pentecostal Council (1912-1914),” *EPTA Bulletin* 6:3 (1987), 76-96, and *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 10 (1988), 36-49.

⁵⁸ Manuel Gaxiola-Gaxiola, “The Unresolved Issue: A Third-World Perspective on the Oneness Question,” in *Probing Pentecostalism* (Virginia Beach, VA: CBN University, 1987), 158-187; Kenneth D. Gill, “The New Issue Reconsidered: A Missiological Analysis of the Oneness Doctrine of the Trinity,” in *Continuity and Change in the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Dallas, TX: Christ for the Nations, 1990), 31 pp.; Ralph Del Colle, “Oneness and Trinity: A Preliminary Proposal for Dialogue with Oneness Pentecostalism,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 10 (1997), 85-110; Amos Yong, “Oneness and the Trinity: The Theological and Ecumenical Implications of ‘Creation *Ex Nihilo*’ for an Intra-Pentecostal Dispute,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 19:1 (Spring 1997): 81-107; David K. Bernard, “Dialogue between Trinitarian and Oneness Pentecostals,” in *Toward Healing Our Divisions: Reflecting on Pentecostal Diversity and Common Witness*

Once these basic issues had been studied, the majority of Pentecostals sought partnerships with one another even as they opened themselves up to potential partnerships with other Christians. They remained fully committed to the invisible unity that exists between all believers through the Holy Spirit. But they were suspicious about entering into more broadly based partnerships if they suspected that these partnerships might mean that they would be asked to give up any of their own autonomy or authority.

In the United States, for instance, the first genuine partnership developed when a number of classical Pentecostal denominations were invited to participate in the founding of the National Association of Evangelicals. While their participation was heavily challenged by a group of Fundamentalists who believed that to include them would be a sign of compromise, the Pentecostals stayed.⁵⁹

On the global front, a European Pentecostal Conference was convened in Stockholm in 1939 that brought together some 15,000 Pentecostals from all over Europe.⁶⁰ More importantly, a Pentecostal World Conference was convened in Zürich, Switzerland in May 1947.⁶¹ The Pentecostal World Conference would become a triennial event that brought Pentecostal crowds together with Pentecostal leaders from around the world. The dream that some Pentecostals had for a Pentecostal World Conference with authority to address substantive issues involving

(Springfield, MO: Evangel University, 1999), 1:5 pp.; David Michael Flynn, "The Oneness-Trinity Debate on the Early Church," in *Toward Healing Our Divisions: Reflecting on Pentecostal Diversity and Common Witness* (Springfield, MO: Evangel University, 1999), 1:29 pp. Manuel Gaxiola-Gaxiola, "Roundtable on Oneness-Trinitarian Pentecostal Dialogue: Thankfulness and Unity: New Testament Lessons for Twentieth Century American Pentecostalism," in *Toward Healing Our Divisions: Reflecting on Pentecostal Diversity and Common Witness* (Springfield, MO: Evangel University, 1999), 1:7 pp.

⁵⁹ Harold Ockenga was still defending the inclusion of Pentecostals in an article, "The 'Pentecostal' Bogey", *United Evangelical Action* 6:1 (February 15, 1947), 12-13; See also Carl McIntire's *Christian Beacon* 9:12 (April 27, 1944).

⁶⁰ Donald Gee, *Wind and Flame* (Croydon, England: Heath Press Ltd., 1941, 1949, revised, enlarged, and retitled, 1967), 175-177.

⁶¹ Gee, *Wind and Flame*, 220-225; Lester F. Sumrall, "International Pentecostal Conference in Switzerland," *Pentecostal Evangel* #1726 (June 7, 1947), 6-7

the whole of Pentecostalism was quickly dashed by those who viewed Pentecostalism in radically congregational terms. This emphasis was carried largely by the Scandinavian churches, the Brazilian churches, and the free or independent churches in the United States, and criticism was spearheaded by the leader of the Swedish Pentecostal Movement, Lewi Pethrus.⁶²

While the Conference never became a “Council of Churches”, it soon adopted a seven point platform that outlined its hopes and intentions. It proposed:

- a. To encourage Fellowship and facilitate coordination of effort among Pentecostal believers throughout the world;
- b. To demonstrate to the world the essential unity of Spirit-baptized believers, fulfilling the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ: “that they all may be one” (John 17:21);
- c. To cooperate in an endeavor to respond to the unchanging commission of the Lord Jesus, and to carry the message to all men of all nations;
- d. To promote courtesy and mutual understanding, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace until we all come in the unity of faith” (Eph. 4:3, 13);
- e. To afford prayerful practical assistance to any Pentecostal body in need of such;
- f. To promote and maintain the scriptural priority of the Fellowship of Bible study and prayer; [and]
- g. To uphold and maintain those Pentecostal truths, “most surely believed among us” (Luke 1:1).⁶³

Clearly, this statement shared many of the concerns that the World Missionary Conference expressed in 1910, it shared a great deal with the concerns expressed by John R. Mott in his 1925 address to the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, and it clearly pointed toward the concerns published by Commission VIII. The singular difference was that it limited its inclusion only to those bodies that were Pentecostal in their doctrine, practice, and self-understanding.

The following year a new organization in the United States was formed when the Pentecostal groups that were members of the National Association of Evangelicals

⁶² Lewi Pethrus, “No Pentecostal World Organization,” *Herald of Faith* 12:7 (July 1947), 4-7.

⁶³ These articles may be found in Klaude Kendrick, *The Promise fulfilled: A History of the Modern Pentecostal Movement* (Springfield, mo: Gospel Publishing House, 1961), 209-210.

banded together. They called it the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America and it developed a statement of objectives that included, once again, a commitment to a visible demonstration of Pentecostal unity. It stated that it intended

- (1) To provide a vehicle of expression and coordination of efforts in matters common to all member bodies, including missionary and evangelistic effort throughout the world
- (2) To demonstrate to the world the essential unity of Spirit-baptized believers, fulfilling the prayer of the Lord Jesus “that they all may be one” (John 17:21).
- (3) To provide services to its constituents which will enable them to accomplish more quickly and efficiently their responsibility for the speedy evangelization of the world.
- (4) To encourage the principles of community for the members of the body of Christ, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit until we all come to the unity of the faith.⁶⁴

In 1994, the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America was replaced by a more broadly representative group, the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America. At its inaugural meeting in Memphis, Tennessee it adopted a Racial Reconciliation Manifesto that included a number of statements committing the organization to work toward visible manifestations of Christian unity while recommitting itself to the task of mission.⁶⁵

In spite of these important statements, a convincing case for participation in Christian unity efforts that extend beyond the Pentecostal Movement remains difficult. Pentecostals continue to participate in various regional, national, and

⁶⁴ W. E. Warner, “Pentecostal Fellowship of North America,” in Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas, Eds., *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, Revised and Expanded Edition, 2002),

⁶⁵ “Racial Reconciliation Manifesto,” Memphis, Tenn., October 19, 1994, in *The Pentecostal Evangel*, No. 4205 (December 11, 1994), 25 in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, 17:2 (1995), 217-218; in *Reconciliation: The Magazine of the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America* 1 (Summer 1998), 17 and in *Yes Lord, Now: A Magazine of Reconciliation* 3:7 (January-March 2003), 56-57. The agenda spelled out in the Manifesto included two major points in this regard. They read as follows: VII We commit ourselves not only to pray but also to work for genuine and visible manifestations of Christian unity. XI At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Azusa Street Mission was a model of preaching and living the Gospel message in the world. We desire to drink deeply from the well of Pentecost as it was embodied in that mission. We, therefore, pledge our commitment to embrace the essential commitments of that mission in evangelism and mission, in justice and holiness, in spiritual renewal and empowerment, and in the reconciliation of all Christians regardless of race or gender as we move into the new millennium.

international associations of Evangelicals, but they have great fear of moving beyond what might be considered the safe space in which they understand many of the factors that are at play. To date, the most significant place where broader ecumenical engagement has taken place is at the bilateral level. An international dialogue between the Catholic Church and certain Pentecostal churches and leaders has existed since 1972, co-founded by David du Plessis and Fr. Kilian McDonnell, OSB.⁶⁶ It has made some important findings during its thirty-five years of existence.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ On the history of this dialogue see, Arnold Bittlinger, *Papst und Pfingstler: Der römisch Katholischepfingstliche Dialog und seine ökumenische Relevanz* (SIHC 16, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1978) 484 pp.; Jerry L. Sandidge, *Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue [1977-1982]: A Study in Developing Ecumenism Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity 16* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1987) 2 volumes, 933 pp.; Paul D. Lee, *Pneumatological Ecclesiology in the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue: A Catholic Reading of the Third Quinquennium (1985–1989)* (Rome: Pontifica Studiorum Universitas A.S. Thoma Ag. in Urbe, 1994), 364 pp.; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Spiritus ubi vult spirat: Pneumatology in Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1972-1989)* (SLAG 42, Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 1998), 509 pp.; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Ad ultimum terrae: Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness in the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1990-1997)*, (SIHC 117, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1999), 281 pp.; Peter Hocken, “Dialogue Extraordinary,” *One in Christ* 24:3 (1988), 202-213; Peter Hocken, “Ecumenical Dialogue: The Importance of Dialogue with Evangelicals and Pentecostals,” *One in Christ* 30:2 (1994), 101-123; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “An Exercise on the Frontiers of Ecumenism’: Almost Thirty Years of Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue,” *Exchange: Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research* 29:2 (2000), 156-171; Kilian McDonnell, “Improbable Conversations: The International Classical Pentecostal-Roman Catholic Dialogue,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 17:2 (1995), 163-174; John A. Radano, “The Pentecostal-Roman Catholic International Dialogue, 1972-1991,” *MidStream: The Ecumenical Movement Today* 31:1 (January 1992), 26-31; Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue: Some Pentecostal Assumptions,” *The Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 21 (2001), 3-25; Juan Fernando Usma Gómez, “El Diálogo Internacional Católico-Pentecostal 1972-1998: Reseña Histórica, Presentación Final de la Cuarta Fase: Evangelización, Proselitismo y Testimonio Común, y Perspectivas,” *Medellín: teología y pastoral para América Latina* Vol. 24, no. 95 (September 1998), 449-470.

⁶⁷ All reports through the third series of discussions were published in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 12:2 (fall, 1990), 85-142 and in William G. Rusch and Jeffrey Gros, Eds. *Deepening Communion: International Ecumenical Documents with Roman Catholic Participation* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1998), 367-422. All reports from the first four rounds of discussion may be found in Gros, FSC, Jeffrey, Harding Meyers, and William G. Rusch, Eds. *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches / Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 713-779. “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,” is available in the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 2:1 (January 1999), 105-151; also in the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity’s *Information Service* No. 97 (1998/I-II), 38-56, and in *Pneuma: The Journal of The Society for Pentecostal Studies* 21:1 (Spring 1999) 11-51. It has been published in French in the *Service d’information* No. 97 (1998/I-II), pp. 38-57, as a Portuguese language booklet under the title *Diálogo Católico-Pentecostal: Evangelização, Proselitismo e Testemunho Comum* (São Paulo, Brazil: Paulinas, 1999), 77 pp; in Spanish in “Evangelización, Proselitismo y Testimonio Común,” *Diálogo Ecueménico* XXXIV, n. 108 (1999), 103-152. It appears in German with all previous reports in Norbert Baumer und Gerhard Bially, eds. *Pfingstler und Katholiken im Dialog: Die vier*

Other dialogues have begun as well. During the 1960s a series of dialogues took place between the Pentecostals and various Reformed denominations in the Netherlands,⁶⁸ while during the late 1980s, the Pentecostal Movement in Finland was engaged in discussions with the Finnish Lutheran Church.⁶⁹ Since that time, a bilateral dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Pentecostals has nearly completed two rounds of discussions,⁷⁰ and a conversation has

Abschlussberichte einer internationalen Kommission aus 25 Jahren (Düsseldorf, Germany: Charisma, 1999), 59-95. It also appeared as “The final report from the Fourth Phase of the International Dialogue 1990-1997 between the Roman Catholic Church and some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders,” *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 4 (July 1998).

⁶⁸ See, *De Kerk en de Pinkster Groepen* (S-Gravenhage, Netherlands: Boekencentrum N.V., 1960), 79 pp.; *De Pinkster Gemeente en de Kerk: De Broederschap van Pinkstergemeenten in Nederland geeft antwoord op het Herderlijk schrijven van de Generale Synode der Nederlands Hervormde Kerk over: “De Kerk en de Pinkstergroepen”* (Rotterdam, Netherlands: Stichting Volle Evangelie Lectuur, 1962) 21 pp.; and *Het Werk van de Heilige Geest in de Gemeente: Voorlichtend Geschrift over de Pinkstergroepen, Uitgegeven in Opdracht van de Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken* (Kampen, Netherlands: J. H. Kok, 1968), 78 pp. The report of the Fifth phase of dialogue (1998-2006) will be published later this year.

⁶⁹ “The Official Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Pentecostal Movement of Finland 1987–1989,” in *Dialogues with The Evangelical Free Church of Finland and the Finnish Pentecostal Movement*. Documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 2 (Helsinki, Finland: Church Council for Foreign Affairs, Ecclesiastical Board, 1990), 33–56. These findings are also published in the Finnish language as: *Päätösasiakirja: Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon ja Suomen helluntaiherätyksen viralliset neuvottelut 1987-1989* (Vantaa, Finland: RV-Kirjat, 1989), 46 pp. For an assessment of this enterprise see, Risto A. Ahonen, “Appraisal of the Discussions Between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Pentecostal Movement of Finland,” in *Dialogues with The Evangelical Free Church of Finland and the Finnish Pentecostal Movement*. Documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 2 (Helsinki, Finland: Church Council for Foreign Affairs, Ecclesiastical Board, 1990), 57–63.

⁷⁰ See “Word and Spirit, Church and World: The Final Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 23:1 (Spring 2001), 9-43. This document was also published in the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4:1 (2001), 41-72, as “Word and Spirit, Church and World: Final Report of the International Pentecostal-Reformed Dialogue,” *Reformed World* 50:3 (September 2000), 128-156, and as “‘Word and Spirit, Church and World.’ The Final Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders: 1996-2000,” *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal Charismatic Research* 8 (September 2000). See: www.pctii.org/cyberj/index.html. It is also found at: www.warc.ch/dt/er11/20.htm. Articles on this dialogue include Frank Macchia, “Spirit, Word, and Kingdom: Theological Reflections on the Reformed/Pentecostal Dialogue,” *Ecumenical Trends*, (March 2001) 1-8; Gesine Von Kloeden, “Geistes Gegenwart: Endrücke von der 4. Konsultation zwischen dem Reformierten Weltbund und den Pfingstkirchen,” *Reformierte Kirchen Zeitung* (15 Juli 1999), 269-271; Gesine Von Kloeden, “Pfingstlerisch und reformiert: Eine Standortbestimmung,” in Christoph Dahling-Sander, Kai M. Fundschmidt, und Vera Mielke, Eds. *Pfingstkirchen und Ökumene In Bewegung*, a special issue of *Beiheft zur Ökumenischen Rundschau* No. 71 (Frankfurt am Main: Otto-Lembeck Verlag, 2001), 82-99.

been initiated between the Institute for Ecumenical Research, in Strasbourg, France, on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation and Pentecostals.⁷¹

What Can We Learn from Commission VIII?

There is no question but that both in the Church's desire to support missionary service and cooperation among non-Christians and in its quest for visible unity during the 20th Century and beyond, the World Missionary Conference convened in Edinburgh Scotland, in 1910 was a watershed. It noted definitively, the need for some form of visible unity as a compelling force or apology for the reconciling message of the Gospel. And it called repeatedly for a clear, compelling, and singular vision and voice to declare Christ to the nations. It contributed substantially to the formation of both the Commission on Faith and Order and the International Missionary Council.

But Edinburgh proved also to be a moment marked by the finitude of human imagination. Those who convened it did not envision the Church in 2010 as looking anything like it does today. They assumed, perhaps rather naively, that they held all the seeds of the answer to Jesus' prayer in their hands. A few participants in the Commission VIII discussions, especially those from the Anglican community, wanted to engage Catholics and the Orthodox more fully even then. Coming as it did a decade later, the call of the Ecumenical Patriarch which was developed independently of the Conference, could be interpreted in some way as being fruit borne from his reflection on the subject subsequent to Edinburgh Conference *and* at it should be

⁷¹ Ken Appold, "Institute Begins Lutheran-Pentecostal Study Group," *Building Bridges: Newsletter of the Institute for Ecumenical Research* 6 (Summer 2005), 2-3; Ken Appold, "Second Lutheran-Pentecostal Conversation Held at Strasbourg Institute," *Building Bridges: Newsletter of the Institute for Ecumenical Research* 7 (Winter 2005), 4. The institute also offered a summer seminar on Pentecostalism in 2006, see Ken Appold, "40th Strasbourg Summer Seminar Focuses on Pentecostalism," *Building Bridges: Newsletter of the Institute for Ecumenical Research* 8 (Summer 2006), 2.

viewed as coming at the prodding of the Holy Spirit.⁷² Since that time, it has become equally clear that something was also happening among Roman Catholics at the time. It is doubtful that any of those who attended the Conference in 1910 anticipated the changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council, but its ecumenical fruit is now a well established fact. Still, notably absent from the Edinburgh Conference and from any deliberation that took place in conjunction with Commission VIII was even a single representative of the Pentecostal Movement. What seems to be the case is that the Holy Spirit was at work within historic Protestantism, among the Orthodox, within the Catholic Church, and in the latest Christian movement – the Pentecostals.⁷³

Those on Commission VIII who envisioned the future of world mission were fully aware of the limitations that comity agreements had. Even as they encouraged further use of these treaties, they recognized that they were not ultimate solutions to real problems.⁷⁴ These limitations would only grow when groups such as the Pentecostals, who had not been part of the implementation process, simply ignored them and crossed lines without regard for those who were already present.⁷⁵ They believed that there was no need to respect these agreements when they had not been part of putting them in place, and they sometimes they viewed them as standing in the way of the will of the Holy Spirit.

⁷² “Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere,” Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarch, 1920, in Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope, Eds., *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company / Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 1997), 11-14.

⁷³ Huibert van Beek, “Pentecostals-Ecumenicals Dialogue,” André Droogers, Cornelis van der Laan, and Wout van Laar, Eds. *Fruitful in This Land: Pluralism, Dialogue and Healing in Migrant Pentecostalism* (Zoetermeer, Netherlands: Boekencentrum Publishing House, 2006), 81-92.

⁷⁴ “The delimitation of territory, as we have seen, can be carried out only under certain limitations, and cannot provide an ultimate solution of the problems of the mission field. But for the present, it has been found to work well, and might be considerably extended in many fields.” *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity*. 139.

⁷⁵ It should be noted that while Pentecostals have violated such agreements because they were not a part of the discussions that made comity decisions, they are not alone in having done so. See, for instance, the report from Zimbabwe in David J. Maxwell, “The Spirit and the Scapular: Pentecostal and Catholic Interactions in Northern Nyanga District, Zimbabwe in the 1950s and early 1960s,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 23:2 (June 1997), 298. Neither party looks very good.

The Commission was also very much aware of the fact that the so-called “Sleeping Giants” of the world, were beginning to stir and at one level they knew that the end of Western Colonialism was at hand.⁷⁶ But while recognizing that the time for action was limited in light of emerging events, the commissioners were unable to think beyond the present form of “Christendom” to which they had grown accustomed. Their vision was still highly dependent on the *status quo*. In some far too many cases they had failed to educate indigenous clergy to adequate levels to take leadership positions, indeed, in many cases they had done so intentionally. In some cases, they established schools only to certain levels of attainment to ensure this limitation. They seem to have expected to be in positions of authority even when the financial and political support from colonizing governments and the home offices that frequently oversaw their work began to dry up. As new nations under indigenous leadership began to emerge, many churches seemed to lose their will or ability to proclaim the Gospel through the historic means of evangelization, preaching, and teaching. They increasingly withdrew or they turned their funds toward other enterprises, projects associated with health, education, and general welfare. Even so, many churches have withdrawn in the name of cleaning up paternalism.

In a sense, what Edinburgh also demonstrates is that “The best laid plans of mice and men often go astray.” The Pentecostal and related movements that began to emerge about the time of the Edinburgh Conference were not yet part of the vision. And while their vision of the world and the challenges they would face began to

⁷⁶ “The non-Christian world is awakening. It is being stirred with intellectual life, new industrial activity, new political aspirations, new moral sentiments, new social principles, and new religious longings. We see this movement everywhere, in the beginnings of life in Africa, in the demand for education and reform in China, in the ‘unrest’ of India, and in the development of Japan. These races have their own future, and mean to work out their own political and social regeneration with the aid of [sic.] all the civilization of the West can give them, but in their own way and for themselves. These awakening nations are looking to the West for intellectual enlightenment and for civilization..” *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity*. 132.

increase, the vision of those who had been so committed to unity for the sake of mission seem to have lost the second part of that vision. For too many, perhaps, unity became an end in itself.⁷⁷ As a result, Pentecostals frequently wonder now, why they need a relationship with historic churches. They wonder what these churches can bring to the table that they might find of value. Perhaps it can be said that while the vision of Edinburgh for the unity of the Church was a large one, just as the missionary vision of contemporary Pentecostals could be said to be large. But in neither case has it been as large as the vision that God has for the Church. God's perspective calls for visionaries who can see beyond themselves as well as the limits of our own imaginations as they stand. In addition to the many contributions of historic Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches, that vision *must* include a role for the witness of Pentecostal, Charismatic, and related types of groups to the ongoing power of the Holy Spirit through signs, wonders, and witness. In the end, that may even call into question long held understandings of the marks of the Church.⁷⁸

Commission VIII called the churches to listen to the voices of the churches on the mission field. "The Churches in the mission field may lead the way to unity," they observed, "but they cannot move far and move safely without the co-operation of the Church at home."⁷⁹ This possibility was undoubtedly raised in light of the progress that had been made even by 1910 in the development of what would later be called

⁷⁷ In his address to the Convention at Washington, D.C. John R. Mott reminded his audience of precisely this concern. "The unity or oneness among His followers down the generations, for which Christ prayed, was not to be regarded as an end in itself, but rather as a means to ensure the great central end of Christian missions, namely, 'that the world may believe'." Mott, "New Forces Released by Cooperation," 217. This admonition bears repeating in 2010.

⁷⁸ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "The Holy Spirit and the Unity of the Church: The Challenge of Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Independent Movements," in D. Donnelly, A. Denaux, and J. Famerée, Eds. *The Holy Spirit, the Church and Christian Unity: Proceedings of the Consultation Held at the Monastery of Bose, Italy (14-20 October 2002)*, BETL 181 (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2005), 353-381; Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "The Challenge Pentecostalism Poses to the Quest for Ecclesial Unity," in Peter Walter, Klaus Krämer und George Augustin, Eds. *Die Kirche en ökumenischer Perspektive* [a festschrift for Cardinal Walter Kasper on his 70th Birthday] (Freiburg, Switzerland: Herder, 2003), 306-320.

⁷⁹ *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity*, 138.

the united and uniting churches. But more than that, it seems to have been a recognition that the key to the unity of the Church for the sake of mission might rest in the hand of Christians in the South. “We are only beginning to understand that the beliefs and customs and capacities of the coloured races are in future to be regarded as worthy of attention,” they noted.

These coloured races have their own future, and mean to work out their own political, religious and social history; and they will no longer do so apart from, and with negligible influence on, the community of the civilized nations. We are beginning to see that the Church is again facing a mighty conflict, like that which arose when the living forces of the Gospel contended with the forces of the pagan world in the early centuries.”⁸⁰

Over the past half century or so, we have seen the rise of indigenous Christianity around the world. It looks more like Pentecostalism than it does many of the historic churches. Even many of the historic churches, especially on the African continent, have become part of those movements for renewal that they view as grounded in the Holy Spirit. The question is whether or not the historic churches have a vision for reaching beyond their time worn traditions, whether they have the ability to think dramatically new thoughts, and whether they are willing to learn from the newer, younger, vibrant, “southern” churches. The question must also be raised in the other direction. Do many of these newer Pentecostal, charismatic, third wave, new apostolic, independent, and prosperity driven, “southern” churches have the patience to learn from the long and valuable experience of the older churches. The option to dismiss one another is not now open. If the conditions that called for the World Missionary Conference were serious in 1910, they are infinitely more serious today. As John R. Mott summarized the issue in 1925,

The missionary message will be wonderfully enriched through the most intimate cooperation of all true believers. In fact, is not genuine

⁸⁰ *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity*, 5-6.

cooperation and unity absolutely essential to ensure the giving of full orbed expression to the message of the Church of Christ? Christ has not revealed himself solely or fully through any one nation, race, or communion. No part of [hu]mankind has a monopoly of His unsearchable riches. Every national and denominational tradition has a contribution to make which can enrich the whole Body of Christ. The help of all who bear His name and who have had experience of Him is necessary adequately to reveal His excellencies and to communicate His power.⁸¹

The call of Commission VIII for visionary people and the call that John R. Mott reiterated fifteen years later is still a call that is waiting to be answered. The question is, “When are the churches going to heed the call and rely both on the Lord and on one another instead of on their own strength and wisdom?”

⁸¹ Mott, “New Forces Released by Cooperation,” 216.