

## **Word and Spirit, church and world**

### **Pentecostal-Reformed dialogue, 1996-2000**

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#### **Introduction**

This is a report from the participants of an international dialogue (1996-2000) between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Warc) and leaders from some classical Pentecostal churches. It had its beginnings in the 22nd Warc General Council (Seoul, 1989), which proposed exploration of the possibility of organizing an international dialogue with Pentecostal churches. This was made possible through the contacts made in 1993 between the general secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Milan Opocensky, and professor of church history and ecumenics at Fuller Theological Seminary, Cecil M Robeck, Jr., a Pentecostal minister. Over the next two years, they exchanged correspondence and talked with one another about the possibility that such a dialogue might be held. They attempted to discern both the need for such a conversation, and the potential outcomes that might result. Finally, they agreed to bring together a small group of scholars who could explore the potential for such a dialogue with them.

In 1995, Dr Opocensky received encouragement from the Warc executive committee to pursue an exploratory meeting with the Pentecostals. Dr Opocensky appointed Dr Henry Wilson of the Warc staff to facilitate the discussion from the Warc side. Dr Robeck acted in that capacity for the Pentecostals. They convened a small exploratory committee at Mattersey Hall in Mattersey, England, from July 8 to 9 1995.<sup>1</sup> The committee determined that a dialogue between Warc and Pentecostals might serve several useful purposes. They noted that those who are disciples of Jesus Christ are all members of the one church. They were concerned, however, that this reality receive attention not merely at an abstract theological or ideological level, but that it receive some attention at the practical level where the churches of the Reformed tradition and the churches of the Pentecostal movement touch the lives of one another directly.

The committee noted that in many places around the world, members of the Pentecostal and Reformed communities are uncomfortable with one another. Sometimes they are openly antagonistic toward one another. In a

few places such as South Korea, Brazil, and South Africa, tensions between the Reformed and Pentecostal communities were clearly evident and often painful for both parties. The committee was concerned that there was no identifiable, formal way for these communities to relate to each other. These facts seemed to indicate that conversation between the various parties involved was not only advisable; it was essential.

The exploratory committee believed that some of these tensions were the result of the state of ignorance that these communities often manifested towards one another. Other tensions seemed to emerge as a direct result of honest theological disagreement. Some of these issues were rooted deeply in the history of one group or the other, while other issues were the result of more recent claims. Still other tensions could be attributed to certain contemporary practices in which one group or the other was engaged. In some places in the world these practices yielded public charges of unfair competition, proselytism, fanaticism, or dead religion. The committee believed that this state of affairs was not only unhealthy for Christians to endure, but that it communicated the wrong message to the world. If the gospel of reconciliation seemed to lack the power necessary to help Christians to resolve differences between themselves, how could it be trusted to bring reconciliation between human beings and their God?

As a result of these considerations, the committee concluded that an international dialogue between representatives of these traditions would go far to help both groups gain a greater understanding of one another, to explore their common concerns, and to confront their differences. They established three limited goals by which the dialogue could begin. First, they hoped that such a dialogue would increase mutual understanding and respect between the churches of the Reformed and Pentecostal traditions. Second, they asked that the dialogue seek ways to identify areas of theological agreement, disagreement, and convergence so that both communities might be mutually strengthened. Third, they suggested that those who would engage in the dialogue would help these two communities by exploring various possibilities for common witness. They also hoped that by entering into the life of these local communities the dialogue might be an encouragement to Christians who were embattled, or who were looking for new ways to validate their message of reconciliation before the world.

The next step was more difficult. Since members of the Pentecostal community and members of the Reformed community did not already have close relations, the exploratory committee looked for ways by which to enter such a dialogue. There is no international Pentecostal group that is equivalent to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Thus, there was no formal organizational source willing or able to provide support or direction for the Pentecostal participants. While this fact held the potential for some imbalance in the process, the committee believed that it was better to begin the conversation than not. This would be a new experience for many of the participants. The committee struggled with what topics should be addressed and with what methodologies of exploration they would recommend.

The committee recommended that the dialogue begin with a tentative discussion of contemporary understandings of spirituality as it is viewed and practised in these respective communities. To aid the dialogue in understanding spirituality, not only theologically, but also as experienced practically, the committee recommended that the dialogue be hosted in alternate years by each of the traditions. They further recommended that the dialogue include, as part of its ongoing life, opportunities for worship in each of the traditions. It was agreed that the members of the subsequent

dialogue teams would engage in acts of common prayer and Bible study on a daily basis, but further, that they would enter into the parish life of the local community of the team that acted as host. This tradition of common worship and witness has proven to be one of the most significant tools for helping both teams understand one another.

The first official meeting of the international Reformed-Pentecostal dialogue was finally convened in Torre Pellice, Italy, from May 15 to 20 1996. The Waldensian Church served as the dialogue's host. Abival Pires da Silveira and Cecil M Robeck, Jr. were asked to serve as co-chairs. The dialogue included delegates from the Pentecostal and Reformed traditions who literally came from throughout the world. The theme for the opening discussion was "Spirituality and the challenges of today". Papers were offered by members of both teams in the following three areas, "Spirituality and interpretation of Scripture", "Spirituality and justice" and "Spirituality and ecumenism."<sup>2</sup> Each of these papers provided insight into the similarities and differences between the traditions, but as the members of the dialogue felt their way into the lives of each other, they began to recognize two things. First, it was too much to ask for the members of the dialogue to do justice to all the material that was presented in these papers in the time allotted. Second, various members of the teams lacked an adequate understanding of the other tradition, and therefore, often lacked a language by which the two could communicate. They decided that they would seek fewer papers at their next meeting and spend more time exploring the ideas that were presented.

The dialogue held its second meeting in Chicago, Illinois, USA, from May 11 to 15 1997. While the Pentecostal team hosted this meeting, McCormick Theological Seminary provided the facilities. The theme was "The role and place of the Holy Spirit in the church". Three papers were presented at this meeting. One was presented on "The relation of the Holy Spirit to the Bible". The other two explored the role of the Holy Spirit in proclamation and the place of charismatic manifestations within the church.<sup>3</sup> While both groups found commonality in God's revelation of Jesus Christ as Scripture bore witness to it, they struggled to understand the implications of ongoing revelation for faith and practice. They recognized the sovereign role of the Spirit in the bestowal of gifts upon the faith community as it seeks to address the diverse needs that arise in the church, society and the world. Both teams began to note that they had much in common, but they took note of the fact that they differed on some important issues as well. While the number of papers they had solicited for this round of discussions was half that solicited during the first round, they concluded that they needed to solicit even fewer papers for the third round.

The dialogue seemed to find its rhythm when it met in Kappel-am-Albis, Switzerland from May 14 to 19 1998. It provided a unique opportunity for participants to hear from Professor Walter J Hollenweger, a former Pentecostal pastor of the Swiss Pentecostal Mission, now a minister in the Swiss Reformed Church, and to meet with the host of the dialogue, President of the cantonal Reformed Church of Zürich, Rev. Ruedi Reich. In the absence of Rev. Abival Pires da Silveira, Rev. Salvatore Ricciardi acted as the Reformed co-chair for this session. The dialogue studied two papers on a single topic, one from each team. The topic was "The Holy Spirit and mission in eschatological perspective."<sup>4</sup>

It became apparent within that context that the dialogue would be significantly aided if there were greater continuity of the members of the dialogue through the years. While those providing leadership to the dialogue had hoped to include people for whom an international encounter

would be an experience of personal growth, the lack of understanding of global Christianity by some participants continued to be a handicap to the project. Similarly, it had been hoped that the dialogue would be composed of people at a variety of educational levels from within the respective traditions. This also proved to be a handicap in the sense that the group continued to lack a common language and methodology by which to pursue their assigned tasks. At the close of this third session, then, the leaders determined to bring teams to the table that embodied greater parity.

From May 14 to 20 1999, the dialogue discussed "The Holy Spirit, charisma, and the kingdom of God" in Seoul, Korea.<sup>5</sup> The Reverend David Yonggi Cho and Yoido Full Gospel Church served as the hosts of the dialogue this year. From this point on, the members of the dialogue felt that the teams that could best facilitate their common task were finally in place. Furthermore, the venue provided members of the dialogue with a first-hand opportunity to observe members from both the Reformed and Pentecostal communities where tensions were known to exist. While the primary discussion at the table focused on the topic at hand, what took place at the times of common worship, in the visits to local churches, and at other specified times proved to be significant to the hopes expressed by the exploratory committee. Local guests from both communities were invited to sit in and observe some of the discussions. At times, members of the local Christian press as well as the secular press were invited to observe particular sessions. On several occasions, members of the dialogue offered press interviews that allowed them opportunity to talk about the hopes of the dialogue and address some of the concerns that were present in the Presbyterian and Pentecostal communities in Seoul. These limited encounters proved to be highly successful in building bridges between the communities at that time.

The first five-year round of discussions between Warc and Pentecostals concluded with a meeting in São Paulo, Brazil, from May 20 to 24 2000. The Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil and the First Independent Presbyterian Church of São Paulo jointly hosted the dialogue. During this session, Milan Opocenský served as chair for the Reformed team. The papers that had been presented in each of the previous four years, agreed accounts from these meetings, and a working draft that was largely derived from these accounts became the materials from which members of both teams drew while preparing this report. Work was undertaken in plenary sessions and in four groups, each working on one of the four major sections of the body of this report. Specialists were invited to work on the language of the text and to provide the introduction. One day was taken for the two traditions to meet in caucus in order to clarify their concerns. In the end, the report was submitted to the plenary for final approval.

This process, upon which both teams agreed, allowed for the recognition of new insights and information that could only be seen at the end of the discussion. Each year had a way of providing parts to the total discussion, but they begged for integration. The members of both teams, therefore, believe that the following statements fairly represent not only their personal concerns, but the concerns of those they sought to represent in this ongoing discussion.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Those present at the Mathersey conference included Hugh Davidson, Margaret M McKay, Salvatore Ricciardi, and Henry Wilson for the Reformed churches, and

Richard Israel, Frank Macchia, Jean-Daniel Pluss, and Cecil M Robeck, Jr. for the Pentecostals.

2. The presentations made in 1996 included Aldo Comba, "Spirituality and Ecumenism: Reformed", Abival Pires da Silveira, "Spirituality and Justice", and Henry Wilson, "Spirituality and Interpretation of Scripture", for the Reformed team; and Daniel Albrecht, "Spirituality and Ecumenism: Pentecostal", Anthea Butler, "Facets of Pentecostal Spirituality and Justice", and Richard Israel, "Pentecostal Spirituality and the Use of Scripture", for the Pentecostals. Edited versions of the papers by Anthea D Butler and Richard D Israel have since been published in Hubert van Beek, ed., Consultation with Pentecostals in the Americas: San Jose, Costa Rica, 4-8 June 1996 (Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 1996), pp.28-55. Daniel Albrecht's paper was published under the title, "Pentecostal Spirituality: Ecumenical Potential and Challenge", in the Cyberjournal for Pentecostal Charismatic Research [www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyber2.html] #2 (July 1997).

3. In 1997, Wonsuk and Julie Ma collaborated on "An Immanent Encounter with the Transcendental: Proclamation and Manifestation in Pentecostal Worship", while Jan Veenhof wrote on the subject of "Orthodoxy and Fundamentalism" with a "Short Note on Prophecy", and Cephas Omenyo addressed "The Role of the Spirit in Proclamation and Manifestations of the Charismata within the Church" on behalf of the Reformed team.

4. In 1998, Byron Klaus delivered "The Holy Spirit and Mission in Eschatological Perspective: A Pentecostal Viewpoint", while Cephas Omenyo delivered the Reformed paper titled "The Holy Spirit and Mission in Eschatological Perspective".

5. In 1999, Yohan Hyun presented "The Holy Spirit, Charism and the Kingdom of God from the Reformed Perspective", while Frank D Macchia addressed "The Struggle for the Spirit in the Church: The Gifts of the Spirit and the Kingdom of God in Pentecostal perspective." Subsequent to the 1999 meeting in Seoul, these papers were published as Yohan Hyun and Frank Macchia, Spirit's Gifts - God's Reign, Theology & Worship Occasional Paper No.11 (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Church [USA], Office of Theology and Worship, 1999), 66 pages.

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## **Spirit and word**

### **The Spirit and the Word in the context of the Trinity**

Together, the members of the Pentecostal and the Reformed teams agree that we stand in communion with the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed in our belief that the Holy Spirit is the lord and giver of life and, together with the Father and the Son, is to be worshipped and glorified. We also believe that the Father and the Son and the Spirit send the church into the world. We regard the older conception of the contrast between the Reformed and Pentecostal families as consisting of a difference in emphasis between the Word (Reformed) and the Spirit (Pentecostal) to be in need of correction. Both the Reformed and Pentecostal traditions consider Jesus Christ to be the criterion for the work of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecostals are aware that some have *viewed* the Pentecostal movement as overly concerned with the Holy Spirit. Though Pentecostals draw attention to the work of the Spirit, they do not generally detach this work from a Trinitarian understanding of God's activity. Pentecostals, in general, tend to agree together that God's work and our worshipful response have a certain Trinitarian structure (involving the Father through the Son in the power of the Spirit). Most Pentecostals accept a Trinitarian understanding of the Godhead, although a wing of the Pentecostal movement affirms only the oneness of God. This dialogue has not included any representatives from this wing of the larger Pentecostal movement. These Pentecostals are

sometimes known as "Apostolics", " ", or "Jesus" Name" Pentecostals. They baptize according to Acts 2.38, and tend to embrace a modalist understanding of God. If there is a centre to the Pentecostal message, it is the person and work of Jesus Christ. From the beginning of the Pentecostal movement, its central message has referred to Jesus Christ as saviour, sanctifier, spirit baptizer, healer, and coming king. In fact, Pentecostal practice strives to conform to the biblical injunction that the yardstick of Christ must judge those things ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

In the context of the Holy Trinity, Reformed churches have affirmed the Christological criterion for the Spirit's work but they have also paid special attention to the work of the triune God in creation. The world is a good work of the triune God who called it into existence through the Word by the Spirit and continues to sustain it. In spite of sin and rebellion, the earth remains the "theatre of the glory of God." There is, as a consequence of this focus on the earth giving glory to God its Creator, an openness in the Reformed tradition to the work of the Spirit in creation and culture. We must fulfil our vocation in this world, over which Jesus Christ is Lord and which by the Spirit will be renewed and brought to its final consummation.

### **The Spirit and the Word in creation and culture**

We agree that God has revealed Godself decisively in Jesus Christ, the one in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells. God's Son is the eternal Word of God, who became flesh (cf Jn 1.14, Heb 1.1-2, and Col 2.3, 9). In addition, God has revealed Godself through the Scriptures; and Scripture, as the Word of God, is not to be isolated from the agency of the Holy Spirit.

We agree that the Holy Spirit is present and active, not only in the Christian church, but also in human history and in various cultures. The work of the Spirit is broader than we think. Nevertheless, we believe that every culture, as well as our own churches, is in need of being reshaped by the Holy Spirit in accordance with the revelation in Jesus Christ as witnessed to in Scripture. We believe that Jesus Christ, the one in whom the fullness of God dwells, is the perfect icon of God, the decisive self-revelation to human beings (Heb 1).

With a focus on preaching and experiencing the ministry of Jesus Christ, Pentecostals have generally emphasized the work of the Spirit in culture as a preparation for the ministry of Christ through the church in the world. The corresponding emphasis has been on the sinfulness and needs of a "world without Christ". More recently, some Pentecostals have begun to reflect on the role of the Spirit in creation and culture to reveal God and to accomplish God's just and holy will, but not to the extent of believing that there is saving grace outside of the ministry of the gospel. Jesus Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life". On the other hand, without diminishing the unique role of Jesus Christ in God's saving plan, the Reformed tradition has regarded the role of the Spirit in culture more expansively and positively than solely as a preparation for the ministry of the gospel.

### **Spirit, proclamation, and spiritual discernment**

Together, we stress the mutual bond of the Word and the Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, the Bible speaks the Word of God. The indispensable action of the Spirit makes the text into a living and life-giving testimony to Jesus Christ, transforming the lives of people, for Scripture is not a dead text. This confession involves more than an articulation of a biblical truth, or an expression of doctrine. It communicates how we understand, relate to, and

engage the Bible in everyday life. The Bible nourishes the people of God and enables them to discern the spirits.

Pentecostals and most Reformed Christians believe that Jesus Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life" and, therefore, that no one can come to the Father except through the Son (Jn 14.6). The Holy Spirit convinces people of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn 16.8-11), leading toward a personal response to the divine invitation to seek him and to find him (Acts 17.27). Both traditions acknowledge that the Holy Spirit is at work among all peoples, including peoples of other faiths, preparing them to receive the proclaimed Word (Ps 139; Acts 14.15-17). There is, therefore, a common challenge for believers from both traditions to learn together the ways in which the Spirit of God teaches the church to utilize various cultural elements in the service of God and the proclamation of the Word of God.

Pentecostals affirm that Christians must continue to work for Jesus Christ through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. By proclaiming the gospel, healing the sick, and confronting demonic powers, Pentecostals seek to be involved in a vibrant proclamation of the gospel, accompanied often by manifestations of the power of God. Healing is probably the most common manifestation of God's power among Pentecostal churches worldwide. Healings (including exorcisms) manifest the presence, compassion, and power of God.

For Pentecostals, the anointing of the Spirit makes proclamation an event and an encounter between people and God. A Spirit-empowered proclamation of the scriptural message thus holds an important place in Pentecostal worship services. But the communication of God's will and action in Pentecostal services is not confined to the event of proclamation. There are multiple gifts of the Holy Spirit at work in Pentecostal worship to channel God's presence and to communicate God's will. The locus of discernment tends to be distributed in many Pentecostal churches among the entire congregation, so that whether gathered in worship or dispersed in society, all members are called to exercise their gifts in ministry. In various times and places, some Pentecostals have even reported that the Spirit worked so dramatically through multiple, extraordinary gifts in a particular church service, that the preached Word of God was not given as it usually is. There is a tendency in many Pentecostal congregations to decentralize the communication of God's Word and to encourage ordinary believers to speak for God alongside the preaching ministry of the ordained minister.

Reciprocity is established between Word, Spirit, and community so that the Spirit enlivens the Word, the Word provides a context for the Spirit's work, and the community lives out the Spirit's directions. Pentecostals place priority on the "leading of the Spirit" both individually and corporately.

While Pentecostals employ different methods and approaches to interpret the Bible, central to their interpretation is the conviction that the Word of God speaks to today's world. Pentecostals strive to hear what the Word of God has to say to them and their era as they live in restored and ongoing continuity with the mighty acts of God recorded in the Bible. For Pentecostals, the Bible is a story; they read their lives into that story and that story into their lives. They stress returning to the experiences of God to which Scripture bears witness, but also moving forth into the world to witness to the deeds of God multiplied through them in new contexts. Essential to hearing the Word, therefore, is the spiritual openness and fitness of the interpreter. The gap between the Bible and the contemporary world, which is emphasized among Pentecostals, is not historical but spiritual.

Pentecostals generally advocate a disciplined study of the Bible that employs methods that do not alienate the reader from the text or cast doubt on the miraculous nature of God's deeds, whether in biblical times or now. For this reason, they have often been wary of historical-critical methods of interpreting the Bible. Some also follow the fundamentalist defences of the inerrancy of Scripture and strive to enter the modernistic struggle over the proper use of historical method in interpreting the Bible. Others are trying, instead, to explore postmodern interpretations of the Bible in order to transcend the limits of historical investigation in encountering the meaning of Scripture. But Pentecostals normally emphasize that the Bible speaks and transforms lives only through the work of the Holy Spirit.

While Pentecostals originally came from diverse denominational backgrounds, they sought to go beyond what they had commonly experienced as "dead forms and creeds" to a "living, practical Christianity". Thus, the revelation of God through the preaching of the Bible was aided, not by conscious devotion to past denominational traditions, but to various signs and wonders of the Spirit indicating the last days, one of the important ones being prophecy. It is a Pentecostal conviction that the Spirit of God can speak through ordinary Christians in various ways that are consistent with the biblical message (I Cor 12-14). Ideally, these inspired words aid the preached word in making the will of God revealed in Scripture dynamic and relevant to particular needs in the church. As the Acts of the Apostles shows, the church is to be directed today by the Spirit prophetically. "Let those who have an ear to hear, hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches (Rev 1-3)."

The Bible is essential to Reformed faith and life. People entering a Reformed church normally find a Bible on the communion table or the pulpit. That the Bible is open indicates that God wants to speak. The Word of God wants to answer questions that people may carry in their hearts. The Word also wants to put a vital question to those who enter the church. Keeping an open Bible in the church is a symbolic act, which affirms that the Bible is central in Reformed experience and worship. The decisive moment in the worship service is, indeed, the reading and preaching of the Word. The entire liturgy is structured to keep preaching of the Word at the centre. However, the Bible is not an end in itself, for both Scripture and preaching point to the living Word, Jesus Christ.

Reformed churches understand that the Word of God is addressed to the whole people of God. Thus, congregations emphasize teaching, studying, discussing and learning the Scriptures so that the community of faith and all its members may hear the Word of God in its fullness.

In previous centuries, Reformed theologians usually said that all signs and wonders were confined to the apostolic age. Increasingly, theologians, pastors and church members see that this opinion finds no ground in the Scriptures. However, a careful reading of Paul's letters leads Reformed Christians to the conviction that it would be wrong to concentrate attention on the so-called supernatural gifts, such as glossolalia and healing. In the Pauline lists of spiritual gifts, the more common gifts, such as leading, organizing and teaching, are mentioned in juxtaposition with the more spectacular gifts. In fact, we cannot sharply differentiate "supernatural gifts" from "natural" gifts. What we see as "natural" can be seen as a miracle, whether in nature, personal experience, or the history of humankind. This is evident in the "miracles" of the growing concern for the equality of women and men, the abolition of apartheid, and the struggle for the abolition of weapons of mass destruction. In these events and efforts,

we may see the Spirit working in our day for the healing of the world.

Reformed people acknowledge that the Word of God comes to them through the faithfulness of those who have preserved and proclaimed it, giving witness in ministry and mission throughout the centuries. The Apostle Paul underscores the importance of tradition when he gives instruction concerning foundational elements of the Christian message, such as the resurrection of Jesus Christ (I Cor 15.3) and the Lord's Supper (I Cor 11.23). Because the Word has reached us over a long span of time, it should be approached through any means of interpretation that will make its message intelligible. One of these means, though not the only one, is the historical-critical method. No interpretative method may take the place of the Word itself. While exegetical work helps the church discern meaning in Scriptures, it is only by the Holy Spirit that the Scriptures become the living Word of God for the church.

The Word of God addresses not only the church or individuals, but also the entire world, which God has deeply loved (Jn 3.16). This is why proclaiming the Word and living in obedience to the Word is central to the Reformed tradition, enabling the church to oppose all oppressive situations in the name of God. Such opposition is normally termed the "prophetic" task of the church, but it cannot be taken for granted that any proclamation is "prophetic". In any case, the prophetic Word is first addressed to the church and so the first task of the church is to listen to the prophets and then - faithfully and humbly - to make the meaning of God's Word clear to the present generation. The Word proclaimed by the church may become prophetic only when and where it pleases God, and it is only "after the fact" that a proclamation by a church may be considered prophetic.

Pentecostal and Reformed Christians conclude that the Bible is the Word of God in its witness to Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. They tend to have different expectations concerning the role of the Spirit in culture and the significance of extraordinary gifts of the Spirit in manifesting the power of God in the proclamation of the gospel. Thus, we affirm the Bible as the Word of God, an instrument of the Spirit to proclaim the grace of Jesus Christ to all people. The Word of God inscripturated in the Bible becomes the living Word that speaks by the action of the Spirit of God, because the Spirit, who speaks through the Bible, is the same Spirit who was present in the formation of the Scriptures. This role of the Bible as an instrument of the Spirit may not be understood in an exclusive way, however, for the Spirit cannot be confined to the text of the Bible. We of the Pentecostal and the Reformed traditions may understand the prophetic task of the church somewhat differently, but we agree that the Spirit of God continues to speak in and through the church in a way consistent with the biblical message.

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## **The Holy Spirit and the church**

The teams of Pentecostal and Reformed theologians share the following affirmations about the Holy Spirit and the church.

- The church is the creature of the Word and Spirit.
- The church is the community of the Holy Spirit's leading.
- The church is the community of the Spirit's gifts.
- >The church is *in* but not *of* the world.

In each of these areas of common conviction, Reformed and Pentecostal

emphases are often different. These differences are sometimes complementary, sometimes divergent. In all cases, however, ongoing dialogue helps to clarify complementarities and divergences, as well as suggest ways of deepening the ongoing conversations between us.

### **The church is the creature of the Word and Spirit**

Reformed and Pentecostal Christians share the firm conviction that the church is God's creation. The church is a people called by the Word and shaped by the Spirit, all to the glory of God. The gracious action of God precedes all human forms, communities, and institutions. In speaking of the church, we stress the mutual connection of Word and Spirit, and the church as creature of the Word and Spirit called upon to respond to God's grace by worship in spirit and in truth. However, Pentecostal and Reformed Christians may use different language to express this common conviction.

Reformed Christians tend to use the language of "covenant" to describe the initiative of God and the formation of God's people. The covenant is the expression of God's gracious action in Christ to reconcile us to Godself, and to one another. Reformed understanding of the church is based on both the promises and the commandments of God. The deepest intention of the covenant is the reconciled life, for reconciliation in Jesus Christ is the basis and motive for life according to the will of God through the power of the Spirit. The shape of the covenant is expressed in the two great commandments - love of God and love of neighbour. Reformed Christians tend to identify the faithful church as that community where the Word of God is rightly preached and heard, and where the sacraments are celebrated according to Christ's institution. Reformed Christians thus affirm that we receive the gospel of Christ through the living community of faith, which is sustained and nurtured through the Word of God, as the Holy Spirit seals the Word in us.

Pentecostals tend to use the language of "the outpouring of the Spirit" to describe the initiative of God and the formation of the church as the body of Christ. They tend to identify the faithful church as the community where Jesus Christ is lifted up, the Word of God is preached and obeyed, and where the Spirit's gifts are manifested in the lives of believers. The Spirit sovereignly bestows charisms upon the community and its members. These gifts of the Spirit manifest themselves in a variety of ways so that the role of the Word and the function of the Spirit are contextualized within the community. Each Pentecostal community, formed by the outpouring of the Spirit and shaped by the Spirit's gifts, discerns what the Spirit is saying to the church through the Word and is thereby shaped by the Spirit in conformity to the Word.

From the covenant it follows that Reformed Christians nurture an awareness of living in congregations, whereas Pentecostal Christians tend to focus more upon the life of the local assembly as it gathers together in the name of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The common affirmation that the church is the creature of the Word and Spirit can lead us into fruitful conversations regarding the ways the Word is given space among us and the ways the Spirit moves among us. Both Pentecostal and Reformed Christians understand worship as the church's primary response to God's grace. Furthermore, both understand that it is the Spirit who enables faithful worship by the community. Yet the two communities of faith express the Spirit's presence and action differently. Much more conversation should occur on the concrete reality of worship. Deeper dialogue concerning the role of sacraments or ordinances, and the

place of the Holy Spirit's gifts, may lead to mutual enrichment.

### **The church is the community of the Holy Spirit's leading**

Both Pentecostal and Reformed Christians recognize the Spirit's leadership in the church as the church confesses its faith, gathers as a community of worship, grows in edification and fellowship, and responds to its mission in the world. In these and other ways the church is facilitated by the Spirit's guidance in the process of spiritual discernment.

Reformed communities affirm that the Spirit leads the church as a community in ongoing confession of Christian faith. Reformed people have always been confession-making people, exercising their God-given freedom and obligation to confess the faith in each time and place. From the earliest beginnings of the Reformation through the 20th century, Reformed communities have formulated creeds and confessions that express the lived faith of concrete communities. The churches acknowledge the ongoing guidance of the Spirit to lead the community of faith into the truth and to make the gospel intelligible and relevant to specific places and times. This ongoing reformulation of confessions is based on fidelity to the Scriptures - the Word of God that bears witness to the incarnate Word of God.

Reformed churches strive to reach consensus through mutual discernment of Word and Spirit. Yet we confess that we are imperfect hearers of the Word who may resist the Spirit's leading. As a community of redeemed sinners, we remain sinners nonetheless. "Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches."

While some Pentecostals have enacted confessions or statements of faith written in formal propositions, frequently they manifest their beliefs through expressions of personal testimony made in daily life and worship. Pentecostals explicitly affirm that it is the Spirit who both leads and enables them to worship God. They attempt to be sensitive to the movement of the Holy Spirit because they believe that the Spirit leads them into all truth and points them towards Jesus Christ.

Reformed worship is the place where the gathered community confesses common faith. In creeds and confessions from the early church, the Reformation period and contemporary settings, the worshipping assembly gives voice to the beliefs that bind individual believers together in common faith, life and witness.

Ideally, spiritual discernment plays an essential role in Pentecostalism. The practice of Pentecostal spirituality collectively prepares congregations, ministries and denominations to discern God's will in concrete situations. Functioning within many dimensions of the church as community, the discernment dynamic relies upon the Spirit's assistance and leadership for an authentication of communal prayer. This is manifested in a collective inner witness that is consistent with Scripture. Prayerful deliberations or conversations enable the local church to arrive at consensus about its response to an issue or situation. Included in the communal discernment is the interaction between Pentecostals and society.

Social changes and developments sometimes awaken a Christian group to the need to wrestle with an issue. Coupled with communal discernment is personal discernment by each member. Each person participates in the discernment, ascertaining her or his judgment on the emerging or established consensus. Pivotal in personal discernment is the role of

conscience. While the term is rarely used among Pentecostals, it is often implied. In the personal discernment of individual Pentecostals, the conscience is shaped, in part, by their spirituality.

The Pentecostal expectation is that the exercise of discernment is distributed throughout the entire congregation. Whether gathered in worship or dispersed in society, all are called to exercise their gifts in ministry. All individuals are accountable to the group and any individual may challenge the group as to who has "the mind of the Spirit". Discernment, then, requires active participation by all the members of the community. They listen for the Spirit to speak through the Word communicated by preaching, teaching, testimony and action. They are encouraged to bring their Bibles to meetings and to read them for themselves. They weigh the value of the proclamation they hear by reference to Scripture as well as "promptings" of the Spirit and prayerful reflection.

### **The church is the community of the Spirit's gifts**

Although the gifts of the Spirit are often associated with Pentecostal churches, Reformed churches also acknowledge that the church is established and maintained by the gracious presence of the Spirit who gives gifts to the people of God. Pentecostal and Reformed ways of speaking about and also receiving the gifts vary, yet both affirm that the Holy Spirit's charisms are constitutive of ecclesial life.

Pentecostals affirm that spiritual gifts enhance the faith of believers, deepen their fellowship with God, edify the church, and empower mission in the world. Pentecostals love and respect the Word of God, so they expect God's Spirit to reveal his power through manifestations of grace. These manifestations of spiritual gifts are signs that God is with God's people. Spiritual gifts such as healing, prophesying, casting out demons, speaking in tongues, and other charisms enrich the lives of persons and the life of the community of faith.

The participants in this dialogue affirm that the gifts of God to the church are real, the Holy Spirit is the giver of gifts to the church, and the gifts are given to the church to work together for the common good. Reformed as well as many Pentecostal churches acknowledge that their understanding of the Spirit's gifts is broader than the classic list of spiritual gifts in 1 Cor 12.8-10. Furthermore, consideration of the Spirit's gifts is shaped by the overarching theme found in 1 Cor 12.4-7: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.'

Reformed Christians affirm that the Spirit's gifts are experienced in the congregational life of Reformed churches. Every congregation can point to numerous instances where, in official and unofficial ways, words and acts have led congregations in faithfulness. Wherever in the church acts of reconciliation are initiated, words of the good news of Christ are proclaimed, gestures of consolation are shared, injustices addressed, or prayers for healing and wholeness are uttered, the Holy Spirit is at work among the people of God. Yet representatives of Reformed churches confess that their churches are sometimes too casual in seeking and receiving the Spirit's gifts. Reformed Christians must proclaim forcefully that it is God who gives the gifts, and not we ourselves.

As we, the Reformed and Pentecostal participants in this dialogue, have reflected on the biblical texts and the life of the church, we have been convinced that no single gift or set of gifts is normative for every believer, every congregation or every church in every time, or place. We share the conviction that gifts are not permanent possessions of believers or congregations, for the Spirit gives various gifts at different places as those gifts are needed.

We also agree that no biblical listing of gifts is a template to be laid over the entire church. On the one hand, we recognize that many Pentecostals limit the gifts of the Holy Spirit to those mentioned in 1 Cor 12.8-10. They do not value the charismatic nature of those mentioned elsewhere in the Bible (cf 1 Cor 12.27-30; Rom 12.3-8; Eph 4.11; 1 Pet 4.10-11). On the other hand, many Reformed Christians recognize the theoretical possibility that the gifts mentioned in 1 Cor 12.8-10 might somewhere be appropriately exercised, but normally they do not encourage or even sanction them to be exercised in their own services. In addition, there are those in both traditions who value one gift over the contribution of another, or who seem to limit the Holy Spirit's sovereign distribution of gifts.

These things being said, it is important to note that most Pentecostals affirm the fact that the gift of tongues is not expected to be given to all Christians. Many of them do argue, however, that the ability for Christians to speak in tongues enjoys a privileged position. They contend that the Pentecostal experience enjoyed by the 120 in Acts 2, an experience in which they spoke in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance, is ultimately available to all who believe (Acts 2.38-39). In this sense, many Pentecostals distinguish between speaking in tongues as a gift of the Holy Spirit (not available to all) and speaking in tongues as sign or evidence (potentially available to all) that one has been baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1.8, 2.1-4).

It is our common conclusion that these Reformed and Pentecostal positions are ultimately no less than concessions to the reality of our separated existence as Christian churches. We believe that those who embrace these positions, or elevate their status by giving voice to them in doctrinal or political statements, must be challenged to recognize their limitations. They need to be asked to broaden their understanding of the gifts which the Holy Spirit desires to give to the church. Only in so doing can they enter fully into the life of the church as the body of Christ. Only in so doing can they participate in what it means to be a priesthood of all believers. Only in so doing can they experience the fullness of what Joel prophesied, and Peter proclaimed on the day of Pentecost, that God's Spirit would be poured out on all flesh, thereby equipping them to participate in God's work in the world.

Reformed Christians affirm that God calls men and women and endows them with different gifts to exercise various forms of ministry in order to equip the whole people of God for mission in the world. Reformed churches express this conviction by affirming that all are commissioned to ministry by their baptism. The classic understanding of "priesthood of all believers" leads Reformed churches to encourage all Christians to participate fully in the life and ministry of the church. Some Reformed churches embody the ministry of the whole people of God by not confining ordained office to the ministry of Word and sacrament. These churches ordain persons as elders and deacons to be full partners with ministers in the service of the church. Other churches commission members to such ministries of the church as caring for the poor and the marginalized, teaching Sunday school, leading

youth ministries, furthering women's ministries, and more. Thus, the gifts given to individual members are recognized and encouraged.

### **The church is in but not of the world**

Both teams in this dialogue affirm that since the church is meant to be an instrument for the transformation of the world, "it is *in* the world, but not *of* the world." The church as the community of believers should be a "model", making evident - even in an inadequate way - what the future kingdom will be. Just as unity in the faith is manifested on the local level through the reciprocal love of the members of the congregation, similarly the unity of the Spirit already granted to us by God is manifested in the relations between congregations, groups, churches, and denominations on the regional, national, and global levels.

The church works in fidelity with the Word and Spirit to live out the message and will of God. The members of the community offer themselves up as the eyes, ears, mouths and hands, which allow the Spirit and the Word to address needs that arise in the church or the world.

From time to time, Reformed churches have been involved in prophetic acts to alter oppressive situations in society. Sometimes, Reformed churches have been part of oppressive structures. Thus, the church's life must be informed by the sustained study and application of Scripture to various situations and social systems, and also by active engagement in the various aspects of society as the church bears witness to the reign of God.

Pentecostals focus more on individuals than on structures, viewing persons as individuals. When a person is in need, Pentecostals will often attend to the immediate need, without always analysing the systemic issues that might give rise to the situation. As they probe more deeply, they uncover systemic issues that produce or aggravate the pastoral issue being addressed. Some Pentecostals, then, confront systemic issues out of strong pastoral concerns about an individual or a group of people. While Pentecostals have frequently been stereotypically portrayed as passive and "other-worldly", programmes of personal renewal at

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### **The Holy Spirit and mission**

#### **Holy Spirit and *Missio Dei***

The relation between the Holy Spirit and mission clarifies the issue of who determines mission and how mission is best carried out in each context. Is mission primarily the work of the church or does the church participate in the mission initiated by God?

When we say we are involved in *Missio Dei* it is a correction of the notion that the mission in which Christians are involved is only the mission of the church. The church is a sign of the reign of God that has been inaugurated by Jesus Christ. While it has been called into this privilege, it does not claim to limit God's reign and sovereignty in all God's creation. We see that mission has its source and authority in the triune God. The biblical foundation points to the imperative for us to witness to all people in word and deed (Mt 28.18-20; Lk 24.46-47; Jn 20.21-23; Acts 1.8).

We affirm that the Holy Spirit empowers women and men for mission in God's world. In the Reformed community it is not usual to define this

empowerment as the baptism with the Holy Spirit. The empowerment as a gift is implied in the grace given to the members of the communities. In recent times, however, it has been recognized that bestowal of grace has a goal: that Christians may become co-workers of God in Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3.9). Therefore, some have proposed the concept of "vocation" as an element with specific significance beside justification and sanctification.

In the experience of Acts 2, Pentecostals are convinced that they have a mandate for mission before the return of the Lord. They see that mandate as rooted in the eschatological significance of the prophecy in Joel 2.28-30. Most Pentecostals believe that baptism in the Holy Spirit is for the empowerment of believers to be effective witnesses of the gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1.8). This empowerment includes divine calling, equipping, commissioning, and the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit throughout mission.

Together, we affirm that *Missio Dei* has implications for the ways we view culture and religions. We believe that the sovereign God is present in all societies and cultures. We believe that the Spirit of Christ goes ahead of the church to prepare the ground for the reception of the gospel.

### **Holy Spirit and culture**

Pentecostals and Reformed believers are both challenged to learn together the ways in which the Spirit of God teaches the church to utilize various cultural elements and how these elements can be put into the service of God, in accordance with the biblical revelation.

The Holy Spirit is present and active in human history and culture as a whole as well as in the Christian church. However, every culture has to be transformed and reshaped by the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the revelation of Jesus Christ as witnessed to in Scripture.

Pentecostals emphasize the work of the Spirit in support of the missionary outreach of the church in the world. Their conviction is that human culture stands in alienation from God and God's truth. The ministry of the gospel is meant to liberate people from captivity to that which is godless in culture. They further believe that godlessness in culture degrades human dignity and occasions, social oppression. The ministry of the gospel implies first the salvation of humanity, but also the enhancement of human dignity and liberation.

Pentecostals and Reformed people believe that cultures are elements within God's creation and so embody many positive elements despite the existence of sin. The relationship between the gospel and culture is dialogical; no one operates in a cultural vacuum. Therefore, witness to the gospel should be embodied in culture. Our mission efforts demonstrate that we have not always paid due attention to issues of culture.

Whether there are salvific elements in other religions, however, is currently being debated by individual theologians within the Reformed family. While Pentecostals and many Reformed find it impossible to accept the idea that salvation might be found outside Jesus Christ, some Reformed agree with the ecumenical observation made at the world conference on mission and evangelism in San Antonio, Texas, USA in 1989, that "We cannot point to any other way of salvation than Jesus Christ, at the same time, we cannot set limits to the saving power of God"<sup>7</sup> (cf Acts 17.28).

On the whole, Pentecostals do not acknowledge the presence of salvific

elements in non-Christian religions because they view this as contrary to the teaching of the Bible. The church is called to discern the spirits through the charism of the Holy Spirit informed by the Word of God (1 Corinthians 12.10, 14.29; cf. 1 Thessalonians 5.19-21; 1 Jn 4.2-3). Pentecostals, like many of the early Christians, are sensitive to the elements in other religions that oppose biblical teaching. They are, therefore, encouraged to receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

### **The multifaceted mission**

Within an eschatological perspective, the mission of the church is to witness to the truth that the kingdom of God, which yet awaits full consummation in the future, has already broken into the present age in Jesus Christ. The ministry of Jesus Christ, therefore, continues in the world by the power of the Spirit working through the eschatological people of God. The integrity of mission is bound up in a commitment to multi-dimensional mission. Those dimensions include, but are not limited to, proclamation of the gospel (Mt 28.19-20, Acts 1.8), fellowship (2 Cor 5.17-20), service to the world (Mt 25.34-36), worship, and justice (Acts 2.42-47).

### **Service to the world**

The grace of the Holy Spirit, given to us by Jesus Christ through the proclamation of the reign of God, prompts us to serve and participate in the mission of God in the world. This mission includes both proclamation and social engagement, which cannot be separated. Mission is concerned with the righteousness of our horizontal relationship with our neighbours and nature, as well as the vertical relationship with God.

We recognize that the understanding of mission varies with the social location of the given situation. The Holy Spirit empowers and leads us to work for the structural transformation of society as well as the individual transformation of ourselves without committing the church to a specific political ideology. This transformation is an ongoing process and realization of the prayer for the coming of the kingdom of God.

7. "Reports of the Sections: Section I: Turning to the Living God", in the International Review of Mission LXXVIII, Nos.311-312 (July/October 1989), p.351.

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### **Spirit and kingdom**

#### **Working definition of the kingdom**

The kingdom of God is apocalyptic and prophetic, both present gift and future hope. The kingdom of God is the broad theological term that represents God's sovereign, gracious, and transformative reign of righteousness and truth in the face of, but also beyond the forces of evil and sin. The kingdom cannot be identified strictly with earthly rule, although God reigns and acts in history. Neither can the kingdom be identified strictly with the church, although the church and all creation exist in the eschatological hope of the fulfilment of the kingdom.

#### **Spirit, kingdom, and eschatology**

Eschatology has often been confined to a theology of the last things,

related to the consummation of the kingdom of God. For Reformed and Pentecostal churches, eschatology is not only a theology of the last things as the concluding part of our doctrinal system, but also an overall perspective of our theology and life. Although the kingdom of God has already come in Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit, it is yet to be fulfilled in the future with the return of Christ. Until then, God rules in the world in the power of the Spirit, who grants a foretaste of the fulfilled kingdom (2 Cor 1.22; 5.5; Eph 1.7-14). God calls us to proclaim and participate in the kingdom of God.

Reformed and Pentecostal churches agree that the church is birthed by the Spirit and serves as an instrument of the kingdom that Jesus Christ proclaimed and inaugurated. The church is called to serve the kingdom, rather than be self-serving or an end in itself. The Spirit's role in ushering in the kingdom relates to its presence in the church

Both Reformed and Pentecostals also agree that the gospel that is at the heart of the church's mission, therefore, is not only directed to individual life in the Spirit and to hope for life after death, but is also future oriented and directed to the resurrection of the dead and the new heavens and the new earth. Christian hope is not just individual and heaven bound, but is social and cosmic (Rom 8) and directed toward the kingdom-to-come at Christ's return.

Thus, for Pentecostal and Reformed Christians to hold eschatology as a context for understanding mission means that the ultimate demands of God's eternal kingdom continue to confront Christians and the churches with the challenge of obedience. Our experience of God's Spirit as an experience of "eternity" in time must be viewed in relation to the horizon of God's ultimate future for humanity and all of creation, which is yet to be fulfilled. The victory of Christ over sin and death and the presence of God's Holy Spirit urge us toward courage and hope in our obedience to God's missionary call. But since the kingdom of God has not yet come in fullness, we confront trials and weakness with patience. We experience the dynamic tension between the "now" and the "not yet" of the fulfilment of God's kingdom in the world by engaging in patient action and active patience. Our actions and our prayers yearn patiently but fervently for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Reformed churches affirm the second coming of Christ. Yet we are aware that God's time is different from ours. Thus, every form of prediction of the end time is excluded. The final victory of Christ gives ultimate significance to life in this world as God's time breaks into our time. Life in Christ is eschatological life.

The Reformed churches know that Christ will come as judge, but stress that the judge is none other than the saviour. Judgment is not confined to the future, for judgment of sin and death happens in our time as well. The motive and attitude of our mission should always be love and compassion, reflecting the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecostalism was born in a milieu of growing disillusionment with 19th-century theological optimism concerning the coming of the millennial reign of Christ. This post-millennial theology, in Britain and North America at least, was being displaced in some circles by a pre-millennial eschatology, which focused on the return of Jesus to rapture the church. It was the personal return of Christ to bring the kingdom, rather than the return of Christ to receive the kingdom which was already to have been established on earth. This eschatology has shaped Pentecostal missions

since that time. It implies a focus on mission as evangelism.

Pentecostals believe that Christians move relentlessly toward that ultimate fulfilment of God's kingdom through prayer and battle against the forces of evil. Meanwhile, this tension between the "now" and the "not yet" of Christian hope grows ever more intense as the Spirit of God is poured out in ever-greater abundance in the direction of final fulfilment at Christ's return.

From their inception, Pentecostals have held to a firm belief that the return of Christ was close at hand. Early Pentecostals zealously proclaimed the message of the gospel to the whole world, in light of the return of Christ. Scripture passages such as Jn 16.12-16, Mt 25.31-46, 1 Thess 4.13-17, and 2 Pet 3.8-9 continue to fuel the missionary zeal of Pentecostals. The Holy Spirit's work in inspiring Pentecostals to missionary activity, service, and giving is in anticipation of the kingdom of God. The eschatological urgency that Pentecostals feel, therefore, should not be thought of only as the hope for the return of Christ, but a firm realization that there remains a responsibility to humanity of providing for the needs of people, such as shelter, education, food, and medical concerns.

Generally, Pentecostal mission cares for the total person. Indeed, prayer for healing and ministry to the personal needs of people such as food and education have always been present in Pentecostal missions. It does suggest, however, that Pentecostal missions have not always challenged social, or structural issues prophetically. There are at least two reasons for this. The first is that the social location of Pentecostals was, on the whole, marginal to society and Pentecostals had limited access to the power centres of the social establishment. Second, those structures were viewed as part of the system, which Jesus' coming would replace by the righteous reign of God.

### **Spirit, kingdom, creation**

The relationship of creation to the Spirit and the kingdom is a pivotal eschatological theme for many churches, both Reformed and Pentecostal. The topic challenges restricting the signs of God's reign to human history. Creation as a topic within Spirit and kingdom introduces the cosmos as an object of God's engagement.

For Reformed and Pentecostal churches, the Holy Spirit is integrally involved in creation. Both recognize the Spirit's role at the beginning of creation as well as acknowledge the Spirit's role in the sustaining and renewing of creation. For Reformed churches and some Pentecostal churches, the expectation of the kingdom includes the restoration and renewal of the cosmos.

In Pentecostal worship, sighs too deep for words are given expression. These are often understood as speaking in tongues (Rom 8.26), offered in anticipation of the kingdom of God yet to come in fullness. Such a yearning for the kingdom implies a desire for the salvation of the lost and the redemption of the entire creation. Examples of their concern for creation are demonstrated through Pentecostals' prayer for rain, especially during droughts, or their prayer for a bounteous harvest. All creation benefits from this concern, and they believe that without God's blessing, creation itself will not be sustained.

For the Reformed churches, the expectation of the coming of our saviour does not exclude, but includes the expectation of the kingdom. The fulfilled

kingdom is not just the collection of all believers, but *shalom* for the totality of creation. It represents the restoration and renewal of the cosmos. Churches of the Reformed tradition strive to be faithful to the creation because God remains faithful to it. Human beings are part of the cosmos, and so together with the whole creation, are invited to participate in the celebration of life.

### **Spirit, kingdom, world**

The location of the world within the topic of Spirit and kingdom is central to identifying the boundaries of the arena in which the Spirit and kingdom intersect in history. Key questions are: Is the work of the Spirit confined to the church? Does the kingdom engage the world? Is the world an arena of the Spirit or the kingdom?

Reformed churches acknowledge that all Christians, as stewards of the rich gifts of God, are called to act in responsible faith towards all creation. Therefore, we are called to proclaim, both in word and deed, the will of God concerning personal and social injustices, economic exploitation, and ecological destruction. Moreover, Reformed churches affirm that the Holy Spirit guides the faithful to work for both personal and structural transformation of society, thus participating in the ongoing process and realization of the prayer for the coming of the kingdom of God.

Pentecostals differ on how they view the role of the Holy Spirit in sustaining, reforming, or transforming human society. Some Pentecostals interpret reality dualistically. They understand that a state of warfare exists between the people of God and "the world". They believe that the Holy Spirit is the one who will triumph over the "principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places". How that warfare is defined varies from those who interpret the warfare in moral terms, to those who employ the term "spiritual warfare" in describing the battle between the godly and ungodly powers. Pentecostals who employ moral terms identify the role of the Spirit as one who *restrains* evil in the world. Others identify the role of the Spirit as one who *invites Christians to engage in the reforming and transforming* of society. This perspective also recognizes the role of the Holy Spirit in reproofing the human society in terms of righteousness.

Some Pentecostals around the world engage the political arena from the underside. Many are in countries where there is no political space for them to engage the political order directly. Their social locations shape their understanding of the Holy Spirit. However, among these are those who respond differently from the majority. They create alternative societies modelling resolutions to social issues within their ecclesial structures. The issues they address include, but are not limited to such evils as racism, classism, materialism, and sexism.

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### **Conclusions**

Several clear benefits have emerged as a direct result of this dialogue. One of the obvious fruits enjoyed so far has been the friendships that have been established across denominational lines and the lines of our various traditions. These friendships have expanded beyond the realm of everyday life into the recesses of our common spiritualities and our ecclesial experiences. Genuine ecumenism begins when Christians find each other and learn to enter into the lives of one another.

A second obvious benefit of the dialogue to date has been the individual

studies that have been offered in the form of papers presented. Some of these have found their way into publication, thereby challenging those who cannot participate at the limited space a dialogue table allows. In addition, press reports from the meeting have been published in a number of papers and journals, expanding the awareness of this dialogue in a number of ecclesial and scholarly communities. They have found their way into classrooms and are contributing to the ecumenical formation of the next generation of pastors and teachers in both communities.

Thirdly, the dialogue has been able to give and to receive from Christians in each of the regions in which it has convened its meetings. It has delved into the lives of Christians who live, sometimes in difficult situations, whether they be members of a minority community in the Italian Alps, an African-American congregation in the USA, an affluent Reformed community in Switzerland, a Pentecostal congregation separated from family members in Korea by an artificial boundary, or a Reformed community in a large Brazilian city, teeming with both hope and despair.

Finally, the dialogue had helped its participants realize the critical necessity for ongoing contact between these two vital Christian traditions. With the completion of this report, the participants in this dialogue wish to encourage others in their respective communities to join in this mutual exploration.

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## Appendix

Portions of this document were developed over the period of five years from 1996 to 2000. While many people during each of these years made substantive contributions that led to this document, only those who were present at the meeting in São Paulo, Brazil in May 2000 had a part in the final drafting and editing of this document. They are indicated with an asterisk (\*). Those who chaired the meetings are indicated with a (c), while those who served as staff from the Warc office are indicated with an (s). Those who presented papers are indicated with a (P) following the year in which they made their presentation. Those who attended the meetings as observers, are indicated with an (o). Those regular participants who were part of the original exploratory committee are noted with attendance in 1995.

### Pentecostal Participants

\*Daniel Albrecht  
Scotts Valley, CA, USA  
1996 P, 1997, 1998, 2000

Miguel Alvarez  
Honduras/Philippines  
o 1999

Arto Antturi  
Helsinki, Finland  
1996

\*Anthea Butler  
Los Angeles, CA, USA  
1996 P, 1997, 1998, 2000

\*David Daniels

\*Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen  
Jyväskylä, Finland  
1997, 1998, 1999, 2000

Byron Klaus  
Costa Mesa, CA, USA  
1998 P

\*Julie [Jungjia] Ma  
Baguio City, Philippines  
1997 P, 1998, 1999, 2000

\*Wonsuk Ma  
Baguio City, Philippines  
1997P, 1998, 1999, 2000

\*Frank Macchia

Chicago, IL, USA  
1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000

Costa Mesa, CA, USA  
1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999 P, 2000

Harold Hunter  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA  
1996, 1997, 1998, 1999

\*Jean-Daniel Plüss  
Zürich, Switzerland  
1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000

Richard Israel  
San Jose, CA, USA  
1995, 1996 P, 1997, 1998, 1999

\*c Cecil M. Robeck, Jr.  
Pasadena, CA, USA  
1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000

### Reformed Participants

Solomon DL Alagodi  
Balmatta, Mangalore, India  
1996

\*s Odair Pedroso Mateus  
São Paulo, Brazil/Geneva, Switzerland  
2000

Aldo Comba  
Torre Pellice, Italy  
1996 P

\*Nils E Norén  
Vétlanda, Sweden  
1999, 2000

Hugh Davidson  
Scotland  
1995

\*Aureo R Oliveira  
Fortaleza, CE, Brazil  
1999, 2000

\*Paul A Haidostian  
Chouran, Beirut, Lebanon  
1999, 2000

Claudio Pasquet  
Luserna San Giovanni, Italy  
o 1996

\*Marsha Snulligan Haney  
Atlanta, GA, USA  
1997, 1998, 1999, 2000

Silas Pinto  
Brazil [Wheaton, IL, USA]  
1997

\*Yohan Hyun  
Seoul, Korea  
1997, 1998, 1999 P, 2000

\*Abival Pires da Silveira  
São Paulo, SP, Brazil  
c 1996 P , c 1997, c 1999, 2000

Moses Jayakumar  
Bangalore, India  
1998

\*Salvatore Ricciardi  
Milano, Italy  
1995, 1996, 1997, c 1998, 2000

\*Gesine von Kloeden  
Bad Salzuffen, Germany  
1999, 2000

Silvia Rostagno  
Ladispoli, Italy  
1996

Margaret M McKay  
England  
1995

Sydney Sebastian Salins  
Balmatta, Mangalore, India  
1997

\*Cephas Omenyo  
Legon, Accra, Ghana  
1996 P, 1997 P, 1998, 1999, 2000

\*Joseph D Small  
Louisville, KY, USA  
1999, 2000

Jana Opocenska  
Geneva, Switzerland  
1999

\*Jan Veenhof  
Gunten, Switzerland  
1996, 1997 P, 1998, 1999, 2000

\*Milan Opocensky  
Geneva, Switzerland  
1998, 1999, c 2000

s Henry Wilson  
Geneva, Switzerland  
1996 P, 1997, 1998

