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KOINONIA, CHURCH AND SACRAMENTS
A PENTECOSTAL RESPONSE

BY

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ROMAN CATHOLIC/PENTECOSTAL DIALOGUE
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Koinonia, Church and Sacraments

A Pentecostal Response

The formulation of the dialogue theme in three parts provides a convenient thematic outline around which to organize the discussion. The first premise is in two parts.

(1) Koinonia is the inner life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (2) The Church is our participation in that life, visible and in history.

Although it is stated declaratively, the first premise implies a question, viz., How do Pentecostals understand the statement that "Koinonia is the inner life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?" The basic meaning of koinonia is "association, communion, fellowship, close relationship."¹ How are these predicates of personal relationship to be understood in relation to the Trinity?

A definitive interpretation of the koinonia of the Trinity, from a Pentecostal viewpoint, is subjoined to Article 2 of the Assemblies of God "Statement of Fundamental Truths." It is entitled "The Adorable Godhead," and the relevant section is (d) "Identity and Co-operation in the God-Head:"

The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are never identical as to Person; nor confused as to relation; nor divided in respect to the Godhead; nor opposed as to co-operation. The Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son as to relationship. The Son is with the Father and the Father is with the Son, as to fellowship. The Father is not from the Son, but the Son is from the Father,

as to authority. The Holy Ghost is from the Father and the Son proceeding, as to nature, relationship, cooperation and authority. Hence neither Person in the Godhead either exists or works separately or independently of the others. John 5:17-30, 32, 37; John 8:17, 18." [2]

The question is at the heart of the Christological controversies going back to the fourth century, and is of primary concern in the Nicene and Athanasian creeds. Even non-creedal communions recognize, at least implicitly, that the creeds as confessional symbols represent a common deposit of the faith of the Church. Duffield and Van Cleave acknowledge that although "the creeds are human documents, and are not infallible; nevertheless, the main stream of the Church has followed the wording of the Nicene and Athanasian creeds with very little variation."³ Whether the acceptance of the filioque is a "little variation" has been a matter of dispute since the eleventh century, and a certain ambivalence is perhaps observable in their treatment of the filioque. For instance, they quote the Nicene Creed without the filioque, e.g.; "And we believe in the Holy Ghost, who is the Lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified. . . ." ⁴ In close juxtaposition to the above is also quoted "the best known of the reformation creeds. . . the Westminster Confession," which reads in part, "the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."⁵ Consistent then with the Latin roots of Protestant theology, these authors conclude, that "the Holy Spirit, then, proceeds (as the creeds declare) from the Father and the Son."⁶

Although Duffield and Van Cleave are aware of the historic dispute between the Latin and Greek churches over the filioque they are noncommittal, e.g.: "Whether the 'proceeding of the Spirit' mentioned in John 15:26, is an eternal relationship (as stated in the creeds), or a proceeding into the Church on the Day of Pentecost in answer to Jesus' prayer, is difficult to determine; for the 'proceeding' is nowhere else mentioned."⁷ On the other hand, Raymond H. Pruitt affirms that the Holy Ghost "proceeds eternally from the Father and from the Son."⁸ In so far as the filioque is concerned, the hesitation of Duffield and Van Cleave is beside the point. Whether the procession is eternal or in time, in John 15:26 the Spirit "proceeds from the Father" alone. Biblically, and within the presuppositions of a Pentecostal theology this is decisive; the procession of the Spirit is attributed only to the Father, never to the Father and the Son.

It is not inappropriate at this point in the discussion to remember the origins of the doctrine of the double procession of the Holy Spirit "from the Father and from the Son." The filioque was "added to the Creed in Spain at the insistence of the Council of Toledo in 589,"⁹ apparently as a defense against Arianism. It was Charlemagne who "introduced the term filioque--'and from the Son'--into the Nicene Creed."¹⁰

Not all Pentecostals will agree with the views expressed above. They would in fact find common ground with

the Orthodox theologians who argue that there are two negative consequences of the filioque, namely, "subordination of the Holy Spirit, [and an] overemphasis on the unity of God."¹¹

From a Pentecostal perspective Raymond Pruitt addresses the question of the subordination of both the Son and the Holy Spirit, and concludes that "it is a subordination of functional activity, not of essence."¹² His remarks deserve to be read in context, e.g.:

As the Lord Jesus Christ is God by eternal filiation so the Holy Spirit is God by eternal procession from the Father and the Son (John 14:26; 15:26; Acts 2:33; Heb. 9:14). These terms have been used for centuries in discussing the intratrinitarian relationships, and for convenience sake it is advisable not to depart from them. However, 'procession' as it refers to the Holy Ghost is quite similar to 'generation' as it applies to the Son except that the Holy Ghost proceeds from both the Father and the Son (see above Scriptures). These are terms of relationship and have nothing to do with time, origin, or subordination of the Son or the Holy Spirit. Where subordination is inferred, as in 'I come to do Thy Will, O God,' it is subordination of functional activity, not of essence. [13]

While the author of the foregoing quotation would retain, "for convenience sake," the traditional terms "eternal filiation" and "eternal procession" to describe "the intratrinitarian relationships," the adjective "eternal" is apparently not to be taken seriously. If we interpret these remarks correctly, the implications are disturbing. If filiation and procession "are terms of relationship [having] nothing to do with time, origin or subordination," is the Trinity to be conceptualized only in terms of Incarnation and temporal mission? What then has happened to the relations of origin, i.e., eternal filiation and eternal proces-

sion? Can one even speak of the Trinity in a traditional sense? Does there lurk behind the Incarnation and the temporal mission the specter of a thoroughgoing Sabellianism? We raise the question now to underscore what we shall refer to again, viz., the need for a theology that is biblical, ecclesial (rather than sectarian) and pneumatic. It desiderates a biblical hermeneutic that recognizes the dialectical tension between propositional metaphysics, biblical exegesis and pneumatic experience, and seeks to integrate them into a new Pentecostal synthesis.

If, as Pruitt contends above, procession and generation are "quite similar," then both are "of essence." The generation of the Son, whether conceived of as in eternity or in time, is not functional but ontological. By parity of reasoning, within his own equation of "similarity," the procession of the Holy Spirit must also be ontological. Once again, eternal relations and temporal mission are confused.

The question of subordination is not answered by characterizing it as functional rather than ontological. For instance, according to the filioque, the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, but the Son is not begotten by the Father and the Holy Spirit. Thus the Father and the Son constitute twin principles or sources of the Godhead from which the Holy Spirit is excluded by definition. Since generation and procession are of necessity ontological, this exclusion of the Holy Spirit from the

source of the Godhead, a relation shared jointly by the Father and the Son, argues for subordination of the Holy Spirit. Thus the filioque is open to the charge of ditheism. The phrase "as from one principle," adopted by the councils of Lyons (1274) and Florence (1438-1439), avoids ditheism by definition only, but thereby opens the filioque to the additional charge of semi-Sabellianism.¹⁴

The implications of the foregoing for koinonia on the metaphysical level must remain moot, however, on the level of the Incarnation and temporal mission of the Spirit, the consequences for koinonia are more apparent. The general neglect of the Holy Spirit in the life of the churches is all too obvious. Even where their theologies are formally trinitarian, all too often, life and praxis are crypto unitarian. It is to the credit of Pentecostals, that despite the opprobrium to which they have been subjected, they continue to bear uncompromising witness to the koinonia of the Holy Spirit.

In the Greek trinitarian formula, "the Father is the unique origin, source, and cause of Godhead."¹⁵ The persons of the Trinity are distinguished by their relations of origin within the hypostatic union, e.g., the Son is eternally begotten by the Father, the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father through or by the Son.¹⁶ The Incarnation is thus the occasion of the Spirit's temporal mission. What is at hand here is not, however, the Incarnation of the Son nor the temporal mission of the Spirit, but eternal relations

(koinonia) within the Godhead. On the other hand, in the Latin scholastic trinitarian formulation, the principle of unity within the Godhead is the one nature or essence, and the result has been to identify the persons with the relations.¹⁷ The result compromises our understanding of personality, consequently of koinonia. For, if the Persons are the relations, then the Johannine "born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5), and Paul's "Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20), can only be understood relationally.

Thus while Pentecostal theologians may agree with the Latin position on the filioque, it is for different reasons, and one suspects without assessing the implications for a pneumatic theology. The Pentecostal methodology is determined by the principle of sola scriptura, with a consequent blurring of the eternal relations and the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit. As already suggested, this underscores the need for a distinctively Pentecostal hermeneutic. The scholastic methodology of the Latin west reasons from the philosophical principle of common essence or nature. The persons are distinguished by their relations within the one essence.

The discussion to this point is not merely captious criticism. The objections raised above have this in common, that the filioque introduces a distortion in the koinonia of the Trinity, and a consequent distortion in the koinonia of the Church. While some Pentecostal theologians may agree in principle with the filioque, the Reformation roots

of their theology would constrain them paradoxically to agree with the following assessment of its consequences on the ecclesiological level.

Because the role of the Spirit has been neglected in the west, the Church has come to be regarded too much as an institution of this world, governed in terms of earthly power and jurisdiction. And just as in the western doctrine of God unity was stressed at the expense of diversity, so in the western conception of the Church unity has triumphed over diversity, and the result has been too great a centralization and too great an emphasis on Papal power. [18]

This section concludes by asking again the question with which it began. How do Pentecostals understand the statement that "Koinonia is the inner life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?" Whatever judgments individuals may pass on the theological debate, the issues involved speak directly to the religious experience of Pentecostals. The Pentecostal insistence upon the new birth and the baptism in the Holy Spirit takes seriously a personal koinonia with the Son and with the Holy Spirit. Thus the Pentecostal experiences the One as Three, rather than the Three as One. It is this distinctively personal awareness of the Persons of the Trinity that distinguishes Christian mystical experience from all nature mysticism, or Hindu based meditation techniques. Christian spirituality is not the intellectual contemplation of a metaphysical essence, it is a personal union with God who comes to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It is significant that the twentieth century Pentecostal renewals of the western churches have led to a renewed emphasis upon the Trinity, not simply on a speculative level,

but existentially in a renewed experience of the immediacy of the vertical as well as the horizontal dimensions of koinonia. It may hardly be gainsaid, that the Pentecostal revivals of the present century have taken the koinonia of/with¹⁹ the Holy Spirit out of the cloistered mystical tradition of the Church, and made it the common experience of the whole people of God. It is not claiming too much to suggest that the interest of Pentecostals in ecumenical koinonia is directly traceable to their openness to the Holy Spirit.

"The Church is our participation in that life, visible and in history" is the corollary to the previous proposition. It must be recognized that the necessary postulate of the Church's participation in the divine life of the Trinity is the assumption of our common humanity into the hypostatic union of the Trinity through the Incarnation.

The eternal Son of God has joined with, shared in, partaken of our common human nature. There is thus a koinonia of man and God in Christ which is the direct outcome of God's condescending and creative love. [20]

It is appropriated individually and personally through regeneration (John 3:3, 5). This is, however, a union of grace, not of nature, for it excludes all pantheistic speculations. Jesus is the Son of God by nature, we become sons of God by grace. As the Trinity is diversity in unity, so "we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread" (I Cor. 10:16, 17).

Paul's words in Gal. 2:20--"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in

me" (NASB)--bear witness to the Christian's mystical koinonia with the hypostatic union of the Trinity. For Paul, the life of the Christian is a life lived "in Christ" (Rom. 12:5, et passim). The words have a mystical and sacramental ring to them, for the first is the obverse side of the second. As I have noted elsewhere,

Paul's sacramentalism. . . is the sacramentalism of mystical union, 'baptized into Christ Jesus. . . baptized into (his) death' (Rom. 6:3); 'crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me' (Gal. 2:20). His is the sacramentalism of the mystic and the seer, 'whosoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord' (I Cor. 11:27). [21]

"He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature"--the words of II Peter 1:4 affirm the same truth. Thus the ultimate end of Christian theology "is union with God, or deification, the θεωσις of the Greek Fathers."²²

As "partakers of the divine nature," the Church objectifies "visibly and in history" the divine/human koinonia. There is no compelling dogmatic reason why Pentecostals may not assent to this proposition, however, their agreement is qualified by their understanding of the nature of the Church. How then do Pentecostals understand the Church? Representative responses reflect a general consensus, e.g.:

The Church is not a human organization, such as a political party, or a society for the promotion or the prevention of something or other. It is a divine institution in that it was called into being by the Lord Himself, and its essence does not consist in its members sharing a common purpose, but in their sharing a common life. [23]

The distinction is important for a Pentecostal ecclesiology. The Church is a "divine institution. . .sharing a common life." The definition implies the metaphysical notion of the mystical body, and even when the institutional expression of the Church is conceded, e.g., "wise Spirit-directed organization helps the Church to carry out her mission," it is scarcely more than a foil to reaffirm that "the Church is not by nature an organization, but rather an organism. . .whose Divine life is provided by the indwelling Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9)." ²⁴ Form and structure, hierarchical, sacramental or otherwise, are not, therefore, necessary expressions of the divine/human koinonia, for "The Church as God's koinonia stresses the idea of a 'society' whose primary characteristics are unity and love." ²⁵

While the stress in Pentecostal ecclesiology is upon the spiritual nature of koinonia, this does not imply that Pentecostals are deficient in social consciousness. Koinonia as an expression of social concern is recognized as characteristic of the Church's beginning, for

As soon as the Church came into being, a strong fellowship of faith, worship and service was established: 'And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and FELLOWSHIP [koinonia] and in breaking of bread and in prayers' Acts 2:42. [26]

One might add that the social imperative of koinonia has not been lost upon Pentecostals for all their charismatic emphases, for "koinonia is sometimes translated 'communicate,' with the meaning of extending material help to the poor and those overtaken by misfortune." ²⁷

There are, however, lingering echoes of the subordinationism of the filioque in the Pentecostal witness to koinonia. From an exegetical standpoint, the trinitarian nature of the Church's participation in the divine life is quite clear. It is a koinonia "with the Holy Spirit,"²⁸ as well as "with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."²⁹ From a trinitarian perspective, therefore, there is an unresolved ambiguity in the statement, that "koinonia was applied to the Church as those having a common salvation through a common faith in God and in His Son Jesus Christ."³⁰

Limiting saving faith to the Father and to the Son, may represent nothing more than the strictures of theological method, i.e., a verbal accommodation to specific texts of Scripture. But a question still persists. Is not saving faith a trinitarian faith? The Nicene Creed is a confession of faith in "one God the Father Almighty. . .one Lord Jesus Christ. . .and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life."³¹ Can one exclude even grammatically the koinonia of the Holy Spirit from the salvific event?

The former statement is subsequently modified in another formulation that does associate the Holy Spirit with the koinonia of the Father and the Son, but in what may be interpreted as a functional role uniting the Father and the Son with the Church.

.. Fellowship, is, first of all, having a common relationship to the Father and the Son in the body of Christ, where we are united by the Spirit in bonds of love, unity and singleness of purpose. [32]

Thus koinonia is "a common relationship to the Father and the Son" effected by the agency of the Holy Spirit. In so far as the temporal mission of the Spirit is concerned, the statement is not erroneous. But considered from the standpoint of the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit, the formula is inadequate, if not misleading. Relegating the Holy Spirit to a functional role in the divine/human koinonia exposes the weakness of the trinitarian model that adopts the filioque. There is in it an implicit subordinationism that emerges in unexpected places. If, as already noted,³³ filiation and procession are perceived as functional activities rather than "of essence," then the koinonia spoken of here says nothing of the inner life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is something less than a participation in the inner life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Rather it is a participation with the Father and the Son in the salvific event through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

The second premise of the Dialogue is stated as a question, viz. "Can Pentecostal theology relate to the Catholic claim that koinonia brings into being, and is mediated by, the Church and its sacraments?" The proposition is compound in nature, and for the sake of clarity may be rephrased as follows. (1) Koinonia brings into being the Church and its sacraments; and (2) koinonia is mediated by the Church and its sacraments.

Thus the question has two component parts, Church and sacraments, that from the standpoint of Pentecostal theology

will be dealt with separately. The first component to be addressed then is this: "Koinonia brings into being the Church." It is noted in passing that koinonia is here understood in terms of the first premise of the Dialogue, viz., that "koinonia is the inner life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

An answer to the statement that "koinonia brings into being the Church," was anticipated in the examination of the Pentecostal understanding of the nature of the Church. The following remarks will undertake to focus that discussion specifically on the question at hand. Pentecostal theologians point out that the antecedents of the New Testament Church are to be found in "the Jewish use of the word [ekklesia] in the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) where it referred to the 'congregation' of Israel."³⁴ The Church of the New Testament began, when at the beginning of His Galilean ministry, "Jesus called out twelve apostles who were to be the pillars of the Church."³⁵ Thus the Church "is a 'called out' body of believers who are summoned to forsake the world and to follow the Lord."³⁶ The concept of the mystical body, already alluded to, is referred to as "the invisible body or church of the Lord."³⁷ The metaphor of "the body of Christ" appears frequently in Pentecostal references to the Church. For example,

The Church is the body of Christ, the habitation of God through the Spirit, with divine appointments for the fulfillment of the great commission. Each believer, born of the Spirit, is an integral part of the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn which are written in heaven.

Eph. 1:22, 23; 2:22. [38]

P. C. Nelson's exposition of this article of faith is a helpful contribution to the subject. It brings to a focus all that has been said heretofore, and in so doing provides those elements necessary to answer the question addressed here.

The universal assembly [i.e., the body of Christ] is not an organization, but an organism, pulsating in every member with the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is to direct and control the movement of the whole body and of each particular believer, and to communicate to every member of the body His wisdom, righteousness, holiness, life and power (I Cor. 1:24, 30; John 6:32-35). Thus by a living union with Christ, every believer, however humble or isolated, is bound together with the rest in one organism pulsating with the love and grace of our Lord Jesus of whose fulness we all have received (John 1:14, 16). [39]

This conception of the Church as "an organism pulsating in every member with the life of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . a living union with Christ [of] every believer" speaks eloquently to the subject of koinonia. As already observed, eternal filiation and eternal procession are not simply functional, but are "of essence," to quote the terms used in the prior discussion. They are integral expressions of the koinonia that is the inner life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the created order, filiation and procession are manifested in the Incarnation of the Son and the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit, without which the Church would not exist. Thus Pentecostal theology can relate, at least provisionally, to the statement that "koinonia brings into being the Church [and its sacraments]." The reservation thus

expressed has to do with the question of sacraments which will be addressed next. However, a brief digression will serve to set forth the presuppositions that will inform the subsequent exposition of the topic.

We live in what one scholar has called "the post-modern era" birthed by the Enlightenment.⁴⁰ The collapse of the world-view spawned by the Enlightenment has resulted in a theological crisis with far-reaching consequences for Western culture, but a crisis of which the Church at large seems to be unaware. The impact of this crisis is most clearly seen in the ethical and moral relativism of Western society. The moral and ethical collapse of "modern" Western culture calls into question the metaphysical dichotomy in its world-view, a dichotomy between Spirit and matter which renders the former largely irrelevant. Consequently, the theological syntheses that sought to accomodate the metaphysical postulates of an obsolete world-view must also be called into question.

There never has been, and never can be, coexistence between Pentecostal spirituality and the world-view of the "modern" world. Therein lies the source of the opprobrium to which Pentecostals have been subjected in a "modern" culture. As I have stated elsewhere, "Pentecostals and sacramentalists share a common world view. . .whether they choose to acknowledge it or not."⁴¹ There is a natural affinity between a Pentecostal spirituality, the sacramental realism of the Scriptures, and the sacramental life of the Church. The

unacknowledged task of Pentecostal theology is to divest itself of the metaphysical shackles of "borrowed" theological systems, and to bring its theology into congruence with its spirituality. As the subsequent study will show, this is being recognized increasingly on the individual and personal levels. A recognition of the natural affinity of Pentecostal spirituality and the sacramental life of the Church will go far to restore a biblical and ecclesial balance to its theology that will nourish it both spiritually and theologically.

The foregoing provides the context within which to address the postulate that "koinonia is mediated by the Church and its sacraments." The investigation to this point has already intimated what the second premise clearly articulates. The question of sacraments is the crux of this Dialogue. A survey of Pentecostal statements of faith suggests that this is a none issue for Pentecostals. For example, in response to an inquiry, Alfred F. Missen wrote:

The relevant Fundamental Truth (No. 11) of the Assemblies of God in Great Britain and Ireland just reads: 'We believe that the Breaking of Bread is enjoined upon all believers until the Lord comes. Luke 22:14-20; I Cor. 11:20-34.' In all my years in the ministry of this Fellowship, I do not ever remember the subject being discussed. [42]

There are, of course, practical reasons for such a disclaimer. Pentecostal priorities have been focussed on the practical concerns of evangelism and missions, rather than on theological reflection. In this they have taken quite seriously the commission of Acts 1:8; "But you shall receive

power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." As another Pentecostal leader remarked:

From your study of our church, I feel confident that you are aware of the fact that we have been long on preaching and short on position papers. This is one reason we appreciate participating in the Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue as it will help us to assemble material and prepare position papers for our college and ministry. [43]

Before proceeding further with the discussion, it is important to define the meaning of the term "sacraments" as it is understood in this paper. Whether one accepts the seven sacraments as formulated by Peter Lombard in the 12th century, viz., Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders, and Matrimony, or the two sacraments generally recognized by Protestants, i.e., Baptism and the Lord's Supper, "the sacraments differ from other rites in being channels by which supernatural grace is imparted."⁴⁴

Occasionally one encounters the use of the word "sacraments" in Pentecostal statements of faith.⁴⁵ Justification for this is offered by recourse to the original meaning of the word as "an oath of obedience taken by newly enlisted soldiers."⁴⁶ The etymology, however, cannot be pressed since the application of it to Baptism and the Lord's Supper is not a military context, but an ecclesiastical one, and context determines the meaning, not the etymology. A weighty argument against this identification is that "in Christian Latin from the third century the word was the accepted rendering

of Gr. μυστήριον Mystery. . .In early Christian language sacramentum and the synonymous μυστήριον were applied indiscriminately to any ritual observance of the Church."⁴⁷

As a consequence, there is an unavoidable ambiguity in the use of the terminology, as the following response to our inquiry suggests.

We do not hold the Transubstantiation theory of the Roman Catholics. However, we do believe that the real presence of the Lord is manifest in the bread and wine. As we come together to celebrate the table of the Lord in obedience to Him, He sovereignly imparts virtue to the participants. [48]

Duffield and Van Cleave reject both Transubstantiation and Consubstantiation because "these are nowhere upheld by Scripture. Furthermore, they encourage superstition and overemphasize the physical over the spiritual blessings of the Lord's Supper."⁴⁹ They also reject the view that "the supper is merely a memorial act that mediates no blessing."⁵⁰ The result is a mediating position somewhere between the sacramental and the symbolic positions. Sanction for this interpretation is found in an appeal to the reformers.

The elements when received by faith, mediate to the believer the spiritual benefits of Christ's Death, held by Calvin and the majority of the reformers. The elements in themselves are only tokens, but when received by faith real communion may be mediated. [51]

Rightly or wrongly, one senses in these latter remarks a conflict between a Pentecostal experience and the Spirit/matter dichotomy of the Enlightenment world-view, while the language reflects the influence of Reformation theology.

Other Pentecostal churches, however, do regard the

Lord's Supper as a memorial and/or symbolic.⁵² Another respondent characterizes the United Pentecostal Church's doctrine as "a typical Protestant statement."⁵³ The same symbolism extends to the interpretation of baptism. It is variously described as "a blessed outward sign of an inward work,"⁵⁴ and "an outward symbol of cleansing."⁵⁵ Its significance is symbolic of the believer's identification with Christ in "death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-4)."⁵⁶

Dissenting voices are being raised, however. In a position paper read at the Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue, Riano, Italy, Volf and Kuzmič concluded that . .

there is nothing in the Pentecostal theology which in and of itself precludes a particular sacramental understanding of baptism. Their soteriology does not make it necessary to claim that baptism merely symbolizes the baptist's (sic.) individual participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. A stronger statement could possibly be made with the claim that baptism is the occasion at which God acts on a person uniting him/her with Christ. [57]

Another respondent, commenting on current practice among various Foursquare churches, notes that fewer and fewer "hold to merely a memorial type point of view as suggested in the Bylaws."⁵⁸

Similar changes in attitudes and interpretation are noted by another observer.

Along with these four areas, my contact with Roman Catholics has given me a new appreciation for and shown me the importance of both the sacramental nature of the church and the sacraments themselves. This influence has challenged me to upgrade Baptism and the Lord's Supper from ordinances (which is the position my tradition holds) to sacraments. Although this change has not been made in the official doctrinal statement of the Assemblies of God, it seems to be from my unmeasured observation more and

more the practice. [59]

This ambivalence, perhaps one might refer to it more accurately as a theological pluralism, is reflected again in what is recognized as a distinctive theme in all Pentecostal theologies, viz., divine healing.

The Lord's Supper is a healing ordinance. If you are sick or afflicted in your body and can discern the healing virtue in the body of our Lord, typified by the bread, you may receive healing and strength for your body as well as for your spiritual nature. [60]

This confronts the reader with an obvious question, or perhaps a series of questions. What connection, if any, is there between "the healing virtue in the body of our Lord" and the bread that typifies it? Discerning must, in some measure at least, constitute an intellectual activity. Is this process of "discern(ing) the healing virtue in the body of our Lord" a metaphysical contemplation of an Ideal Reality (Platonism), or perhaps a crypto Gnostic spiritualizing--a charge against which Pentecostals and Charismatics are not completely immune? The question becomes more acute when healing (a supernatural charism) is mediated through the sacramental anointing with oil and prayer (James 5:14, 15a). Duffield and Van Cleave acknowledge that "When the Church became established, prayer for physical healing became a sacrament."⁶¹ It may be purely coincidental that they refer specifically to prayer for healing, while acknowledging the anointing with oil only in the actual quotation of these verses.

Up to this point in the discussion, it is not possible

to give an unqualified Pentecostal response to the Catholic claim that "koinonia is mediated by the Church and its sacraments." At the propositional level, Pentecostal theologies are equivocal in their answer. The semantic difficulties encountered in their use of the term "sacraments" simply compounds the difficulty. On the other hand, whether formulated theologically or not, there is apparent an intuitive awareness of sacramental realities in the Pentecostal experience. And this awareness is shared, and articulated, by both Pentecostal pastors and theologians.

From the propositional point of view, further dialogue would appear to be stalled. The problems so far encountered are both theological and semantic. One might legitimately question whether any movement is possible beyond this point. Theological formulae cannot move beyond the logic of the syllogism. However, the Pentecostal experience of the charismata provides another point of departure. On the Pentecostal side this desiderates a theological enterprise that is flexible enough to conceptualize a pneumatic theology without recourse to borrowed propositional categories that stifle Pentecostal experience. The eclectic nature of Pentecostal theology is frankly acknowledged in the following:

The Pentecostals, following the anabaptist tradition and in agreement with most of the modern day 'free-church' evangelicals understand [baptism] in a more symbolic way as a mere visible sign of regeneration that as a rule happens not in the act of baptism itself, but prior to it. [62]

However, a pneumatic theology worthy of the name must

be first and foremost a spirituality, not simply a rearranging of propositional furniture.

The answer then to the Catholic claim that "koinonia is mediated by the Church and its sacraments" is an equivocal one. The Church as "an organism, pulsating. . .with the life of our Lord Jesus Christ" does mediate that koinonia which is "the inner life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." The sacraments, conceived as symbols and ordinances, cannot mediate the koinonia of the Trinity. They are symbols of reality and not the reality itself. Is this a final word? The response must be equivocal. However, to the degree that Pentecostals are open to the sacramental implications of the Pentecostal experience, to the extent that they can acknowledge the living presence of the Trinity in the ecclesial and sacramental life of the Church, they can then agree that the koinonia of the Trinity is mediated by the Church and its sacraments. But as this study has shown, there is at present no Pentecostal consensus on the subject.

The third premise of the Dialogue is stated as a three-fold question, e.g.: "Can we find further common understanding of koinonia by discussing sacraments as (1) confession of faith, (2) empowering in the Holy Spirit, and (3) necessary expression of the Church (that is, the sacramental structure of the Church)?"

The previous investigation has indicated basic assumptions about the nature of the Church and its spiritual life that precondition a Pentecostal response to this question.

Pentecostal theology is fundamentally a biblical theology. It accepts the Reformation principle of sola scriptura. This is clearly illustrated in the copious citations from Scripture which characterize its formal expression. In contrast to a philosophical theology, it rests its case upon proof texts rather than upon philosophical reflection. The frequent appeal to typology and allegory, not always consistent with sound exegesis, suggests the influence of the pulpit rather than the academy operative in Pentecostal theology.

The principle of sola scriptura implies an antipathy to Tradition. A thoroughgoing application of the principle, therefore, severs Pentecostal theology from fruitful interaction with the ecclesial life of the whole Church. A needed corrective, and one consistent with the Pentecostal insistence on the baptism in the Holy Spirit, is the recognition that Tradition, rightly understood, is the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church (John 14:26; 16:13). The Bible as the record of apostolic life is itself part of that living Tradition, as the Church today is also part of that living Tradition. Let it be clearly understood, however, that Tradition is here understood as hermeneutics and not as revelation.

Finally, the preoccupation of Pentecostals with mission and evangelism is characteristic of their approach to theology. It is a preoccupation with the functional that informs their approach to the charismata. A common theme among Pentecostals and Charismatics is "learning to operate the gifts," again indicative of their concern with function

rather than essence, and koinonia as the inner life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit has to do with essence. Such a selfish preoccupation with the charismata can be perverted to serve ego ends, and thereby subvert koinonia. However, when the role of the charismata is interpreted contextually, they contribute to koinonia (I Cor. 12:12ff; Eph. 4:11ff).

J. D. Davies enters a salutary caveat at this juncture.

These 'manifestations' of the Spirit (I Cor. 12:7) are not given to the individual to glorify himself but to serve the people of God; they are not endowments for individual self-expression nor are they primarily concerned with fostering the individual's relation with God but with furthering the moral and spiritual health of of the Body, i.e. of the koinonia. [63]

In the earlier comments on the Trinity, a blurring of the distinction between eternal filiation and eternal procession and Incarnation and temporal mission was remarked. This was due in large measure to (1) the strictures of theological method (sola scriptura), and (2) the Pentecostal preoccupation with the functional aspects of Incarnation and temporal mission. The interpretation of eternal filiation and eternal procession as functional rather than "of essence," underscores the blurring of the distinction.

The effort to "further common understanding of koinonia by discussing sacrament as confession of faith" offers limited encouragement, because of (1) the ambivalence of Pentecostals in their understanding of sacraments, and (2) the biblical connection between the Lord's Supper and confession of faith (I Cor. 11:26). For Duffield and Van Cleave, the Lord's Supper is. . .

a proclamation, an act of confession by the Church, of faith in the efficacy of Christ's Atoning Work, 'ye do shew forth the Lord's death' (I Cor. 11:26). . . It is an experience of communion with the Lord in which the participant receives by faith the strength and blessing of fellowship with the Savior, 'The bread which we break, is it not the communion (koinonia) of the body of Christ?' (I Cor. 10:16). . . It is a communion (koinonia) of believers at the Lord's table, and a statement of the oneness of the body of Christ (I Cor. 10:17). [64]

This "koinonia of the body of Christ" is not a sacrament so long as the elements are regarded as symbols. For traditional Pentecostal theology, the problem lies in accepting the premise that the elements themselves are objective and effectual channels of the grace received. And for Pentecostals in general, the problem is compounded by the doctrine of Transubstantiation.

Volf and Kuzmič strike a different note. For them, it is not the rite itself, but the interpretive Word that is the witness.

Third, the celebration of the Lord's Supper is an evangelistic witness. 'For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.' (I Cor. 11:26). The word used for proclamation (*katangello*) [sic.] is particularly associated with the proclamation of the gospel. The celebration of the Lord's Supper is the means of evangelization of the unsaved. We should not take Paul to mean that the proclamation occurs through the participation in the elements as such, apart from anything else that happens at the Lord's Supper. Rather the participation becomes proclamation in the context of the accompanying interpretative word, which is the essential part of the Lord's Supper. . . Each time the Supper takes place 'it transforms the participants into preachers' and becomes thus 'a means of saving people from their sins.' [65]

This is a characteristic Reformed view, however, it is open to several objections. (1) In an age of persecution, it is highly unlikely that the unsaved were admitted to the Eucha-

ristic celebration. That they would be present at the preaching and witnessing of the community is quite possible, (i.e., at the Liturgy of the Word),⁶⁶ but it is less than certain that they were present at the celebration of the central mystery (μυστήριον) of the Christian faith, the Eucharist. (2) The exegesis of καταγγέλλω is open to criticism. A more accurate translation of the passage in question is furnished by Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, viz., "you proclaim (by celebrating the sacrament rather than w[ith] words) the Lord's death."

What has been said above is equally applicable to the second part of the proposition, i.e., "Can we find further common understanding of koinonia by discussing sacrament as empowering in the Holy Spirit?" For the Pentecostal, it is the baptism in the Holy Spirit that empowers the Christian. As already demonstrated, there are those Pentecostals who "believe that the real presence is manifest in the bread and wine" whereby "He sovereignly imparts virtue."⁶⁷ On the other hand, there are those Pentecostals who believe that "the elements when received by faith, mediate to the believer the spiritual benefits of Christ's Death,"⁶⁸ though the elements themselves are only tokens. Whether the "virtue" that is "manifest in the bread and wine," or the "spiritual benefits of Christ's Death" are to be interpreted as "empowering in the Holy Spirit" is a moot question.

Lastly, "Can we find further common understanding of koinonia by discussing sacrament as necessary expression of

the Church (that is, the sacramental structure of the Church)" has already been answered in the prior discussion of the Pentecostal understanding of the nature of the Church. As already observed, the question of sacraments is the crux of the present Dialogue. The Church cannot have a sacramental structure, i.e., hierarchy, priesthood, sacramental life and worship, unless it is committed to a sacramental theology. As the present discussion has demonstrated, in traditional Pentecostal ecclesiology, the body of Christ "is not an organization, but an organism, pulsating in every member with the life of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁶⁹

Endnotes

- ¹Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, koinonia.
- ²P. C. Nelson, Bible Doctrines (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1984), p. 24. The student of Byzantine theology will note its apophatic tone and acceptance of the filioque.
- ³Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, Foundations of Pentecostal Theology (Los Angeles: L.I.F.E. Bible College, [c] 1983), p. 87.
- ⁴Ibid. ⁵Ibid. ⁶Ibid., p. 109. ⁷Ibid.
- ⁸Raymond M. Pruitt, Fundamentals of the Faith (Cleveland: White Wing Publishing House and Press, [c] 1981), p. 284.
- ⁹Pierre Loret, The Story of the Mass (Liguori: Liguori Publications, [c] 1982), p. 77.
- ¹⁰Ibid.
- ¹¹Timothy Ware, The Orthodox Church (1963 rpt. Baltimore: Penquin Books, [c] 1972), p. 235.
- ¹²Pruitt, op. cit., p. 102. ¹³Ibid.
- ¹⁴Ware, op. cit., p. 102. John Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology (New York: Fordham University Press, [c] 1974), p. 110.
- ¹⁵Ware, op. cit., p. 221.
- ¹⁶Meyendorff, op. cit., pp. 93, 94. "Gregory of Cyprus . . . chairman of the council (1285) which officially rejected the Union of Lyons, had this assembly approve a text which, while condemning the Filioque, recognized an 'eternal manifestation' of the Spirit through the Son. What served as a background to the council's position is the notion that the charismata of the Spirit are not temporal, created realities, but eternal, uncreated grace or 'energy' of God. To this uncreated divine life, man has access in the body of the Incarnate Logos. Therefore, the grace of the Spirit does indeed come to us 'through' or 'from' the Son; but what is being given to us is neither the very hypostasis of the Spirit nor a created temporal grace, but the external 'manifestation' of God distinct from both His person and His essence."
- ¹⁷Ware, op. cit., pp. 221, 222. "In Latin Scholastic

theology, so it seems to Orthodox, the persons are overshadowed by the common nature, and God is thought of not so much in concrete and personal terms, but as an essence in which various relations are distinguished. This way of thinking about God comes to full development in Thomas Aquinas, who went so far as to identify the persons with the relations: personae sunt ipsae relationes."

¹⁸Ware, op. cit. pp. 222, 223.

¹⁹Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, koinonia. 2 Cor. 13:13 καὶ ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος may be translated fellowship with the Holy Spirit "(so Sickenberger in the Trinitarian sense)" or "participation in the Holy Spirit."

²⁰J. G. Davies, Members One of Another: Aspects of Koinonia (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co. Limited, [c] 1958), p. 7.

²¹Conversion-Initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. [c] 1984), p. 110.

²²Vladimir Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church (1957 rpt. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., Ltd.. 1958), p. 9. Cf. also Ware, op. cit., pp. 236, 237.

²³Pruitt, op. cit., p. 344.

²⁴Duffield and Van Cleave, op. cit., p. 439.

²⁵Ibid., p. 448. ²⁶Ibid., p. 447. ²⁷Ibid., p. 448.

²⁸Phil. 2:1, εἰ τις κοινωνία πνεύματος, "fellowship with the Spirit," Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich. Cf. also II Cor. 13:13, fn. 18.

²⁹I John 1:3, καὶ ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

³⁰Duffield and Van Cleave, op. cit., p. 447.

³¹Saint Augustine's Prayer Book, ed. Loren Gavitt (rev. ed.; New York: Holy Cross Publications, 1969), pp. 65, 66.

³²Duffield and Van Cleave, op. cit., p. 432.

³³Cf. fn. 13.

³⁴Duffield and Van Cleave, op. cit., p. 420.

³⁵Pruitt, op. cit., p. 350. ³⁶Ibid., p. 351.

³⁷Declaration of Faith, International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, Duffield and Van Cleave, op. cit., p 421.

³⁸Nelson, op. cit., p109. ³⁹Ibid., pp. 112, 113.

⁴⁰Diogenes Allen in a lecture at Southminster Presbyterian Church, Tulsa, OK, August 1986.

⁴¹Ervin, op. cit., p. v. Cf. also pp. 81-83; 97, 98; 109, 110.

⁴²Letter dated 20th February, 1987.

⁴³Hugh R. Edwards, Overseer Southern California, The Church of God of Prophecy. Letter dated Mar. 3, 1987.

⁴⁴The Compact Edition of the Oxford Dictionary, Vol. II, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), sacrament.

⁴⁵Article V of the Tenets of Faith of the By-Laws of Evangel Temple, Inc., Washington, D.C., refers to "The Sacrament of Water Baptism," sec.9, and "The Sacrament of Holy Communion," sec. 13. Duffield and Van Cleave, op. cit., p. 437; Pruitt, op. cit., p. 365; The Pentecostal Holiness Church Manual, ed. Bishop Leon C. Stewart, et al. (Oklahoma City: The Pentecostal Holiness Church General Headquarters, 1981), p. 79.

⁴⁶Duffield and Van Cleave, op. cit., p. 435.

⁴⁷The Compact Edition of the Oxford Dictionary, sacrament.

⁴⁸Robert Mueller, Independent Assemblies of God, International, La Mesa, CA. Correspondence dated Jan. 14, 1987.

⁴⁹Duffield and Van Cleave, op. it., p. 438.

⁵⁰Ibid. ⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²R. H. Gause, Church of God Polity (Cleveland: Pathway Press, [n.d.]), p. 106.

⁵³Manuel Gaxiola Gaxiola, Center for the Study of Protestantism in Mexico. Letter dated Feb. 19, 1987.

⁵⁴Duffield and Van Cleave, op. cit., p. 436.

⁵⁵Nelson, op. cit., p. 60.

⁵⁶Pruitt, op. cit., pp. 365, 366.

⁵⁷Miroslav Volf and Peter Kuzmic, Communio Sanctorum: Toward a Theology of the Church as a Fellowship of Persons

Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue, Cittadela Ecumenica, Riano, (Rome) 1985.

⁵⁸John L. Amstutz, letter dated Jan. 13, 1986. "Upon this foundation [the doctrinal statement of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel] there are built differing emphases among various Foursquare churches. Jack Hayford teaches the presence of Christ to heal and forgive in the Lord's Supper and to deliver and empower in water baptism. Others (but fewer and fewer) hold to merely a memorial type point of view as suggested in the Bylaws. When this statement of faith will be brought more into line with what is taught and practiced in Foursquare remains to be seen."

⁵⁹Jerry L. Sandidge, "The Roman Catholic Challenge to the Pentecostal Church," The Oracle [Tulsa, Oklahoma] Oral Roberts University, Mar. 20, 1987, Vol. 22, no 26.

⁶⁰Nelson, op. cit., p. 73.

⁶¹Duffield and Van Cleave, op. cit., p. 127.

⁶²Volf and Kuzmič, op. cit., p. 5.

⁶³Davies, op. cit., p. 18.

⁶⁴Duffield and Van Cleave, op. cit., p 437.

⁶⁵Volf and Kuzmič, op. cit., p. 46, 47.

⁶⁶The common assumption that the hierarchical and liturgical structure of the Church is a 2nd century innovation overlooks the obvious fact that the Church was birthed in a highly structured cultic society. A common objection is that no priests are mentioned in the New Testament in connection with the Church. But this also overlooks the obvious fact that the Church was birthed as a Jewish messianic sect that implicitly acknowledged (by their attendance at the Temple services) the presence of a Levitical priesthood.

⁶⁷Mueller, fn., this document.

⁶⁸Duffield and Van Cleave, op. cit., p. 421.

⁶⁹Pruitt, op. cit., p. 344.