

“Pentecostal Ecumenical Pioneers: Select Case Studies in Leadership”

By Harold D. Hunter

The first time I heard Neil Ormerod was in Durham, UK, in January 2000 at a conference on Receptive Ecumenism. I remember the chair of the session lauding Neil’s expertise as a Lonergan scholar. One of the first things that Neil said was that his paper was not going to draw from his specialization but rather would be about advanced Pentecostal studies in Australia. If I remember correctly, he was talking about the likes of Shane Clifton and Jacqui Grey and he ignited in me an interest to visit Australia.

I find myself in a similar situation today. My academic work centers on aspects of Pentecostal theology, history, and ecumenism so today’s topic has been a stretch for me. Others will have to judge how well I have navigated the maze.

This presentation will seek to examine the theological context for ecumenical leadership provided by select Pentecostals. The Pentecostals in question come from churches that are part of the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF). The historical narrative will start with David DuPlessis then move on to Cecil Mel Robeck, Wonsuk Ma, Cheryl Bridges Johns, Vinson Synan, and finally Harold D. Hunter.

Many efforts were made to look at emerging voices in the global South that I lecture about in my course on global Pentecostalism last taught at Kuala Lumpur late in 2013 but it has been impossible to get adequate documentation to include them. Having visited over 70 countries, this is no small failure on my part. Although the first Pentecostals to join the World Council of Churches (WCC) were from Latin America, none of these autochthonous Pentecostal groups were or are now part of the PWF. Currently no member church of the PWF belongs to the WCC.

In 1961, the Iglesia Pentecostal de Chile and the Misión Iglesia Pentecostal joined the WCC as the first Pentecostal members. They were the first of a yet undetermined number of Pentecostal churches that would cast their lot with the WCC. They were joined by a number of Latin American churches, Manuel de Mello and his Igreja Evangélica Pentecostal “O Brasil para Cristo” in 1969, the International Evangelical Church in 1972, Bishop Gabriel O. Vacaro’s Iglesia de Dios from Argentina in 1980, the Missão Evangélica Pentecostal de Angola in 1985, and the Iglesia Misiones Pentecostal Libres de Chile in 1991¹. The Christian Biblical Church in Argentina joined the WCC in 1997.

¹ On Chile, see Carmelo E. Alvarez, “Joining the World Council of Churches: The Ecumenical Story of Pentecostalism in Chile,” in *Pentecostalism and Christian Unity: Ecumenical Documents and Critical Assessments*, edited by Wolfgang Vondey (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 34-45. Alvarez highlights Enrique Chavez, Gabriel Vaccaro and Narciso Sepulveda. Alvarez, p. 39, points out that Chavez considered affiliation with the Pentecostal Holiness Church from the USA but the IPHC was dissuaded by the fact that the Pentecostal Church of Chile was a member of the WCC. Also see Juan Sepulveda, “Pentecostalism and Liberation Theology: Two Manifestations of the Work of the Holy Spirit for the Renewal of the Church,” in *All Together in One Place*, eds. Harold D. Hunter and Peter D. Hocken (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 51-64.

I have consistently worked hard to move toward models of equality lauded in WCC circles that were installed in me by the Church of God of Prophecy (CGP). One can look at the various conferences I have organized, the most recent being the Oxford 2012 conference on global Pentecostalism. Most of the papers were published in *The Many Faces of Global Pentecostalism*.² The previously exclusive CGP got many things wrong but they knew they needed to empower women and break racial barriers regardless of society's resistance. So the marks of the church for them were more than the famous four known to all, namely one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

It is axiomatic that early Classical Pentecostalism embraced with enthusiasm a particular notion of calling and gifting when it came to the recognition of leaders. This thread remains so prevalent that a February 2015 unpublished document by the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA) stipulated that any new commissions must embody "divine initiative, visionary calling, passion, and obedience of faith". A constant for the Pentecostal ecumenists treated here is the Pentecostal emphasis on gifting and calling or as du Plessis put it *The Spirit Bade Me Go*.

Pentecostals and Bilateral Dialogues

Some scholars including Roman Catholic Monsignor Peter Hocken have argued that Pentecostalism was inherently ecumenical. I published an article many years ago to the contrary pointing out that the exalted language from early Pentecostals about unity of all believers really was about uniformity shaped by an eschatology that thought Jesus would return in the first generation.³ However, starting with the likes of David du Plessis from South Africa, Pentecostals finally moved beyond their own circles and engaged conciliar ecumenism.

a. International Roman Catholic - Pentecostal Dialogue

This dialogue began in 1972 and has gone through five rounds of study between five and eight years in length. The result has been five Final Reports, which are as follows:

- 1) Final Report of the Dialogue Between the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and leaders of Some Pentecostals Churches and Participants in the Charismatic Movement within Protestant and Anglican Clergy, 1972-1977
- 2) Final Report of the Dialogue Between the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostals, 1977-1982
- 3) *Perspectives on Koinonia*: The Report of the Third Quinquennium of the Dialogue between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders 1985-1989

² Harold D. Hunter and Neil Ormerod, eds., *The Many Faces of Global Pentecostalism* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2013).

³ Harold D. Hunter, "Two Movements of the Holy Spirit in the 20th Century? A Closer Look at Global Pentecostalism and Ecumenism", *One in Christ* 38:1 (January 2003), 31-39.

4) *Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness: The Report from the Fourth Phase of the International Dialogue 1990-1997 between the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders*. See <http://pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj4/rcpent97.html>

5) *On Becoming A Christian: Insights from Scripture and the Patristic Writings with Some Contemporary Reflections*," The Report from the Fifth Phase of the International Dialogue between Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders and the Catholic Church (1998-2006) I read the primary paper at the 1999 meeting in Venice.

The sixth round of dialogues began in 2011 with Rev. Dr. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. remaining co-chair for the Pentecostal team. See http://pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj18/2007RC_Pent_Dialogue.pdf

b. World Alliance of Reformed Churches/World Communion of Reformed Churches – Pentecostal Dialogue

The first official dialogue began in 1996 and has undergone two rounds of studies. The report for both rounds have been issued. Rev. Dr. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. chaired the first round and Rev. Dr. David Daniels chaired the second round. The reports are as follows:

1) *Word and Spirit, Church and World*. The Final Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders: 1996-2000. See <http://pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj8/WARC.html>

2) *Experience in Christian Faith and Life: Worship, Discipleship, Community, and Justice*. The Final Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders: 2001 – 2011. See http://pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj21/WARC_2011d.html

Round three was launched November 2014 in Hungary. I have been part of this dialogue from the beginning. WARC (World Alliance of Reformed Churches) is now known as WCRC (World Communion of Reformed Churches).

c. Lutheran World Federation – Pentecostal Conversation

Beginning in 2005, Pentecostals began a conversation with the Lutheran World Federation on the theme of “Encountering Christ.” Rev. Dr. Jean-Daniel Plüss served as the chair for the Pentecostal team. The dialogue was completed in 2010 and a report was issued to the Lutheran World Federation under the title, *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue*.

d. Talks in process

Informal talks between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Pentecostals: 2010-2012. A Consultation was planned in Oxford for September 2015. I led the Pentecostal team but had to omit a larger section on these talks due to space limitations.

Initial talks with the Baptist World Alliance were held December 2011 in Birmingham, Alabama. Other important conversations are underway in addition to concrete plans for talks with the Anglicans that are currently limited to the UK.

4. Pentecostals and Ecumenism

A growing number of Pentecostals are involved on various levels with the World Council of Churches, several National Council of Churches, the Global Christian Forum (GCF), Christian Churches United USA (CCTUSA) and Christian Churches United in England. A wide variety of Pentecostal churches who are members of the PWF belongs to various national council of churches like the IPHC in Cuba for example.⁴ The IPHC is a member of CCTUSA and is represented at the GCF. Clearly the next chapter on ecumenism will be written by the global South.

In light of the fact that there is no agreement on global Pentecostal identity, it would be ludicrous to expect any presentation on ecclesiology that could speak authoritatively for even those Pentecostals that make up the PWF. The wide diversity of ecclesiology found among Pentecostals around the world is easily measured by the number of official documents available now on cds, dvds, and online. In terms of scholarly analysis, we need look no farther than the works on ecclesiology by Shane Clifton (Australia), Simon Chan (Singapore), Wolfgang Vondey (Germany), and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Finland).⁵ I would add that while our lack of homogeneity is roundly criticized, no tradition known to me is monolithic.

Neil Ormerod and Shane Clifton refer to their book as an example of “shared intra-ecclesial mission” and among the precedents cited and labeled “common witness” is the work of the North American Renewal Service Committee (NARSC) once led by Dr. Vinson Synan and the International Charismatic Communion (ICCOWE/ICC) originally led by Fr. Michael Harper. My exposure to such groups comes first-hand as a board member of NARSC, ICCOWE then ICC.⁶ NARSC attracted up to 50,000 people in its USA conferences that drew mostly Roman Catholic Charismatics, all types of Protestant Charismatics, a wide range of independent groups, and Classical Pentecostals.

It was insights like that which follows that led me to invite Shane Clifton to be part of the discussion with Orthodox in 2010. I would later invite Neil Ormerod to be part of Oxford 2012 and so he became my co-editor for *The Many Faces of Global Pentecostalism*.

This insightful comment from Clifton and Ormerod uses a trifold framework not unlike a chart I first published in 1992:

⁴ Harold D. Hunter, “Global Pentecostalism and Ecumenism: Two Movements of the Holy Spirit?” in Wolfgang Vondey, Ed., *Pentecostalism and Christian Unity: Ecumenical Documents and Critical Assessment* (Eugene, OR: PICKWICK Publications, 2010), 26; David Cole, “Pentecostal Koinonia : An Emerging Ecumenical Ecclesiology Among Pentecostals,” (PhD dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1998), 99.

⁵ Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: An Essay on the Development of Doctrine* (Amsterdam: Deo Publishing, 2011); Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002); Shane Clifton, *Pentecostal Churches in Transition :Analysing the Developing Ecclesiology of the Assemblies of God in Australia* (Leiden ; Boston : Brill, 2009); Wolfgang Vondey, *People of Bread: Rediscovering Ecclesiology*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2008).

⁶ Neil J. Ormerod and Shane Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission of the Church: Ecclesiological Investigations*, (London: T&T Clark, 2009), pp. 176-177. See Ziefle, *David du Plessis*, 133, 172. Cf. Vinson Synan, *An Eyewitness Remembers the Century of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2010).

This grounding of ecclesiology in local assemblies, therefore, paves the way for reconceiving broader notions of ‘the Church’. Of course, in addition to hierarchical institutional strictures, there is the added complication that both the Catholic and Orthodox churches (along with High Church Anglicanism/Episcopalianism) also have a sacramental and Eucharistic ecclesiology that differs from that of most Protestant churches who locate ecclesiality in the preaching of the word, and Free Churches, who locate ecclesiality not in the Eucharist, but in the gathering of the two or three by the power of the Spirit in the name of Jesus (Matthew 18.20). In all cases, however, the Church (of God) is understood to be constituted by the Spirit under the headship of Christ, so that Kasper can note that all of the ecumenical dialogues undertaken by the Roman Catholic Church converge in the fact that they revolve around the concept of *communio* as their key concept. All dialogues define the visible unity of all Christians as *communio*-unity, and agree in understanding it, in analogy with the original trinitarian model, not as uniformity but as unity in diversity and diversity in unity.⁷

Profoundly relevant for an answer to this question is the theological diversity contained in the canonical record. Ernst Käsemann brought to the 1963 Montreal conference on Faith and Order his publicized view that the New Testament canon does not dismiss but in fact contains “the basis for the multiplicity of the confessions.”⁸ Coping with the additional realities of diverse cultural and social contexts also strengthens the argument of Jürgen Moltmann that the church should not be seeking “uniformity but should be working through the ecumenical movement to expand its range of unlikeness.”⁹ As has been said by the Waldensians in Italy, no one church has all the marks of the church, and the more we fellowship with other churches, the more we represent the body of Christ rather than compromise the unity of that body.

Case Studies of Pentecostal Ecumenists

Now let us look at select case studies of Pentecostal ecumenical pioneers. First up is David du Plessis.

Born in South Africa of French Huguenot stock in 1905, David du Plessis experienced an evangelical conversion in 1916 -- "I'm a little white heathen, saved by black Christians" -- and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1918. In 1927, du Plessis was married, and the following year was ordained to the ministry of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM).

⁷ Ormerod and Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission of the Church*, pp. 174-175.

⁸ Käsemann quoted by James D.G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 376. This view compares favorably with Dunn's perspective that “there was no single normative form of Christianity in the first century.” Cf. William G. Rusch, *Ecumenism: A Movement Toward Church Unity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), chapter 1; John R.W. Stott and Basil Meeking (eds.), *The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission, 1977-1984: A Report* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 19–20; Anton W. J. Houtepen, “Toward An Ecumenical Vision of the Church,” *One in Christ* 25, no. 3 (1989): 217–37.

⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, “Pentecost and the Theology of Life,” in Jürgen Moltmann and Karl-Josef Kuschel, *Pentecostal Movements as an Ecumenical Challenge*, Concilium 3 (London: SCM, 1996), 123–34.

David had no theological education but a year of college was more than his peers in the AFM. His parents were turned out of the Dutch Reformed Church for their Pentecostal activity. From 1928 to 1949, David gradually emerged from evangelist to pastor into the bureaucratic leadership with the AFM, finally to general secretary, at age 37, of the national church.¹⁰

The year was 1936. David was General Secretary and he had Smith Wigglesworth, aged 77, a well-known British "Pentecostal" evangelist, staying in his home. It was about 7AM:

Suddenly the door [to David's AFM office] flew open and in walked Smith Wigglesworth. He commanded the startled du Plessis to come out from behind the desk. Laying his hands on his shoulders he pushed him against the wall and began to prophesy: 'You have been in Jerusalem long enough ... I will send you to the uttermost parts of the earth ... You will bring the message of Pentecost to all churches ... God is going to revive the churches in the last days and through them turn the world upside down.'¹¹

Of course, the wording of such accounts come from David du Plessis's memory much later in his life.

Then Wigglesworth went out as quickly as he had come. David was confused. Were not the historic churches, together with the Roman Catholic Church, the Beast and Scarlet Woman of Revelation, doomed to the lake of fire?¹²

Du Plessis had been bitter toward the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa because it had ostracized Pentecostals in general and his family in particular. He was not positive towards Roman Catholics and non-Pentecostals in general. Surely God would work directly through Pentecostalism alone he thought.¹³

David had never traveled outside his own native South Africa. However, in 1927 he had opened up correspondence with Lewi Pethrus in Sweden.¹⁴ Wigglesworth returned later - about 10 minutes later - acting like nothing had happened. He prayed that David would never experience

¹⁰ Richard Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics: The Origins, Development and Significance of Neo-Pentecostalism* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1976), 92f.

¹¹ Michael Harper, *As At The Beginning* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1965), 47. Also see David du Plessis with Bob Slosser, *A Man Called Mr. Pentecost: The Story of a legendary missionary to the Church* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1977), 2f. See Joshua R. Ziefle, *David du Plessis and the Assemblies of God: The Struggle for the Soul of a Movement*. (Brill, 2013), 30 n.35, about the accuracy of aspects of Du Plessis's memory. Ziefle's source is Brinton Rutherford, "From Prosecutor to Defender: An Intellectual History of David J. du Plessis, Drawn From the Stories of His Testimony" (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2000), 169. Also see Martin Robinson, "To the Ends of the Earth: The Pilgrimage of an Ecumenical Pentecostal, David J. du Plessis (1905-1987)." (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Birmingham, England, 1987) and Peter Hocken, *Streams of Renewal: The Origin and Early Development of the Charismatic Movement in Great Britain* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1986), 19-21. All the sources agree, however, that even prior to this prophetic encounter, Du Plessis was confident in his call to ministry.

¹² Harper, *As At the Beginning*, 47.

¹³ David du Plessis with Bob Slosser, *A Man Called Mr. Pentecost* (South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Publishing Inc., 1977), 206f.

¹⁴ Ziefle, *David du Plessis*, 28f.

motion sickness when travelling and told him that he, David, would be leaving soon for initial travels, but more extensive after the death of Wigglesworth.

Within three weeks, quite unexpectedly, came an invitation to attend the General Council of the Assemblies of God in the USA the following year. Du Plessis was away for 10 months. At the Bible School in Pasadena, CA, he met Dr. Charles Price.

Dr. Price wept with joy when he heard the story, and thanked God that it confirmed what he had been shown him about the future. In 1939 the Second World War broke out and du Plessis, back in Africa, had no further opportunities for travel. On March 12, 1947, Smith Wigglesworth died, and the same year du Plessis started his extensive travels as per the prophecy.¹⁵

In 1947, the first Pentecostal World Conference was called to Zurich. Du Plessis attended this meeting as a delegate from the Apostolic Faith Mission in South Africa and in 1948 he was asked to convene a second such conference in Paris and to serve as its secretary -- an office he also held in the third (1952) and fifth (1958) meetings.¹⁶

Something happened during the preparations for this 1949 session in Paris. It was late at night (i.e. about 3 AM in 1948) and David was hurrying from one appointment to another in a hilly region of Tennessee on their way to Beckley, West Virginia. A friend, Paul Walker head of the Mission Department of the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), had offered to drive him in the interest of time. The night was dark and rainy, clouds of fog hid the road. Conversation had almost ceased because of the late hour and the difficult driving. Suddenly Walker peered intently through the streaming windshield, David remembers him saying, "There's supposed to be a white bridge ..." but he never finished his sentence. Out of the fog suddenly loomed the hulk of a locomotive, stopped without lights directly across the highway. Walker tried to break his car, but the road was slick and the automobile, a Packard, skidded into the train.¹⁷

Paul Walker was hurt only slightly, but David's head smashed through the windshield. He was jerked back through the glass, cutting himself both going and coming. His left leg was broken above the knee. His back was twisted, his shoulder cut. Twelve hours later David regained consciousness. David did remarkably well. "The only real effect of the accident," said David, "was to slow down my bullheaded, steamroller approach to the Paris conference."¹⁸

The result was a more thoughtful approach to issues and a deepening concern for the World Council of Churches (WCC). While convalescing he thought also about Teddy Hodgson, an Englishman who came to Africa as a missionary to Cannibals in Zaire. Hodgson, he remembered, ministers out of love. David felt he could not go to those with whom he disagreed in doctrine and practice. He decided that God was not requiring him to "justify" non-Pentecostals, but God was calling for "forgiveness."

¹⁵ Harper, *As At the Beginning*, 48f.

¹⁶ Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics*, 93.

¹⁷ John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1964) 54.

¹⁸ Sherrill, *They Speak With Other Tongues*, 55. Cf. Ziefle, *David du Plessis*, 36.

Michael Harper and John Sherrill do not agree on particulars (e.g. plane or train, which day, etc) but do agree that it was 1951 when David became acutely aware of a calling to speak to the leaders of the WCC. Introducing himself as "world secretary" of the Pentecostal Movement, he was warmly received by members of the WCC New York office.¹⁹

Du Plessis's account of his first encounter with the WCC intersects a point that I have made often which is that only as one is faithful to one's tradition can they be of interest to the WCC. It is evident that du Plessis benefited greatly from Bishop Lesslie Newbigin's designation of Pentecostalism as the "third stream" in Christianity in his widely acclaimed *The Household of God* (1953).²⁰ Then the next stage was elevated by befriending John Mackay when he was president of Princeton Theology Seminary who had already been quoted by Donald Gee in the PWF magazine *Pentecost*.

When the office on Fifth Avenue opened I was there. I announced myself and made sure there was no mistake about who and what I was – a Pentecostal, and one of the worse, actually the world secretary. In the train on my way in I had decided to make things so hot that those I spoke to would have no trouble in knowing what I had to say, and I expected them to object and reject. But the hotter I made it the better my friends seemed to like it.²¹

As a result of this encounter David was invited to his first ecumenical conference - the 1952 International Missionary Council at Willingen in Germany. He checked in for three days but stayed much longer. He arrived during a coffee break on the first day, and Dr. John A. Mackay - then president of Princeton Seminary - took him by the arm and introduced him to many of the delegates as "my great Pentecostal friend." In 1954 Dr. Visser't Hooft, the Secretary of the WCC invited David to attend the Second Assembly of the WCC, at Evanston as a member of the staff. Here he was first called "Mr. Pentecost." This was followed in 1961 by his participation as a Pentecostal observer at the third WCC assembly in New Delhi.²²

Calling himself an "ecumaniac," he lectured in several prominent seminaries - Princeton, Yale, Union, Perkins, Fuller - in addition to being an observer at Vatican II and founding co-chair of the official dialogue between Roman Catholics and Pentecostals for 10 years, 1972-82. His brother Justus DuPlessis followed him then Mel Robeck.

¹⁹ Harper, *As At The Beginning*, 52; Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues*, 56; Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics*, 93.

²⁰ David Cole, "Pentecostal Koinonia : An Emerging Ecumenical Ecclesiology Among Pentecostals," (PhD dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1998), 94ff. Cole continues, p. 95, "He lamented the fact that this third stream 'at present runs more outside of, than inside of, the ecumenical movement, and has so far taken an inadequate part' in the ecumenical theological encounter." Also see Cole, p. 100-102, for a summary of the speech by Pentecostal Christian Krust, then head of the Christlicher Gemeinschaftsverband in Mulheim-Ruhr, on July 6, 1968, at the WCC General Assembly in Uppsala.

²¹ David J. DuPlessis, *The Spirit Bade Me Go* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1970), 13f. See Ziefle, *David du Plessis*, 38. Ziefle notes (p. 54) that du Plessis's lectures advocated Pentecostalism as a renewal agency over against the notion of supercessionism.

²² Harper, *As At the Beginning*, 53; Quebedezux, *The New Charismatics*, 93.

Many AG leaders of influence inside and outside the USA rejected David's ecumenical activities. After taking residence in the US in 1949, David had gained ministerial status in the AG in 1955, but in 1962 he was stripped of his credentials by the governing board for his fraternal contacts with the WCC.²³ The World Pentecostal Conference, now known as the Pentecostal World Fellowship, also repudiated him.

An article published in the *Pentecostal Evangel* in 1962 by Boyd expounded the view that the ecumenical movement was a means to form the harlot church of Revelation:

The National and World Councils of Churches are the crystallization of this apostasy, for they do not believe in the inspiration of Scriptures nor are they true to the Person of Christ.²⁴

It is true that WCC evidenced more influence of 'liberals' up through the 1980s. Yet Donald Gee in the meantime argued "Contact is not compromise." Du Plessis tried to get Gee to go and extended an invitation. Gee wanted to go but gave in to church pressure and declined but sent David money to encourage his work. Gee later said that he regretted not having gone.²⁵

The now defunct *Agora* ran a most illuminating interview in the summer of 1978 with Du Plessis over this action of the church.²⁶ Du Plessis believed the main problem was that AG was courting heavily the good favors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) which put a specific ban on WCC. David compared the difference in influence noting that little Pentecostal influence has been shown on the NAE while in 10 years some 375 men associated with WCC have been Spirit baptized and he had been assured by WCC that no one would be turned out of the organization for a Pentecostal experience. It should also be noted that du Plessis pushed back against the notion that he encouraged Pentecostal churches to join the WCC rather claiming that Pentecostals should bear witness to this receptive audience.²⁷

The AG leaders – du Plessis specified General Superintendent Thomas Zimmerman -- had soft pedaled the Pentecostal distinctives in order to work with the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) while du Plessis did not recanted anything while working with the WCC. He told Zimmerman after Zimmerman had been elected president of NAE: "Are they going to have to put up with a Pentecostal president, or are we going to have to put up with an evangelical general superintendent?" In 1980 David got his AG license back. At the 1981 SPS conference, David quoted Zimmerman as saying send the critics on to him.

²³ Details can be found in Ziefle, *David du Plessis*, 57ff, who casts the crisis as one of AG institutionalization. Given what I know of conciliar ecumenism and Pentecostal headquarters, I view this as an inadequate reading of the dynamics in play. However, I think further discussion is warranted about to what degree du Plessis sought the support of the AG leaders at critical points in his journey.

²⁴ Frank M. Boyd. "Ecumenicity: False and True," *The Pentecostal Evangel* #2526 (October 7, 1962), 19.

²⁵ David Cole, "Pentecostal Koinonia: An Emerging Ecumenical Ecclesiology Among Pentecostals," (PhD dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1998), 89ff, casts Gee as a Pentecostal ecumenist who preceded DuPlessis.

²⁶ Richard Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics II* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983) 114, says this was his first public word on this issue.

²⁷ Ziefle, *David du Plessis*, p. 78, reproduces a June 29, 1962 letter by du Plessis in the middle of exchanges with the AG Executive Presbytery that is specific about blaming the crisis on the NAE. Ziefle, p. 901f, reproduces minutes from the AG dismissal of du Plessis by the Executive Presbytery.

In the same *Agora* article²⁸ David talked about his personal time with Karl Barth. Du Plessis said that Barth was open to Spirit baptism and that they prayed together about it. Du Plessis added, "On a different occasion Barth said to me, 'Almost thou persuadesth me to become an enthusiastic, but I must have scripture.'"

Du Plessis also said that Barth said that a renewed Roman Catholicism and a mature Pentecostalism would bring the church together. Du Plessis also met with Hendrikus Berkhof. Of course du Plessis worked much with Roman Catholics. He got a gold medal from Pope John II; the first non-Roman Catholic to receive such.

The kind of observations often associated with David would be the following as characterized by a Roman Catholic Charismatic scholar:

They [Pentecostals] have the Anglicans' creed and sense of God's greatness; the Congregationalists' belief that Christianity is a layman's religion; the Quaker's practice of waiting for the Holy Spirit; the Brethren's emphasis on the word of God; their own unequalled zeal for evangelism; plus the power of the Apostles received at Pentecost.²⁹

David advocated a spiritual unity, rather than an organizational unity. Du Plessis always encouraged those in the traditional churches who were Spirit baptized to remain in their own tradition. He opposed the "come-outism" and encouraged Charismatics to change the tradition from within. However, clearly his mode was that of a 'missionary' who took the Pentecostal experience to receptive fields.

Fuller Theological Seminary created a David J. du Plessis Center. He did not want Oral Roberts University to have this because they were not truly ecumenical; only Fuller Theological Seminary would qualify.

Now, I move quickly to Vinson Synan. Here is what Vinson Synan said to me in an email sent July 29, 2014:

1. About 1944 when I was 10 years old and living in the PHC parsonage in Suffolk, Virginia, I remember seeing an unusual vision in my bedroom about dawn. I seemed to see a procession of dark figures dressed in robes with heads bowed marching across the room in front of the window. They marched on and on. Only in later years when I saw lines of Catholic priests and Bishops in processions that I remembered the vision. It seems that I was seeing churchmen marching as they had for centuries in an endless

²⁸ Augustus Cerillo, Jr., "Agora Talks to David du Plessis," *Agora* (Summer 1978), 11. David du Plessis, *Simple & Profound* (Orleans, MA: Paraclete Press, 1986), 175ff, says that Karl Barth changed his attitude about Roman Catholics then made a connection for him to the Vatican.

²⁹ Prudencio Damboriena, *Tongues As of Fire: Pentecostalism in Contemporary Christianity* (Washington, D.C.: Corpus Books, 1969), 65. Damboriena quotes his source as du Plessis, *The Spirit Bade Me Go*, 8. He does not give the edition and I have not been able to locate this quotation in any of the published books by du Plessis. Not being able to locate the original source has led to speculation that this wording might have come from Harper, Quebedeaux, Sherrill, Harrell, John Mackay, or Walter J. Hollenweger.

procession that would only end in heaven. I feel that this was a premonition of my future ministry to Catholic Charismatics beginning in 1972 at Notre Dame.

2. In my memoirs, *An Eyewitness Remembers the Century of the Holy Spirit* I describe my epiphany at Notre Dame while watching my first Catholic Charismatic service³⁰.

"As I wept, it became almost impossible to breathe. So I ran to a restroom and literally sobbed before the Lord. As I tried to recover, I heard almost audibly the words: 'This is real. I'm doing a new thing in the Catholic Church and it will spread over all the earth. You'll be a part of it and contribute to this great awakening. You must tell your own people what you have seen and lead them to pray for these Catholic Pentecostals.'"

Mel Robeck's version is that his call came while preparing for my 1983 SPS program. Here is part of his account:

Then one night while I was sleeping, I could see the Lord standing at the end of my bed. Then He spoke to me. "Mel," he said, "I want you to talk about ecumenism." I knew the voice instantly, though I had never heard it this way before! It woke me, and in great fear I looked around.

The closest description I can give to that voice as I have reflected on it since is that which I read in Revelation 1:10. It was a "voice like a trumpet." I had never heard such a voice in my entire life before that moment. The words were clear, but the voice was a not typical a human voice. The closest description I can give to the Lord as He stood at the end of my bed was that found in the Transfiguration, and the old English word "glistening" (Cf. Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:3; Luke 9:29). I knew it was the Lord, the risen Christ, but he scared me with this specific call. And He had called me by name.

My immediate response to that visionary experience, however, was to say, "Lord, I don't know anything about ecumenism." And I went back to sleep.

Later that same night, the Lord stood again at the foot of my bed and said, "Mel, I want you to speak about ecumenism." I was more awake this time, and even though I was afraid, I argued with the Lord. "Lord," I said, "I don't know anything about ecumenism. Besides, ecumenism is a bad word in our circles. If I speak on the subject of ecumenism, I will just get into trouble with the Assemblies of God. Don't you know that we have condemned ecumenism] I can't do it." And I went back to sleep.

Still later that night, it happened once again. The Lord stood at the foot of my bed and spoke the same words once again. "Mel, I want you to speak about ecumenism," He insisted. This time when He spoke, He had my complete attention. I knew who was calling me, and I had twice said "No." By the time I heard him speak to me the third time, I was fully awake, and I began to think. The Lord is asking me to do something about which I know nothing. I don't even know where to begin with the subject and I have a great deal of fear about doing what He has asked. On the other hand, I have no right to call myself a minister of the Gospel if I cannot do the simplest thing He has asked me to

³⁰ See Vinson Synan, *An Eyewitness Remembers the Century of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2010), p. 65.

do. I knew what I had to do. I responded, "Okay, Lord. I'll do it. All I ask is that you take care of me."³¹

Robeck would go on to argue that Pentecostalism is inherently ecumenical and I have published an article from a paper originally read to the 1999 EPCRA conference in Hamburg, Germany, that challenges such a notion.³² However, for my generation there is no Pentecostal more visible among conciliar ecumenists than Mel Robeck. The list of Robeck's conciliar ecumenical achievements is too long for this paper.³³

Cheryl Bridges John's published call to ecumenism follows:

This ecumenical calling came somewhat out of the blue, and I am careful how I share the experience. Suffice it to say that this experience had all the marks of a Pentecostal encounter with God. It was transformative, scary, and left me face down on the floor. During this experience God clearly spoke to me through the text of John 17. The Lord allowed me to feel a small amount of his passion for the unity of his body. Such an experience was almost more than I could bear.

My ecumenical vocation has taken me many places: World Council of Churches, National Council of Churches, Roman Catholic–Pentecostal/Evangelical dialogues, lectures in mainline seminaries, Evangelical initiatives.³⁴

Wonsuk Ma wrote the following to me in an email sent March 3, 2015:

My ecumenical 'call' may have been less drastic and 'Pentecostal'. I remember two important moments:

In my Bible college day, a classmate (Methodist) invited me to Asian Young Christian Leaders' Conference in Jeju Island. That was my first international and inter-church interaction. Must have been 1973 or so.

The second is Mel's invitation extended to us to join the Reformed and Pentecostal dialogue. My ecumenical induction appears in outset more human instrumentality, although I firmly believe in God's hand behind and above it.³⁵

³¹ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "My Call to Ecumenism," in *Global Christian Forum: Transforming Ecumenism*, Edited by Richard Howell (New Delhi, India: Evangelical Fellowship of India, 1907), p. 67f. Also see Cecil M. Robeck, "A Pentecostal Perspective on Leadership," in Richard J. Mouw and Eric O. Jacobsen, Eds., *Traditions in Leadership: How Faith Traditions Shape the Way We Lead* (Pasadena, CA: De Pree Leadership Center, 2006), 139-160, endnotes 234-237.

³² Harold D. Hunter, "Global Pentecostalism and Ecumenism: Two Movements of the Holy Spirit?" in Wolfgang Vondey, Ed., *Pentecostalism and Christian Unity: Ecumenical Documents and Critical Assessment* (Eugene, OR: PICKWICK Publications, 2010), 20-33.

³³ See Tamara Grdzeldze, "The WCC – Pentecostals: Where Are We Now?" unpublished paper presented to Consultation on Global Pentecostalism held June 7-9, 2012 in Oxford, UK.

³⁴ Cheryl Bridges Johns, "This Place Is too Small: Journeys Into unchartered Space," in *Pentecostals in the Academy*, edited by Steven Fettke and Robby Waddell (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012).

³⁵ See Julie C. Ma and Wonsuk Ma, *Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Mission* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 256-266; Wonsuk Ma and Julie C. Ma, "The Making of Korean Missionaries: Our Personal Journey," in *Together In One Mission*, edited by Arto Hämäläinen (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2012), 159-176.

Here is an account of Harold D. Hunter's call to ministry as written on the back of the album "Here's One" put out in the early 1970s. I wish I could say this was a Hillsong kind of album but it was contemporary gospel music influenced by Andrea Crouch. My wife and I both sang and played instruments for the album which we also did on radio and television.

On a Sunday morning in July 1966, the Holy Spirit completely changed the direction of my life. The local church in Pierre, South Dakota, was having revival services and during the altar service I was found playing my trumpet as usual. The course of the altar service was changed as the Holy Ghost fell, at which time a sister came to me and directed me to and directed me to the pulpit and placed a Bible in front of me. As soon as this was done a visiting minister gave a message in English. The message was my calling into the ministry. I opened the Bible in front of me and looked at one side of the page which had an artist's conception of Christ in the temple at the age of twelve, confounding the doctors and lawyers. My eyes ran to the other page and I found the following: "And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing he shall answer, or what ye shall say; For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what you ought to say." (Luke 12:11, 12)

My story does not mean that I am not accountable to my faith community or that I can claim impulses of the Spirit without qualification. Incidentally, one should not miss out on the African-American and African-Caribbean influence in CGP. I am not 'liberal', I am 'radical' in a CGP sense when it comes to gender and race.

My call in CGP meant that I started as an evangelist who held week long revivals. This is still apparent today which some applaud and others do not. I pastored for several years and did a five-year term as an executive at the CGP headquarters.

I had visions, but the WCC brought many of them to life. I said this directly to Rev. Dr. Olav Tveit, General Secretary of the WCC, during the November 18, 2010, visit to the Geneva headquarters with the WCC – Pentecostal JCG. My turn of phrase was something like this: "We Pentecostals have our dreams and visions, but mine were brought to life by the WCC."

I have to say that I never heard of Du Plessis because I lived in such a closed community who wondered aloud from the pulpits if the Holy Spirit was present in other churches, even Pentecostal churches. For me, again it was the literal interpretation of a Matthean directive (Matt 18:15) that 'if you have ought against your brother' you should go directly to him and be reconciled. That is part of what drove me to start attending other church services like a Roman Catholic mass when I was 19 years old and a student at the CGP college in Cleveland, TN.

I am not going to list all my ecumenical activities that can be found in my online resume³⁶, but one note I could mention is that more than once I give up my seat in preference to others. One of the reasons that I have organized various high profile international conference is to give voice to those who are often not heard. CGP taught me to take the last seat and I felt privileged inside CGP due to my father's work in the church that goes back to the founder A.J. Tomlinson. To cite a specific example, I gave up my seat in the International Roman Catholic – Pentecostal

³⁶ See <http://www.pctii.org/vita.html>

Dialogue. This was in the early 1980s when I got M.A. Tomlinson, General Overseer of CGP, and the administrative committee to endorse an official representative at the dialogue.³⁷ If one were to judge the results from a professional point of view, one could say this move hurt my ecumenical career. At that time, I was on the faculty of the Church of God School Theological Seminary later renamed the Pentecostal Theological Seminary in Cleveland, TN.

These kinds of decisions reflect my deep connection to Pentecostal churches. One small dividend of late will be mentioned in the oral presentation.

³⁷ It is unknown to what degree MA Tomlinson was influenced by David du Plessis. Tomlinson told me about talking to du Plessis in a grocery store not his office but little was said about specifics. Ziefle, p. 45, gets it wrong when he says du Plessis met with AJ Tomlinson. This was MA Tomlinson as AJ Tomlinson passed away in 1943.