



**Lessons Learned During 30 Years of Ecumenical Dialogue.**

**What Future Challenges Can Be Expected?**

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## INTRODUCTION

Around 1970, the president of the Swiss Pentecostal Mission wrote the following about Pentecostal churches in Germany and Switzerland:

“W.J. Hollenweger sees the Pentecostal movement ‘moving more and more in the direction of the traditional churches’. Today, ‘the difference between Pentecostalism and the traditional churches in many places consists in a doctrinal difference—truly a tragic situation for a movement that set out to overcome dogmatic differences through a common spiritual experience.’ However, Pentecostalism finds not so much its own situation tragic as the fact that even today there is still an ugly trench between the traditional churches ... and (the Pentecostal movement) ... But despite all ecumenical goodwill, the Pentecostal movement cannot ignore this trench either. It is there.”<sup>1</sup>

This was the situation when I was a young Pentecostal. Pentecostals defined themselves as being different from other Christian denominations. On the other side of that gulf some argued that Pentecostals were sectarian.<sup>2</sup> Was Professor Hollenweger, the early expert on global Pentecostalism, right in claiming that Pentecostals were moving closer to the traditional churches? My aim is to take you on a journey and present some historical context of ecumenical efforts by Pentecostals. What are lessons learned and what challenges can we discern ahead of us, especially if we consider the secularizing influence in many of our societies?

## THE ECUMENICAL ROOTS OF PENTECOSTALISM

Walter Hollenweger has argued that Pentecostalism started in most places as an ecumenical renewal movement in the mainline churches.<sup>3</sup> He makes his point by showing that early European Pentecostal leaders came from a variety of ecclesial backgrounds.

Thomas Ball Barratt, the man that brought the Azusa Street revival to Norway during the

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<sup>1</sup> Jakob Zopfi, *Deutschland und die Schweiz in Die Pfingstkirchen*, Walter J. Hollenweger ed. *Die Kirchen der Welt* vol. VII, (Stuttgart, Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1971), 73.

<sup>2</sup> This trench was partially created in 1909 by the *Berlin Declaration* in which a branch of conservative Lutherans claimed that the Pentecostal movement was “from below”.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 334.

Christmas Season in 1906, was a Methodist minister. Jonathan Paul, the first leader of the Pentecostal movement in Germany was a Lutheran pastor. Alexander Boddy, an Englishman, started to gather the first Pentecostal believers in his Anglican parish in Sunderland. Gerrit Polman, the first Pentecostal pastor in the Netherlands, was an officer in the Salvation Army. Lewi Pethrus, the primordial Pentecostal leader in Sweden, was a Baptist. Louis Dalli  re, was a leading charismatic pastor within the French Reformed Church. Indeed, the birth of European Pentecostalism happened in a multi-ecclesial context. There was a strong bond among these early leaders as they would meet from 1908 to 1914 at the yearly Sunderland Conventions in the Northeast of England. They all had their faith in the same Lord Jesus, and they all had experienced an infilling of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, they came from very different traditions. Anglicans and Lutherans were baptizing children, whereas Baptists insisted on believer's baptism and members of the Salvation Army did not baptize at all. Reformed Pentecostals had espoused a congregational understanding of the church whereas Methodists had an episcopal set up. While some would refer to the Lord's Supper as a sacrament, others saw this rite in terms of an ordinance.

So, what we see is that although there was a strong sense of unity, there was also diversity in terms of particular practices and ecclesial convictions. Would this situation enable the renewal of all Christian churches? Many understood the renewed outpouring of the Holy Spirit as a gift for everyone and lived with a vision of "Christian unity everywhere".<sup>4</sup>

As time passed, the Pentecostal gatherings began to assemble as churches and by the 1930s most European Pentecostals had solidified as separate denominations.<sup>5</sup> That meant that

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<sup>4</sup> William Seymour in *The Apostolic Faith*, September 1906, 1, 2. Similarly, Swiss Pentecostal pastors made a declaration of ecumenical intent in the Swiss journal *Die Verheissung des Vaters*, November 1913, 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> In Switzerland, the Eglise de R  veil organized itself in 1932, The Gemeinde f  r Urchristentum in 1933 and the Schweizerische Pfingstmission, that previously was a mission agency, declared itself a denomination in 1935. In the United Kingdom the process began with the first Elim church in Belfast in 1915, the British Assemblies of God were established in 1924. In Germany, the Christian M  lheim Fellowship (Christlicher Gemeinschaftsverband M  lheim an der Ruhr) was established as an independent body in 1913. The Italian Assemblies of God (Assemblee di Dio in Italia) officially constituted themselves as a denomination in 1959; for further details see below. In Sweden, on the other hand, there was no formal Pentecostal body for many decades

many Pentecostals in Europe defined their identity in terms of being different. Especially their views on the experience of a baptism in the Holy Spirit set them apart from other renewal movements and evangelical denominations, not to mention the traditional churches.

It would be the onset of the charismatic renewal in the late 1960s and early 1970s, mostly among Episcopal and Roman Catholic communities in North American and Europe, that would bring the issue of ecumenical relations back to the table. Suddenly, it was not only Pentecostals who claimed having received the gift of speaking in tongues, uttered prophetic messages or exercised the charism of prayer for healing. New realities began to emerge.<sup>6</sup>

### PENTECOSTALS IN DIALOGUE

The first international religious dialogue involving Pentecostals began in 1972 when the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity<sup>7</sup> of the Roman Catholic Church began conversations with individual Pentecostals and Charismatic leaders. Later it became clear that the Pentecostal group should only represent classical Pentecostals as this would make the conversations more focused. This dialogue has continued ever since and has recently celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Its various documents testify to a rich theological exchange.<sup>8</sup>

Since the mid-1990s Pentecostals have begun official dialogues with other church families like the Reformed and Lutheran Churches, the Anglican communion, conversations with Orthodox churches and a Joint Consultative Group with the World Council of Churches.<sup>9</sup> For the purpose of this essay, I will focus on the dialogue between Pentecostals

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to come because of a strong congregational setup that gave autonomy to local churches. Eventually, *The Pentecostal Alliance of Independent Churches* was founded in 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Daniel Plüss, *Vom Geist bewegt. Die Geschichte der Schweizerischen Pfingstmission* (Kreuzlingen: Asaph Verlag, 2015), 150-151.

<sup>7</sup> Now known as the Dicastery for the Promotion of Christian Unity.

<sup>8</sup> The reports are available from the website of the Dicastery for the Promotion of Christian Unity, <https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/pentecostali/dialogo.html>.

<sup>9</sup> The official dialogue with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) started in 1996. The World Council of Churches Joint Consultative Group with Pentecostals started in 2000 and a proto-dialogue with

and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the dialogue with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). I will describe their development and venture into a reflection on the significance of these dialogues for the Pentecostal movement today.

## **THE BEGINNINGS OF DIALOGUE WITH THE CHURCHES OF THE REFORMATION**

Why were Reformed and Lutheran churches interested in starting dialogical conversations with Pentecostals? On one hand there was the strong growth of the Pentecostal movement. Some churches felt threatened by the upsurge of Pentecostal churches.<sup>10</sup> Another reason for engaging with Pentecostals was the pentecostalisation of Protestant churches. Dr. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, a Methodist minister and expert on African Pentecostalism, brought the issue into focus when he wrote:

... the impact of neo-Pentecostalism has left the older churches with very little room to manoeuvre. Their very survival has come to depend not on their historic achievements in education and social work, but on how open they are to a Pentecostal or charismatic culture.<sup>11</sup>

Whether it concerned the growing charismatic presence in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana or the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, partner churches of the World Communion of Reformed Churches or the Lutheran World Federation respectively, need to understand these new realities. Páraic Réamounn, a former communications executive of the WARC, argued that in many parts of the world, Pentecostals and Reformed are at loggerheads or compete for religious market share.<sup>12</sup> A concrete expression of this tension

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members of the Lutheran World Federation began in 2004. The international dialogue between Anglican Communion and the Pentecostal World Fellowship had its beginning in 2022. Besides engaging in official dialogues Pentecostals have also participated in Faith and Order meetings of the WCC at least since 1985 when Cecil Mel Robeck was invited to join that group.

<sup>10</sup> Karen L- Bloomquist ed. *Lutherans Respond to Pentecostalism* (Minneapolis, MN: Lutheran University Press) 2008, 5.

<sup>11</sup> J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Neo-Pentecostalism and the Changing Face of Christianity in Africa* in Bloomquist, *Lutherans Respond*, 20.

<sup>12</sup> Páraic Réamounn, *Introduction in Reformed World. Can two walk together?* 50/3 (September 2000), 103.

was evident in the strained relations between the Presbyterians and Pentecostals in the Republic of Korea.<sup>13</sup> Entering dialogue with Pentecostals seemed to be a necessary way forward.

In July 1995 an exploratory committee of four Reformed and four Pentecostals met on the grounds of the Assemblies of God Bible college in Mattersey, England, to see if a dialogue between the two traditions might be useful.<sup>14</sup> The official Dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (now World Communion of Reformed Churches) and Pentecostals (now Pentecostal World Fellowship) began in 1996. In the meantime, three reports have been published reflecting the progress of each round, each lasting about 5 years.<sup>15</sup> A fourth round of dialogues has started in 2025.

Similarly, a study group between members of the Lutheran World Federation and Pentecostals began in 2004 at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg. There were yearly meetings that lasted till 2010 when the group met in Tampere, Finland, and published a report.<sup>16</sup> The official Dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) began in 2016. The first round ended with the publication of “The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me” in 2023.<sup>17</sup> The LWF and the PWF both supported a continuation of this dialogue. The second round started in 2025 in São Leopoldo, Brazil.

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<sup>13</sup> Cecil M. Robeck Jr. *Yoido Full Gospel Church and Ecumenism* in Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies eds. *The Holy Spirit, Spirituality and Leadership* (Oxford: Regnum Books International) 2024), 279.

<sup>14</sup> Those present at this meeting were on the Reformed side: Hugh Davidson, Margaret M. McKay, Salvatore Ricciardi and Henry Wilson. The Pentecostal participants were Richard Israel, Frank Macchia, Jean-Daniel Plüss and Cecil M. Robeck Jr.

<sup>15</sup> *Word and Spirit, Church and World* (2000), *Experience in Christian Faith and Life* (2012), *Called to God's Mission* (2020). All documents are available at <http://www.epcra.ch/papers.html>.

<sup>16</sup> *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue* (Strasbourg: Institute for Ecumenical Research, Pasadena, CA: The David Du Plessis Center for Christian Spirituality, Zurich: The European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> *The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me*, 2023 available online <https://lutheranworld.org/resources/publication-spirit-lord-upon-me>.

When we look at these documents, we notice how the church traditions met, built trust and learned to pray and think together.

### THE LANGUAGE OF EARLY DIALOGUES

The introduction of the first report of the Reformed–Pentecostal dialogue describes the “struggles” they encountered in getting started.<sup>18</sup> As a consequence, it was helpful to affirm basic agreement such as “we stand in communion with the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed” (§15) or that God revealed himself in Jesus Christ and by means of the Scriptures through the agency of the Holy Spirit (§19). The Reformed team stated “In previous centuries, Reformed theologians usually said that all signs and wonders were confined to the apostolic age. Increasingly, theologians, pastors, and church members see that this opinion finds no ground in the Scriptures” (§32). The document also mentions areas, like the prophetic ministry of the church, where Pentecostal and Reformed Christians differ in emphasis (§35). Likewise, the Reformed and Pentecostals tend to identify the faithful Church differently. Whereas the Reformed define the faithful church as a place where the Word of God is proclaimed and the sacraments rightly administered (§38), Pentecostals would see the faithful church as community where “Jesus Christ is lifted up, the Word of God is preached and obeyed, and where the Spirit’s gifts are manifested in the lives of believers” (§39). Such differences in emphasis were picked up as a positive challenge. For instance, paragraph 41 notes, “Deeper dialogue concerning the role of sacraments or ordinances, and the place of the Holy Spirit’s gifts, may lead to mutual enrichment.”

Furthermore, a useful gauge of evaluating progress in dialogue is the “we” language being used documents. Forty-four times the word “we” is used in this first document of the Reformed-Pentecostal dialogue. Phrases like: we confess, we share, we agree, and we believe

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<sup>18</sup> *Word and Spirit, Church and World*, §1-14.

indicate that there is a commonality that suggests the possibility for a fruitful continuation of that dialogue.

When the second round began, the dialogue partners first had to agree on the overarching topic for the next five years. In a mutual gathering of ideas, the theme chosen was “Experience in the Christian Faith and Life” and every year the focus would be on a different aspect, namely on worship, discipleship, discernment, community, and justice. When the second document was written, it turned out to be considerably larger than the previous one.<sup>19</sup> Assuming the same dialogical dynamics one could expect about eighty “we” references. In fact, there are 167 uses of that word, not counting citations. This illustrates in a simple way that this dialogue represents a journey of fruitful encounter. Paragraph 30 in *Experience in the Christian Faith and Life* puts it as follows:

We can explore the depth of God’s covenant of grace, from Abraham through Sinai to the new covenant sealed in Christ’s blood that establishes new relationships among God’s covenant people. We can explore the riches of the Spirit’s gifts, poured out at Pentecost and poured out today that build up the one body of Christ. We can explore the Nicene Creed’s marks of the church—unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity—in congregations, denominations, and the Church universal. We can explore the reality of the Church as the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. As we probe these elements of our common heritage, we will be drawn into realities of *koinōnia* that we have not yet imagined. (§30)

The third document of the Dialogue between representatives of the Word Communion of Reformed Churches and the Pentecostal Word Fellowship was published in 2020 just as the COVID pandemic started; its title: *Called to God’s Mission*. The first paragraph explains that “This document is a testimony to how Pentecostal and Reformed Christians respond together to God’s mission into which we have been called”. Who would have thought that a dialogue that began with mutual reservations would develop to a confession that would benefit both church traditions?

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<sup>19</sup> *Word and Spirit, Church and World* has a word count of about 11300, whereas *Experience in Christian Faith and Life* has 20000 words. The third report *Called to God’s Mission* has even more “we” language 166 mentions with a word count of 14100.



The dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation and the Pentecostal World Fellowship has taken a different journey. Right at the beginning of the conversations that preceded the official dialogue, it was agreed upon that the common format of bipartisan theological reflection was often structured on the non-Pentecostal churches' terms and a different methodology was needed, allowing an experiential dimension to be taken into consideration.<sup>20</sup> A second point that was soon established is the fact that there are no basic doctrinal disagreements to talk about. Although we have different styles of worship and expressing our faith, there is basic doctrinal agreement.

“Together we confess God the Holy Trinity. We believe in Jesus Christ, truly human and truly divine, who is our Savior and Lord. We hold that salvation is a purely gracious and free gift of God, and that sinners are justified by faith, which sets us free and sends us out into the world to serve. We interpret our experiences through holy Scripture and with the help of both the local and the global church. It is in the joyful recognition of these convergences in our Christian faith and practice that we can proceed to deeper exploration...”<sup>21</sup>

The report of the first round of the Lutheran-Pentecostal dialogue ends with a section entitled “Looking Toward the Future”. There mention is made that we both witness in a world that is itself characterized by polarization and pluralism. “We are often confronted by the same challenges... we discussed the impact of secularism on both of our churches.”<sup>22</sup> To this point we shall return shortly. But let us first look at some fundamental lessons learned.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Every initial ecumenical encounter between two or more Christian traditions is loaded with uncertainties and fundamental questions. Why would an ecumenical encounter be

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<sup>20</sup> *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue* (Strasbourg: Institute for Ecumenical Research; Pasadena, CA: Th David Du Plessis Center; Zurich: The European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association, 2010), 2.

<sup>21</sup> *The Spirit of the Lord* (2022) §23.

<sup>22</sup> *The Spirit of the Lord* (2022) § 97. Incidentally, this document has a word count of 12900 and it contains 163 “we” references. The question arises if there is so much agreement, why should we not learn to witness together?

desired? What misconceptions could hinder open dialogue? Are there historical wounds between the dialogue partners? Are ecumenical dialogues for the academic elite or do they have any relevance to the churches in their regional and local contexts? These and other important questions need to be raised repeatedly.

Instead of addressing these questions individually which would necessitate a look at various historical contexts and cultural situations, let me suggest four points that are fundamentally significant.

First, at every beginning there is Christ. Our common allegiance to Christ builds the basis of our encounters. It is not the differences between our religious traditions or church cultures. If there is a common starting point it will have to focus on Jesus Christ as our common Lord and Saviour. Jesus Christ being fully human and fully divine, as described in the Scripture and as the Nicene creed proclaims, needs to be our foundation.<sup>23</sup> Everything else will follow from that.

Second, hard questions need to be asked. There are many reasons why members of certain church traditions have reservations towards others. There may be misconceptions, traditional misgivings, false characterization of past events and other impediments to open encounter and conversation. Hard questions help to clarify the situation and allow for taking steps toward mutual correction and reconciliation. The tensions between Pentecostals and Roman Catholics in Italy serve as an example that will be described later.

Third, relationships need time to grow. Human factors like building trust and developing friendships play an important role in ecumenical rapprochement. Speaking as a

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<sup>23</sup> The World Council of Churches affirms in 1961 that the Lord Jesus Christ is both God and Saviour according to the Scriptures. <https://www.oikoumene.org/node/6243#:~:text=and%20Holy%20Spirit.%22-,The%20WCC's%201948%20inaugural%20assembly%20declared:%20%22The%20World%20Council%20of,c%20hurches%20by%20its%20own%20wisdom.%22>. More recently the Global Christian Forum states “The purpose of the Forum is to be ‘an open space wherein representatives from a broad range of Christian churches and inter-church organisations, which confess the triune God and Jesus Christ as perfect in His divinity and humanity, can gather to foster mutual respect, to explore and address together common challenges.” <https://globalchristianforum.org/about-us/>.

Pentecostal I would say that it is in relationships that God can work through the Holy Spirit in creative ways.

Fourth, we have more in common than we first assumed. That is a frequently voiced comment by participants and is reflected in various ecumenical documents.<sup>24</sup> It is a foundation to build on. If, as believers in Christ, we acknowledge that we have more in common than separates us, then there is no reason why we should not attempt to engage in common witness. I would even go so far as to argue that given the increasing influence of secularization in our time, we need common witness in order to be credible in a world less and less concerned about God. And this argument would bring us to the last section of this paper.

### **COMMON CHALLENGES IN VIEW OF SECULARISATION, PLURALISM AND POLARIZATION**

Many religious people consider the influence of secularism as a threat to their faith. Similarly, we increasingly live in pluralist societies that seem to level distinctions as if any particular value is optional.<sup>25</sup> This can be compared to a supermarket mentality where the consumer can choose from a wide range of breakfast cereals, different types of milk, or a detergent that washes whiter. Opposed to those trends, or perhaps because of them, we can notice strong tendencies toward polarization of opinions, whether they are political, social, or ideological. These unsettling tendencies call for discernment.<sup>26</sup> We are facing these tendencies regardless whether we are Pentecostal, Protestant or Catholic, we sit in the same

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<sup>24</sup> *Word and Spirit* (2000), §9; *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue* (2010), 2; *Experience in Christian Life* (2011), §11; *Called to God's Mission* (2020), §3, §85; *The Spirit of the Lord* (2023), §91.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Marina Ngursangzeli Behera and Jean-Daniel Plüss eds. *Conviction in an Optional Society. Pentecostal /Charismatic Christianity & Religious Pluralism* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2020).

<sup>26</sup> Whereas the LWF-PWF report calls for discernment in biblical and spiritual terms (*The Spirit of the Lord*, §15, 76, 82, 87), the reports of the WCRC – PWF dialogue emphasize communal discernment for the benefit of society at large. In *Experience in Christian Faith and Life*, a whole section was dedicated to the theme of discernment (§§73-116).

boat, why not address these challenges together? If we do not, my thesis would claim, we become less credible with our Christian witness in this world because people will be distracted by our differences. We can also put it differently, the ecumenical dialogues have taught us, not only to pray and believe together, but also to be a prophetic voice in our societies so that we can uphold peace, justice and reconciliation. An image that comes to mind is the prophet Jeremiah's call to "... seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare." (Jeremiah 29:7). So how can we seek for the welfare, also the spiritual welfare of society in this secular, pluralistic, and divided world? Let me answer by looking at three objections.

The first objection would say that there is nothing good in secularism. I would answer while it is true that secularism can distract people from paying attention to fundamental spiritual values. Secularism is not all bad because it can protect us from extreme positions. The former Anglican Bishop of Durham, argues that "a certain degree of secularity—by which we mean preventing theocracy, enabling the free exercise of religion, and permitting liberty of conscience in religion—is far better than Christian nationalism."<sup>27</sup> In certain countries, especially in the West, some people advocate for some form of Christian nationalism, but let me remind them that Pentecostals suffered persecution from governments that saw themselves as custodians of a Christian nation. German National Socialism comes to mind. More interesting in our context is the fact that Italian Pentecostals suffered in the 1930s until the mid-1940s from the Fascist regime that was in cooperation with the Roman Catholic Church. They were not allowed to assemble freely, their properties were attacked, their members were put into insane asylums and prisons until a secular initiative in the 1950s gave

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<sup>27</sup> Tom Wright & Michael F. Bird, *Jesus and the Powers. Christian political witness in an age of totalitarian terror and dysfunctional democracies* (London: SPCK, 2024), 134.

them the right to exist as a Pentecostal denomination and practice their faith freely.<sup>28</sup> No wonder Italian Pentecostals had a strained relationship with Catholics. They had every right to demand an apology from the Pope. In 2014 Pope Francis travelled to Naples and attended a Pentecostal worship service led by his Pentecostal friend Giovanni Traettino and publicly acknowledged wrongdoing by the Catholic Church and asked for forgiveness.<sup>29</sup>

The second objection focuses on pluralism. It is a common misconception that pluralism necessitates a levelling of opinions. Some people say that if people accept pluralism, then there is no conviction worth fighting for because everything is seen as acceptable. You are OK and I am OK, as long as nobody is exclusivist. But there is a more constructive approach to pluralism. Veli Matti Kärkkäinen pleads for a hospitable, dialogical and witness oriented communication. Borrowing from missiologist Harold Netland, Kärkkäinen pleads for:

1. Bearing witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ among religious others is not optional, but rather obligatory for the Christian Church.
2. Christians are to bear witness to the gospel in accordance with God's love.
3. Christian witness must be respectful of others and be conducted with humility and integrity.
4. Christian witness should include appropriate forms of interreligious dialogue.
5. Christians are to reject violence and the abuse of power in witness.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Jean-Daniel Plüss, "European Pentecostal reactions to totalitarianism: A study of ethical commitment in the 1930s" in *EPTA Bulletin*, 4, no. 2 + 3 (1985), 2, 40-55, 88-100. This two-part article focuses mainly on Germany, and Italy during the influence of German National Socialism and Fascism in Italy.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/pope-francis-apologizes-persecution-pentecostals#:~:text=During%20the%20visit%2C%20Francis%20apologized,were%20crazy%2C%22%20Francis%20said.>

<sup>30</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Christian Church among Religions: Toward a Hospitable Encounter with the Other" in *Conviction in an Optional Society* (2020), 7-21, quoting H. Netland on page 20.

If the late Walter Hollenweger, would hear this, he would probably laugh and say, “I have long argued that the Pentecostal movement is in itself fundamentally pluralistic”.<sup>31</sup> Pluralism in our societies is simply the context of our lives.

Finally, there is the perception of polarization in our societies and churches. Since the rise of social media and partially as a consequence of the COVID pandemic, individual opinions are more pronounced. People are increasingly willing to defend their oftentimes extreme convictions more rigorously. Here again, being in dialogue with other Christian traditions has been a blessing to Pentecostals. Practicing true dialogue means paying attention, being a good listener, and trying to find mutual understanding. These are qualities we desperately need in a fragmented world.

I would say in concluding that the 21<sup>st</sup> century brings a number of challenges to our social lives and personal convictions. Never was it so obvious that we cannot manage on our own if we want to be faithful to our missional calling in the world. We need one another, especially in the community of faith, if we want to discern the guidance of the Holy Spirit and be credible witnesses of Christ. The dialogues between Pentecostals and representatives of other Christian families are a gift by which we can learn to journey together, grow in wisdom and live lives loving God and our neighbour as ourselves.

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<sup>31</sup> Walter Hollenweger, “My pilgrimage in mission,” in *Refleks* 2005 4-2, 93-94.