

Anabaptism-Pietism and Pentecostalism: scandalous partners in protest

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Abstract

This article is an ecumenical conversation between Pentecostal and Anabaptist-Pietist traditions. Emerging out of this will be a suggestion that the Christian worship practice of footwashing may provide a means to share Christian love and fellowship that is inclusive of all Christian traditions. In this article we will address important points of theological intersection of these two storied traditions, specifically soteriology as a 'Christian synergism' and ecclesiology as an 'alternative society'. These traditions approach ecclesiology through soteriology with a conscientious concern to form eschatological communities. We believe that these traditions must engage in ecumenical dialogue for mutual theological support in forming and sustaining 'alternative Christian communities' while continuing to participate in ecumenical dialogue with other traditions.

Introduction

The Brethren and Pentecostal traditions are two distinct narratives within Christianity. While they share this basic commonality, other convergences exist which may helpfully contribute to their continual formation. The purpose of the article is to explore important points of intersection of these two storied traditions, specifically soteriology as a 'Christian synergism' and ecclesiology as an 'alternative society'. The first section introduces the broader stories of the Anabaptist-Pietist tradition and Pentecostalism.¹ The second section will address the theological similarities and differences of soteriology and ecclesiology. The final section will argue for the importance of these traditions engaging in ecumenical dialogue for mutual theological support in forming and sustaining 'alternative Christian communities'.

¹ We recognise that within these two classifications exist various denominational differences and emphases, but believe that the overarching designations are helpful in this discussion.

Intersecting narratives

As we enter into this conversation it is necessary that we recall, affirm and retell (in summarised ways) the core narratives from which we come. It is essential to the process that we acknowledge the dynamics which our stories contribute to the conversation, not only as past and present realities, but more importantly how, as they intersect, God may shed new light upon our paths.

Accepting the assumption that the populated world is made up of billions of interconnected narratives, one also recognises the existence of particularly powerful and culture-shaping narratives that exist in this world, the 'meta-narratives'. We necessarily speak from within and about a particular 'non-modern meta-narrative'.² Obviously this particular meta-narrative is Christianity. More specifically Andy is shaped by Anabaptist-Pietism and Ken by Pentecostalism.³ Our storied traditions emphasise a stereological relationship with Jesus Christ and his narrative. This interconnection and interrelationship is important because it extends MacIntyre's statement to say that 'I am part of Jesus' narrative and he is part of mine'. In one sense this reflects Jesus' teaching in the gospel of John where Jesus says, 'On that day you will know that I am in my father, and you in me and I in you' (John 14:20 NRSV). This is also the intersection of the two (and most certainly more) narratives. And it is within the parameters of this intersection that the significance of the symbols exists.⁴ At this merging of narratives a transforming relationship occurs in which Jesus' story shapes

² Unlike the modern meta-narratives, which totalise and seek to assimilate all other stories, the Christian meta-narrative resists such assimilation into a singular plot due to the diverse nature of the biblical witness. See Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2003), pp. 90–4.

³ It must be noted that a large portion of Andy's contribution is based upon research for his doctoral dissertation.

⁴ The use of this term serves to form some middle ground regarding reference to the ordinance/sacraments. Based upon our conversation, Pentecostals are drawn more to a sacramental understanding of these narratives, while the Anabaptist-Pietist communities hold more strongly to them as ordinances. What serve as the ordinances/sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism for the greater believing community (from which it draws its religious identity), also become essential symbols for believers. Within these terms 'ordinance', 'sacrament' and 'symbol' lies a significant differentiation in language. Therefore it is necessary to acknowledge that we are attempting to discuss both the relationship between these theological and sociological categories as well as their effect upon each other and the community of believers. By referring to them as 'symbols', we are expressing the way in which they serve the community as interpretative filters by affecting how the community understands itself in relationship to its surrounding environment (including the other societal communities with which it has contact). Much like its use in literature, our

and transforms the other narratives. This pertains to the very nature of Jesus' story as being 'revelation', and as such calls the story of the other to judgement by its scandalous nature. According to Daniel Migliore, revelation 'is always a disturbing, even shocking event'. It is always understood that the transforming power of the Holy Spirit uses the medium of scripture to effect real change in the believing community and extending out to all creation.⁵ Likewise, the other's story changes Jesus' narrative only in so much as it is added to his in the form of experiential testimony.⁶ The result is, as Richard Bauckham has argued, that 'the story of Jesus Christ inevitably is the story of the world'.⁷ Nevertheless, the core narrative of Jesus as testified in scripture does not change, even though our understanding of it may change due to the fluidity of culture and language and the interpretative leading of the Holy Spirit. What does change is the extended Christian narrative as experienced over time.⁸

Why is narrative such an important aspect of identity? Alasdair MacIntyre argues that narrative is the only appropriate form that human beings can use

use of this term also expresses the inherent quality that the ordinance or sacramental narratives represent a far greater reality than the literal meanings of the words.

⁵ Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 24.

⁶ By 'experiential testimony' we are referring to the intersecting events as perceived by the other when the Jesus narrative effects transformation in the other's narrative. It becomes testimony as the other shares the personal experiences of this intersecting event with others. This is both a conversion event that transforms the person holistically (affectations, perceptions and practices) in the process. Paul Ricoeur argues that the interpretative identity is formed by and through shared experiences plus the corporate remembrance of these experiences: *The Conflict of Interpretations* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 47ff.

⁷ Richard Bauckham, 'The Future of Jesus Christ', *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* (1998), pp. 97–110.

⁸ There is an essential connection between people that creates community and ultimately forms identity. It is the result of this that affects the interpretation of one's surrounding reality. Thus each time a community corporately recollects a particular narrative, their identity is essentially affected, bringing into a creative tension the particular past narrative with the shared present experiences. The combination of these shared experiences with the past narratives do, in fact, become narratives of identity. Therefore, as believers encounter the Jesus narrative when they are called to remember and re-enact in the Lord's Supper or Baptism, their own narratives become further conformed to the greater Jesus narrative. Their lives begin to look more like Jesus', thus revealing more of the Jesus narrative from within their own. In addition they encounter each other's narrative adding to the shared experiences, thus increasing the commonality shared within the congregation and the shared identity. For a fuller discussion of this, see Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989).

to make sense out of life.⁹ The basis for this thought is that any human being must be identified through the events of the individual's life, which consists of relationships to other human beings as well as to her environmental surroundings. If what MacIntyre argues for is true then it is impossible to identify any human being apart from the particular individual's life narrative.¹⁰ He, of course, directs his argument on a more general (and sociological) scale saying, 'there is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stock of stories which constitute its initial dramatic resources'.¹¹ What we are arguing is that this applies also on a narrower plane, in an inverted sense. Thus modifying MacIntyre's statement, we are arguing that 'there is no way to give us an understanding of any "person," including "ourselves," except through the stock of stories which constitutes the events of our lives'. Now these stories are made up of relationships between characters, settings and cultural systems. They constitute a weaving that forms affective community. Therefore, as the person participates in the event of the community it not only shapes the identity of that person but the identity of the community. If then the community expands in the number of those participating, then the identity of the community changes in a diversified way. This does not mean that the community loses its distinction because the community is called to a corporate remembrance of its core narratives holding the identity in tension with the numerous participants. On the contrary, the community affects the identity of the individual as that person participates in the events and life of the community. As stated previously, as the narratives of the individual and the community intersect, they begin sharing a more common perspective, thus affecting the identity of the individual and ultimately their perspective. The interconnectedness of identity becomes especially significant as individuals corporately 'participate' in the Jesus narrative (particularly through the practice of the symbols) likewise affecting the definition and constitution of the community.

⁹ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 2nd ed, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 204–25. It is necessary to indicate that, while MacIntyre speaks particularly to social ethics, we are borrowing his ideas for theological purposes. The idea is that the narratives, of these symbols in particular and the Gospels generally, are internalised as they begin binding the narratives of the believers together. This is a spiritual event and not merely a social encounter.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* He underscores the significance of his previous statement saying, 'Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words.'

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Having noted the significance of intersecting narratives and their effects upon the larger believing community, it is now appropriate not only to create a point of intersection with this conversation but also to recognise other significant points of intersection within the narrative traditions. In the following section we will briefly introduce these narrative traditions for the purpose of highlighting particular points of agreement pertaining to socio-theological perspectives each tradition shares, for the purpose of building consensus and commonality from which each tradition can glean from the other through corresponding points of contrast.

Anabaptist-Pietist story

Anabaptist-Pietism is a uniquely formed story which forms its identity and hermeneutical lens from both Anabaptist narratives as well as being significantly affected theologically by Pietism.¹² The Anabaptist-Pietist stories are stories of radical reformation and revivalism. Unfortunately, there is no singular (or even two or three) event(s) one can point to as the root or beginning of Anabaptist-Pietism. Unlike Pentecostalism, which can point to the turn of the twentieth century looking to Topeka, KS, or to the Azusa Street revival, the Anabaptist-Pietist tradition is represented by a number of different narratives that range over different continents and even centuries.¹³ Thus to offer a singular narrative definition becomes difficult if not impossible. However, what make them Anabaptist-Pietists are their unique perspectives shaped by their theological convictions. Specifically, Anabaptist-Pietists form their identity primarily from the New Testament with the Gospels holding priority and the Sermon on the Mount playing a particularly central role. Their desire is to recapture primitive (New Testament and Early Church Fathers) Christianity, prior to Constantine.¹⁴ Anabaptist-Pietists emphasise

¹² This is not to say that the Anabaptist community has not been affected by Pietists – see C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 1995); Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004) – only that there has not been the effects upon the community that are related either to a direct outgrowth from Pietism to Anabaptism, vice versa, or some other direct relationship such as to warrant the identifying marker to the community.

¹³ Some examples of these are as follows: Schwarzenau Brethren fellowships, the Brethren in Christ, the Mennonite Brethren, etc.

¹⁴ I (Andy) am unaware of whether or not all those representing the Anabaptist-Pietist community would agree with including the early church fathers. However, speaking specifically for the Brethren tradition, the writings of the early fathers and particularly the *Didache* contributed to the initial formation of the Brethren community. Thus it was not simply the New Testament but more specifically the early church or primitive Christianity.

and acknowledge the personal experience of the Holy Spirit's presence in the individual's life in the context of community.

The person of Jesus, the Christ, stands as the foremost central figure for the Anabaptist-Pietist community. His teachings are predominantly interpreted literally and understood as precepts by which believers are to live their lives.¹⁵ In addition to the Christocentric perspective, the Anabaptist-Pietist community holds to an understanding that, with Constantine's legitimising the Christian religion, Christianity ceased being the persecuted minority and became 'tolerated in the Roman Empire and even popular' and in numerous events the persecutors.¹⁶ This paradigm shift has been generally (among Anabaptists and Pietists) interpreted as the 'fall of the church'.¹⁷ It is generally agreed that it ultimately undermined the piety of the community, thus causing the Christian community to cease being salt and light (distinct and set apart). Anabaptist-Pietism sought to continue and complete the reform which the Protestant Reformation failed to do. Therefore, much like their Anabaptist brothers and sisters, these believers began forming discipleship communities that were highly accountable (drawing from Matthew 18 for the continual nurture and maintenance of whole relationships) and yet emphasised the need for conversion, believer's baptism and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification.¹⁸ Due in part to their original social milieu, these communities held to a strong theology of suffering. They took (take) seriously the teachings of nonresistance by Jesus, often leaving them to be persecuted while taking no recourse. Persecution at the hands of the government and institutional church greatly formed their

¹⁵ See Dale R. Stoffer, *Background and Development of Brethren Doctrines, 1650–1987* (Philadelphia: Brethren Encyclopedia Inc., 1989); Andrew S. Hamilton, 'Counting the Cost: Church of the Brethren as a Hermeneutical Community', thesis, University of St Andrews, 2002; Katie Funk Wiebe, *Who are the Mennonite Brethren?* (Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1991). This form of 'living' is marked by nonviolent maintenance and nurture of whole relationships.

¹⁶ John Driver, *Images of the Church in Mission* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1997), pp. 17ff.

¹⁷ This is particularly true due to its marking a significant event in the development of sacerdotalism and particularly the dichotomisation of the church between the priestly order and the laity. While the former issue was to some extent addressed by the Reformation, the latter has been perpetuated under the guise of 'clergy-laity' within Protestantism. The Anabaptists and Pietists have resisted this dichotomisation, emphasising the 'priesthood of all believers', although with varying success.

¹⁸ For a more thorough treatment of this subject, see Donald Durnbaugh, *European Origins of the Brethren* (Elgin: Brethren Press, 1986); Stoffer, *Background and Development*.

perspective.¹⁹ Being persecuted for their faith was and is the ultimate mark of the legitimacy of their faith.

Pentecostal story

Stanley Grenz offers a typical definition of Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism as a movement began in the early twentieth century and emphasises a post-conversion experience called the baptism in the Holy Spirit which is for all believers. Glossolalia (speaking in tongues) is affirmed as the initial evidence of such a baptism.²⁰ This intentionally brief definition highlights Pentecostalism's 'unique doctrine' which is usually the entry point for a discussion about Pentecostalism.²¹ No doubt Pentecostalism does indeed emphasise such an experience. We would suggest that Pentecostalism is better defined as diverse groups of restoration-revivalistic movements held together by a common doctrinal commitment to the Five/Four-Fold Gospel and marked by experiential-charismatic worship services. Pentecostalism emerged as a Christian missionary movement in the early twentieth century. As a Christian restoration-revivalistic movement Pentecostalism emphasises the continuing work of Jesus Christ through the personal agency of the Holy Spirit. The community continues the ministry of Jesus through proclaiming Jesus as Saviour, Sanctifier, Spirit Baptiser, Healer and Soon Coming King.²² Pentecostals envision themselves as a restoration of New Testament Christianity living in the 'last days of the Latter Rain' and in opposition to 'the World'. In this way Pentecostalism is appreciated for more than simply the 'rediscovery' or 'restoration' of the doctrine of Spirit baptism as a post-conversion experience evidenced in other tongues. Furthermore

¹⁹ This persecution was due primarily because of the Anabaptist-Pietist conviction of 'adult believer's baptism'. However, their nonresistance stance has also been a source for persecution. See Durnbaugh, *European Origins*, pp. 217ff.

²⁰ Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), p. 90.

²¹ Concerning the diversity of Pentecostalism, see the essay by Jackie David Johns, 'Pentecostal Churches' in *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans-Brill, 2005), pp. 14–21. For an informative read that takes seriously the global diversity of Pentecostalism, see Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004).

²² See Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987). Some affirm his work as an important developmental backdrop of early Pentecostalism; however, I believe it can serve also as an implicit Pentecostal spirituality which can contribute to the development of a Pentecostal theology of worship and witness informed by the full gospel. See further, Kenneth J. Archer, *The Gospel Revisited: Towards a Pentecostal Theology of Worship and Witness*. Pickwick Publishers, forthcoming.

Pentecostalism is affirmed as an authentic Christian movement which shares various core doctrines with other Christian traditions. Pentecostalism is a distinct Christian tradition because of its unique story which is a particular twist on the Christian story.²³

The Pentecostal story is a teleological telling of the Christian story that is held together by the 'Latter Rain' motif. The Pentecostal story articulates God's redemptive involvement within human history in a promise-fulfilment pattern. The Early and Latter Rain motif provides the basic story line.²⁴

In the beginning God poured out his Spirit on a holy Christian community (Acts 2). This was the Early Rain outpouring of the Holy Spirit. However, as time passed, Christianity became corrupted by worldly desires so God withdrew his Spirit. Signs and wonders began to disappear, yet the Lord always had a victorious persecuted remnant. The remnant was made up of authentic Christians living godly lives. A significant shift occurred when Christianity was embraced as an acceptable Roman state religion. Constantinianism marks the beginning of the middle of the story. It was the death blow because it accelerated the corruption of the church. Christianity enters the 'dark ages'. God, however, promised to pour out his Spirit on all authentic Christians. The Reformation brought the initial sprinkles of the Latter Rain which would be greater than the former rain by restoring New Testament practices and doctrines to the church. The Latter Rain outpouring begins in the early twentieth century as a result of holiness people seeking the redemptive empowerment promise of Spirit baptism. This Latter Rain outpouring restores the charismatic gifts to the Christian community and signals the imminent return of Jesus. Spirit baptism was the missing experience which would prepare the people to participate in the final harvest by empowering them to preach the 'full gospel' to the whole world. The Early and Latter Rain motif shapes Pentecostals by explaining not only who they are as a people in relationship to the Living God, but also to the biblical story, Christian history and world history. Pentecostals are people of the Latter Rain bound together by their shared central narrative convictions of Jesus as Saviour, Sanctifier, Spirit baptiser, healer and Coming King. The Pentecostal communities then are to be 'contrast societies' because they are the family of God existing as the visible embodied witness as bride of Christ to a lost and dying world.

²³ I have developed this in more detail elsewhere. See Kenneth J. Archer, 'Pentecostal Story: The Hermeneutical Filter for the Making of Meaning', *Pneuma* 26/1 (Fall 2004), pp. 36–59.

²⁴ See D. William Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 19–43.

Intersecting themes

The Latter Rain motif intersects at key junctures with other stories of Western society and Christian history, especially Protestant understandings.²⁵ The two points we want to lift up are ‘corruption of the church’ associated with Constantinianism and the ‘restoration’ of a dynamic soteriology which is pneumatic and pietistic while also being focused devotionally upon Jesus Christ. For Pentecostals, ‘Constantinianism’ has to do with the corruption of the church by institutionalising the Spirit through the hierarchical clergy and coerced conformity to creeds.²⁶ This led to a loss of the priesthood and prophethood of all believers. The loss has more to do with personal synergistic soteriology than just the loss of nonresistant practice of the early Christians – although the two are interrelated. Early Pentecostals may have recognised this because they were primarily pacifist.²⁷ Augustinian soteriology-ecclesiology is rejected because it confuses Christianity with a worldly structure of state and dilutes the church with unsaved people. The Reformation initiates the restoration of the Full Gospel which culminates in the Latter Rain outpouring.²⁸

For Anabaptist-Pietists the protests are similar. Constantinianism represents not so much the corruption of the church as the ‘fall of the church’. Constantine’s institutionalisation of the church allowed for a further developed sacerdotalism that placed a priestly order above the people allowing the institution of the church to use the ‘sacraments’ as a means of controlling the masses by placing the means of salvation at the discretion

²⁵ Mark A. Noll in his *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books and InterVarsity Press, 1997), pp. 32–3, raises the important issue of the ‘historian’s’ point of view related especially to early Christianity. Noll states that even among Christian historians there are three possible ways to explain how God guides the church through history. Noll identifies a Roman Catholic view, an Orthodox view and a Protestant view. Pentecostalism, like Anabaptist-Pietism, offers a ‘subversive reading’ to the basic Protestantism associated with the Magisterial Reformation.

²⁶ See Dale M. Coulter, ‘The Development of Ecclesiology in the Church of God (Cleveland, TN): A Forgotten Contribution?’, *Pneuma* 29/1 (2007), pp. 58–85, esp. pp. 64–7.

²⁷ Most early North American Pentecostal denominations were pacifist in practice. For further insightful discussion on ‘Constantinianism’ and its impact on Pentecostal ecclesiology see Joel Shuman, ‘Pentecost and the End of Patriotism: A Call for the Restoration of Pacifism among Pentecostals’, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 9 (Oct. 1996), pp. 70–96.

²⁸ The model that emerges from Pentecostal testimonies is more in line with primitive Christianity’s *Christus Victor* understanding of God. See Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), pp. 26–7. He discusses Asian Christianity, but I (Ken) feel this also could apply to some early forms of North American Pentecostalism.

of the priesthood. Moreover this same system dichotomised the Christian community, elevating a priestly order (one ordained by God to administer grace) above the so-called laity. However this was the first time the word laity (*laos*) was used to refer to Christians. Biblically this term is used to distinguish between believers and unbelievers. This dichotomisation not only separated Christians from God (using the priests as mediators) but also removed the scriptures and the ability to interpret them from the 'laity' as well. Anabaptist-Pietists (along with the other radical Reformation groups) believe that this led to the downfall of the church allowing members to live 'worldly' lives while remaining in the church community.

An Anabaptist-Pietist soteriological approach to ecclesiology

Anabaptist-Pietists hold to a strong ecclesiology which begins with baptism as the entrance into the life of the church and expresses a covenantal commitment to Jesus and fellow followers of him. It finds its foundation in Matthew 18 binding the community together with accountability and a continual working for whole relationships in the community. This section will argue for a soteriological approach to ecclesiology using an Anabaptist-Pietist interpretation of footwashing (John 13) in the context of the Lord's Supper as the symbolic model of a life of salvation for the church.

Within the Brethren community footwashing serves as a preparatory service within the whole event of the Lord's Supper. Unlike some who interpret John 13 spiritually, understanding the passage as a mere teaching regarding humility for the disciples, the footwashing ceremony has served as an extension of the examination by the elders' visit.²⁹ Even as Matthew 18 was used to ensure unity in the body previous to the Lord's Supper, so also was footwashing (from Peter Nead's perspective) a pragmatic tool of reconciliation as one brother or sister humbly kneels before the other to offer cleansing and forgiveness of sins.³⁰ Nead explains that this practice 'represents that brotherly chastisement, which the children of God are sometimes called upon to exercise one towards another'.³¹ This is an uncomfortable interpretation because it requires both vulnerability and openness to the other. However, within Nead's context where the ban was a valid option (due to an Early Brethren interpretation of Matthew 18), this

²⁹ Based upon a close reading of 1 Cor. 11, the Early Brethren elders would visit the homes of the church members to ensure that everyone's lives were in good standing and especially that there were no divisions in the body prior to the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

³⁰ Peter Nead, *Theological Writings on Various Subjects* (Youngstown, OH: Dunker Springhaus Ministries, 1997), pp. 131–2.

³¹ *Ibid.*

practice was not nearly as difficult as it would seem today. Those brothers and sisters confronting each other in love would be less threatening because those allowed to participate were already considered to be living faithfully. Again, this particular interpretation becomes far more difficult and even more needed for contemporary believers as they celebrate the Lord's Supper in a context where elders' visits no longer take place.

If a believer accepts the reinterpretation of Matthew 18, as has been agreed upon in the Church of the Brethren,³² then the ordinance of footwashing (if interpreted according to Nead) becomes a powerful and relevant symbol for contemporary believers. Whether or not Nead's interpretation of footwashing was ever a widely accepted interpretation within the Brethren community is not an issue. However, it is far removed from the widely accepted interpretation, symbolising mutual humble service, as it is popularly understood today.³³ If interpreted intertextually with Matthew 18, then the participation requires that the sinner be treated even as Jesus treated the sinners and tax collectors, with love, mercy, compassion and forgiveness. The ecclesiological implication of this is that the community of believers is one that continually lives out a life of confession, forgiveness and reconciliation in Christ and through the Spirit. Even as the other sits humbly in repentance, the subject is required to offer forgiveness humbly. This event is nothing other than a living parable regarding the ministry of reconciliation to which Christ has called his followers. It then represents reconciliation both vertically and horizontally, and thus prepares the participants to approach the table with clear consciences and in all righteousness (1 Corinthians 11:17ff.).

³² Traditionally, the interpretation of Matt. 18:17 was the basis for the application of the ban. However, following an extensive study of the passage it was understood to be the application of mercy, compassion and forgiveness. This reinterpretation centred on Jesus' instruction for relating to disobedient brothers and sisters. Instead of the traditional understanding of ostracising the member as one would a 'tax collector or sinner', the committee observed how Jesus treated just such people and reinterpreted it in the spirit of *imitatio Christi*. Thus it was understood that Jesus would extend forgiveness and love while still attempting to bring the member in line with discipleship. The reinterpretation was accepted and affirmed at the 1976 annual conference.

³³ See Frank Ramirez, *The Love Feast* (Elgin: Brethren Press, 2000), for a popular (within the CoB) understanding about the footwashing ceremony. Admittedly, there are a few explanations regarding how footwashing represents a form of cleansing. However, this is not the norm. For other sources regarding the interpretation of footwashing (particularly referring to it as cleansing ritual), see also John Christopher Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); 'Footwashing in the Context of the Lord's Supper', *The Lord's Supper: Believers Church Perspectives*.

In the same way that it requires one to kneel humbly before a brother or sister with a readiness to offer the ministry of forgiveness and cleansing, so also it requires one to honestly and humbly recognise the wrongdoing in one's life and to repent from it as one sits in the chair.³⁴ In light of this interpretation, vulnerability is a necessary requirement in order that love may be expressed and profoundly experienced.

Having administered the ministry of reconciliation in preparation for the *agape* meal and communion, the participants then gather around the table to share a meal. For the Brethren the *agape* meal has represented a protest of the established churches and an expression of a 'loving fellowship sharing material and spiritual support along with mutual discipline'.³⁵ Thus, within the context of the above, interpretation of the 'footwashing' ceremony, the *agape* then represents the full unity and mutuality which has resulted from the work of reconciliation and cleansing. It expresses welcome and fellowship, which are the result of openness to the 'other'. Even as the father, in the parable of the prodigal, prepares a feast following the reconciliation, so also the *agape* meal represents this same celebration of fellowship. In addition there is a definite eschatological factor in this celebration that demonstrates God's desire and openness to reclaim the 'others'. In this sense it serves as a foreshadowing of the future hope when God will be all and in all.³⁶

This form of celebrating the Lord's Supper serves as a symbolic foundation for a soteriologically shaped ecclesiology whose mere existence protests the structures and systems (both religious and secular) which tolerate, ignore and

³⁴ Nead describes the act of footwashing not only in relationship to Matt. 18, but as an extension of it. He says, 'In like manner to gain, or have a brother cleansed from his trespasses, we must go in love and with great humility, and apprise our brother of his conduct, expostulating in an humble manner with him, and by so doing, it may be, that your brother will receive the admonition, and give himself into your hands, so that you can wash him from his trespasses, which is accomplished whenever a reconciliation takes place.' He then makes the direct connection between the two commands, stating, 'Whereas, it may be, if you had not humbled yourself – that is, bent or stooped before your brother, he would not have acknowledged his fault – that is, given himself into your hands, (in order to forgiveness,) so that you might forgive – that is, wash him.' *Theological Writings on Various Subjects*, p. 132.

³⁵ Bach, 'The Agape in the Brethren Tradition', *The Lord's Supper: Believers Church Perspectives*, Dale Stoffer, (ed.) (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1997), p. 163.

³⁶ Even as the primary meaning of the meal signifies the eschatological feast of the Lamb, Nead expresses both the hoped for future and the contemporary experience of unified love as he sums up his argument regarding this meal, saying, 'O! how solemn and instructive, to see the children of God seated at one table, united in the bonds of brotherly love, partaking of a repast which serves to remind them of that blessed time and state, when they, in common with other children of God, shall surround the table of their Lord in the Kingdom of God!' *Theological Writings on Various Subjects*, p. 145.

ultimately cause brokenness and division (many times violently). As believers encounter the Jesus narrative in such a way that requires the participants to embody relationships in which the Spirit of God draws the community into the divine fellowship, the believing community takes on the mark of the triune God – abiding love.

A Pentecostal soteriological approach to ecclesiology

Pentecostals hold to a dynamic synergistic view of salvation which is articulated by the Full Gospel. Soteriology takes precedence over ecclesiology but nonetheless the storied Five-Fold Gospel implies a commitment to a local community and an implicit ecclesiology.³⁷ In the following, I will sketch ecclesiastical symbols that are linked to the Five-Fold Gospel, namely water baptism, footwashing, glossolalia, anointing the sick with oil and the Lord's Supper.³⁸

The statements associated with the Five-Fold Gospel are certainly doxological in character because they represent shorthand testimonials of a person and the community's redemptive experiences mediated by the Spirit as one lives in Jesus Christ.³⁹ Entrance into the Pentecostal community is first and foremost connected to the doxological confession that Jesus is 'my' Saviour, which testifies to one's personal conversion experience. This initial salvation experience liberates the person from the demonic kingdom of darkness and brings her/him into the kingdom of Christ Jesus (Colossians 1:12–14; 2:8–15). The ecclesiastical sign of water baptism signifies to the community the person's ongoing commitment to follow Jesus as Lord and King of their lives, thus separating them from the world and integrating them into the body of Christ – a redeemed community. Out of the community's

³⁷ For more recent, extensive and developed attempts at a Pneumatic Pentecostal ecclesiology, see Amos Young, 'The Acts of the Apostles and of the Holy Spirit: Toward a Pneumatic Ecclesiology' in his *The Spirit Poured out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), pp. 121–66, and Frank Macchia, 'Signs of Grace in a Graceless World: Toward a Spirit-Baptized Ecclesiology', in his *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), pp. 155–256.

³⁸ John Christopher Thomas was the first to call for an integrative Pentecostal theology specifically structured around the Five-Fold Gospel. See his '1998 Presidential Address: Pentecostal Theology in the Twenty-First Century', *Pneuma* 20/1 (Spring 1998), pp. 3–19, esp. pp. 17–19. See also Kenneth J. Archer, 'Nourishment for our Journey: The Pentecostal Via Salutis and Sacramental Ordinances', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13/1 (Oct. 2004), pp. 79–96.

³⁹ I have discussed this in more detail elsewhere. See Kenneth J. Archer, 'A Pentecostal Way of Doing Theology: Manner and Method', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9/3 (July 2007).

testimony that Jesus is Saviour arises an understanding that the 'redeemed community' has been reconciled to God and called to preach the Gospel of reconciliation to all people (2 Corinthians 2:18–21). As one enters the community one becomes reconciled to God's people and becomes adopted into the family of God. Water baptism, which affirms that the community is a visible church, is entered into by the conscious believer. The community exists as a contrast society which pledges its allegiance to the head of the Church – Jesus Christ.

Pentecostal soteriology calls for a synergistic understanding of the community's relationship with God. Pentecostal synergism affirms that God always initiates the redemptive relationship, thus, salvation is by grace through faith unto good works (Ephesians 2:1–10). The Christian in community responds to sanctifying grace by producing fruit of the Spirit. One's commitment to Jesus and his community is further grounded in the love for God. Jesus as 'my' sanctifier testifies to one's personal need for the Holy Spirit to shed forth the love of God in our hearts (Romans 5:5). The ongoing practice of repentance and receiving of forgiveness from God and the community is signified through the ecclesiastic sign of footwashing. The local church that confess Jesus as Sanctifier recognises itself to be a holy community set aside to bring glory and honour to God. Salvation then becomes an ecclesiastically mediated opportunity for people to become set free from destructive sinfulness of the flesh, delivered from demonisation and set free from the structural powers of the world so that one can truly and responsibly love God. Love for God is manifested concretely by individuals in community through loving one's neighbour, even when that neighbour is a threatening enemy (Matthew 5:44–8; 22:37–8). Through the sanctifying work of the Spirit of Christ, the local church mediates the presence of Christ to the world. The bride of Christ is passionately seeking the fullness of the reign of God which is manifested proleptically among the people of God in anticipation of the imminent return of its bridegroom – King Jesus.

Jesus is 'my' Spirit Baptiser affirms Pentecostal soteriology as a continuing relationship with God understood more appropriately as a 'pilgrim journey' in a strange land (Hebrews 11:8–10, 13). Spirit baptism is personally testified to through the manifestation of glossolalic speech (Acts 2) and faith-filled charismatic manifestations of loving acts of joy which mediate God's grace to others (Luke 4 and Acts 4). The community that testifies to Spirit baptism indicates that it is an empowered community – a priesthood and prophethood of believers (1 Peter 2:9). The manifestation of gifts serves as witnessing signs to the world. The ecclesiastical community's charismatic gifting of the Spirit is necessary in order for it to carry forth its mission. The local Pentecostal church then becomes a tabernacle of the Spirit empowered

to witness to the full and whole gospel of Jesus Christ – a pneumatic ecclesiastical missionary church. The ecclesiastical sign is glossolalic speech which epitomises proleptically the reconciliation of all peoples by enabling the community to overcome language barriers as it corporately praises God in unlearned tongues. Furthermore communal glossolalia rises forth from the Spirit's cry to the Father for the liberation of the entire created order, thus protesting the powers of an evil resident in both persons and social structures (Romans 8:18–27).⁴⁰

The healing virtue of Jesus' atoning existence is expressed through the testimony that he is 'my' healer.⁴¹ The sporadic and limited charismatic manifestations of individual healings do not take away from this proleptic experience which anticipates glorification. The community that testifies to Jesus as healer sees itself as a hospitable healing community.⁴² The need for healing affirms the brokenness of human existence which finds restoration in a reconciled relationship with God and God's people. Healing is anticipated through the ecclesiastical sign of anointing the sick with oil and praying for them (James 5:13–18). The local church, as a healing community, offers other means of experiencing healing by providing medical and psychological services. The ecclesiastical practice of anointing the sick with oil signifies a hospitable embrace of the 'outcast' creating an accepting hospitable healing community. These witnessing practices testify to the ongoing ministry of Jesus as our healer.

'*Maranatha!* Come, Lord Jesus' is not an escapist cry but an empowering testimony to engage the world with missionary zeal. The doxological confession of Jesus as coming conquering King testifies to the hope that we hold onto in the midst of suffering trials. The ecclesiastical sign of the Lord's Supper anticipates the Marriage Supper of the Lamb as it recalls the passion of the Christ. The table is open to all who confess Jesus as Lord. This reinforces the importance of being connected to the family of God, but not necessarily a particular ecclesiastical denomination. The Supper strengthens the community's journey by providing opportunities to experience God's redemptive graces. The community's testimony of the coming Christ affirms itself as an eschatological community ministering in the last days. As an eschatological community, it mediates hope and inspires faithful witness

⁴⁰ See further Ricardo Waldrop, 'Mision trinitaria e historia salvific: Reflecciones sobre la naturaleza misionera del dios trino y de la iglesia', *Sanjuaoche* (forthcoming).

⁴¹ I am affirming that Jesus' whole existence of the incarnate Son of God, from conception to ascension and current high priestly mediator, provides for our atonement without downplaying his earthly ministry, miracles and crucifixion.

⁴² See Kimberly Ervin Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing: Models in Theology and Practice* (Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2006) for further development.

to the world by holding firm to our confession that Jesus is Lord. Thus martyrdom may be and has been the ultimate act of worshipful witness.

These ecclesiastical signs associated with the doxological confession of the Five-Fold Gospel must be nurtured by a contrast and charismatic community in keeping with New Testament apostolic practice and belief. In order for contemporary North American Pentecostal churches to recapture the vibrancy of being a contrast community formed by the gospel story, Pentecostals need to return to the early Pentecostal practice of pacifism or better peacemaking. Peacemaking is not a naive withdrawal from the world but a necessary expression of the gospel which reflects the Pentecostal commitment to be faithful followers of Jesus empowered by the Spirit in the world. As Steve Land has suggested, 'early Pentecostal pacifism, in a nuclear age of extensive poverty, is the best strategy for the church today'.⁴³

Points of intersection within this theological conversation

Having briefly described two soteriological approaches to ecclesiology, from both Pentecostal and Anabaptist-Pietist perspectives, three points warranting further discussion have become clear, the necessity for the believing community to be a contrast community protesting the structures, systems and institutions that tolerate, ignore and many times cause brokenness and division in the world. Such a community must fully depend upon the charismatic gifts in order to sustain the witnessing community. Second, as protesting communities, Pentecostalism and Anabaptist-Pietism would only strengthen their witness by entering into a partnership in protest for peacemaking as an expression of Christ's love in the world.⁴⁴ And third, the ministry of establishing and nurturing whole relationships, as attested to in scripture, should be incorporated as part of the missionary witness to the world.

In the process of this study it has also become evident that certain obstacles could prevent such an endeavour. First, we are convinced that our traditions in North America have aligned themselves too much with the popular meta-narratives of Western society.⁴⁵ This has compromised our witness and

⁴³ *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), p. 207.

⁴⁴ For Pentecostal resources, see <www.pcpj.org>; and for Anabaptist-Pietist resources, see <www.brethren.org/oepa>, <www.bic-church.org>.

⁴⁵ These meta-narratives pertain to the dominant controlling modern stories of Western society. These stories attempt to explain rationally the universal reality to the exclusion of all others: see Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). In North America we have most recently been experiencing the effects in terms

contaminated our identity as an eschatological community (a community whose hope is fully in the promises of God as revealed in Jesus Christ). In order to regain our full (whole) gospel witness, it is necessary that a grassroots soteriological ecclesiology be formed which fosters and nurtures whole relationships through the Christ-ordained ministry of forgiveness and reconciliation. For a fruitful witness to occur, the believing community must begin embodying this ministry starting in the core relationships of the church (families) and then extending out. Our soteriological witness extends out of the way in which we live our lives in community and is grounded in the confession of what we believe.

Second, the faith languages of our traditions could possibly impede such an endeavour. Therefore it will be necessary that open and attentive conversation occurs, with intentional attention given to denotative explanation.⁴⁶ The goal is to dialogue respectfully, appreciating our differences as we explain our traditions. The most obvious example of this could be issues surrounding glossolalia as initial evidence and how that is applied to those outside the Pentecostal community. In addition, Anabaptist-Pietists will need to define more clearly and explain their understanding of the charismatic gifts and how they are evidenced. We believe that in the process of such conversation our communities will discover surprising commonalities, thus building a strong coalition for this endeavour.

Finally, we are convinced that our traditions in North America have aligned themselves too much with magisterial and evangelical traditions.⁴⁷ This has diluted our witness and moved us from the margins and into the mainstream

of capitalism, democracy (politically, both liberal and conservative), and most notably patriotism. These three meta-narratives have historically led to violence undermining the gospel of Jesus Christ, through the manipulation of word games, and injustice by perpetuation of poverty, disease and the destruction of the environment. What has been most disconcerting is that it appears that a growing number of members within our traditions are adopting such stories as their own, thus affecting detrimentally their identity and witness.

⁴⁶ We agree with Jürgen Moltmann's pointed discussion concerning the requirements of the participants which merit a fruitful inter-faith dialogue. We believe these same prerequisites apply to dialogue participants within Christianity's diverse yet complementary traditions. See his *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), pp. 18–22.

⁴⁷ It is necessary to note that this by no means suggests positioning ourselves as adversaries with these other Christian traditions, or that we should in any way interrupt (obstruct or cease) ecumenical conversations with these other traditions. What we are arguing for is preserving our distinct narrative traditions as a means of protesting witness. The alignment with 'magisterial' and evangelical we refer to is more ideological and concerned about compromising identity rather than relational.

of Western Christianity. Traditionally our communities have existed on the margins of society bearing a distinct witness to both the world and the rest of the church. As we have embraced liberal education and sought legitimization, compromises have occurred by means of adopting modern ideology. It is necessary that our communities retain their distinct identity narratives as they enter into the greater conversation.

In addition to these potential pitfalls, we are certain that a significant cornerstone of this process is found in the symbol that we share – footwashing. This symbol not only emphasises Christ-like relationships at the centre of which confession, forgiveness and reconciliation play a primary role, but it is a symbol that can be used universally within the Christian faith. Historically, the most significant symbol in the church, the Eucharistic meal or Lord's Supper, has been the one that has separated us most. It is our intention to suppose that footwashing is the symbol able to be shared among the various traditions of Christianity bringing them together in the ministry of our Lord Jesus.