

Abstract: Pentecostals are getting increasingly engaged in ecumenical dialogue. In the Netherlands the Reformed churches officially recognized the Pentecostal appeal as early as the 1960's. During the 1990's the Re-Reformed Church, the interdenominational missionary organizations and the Roman Catholic Church have initiated various ecumenical exchanges with the Pentecostals. The latter two are still ongoing. These dialogues prove to be mutually beneficial. Some important lessons can be drawn from the Dutch experiences like the integration of worship and charismatic utterances, the necessity of equal participation and the focus on faith and fellowship.

"Guidelines for a Challenging Dialogue with Pentecostals: Lessons from the Netherlands"

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When I finished my dissertation¹ in 1988 on the topic Pentecostalism in Ecumenical Perspective one could hardly have envisioned how relevant this topic would become in the following decades. It was the focus of the fall 1995 issue of the periodical of the SPS (Society for Pentecostal Studies) *Pneuma*². Last year the SPS devoted its Conference Theme on the very topic³ and stated it had a promising future as more and more scholars were entering into this process. Cecil M. Robeck concluded:

Pentecostal interest and participation in ecumenism are still in their infancy. Those who enter the field at this time will help to define the field for the future of Pentecostal participation. A variety of churches and organizations exist, which are open to Pentecostal participation. The building of bridges between denominations is a rewarding challenge that can bear good fruit⁴.

The international dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church is still continuing and is now in its sixth quinquennium. The International Dialogue between representatives of

¹ Paul van der Laan, *The Question of Spiritual Unity. The Dutch Pentecostal Movement in Ecumenical Perspective*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Birmingham (U.K.), University of Birmingham, 1988.

² PNEUMA - The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, 17/2, Fall 1995, p. 145-228.

³ Society for Pentecostal Studies, *Pentecostalism and the World Church: Ecumenical Opportunities and Challenges*, 31st Annual Meeting, Lakeland, Florida: Southeastern College, March 14-16. Since 2000 the S.P.S. installed the Ecumenical Interest Group.

⁴ Cecil M. Robeck Jr., *Pentecostals and Christian Unity: Facing the Challenge*, p. 19. Presentation at the 31st Annual Meeting of the S.P.S. in Lakeland, Florida on March 15, 2002. The paper is not included in the collected papers, but is available at the S.P.S. homepage: www.sps-usa.org

the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders is in its second quinquennium⁵.

Beyond my wildest dreams the ecumenical dialogue flourished in the Netherlands after 1988. Various national dialogues began of which two are still ongoing. The dialogue with the Re-Reformed Churches in the Netherlands i.e. "Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland" (henceforward called RRCN) lasted for three years (1992-1995), the dialogue with a number of interdenominational Missionary Organizations started in 1998. The most recent dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church started in 1999. I was privileged to participate in all of these dialogues as a Pentecostal delegate. Other important developments were the growth of the indigenous migrant-churches, the Alpha-courses, the merge of the two largest Pentecostal Movements and the integration of the Azusa Theological College including the establishment of an Academic Chair in Pentecostalism at the Free University of Amsterdam. To provide an historical framework for my "Guidelines for a Challenging Dialogue with Pentecostals" I need to present a brief overview of the Netherlands and the most significant ecumenical interchanges that have taken place there.

The Netherlands, an ecumenical model

The Netherlands is in many ways a country of contrasts. The people who derive from different races are as variable as their climate and soil. All 16 million of the inhabitants have to live together on 16,033 square miles. In order to find a common ground for this overcrowded melting pot, tolerance has been a necessary merit. Both Desiderus Erasmus (1469-1536) and William of Orange (1533-1584), the father of our present monarchy, promoted freedom of thought, but their voices were subdued by the religious controversy of their time

Hebly has suggested:

Many call the Netherlands an "ecumenical model", an example worthy of imitation, while others, watching from afar, register shock at the changes taking place in the Lowlands⁶.

Nijenhuis adds:

Nowhere in the world outside the U.S.A. is the picture of the history of the Reformation as varied as it is in the Netherlands. This spiritual and ecclesiastical diversity is matched by a corresponding diversity of cultural, social and political organizations⁷.

It is therefore not surprising that the this Netherlands has had a leading role in the development of the Ecumenical Movement in the 20th century. The World

⁵ Word and Spirit, Church and Word. The Final Report of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders 1996-200, *PNEUMA - The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Churches*, Volume 23, Number 1, Spring 2001, and p. 9-37.

⁶ J.A. Hebly (ed.), "Lowland Highlights-Church and Oecumene in the Netherlands (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1972) p. 5.

⁷ W. Nijenhuis, The Dutch Reformation in *Lowland Highlights-Church and Oecumene in the Netherlands* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1972) p. 23.

Council of Churches was established in Amsterdam in 1948 and the Dutchman Willem A. Visser 't Hooft (1900-1985) served as its first General Secretary.

However, the Pentecostal Movement in the Netherlands initially did not experience this characteristic tolerance and ecumenical openness. On the contrary in spite of the fervent plea for unity by the pioneer and dominant leader of the Dutch Pentecostal movement Gerrit Polman (1868-1932)⁸, the Pentecostals were looked down upon as an insignificant, fanatic sect that would soon disappear. Only a few open-minded Dutch Reformed ministers took some personal interest in this peculiar new expression of the Christian faith⁹. Polman nevertheless had expressed that it was his desire that the Pentecostal Movement would ultimately "loose itself in the body of Christ"¹⁰. At the end of his ministry he still stressed:

We belong to everybody, we are not a sect and avoid every sectarian spirit, we want to be a blessing for everybody and do not aim to become big ourselves, but to help the common cause. May the Pentecostal Spirit be poured out in every church of whatever name that is our prayer¹¹.

Long after Polman's death this prayer would be answered. The controversy around divine healing in the fifties opened an unexpected and interesting in the early sixties initiated by the Netherlands Reformed Church (Nederlands Hervormde Kerk).

Pastoral Letter of the Netherlands Reformed Church

When David du Plessis visited Holland in 1959 he made the following observation:

My visit to Holland in June gave me the opportunity to observe at first hand the mighty work of the Holy Spirit in the Netherlands Reformed Church. I felt a movement in that country that can only be sensed by people who are truly filled with the Spirit. A genuine Pentecostal tide is rising within that church ... I am convinced that America cannot boast of a further and deeper reaching movement of God than Holland¹².

A year later the Netherlands Reformed Church (Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk) published a remarkable pastoral letter entitled "De Kerk en de Pinkstergroepen" (The Church and the Pentecostal Groups). In spite of its concise length (78 pages) and relatively simple contents it was received with enthusiasm and approval by most mainline churches as well as by the Pentecostals. W.J. Hollenweger labeled it as "a milestone in relations between a national church and the Pentecostal movement, which should be present in every theological library."³¹ It most probably is the first official publication anywhere in the world in which a mainline church acknowledges the important contribution of the Pentecostal movement to the church and which seeks answers within its own

⁸ C. van der Laan, *Sectarian Against His Will: Gerrit Roelof Polman (1868-1932) and the Birth of Pentecostalism in the Netherlands*. Studies in Evangelicalism 21. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1991.

⁹ Dr. G.A. Wumkes, Dr. J.H. Gunning and Prof.Dr. A.H. de Hartog - see Paul van der Laan, *The Question of Spiritual Unity*, p. 52-63.

¹⁰ G.R. Polman, *Uit den Arbeid, Spade Regen* 18/1, April 15, 1925, p. 14.

¹¹ [G.R. Polman], *Spade Regen, Spade Regen* 22/12, March 15, 1930, p. 190-191.

¹² David J. du Plessis, *Echo van de Opwekking in de Kerken, Kracht van Omhoog* 23/2, July 25, 1959, p.7-8.

denominational context. The original intent however was very protective as is demonstrated by the initial letter of the Synodal Board's to the proposed committee members of February 13, 1958:

The Synodal Board is of the opinion that a to be published writing should not only contain teaching and guidance to the church, but also investigate the reasons for the origin of these movements in the life, confession and work of the Netherlands Reformed Church and show a means by which the growth of these movements could be prevented¹³.

The committee met eight times in the period from 16 September 1958 until 25 September 1959. The ecumenical aspect came most to the fore in the meeting with David du Plessis on 24 June 1959, at Driebergen. Du Plessis did not believe that the time was ripe to for the Pentecostal Movement to consider the question of membership of the World Council of Churches, but he did notice a remarkable openness towards each other. He compared the Pentecostals with a busy, annoying child and the Church with an old man sleeping in a chair and concluded: "they both have their own downsides, but at least the baby is very much alive!"¹⁴

In December 1960 the pastoral letter was finally published, with an introduction from the Synodal Board. Over a period of nine years it made four reprints and a total circulation of 12,000 copies¹⁵.

In 1962, Feitse Boerwinkel, the chairman of the committee who wrote the initial draft of the pastoral letter, wrote a pamphlet for the "Oecumenische Leergang" (Ecumenical Course) entitled "de Pinkstergroepen" (the Pentecostal groups), in which he stressed the ecumenical challenge once again:

The Pentecostal movement asks the people of the church to read their Bible again concerning the promises of God towards His assembly. She is asking the people of the church whether they are satisfied with the present situation of impotence and if not, if it would not be a good thing to simply, but strong in faith, pray for the powerful manifestation of the Spirit who is already given to the church¹⁶.

The "Brotherhood of Pentecostal Assemblies in the Netherlands", who affiliated with the Assemblies of God in 1967 (henceforward called "Brotherhood"), decided to issue an official answer to the pastoral letter. On 13 October 1962, they officially presented its "Answer to the pastoral letter" to the large Synodal Board of the

¹³ Synodal Board, Letter to the Committee for the Study of Sectarianism, The Hague February 13, 1958.

¹⁴ J.Swijnenburg, "Verslag van het gesprek met ds. du Plessis op woensdag 24 juni 1959 op de Horst te 9 uur v.m." (Report of meeting with David du Plessis on June 24, 1959), p. 2

¹⁵ *Herderlijk schrijven van de Generale Synode der Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, De Kerk en de Pinkstergroepen* (Den Haag: Boekencentrum, 1960).

1st edition, December 1960, 3,000 copies, 2nd edition, 1961, 3,000 copies, 3rd edition, 1961, 3,000 copies, 4th edition, 1962, 2,000 copies, 5th edition, 1969, 1,000 copies.

¹⁶ Dr. F. Boerwinkel, *De Pinkstergroepen* (Oecumenische Leergang No.5 - Den Haag: Stichting Plein, 1962, p. 13.

Netherlands Reformed Church. At this occasion, P. van der Woude addressed the Synodal chairman P.G. van den Hooff as follows:

The Brotherhood of Pentecostal Assemblies is glad that your synod has clearly stated the necessity of the fulfillment with the Holy Spirit. We believe that in these days it is more necessary than ever before to have a church that is standing in the power and fullness the Bible speaks about. May I present you, Mr. chairman, on behalf of the Brotherhood of Pentecostal Assemblies, our answer to your pastoral letter with the words you will find in the conclusion of this booklet: "The Brotherhood does not want to point her finger accusingly to the Church, but to reach out her hand in love to the Church to come to the glory Christ has given us together¹⁷.

The "committee for the study of sectarianism" who wrote the "Pastoral Letter"¹⁷ met once with the committee that prepared the answer of the "Brotherhood". Though none of the participants who are still alive seem to remember much of this historic meeting that took place on 28 May 1963, the minutes reveal an interesting and promising discussion¹⁸. The main theme chosen was: "What prevents us to be the Church of Jesus Christ together?" A report in the Pentecostal periodical *Pinksterboodschap* mentions that the meeting took place "in a spirit of mutual frankness with resulted in some new perspectives"¹⁹. When questioned about their attitude towards the World Council of Churches (henceforward called W.C.C.) the Pentecostal delegation answered that they objected to the liberal element. They feared that the Bible was not fully accepted as the Word of God and that the W.C.C. was too sympathetic to communism:

The World Council reminds us of a sign of the time, a desire for an organized world-church instead of a truly spiritual renewal. The danger of a renewed "power-church" that persecutes the believers is dooming²⁰.

The Pentecostals did not expect the "Brotherhood" to join the W.C.C., but were open to cooperation in practical areas. At the end it was agreed to have two more meetings, one in the autumn of 1963 concerning the "exegesis of certain scriptures" and one in the spring of 1964 concerning "the work of the Holy Spirit". However these meetings never took place. In a letter of 12 May 1964, the "committee for the study of sectarianism" asked the Synod Board whether it was desirable that the committee should continue this dialogue.

¹⁷ P. van der Woude, unpublished speech delivered at October 13, 1962 at the presentation of the "Answer of the Brotherhood" to the large Synodal Board at The Hague (van der Woude's personal archives at Hoogvliet).

¹⁸ J. Swijnenburg, "Verslag van het gesprek van de Commissie voor het Herderlijk Schrijven "De Kerk en de Pinkstergroepen" met enige vertegenwoordigers van de Broederschap van Pinkstergemeenten in Nederland", Driebergen: May 28, 1963.

¹⁹ Gesprek Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk - Broederschap van Pinkstergemeenten, *De Pinksterboodschap* 4/7, July 1963, p. 11.

²⁰ Minutes of meeting of the Netherlands Reformed "Committee for the study of sectarianism" and the Brotherhood delegates on 28 May 1963 at Driebergen, p. 4.

The Synodal Board, who never expected this dialogue to last longer than one meeting, answered that the committee could consider her task as completed²¹. Interest in the dialogue gradually diminished, because the Netherlands Reformed Church was caught up too much in political issues like nuclear armament, while the Pentecostals were focused on handling some turbulent divisions in their own rank and file. Thus a promising dialogue was quenched before it really got started.

Reference Document of the Re-Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

In 1967 the General Synod of the RRCN accepted a reference document entitled "The work of the Holy Spirit in the assembly". The subtitle reveals what it was really about: "Reference document about the Pentecostal churches". In contrast to the pastoral letter of the Netherlands Reformed Church, this document was a classical refutation of the Pentecostal movement based upon the arrogant conviction of being in the right oneself. From a Pentecostal perspective it was much more conservative than the pastoral letter that was published seven years earlier. The main resemblance between the two booklets was the number of pages²². Nevertheless it is meaningful that the second largest Reformed denomination in the Netherlands felt the need to supplement the pastoral letter with a document "that would pursue the Scriptural data in a more profound way".

The immediate cause of the reference document were letters from various local churches of the Regional Synod of South Holland to the General Synod of the RRCN in which they requested:

... clear guidance concerning the Pentecostal movement, and if possible general guidelines with reference to the pastoral and ecclesiastical handling of these church members; so as to further the unity of action in these churches²³.

It was decided to install a study committee, which would prepare a reference document on the Pentecostal groups. At the General Synod at Lunteren on September 14, 1967, it was accepted without hardly any questions asked or comments made²⁴. In 1968 the reference document was published. In spite of the fact that Kilian McDonnell called it "a major document from the historic churches" and included a complete translated version in his *Presence, Power, Praise*²⁵, it was hardly noticed in the Netherlands. The

²¹ Synodal Board, Letter to the Committee for the Study of Sectarianism, The Hague 26 May 1964. In several letters to individual committee-members the Synodal Board had indicated that they only expected one meeting to take place. In the letter to J.R. Wolfensberger, dated 26 March 1963, this was expressed as follows: "It is merely a meeting to give a tribute to the answer of the Brotherhood it deserves."

²² The pastoral letter of the Netherlands Reformed Church was 78 pages, the reference document of the RRCN 75 pages.

²³ Particuliere Synode Zuid-Holland (Oost) der Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, Letter by scriba ds. W.G. Scheeres of 16 April 1962 (!) to the General Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland.

²⁴ Acta van de Generale Synode van Amsterdam, Utrecht en Lunteren 1967-1968 (Kampen: J.H. Kok), art. 163, p. 123.

²⁵ Kilian McDonnell, *Presence, Power, Praise - Documentation Charismatic Renewal*, Volume I, Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1980, p. 147.

publication raised little interest and there proved to be no need for a reprint²⁶. Even the authors of the Reference Document had to admit retrospectively that "it did not make an impact"²⁷. From amongst the Pentecostals, only the "Brotherhood" gave a serious response. In a letter to the General Synod of the RRCN they expressed their appreciation and stated:

We regard ourselves attached to all who accept and confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior and with all who pray and reach out for "the Spirit of truth and revelation to know Him truly". We hope to discuss this document in our midst and inform you about the results in due time together with a stand and view of the Brotherhood of Pentecostal Assemblies²⁸.

The fact that the Brotherhood gave such a positive response to such a critical document can only be explained by the fact that in this year the Brotherhood was at its pinnacle of ecumenical openness. Their young General Superintendent Dick Voordewind (born 1937) had started a column in their periodical *De Pinksterboodschap* entitled "Between Church and Pentecost", in which he openly pleaded for a dialogue with other denominations²⁹. In their information booklet, the Brotherhood stated:

We are grateful for the change in attitude in many churches with regard to the revelation of the Holy Spirit in our days. Whenever a talk with the churches and its representatives is possible, we will like to do so. On a local level the assembly is free to be represented as an observer on the local Council of Churches³⁰.

The letter of the Brotherhood was read during the General Synod of the RRCN at Lunteren of 6 March 1968 and was merely taken notice of.³¹ The Brotherhood also published it partially in *De Pinksterboodschap* and advised the Pentecostals to read this reference document. The only critical note that was raised, was the fact that the historical information about the Brotherhood was not up to date³². During the General Council of

²⁶ H.C. Endedijk, A.G. Kornet & drs. G.Y. Vellenga, *Het werk van de Heilige Geest in de Gemeente* "Voorlichtend geschrift over de Pinkstergroepen, uitgegeven in opdracht van de Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken" (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1968), 78 pages. The first and only edition had a circulation of 4,000 copies.

²⁷ H.C. Endedijk, Personal interview at Velp, 23 September 1987. A.G. Kornet (interview 9 December 1987) and Prof. H.N. Ridderbos (Telephone interview 14 December 1987) could agree with this statement. Due to illness of ds. G.Y. Vellenga, he could not be interviewed.

²⁸ H. Ch. Sleebos on behalf of the Executive Council of the Broederschap van Pinkstergemeenten, Letter to the General Synod of the RRCN at Lunteren, March 2, 1968.

²⁹ D. Voordewind opened this series in *De Pinksterboodschap* of October 1967 with the desire "to narrow the gap between the Church and the Pentecostal movement" (D. Voordewind, Tussen Kerk en Pinksteren, p. 6).

³⁰ Committee for literature of the Brotherhood, *Het zal zijn in de laatste dagen* (Den Haag: Broederschap van Pinkstergemeenten, 1968), p. 6.

³¹ *Acta van de Generale Synode van Amsterdam, Utrecht en Lunteren 1967 en 1968* (Kampen: J.H. Kok), art. 359, p. 277. The letter was merely announced. The minutes do not report any questions on the receipt of the letter.

³² D. Voordewind, Tussen Kerk en Pinksteren - Het werk van de Heilige Geest in de gemeente, *De Pinksterboodschap* 9/5, May 1968, p. 12.

the Brotherhood at Ede on 27-28 September 1968 a committee was installed, which would prepare an official answer to the reference document of the RRCN. The project was never finished. The minutes of the Executive Council of 14 September 1970 simply stated that "the manuscript has been mislaid"³³.

The Reference Document of the RRCN can serve as an example of what may happen if a genuine dialogue is avoided. The sociological phenomenon of the Pentecostal Movement was hardly recognized and the short historical view in the appendix was full of mistakes. Even worse however was the caricature of the Pentecostals. The document refuted a movement, which only existed in their imagination. In the preface the Synod board stated that "they expected that church councils and community members would obtain a correct viewpoint concerning the nature and background of the Pentecostal movement"³⁴. However this booklet gave a shameful distorted picture. If one realizes that this report was prepared over a period of three years and was checked twice by over a hundred people including many scholars, one would almost doubt the academic standard in the Netherlands. The document leaves the impression that hardly any authentic Pentecostal literature was read. This ignorance concerning (Dutch) Pentecostal literature is even more embarrassing, when one realizes that in 1964 an excellent bibliography of the same had been published in the renowned periodical *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift*³⁵. The committee made a major omission by not inviting any Pentecostal for a hearing. In the meeting with the Netherlands Reformed Church the "Brotherhood" had shown itself to be very eager to enter into a dialogue. In light of this the opening phrase in the introduction of the reference document that the authors "hoped to contribute towards a positive exchange of thoughts with supporters of the Pentecostal movement"³⁶ seems rather surprising. One of the main goals of the reference document was to stop the exodus from RRCN to the Pentecostal assemblies. The statistics show that the reverse was accomplished; in 1968, the year of the publication, the number almost doubled³⁷. This proves that it is in the best interest of the church to enter into a genuine dialogue with the Pentecostals to discover why their church-members are attracted to them.

Due to the growth of the Charismatic Movement the mainline churches were of the opinion that the Pentecostal appeal was now answered in their own rank and file and subsequently they lost interest in an ecumenical interchange with the national Pentecostal denominations. As I told you in my introduction, when I finished my dissertation in 1988 there was hardly any cross-fertilization. The Pentecostals were frustrated that the Charismatics had not joined their ranks by now, which they had eagerly anticipated, and the Charismatics looked down upon these less intellectual Pentecostal fanatics. However during the 1990's a new interest in the Pentecostal Movement emerged.

Dialogue with the Re-Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

³³ Minutes of the Executive Council of the Brotherhood, September 14, 1970 at Moerkapelle, p. 1

³⁴ *Het werk van de Heilige Geest in de Gemeente*, p. 5.

³⁵ Walter J. Hollenweger, Literatur von und über die Pfingstbewegung, *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 18/4, April 1964, p. 289-306.

³⁶ *Het werk van de Heilige Geest in de Gemeente*, p. 7.

³⁷ Years and numbers of members that transferred from a RRCN to a Pentecostal assembly: 1967: 128, 1968: 200, 1969:120 see: Paul van der Laan, *The Question of Spiritual Unity*, p. 476.

In 1976 the Synod of the RRCN decided to appoint some delegates for the study of the Charismatic movement, in particular with reference to the questions of church-offices and baptism³⁸. This resulted in a positive evaluation of the Charismatic movement and finally in the decision to give this committee a more permanent appointment to sustain the dialogue with the Charismatic Movement in the Netherlands, who had organized themselves as the so-called C.W.N. (Charismatische Werkgemeenschap Nederland)³⁹. In 1992 I challenged this committee to open a dialogue with the Brotherhood, which had at that time recently appointed a committee for this end. To my joyful surprise they reacted positively to my suggestion⁴⁰. In this dialogue a representative from the committee Ecumenism of the RRCN and a representative of the C.W.N. also participated. The committee met seven times with a number of representatives of the Brotherhood over a period of more than two years⁴¹. All meetings were held in the headquarters of the RRCN at Leusden and chaired by Dr. Riemer Roukema of the RRCN Committee. In their report to the Synod of the RRCN their committee concluded that "they had experienced these conversations as open and fruitful"⁴². In mutual agreement the following topics were discussed:

1. The perception Church-members have of the Pentecostal Movement
2. The perception Pentecostals have of the Church
3. Transfer of members from the mainline churches to Pentecostal denominations and vice versa.
4. Prophecy
5. Ethics and Pastoral Care.

Let me summarize the main conclusions of these discussions, which may serve as an illustration how mutual beneficial an open dialogue can be.

1. The perception Church-members have of the Pentecostal Movement⁴³
 - The Pentecostal Movement holds a great attraction for people who are looking for a fulfillment in their life.
 - Pentecostals sing enthusiastically and use a variety of musical instruments.
 - There is earnest prayer and experiential preaching.
 - They pray with the sick and have a practical involvement of their faith.

³⁸ Acta van de Generale Synode van Maastricht 1975-1976 van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland Kampen: J.H. Kok, meeting of 7 October 1976, acta art. 332, p. 216.

³⁹ In 1984 the delegates issued a booklet to "help in the discussions about and with the Charismatic movement". Deputaten voor Contact met de Charismatische Werkgemeenschap Nederland, Vurig van Geest - Een handreiking voor gesprekken over en met de charismatische beweging, series Toerusting, Driebergen: Centrale voor vormingswerk, 1984.

⁴⁰ Bijlagen bij de Acta van de Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland - Aalten 1993, Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1995, p. 155.

⁴¹ Usually about five to six Pentecostals participated. Regular attendees were Paul Pouwelse (chaplain), Rev. Ap van Polen (retired pastor) Rev. Klaas van Balen (pastor), Dr. Paul van der Laan and Huib Zegwaard (General Secretary of the Brotherhood). Committee members of the RRCN who participated were: Mrs. Drs. E.A. de Boer, Mrs. Drs. T. de Jong, Dr. C. van der Kooi, Dr. R.A. van Kooij, Dr. R. Roukema (chair) and Drs. B.C. van Wieren. The Committee Ecumenism of the RRCN was represented by Rev. P. Schravendeel or Dr. L.J. Koffeman. The C.W.N. was represented by Rev. W.W. Verhoef.

⁴² Bijlagen bij de Acta van de Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland - Haren 1995, Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1997, p. 499.

⁴³ Bijlagen bij de Acta van de Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland - Haren 1995, p. 499-500,

- Pentecostals tend to look upon themselves as superior over ordinary church-members.
- In many Pentecostal churches there is rivalry between the pastor, elders and members.
- In ethical issues the Bible is used too quickly and too univocal.
- The preaching is quite elementary.
- Infant baptism is not accepted and believers who want to join a Pentecostal church need to be re-baptized.

2. The perception Pentecostals have of the Church⁴⁴

The Pentecostals seem to have a more negative perception of the Church:

- There is little spiritual life, especially with regards to prayer and relation with God.
- There is insufficient openness for the work of the Holy Spirit.
- There is a great lack of sanctification.
- The theological education is too much geared to the intellectual.
- Biblical exegeses and hermeneutics is too liberal.
- The liturgy is too static, old-fashioned and impersonal.
- There is too little personal contact among the members.
- The churches are too much engaged in politics and social help, instead of emphasizing the vertical relation with God and evangelization of the world.
- The distance between God and man is too big in the church.

Committee members of the RRCN were of the opinion that a number of these issues were outdated and not relevant any more.

3. Transfer of members⁴⁵

Reasons why members of the RRCN transferred to a Pentecostal Church⁴⁶:

- Enthusiastic Christianity.
- The songs and music in the Pentecostal church.
- Adult baptism by immersion.
- Appealing sermons and call to conversion.
- Warm social involvement with one another.
- The security of life that is offered.
- Active church-programs for children.
- Former personal experiences with the Holy Spirit, which are acknowledged by the Pentecostals.

Reasons why Pentecostals join the RRCN:

- More liberty and tolerance
- More openness for different opinions
- Room for homosexuals and acceptance of their lifestyle.
- More profound preaching and biblical exposition.

⁴⁴*Ibid*, p. 500-502.

⁴⁵*Ibid*, p. 502.

⁴⁶ In the period of 1954-1985 5,245 members of the RRCN transferred to a Pentecostal Church. In that same period 196 Pentecostals transferred to the RRCN. Source: *Jaarboek van de Gereformeerde Kerken 1956-1987*, Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, Chapter Statistiek - section Grensverkeer. Also Paul van der Laan, *The Question of Spiritual Unity*, p. 476.

- A broader view on the Church and her tradition.

4. Prophecy⁴⁷

The Pentecostals indicated that they were suspicious when a prophet is re-affirming himself or his position. The community of believers should test the prophets and a prophet who does not want that his/her prophecies are tested cannot be trusted.

Prophecies have a tendency to confirm the status quo and lose their critical effect. The routine of having prophecies sometimes results in not taking them too seriously.

The RRCN-delegates added that Pentecostals only seem to be open for a specific type of prophecy. According to them a consistent urge by one of the church-members or a particular section of a sermon may also be of prophetic nature. The pacifists who demonstrated for nuclear disarmament also experienced the prophetic nature of their manifestations. Pentecostals are generally reluctant to give prophetic utterances about political issues, but there is an increasing awareness of social and political abuses.

5. Ethics and Pastoral Care⁴⁸

Pentecostals have a strong sense of community and provide a shelter for many who have social or psychological problems. As a result of their holiness heritage Pentecostals have ethical reservations on issues like sex before marriage and divorce. There is a tendency to spiritualize or demonize a social or psychological problem. It was acknowledged that the mainline churches usually provide more balanced and professional care in these cases.

At the end of the dialogue the Committee of the RRCN concluded that this has been "...a genuine dialogue. From both sides there was a readiness to critically observe one's own denominational tradition and to hold the other 'party' accountable for the questions and criticism that is raised"⁴⁹. They recommended to continue this dialogue, but unfortunately this never happened. I must add that the Pentecostals also did not initiate a continuation. From my personal observation I would like to add the following comments:

- The dialogue was the most intensive and genuine so far. There was indeed a surprising openness and the Pentecostals were treated as equal partners.
- All meetings were held in the headquarters of the RRCN and chaired by their committee, which created a feeling of ownership and dominance by the RRCN.
- I personally challenged the RRCN-members to integrate time for mutual worship in order to 'get a taste of our spiritual life'. Although some of the Reformed delegates were open for this, it never materialized. Thus the dialogue remained merely an intellectual exchange.
- Essential topics like "Pneumatology", "Baptism", "Divine Healing", "Signs and Miracles", "Evangelism and Missions" etc. were never touched. The Pentecostals could also have reflected on the various documents the RRCN-committee had produced⁵⁰. There seems plenty material left to talk about.

⁴⁷ *Bijlagen bij de Acta van de Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland - Haren 1995*, p. 503.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 503-504. For this meeting Mrs. Connie Karsten, professor at the Azusa Theological College (Brotherhood) was invited to give an introduction.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 504.

⁵⁰ *Bulletin voor Charismatische Theologie*, 4/7, Easter 1981, p.2-16 & 6/11, Spring 1983, p. 3-19 & 9/18, Autumn 1986, p. 3-14.

Profetieën, ingevingen en visioenen. Omgaan met bijzondere ervaringen, *Bijlagen bij de Acta van de Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland - Haren 1995*, p. 474-498.

The following two dialogues I am going to introduce are still in an ongoing process. For this reason I will merely focus on their initial history and some of their most remarkable characteristic.

Missiological interaction and vision

In 1996 the delegates of the Netherlands Missionary Council⁵¹ (Nederlandse Zendingraad, henceforward called NZR) were astonished that there were no representatives of the (black) Pentecostal Churches, who took part in the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) at Salvador, Brazil. When they asked critical questions about this to the leadership of the conference, they were challenged by them and the staff of the World Council of Churches in Geneva to start a dialogue with the national Pentecostal and Charismatic organizations. Their general secretary Wout van Laar had already taken up a personal interest in the Pentecostal movement during the years he worked and lived in Chili. Together with the Evangelical Missionary Alliance (Evangelische Zendingalliantie, henceforward called EZA)⁵² and the Netherlands Mission Council (Nederlandse Missieraad, henceforward called NMR)⁵³ the NZR organized a "day of meeting and consultation" on May 12, 1998. The goal for this meeting was "to get to know and recognize Christians of the Ecumenical, Charismatic and Pentecostal traditions, in the hope that in this meeting and celebration a new vision may grow for cooperation and unity in the unified mission of God (Missio Dei)"⁵⁴. More than fifty representatives of these various traditions including members of the migrant churches participated. The main speaker was Dr. Cheryl Bridges John⁵⁵, who was introduced as an "American Pentecostal theologian". The day concluded with worship and prayer. This resulted in the formation of the Mission Quarterly Council (Missionair kwartaalberaad). During its first session in January 1999 Prof. Dr. Water Hollenweger introduced a number of suggestions for an effective dialogue. The group agreed to pursue the following aims⁵⁶:

- The Mission Quarterly Council aims to create a forum where 15-20 participants meet informally in a hospitable environment.
- The meetings must include moments of celebration and prayer. Heart and mind, worship and discussion need to be pursued in a fruitful balance.

⁵¹ The NZR is a platform of about 15 Dutch denominations and organizations for the exchange of reflections and ideas in its most broadest meaning. Most of the affiliated organizations are Dutch Reformed or Evangelical. For a complete list of their participants and more information visit their Dutch website at www.zendingraad.nl

⁵² In the EZA about 70 evangelical missionary organizations in the Netherlands cooperate. For a complete list of their participants and more information visit their Dutch website at www.eza.nl

⁵³ The NMR coordinates the activities in the Dutch Roman Catholic Church with regards to mission, development aid and dialogue. For more information visit their Dutch website at www.missieraad.nl

⁵⁴ Wout van Laar, *Missionair Kwartaalberaad - Een terugblik*, Amsterdam: Nederlandse Zendingraad, NZR 123/01, May 10, 2001, p. 1.

⁵⁵ The core of her lecture is published in her article: Cheryl Bridges Johns, What Can the Mainline Learn from Pentecostals about Pentecost, *Journal for Preachers*, Volume XXI Number 4, Pentecost 1998.

⁵⁶ Wout van Laar, *Missionair Kwartaalberaad - Een terugblik*, p. 2.

- The Council wants to initiate a learning process in which we get to know one another in such a way that it will eliminate our prejudices and will lead to possible ways of cooperation in a missiological perspective.
- The meetings cannot be merely investigative and noncommittal. It is our goal to develop a framework for a combined missiological strategy for the 21st century.

During the following meetings⁵⁷ a wide range of topics was discussed. In chronological order: The strength and weakness of Pentecostal Mission, Eschatology as Motive for Mission, Intercultural Theology and Narrative Exegesis, Our testimony and to be a witness, African Pentecostalism and Non-Western Pentecostalism in the Netherlands. One of the most significant features of this dialogue has been the time of worship and prayer, usually at the beginning of each session. In his report on the first three years of these meetings Wout van Laar described this as follows:

What cannot be reported are the experiences during the moments of celebration and fellowship, which are the heart of the Missionary Quarterly Council. These repeating moments, when we light the candle and are silent together in the face of God and call out His name. When we worship Him it brings the participants closer to one another and these moments are invaluable⁵⁸.

Another important element is the integration of the migrant churches, which is the fastest growing section in the Pentecostal family in the Netherlands and brings the Great Commission literally home.

These meetings still seem to be in the exploratory phase. It will be interesting to see whether a combined missiological strategy can be formulated. The mutual recognition, dialogue combined with worship and balanced participation may prove to be the right ingredients to reach this challenging goal.

⁵⁷ Meetings have taken place on January 1, 1999; September 2, 1999; November 4, 1999; February 3, 2000, May 18, 2000, September 14, 2000; January 1, 2001 (hosted by the African Pentecostal Council of Churches), May 17, 2001; January 21, 2002.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 9.

The holy confusion of Roman Catholic Charismatics

In 1997 Fr. Peter Hocken⁵⁹ visited the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the Netherlands. His lecture stimulated their National Pastoral Core group (Landelijk Pastorale Kerngroep) to invite the Brotherhood to appoint a delegate to attend their annual conferences. In their letter of July 10, 1998 they wrote:

We are impressed by the outpouring of the Spirit over so many Christians, who plant so many new churches, apart from the historic churches. It is not important whether we like that or not because of our own denominational perception, whether we agree with it or not or whether all is perfect or not. It is important (to recognize) that the Holy Spirit is at work. That is why we are directly involved in this by the same Spirit. In essence there is a unity because we are baptized in the same Spirit. That is why we believe that the Lord is urging us to be in closer personal relationship with you.⁶⁰

The Brotherhood responded positively and appointed me as their delegate to represent them at their annual conference. This contact and the desire to discuss the report of the fourth phase of the international dialogue 1990 - 1997 between the Roman Catholic Church and some Classical Pentecostal Churches and leaders on "Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness"⁶¹ resulted in the decision to start a national dialogue between representatives of the Roman Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the Brotherhood. We decided to meet every four months with about ten representatives from each denomination. The delegates should include clergy and laity and represent different age groups. Each denomination was to host the meeting alternately. A core-group with two representatives from each denomination prepared these meetings and set up the agenda. Every meeting was to start with a time of charismatic worship, personal testimony, prayer and prophecy. I insisted on this because I knew that many Pentecostals were prejudiced towards the Charismatic Catholics. They could not figure out how somebody could be baptized in the Spirit and still pray to Mary or, even more horrific, smoke a pipe. The best way to overcome this prejudice I knew by experience was to have charismatic interaction with them. The holy confusion would result in the undeniable acknowledgement that it is the same Spirit and the same gifts, we as Pentecostals are so familiar with. After the worship a delegate of each denomination would introduce the topic for this day, which we then discussed in small-groups and/or in a plenary session.

⁵⁹ Peter Hocken PhD served as an officer of the Society for Pentecostal Studies 2nd Vice President, 1st Vice President, President – 1983 – 86 and was Executive Secretary from 1988 – 1997. In March 2001 he was made a Chaplain to His Holiness the Pope at request of his bishop Leo of Northampton, UK. He presently lives at Vienna. He has written several books on the charismatic movement and ecumenism: *Streams of Renewal* (Paternoster, 1986), *One Lord One Spirit One Body* (Paternoster, 1987), *The Glory and the Shame* (Eagle, 1994), *The Strategy of the Spirit?* (Eagle, 1996), *Blazing the Trail* (Alive, 2001), *The Spirit of Unity: How Renewal is Breaking Down Barriers between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics* (Grove, 2001).

⁶⁰ Landelijk Pastorale Kerngroep Katholieke Charismatische Vernieuwing in Nederland, Letter to the Broederschap van Pinkstergemeenten in Nederland, July 10, 1998 in Kees Slijkerman, "Als wij niet willen roept God anderen", <http://home.hetnet.nl/~stucom/document/0013.htm>

⁶¹ Published in "Information Service" nr.97 (1998/ I-II) of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Vatican City, and available at <http://home.hetnet.nl/~stucom/document/0002uk.htm>

This set up has worked remarkably well. The dialogue is still ongoing and up to now eight meetings have taken place⁶²:

1. November 11, 1999 - Topic: "Our mutual perception of one another"
2. March 2, 2000 - "The ministry of healing"
3. June 14, 2000 - "The pastoral contact with our sick neighbor"
4. November 15-16, 2000⁶³ - "God's word in words of man"
5. June 18, 2001 - "Consultation on publication of a report of the dialogue about healing"
6. November 29, 2001 - "The Church of Jesus Christ and its necessary structures"
7. April 12, 2002 - "Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness"
8. November 27, 2002 - "A new model for ecumenical dialogue-Consultation with Fr. Peter Hocken"

The meetings were also represented by a delegate the Catholic Society for Ecumenism (Katholieke Vereniging voor Oecumene). In 2002 the Brotherhood merged with the "Volle Evangelie Gemeenten in Nederland", the second largest Pentecostal denomination in the Netherlands, into the VPE (Verenigde Pinkster Evangeliegemeenten), which resulted in a broader representation of the Dutch Pentecostals in this dialogue. The last meeting was also attended by bishop mgr. J. van Burgsteden (bishop-consultant for ecumenism).

Kees Slijkerman concluded that the goal of the first phase of this dialogue "to recognize and appreciate one another as belonging to the same Lord, to further respect and mutual understanding and to exchange the work of the Holy Spirit in each denomination" has been met⁶⁴. During the last meeting Fr. Peter Hocken stressed that a dialogue with the Pentecostal Movement should not follow the usual pattern of an academic comparison of the mutual doctrines in the attempt to find a consensus. This particular dialogue should rather "focus on the essence of faith and Church, in line of the Second Vatican Council, (and result in) an appeal for conversion and renewal."⁶⁵. He recognized that this dialogue in the Netherlands, which is less academic and closer to the believers, had many elements of the model he is pleading for. He suggested to discuss the following topics in the future:

- The balance between body and spirit in faith and liturgy.
- The relationship between the Word of God, the fellowship and the Holy Spirit.
- Preference of scriptures to be read in the worship service.
- Revival and Renewal.
- Contemporary Eschatology.

Guidelines for a Challenging Dialogue with Pentecostals

⁶² Kees Slijkerman, Chronologisch overzicht van de eerste fase van dialoog in Nederland, 1999-2002, November 14, 2002, <http://home.hetnet.nl/~stucom/document/0093.htm> and Persbericht, Oecumenische dialoog naar een nieuw model- Achtste Dialoogdag van katholieken en pinkstergelovigen, <http://home.hetnet.nl/~stucom/document/0094.htm> Most of the lectures presented at these meetings and additional information about this dialogue are published on <http://home.hetnet.nl/~stucom/grpdconl.htm#030>

⁶³ This meeting of two consecutive days took place in the monastery of the Achelse Kluis. Delegates participated in the prayers-sessions with the monks.

⁶⁴ Kees Slijkerman, Chronologisch overzicht van de eerste fase van dialoog in Nederland, 1999-2002, p. 3.

⁶⁵ Persbericht, Oecumenische dialoog naar een nieuw model- Achtste Dialoogdag van katholieken en pinkstergelovigen, <http://home.hetnet.nl/~stucom/document/0094.htm>

In my dissertation in 1988 I summarized the promises of a dialogue with Pentecostals⁶⁶.

Liturgical creativity: Bridge the gap between body and mind.

Social revaluation: Bridge the gap between the classes.

Communication expertise: Bridge the gap between word and image (i.e. from a two-dimensional to a three dimensional way of communication).

Intercultural exchange: Bridge the gap between cultures⁶⁷

One could add world missions, oral and narrative theology etc. As Pentecostals continue to grow in numbers, they cannot longer hide themselves in a fin-de-ciècle eschatology. They will be challenged increasingly what their faith means in the "real world" and to prove the relevance of the gifts of Holy Spirit in society. For this reason a dialogue with the mainline churches, who have centuries of experience in some of these areas is crucial to them. How can such a dialogue be effective and relevant?

A prerequisite for any dialogue, particularly with Pentecostals, is that all participants are allowed and encouraged to be genuine and authentic. Let me apply this principal on the evangelistic zeal of the Pentecostal. The pastoral letter of the Netherlands Reformed Church stated that one has to weigh the Pentecostals instead of counting them, because a large number of them are evangelists⁶⁸. An authentic Pentecostal will try to convert anybody who does not fit his perception of a reborn Christian, whether this is a liberal theologian or a Hindu. If a dialogue with Pentecostals is to succeed one has to be ready to endure their persistent call for personal conversion, however annoying this may be. However, Pentecostals have to learn that evangelism is a dialogical process in which also the evangelist learns something of the gospel from the one he wants to evangelize⁶⁹. There must be room for a holy annoyance and it is unavoidable that participants will be offended at times. No a dialogue can never be comfortable, although it may be amusing at times, especially when one is confronted with the relativity of one's persuasion. On the other hand this dialogue should never aim to create a mix of both identities, which probably would produce a hideous monster anyway.

Another perquisite is that we are genuinely prepared to listen to one another. The Dutch Queen Beatrix said in her Christmas speech of December 2002:

Listening is more than hearing. You do not have to agree with what motivates the other in order to be open for this. To get to know someone else is a first step to a better understanding⁷⁰.

⁶⁶ Paul van der Laan, *The Question of Spiritual Unit*, p. 442-447.

⁶⁷ In his inventory of migrant churches in the Netherlands Van den Broek observed "The most positive, well informed, reactions about pastoral and denominational integration come from the Full Gospel and Pentecostal Churches" A.P. van den Broek, *Ieder hoorde in zijn eigen taal*, Amersfoort: SKIN, 7th Edition, June 2001, p. 2.

⁶⁸ Generale Synode van de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, *De Kerk en de Pinkstergroepen* Herderlijk Schrijven (The Hague: Boekencentrum, 1961), p.22.

⁶⁹ Walter J. Hollenweger, Pentecostalism, growth and ecumenism, *Priest and People*, February 2003, http://www.priestsandpeople.co.uk/cgi-bin/archive_db.cgi?priestspp1-00037

⁷⁰ Her Majesty Queen Betarix, Ondersheid is rijkdom - Kersttoespraak, *Trouw*, December 27, 2002, p.4.

Allow me to summarize some practical guidelines for a challenging dialogue with the Pentecostals, based on our experiences in the Netherlands:

1. All participants must have a willingness to look critically at one's own tradition and be enriched by the tradition of the denomination they are in dialogue with.
2. False presuppositions and prejudices of one another must be eliminated as soon as possible. This can best be done by making an inventory of the mutual perception in small-groups, during the first session. In a plenary sessions these perceptions can be corrected where necessary. This amusing exercise also helps to set the right tone for the following sessions.
3. It is essential that there is an equal participation in all elements of the dialogue: in the preparation and determination of the agenda, the number of delegates, liturgical elements in the worship, equal number of presenters and respondents, alternate chairs of the meetings etc. I would also advise to have the meetings hosted alternately by each denomination in different locations that represent the variety of their tradition.
4. Worship and prayer should always be included in the dialogue, preferably at the beginning or at the end of each day. During this time there should be room for charismatic utterances, intercession, silence and testimonies. Some may get annoyed by the noisy worship of the Pentecostals and some Pentecostals may get upset by some liturgical elements the other group introduces, but this risk must be taken. It has been our experience however that all participants felt blessed and enriched by this part of the dialogue.
5. There must be a clear mutual understanding of the goal that is to be accomplished by this dialogue. This must regularly be evaluated and updated. The topics that are discussed should be chosen in the perspective of the goal that has been set.
6. The selection of the participants is crucial. Ideally it is a healthy, balanced mix of various ages, clergy and laity, ethnic variety and sex. All should authentically represent their denomination or tradition and have an ecumenical spirit.
7. The group must be big enough to represent the various streams, but small enough in order to build up a personal relationship among the participants. Probably the ideal number is between twenty and thirty.
8. The lectures and the reports of the dialogue must become accessible and when possible published on the Internet.

In conclusion I want to focus on a possible agenda for a fruitful Pentecostal/Ecumenical dialogue. In 1987 Cecil M. Robeck proposed the following six items⁷¹:

1. Acknowledge the universal nature of the church and allowing room for one another in it.
2. Forgive and ask forgiveness of each other for the hurts we have inflicted and received.
3. Begin to treat one another as sisters and brothers, rather than as people outside the common household of faith.
4. Affirm each other's strengths and acknowledge our own weaknesses.
5. Encourage one another to live up to our expectations.
6. A mutual review of our priorities and practices to reveal helpful information.

⁷¹ Cecil M. Robeck, A proposed Pentecostal/Ecumenical Movement Dialogue Agenda, Ecumenical Trends 16/11, December 1987, p. 185-188.

I would like to add the following suggestions:

7. Realize the biblical and universal implications of the spiritual gifts, enriched by the integration of our various denominational traditions.
8. Tackle the powers of war and injustice in this world in Jesus' name by the power of the Holy Spirit.
9. Discover the essence of our mutual driving force.
10. Build up a critical and lasting friendship.
11. Pray together for a genuine and visible Christian unity.
12. Worship and celebrate together⁷².
13. Develop an ecumenical theology that integrates oral tradition.
14. Establish a community of believers from various Christian denominations, which serves as a global model of the Kingdom of God and exemplifies relevant contemporary Christianity.
15. Work out a unified plan to disciple every ethnic group according to the example of Jesus Christ.

I realize that these combined goals are extremely idealistic. We sure need the baptism of the Holy Spirit and all the spiritual gifts we can get to accomplish at least some of them. Veni Creator Spiritus!

The overview of the Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue in the Netherlands - mentioned in note 62 - is now also published in English on Web site **StuCom**, <http://home.hetnet.nl/~stucom> , document 0093uk. More English documents on this dialogue are in the English section of **StuCom**.

⁷² Paul van der Laan, *The Question of Spiritual Unity*, p. 450.