

Reflection on

THE PENTECOSTAL AND THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

Honoured Mr. President!

Dear church leaders, dear members of the CMCR, dear Sisters & Brothers!

My name is Hermann Domianus, I am a pastor and for ten years I am working with the German Hermannsburg Mission within the EECMY.

I have been asked by the General-Secretary and the CMCR-Secretary to give a lecture/inputs on the pentecostal as well as on the charismatic movement in continuation of the lecture given by the General-Secretary, Rev. Megersa Guta, during the last General Assembly one year ago.

I have been asked to focus on the history of the pentecostal as well as of the charismatic movement and on doctrinal issues. I like to do so and I thank you for this invitation!

The pentecostal as well as the charismatic movements are very fast growing movements within the worldwide Christian church. This growth takes place mostly in the developing countries of the world. Within the last ten years also Ethiopia was flooded with a great variety of diverse pentecostal churches entering the country. It is interesting to note that the pentecostal churches and the charismatic movement attract both: the educated high class society as well the marginalized of society.

In order to understand the movements better let us have a short look into their history:

The beginning of the pentecostal movement

The pentecostal (referring to the „Day of Pentecost“, Acts 2) movement started at the beginning of the 20th century in America.

In 1900 the former Methodist and then independent preacher Charles F. Parham taught the doctrine which should become the main doctrine of all pentecostal churches: That speaking in tongues is the initial evidence of being baptised with the Holy Spirit.

Charles F. Parham had founded his own Bible school in Topeka, Kansas, USA. He was able to convince all his students of the above mentioned doctrine. On New Year's Eve 1900 he and his students celebrated together a worship service. During that worship service a female student by the name of Agnes Ozman asked Parham and the other students to lay hands upon her so that she might be baptised with the Holy Spirit. Parham and the students did so and Agnes Ozman was what they called baptised with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues. She spoke in the Chinese language and was not able to talk in English for 3 days. This impressed the other students so much that also they were baptised with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues. Again this experience was so overwhelming for all that they closed the Bible school and became itinerant preachers.

Five years later Parham met the black Baptist and holiness-preacher William J. Seymour, a son of former slaves. Seymour was convinced of the doctrine of Parham and was baptised with the Spirit. Because of this new doctrine Seymour started to preach, he was expelled from the Baptist church and became an independent preacher.

On April 9, 1906 Seymour conducted a worship service in Los Angeles at a private house with seven „seekers“. All of them were baptised with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues. This was such an overwhelming experience for them that they continued to worship God for 3 days without interruption. Seymour had to rent a bigger house because of the many people who

now came to attend the worship services. Seymour found an abandoned Methodist church in the Azusa Street of Los Angeles. Therefore the revival started by Seymour is called „Azusa-Street-Revival“.

The services on an average Sunday lasted normally for 15 hours. What were the main elements of that worship services?

I like to mention the experience of the reality of the Holy Spirit which became manifest for the worshippers in being baptised with the Holy Spirit and in receiving the gift of speaking in tongues. Next to speaking in tongues the gift of prophecy was highly valued. Practising this gifts each participant could contribute to the worship service. In addition a lot of new songs were written with African melodies which expressed the identity of the mostly black Christians. This revival spread within the United States and from there to Norway. A Methodist pastor from Oslo, B.T. Barratt, went to New York, was baptised with the Holy Spirit (as he understood his experience) and began to speak in tongues. He returned to Oslo and started a revival. News of the revival in Oslo attracted Lewi Pethrus from Sweden. Lewi Pethrus was touched by the same experience, returned to Stockholm's Philadelphia church and made it one of the largest pentecostal assemblies of the world. In 1907 the Lutheran pastor Jonathan Paul from Germany heard about the revival in Oslo. Baptised with the Holy Spirit he returned from Oslo and started the first pentecostal congregations in Germany in 1909.

The beginning of the charismatic movement

In the 1960' in the United States leaders and members of the Episcopal (Dennis Bennett), the Presbyterian, the Lutheran (Larry Christenson) and the Catholic church experienced what they called „renewal in the Spirit“ or „new release of the Spirit“ instead of „baptism with the Spirit“. Rev. Dennis Bennett was overwhelmed by the power of the Holy Spirit during a worship service when he all of a sudden together with many others received the gift of speaking in tongues. This experience led to a revival at Van Nuys, California, and marked the beginning of the so called „charismatic movement“ (Greek: „charis“, pl.: „charismata“ = „gifts of grace“).

Like the pentecostal churches the charismatic movement wants to be open for the power of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. But there are important differences:

Unlike the pentecostal churches the charismatic movement does not want to form own churches but wants to stay in their respective churches and adhere to their traditions and doctrines. And so today we find the charismatic movement within the Lutheran, the Presbyterian, Reformed, Catholic and other churches. (More under „theological issues“!)

How did the pentecostal movement come to Ethiopia?

In 1955 (other sources: 1951) the pentecostal „Finnish Mission“ started work in the Mercato area of Addis Ababa. And in 1959 the „Swedish Philadelphia Mission“ (remember Lewi Pethrus) started its work in Awasa.

The Swedish Philadelphia Mission had annual summer conferences to which they invited guest-speakers from different parts of the world.

In 1963 the black Kenyan evangelist Omaha Chacha was invited. He taught about „baptism with the Holy Spirit“ and speaking in tongues as initial sign in such a way, that many young people accepted his teachings and experienced what they called „baptism with the Spirit“.

These youngsters then who had attended the Awasa-meeting went back to their home-towns and started to spread the pentecostal teaching in their home-towns.

Strong centers of the pentecostal movement became Nazareth („Ye semay berhan youth association“), Debre Zeyt (a.o. Air-Force-Soldiers), Awasa, Holetta, Ambo, Debre Berhan and Harrar.

Most of these towns had Secondary Schools and Teacher's Training Centers. These institutions served as **points of first contact**, because the students could read easily the English pentecostal literature provided for them. It were these students who again should become instruments to take the pentecostal movement into the various parts of the country after they graduated.

What made the pentecostal movement attractive to the mostly young people?

The socio-cultural situation of the youth

In the 1960' the leadership of the different churches within Ethiopia was almost entirely in the hands of older people. Traditionally this was where the leadership belonged. Young people were generally excluded from having any part in the leadership or taking part in the worship services actively.

Young Orthodox Christians experienced that biblical preaching and bible studies were not encouraged. Sermons in other churches tended to be rather legalistic. Songs with European melodies were sung.

Now, this young people came to Addis Ababa to get further education. This young people had spiritual needs: Coming from the countryside many felt lost in the capital city.

Most of all it were the Pentecostals who understood and responded to that need by offering a new fellowship to the students and by supplying them with English literature.

The Pentecostals introduced to them „baptism with the Spirit“, encouraged the students to leave the European songs and to write their own worship songs which could express their feelings and longings, their faith.

In the pentecostal movement educated young people could take over responsibilities which they were denied in their home congregations. Everybody could share in the worship services actively with his/her gift.

Some observations

What can we learn from this short journey through the history of the pentecostal and the charismatic movement?

I like to share with you some observations:

- Obviously the pentecostal as well as the charismatic movement meet the needs of many people. The students of Charles Parham must have experienced something so that they closed their Bible school, forgot about their Certificates and Diplomas and became itinerant preachers. The worshippers of the Azusa Street must have experienced something so that they worshipped God for 3 days continuously. Question: People (we) have spiritual needs! Do our worship services lead people into the presence of God so that they can experience the reality/the presence of God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit?
- Do our congregations offer fellowship to those who find themselves lost and left alone?
- What do our seminaries and bible schools teach? Do we just pass on knowledge to our students? In, with and under teaching theology do we lead them to spiritual competency, to personal and spiritual formation?
- Secondary Schools and TTI's served as points of first contact. The Pentecostals went to the right places and to the right people, their focus was on key-people, multipliers. Where are the right places today? Who are the key-people today? (Counterquestion: Are we allowed to think in such a strategic way? Were the first disciples before Christ called them „key-persons“ of society?)
- Literature was one „key to success“. Do we provide our members with enough and good literature?
- The pentecostal movement encouraged the young people to write their own songs with their own melodies, which could express their identity. Was it the pentecostal movement which started to contextualize the gospel? Do our liturgies and worship songs reflect the identity of the people?

Doctrinal issues

Before I start with this chapter I like to mention the apostle Paul who writes: „Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror...Now I know in part...” (1.Cor.13,12). In the following I shall compare pentecostal doctrines with our Lutheran/Presbyterian/Reformed convictions. Having studied Lutheran Theology and being a Lutheran pastor I am convinced that our theology is the most helpful one, but I want to remain open for new insights and teachable!

Baptism with the Holy Spirit:

The pentecostal movement teaches „baptism with the Holy Spirit“ and speaking in tongues as its initial sign. This teaching leads to a 2- or 3-steps-Christianity:

First step: Becoming a Christian through accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.
Such a person is saved, but something is missing:

Second step: „Baptism with the Holy Spirit“ and speaking in tongues. This 2nd step is also called „2nd blessing“ or „anointment“. Some very few Pentecostals know even a 3rd step:

Third step: This step means the „entire sanctification“ of a Christian within this lifetime,

so that one does not need to pray the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer anymore. Jonathan Paul had this conviction and the so called „Faith-movement“ seems to have this doctrine as well.

In response to the above mentioned doctrines I like to read 1.Cor.12,13:

„For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink“.

According to this verse „baptism with the Holy Spirit“ is not a second blessing, just for some special people only. On the contrary: „Baptism with the Holy Spirit“ is the initial blessing in which every Christian shares! Each Christian has received the Holy Spirit when he/she was baptised. „Baptism with the Spirit“ is not the great divider into those Christians who have it and those who have not. No! In Christianity there are no steps to reach, but growth! And this growth is initiated by the initial blessing in which all Christians share! Therefore if a baptised Christian asks God to be „baptised with the Holy Spirit“, he/she asks God for something he/she has already received. So then, what do the pentecostal Christians experience when they experience what they call „baptism with the Spirit“?

I am sure they really experience the reality of the Holy Spirit, but the interpretation of their experience seems to be wrong. In accordance with the charismatic movement I like to call their experience not „baptism with the Spirit“, but „new release of the Spirit“ or „renewal in the Spirit“.

This renewal in the Spirit might be accompanied with the gift of speaking in tongues, but it must not, because speaking in tongues is one gift among many others (1.Cor.12, 30).

The gift of healing:

In the following I like to share some ideas with you about the gift of healing.

Healings play an important role in the pentecostal movement as well as in the charismatic movement.

When we look into the New Testament we discover that the NT points out four different aspects of healing:

- 1.: spiritual healing (healing of the broken relationship between God and man)
- 2.: physical healing
- 3.: deliverance from evil spirits
- 4.: social healing (healing of the broken relationship between man and man, e.g. Zacchaeus)

Whereas all 4 aspects have their own importance we may state that the first aspect, the spiritual healing, is most important, because only spiritual healing will lead to eternal salvation.

Because of that John calls miracles „signs“! The function of a sign is not to point to itself, but to something else. A miracle is a sign that wants to point to Jesus Christ, it wants to point to the coming kingdom of God, in which all diseases will be healed.

Another interesting observation is that, when Jesus heals people, sometimes the faith of the sick person is mentioned (Mk.5,34), sometimes the faith of others (Mk.2,5), sometimes faith mixed with doubts (Mk.9,24), and sometimes faith is not mentioned at all (John 9,1-12).

In some places the NT mentions that Jesus has healed all sick people (Mt.4,23), in other situations Jesus only heals one out of many (John 5,1-15).

I have to limit myself even though there is so much more to say. But we find out that there is a tension between the „Already“ and „Not yet“.

John Stott in his writings likes to talk about the „already“- and „not yet“-Christians:

There are Christians (e.g. the pentecostal movement) who emphasize the „already“ of the kingdom of God. They rightly emphasize what God has already done for us in Christ. They maintain that each Christian can attain perfection during this life-time and that all sicknesses can be healed already today for him who believes. These Christians want to glorify Christ by really expecting his active involvement in human lives. Instead of being a „dry“ Christian who does not expect anything from God they rather want to expect everything from him. We may honour the motive and the zeal of these Christians to honour Christ, but their teachings will lead sooner or later to frustration, because they expect, even claim from God, what he did not promise. They forget the „not yet“ and will lead many (sick) Christians into desperation. Not healed they may feel cursed by God and blame themselves of lacking faith.

Then there are other Christians who emphasize the „not yet“ of the kingdom of God. They rightly emphasize the incompleteness of the world, the church etc. Christ needs to complete what he has begun when he comes back. These Christians want to be humble sinners. They want to honour the Scripture by focusing on our human depravity. But these Christians are endangered to forget that God is already present and active in this world. In case of sickness they may only pray for strength to carry the sickness instead of praying also for healing, because they don't expect God's intervention at all. These Christians forget the „already“ of the kingdom of God. Also this type of piety can lead to disappointment and frustration because of lacking any vision of what God can do.

So then, what type of Christians do we need?

We don't need one-sided Christians but **BBC-Christians** with a **balanced biblical view** (John Stott). We need Christians who give equal emphasis to the 2 comings of Christ: to what he has already done and to what he is going to do. This means practically: We can and we shall pray for the sick. We shall do that expectantly, because God will respond to our prayers in one way or the other. We are invited to ask God persistently, but each prayer may be concluded with the words: „your will be done“ (Mt.

6,10). Some Christians maintain that concluding a prayer with this words indicates unbelief.

We don't agree to that. We pray persistently, but we always keep in mind that not we are the Lords, but God. And what he wills is always the best for our lives - we may be healed or remain sick!

How about those who remain sick?

„Today is the day of miracles! If you are sick and have faith in Jesus' healing power, you will be healed today!“ This is the message oftentimes proclaimed on evangelistic crusades of different pentecostal preachers. We saw already above that Jesus does not only respond to people who have faith. Jesus in his grace even responds to a „doubting faith“ or he heals even though faith is not mentioned at all.

But how about those who remain sick? Do we have a message for those who remain sick? We must have, because God has a message for them. And God's message is: „My grace is sufficient for you...“ (2.Cor.12, 9). My criticism of many pentecostal preachers is that they don't have a message for the sick. On the contrary, they even put another burden on the sick people, who may feel unworthy or even forsaken by God. And that is not true: Sickness is not a sign of God's

absence, but a sign of God's special presence. A sick person has a special place in the heart of God, because he/she needs the love, the care and strength of God in a special way.

Conclusion

There is place for charismatic experiences e.g. in the Lutheran church! There is a place of the charismatic movement in the Lutheran church, and we even welcome the charismatic movement, if the charismatic movement adheres and sticks to our doctrines.

What are our doctrines? The best summary is given by the „4 alone“:

Christ alone, Grace alone, Faith alone, Scripture alone!

Jesus Christ is the center of our faith! Not the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit points to Jesus and wants to glorify Jesus (John 16,14). The Spirit does not want to take over the center from Jesus! Neither good works nor spiritual gifts make a Christian or lift him/her up on a higher spiritual level. One becomes a Christian through grace alone, by faith in Jesus Christ alone! We do not worship special gifts, but the giver: Jesus Christ! As Lutheran, Presbyterian or Reformed churches we don't need to oppose spiritual gifts like speaking in tongues, prophecy and healing. But we have to give them the right place in our lives!

Pentecostal Christians are Christians, sisters and brothers in God's great worldwide family. But I regret that their interpretation of some passages of the Bible is different and their experience of the Holy Spirit, who is a Spirit of unity (!), has led to the establishment of hundreds if not thousands new churches, and that means crucifying the body of Christ again and again. Therefore I like to accept a charismatic movement that develops a „BBC-Christianity“ and has e.g. a message also for the sick. I am sure that a charismatic movement rooted in the Word of God can be a great blessing for our church. Such a movement, which really deserves the name „spiritual movement“, will lead to a deeper love of the Word of God. It will deepen the prayer-life of individual Christians as well as of whole congregations. It will lead to continuous renewal, to a serving church, a healing, worshipping and evangelistic church, where Christians reach out to the unreached with great zeal and deep love!

Because of this I like to establish that the church and the charismatic movement need each other!

It is the church which is founded on the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ that he himself will build his church and that the „gates of Hades will not overcome it“ (Mt.16,18). In the same way it is the

charismatic movement rooted in the Word of God which can be a special tool of God to renew his church spiritually and prevent his church from „spiritual sleep“, dryness and Christian routine.

When the charismatic movement is called „charismatic“ it does not mean that the church is „non-charismatic“ in the sense of „unspiritual“ while the charismatic movement is spiritual. There are no charismatic and non-charismatic Christians. The Holy Spirit lives in each Christian and has given gifts of grace („charismata“) to each Christian. The charismatic movement is not the whole, but part of the whole, she is not the church, but part of the church, which exists for nearly 2000 years and which has paved the way for the charismatic movement. **The church is the mother of the charismatic movement!** The church and the charismatic movement are not adversaries but both together form the one body of Christ!

The church and the charismatic movement will correct each other and strengthen each other:

The church as an institution with her structure, her tradition, formally trained and ordained leadership will keep the charismatic movement from becoming one-sided, from sliding away to heretical teachings and from becoming a sect.

On the other side the charismatic movement will keep the church from becoming formalistic and complacent, it will keep the church from losing her inner life, spiritual power and competence.

The church and the charismatic movement need each other and both are called from God to live together in a „creative tension“ (David Bosch), to challenge and to enrich each other and to serve each other in order to remain spiritually healthy. The church rests on 2 pillars: Tradition and charisma, order and freedom, and both is necessary!

Dear Sisters & dear Brothers!

Let us not judge the charismatic movement by its misuse! An immature or even arrogant use e.g. of spiritual gifts does not disapprove in general the use of spiritual gifts God wants to give to his church.

Personally I like to say that I like to welcome each spiritual movement which challenges me and helps me to love our Lord Jesus Christ and my fellowmen more and with a deeper love than I have now.

Let us accompany, teach and counsel in love all members of our church who consider themselves as members of the charismatic movement, let us help them to interpret their spiritual experiences in a biblically healthy way, so that they remain a charismatic movement within the church, helping her to grow in her inner life by being faithful to her traditions and doctrines, and by doing so preventing the charismatic movement from becoming a pentecostal movement.

Let us respond to the call of God through the charismatic movement for a new dedication of our lives to Jesus Christ and a deeper love for our fellowmen so that all of us grow in faith, love and unity to the glory of him who has revealed himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

Respectfully submitted by
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