Dialogue

Ecumenical Connections across Time: Medieval Franciscans as a Proto-Pentecostal Movement?

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Abstract
In the long course of Christian history there have been many expressions of the action of the Holy Spirit in renewing the Christian Church through a variety of renewal movements. Two such movements are the twentieth-century Pentecostal movement and the thirteenth-century Franciscan movement. While there is no specific historical link one with the other, there are resources in the older movement, with its concern for direct human experience of Christ, its return to biblical poverty, a hope of renewing the church by a restoration of biblical holiness, its experience of gradually integrating its radical view of the end of time with the institutional church, and its impulsive missionary outreach, that offer many lessons for the newer movement as it serves worldwide Christianity.

Keywords
movement, renewal, Franciscan, Pentecostal, restoration, church, ecumenism, history, eschatology

In turbulent times, the Holy Spirit raises up new evangelical movements that draw energies from their experience of the Gospel to renew the Church, reinvigorate mission across the globe, and lead believing Christians to a new level of holiness and service. The opening of the thirteenth century, like the dawn of the twentieth century, was such a time. Looking at the Franciscan and the Pentecost renewal movements can be instructive for the ecumenical enterprise.

In this essay, I suggest resources from the Franciscan movement that facilitate reconciliation and understanding for the Pentecostal movement as it enters its second century. In these short reflections, I am not going to make a case for direct connections and influences from these two Christian renewal movements, or exegete primary sources from Pentecostal or Franciscan movements.
to attempt to substantiate more correlation than can be documented.\(^1\) In the eighteenth century, hagiographers attributed the gifts of tongues to Francis in his encounter with the Sultan;\(^2\) and there may be genetic links with the eschatology of the fourteenth-century Spiritual Franciscans influenced by Joachim of Fiore and evangelical images of the antichrist and the second coming.\(^3\) Popular piety and eschatological hopes will be illustrative here, but only of the importance of exploring experience-focused renewal movements as sources of mutual learning.

My intention, rather, is to identify potential insights from Franciscan history, and from twentieth-century Pentecostalism, that can help us in our task of building bridges and deepening the bonds of communion some Pentecostals and Catholics believe they already experience in Christ. The purpose of this paper is an invitation to deeper Pentecostal analysis of these materials for research, correlation, and reconciliation. There are four sections, after this introduction: (1) the Franciscans, (2) insights, with specific focus on (3) eschatological piety, and (4) some tentative challenges. The analysis is suggestive and ecumenically motivated with a focus upon perspective and method of approach rather than systematic and historical arguments. As such, the paper will highlight for Pentecostals the riches to be mined in Franciscan and other renewal movements in the Catholic tradition; and for Catholic renewal scholars, Franciscans among them, the insights to be gained for research in twentieth-century renewal movements, Pentecostals among them. As we look at the rambunctious, restorationist movement of popular piety, breaking the bonds of thirteenth-century ecclesiastical conventions that transformed Catholic Christianity in its day, we may be better equipped to look at the twentieth-century renewal, missionary, evangelical movement that is transforming global Christianity and the shape of the ecumenical conversation in our century.

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1 In the sixteenth century both friends and critics of Franciscanism, including the Inquisition, suggested affinity between the evangelical renewal movements that became “Protestants” and the Franciscan renewals of the period: “If St. Francis was a heretic, then call them Lutherans. If to preach the liberty of the Spirit is a vice, when subject to the rule of the church, what will you make of the text, ‘The Spirit gives life’?” See Vittoria Colonna, cited in Roland Bainton, *Women of the Reformation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971), 204.


3 There are rich parallels between the extreme millennialism of Joachim of Fiore and his Franciscan followers and the variety of premillennialisms and images of the antichrist in popular evangelicalism, as noted below. However, research is only beginning to connect the dots between the Middle Ages, Luther and the reformers, and Darby, some through Jesuit anti-Protestant apologetics! See the essays in Karl A. Kottman, ed., *Millenarianism and Messianism in Early Modern European Culture*, vol. 2: *Catholic Millenarianism from Savonarola to Abbé Grégoire* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001).
The thirteenth-century Franciscans and twentieth-century Pentecostals are two renewal movements that emerged in times of change:

The problems that beset the Church... were... the outcome of economic and social changes in western Europe that had been gaining momentum for more than a hundred years. The expansion of urban communities producing a society that was more affluent and more mobile than before, the emergency of a more educated laity critical of clerical privilege and clerical failings, the spread of heresy, and the rise of an international scholastic community following a common curriculum of secular studies, all presented the Church with a challenge that it was poorly prepared to meet.4

The social malaise facing the bishops of the thirteenth century resonates with transitions at the turn of the twentieth century in which the Pentecostal movement emerged around the globe:

The emerging industrialization, urbanization and European immigration would profoundly alter the lives of these simple folk from the rural areas of Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Florida. While the majority culture spoke of the pursuit of educational accessibility, moral stability and world peace, the black minority culture of African Americans was forced to live daily with the death-dealing fruits of racism, poverty and social ostracism. However, God, the sovereign of all the earth, transformed the pitiable cries of these oppressed people — a minority of a minority — into a glorious, ecstatic witness.5

Moreover, reflecting on the urgency of the end time, Pentecostals responded to the same cultural turmoil:

Early Pentecostals were on the cusp of the shift from the postmillennial optimism of nineteenth century Evangelicalism, enthralled in its success of abolition, the rights of women, enactment of Sabbath laws, etc., but with the American Civil War, a pessimistic undertone starts to arise, shifting American Evangelicalism, at least, to a pessimistic skepticism of any religious social transformation, and hence the rise of fundamentalist dispensationalism. A number of scholars have noted, curiously [but not for the author of this article!],6 that dispensationalism has historically been stronger in the South

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than in the North, perhaps reflective of the South’s losses in the Civil War and its frustration with attempts at social reconstruction. [Not to mention the plight of freed slaves there, noted in the previous quote!]\(^7\) The Rapture becomes a form of passive acceptance (and perhaps resistance) in the face of a loss of control over social structures to the dominance of the North’s ideologies.\(^8\)

Among early Pentecostals there was not only an appreciation of eschatological missional urgency, but also a recognition of God’s presence in creation that responded to the signs of their times just as Francis responded to his:

> Bishop C. H. Mason [who] had a profound sense of appreciation for and awe of God’s handiwork in nature affirms the notion of God’s control over the entire created order . . . one sees the pictures of him with the tree roots and branches, he/she is made aware of the tremendous spiritual insights that our fore-parents had and their ability to “see God in everything.”\(^9\)

Like the Pentecostals in the century past, the Friars Minor (Little Brothers), known as Franciscans, demonstrated an evangelical fervor and zeal for holiness that was to reconfigure the global Christianity of their day.

### The Franciscans

Since the earliest days of Christianity individuals and communities were moved to deeper union with Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.\(^10\) Like Jesus himself, Egyptian Christian women and men were led by the Spirit to encounter God in the desert. In evangelizing Europe, Irish traveling monks and monastic communities from Italy and Greece were key in bringing the Gospel to the “barbarian” tribes that became the civilized Christian communities of the Middle Ages. These great centers of monastic learning, prayer, holiness, and civilization were, however, settled and rather stayed communities in rural Europe and

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therefore were less adapted for the new missionary, urban, mobile, and increasingly educated culture emerging in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Western Europe.

A number of more mobile, less agrarian, mendicant (begging) communities were founded that did not depend on local bishops and parish structures or settled monastic structures, but took the Gospel where it was needed, providing traveling evangelists with highly innovative, if sometimes controversial, methods for spreading the Word of God. Like Pentecostal retrievals of the gifts of the Spirit, Francis of Assisi and his followers attempted to restore the connection between holiness of life and radical poverty for the sake of the Kingdom that they read in the Scripture.

Francis was humble, but institutionally sensitive. He rejected his family heritage, all earthly goods, and any church privileges, but he sought support from the institutional church in the person of Pope Innocent III. While Innocent III was not about to follow Francis’ evangelical ideal, he was smart enough to know that this was a great evangelical opportunity to contribute to his program of spiritual renewal and reform of the church of his day. Francis and his followers used a variety of innovations that may have seemed gimmicky in their day (just as did early Pentecostal preachers in the last century). The Christmas crib, devotion to Christ on the cross and his passion, new and sensational for their times, were as innovative and controversial in the thirteenth century as the flamboyance of some of Aimee Semple McPherson's and contemporary televangelists' antics, or the lavish media ministries of Pentecostal megachurches today.11

Francis’s motley crowd, clothed in tattered robes with only a piece of rope for a belt and no shoes, grew from twelve in 1209 to 5,000 in 1219, and 30,000 in 1250. By the mid-thirteenth century “perhaps one in every thousand Italians was a Franciscan.”12 The movement was gradually transformed from an informal brotherhood into a religious order, though nothing like the settled, wealthy, landowning monasteries that were so central to the spiritual life of Europe up until that time. Francis insisted that his followers take no privileges from the church, but after his death (1226) the church began to look to the friars for leadership so that within thirty years of the appointment of their first bishop (1244) there were 320 Franciscan bishops!

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12 Ibid., 4.
Almost immediately, many friars with little education (not all) or crosscultural sensitivity set out on missionary journeys around the world. Francis himself went behind enemy lines in the fifth crusade to preach the Gospel to the Sultan of Egypt. Like so many early Pentecostals who relied on their perceived linguistic gifts and the urgency of the end time, friars went to Germany, Hungary, and across the Levant armed only with a naïve trust in God’s providence. While there were failures and martyrs during this first century of evangelical work, friars traveled the silk route to Mongolia, China, and the Middle East. They had more than a century of successful evangelism in Beijing. They established themselves as custodians of the Holy Places of Christ’s birth, death, and resurrection in the Holy Land, receiving pilgrims and witnessing to the Gospel, a ministry they continue to this day after eight centuries. When Pentecostals move around the world, especially in the Holy Land and Latin America, they will find coworkers in the Lord’s vineyard who have been proclaiming the Gospel for centuries.

Like first-generation Pentecostals, Francis had a certain reticence about the intellectual life, and only when scholars at the Universities of Paris and Oxford began joining the movement after 1225, and one of them, Bonaventure (1221-1274), was made the leader of the Order, did an intellectual tradition begin to develop that has contributed to the faith of the Church for eight centuries. Like many evangelicals, Franciscans were promoters of millennial visions of God’s action in history — the coming changes that could be expected and the political and ecclesiastical events that could predict them — and identified problematic figures, including popes, with the biblical image of the antichrist.

Insights for Reconciliation and Mutual Understanding

Christians have treasures in their traditions for building bridges that many scholars and church leaders are ill equipped to tap into. An authentic herme-

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13 Michael Robson, *The Franciscans in the Middle Ages* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2006), 22-37, notes that the initial expansion of the order included men from all levels of society, even scholastics teachers.

14 The traditional date of Francis’ arrival in the Holy Land is 1219. The Franciscans have been in the Holy Land ever since. Francis had two early attempts (1212 and 1213) before making it to the Holy Land. On the early history, see Michael F. Cusato, *The Early Franciscan Movement (1205-1239): History, Sources, and Hermeneutics* (Spoleto, Italy: Centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo, 2009), 106-28; and the official Franciscan site, *Custodia Terrae Sanctae: Franciscan Missionaries Serving the Holy Land*, http://www.custodia.org/?page=splash&lang=en (accessed May 24, 2011).

neutics of piety is an essential element in the postmodern ecumenical movement. Pentecostals may find in spiritual renewal movements an easier entry to the Catholic tradition than formal doctrinal and theological formulations. Catholic Charismatic theologians have already begun the process of probing the deeper history of baptism in the Holy Spirit and its theological meaning within the wider sweep of the history of Christian spirituality. Pentecostal scholars may find movements promoting piety and renewal, like the Franciscans, useful starting points for dialogue. Renewal scholars in the Catholic community, like scholars of Franciscan spirituality, may have better tools than some systematicians for understanding Pentecostalism as a movement.

In addition to phenomenal expansion by medieval religious standards, the Franciscan growth in the second and third decades of the thirteenth century resonates with twentieth-century Pentecostal expansion. While more could be identified, five Franciscan themes that can help the ecumenical task are: (1) the focus on popular piety for renewal rather than institutional or intellectual reform (that is, evangelical zeal broke out of traditional forms of settled monasticism for the Franciscans, and out of ordered worship and settled church order for the Pentecostals); (2) a certain initial resistance to the intellectual life — corrected by Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, and other Oxford and Parisian masters for Franciscans, and still developing within the Society for Pentecostal Studies and sister societies across the globe; (3) a restorationist approach to church reform and institutional order, sometimes slipping into fundamentalism; (4) an enthusiastic commitment to mission abroad, often relying more naively on providence and the Spirit's immediate gifts than on crosscultural training and sensitivity; and (5) an eschatological urgency filled in with a full measure of pious imagination and critiques for the reigning

18 Randolph Daniel, The Franciscan Concept of Mission in the High Middle Ages (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1975). In sixteenth century evangelism, for example, it was a restorationist understanding of the Church's primitive mission, and eschatological urgency — with a dispensational type of periodization — that fueled the Latin American missions: “The image of the Primitive Apostolic Church was a key concept in this constellation of ideas.” See John Phelan, The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1970), 46. They felt the fervor of the faith had died out in the Old World and was to be reborn in the Indies.
secular and ecclesial order, about which more below. Of these five themes, we will use eschatology as illustrative of the broader possibilities in this hermeneutics of piety.

Resources for exploring pietistic traditions can also draw methods from styles of Franciscan research. First, the sources of popular religion are among the more important research tools for both traditions: hagiography, spiritual journals, homilies, sympathetic or critical accounts, hymnody, poetry, visions and dreams, and iconography. A second methodological resource is Weberian analysis of the routinization of charisma — that is, how were the ideals and visions of the original intuition and spiritual experience formed and formulated into lasting structures, organizations, and doctrines? Franciscan reflection on this theme is rich. Like the initial Franciscans, the early leaders of the Azusa Street Mission were already experiencing debates about organization-as-compromise in 1908. At least five volumes in this vein have recently been published on groups as diverse as the Church Of God In Christ, the US Assemblies of God, and their Australian counterpart as well as the movement in Latin America. Moreover, much revisionist scholarship is attempting to decenter the USA as origin of the global outbreak. Finally, hermeneutical openness is


20 See, for example, Theophile Desbonnts, From Intuition to Institution: The Franciscans (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983).


23 Allan Anderson, Michael Bergunder, André Drooger, and Cornelis van der Laan, eds., Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009);
essential to see new phenomena and experiences of the faith (whether in the thirteenth or twentieth century) in light of their evangelical center rather than focusing on their excesses.24

As a late Pentecostal missiologist, deeply committed to the dialogue with Catholicism, has noted about the Pentecostal approach: “...one feature has remained constant in regard to the apostolic nature of mission: attempts to lay claim to the term apostolic without the possibility of the ‘miraculous signs and wonders’ that characterized the ministries of the apostles and their followers has invariably created an awkwardness, need for explanation, or a defensive posture.”25 Franciscan origins are as deeply rooted in this proximity to the divine and apostolic origins as are present-day Pentecostals, not to mention the awkwardness and defensiveness, present in both traditions.

**Pentecostal Eschatological Piety and Its Franciscan Catholic Antecedents**

The history and theology of spirituality is usually not a high priority for the common believer. In fact, piety has a much stronger hold on the religious imagination and on the style of discipleship of the ordinary follower of Christ than the most accurate theology or the clearest biblical exegesis. To illustrate this influence of fourteenth/twentieth century pieties, we will focus on one element, eschatology.26 Of course, a variety of other illustrations could be used. Likewise, more in-depth exploration of Pentecostal and medieval Franciscan

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26 Much work has been done among Pentecostal scholars in looking at the social ethical implications of evangelical eschatologies as they have influenced Pentecostals' view of the world, history, and ethics; for example, Gerald Sheppard, “Pentecostals and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism: The Anatomy of an Uneasy Relationship,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 6 (Fall 1994): 5-33, and Douglas Peterson, *Not by Might, Nor by Power: A Pentecostal Theology of Social Concern in Latin America* (Oxford: Regnum, 1996), 299.
primary sources could fill out, or correct, the proposal outlined in this suggestive illustration.

Throughout the history of Christianity one can notice the recurrence of apocalyptic readings of the biblical record, especially Daniel, Revelation, Thessalonians, and segments of the Synoptic Gospels. Apocalyptic approaches to history are also present in the Hebrew Scriptures and extracanonical or intertestamental literature. Contemporary popular Pentecostal apocalyptic views of the future and interpretations of history demonstrate more continuity with the piety of the church through the ages than is acknowledged by critics and practitioners alike.

Many Catholics do not know that all of the prophetic interest within apocalyptic dispensationalism, with its detailed interpretation of historical events as presaging critical junctures in history and its characterization of particular figures, including the pope, as the antichrist, have precedents especially in the Franciscan spiritual tradition. Conversely, many evangelicals do not realize that their readings of biblical apocalyptic and its application to specific epochs, events, and persons have precedents in pre-Reformation Franciscan Catholic religious speculation and devotion:

The outset of the sixteenth [and one might add twentieth] century does not mark an important change in the form or content of the apocalyptic tradition itself — most, if not all, of the themes used by the Reformers and their Catholic opponents, including the identification of the papacy and the Roman Church with the Antichrist, had their origins in the late Middle Ages.

Pentecostal scholars themselves are challenged to study patristic and medieval apocalyptic literature and trace the parallels and sources. This challenge

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29 What the most recent report of the bilateral Pentecostal/Catholic dialogue says about patristics may very well be true of medieval sources as well: “we have seen that there are patristic texts which can cast light on each of the issues we considered (conversion, faith, Christian experience in community, discipleship and formation, and Baptism in the Holy Spirit). These texts arise from the Fathers’ reflections on the Scriptures and frequently provide insight and wisdom to con-
includes helping their own Pentecostal people to see their continuity with Christian visionary piety through the ages. “Christianity was born apocalyptic and has remained so, not in the sense that apocalyptic hopes exhausted the meaning of Christian belief, but because they have never been absent from it.”

Within the history of Christianity, there are two tendencies in interpreting biblical prophecies, especially after the christianization of the Roman Empire and its tension with the attitude toward the pagan, persecuting Rome expressed in the Book of Revelation. One tendency continues to give specificity to the final struggle and immediacy to the final coming of Christ, and identifies concrete persons, events, and eras with biblical symbols. The other tendency attempts to come to terms with the delay of the end time by providing an interpretation that spiritualizes the millennium and its attendant biblical symbols. This latter emphasis was supported by Augustine and dominated until the High Middle Ages, though the former was never totally absent from Christian thinking.

Since Augustine set the tone for the philosophy and theology of history in Western Christianity, apocalyptic speculation and piety were, and continue to be, marginalized. For example, theologian Joseph Ratzinger provides an accurate assessment of most Catholic attitudes today:

> Christ’s coming is quite incommensurable with historical time and its immanent laws of development, so it cannot in any way be calculated from the evidence of history. In so calculating, man works with history’s inner logic, and thereby misses Christ, who is not the product of evolution or a dialectical stage in the possessive self-expression of reason, but the Other, who throws open the portals of time and death from the outside.

This does not mean, of course, that in popular Catholicism it is impossible to find millennial movements, dispensational theories, and persons or institutions designated as the antichrist, even in today’s Church. With the Fifth Lateran...
Council (1512-15) on the eve of the Reformation, the eschatological debates diminished, though some of the end-time urgency continued among the Franciscans and in the Latin American mission context.33 Much of the apocalyptic thinking about history, the proximate end, and the antichrist was carried forward in Reformation rhetoric.

In this section we will look at pre-Reformation Franciscan apocalyptic piety and its perspectives on (1) the millennium, (2) dispensations in Christian history, and (3) the antichrist figure.34

**Millennial Contexts**

The crisis atmosphere that generates apocalyptic piety in every generation continued after the end of the Roman persecutions that were the context for the Book of Revelation. Ample opportunity and scope for apocalyptic analyses of history, signs of immediate divine intervention, and personages identified with the antichrist were provided by many historical upheavals. Examples of these upheavals include the “barbarian” invasions and fall of old Rome in the West, the rise of Islam and Crusading wars, the feuds between emperors and popes within Christendom, the Avignon papacy and subsequent Great Schism with its two rival popes, the plagues and cataclysms characteristic of Western European history, and the persecution of Franciscans who held a radical restorationist view of poverty.35

The ultimate, positive religious meaning and faith content of the extravagant prophecies, predictions, expectations, and conflict-oriented rhetoric in medieval apocalyptic or contemporary Pentecostal piety is recognized if we look to its christocentric core: “The most fundamental appeal of apocalypticism is the conviction it holds forth that time is related to eternity, that the


34 An extended version of this section can be found in my essay, “Hope for Eternal Life: Perspectives for Pentecostals and Catholics,” in Althouse and Waddell, ed., *Perspectives on Pentecostal Eschatologies*, 149-72.


36 Ratzinger characterizes the medieval developments as hysteria, while McGinn (*Visions*, 8) is more moderate in his assessment.
history of man has a discernable structure and meaning in relation to its end, and that this End is the product not of chance, but of divine plan.”

Medieval Dispensationalism

Throughout the Middle Ages, apocalyptic literature was a continual source of evangelical reform and internal critique of the political and ecclesiastical realities of Christendom. The most influential dispensationalist was the Calabrian Abbot Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202). His visions of history, its stages and its dynamics, and later works attributed to him influenced piety and theology for centuries. His vision energized many reform movements, especially fourteenth-century Franciscans following John Peter Olivi (1248-98), and a variety of critics of emperors and popes.

Much attention is given to the social and historical implications of the thought of the spiritual Franciscans. One can, however, also see this contribution as an expression of the Christ-centered, contemplative stream of Western mysticism, just as one needs to see behind the more demonstrative expressions of Pentecostal piety the trinitarian faith that informs it. Might not what was said about the thirteenth-century eschatological speculation also be true of the twentieth century from the point of view of some Pentecostals? “Joachim’s stress on the domination of the spiritual and charismatic over the institutional and rational in the future church was diametrically opposed to the forces that triumphed in the thirteenth century. . . . In this sense the concept of the third age in the writings of Joachim of Fiore was a radical critique of the thirteenth-century church.”

Later, St. Francis was interpreted as an eschatological harbinger of the end of time, and a splinter group of Spiritual Franciscans used Joachim’s prophecies and a restorationist view of their movement as bringing back evangelical

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37 McGinn, *Visions*, 36. This author goes on to question whether these faith apprehensions of the mystery of time and eternity are any less worthy of consideration than the bland reductionistic scientific illusions.


41 McGinn, *Visions*, 129.
poverty into the Church, to further their vision of reform and restoration. In fact, to reconcile the charismatic, restorationist Franciscan zeal and millenarian enthusiasm that was dividing the order, Bonaventure (1221-74) had to be taken out of academics at the University of Paris into Franciscan leadership, where he integrated Joachimist apocalyptic into an orthodox theology of history, compatible with medieval Catholicism's ecclesiology.

The most chilling secularized millenarian pretensions surfaced in the twentieth century with the Third Reich of Hitler's Nazi nihilism. A political component often accompanied the predicted final reign of the Last Emperor, the antichrist, the Angelic Pope, or Christ himself. Unlike many of the caricatures retrojected from the tragic twentieth century, however, millennial thinking prior to the fifteenth-century Hussite revolts remained pacific, even contemplative. Contemporary evangelical millennialism has its own political dimension in the contemporary world.
Recurrent Antichrist

The imminent end, coming final judgment, and the antichrist figure were deeply engrained, not only in medieval popular piety, but also in philosophies of history and political rhetoric. During the eleventh-century reforms, the papal party would use the antichrist rhetoric to characterize the Hohenstaufen emperors in their struggle within the Christendom of the day.

Emperors and popular reform movements would characterize popes with whose policies they disagreed as the antichrist or his precursor. The first such characterization is recorded in 1260 by a Franciscan friar: "Hence it is necessary that Antichrist appear in the place of the Supreme Pontiff [Innocent IV, 1243-54], in which state his avarice and other vices will be most directly opposed to Christ and in which the Church will be most scandalized and corrupted."47 This use of antichrist rhetoric to designate elements of Catholic Christendom at that time was by no means a rejection of the papacy, much less of the universal Church, which, in the West, was the Roman Catholic Church of the day. Indeed, the Franciscans used the papacy as their allies against their enemies as often as they characterized unfriendly popes as the antichrist or his precursor. Rather, it was a reforming rhetoric that looked forward to a prophesied angelic pope, or later a series of such popes who would rectify problems of Church and Empire.48

As in Luther's vision, the Roman Catholic Church had to be the true Church for the antichrist to be the “abomination of desolation in the holy place” (Dan 11:31). The American evangelical use of the biblical symbol for the Roman Catholic Church is an ironic creativity in the Christian tradition.

Catholic views of the antichrist motif today tend also to be spiritualized rather than personalized in history:

The fact that the future antichrist is thus described [in Dan 11:36, Ezek 28:2]... naturally deprives him of any very well defined uniqueness.... [C]hristological heretics contemporary with the writer are called "antichrist," leading to the conclusion that the "final hour" is now. In truth, however, this "hour" loses thereby its chronological content, becoming the expression for a central spiritual condition, a certain inner closeness to the End....

The Easter Jesus is our certainty that history can be lived in a positive way, and that our finite and feeble rational activity has a meaning. In this perspective, the "antichrist"

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47 Friar Arnold, in McGinn, Visions, 175. The Friar goes on to quote 2 Thessalonians 2:4 and Revelation 13:8 to underline his claims.

48 See ibid., 186-95.
is the unconditional enclosure of history within its own logic — the supreme antithesis to the Man with the opened side.\.\.\.49

The eschatological motif, like that of restoration, empowered missionary witness, and the proximity of the miraculous demonstrate much that can be learned by the orientation of Pentecostals and Franciscans toward popular piety in their expectation of God’s intervention in history.

Concluding Challenges

There are many insights Catholics and Pentecostals can take for their relationship in Christ by exploring the action of the Holy Spirit in the history of the charismatic Franciscan movement in our common past: (1) we can recognize the importance of history in claiming our common evangelical past; (2) we can help the ecumenical world to privilege piety and spiritual movements as a source in healing our divisions; (3) we can recognize the variety of ecclesiological emphases and debates within a united Church; (4) we can learn to interpret one another, with all of our sinfulness, in the light of Christ, whose witness shines through the weaknesses of all human embodiments of the Spirit’s action in history.

Every age has its challenges and its impulses for radical renewal and change, rediscovering yet again the rich gifts with which the Spirit endows the Church in its biblical and historical pilgrimage. As theologian Joseph Ratzinger notes, in assessing a volume on Franciscan approaches to history: “I am furthermore convinced that, precisely at the present moment [1969], theology has every reason for remaining in contact with its history. Without this, it is condemned to wither like a tree cut off from its roots.”50 As he reacted to his moment, so conflict driven in his Europe, so Seymour in 1907 and Francis in 1210 tapped into the biblical resources in reaction to their own contextual challenges.

Today we need to reassess the experience of Christian movements within the wider sweep of history. Pentecostal insertion into the two thousand years of Christian history will benefit by scholarship in every era of Christian renewal, pre- and post-Reformation, biblical and patristic, medieval and nineteenth century, all of which are our common birthright. Indeed, a Pentecostal theologian of the stature of Bonaventure may yet to have been called into ecclesiastical leadership in one of the classical Pentecostal churches. The challenge

of historical research, reinsertion of the movement into the greater Christian tradition, rectification of exaggerations in the light of the Gospel, and ecumenical openness are recurring challenges for all Christians, including Pentecostal scholars.

Sometimes the ideological struggles of a particular culture, whether it is thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Europe or twenty-first-century America, can strain the bonds of communion, mute the missionary and prophetic urgency of the first intuition of a movement, and inhibit evangelical reconciliation. The admonition of the late Ithiel Clemmons still reverberates in contemporary Christian ears, Catholic and Pentecostal: “African-American mainline denominations are in crisis because American prophetic Christianity has been co-opted by a liberal political agenda, and American conservative Christianity is also in crisis because it has been trivialized by Republican politics.”

Might we not add Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox of whatever race to this mix as well?

Pentecostal voices in the bilateral dialogues, the World and the National Councils of Churches discussion, and the broader academic and ecclesial community have brought important insights, witnesses, and theological perspectives to our common search for that unity for which Christ prayed. The results of these dialogues need to become central to our teaching and preaching so that they become a common heritage.

Franciscans, Pentecostals, and a host of other energetic and edgy Christian movements are particularly important in helping us all understand that popular piety and spiritual renewal movements need not be divisive, but may be enriching to our pilgrimage of reconciliation. Pentecostals, especially those working in Latin America and the Holy Land, will need to be equipped with Franciscan mission history.

As the education level and the cultural assimilation of Pentecostal populations move forward, popular devotion, enthusiasm, and spontaneous worship begins to be balanced with an appreciation of the intellectual heritage of Christianity. The unique contributions that a strong pneumatology, a robust appreciation of religious experience, and a flexible global, crosscultural interdependence provide to all Christians reflects the faith of the church through the ages. It has already been demonstrated what these perspectives can add to

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While many of us see the full visible unity of the Church as the biblical witness and the goal of our pilgrimage together, none of us dare neglect the role of the Holy Spirit, the centrality of piety, and the academic analysis of popular religion as integral to the journey on which we are embarked in Christ.

Franciscan voices are well aware of the radical call inherent in their heritage:

Everything is gift, nothing is “property.” The gospel mandate to “sell all and give to the poor,” which Francis and Clare followed, far from being meaningless, is as urgent in our own day as it was in theirs. The recovery of a spirituality of creation, linked with contemporary awareness of the global effects of environmental exploitation, can form a bridge between contemporary concerns and this wisdom from the past.\footnote{Short, Poverty and Joy, 129. See also Elise Saggau, ed., The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2002).}

Pentecostals have produced a rich harvest in study on the doctrine of the Church in the last few years. Most Pentecostal ecclesiologies develop a spiritual picture of their understanding of the biblical doctrine of Church. Some, however, like the Church of God, Cleveland, are committed to a robust, visible ecclesiology: “The distinction between the visible and the invisible church violated the nature of the church as a community governed by Christ’s laws.”\footnote{Dale M. Coulter, “The Development of Ecclesiology in the Church of God (Cleveland, TN): A Forgotten Contribution?” Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies 29, no. 1 (2007): 76.} A careful study of the variety of movements bearing both the impulse of the Spirit and a restorationist approach to reform in the era before the tragic divisions of
the sixteenth century can be instructive as to how renewal, restoration, and even vigorous ecclesiological debate are not incompatible with a biblical doctrine of the Church as a visible, sacramental reality willed by God in time and space.\textsuperscript{56} Pentecostals have a great deal to contribute the discussion of the nature and mission of the church, and much to learn.

Finally, movements recur in history that remind us of our sinfulness, of the New Testament resources for renewal, and of the spiritual gifts promised to the faithful Christian at every stage of God’s care for the church in history. Both Pentecostal and Franciscan movements have a rich abundance of excess, but also a core of evangelical zeal that will be a resource for twenty-first-century global Christianity and that can be enhanced by deeper mutual understanding and appreciation. As one Pentecostal says of his Church in a dissertation written at Australian Catholic University, a sentiment is readily shared by the heirs of Clare and Francis:

God has always used passionate and flawed people to preach the Gospel, build the church, and transform the world. One dares to hope that the flawed but passionate AGA [Assemblies of God, Australia] will likewise continue to be a tool used by the Spirit for the sake of God’s kingdom, influencing not only Australia but the world.\textsuperscript{57}


\textsuperscript{57} Clifton, \textit{Pentecostal Churches in Transition}, 225.