



# GCE

## Religious Studies

**RS3 CHR:  
Studies in Christianity (A2)  
Topic 4**

*by Gordon Reid*

## *Topic 4: Christianity in the Modern World*

### **AIM**

#### **At the end of this topic you should:**

- understand the main features of the Ecumenical Movement
- be able to evaluate the extent to which this movement has influenced structures and traditional beliefs within the Christian Church
- understand the meaning and significance of Vatican II
- understand and evaluate the main teachings of Liberation Theology
- understand the mission and work of Taizé and the World Council of Churches
- understand the nature and growth of the Charismatic Movement and Pentecostalism
- be able to evaluate critically the influence of the Charismatic Movement and Pentecostalism on the Christian Church
- be able to see connections between this topic and other topics in this unit.

### *The Ecumenical Movement*

Since the Reformation, the Christian Church in the West has been divided into Roman Catholic and Protestant. For many Christians, this goes against biblical teaching, because all Christians believe in the same Jesus Christ, the same Bible and the same sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. By the beginning of the twentieth century, a desire grew among Christians on all sides to seek some kind of unity and this developed into the Ecumenical Movement.

The Ecumenical Movement (from the Greek '*oikumene*' meaning 'the whole inhabited earth'), was established in 1910, following the World Missionary Conference. Its aim has been to bring Christians of all denominations together.

## *The 1910 Edinburgh Conference*

The 1910 Edinburgh Conference really got the movement going. Its energetic chairman, J. R. Mott (1865-1955) was determined that the conference should produce positive results and action. He set up eight commissions to prepare materials and he spoke to a large number of church leaders and other influential figures, including the Archbishop of Canterbury. The result was a conference with well-informed delegates coming from a wide cross-section of the Christian Church. It led to the development, over the next few decades of three different strands of ecumenism:

1. The International Missionary Council – linking the various groups together and setting up conferences on ecumenical issues.
2. The Faith and Order Movement – providing a united Christian message which missionaries could take to new converts without fear of denominational divisions.
3. The Life and Work Movement – providing support to Christians speaking out against oppression in the world.



### *For reflection:*

Why did Ecumenism arise in the Christian Church?

## *Changes in Ecumenism*

However, Ecumenism has suffered many setbacks over the years, including the refusal of the Roman Catholic Church to take part in the belief, that only the Roman Catholic Church had the complete Christian truth. Pope Pius XI in the encyclical '*Mortalium Animos*' declared:

*'The Apostolic See can by no means take part in these assemblies, nor is it in any way lawful for Catholics to give to such enterprises their encouragement or support. If they did so, they would be giving countenance to a false Christianity.'*



### *Seminar Topic:*

Was the Roman Catholic Church right to take this view? Why / why not?

Other changes have also stifled the growth of ecumenism:

- There has been a move away from individuals and missionary groups and a greater inclusion of the churches.
- This has led to the movement slowing and getting bogged down in administrative and doctrinal detail.
- The churches are anxious to preserve their traditions and therefore slow to agree to change things.
- The Ecumenical Movement is not a priority for most churches.
- Some churches feared that the World Council may become a 'super-church'.

The emphasis of ecumenism has also changed, with a greater church involvement in political and social issues. Despite the opposition of many in the churches, who believe that the church should keep out of politics, there has been a theological shift, led by a greater recognition of the need to tackle human suffering, to apply Christian principles to criticism of political and social issues. However, this too has its problems, as many Christians remain unsure whether or not the Church should be involved in politics, or should stick to preaching the Christian message. The matter is still the subject of intense debate, though most Christians now accept that people experience their faith in different ways and in different lifestyles, and the World Council of Churches (ibid) continues to seek a greater understanding of these differences between Christians.



### *Seminar Topic:*

Should the Church be involved in politics? Why / why not?

### *Ecumenism in the UK*

The Ecumenical Movement encountered particular problems in England due to the unique position of the Church of England and its links with the state, and the legal and social privileges it has. In a sense, in the UK, not all Christian churches are equal, as the Church of England, but not the Churches of Wales or Scotland, is the Established Church and the centre of the worldwide Anglican Communion.



### *For reflection:*

Is it right that the Church of England should have such a special position?

With regard to Ecumenism in the UK, the Roman Catholics have maintained their traditional exclusiveness stance, whilst the Free Churches are divided and unsure.

For its own part, the bishops of the Church of England and Wales have called for all Christians to work together for a united church and acknowledged the 'spiritual reality' and the work of God being done in other denominations. However, one barrier to ecumenism is the insistence by the bishops, on the historic episcopate. This is the view that the ministers of a Christian Church should be ordained by bishops, who were themselves ordained by bishops and so on, back to the first apostles of the early Church. This is called 'apostolic succession'. For the Churches of England and Wales, no other ordination or priesthood is valid. Church unity, the bishops said, could only come about if the other denominations accept this. As a result, there have been no successful attempts at unity between the Churches of England and Wales and the Free Churches.

### *Recent Developments*

In 1970, the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission was set up and reported 'substantial agreements' over the next few years, between the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian Churches on such matters as Ministry, Authority and Justification by Faith. In the meantime, the Catholic Church also offered more flexibility on the issue of marriage between Catholics and Christians of other denominations.

In 1972 the Congregational Church and the Presbyterian Church of England joined together to form the United Reformed Church. Later, they invited other churches, including the Church of Wales, to join them in praying for unity and the Churches' Council for Covenanting was set up in 1980.

Ecumenical movements continue to develop, particularly where Christians of different denominations share buildings and undertake joint worship, and in many universities and colleges, many ecumenical groups have developed, including the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship.

### *Writing Task:*

- (i) Examine the development of ecumenism in the UK.
- (ii) 'Ecumenism will never succeed in the UK' – Assess this view.

### *The World Council of Churches*

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is a worldwide fellowship of 349 national and local churches which seeks unity among Christians. It is based in the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, Switzerland and includes denominations representing over 590 million Christians in 150 countries, and incorporates many Orthodox and Protestant denominations, including the Churches of

England and Wales. The Roman Catholic Church is not, however, a member, but sends observers to WCC meetings and has worked closely with the WCC for many years.

The WCC emerged following the success of the Ecumenical Movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and was formed by the merger of the Faith and Order and the Life and Work Movement. Today, the main work of the WCC is to coordinate ecumenical, religious and social work all over the world. This includes working for Christian unity, promoting Christian mission, worship and serving human needs by breaking down barriers and upholding justice and the Christian message. The WCC campaigns for peace and justice in areas of oppression, and works to forward the cause of peace and Christianity worldwide. It has campaigned on many related issues, including racism, the environment, women's rights, people with disabilities, peace and youth work. Its mandate is:

*'To analyse and reflect on justice, peace and creation in their interrelatedness, to promote values and practices that make for a culture of peace and to work towards a climate of solidarity with young people, women, indigenous peoples and racially and ethically oppressed people.'*

The World Council of Churches describes itself as:

*'...a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.'*



*For research:*

- (i) Make a list of the churches and denominations in the UK that are affiliated to the World Council of Churches.
- (ii) For what reasons is the Roman Catholic Church not directly involved?

## *The Second Vatican Council*

The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) was convened by the Roman Catholic Church to address its on-going relationship with the modern world, with the aim of looking at ecumenism and renewal. It was opened by Pope John XXIII on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1962 and was closed by Pope Paul VI on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1965. The purpose was to help the Church, and in particular, the priesthood, to utilise and adapt Catholicism to meet the political, social, economic and scientific challenges of the modern age. Pope John called it: *'...the time to open the windows of the Church to let some fresh air in.'* To this end, the Pope invited Christians outside the Catholic Church to send

observers, and acceptances came from many Protestant denominations and the Eastern Orthodox church.



### *For reflection:*

Was Pope John XXIII right to call Vatican II?

In September 1963, Pope Paul VI declared that the Vatican II had four pastoral purposes:

- to fully define the nature of the church
- to renew the church
- to restore unity among all Christians
- to start a more productive dialogue with the modern world.

Many hard and controversial decisions were made, overturning centuries of traditional thought and attitude. One such decision was *'Nostra Aetate'* which stated that, in the view of the Roman Catholic Church, the Jews were not responsible for the death of Christ:

*'True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God... the Church... decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.'*

The Council was about modernising the Roman Catholic Church. Pope John XXIII had realised that the Church needed to give a new expression to the faith and make itself less defensive and authoritarian – he said that there was a need to fill the Church with vitality – what he called *'a new Pentecost.'*

The Council ended with new declarations being made that would link more closely the Catholic faith, with the needs of modern life. The most far-reaching product of the Council was the *'Lumen Gentium'*, which included the declaration that:

*'...the sole Church of Christ which in the Creed we profess to be one holy, catholic and apostolic, which our saviour, after His resurrection commissioned Peter to shepherd, and him and the other apostles to extend and direct with authority, which he erected for all ages as 'the pillar and mainstay of the truth'. This Church, constituted and organised as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter*

*and by the bishops in communion with him... nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and the truth are found outside its visible confines.'*

In other words, the Roman Catholic Church had moved significantly closer to other Christian denominations by declaring that:

- The Christian Church is all Christians, not just Catholics.
- The Roman Catholic Church is not the only means of salvation.
- God uses other Christian and also non-Christian religions to offer salvation to believers.

### *Seminar Topic:*

How much has changed in the Roman Catholic Church as a result of Vatican II? Could, and should the Council have gone further? How?

### *Taize*

The Taize Community, located in the village of Taize, Saone-et-Loire, Burgundy, France, is an ecumenical monastic order, comprised of 100 brothers from all over the world. It is a self-supporting community and the monks are committed to sharing all they have together. They wear ordinary clothes during the day, and white hooded robes in church. The community is one of the most important sites for Christian pilgrimage, with more than 100,000 people visiting every year to join in the prayer, Bible study and communal work. Also, over the New Year period, the Taize Community holds a European Young Adults meeting in a different large European city, where tens of thousands of young worshippers attend.

Prayer and silence are at the centre of what has become known as the 'Taize Experience', with many young Christians coming to share the community's way of life – studying the Bible and living out the Christian gospel in a spirit of joy, simplicity and reconciliation.

The Community was founded in 1940 by Brother Roger Schutz (died 2005), as an ecumenical group devoted to seeking peace and justice in the world through prayer and meditation, with the brothers living in a spirit of kindness, simplicity and reconciliation. At the time of its founding, in war-torn France, Brother Roger said:

*'France was a land of poverty, a land of wartime suffering, but a land of inner freedom... the defeat of France awoke powerful sympathy. If a house could be found there of the kind I had dreamed of, it would offer a possible way of assisting some of those most discouraged, those deprived of a livelihood; and it could become a place of silence and work.'* – 'A Lifelong Commitment' – Official Taize website.

The community today includes people, worship and traditions from all over the world – their music reflects many different languages and includes songs, chants and icons from many different Christian traditions, including Protestantism, Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox.

Taize has developed a unique style of worship, that has been adapted by churches and Christian centres throughout the world. Usually done by candle light, it comprises of singing much-repeated chants and prayers. The music uses only simple phrases, such as lines from the Psalms or scriptures, sung repeatedly or in canon, to help the worshippers in meditation and prayer. Between the songs, periods of silence are held to encourage thought and meditation. The songs are sung in many different languages. Formal prayers are also offered, including hymns, intercessions and scripture readings.

Some of the Taize brothers work with the needy and oppressed in some of the world's poorest countries, and every year an International Young Adults Meeting is held in a different country of the world, to widen what Brother Roger called the 'Pilgrimage of Trust on Earth'.

Taize has also welcomed many Christian leaders, including the former Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey and Pope John Paul II, who called it a '*spring of water*.'

Taize is a great ecumenical centre that brings people together from all Christian denominations and cultures – for many, it is a sign of hope in a divided world.

### *Writing Task:*

- (i) Examine the contribution of the WCC and Taize to Christian unity.
- (ii) 'Ecumenism is a failure'. Assess this view.

### *Liberation Theology*

Liberation Theology is a movement that began in Latin America in the 1960's and which seeks to detach Christianity from its political and cultural roots. This is because Liberation theologians claim, the Church supports governments and power structures that oppress the weakest members of society - the poor and oppressed, who are searching for hope in a world of poverty and injustice.

The movement had its roots in the extreme poverty of Latin America – an area that had been deeply Christian for centuries, but where people have felt abandoned by the Christian Church and claiming that their suffering was against the will of God and contrary to the teaching of Christ.

Liberation theology is Roman Catholic in origin, but differs from traditional views, in that it looks first of all upon conditions in the world, and then at how God is manifested in human history. It took on a new urgency, when the Second Vatican Council promised to examine Catholicism, in the light of the social and economic conditions of the world.

The Medellin Conference of Latin American Bishops in 1968, made the startling admission that the Roman Catholic Church had indeed supported oppressive governments in Latin America and that in future, the Church would be on the side of the poor. **Bonino** in 'Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation' (Augsburg 1985) wrote:

*'Theology has to stop explaining the world, and start transforming it'.*

However, the Roman Catholic Church has always been suspicious of the Liberation theology movement, because of its Marxist connections. In the Puebla Conference of Bishops in 1979, Pope John Paul II declared that:

*'...those who sup with Marxism should use a long spoon'.*



*For reflection:*

Was Pope John Paul II right?

Then, in 1986, the Pope's 'Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation', adopted a more reconciliatory tone, and the Church recognised some forms of Liberation theology and gave a higher priority to the relief of the poor in Latin America. Bonino:

*'God is clearly and unequivocally on the side of the poor'.*

At first, Liberation Theology was found in the universities and amongst the educated middle classes, but it has since moved into the lives of the common people of Latin America and elsewhere. There has been a growth of 'Base Ecclesial Communities', which are small groups of ordinary people, who meet to pray and address the social and political issues that affect their lives. In 'Christology at the Crossroads' (Orbis 1978), Sobrino observed:

*'The poor are the authentic theological source for understanding Christian truth and practice'.*

In 'Introducing Liberation Theology' (Orbis 1987), Leonardo Boff linked liberation theology to the teachings of Jesus Christ. He said that Jesus came to earth as a poor man and his message was that the kingdom of God was concerned with the liberation of the poor. Jesus' death, claimed Boff, was a plot by the rich and powerful to prevent his mission from succeeding. He claimed that the mission of the Church should be, not just to teach, but to 'get

*something done*' - this is the concept of '**praxis**' or 'action', whereby Christians are urged to change society on behalf of the poor.

Liberation theologians talk about '*structural sin*' – that it is society, rather than individuals, that is corrupted and requires redemption. James Cone in 'God of the Oppressed' (Orbis 1997) wrote:

*'Is there a 'hidden agenda' in our theological formulations that has helped to make the world-wide church more comfortable with the middle and upper classes than with the poor?'*

In 'A Theology of Liberation' (SCM 1988), Gustavo Gutierrez went further and said that it was a Christian's most important duty, to fight against oppression and that theology itself should come second and be a reflection of that fight:

*'The starting point of liberation theology is commitment to the poor, the 'non-person'. Its ideas come from the victim.'*

Gutierrez called the oppressed masses the 'non human beings' (Hombres Cactus – the 'cactus people'). These people were the victims of exploitation, which stripped them of their right to a proper human existence. He said that the message of Christianity was to fight for the poor:

*'Charity is God's love in us... loving us as a human, Christ reveals to us the Father's love. Charity, the love of God for human beings, is found incarnated in human love – of parents, spouses, children, friends – and leads to its fullness.'*

This fight, the 'praxis of solidarity', he called the '*option for the poor*', and was at the very heart of liberation theology.

Today in Latin America, there are still many poor and oppressed people. Changes in Church structures resulted in the rise of 'popular movements', such as the Movement of Landless People and the Children of the Street Movement, which is supported by many Christian churches as a way in which professional people can give help to the most needy. Gutierrez:

*'We are on the side of the poor, not because they are good, but because they are poor.'*

However, critics of Liberation theology say that it is too simplistic and avoids some of the deeper theologies concerned with sin, salvation and atonement. It has, they say, reduced salvation to a worldly problem and it ignores the spiritual dimension.

### *Writing Task:*

(i) Examine the strengths and weaknesses of Liberation Theology.

(ii) 'Liberation Theology is about politics, not religion'. Assess this view.

## *The Charismatic Movement*

The Charismatic Movement is an inter-denominational Christian renewal movement. It is not a church, but a blanket term, covering a range of international and denominational Christian groups who emphasise the belief that Christians may be 'filled with' or 'baptized in' the Holy Spirit. It became a popular movement within both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism in the 1960's, when a number of younger adult mainstream Christians began to accept Pentecostal teachings about baptism in the Spirit and speaking in tongues. This view became known in Christian denomination as 'Neo-Pentecostalism', before distinguishing itself from Pentecostals and calling itself the Charismatic Movement.

The movement takes its name from the Greek '*charis*' (grace) and '*mata*' (gifts). Its emphasis lies on the manifestation of what are known as the gifts of the Holy Spirit ('charisms'), which are a sign of the presence of God. Charismatics believe that the Holy Spirit gives different spiritual gifts to believers – these are gifts of God's grace, as highlighted in the New Testament by St Paul, who said:

*'Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation on tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.'* – 1 Corinthians 12:7-11



### *For reflection:*

If the Charismatics are right, then shouldn't all Christians be like them?

Although Charismatics may be found in any denomination of the Christian Church, some have created their own independent ministries and organisations, such as the Vineyard Movement, the Fountain Trust and the British New Church Movement.

Charismatics may be distinguished from Pentecostals because, although they share a belief in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, most Charismatics do not support the Pentecostal view that speaking in tongues is evidence that a person has been fully baptized in the Holy Spirit. They and also do not accept the Pentecostal view that a separate baptism of the Holy Spirit, is needed for

Christians and that the infilling of the Holy Spirit in someone is a sign of salvation. In fact, most Charismatics tend to worship in more traditional Christian style. Nicky Gumbel in 'Questions of Life' (Kingsway 1993), explained how Charismatics feel:

*'Every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, yet not every Christian is filled with the Spirit... when people are filled by the Holy Spirit, they begin to fire on all cylinders... when you look at them you can almost see and feel the difference.'*

Other writers have emphasised the need for mainstream Christian churches and the Charismatics, to remain strong. In 'Renewal and the Powers of Darkness' (1983 DLT), Leon Suenens observed:

*'At the heart of a world imbued with a rational scepticism, a new experience of the Holy Spirit suddenly burst forth. And, since then, that experience has assumed a breadth of a worldwide Renewal movement... What the New Testament tells us about the Charisms – which were seen as visible signs of the coming of the Spirit – is not just ancient history, for it is once again becoming extremely topical... priests and bishops must not let the renewal pass the by, but welcome it, and on the other hand, the members of the Renewal must cherish and maintain their link with the whole Church.'*



*For research:*

- (i) Make a list of the main differences between Charismatic beliefs and practices, and those of traditional Christianity.
- (ii) What reasons can be given for these differences?

## *Pentecostalism*

Pentecostalism is one of the most rapidly growing Christian movements – it is now third behind Catholicism and Protestantism. Pentecostalism is not a church, but a movement within Christianity, which places a special emphasis on a worshipper's personal experience of God, through the action of the Holy Spirit. It is an experiential faith, in that the emphasis is not on passive worship and reading the scriptures, but on a lively and very active worship style. The movement takes its name from the Day of Pentecost in the Bible, where the apostles of Jesus Christ were filled with the Holy Spirit and received God's spiritual power within them:

*'When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.'* – Act 2:1-4

Today, Pentecostals see themselves as having the same spiritual energy that the early Christians had, and they place great emphasis on spiritual gifts from God and baptism by the Holy Spirit. They are part of what has come to be known as 'Charismatic Christianity' and there are more than 250 million Pentecostal worshippers throughout the world. They believe that they are the modern fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel:

*'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophecy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams... and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'* – Acts 2:17, 21



### *Seminar work:*

What are the main differences between traditional Christianity and Pentecostalism? Are these differences significant? Why / why not?

### *The Origins of Pentecostalism*

Pentecostalism had its roots in the Wesleyan Holiness Movement of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and was a reaction to the stiffness and formality of traditional Christian churches. At that time, many Christians in America and Britain believed that modern Christianity had lost something of the power and life of the early Church and some, known as evangelicals, called for a greater need to seek the experiences of the Holy Spirit and to take the message of Christ out more enthusiastically into the world. They claimed that Christians needed to be transformed by a personal experience of the truth of Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Modern Pentecostalism began in 1901, when Agnes Ozman claimed to be filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues at the Bethel Bible School in Texas. Others followed and the movement grew, particularly at the Apostolic Faith Gospel Mission in Azusa Street, Los Angeles, where preacher William Seymour declared that God would send a new Pentecost if people prayed for one, and he and his congregation then started speaking in tongues. A powerful change – dubbed the Azusa Street Revival, followed and many hundreds of people began to flock to the mission and to take the 'fire' back to their own churches. Soon, new Pentecostal groups grew up all over America and in Europe. In the UK, the first Pentecostal church was opened in 1914, followed in Ireland by the Elim Pentecostal Church in 1915, founded by Welshman George Jeffreys.

Today, the Church Census Data 2006 shows that there were 288,500 active Pentecostals in Wales, compared with only 278,000 Methodists, making it the

fastest-growing Christian group. Jonathan Kerry of the Methodist Church acknowledged that:

*'Like many historic denominations, the Methodist Church now struggles to respond to new movements of God's spirit without feeling that it is betraying the past. New church movements, such as Pentecostalism, carry less of the weight of tradition.'*

Dr David Voas of Manchester University said that this showed:

*'Immigration from Africa and elsewhere has led to growth in Pentecostal churches, where the worship style is more flamboyant.'*



*For reflection:*

Is this right?

### *Pentecostal worship and belief*

Pentecostals follow what they call the 'full gospel', that is, they believe that the Bible is the word of God and contains the four fundamental truths of Pentecostalism, which are:

- Jesus is the source of salvation (John 3:16)
- People must be baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4)
- God can heal the body (James 5:15)
- Jesus will return to receive all those who are saved (I Thessalonians 4:16)
- 



*Seminar Topic:*

In what ways do the four fundamental truths of Pentecostalism both agree with and differ from traditional Christianity?

One of the most crucial elements of Pentecostalism is the need for baptism, which is understood in three different ways:

- **Baptism into the body of Christ** – Through this baptism, a believer becomes part of Christ's body, the Church, and will be saved. This baptism can only be carried out once a person has been converted and given their lives to Jesus.
- **Baptism by water** – In this baptism, the believer washes away their former, sinful self, and emerges as a worthy member of the Church.
- **Baptism with the Holy Spirit** – The Holy Spirit fills the believer with spiritual power and belief – this is called an 'empowering experience'

and is often manifested by the believer being given the gift of speaking in tongues.

The central beliefs of Pentecostals are that:

- The Bible is the word of God without error.
- Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, believers can be forgiven their sins and reconciled with God.
- This means that they are 'born again' when they choose, through faith, to accept Jesus as their personal saviour.

As Duffield and van Cleave in 'Foundations of Pentecostal Theology' (1981 Foursquare Media) noted:

*'The fundamental requirement of Pentecostalism is that one be born again. The new birth is received by the grace of God through faith in Christ and acceptance of him as personal lord and saviour. In being born again, the believer is regenerated, justified, adopted into the family of God and sanctified.'*

This means that, as a believer, they are regenerated when they die and they will have everlasting life in heaven. Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit dwells within them from the moment that they are 'born again' – this is known as the '*pouring out of the Spirit*', and this gives the believer the strength and power to live a life following Christ, to receive spiritual gifts from God and to fight against the forces of evil.

Pentecostal worship is less formal and more emotionally expressive than most other Christian traditions – participants worship with heart and body, soul and mind. Worship is designed to bring about an experience of the presence of God, through the use of atmosphere, worship-leading, music and a greater openness to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.



### *Seminar Task:*

How does Pentecostal worship differ from traditional Christian worship? Are the differences important?

Just as in other Christian Churches, Pentecostals use rituals and ceremonies to aid worship – they call these 'ordinances'. For example, the ordinance of water baptism is an outward sign of an inner cleansing of a person from sin – and this is essential for salvation. Similarly, the ordinance of Holy Communion is a remembrance of Jesus Christ. However, there is one major difference – whilst many Christian churches see such rituals as sacraments, that is, actions which impart the grace of God to the believer, Pentecostals do not, and regard them as such. Instead, they use the term '*sacerdotal ordinance*' to highlight a distinctive act of God's grace on a believer.

Pentecostal worship is very lively, with a great emphasis on congregation participation – a mixture of prayer, singing, teaching, gifts of the Spirit, testimonies and Bible reading. Edmund Rybarczyk in 'Introduction: American Pentecostalism', described it as:

*'...a vibrant and kinetic worship style of clapping, waving and raising hands, dancing, marching and falling in the Spirit, shouting, a call and response form of preaching and general sense of spontaneity.'*



*For reflection:*

Does Pentecostalism give too much emphasis to congregational participation?

For many Pentecostals, the most important aspect of worship is their physical response to the presence of the Holy Spirit. There are two particular aspects to this. The first, 'dancing in the Spirit', was defined by Shane Clifton in 'An Analysis of the developing ecclesiology of the Assemblies of God' (ACU 2005), as:

*'...a single participant spontaneously dancing with eyes closed without bumping into nearby persons or objects, obviously under the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.'*

The second aspect is called 'slaying in the Spirit' and is where a person falls backwards, whilst being prayed over, filled with the presence of God.

Pentecostals do not baptise babies, since they believe baptism should be a personal choice. Instead, babies are dedicated to God and blessed.

Much Pentecostal worship centres upon the '*gifts of the Spirit*' – which are supernatural abilities given to believers by God (1 Corinthians 12 *ibid.*) to demonstrate the presence and power of God through, for example, prophecy, healing the sick and the performing of miracles. One of the most startling of these gifts is the ability to '*speak in tongues*' (glossolalia), which is evidence of the Holy Spirit dwelling within a person. It follows the words of Christ himself:

*'In my name they will drive out demons, they will speak in new tongues... they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.'* – Mark 16:17-18



*For reflection:*

What is the point of speaking in tongues?

## *The appeal of Pentecostalism*

Perhaps the greatest appeal of Pentecostalism is that it offers attractive spiritual certainties, based upon a direct experience of God. It provides the kind of certainties that many traditional Christian Churches do not seem to do – for example, beliefs about baptism, being born again and everlasting life. It is also much less rigid and able to adapt more easily to different local traditions, methods of worship and cultural ideas. In ‘American Originals’ (ACU 2007), Paul Conkin noted:

*‘Pentecostal denominations have been particularly successful in Latin America among largely unchurched and nominal Roman Catholics, particularly those at the bottom of the social and economic hierarchy. In this sense Pentecostalism is Christianity for the underclasses of the poor.’*

In ‘The Pentecostal Gospel and Third World Culture’ (ACU 2006), Allan Anderson observed:

*‘Because Pentecostal worship is spontaneous and oral, rather than anchored in a liturgical text, it allows all members of the congregation to play their part without any fear of doing the wrong thing, and enables each one to share their particular experience of God and have it valued by the whole community.’*

However, Pentecostalism has had little effect on the traditional Christian establishment. This may be because the members of most Pentecostal churches are poor and from racial minorities, who have little power in the secular world.

## *Writing Task:*

- (i) Examine the appeal of the Charismatic Movement and Pentecostalism.
- (ii) Assess the extent to which the Charismatic Movement and Pentecostalism have succeeded in making Christianity more relevant to the modern world.