



<p><u>THEOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM</u> - ThS.3B</p> <p><u>TITLE</u> : AN ECUMENICAL CURRENT OF GRACE in Response to Fr. Peter Hocken †</p>	<p><u>SPEAKER</u> : Dr. HAROLD VINSON SYNAN – Pentecostal</p>
<p><u>LANGUAGE</u> : ENGLISH</p>	<p><u>COUNTRY</u> : USA</p>

It is a pleasure and delight to respond to this excellent paper by my good friend Peter Hocken, who I have worked with and admired for many years. He has been a true friend of all Pentecostals and Charismatics in all the churches and has contributed greatly to our understanding of this great Catholic Charismatic Renewal which has spread around the world since the small beginnings in Duquesne University fifty years ago. He also once served as president of the Society for Pentecostal Studies. He himself is a very important part of this “current of grace.” This paper, “Catholic Charismatic Renewal: an Ecumenical Current of Grace” continues his great scholarly legacy to the movement.

Hocken has given to us an excellent paper on the ecumenical grace of the renewal. He has abundantly demonstrated how correct Pope Francis was when he said, “Do not forget your background: the Charismatic Renewal was born ecumenical.”

I agree that the renewal came from the Lord “without human founders,” although the graduate students at Duquesne were mightily used of the Lord in the beginning of the movement in the United States. The renewal was not dreamed up in a boardroom or in an ecclesiastical council of bishops. It came directly from heaven. Neither is there a historic founding figure such as a Luther, Wesley, or Calvin. The Pentecostals always said that theirs was a “movement without a man.” Yet God used such men as Charles Fox Parham in Topeka, Kansas and Joseph Seymour in Los Angeles, California as catalysts that He used to bring the movement into being.

Hocken correctly distinguishes between “charismatic ecumenism” and “classical ecumenism” and correctly calls for both to continue. As Kilian McDonnell has pointed out, Pentecostalism was inherently ecumenical from its earliest days at Azusa Street. This has also has been true of the Charismatic Movement in all the Protestant churches as well as in the Roman Catholic Church.

A continuing “surprise of the Holy Spirit” has been the support of the Renewal by all the popes beginning with Paul VI and continuing through Pope Francis, perhaps the strongest supporter of all. Another surprise is the fact that there is a “radical equality between all believers baptized in the Holy Spirit,” as Hocken points out. It is no longer “us and them,” but we now are “walking together” without “fears concerning our differences.” I have found this to be true in my own experience. In the words of the song “we are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord.” As Hocken says, “Catholics baptized in the Spirit are closest—indeed more than close—to other Christians baptized in the Holy Spirit.”

I find it interesting that Hocken sees more “ecumenical creativity” in the newer Charismatic churches and networks than with the older classical Pentecostal denominations. He cites the



Marches for Jesus, the Houses of Prayer, and the Prayer Journeys as examples. I am not sure that I agree with these examples. His example of Classical Pentecostal creativity among such leaders as Giovanni Traettino and Matteo Calisi seem more convincing to me.

I would like to add to what Hocken says about what Protestants and Pentecostals have received from the Catholic Renewal. I am convinced that many thousands of them received the baptism in the Holy Spirit in Catholic prayer meetings. I have met hundreds of them who were grateful for the blessings and support they received from their Catholic brothers and sisters.

I might also add the fact of “grassroots ecumenism” that was experienced all over the world when Spirit-baptized Christians from many backgrounds worshipped together in such great gatherings as the Charismatic congresses in Kansas City (1977), New Orleans (1986-87), Orlando in (1990), and Indianapolis (in 2000). Other such gatherings were held all over the world. In these gatherings tens of thousands of Christians prayed together, worshipped together, and learned together in perfect harmony. Nothing on that scale has happened before in church history. Perhaps we need to go back to these great examples of open Christian unity.

Finally, in the suggested areas of “practical” cooperation, including “formation of leaders,” “networking between leaders,” “preaching,” “having vision for cities,” and “dealing with the occult and spiritualism.” In my view one thing of prime importance is missing, evangelization. Although I agree on the entire list, I must add Acts 1:8 to the conversation: “You shall receive power after the Holy Ghost has come upon you and you shall be witness in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria and to the uttermost ends of the earth.”

Somehow we must learn to evangelize together in order to fulfill the Great Commission given to us by Jesus to “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.”

I know that this is the most difficult ecumenical task to achieve, but in the light of the world situations where churches are being burned and Christians are martyred for their faith, we must join forces to proclaim to the world the name of their savior, Jesus Christ.