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PERCEPTION OF MIRACLES AMONG 21ST CENTURY DUTCH CLASSICAL  
PENTECOSTALS AND IN TWO AFRICAN INITIATED PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES  
IN AMSTERDAM SOUTH-EAST

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## **Thesis Summary**

This thesis explores the teachings and practices of miracles according to the leadership of two Dutch Classical Pentecostal churches and two African Initiated Pentecostal churches in Amsterdam South-East. Dutch Classical Pentecostals lay emphasis on direct personal experience of God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the continual use of the spiritual gifts described in the Bible. African Initiated Pentecostals emerged out of several new and independent congregations that were formed in Amsterdam South-East by African foreigners, and they are distinguished by their emphasis on the Holy Spirit.

In this thesis, most of the respondent leaders of the Dutch and African Pentecostal churches attribute miracles to supernatural manifestations. With regards to their position of miracles today, they are all non-cessationists. Further result shows that there is different perception of miracles among Dutch and African Pentecostals but both groups share common theological beliefs. Significantly for both groups also, miracles serve as important assets to confirm that God is still at work in today's church. Final result reveals some Dutch Pentecostal leaders believe that different miracle perceptions contribute to absence or few memberships of African Pentecostals in their churches. African Pentecostal leaders, however, do not believe different miracle perception as the reason why they (Africans) are not attracted to the Dutch churches, but rather attribute the cause to demographic factors, different cultural and worship expressions.

## **Introduction**

My interest in having a theological and practical understanding of miracles motivated me to choose this research topic when the necessity of writing a bachelor thesis in my theological studies came up. My research, “perception of miracles among 21<sup>st</sup> century Dutch Classical Pentecostals (DCP)<sup>1</sup> and in two African Initiated Pentecostal (AIP) churches in Amsterdam South-East” provides the platform for this quest. Due to the broad scope of this topic, I have limited myself to two DCP churches, Evangeliegemeente De Oase and Pinkstergemeente Agape. The other two are African initiated, the Maranatha Community Transformation Center and the Pentecost Revival Church.

A casual study of various Christian literature and media in the 21<sup>st</sup> century shows that Pentecostals worldwide lay emphasis on miracles (Osei, Asem Radio Broadcast, October 27, 2012). However, my study of these Christian literatures and media gave me the impression that there are diverse spiritual orientations (different positions or direction of thought) among Pentecostal churches toward miracles (Osei, personal communication, October 27, 2012). According to Pastor Osei, in the Netherlands, especially within the Dutch Pentecostal churches, there seems to be a different perception (awareness) to what miracles are and how relevant they are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century church (Osei, Asem Radio Broadcast, October 27, 2012). Pentecostal Africans, who live in the Netherlands, have different spiritual orientation and expectations. These expectations are connected to divine interventions such as miracles, prophecies, and healings and so on. Are they disappointed with fewer miracles in the DCP churches? Is this among some of the reasons why they are not

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of Classical Pentecostalism in the Netherlands is discussed and follows in chapter two of this research paper

attracted to these churches and rather prefer going to the AIP churches where there seems to be strong emphasis on miracles, deliverance and supernatural happenings? What are the differences and similarities among both sides on the subject of miracles? What does a miracle mean today for a Dutch Classical Pentecostal believer in particular? And as far as this is concerned, what role does it play (or not play) in the integration of both sides? In essence, what are the teachings and practices of miracles according to the leadership in Dutch Classical Pentecostalism and in the above mentioned two African Initiated Pentecostal churches in Amsterdam South-East? (This is the main question of this thesis).

At the end of this project, my purpose is to examine how DCP and AIP churches understand miracles today in order to gain theological and practical insight of miracles in the Pentecostal churches.

In the course of writing this paper therefore, a focus is given to defining a miracle, its biblical perspectives and with some illustrations in chapter one. As to whether miracles are bound to certain age or class of people, this is also clarified in this same chapter. Chapter two focuses on Classical Pentecostalism in the Netherlands on the subject of miracles. A short history of Dutch Classical Pentecostals is given, as well as their main tenets of beliefs. A particular attention in this chapter is given to the teachings and practices of miracles through four interviews among the leadership of the above mentioned two DCP churches. The interviews- report analysis and the chapter's conclusion follow.

In chapter three, a focus is given to the AIP churches in Amsterdam South-East on the subject of miracles. A short history and main tenets of beliefs about the AIP churches in Amsterdam South-East are expressed, and with a keen interest

given to the teachings and practices of miracles through four interviews among the leadership of the two AIP churches mentioned above. The interviews-report analysis and chapter's conclusion follow . Chapter four, which is the last, deals with general conclusion and recommendations and as well as theological reflection on the subject of the research.

## **Methodology**

First, I interacted with relevant literature<sup>2</sup> and then interviews<sup>3</sup>. I chose to interact with relevant literatures because I found in them a lot of information which were useful and very much related to the subject of this research.

The interview methodology was qualitative in nature. By this I mean that I did not approach the research in a statistical way<sup>4</sup> but rather explored the topic of miracles among the leadership of the four churches chosen for this work. Because there are also different kinds of interviews within the interview methodology itself, I chose the semi structured oral type. The reason for employing this type was that during the interviews with my interviewees, it would allow me a room for supplementary questions<sup>5</sup> should the occasion demand them. The second reason was that it would allow the interviewees and myself the flexibility to probe more into the topic of the research in case of other suggestions or questions that might come into mind. In short, this method would prove valid due to the advantageous framework it would provide to enquire more information from the interviewees and the opportunity it would create to better understand the answers that they would give.

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<sup>2</sup> The Bibliography of the literatures is found at the end of my thesis.

<sup>3</sup> The interviews are found in Appendixes B and C

<sup>4</sup> My focus was not about recording the number of miracles that have been experienced by the respondents

<sup>5</sup> However, the interview questions were answered with lots of information that I did not ask many further questions

In practice, I interviewed four leaders of the DCP churches, namely, Pinkstergemeente Agape and Evangeliegemeente De Oase. Also, four leaders of the AIP churches, namely, Maranatha Community Transformation Center and Pentecost Revival Church were interviewed. The interview questionnaire itself contained questions that were designed to solicit information from the leaders about their miracle perceptions. It was divided into three sections.

First, it dealt with the leaders' personal context, their upbringing and Christian denominations so as to better understand the framework of their answers. Second, it dealt with what they as leaders believe and teach as miracles. The last part dealt with a comparative view of miracles among the leadership of DCP and AIP Christians.

The interviews were further done in person with all of the respondents in their various locations (in the Netherlands) and have been audio recorded on my digital voice recorder. A further explanation of the interviews' approach is included in chapters 2 and 3, and also in the introduction to the interviews found in Appendixes B and C.

## **Notes**

In this research, unless otherwise stated, all scripture quotations are from the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible.

## **Abbreviations**

DCP: Dutch Classical Pentecostal

AIP: African Initiated Pentecostal

## CHAPTER ONE

### What is meant by a Miracle?

Generally, miracles are those occurrences outside the usual course of events, and for which a natural explanation is seen as inadequate<sup>6</sup>. In other words, they are supernatural manifestations, extraordinary events, wonders and marvels that surpass all human or natural powers and are ascribed to a supernatural cause. All religions have a position regarding them. Many other individuals<sup>7</sup> have different definitions of the word “miracle” today. Due to the large spectrum of what people consider to be a miracle, it becomes essential for us to understand what they mean when they use that word. In this study, while I am limiting myself to Pentecostal’s perception or understanding of miracles, therefore, I will stick to one basic definition which is given above. However, I will also include that the interest of this paper is also to survey the range of other definitions and theological understandings concerning miracles suggested by the interviewees.

Now, a casual look into the Bible shows that miracles happen for different reasons including the expression of God’s compassion in certain situations<sup>8</sup> because there may be no other option<sup>9</sup>. Another instance of a miracle is in a situation whereby a person lives on after he or she was declared terminally ill and was given a number of days to live (Pignato, personal communication, April 5, 2013). A situation whereby a woman gives birth to a child after doctors had declared that the womb was removed is also considered as a miraculous act (Koney, personal communication, April 9, 2013). There are different kinds of miracles in the Bible. Lindsay enlists some

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<sup>6</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/miracle>

<sup>7</sup> In the course of my interviews found in Appendixes B and C, different definitions were given.

<sup>8</sup> John 11:32-35, 43-45

<sup>9</sup> The miracle account of Raising Lazarus to life from dead in John 11 is an example



of them and expresses how they can fall into various distinct classifications such as miracles of supply, miracles of raising the dead, miracles of judgment, miracles of deliverance and miracles overruling nature (Lindsay, 1963, p. 7).

The miracles of supply speak of miracles that in most cases are experienced in situations whereby there is a lack. An example includes the miracle of the Water turned to Wine<sup>10</sup>. In this account, there was a lack of wine in the wedding feast indicated by the words of Mary (John 2:3). Miraculously at the end, Christ supplied a refreshing wine that left the guests of the wedding for the better and not for the worse. The miracle of the Coin in the Fish's Mouth<sup>11</sup> is another instance of miracles of supply. In this account, Jesus was required to pay tax. Eventually, Peter is told by Jesus to go down to the sea and cast in his hook and after drawing up a fish, he would find a piece of money in its mouth. He (Lindsay) believes that this miracle was to teach the disciples that regardless of circumstances, God could at any time or place supply for their needs (Lindsay, 1993, p. 54). Speaking about judgmental miracles, he offers the account of a couple in Acts chapter 5 as an example (Lindsay, 1963, pp. 68 - 70). In this account, the couple, Ananias and Sapphiras, sold a piece of a land and conspired to reserve part of that money for themselves and to give the other half to the church. But they pretended to have given the entire sum of the money to the church. Eventually, by the words of Peter, both of them died, one after the other as a result of this lie. Lindsay continues to explain that it was the spirit of discernment in Peter that perceived the lie of the couple; this discernment was supernatural and the infliction of punishment (death) was supernatural, too (pp. 69 - 70). This miracle in particular thus explicitly places us in a position whereby certain miracles are not seen as positive.

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<sup>10</sup> John 2:1-11

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 17: 24-17

## Miracles Perspective in the Bible

The Bible is replete with miracles which are recorded both in the Old and New Testaments. For instance, the miracle of raising Dorcas to life found in Acts 9:36 – 41:

In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!" Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive.

This particular miracle is obviously among the category of miracles of raising the dead. Dorcas had been for some time dead but came back to life through the eventual prayer of Peter. One remarkable thing about this miracle was that, it opened a door of faith for many unbelievers to come to God.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Peter performed the miracle but certainly he depended on God's power. Some other miracles includes the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:16, 21,) which can also be categorized among the miracles of overruling nature. In this account, Moses acted on God's direction and the result was a miracle of the sea parting into two for the people of Israel to walk on dry ground unhindered. Moreover, in the feeding of the five thousand miracle (John 6:1-14) account, it was humanly and statistically impossible for only five loaves of bread and two little fishes to feed 5000 people and still had left-overs of twelve baskets.

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<sup>12</sup> Acts 9:42

In the Bible, miracles are also seen as signs which support the word that was proclaimed.<sup>13</sup> As a matter of fact, some of the authors of the books of the Bible refer to them as signs. John, the author of the Gospel of John, for instance, called them signs. In declaring his intention for writing the book, he writes: “Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book.”<sup>14</sup> Tenney observes that, “while the use of this term [sign] as applied to a miracle is not confined to John, it is the only word used for miracle in that Gospel” (Tenney, 1976, p. 29). These few instances above speak of miracles or signs that were attributed to the manifestations of a supernatural power. This leads to a further perspective on the source of the Biblical miracles.

God, and not man, is the originator of miracles. In the Bible, man only performed them through a divine power. The ministry of the Holy Spirit then comes into view. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, or the Spirit is the third person of the triune God (2 Corinthians 13:14). The Spirit has been an active force in the concept of miracles in the Bible. In the Genesis account of creation, we are reminded that, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light’, and there was light.”<sup>15</sup> In one sense, the Spirit of God moved to and fro in this chaotic atmosphere (formless, empty and dark) and contributed to fashioning out a pleasant and fruitful earth. How this was fashioned out is beyond any human explanations, entirely miraculous itself.

Time and time again, the spirit empowered many individuals which resulted in miraculous acts. For instance, Mary was empowered which resulted in the birth of

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<sup>13</sup> Mark 16:17,20

<sup>14</sup> John 20:30 KJV

<sup>15</sup> Genesis 1:1-3

Christ (Luke 1:35), the apostles were empowered which resulted in the spread of the Good News with numerous signs and wonders confirming them.<sup>16</sup> Kanaga adds, “Thus, it is evident that, the Holy Spirit empowerment enabled Jesus’ disciples to do miracles, and those miracles enhanced the credibility of the Gospel,” (Kanaga, 2005, p. 44).

### **The Working of Miracles as a Spiritual Gift**

As stated in the Scripture, the Spirit of God gives different gifts (1 Corinthians 12). For instance, it reads: “To another the working of miracles.”<sup>17</sup> The working of miracles as a gift from the Spirit has a wide scope of operation. Lindsay writes:

At one end of the spectrum, it merges with gifts of healing. Certain healings, involving creative actions, whether so classified or not, are true miracles. At the other end of the miracle spectrum, [there] are the miraculous interventions involving the very course of nature such as the breaking of droughts, the rolling back of the sea and so on (Lindsay, 1993, p. 3).

There is a further weight of Scriptural evidence of how so many people in the Bible were recipients of the miraculous gifts. The apostles Peter and Paul were classic examples. We read:

People brought those who were ill into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing those who were ill and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.<sup>18</sup>

God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to those who were ill, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Acts 1: 8, Mark 16:15-18

<sup>17</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:10a KJV

<sup>18</sup> Acts 5:15-16

<sup>19</sup> Acts 19:11-12

It is believed within the Pentecostal circles that First Corinthians chapters 1 and 13 show that this gift will not cease in operation till the return of Christ. In conclusion here, this part has shown miracles are interventions that come from God of the Bible. He performs them and through some people and for various purposes.

### **The Biblical Purpose of Miracles**

The myriads of miracles recorded in the Bible point to the power of God, the identity of God (2 Kings 5:15 KJV), the authority of God (Luke 5:18-16) the glory of God (John 11:4), the confirmation of his word (Mark 16:20) and so on.

In the Old Testament, we have the first instances of miracles whereby a dead person was restored back to life. Specifically in First Kings 17, we see Elijah raises a widow's son to life after he was dead. In the New Testament also Jesus raised a man named Lazarus to life after he was dead and was even in the tomb for four days (John 11). The miracle of raising the dead expresses God's power over death. Again, miracles in the Bible serve to authenticate the claim of Jesus as the son of God. In the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, the verses 30-31 reveal that the recorded signs (miracles) were for the purpose of showing and convicting the people that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Moreover, the story<sup>20</sup> of the deliverance of Israel from the bondage in Egypt to the Promised Land which was accompanied by numerous miracles pointed to God as the one whose sovereignty was incontestable and whose power was irresistible. It simply answers the question of who was the true God. At the end of the deliverance story, we see that Israel was freed from the hands of pharaoh showing that only the God of Israel was the one and only true God. In addition, here

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<sup>20</sup> Exodus 13-15

are the words of Naaman, a man from a gentile background after he was miraculously healed of leprosy through the ministry of Elisha:

And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel, (2 Kings 5:15 KJV).

Some miracles that point to the authority of God over all situations include the account of dividing of the Red Sea, the calming of the raging storm, the deliverance of a demon-possessed man.<sup>21</sup> There are other miracles too that directly point to God's glory. They include the recovery of sight to the man who was born blind and the raising of Lazarus to life.<sup>22</sup>

Finally on the purpose of Biblical miracles, they were performed to confirm the preaching of God's word. Mark, one of the gospel writers records these words, "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."<sup>23</sup> The centrality of the miracles in the Bible thus pointed to God. Tenney (1976) subscribes to this by stating that, "the miracles turn the attention of the reader to the One [God] who performed them rather than to themselves" (p. 311).

### **Are Miracles Bound to Certain Age, Groups or Places?**

Over the years, there have been theological discussions on perception of miracles as to whether they are meant for certain age or class of people. In a book entitled: *Are the Miraculous Gifts for Today*, two main views were presented on the miraculous gifts today. And yet at the end of the book the debate topic was still left unresolved (Grudem, 1996. p. 341). In a basic category, we have the cessationists

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<sup>21</sup> Exodus 14, Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 5:1-13

<sup>22</sup> John 9:1-8; 11:1-43

<sup>23</sup> Mark 16:20 KJV

who believe that the miraculous gifts of tongues, prophecy and healing etc., have ceased. The other category believes in the continuity of the gifts. They are called the continuationists or non-cessationists. Further, in (Roozen & Nieman, 2005, p. 56), Blumhofer was quoted as saying that dispensationalists<sup>24</sup> have a general believe that miracles have ceased with the apostles. With this in mind, the dispensationalists perspective disparages the belief of continuity of miracles among contemporary Christians (particularly, Pentecostals) by limiting the miraculous to the time of the apostles. Kanaga (2005) asserts that “there are still those who insist today that these [the] miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost [including the gift of miracles], are not available to believers today” (p. 25).

For the non-cessationists which include Pentecostal Christians, miracles still happen in our days. Wenham and Bloembergen (1986, p. 5) argue that:

To dismiss the miracle stories simply on the grounds that they are strange to our contemporary outlook would be unsatisfactory... miracles such as the gospels portray are not unknown today in certain parts of the world.

These authors believe that miracles are generally a positive asset to the Christian faith rather than limiting them to a mere historical liability. Kanaga (2005) further examines that “in spite of men’s inconsistent thinking, the Bible continues to declare that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forevermore” (p. 25). He refutes the *cessationists*’ perspective about miracles and exposes their philosophy as a hoax that may be based on poor exegesis or irrational behavior of codified stultifying unbelief (Kanaga, pp. 24 - 25).

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<sup>24</sup> Adherents of dispensationalism, a theological system that believes in divisions of history based on God’s dealing with man

Moreover, the apostle Paul prays under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost that the church would not lose any spiritual gifts until the Lord Jesus Christ returns<sup>25</sup>.

Miracles are also for all people at all locations just as they are not bound to a particular age of time. However, faith is essential to the miraculous. Miracles can be performed on people who have faith and believing in the existence of a supernatural God. From the Scriptures, Mark records: “And these signs shall follow them that believe.”<sup>26</sup> Yet, it is not in all cases in the Bible that we see faith as the sole necessity for the miraculous atmosphere. Jesus restored the ear of Malchus without any faith present; the raising of Lazarus to life was without any faith present.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, in view of the various perspectives expressed here and in this chapter as whole, the Pentecostal Christians are in substantial agreement with the view that miracles are not relegated to the distant past or bound to certain age or locations, but will remain in operation till Jesus comes back again.

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<sup>25</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:7

<sup>26</sup> Mark 16:17

<sup>27</sup> John 18:10; 11



## CHAPTER TWO

### **Dutch Classical Pentecostals and Miracles**

Pentecostalism is usually traced to the Azusa Street revival of the early twentieth century. But there were also similar revivals before and after the unprecedented Azusa event. With deep roots in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition and African spirituality, the Azusa Street revival engendered what came to be described as Classical Pentecostalism. It was associated with denominations such as the Assemblies of God, the Church of God in Christ, and the Church of God in Cleveland (Smith, 2010, p. xv). Classical Pentecostalism is characterized by a distinctive emphasis on tongues speaking as the initial baptism of the Holy Ghost as well as the continual manifestation of all the spiritual gifts. Dutch Classical Pentecostalism is, in no wise, different than this. It lays special emphasis on direct personal experience of God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the continued use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

A brief history of Pentecostalism in the Netherlands cannot have a meaningful account without the mentioning of two important figures, Gerrit Roelof Polman and Wilhemine Johanna Marie Blekkink. They served as the pioneers of the Dutch Pentecostalism. Van der Laan recounts that Gerrit and Wilhemine Polman were formally part of the Salvation Army. Later on in October 1903, the couple travelled to America under the influence of John Alexander Dowries' Christian Catholic Church in Zion (Van der Laan, 1991, p. 84). He continues that, the couples became members in this movement and were ordained as deacon and deaconess. Eventually, they were among those set apart and consecrated for ministry as messengers of Zion designated to various parts of the world. The aftermath of this assignment brought

them back to the Netherlands with the attempt to continue the Zion's movement which already had a branch in the country. Gerrit and Wilhemine Polman had to independently move on after John Alexander Dowie was deposed in 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1906 amidst circulation of rumours (Van der Laan, 1991, p. 91).

The sparks of the Pentecostal fire was soon to follow after the disappointment with the Zion connection. The couple together with followers whom they have been holding fellowships with saw the need for a revival in the country and, thus, started praying for the Holy Spirit's baptism. The news of the Pentecostal revival at Los Angeles and other places got to them. These are the words of Gerrit Polman as cited by van der Laan:

In 1906 we heard of wonderful tidings from America. Some papers were sent to us in whom we read that God had again revisited His people as in the times of old. We learned that God was pouring out His Holy Spirit and people were speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance (Van der Laan, 1991, p. 91).

In the course of time, their links with the Pentecostal experience around the world brought about the birthing of Pentecostalism in the Netherlands. One of the foundational elements of this form of Christianity was the emphasis on the Holy Spirit baptism and with the speaking of tongues as initial sign. Equally important in their beliefs was the emphasis on the continual demonstration of the spiritual gifts described in First Corinthians 12 and the Bible as the infallible word of God.

Today, there are various streams of Pentecostalism in the Netherlands although it has a common Trinitarian doctrinal outlook just like many other Christian lines. Huibert Zegwaart, one of the contributors of 'Fruitful in This Land', admits that "Dutch Pentecostalism is both multifarious and vibrant" (Droogers, Van der Laan & Van Laar, 2006, p. 61). They include the Classical Pentecostals (associated with, for

instance, the Assemblies of God in the Netherlands) and the Pentecostal Charismatics. The difference which Margaret M. Poloma draws between these two are seen in different expressions of their common core of Pentecostal spirituality; the Classic Pentecostals tend to place a doctrinal emphasis on the gift of tongues while the Charismatics are more likely to be open to a range of paranormal experiences (such as miracles and prophecies) as signs of Spirit baptism; Again, the Classical Pentecostals denomination have a well-developed bureaucratic structures while the Charismatics tend to be non-denominational with members focusing on relational ties expressed in loosely knit networks (Roozen & Nieman, 2005, p. 52).

According to Droogers, van der Laan and van Laar (2006), the Dutch Classical Pentecostals (DCP), which is the focus of study in this chapter, follows the original position and theology of the Azusa Movement (pp. 61 - 63). In essence, it places a special emphasis on direct personal experience of God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the further use of the Spiritual gifts. Two of such churches are examined as follow in relation to what their leaders teach and practice as miracles.

#### **Four Interviews among the Leadership of Pinkstergemeente Agape and Evangeliegemeente De Oase**

In order to gain more insightful information about the focus of this study, I visited two Dutch Pentecostal churches, namely, Pinkstergemeente Agape and Evangeliegemeente De Oase. Pinkstergemeente Agape is located at Amsterdam North and it is currently led by Pastor Enzo-Sandy Pignato. Evangeliegemeente De Oase is found in Zeist. John Karsten is currently the head pastor of this church. I conducted four interviews with four individual leaders, two from each church. Due to the vast amount of information obtained in each interview, I did not include all their

answers to my questions, but carefully selected only the parts that were most relevant and essential to my thesis. The interviews can be found in Appendix B but below are the analytical report and conclusions.

In the interviews, I have labeled the four respondents as follow: Interview One, R1, Interview Two, R2, Interview Three, R3 and Interview 4, R4. The “R” stands for respondent

### **Analysis of R1, R2, R3, R4 Interviews- Reports**

#### **In the Area of Interpretation**

The data collected from the interviews yielded similar definitions of miracles among the DCP leadership. All of the four leaders that were interviewed here expressed in similar ways and in different degrees that miracles are results of a supernatural phenomenon.

Taking R1’s definition for instance, he interpreted a miracle as “anything we do not expect or which we cannot do by ourselves, which comes outside our strength.” If miracles are seen as things that happen outside the capacity of man’s strength or wisdom, then, doubtlessly, he attributes them to a supernatural cause, which goes in alignment with the definition that I gave earlier on in chapter one<sup>28</sup>. R2’s definition was similar and very compelling too. He expressed that, “A miracle is something that is extraordinary, something one is not accustomed to and something supernatural.” For R3, “It is the unexpected reality that can be in many areas such as a healing, restoration of relations or repentance.” Although this interpretation, in some degrees, is linked to the supernatural, it is not in total agreement with the previous

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<sup>28</sup> Miracles are supernatural manifestations, extraordinary events, wonders and marvels that surpass all human or natural powers and are attributed to a supernatural cause

interpretations. The restoration of a relationship, for instance, is not wholly a supernatural cause. R4 also defined a miracle as “a direct change that comes from above and always positive.” In chapter one, Lindsay’s classification of miracles included miracles of judgment (Lindsay, 1993, p. 7). Some judgmental miracles, however, may not always be positive (for instance, he gave the death account of Ananias and Sapphiras found in Acts 5 as an example). Thus R4’s interpretation, although linked to the supernatural, did not totally agree with all of Lindsay’s classifications.

The interpretation of miracles here among these four respondents who are all DCP leaders are therefore in similar ways but in varying degrees linked to a supernatural cause. In addition, since all of them are Pentecostal Christians then it becomes important for us to understand that their definitions are mainly from Dutch Pentecostal perspective and the Christian God is believed to be the initiator and performer of miracles. In conclusion here in the area of interpretation, therefore, all of the four respondents linked the miraculous to God but in different extents of explanations. However, R3’s definition cannot be totally placed in the realms of the supernatural.

### **In the Area of Teaching and Practice**

The DCP churches believe and practice miracles. All of the four leaders that were interviewed believed in the miraculous, and that, miracles still happen in our days. Thus, they belong to the non-cessationists’ view (discussed earlier in chapter one<sup>29</sup>), one of the main views presented in Grudem’s edition of *Are the Miraculous gifts for Today?* In this case, the four DCP leaders disagree with the miraculous being

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<sup>29</sup> Under the sub-topic: Are Miracles Bound to certain Age, Groups or Places? found in page 14 of this paper

limited to the apostolic age (as held by the dispensationalists or the cessationists' view discussed earlier in chapter one).

Miracles are significant in different ways for the Dutch. For instance, in the case of R1, "A miracle can change people. A miracle will also not change people. I saw a family whose child was raised from dead but the father did not accept enough to follow Jesus and only thought it was a coincidence." This means that a miracle for some DCP believers will not always yield an impact of change. The word "coincidence" clearly conjures up a picture of doubts about the reality of miracles. For R2, miracles simply made God real for him and made him wanted to share his faith with others. R3 believed that miracles are;

To confirm that Jesus is Lord; to show the world that God is still there. People are in need and God wants to help, intervenes, and heals... a blessing for the person and at the same time as a testimony to the world. God is present in the church. God is still working in the world.

Most of these four leaders also gave personal testimonies and also about other people either in their churches or outside. All of them admitted the teachings of miracles in their churches except for R2 who saw an active awareness being created towards miracles rather than teachings of miracles in his church. Yet all of these four again expressed different measures of teachings. For instance, in the cases of R3 and R4, the teachings of miracles come up every now and then but there is no a specific focus of teachings in their church. R3 accounted:

There is not a specific focus but when the Bible story tells about a miracle, then, we say, miracles still happen. So it is not like every Sunday we are going to preach about miracles. We teach the church that miracles can happen. There is not an automatism - you push the bottom and you have a miracle. There are two things; you have the preaching, and when in the Bible portion there was a miracle you referred to, people can always come and ask for a prayer for a miracle after the service. We do not have too often an invitation, we have it once in a while where people can come forward and be prayed for.

There is a room for miracles. Concerning healing miracles, we raise awareness that God can do it in different ways. He can do it without medicine and also through medicine. Sometimes God intervenes and the sick don't need medicine anymore or don't need hospital treatment. But many times, people need it and so we pray that God will work His miracles through the medicine to heal the sick.

In conclusion concerning the area of teaching and practice, the DCP leaders believe, teach and practice miracles. Miracles for them are signs confirming that God is still at work in His church and serve as testimonies to unbelievers. For them, also, miracles bring encouragement and inspire faith. However, little attention is given to the teachings and practices of the miraculous in the DCP churches.

### **In the Area of Comparison**

The question of differences and similarities of miracles among both DCP and AIP believers was answered in the following ways. The respondents from the Dutch side believed in different expressions but have common theological beliefs as the African Pentecostals. For instance, R1 stated:

I see the difference. Of course, African people are much more opened to everything that has to do with miracles. I think it also has a lot to do with the background and culture. The Africans are much more opened to everything spiritual compared to Dutch people who are more pragmatic people, a more reserved people and everything that is supernatural is a bit strange. I think that is the biggest difference.

R2's view was:

I think there are differences but more a cultural ones. When you come back to what we really believe in, we actually believe in lots of things the same. It comes from God; the miracles are not the main focus of anything. It is only pointing towards... There are some differences but it is mostly cultural in the true sense of pure doctrine. I think there are tones of similarities, you need faith, you need the Holy Spirit, and you need to be in Jesus etc.

R3 believed that Africans preach and teach more about miracles than the Dutch. She stated:

Both have different measures of emphasis. In my opinion, the Africans preach and teach more about miracles, more emphasis on what you see or hear. The Dutch Pentecostals lay lesser emphasis on miracles although both groups believe in miracles.

R4 also believed in the same beliefs of miracles among both groups but different out working.

With regards to the question of absence or few DCP believers in the AIP and the vice versa, R1, R2 and R3 agreed to possible different perceptions of miracles as a factor to this absence or few membership attendance. R1 expressed:

I don't think only miracles but all the charismatic aspects... I think besides the miracles, there is all the cultural, the spirituality, the stream and the expression of your faith which makes it become part.

R3 added, "Possibly, a small part in it." R4 was not sure whether it was the issue of possible miracle perceptions but suggested different cultural expressions.

In concluding the analysis of the data in the area of comparison, it is obvious from most of their answers that there is different perception of miracles among DCP Christians in comparison with AIP Christians (whose perception follows in chapter 3). However, they believe that they have common theological beliefs of miracles as their AIP counterparts. Three of the four leaders (R1, R2 and R3) are of the view that different miracle perceptions contribute to the absence or few memberships of African Pentecostals in their churches.

## **Chapter Two's Evaluation and Conclusion**

First, this chapter has revealed to me that there are various streams of Pentecostalism in the Netherlands today. Dutch Classical Pentecostals are those who lay emphasis on direct personal experience of God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the continuity of the use of the spiritual gifts described in the Bible.



Second, in relation to miracle perception, the four DCP leaders that were interviewed linked the miraculous to God but in different extents of explanations. Three of them (R1, R2 and R4) explained that miracles are supernatural manifestations. R3's definition, although linked to the supernatural in some extents, did not totally and deeply submerge in the arena of supernatural manifestations.

Moreover, the leaders have their theological beliefs and teachings about miracles rooted in the Bible. Significantly for the Dutch Pentecostals today, miracles are signs confirming that God is still at work in His church and also serve as testimonies to unbelievers. Miracles further bring encouragement and inspire faith. Two leaders (R1 and R2) shared that the Dutch are very cautious about miracles because of too much human reasoning and intellectualism. They also believe that miracles may bring a change in a person's life but not always. From the answers given by all the four leaders, it is also obvious that little attention is given to the teachings and practices of the miraculous in the DCP churches.

Finally, with the question of different perceptions, the four leaders were of the view that there is different perception of miracles among DCP Christians in comparison with AIP Christians (whose perception follows in chapter 3). This difference is however seen in the way the Africans strongly expect and highly express miracles. Three (R1, R2 and R3) of the four leaders believed that the Africans have deeper emphasis on miracles than the Dutch. However, the similarities that both groups have which the respondents expressed in their answers were common theological beliefs of miracles. The miracles are results of supernatural cause; they come from the God of the Bible and the emphasis on the Holy Spirit is also crucial. On the role of integration, three ((R1, R2 and R3) of the four leaders again are of the view that different miracle perceptions contribute to the absence or

few membership of African Pentecostals in their churches aside other reasons such as different cultures and spiritualities.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **African Initiated Pentecostals and Miracles**

There are several foreign Christians in the Netherlands today. A research conducted by Kathleen Ferrier proves that as at 2002, migrant Christians in the Netherlands were about 800,000 (Droogers, Van der Laan & Van Laar, 2006, p. 5). Included in this tally are Pentecostal Africans many of whom are living in Amsterdam. Many of these foreigners who have come from African countries like Ghana, Nigeria, Congo, Angola and so on, have formed several new and independent congregations. It is to this new independent churches that Haar (1998, p.4) refers to as the African Initiated or African led churches. According to him, they are a modern extension of the numerous independent churches existing on the African continent which have been founded by Africans over the last century (Haar, p. 5). He further reveals that a large number of such churches exist in Amsterdam and many were founded in the 1990s (Haar, p. 5).

African Initiated Pentecostals (AIP), the highlight of this chapter, has several beliefs and doctrines. According to Haar, God is central in all. The Trinity is credible. They believe in the central role of the Bible (Haar, 1998, p. 7). They believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit and tongues speaking. They also believe and practice the spiritual gifts described in the Pauline letters. In essence, Haar (1998) reveals that “they believe in the power of the Spirit, the concept of the church as constituted by community of believers, the importance of worship as a form of celebration, the emphasis on the concept of love and the meaning which they ascribe to healing” (p. 7) Two of such AIP churches in connection to what their leaders teach and practice as miracles are investigated below.

## **Four Interviews among the Leadership of Maranatha Community Transformation Center and Pentecost Revival Church**

Some of the AIP churches in Amsterdam South-East include the Maranatha Community Transformation Center (MCTC) and Pentecost Revival Church (PRC). MCTC is located at Huigenbos 100A in Amsterdam South-East. It is currently led by Pastor Moses Alagbe. PRC is located at the Kandelaar, Bijlmerdreef 1239 in Amsterdam South-East. It is led by Pastor Emmanuel Koney. In order to get more theological and practical understanding of miracles from the African side, I conducted four interviews with four individual leaders, two from each church.

Due to the vast amount of information obtained in each interview, I did not include all their answers to my questions, but used the scheme of carefully selecting only the parts that were most relevant and essential to my thesis. All of the four interviews in this chapter are found in Appendix C. Below is the analytical report of the interviews, evaluations and conclusions. In the interviews, I have further labelled the four respondents in this chapter as follow: Interview Five, R5, Interview Six, R6, Interview Seven, R7 and Interview Eight, R8. The “R” stands for respondent.

### **Analysis of R5, R6, R7, R8 Interviews- Reports**

#### **In the Area of Interpretation**

The data collected from the interviews yielded more similar definitions of miracles among the AIP leadership. All of the four African Pentecostal leaders that were interviewed here expressed in similar ways and in different degrees that miracles are results of a supernatural phenomenon.

For R5, “The existence of life itself is a miracle”. In other words, he believed that how this life came into being cannot be explained by any human being. He added, “Anything that we cannot explain with this mind is a miracle - a healing, deliverance...” Thus his interpretation is logically in alignment with the interpretation of miracles as supernatural manifestations, extraordinary events, wonders and marvels that surpass all human or natural powers and are attributed to a supernatural cause.<sup>30</sup> The human or natural explanation of miracles is certainly inadequate. There are also elements of Lindsay’s classifications of miracles in R5’s definition. The mentioning of inexplicable healings and deliverance fall into Lindsay’s classifications of healing miracles, deliverance miracles and so on.<sup>31</sup> R6 also believed that “a miracle is a supernatural thing, and that, with the natural mind one cannot understand the whole concept.” He further explained, “A miracle is not something you can say, ‘oh I know how it works.’ Miracle is something specifically done by God that we have no answer and we cannot say we played a part in.” R7 is also of the view that, “anything that happens in a supernatural way is considered as a miracle.” R8 interpreted a miracle as “a thing that God actually does that is unusual.” But for him also even, “sometimes, the normal things can be miracles as well.” The later part of this definition is however not in alignment with the other three interpretations.

In conclusion here in the area of interpretation, all of the four leaders linked the miraculous to the supernatural manifestations but in different degrees of explanations except for R8, whose definition was not completely supernatural. They

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<sup>30</sup> The main definition for the research found in chapter one

<sup>31</sup> Lindsay’s classification of miracles is discussed in page 8 of this thesis

believed that the supernatural has to do with their God, who is responsible for the existence of life based on the teachings of the Bible.<sup>32</sup>

### **In the Area of Teaching and Practice**

The various reports from the AIP leaders also portray that these churches believe and practice miracles. All the people interviewed believed in the miraculous, and that, miracles still happen in our days. This means that they belong to the non-cessationists' view and thus disagree with the cessationists or dispensationalists view of miracles.<sup>33</sup> To authenticate their position, all of them gave personal testimonies and also about other people either in their churches or outside.

Significantly, R5 believed that, miracles, as embodied in Jesus Christ, served to give us the knowledge that the Kingdom of God has come. For him, they are also blessings from God. He stated:

I think the key purpose of the miracles is to let people know that the kingdom of God is here. Because when John sent his disciples to Jesus to find out if he was the Messiah. Jesus said, 'the blind see, the lame walk etc...In essence, the kingdom of God has come.' And apart from that, miracle is just to let people experience some of the blessings of God, the blessings of life because Jesus said I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly.

R6 also believed that miracles are bread for the followers of Christ and that they speak about the sovereignty of God. In this sense, God can make an impossible situation possible. He said:

I believe that God initiated miracles, it is bread for children of God, healing etc., and it is something that when you become a follower of Christ you can't separate miracles from yourself. I mean they go hand in hand. When I tell people, it depends on the case you have, I say, the miracle is that you have to

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<sup>32</sup> The Genesis account of creation, Genesis 1 and 2

<sup>33</sup> This is discussed in page 14 under the sub-topic: Are Miracles Bound to certain Age, Groups or Places?

go back and make peace with God. That is a starting point or a set-off point. And when you make peace with God and not just because you want a miracle in your life, then he will speak to you and your mindset will be broadened and you will see that what you think is not possible means nothing to God...

Thus there is an element of agreement in what a miracle significantly means for R5 and 6, that, they are blessing or 'bread' for the followers of Christ. R7 and R8 didn't hold any different significance in connection to the previous two. R7 stated, "Because you know it [miracle] is something that is from God, and as his child, you don't feel like a servant... We cherish Him and we worship him and not because of the miracles but because he is our father." R8 also included miracle significance of increasing faith, inspiration of worship to God and help in the growth of the church as they witness to unbelievers.

With regard to their teachings of miracles, in the cases of R5 and R6, the focus is on Jesus. They believed that when Jesus is preached, miracles would follow. R5 stated, "I teach them about Jesus, not about miracles because Jesus is the miracle. So, I preach Jesus and when Jesus is preached, definitely, you are preaching a miracle. I believe Jesus is the one who carries all the healings, deliverance and so on". R7 added:

A lot of people in the course of the services that have been prayed for were healed from whatever infirmities they had. Theologically, we preach miracles but we don't make it the only emphasis. You know, miracle is just one of those things that happen, part of the things that are included in the package of salvation.

Thus for both R5 and R6, to preach about Jesus is to preach about the miraculous. For R7 and R8, miracles are heavily emphasized in their church too (both belong to the same church). R7 said:

We experience daily miracles events in our ministry. My theological position is that I believe in miracles and what the Bible teaches about them... You see it

from 1 Corinthians 12, the gifting of the Holy Ghost; to others he gave them the gift of word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, the word of faith, the word of healing and the working of miracles etc.

This theology is also very much related to my earlier discussion about the working of miracles as a spiritual gift (found in chapter one). R8 also added, “We teach them about the miracles that God has performed in the Bible, at our present age and also the possibility of miracles in future expectations.”

To conclude in the area of teaching and practice, it is obvious from the answers that the leaders of the AIP churches stress on miracles in their churches. They believe and practice miracles even today. Their theological positions are traced to the Bible. Jesus is the miracle. The Holy Spirit gives the power to perform miracles. Miracles are also part of the salvation package. Significantly for them, miracles confirm that God is real and he is sovereign and above all. Miracles are blessings or ‘bread’ from God. They also provide a platform for increasing their faith. Miracles contribute to the growth of the church of Christ.

### **In the Area of Comparison**

The question of difference and similarities of miracles among both DCP and AIP believers was answered in the following ways. R5 and R6 had similar views about the differences and similarities. They both believed that the Africans are more extreme in their attitudes toward miracles while the Dutch are very cautious. R5 stated:

The African, no doubt, they just go for it. The Dutch are very cautious. Even when there is a miracle, they are very cautious to say it is a miracle. But the Africans even when there is no a miracle, they claim there is a miracle.



R7 and R8 are also in agreement that both groups have the same beliefs about miracles. However, R7 pointed out a slight difference. He said:

Well, Pentecostalism is Pentecostalism. So in the same way I believe in miracles, my Dutch colleagues also believe in miracles. But they are liberal theology but I can't see liberal theology in Pentecostalism. Since I have been in the west affiliating with these Pentecostal churches, they also believe in the Bible, they believe in miracles.

With regards to the question of absence or few DCP believers in the AIP churches and the vice versa, all of the leaders shared similar views – mostly on different cultural and traditional expressions. But some of them also admitted that they either did not know or believed whether it was the issue of possible different miracle perceptions but allotted the absence to mainly demographic and cultural factors. For instance, R5 commented, “I can't say yes to that because I don't know whether it is the issue of miracles. But I know it is the issue of demography. I think demography contributes to that difference in congregations.” R8 also added, “I don't think it would have to do with any different perception of miracles but more a traditional or cultural side of the whole thing.” However, he believed that Africans have deeper expectations of miracles.

To conclude in the area of comparison, therefore, it is obvious from some of the AIP leaders (R5, R6 and R7) that there is a different perception of miracles in comparison to DCP Christians (whose perception is found in chapter 2). However, the AIP leaders believe they have common theological beliefs of miracles as the Dutch. Almost all of the four leaders also do not believe in different miracle perceptions as the reason for the absence or few memberships of Africans in the DCP churches and the vice versa. They attribute this situation to mainly different cultural and traditional expressions and demographic factors.

### **Chapter Three's Evaluation and Conclusion**

First of all, this chapter has demonstrated that there are several new and independent congregations that have been formed in Amsterdam South-East by African foreigners. As indicated by Haar (1998, p.4), they are referred to as African initiated, and of which many are Pentecostals. African Initiated Pentecostals believe in the central role of the Bible. They have a strong believe in the power of the Spirit. They are also characterized by baptism of the Holy Spirit and the speaking of tongues. The gifts of the Spirit described in the letters of Paul are also heavily emphasized in the AIP churches.

Second, in relation to miracle perception, the four AIP leaders that were interviewed here linked the miraculous to the supernatural manifestations but in different degrees of explanations except for R8 whose definition was not in its totality a supernatural cause. They further believed that the supernatural has to do with their God, who is responsible for the existence of life based on the teachings of the Bible. They also teach about miracles in their churches. They believe and practice miracles even today, and thus, belong to the non-cessationists' position of the miraculous. Like the DCP, the AIP Christians have their theological positions traced to the Bible; The Holy Spirit gives the power to perform miracles. Miracles are also part of the salvation package.

Significantly for them, miracles confirm that God is real and he is sovereign and above all. Miracles are blessings or 'bread' from God. They also provide a platform for increasing faith. Miracles further contribute to the growth of the church of Jesus Christ.

Finally, most of the AIP leaders that were interviewed believed that there are different perceptions of miracles in comparison to DCP Christians (whose perception is found in chapter 2). Thus this chapter has shown that the AIP Christians have different spiritual orientations of miracles but only in the area of expressions and higher expectations. However, the AIP leaders believe they have common theological beliefs of miracles as the Dutch. Almost all of the four leaders also do not believe in different miracle perceptions among the reasons for the absence or few memberships of Africans in DCP churches and the vice versa. They attribute this integration situation to mainly different cultural and traditional expressions and demographic factors. So it is clear also in this chapter that the African Pentecostals do not see different miracle perceptions as a reason why they are not attracted to the DCP churches or a reason of fewer miracles, but rather, different cultural expressions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### General Conclusion

#### **Final Conclusion and Recommendations**

The definition chosen for miracles in this thesis was that, they are supernatural manifestations, extraordinary events, wonders and marvels that surpass all human or natural powers and are attributed to a supernatural cause. They have been categorized into different classifications (miracles of supply, miracles of raising the dead, miracles of judgment, miracles of deliverance and miracles overruling nature). With regards to the position of the miraculous, Pentecostal Christians are non-cessationists.

This research has also shown that there are various streams of Pentecostalism in the Netherlands today. Dutch Classical Pentecostals are those who lay emphasis on direct personal experience of God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the continuity of the use of the spiritual gifts described in the Bible. They believe in the central role of the Bible as the word of God. The African Initiated Pentecostals are the Pentecostal Christians who emerged out of the several new and independent congregations that were formed in Amsterdam South-East by African foreigners. Like the Dutch, they also believe in the central role of the Bible as the word of God. They are characterized by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the speaking of tongues and the practise of the spiritual gifts in the Bible.

In relation to miracle perception, the leaders of the four selected churches that were interviewed provided valuable insight regarding the interpretation of a miracle. By placing miracles in their various Pentecostal contexts, most of them employed the use of the words 'supernatural', 'unusual', 'extraordinary' in their attempts to define a

miracle. The centrality of the miraculous, for most of them, has to do with a supernatural phenomenon. Moreover, there was none among the leaders that expressed that, miracles had ceased in operation (or limited to a particular age).

In particular, this research has shown that there are different degrees and measures of teachings, practices and anticipation of miracles among the Dutch and African Pentecostals that were chosen for this thesis. Most of the eight leaders believed that there are different perceptions of miracles among the DCP and AIP Christians. The Dutch would expect miracles but the Africans live on miracles. The Africans are a little bit more extreme while the Dutch are more cautious about the claims of miracles. The spiritual orientations and expectations of miracles among the AIP Christians are such that they have deeper expectations and expressions of the miraculous; their leaders teach and preach more about miracles than the DCP leaders do. However, both DCP and AIP Christians share common theological beliefs concerning miracles. They both trace miracles to the Bible. The beliefs of the Holy Spirit and his baptism as well as the practice of the spiritual gifts are seen as underlined factors in this line of Christianity among both groups.

Generally for the Dutch and the Africans, miracles serve as important assets to confirm that God is still at work in today's church, the kingdom of God has arrived, to show the sovereignty of God, to inspire faith and worship, as blessing or bread for God's children, to glorify God, to arouse awe, as a part of salvation package and to foster church growth. One of the DCP leaders, (R1), however, believes that miracles do not always bring a change in an individual's life.

On the role of integration, three of the DCP leaders believe that different miracle perceptions contribute to the absence or few memberships of African

Pentecostals in their churches. Almost all of the AIP leaders do not believe different miracle perception as the reason why they are not attracted to the DCP churches but rather attribute the cause to demographic factors, different cultural expressions and different worship expressions.

## **Recommendations**

My recommendation for the DCP leadership is that they should review their perceptions on the miraculous. As non-cessationists, believing in the continuity of the miraculous and knowing also that miracles play an important part in a believer's life and the church as a whole, they should increase more teaching on the miraculous in their various assemblies (since two of their leaders, R2 and R3, admitted that little emphasis about the miraculous is given in their churches).

To the AIP leaders, personally, I urge that the miraculous should not be too infiltrated by influence of their cultures and spiritualities. In this way, I believe that the perception of miracles wouldn't have any difference among different cultural backgrounds or groups of people. Also, they should strive for a clear unified theology of miracles in the global Pentecostal denomination of Christianity. I believe this will help prevent the extremity of the miraculous among some of the African Pentecostals (as testified by R5, that the Africans are too extreme - claiming miracles even when there is none).

## Theological Reflection

In the first place, I chose the interpretation of miracles as supernatural manifestations, extraordinary events, wonders and marvels that surpass all human or natural powers and are attributed to a supernatural cause. Looking at the various interpretations that came up in the research, particularly from most of the leaders that were interviewed, the centrality of the miraculous has to do with a supernatural phenomenon. By placing miracles in their various Pentecostal contexts, most of them employed the use of the words 'supernatural', 'unusual', 'extraordinary' in their attempts to define a miracle. Only two of the leaders' (R3 and R8) definitions were not totally related to a supernatural cause. For instance, R3 explained that "a miracle is an unexpected reality that can be in many areas such as a healing, restoration of relations or repentance." Although this interpretation in some degrees is linked to the supernatural, it cannot be totally submerge in the arena of the supernatural. For instance, the restoration of a relationship is not a supernatural cause and thus cannot be seen as a miraculous act. Also, to consider the classifications of miracles given by Lindsay, R4's definition was exposed. But this exposure did not discredit R4's definition of miracles as supernatural manifestation but rather a matter of being unconscious of miracle classification. She, (R4), explained that "a miracle is a direct change that comes from above and always positive." Lindsay however showed that miracles are not always positive because some can happen as a result of divine judgment even resulting to death just like he offered the case of Ananias and Sapphira as an example (Lindsay, 1963, p.7). Thus, R4's definition was a very limited one because it did not fit fully into the broader picture of Lindsay's categorical classifications. In effect therefore, most of the eight leaders' definitions are in

substantial agreement with my hypothetical definition given above except a few of them (R3 and R8).

Further, I had a hypothesis of different miracle perception (awareness) among the leadership of the DCP and AIP Christians. As to this synthesis, most of the eight respondents (R1, R2, R3, R5, R6 and R7) are of the view that there are different perceptions among both groups in the areas of expectations and expressions. The spiritual orientations and expectations of miracles among the AIP Christians are such that, they have deeper expectations and expressions of the miraculous; they do not only believe in miracles but they live on miracles while the Dutch believe in miracles. They are also a little bit more extreme while the Dutch are more cautious about the claims of miracles. The logical explanation for the difference in expectations and in expressions is allotted to different cultural, environmental, economic and spiritual backgrounds. Examples are seen in the words of two of the respondents here. R5, one of the AIP leaders accounted:

I think it is the environment. The environment we grew up from is an environment of miracles because our lives totally depend on God, that's the way we have been brought up. Even for some people in Africa, they have to pray before they can eat. In Africa, we pray for everything – for rain, even for electricity... a miracle to have light. But here in the Netherlands, the environment is such that it does not challenge people's faith to expect a miracle because nearly everything is provided. If you are not working they [government] gives you money, your health insurance is there... So that plays a very important role in the African Pentecostal believers' expectations, understanding and beliefs of the miraculous.

R1, a DCP leader said:

They [the Africans] do not only believe in miracles but all of their life shows the life of miracles. There is a different attitude compared to what we call the 'European' or 'Dutch'. We would expect a miracle while the African who I know would live on miracle, and that's the different kinds of mentalities, different mindsets that I perceive.

African people are much more opened to everything that has to do with miracles. I think it also has a lot to do with the background and culture. The



Africans are much more opened to everything spiritual as compared to Dutch people who are more pragmatic people, a more reserved people and everything that is supernatural is a bit strange. I think that is the biggest difference. The African people live the life of miracles.

However, both DCP and AIP Christians share common theological beliefs concerning miracles. They both trace miracles to the Bible whereby the sparks of miracles and the apex of miracles centres on the Holy Spirit of God. The beliefs of the Holy Spirit and his baptism as well as the practice of the charismata (spiritual gifts) climax this line of Christianity among the DCP and AIP Christians.

For my own professional development and identity, I can confidently say that this research has been a great experience for me. It has increased my theological perspectives of what some Pentecostal Christians view and practise as miracles in our days (that some of them believe in miracles but some actually live on miracles). At the same time, this research has a challenging effect on me. That is, it has challenged me to realise that there is not a unified concrete theology of miracles even among today's Pentecostal Christians. This is because the perception of miracles among even the Pentecostal denomination of Christianity varies.

In learning effect, it has added a valuable insight to the theoretical knowledge that I gained from classroom about the topic of miracles.

In learning effect for the practical field, the different cultural, spiritual and economic backgrounds of the eight leaders that were interviewed have made me to understand that, miracles, although being supernatural manifestations, have yet different expressions and expectations among some Pentecostals. And so, with the understanding that I have gained from this research, I will be able to teach other people with the awareness that there are different perceptions from culture to culture. Moreover, with the growth of Pentecostalism which is doubtlessly becoming a

powerful Christian force globally (Droogers, Van der Laan & Van Laar, 2006, p. 10), and with its beliefs on the continuity of the spiritual gifts and also with the fact that they have a common goal to proclaim the good news in the power of the Spirit (Roozen & Nieman, p. 35). I urge that they should have a solid theological framework in order to enable them have a tangible unified Pentecostal theology about miracles irrespective of different cultural backgrounds. I believe that a unified theology of miracles will go an extent of stimulating easy integration of Pentecostals from different backgrounds, spiritually, culturally, economically and even socially.

In a future study, I would interview Christians especially, Pentecostal Christians from a wider variety of countries and cultures about their perceptions of miracles. The cultural and economic backgrounds that I found out in relation to most of the respondents' perceptions made me curious as to what other Pentecostal Christians with different cultures believe, interpret, teach and practise as miracles in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Appendix A: Interview Questionnaire**

### **(i) Context**

- 1) Where do you come from?
- 2) Where is your current residence?
- 3) What is your profession or occupation?
- 4) Would you please give a short history about your religious/ Christian background?

### **(ii) Miracle Significance and Teachings**

- 5) What do you consider as miracle?
- 6) Do you believe in the miracles of the Bible?
- 7) If so, what do you think were the purposes of miracles in the Bible?
- 8) What would you say about some school of thoughts that believe that miracles were bound to certain age, certain groups and certain places?
- 9) What do you think is the place of miracles in the Pentecostal churches today?
- 10) What would you say has been the historical and theological position of your church on the subject of miracles?
- 11) Is there a specific focus of miracles in your sermons? Or what do you teach the congregation about miracles?
- 12) Is there any personal testimony of a miracle that happened to you or is there any clear case in your church whereby you realized that this was a miraculous occurrence?
- 13) If so, what was your immediate reaction after the miracle or in the days following?

14)Has experiencing of a miracle changed the way you think or react with other people? If so, how?

15)What kind of influences do miracles bring on the lives of the members of your church and possibly the people around?

**(iii) A Comparative View of Miracles**

16)As an African Pentecostal leader living in the Netherlands, what is your experience with the Dutch Classical Pentecostal church concerning miracles?

17)Do you perceive any differences or similarities about both beliefs and doctrinal views of miracles?

18)I have visited a couple of African Initiated Pentecostal churches in Amsterdam Southeast only to discover either few or sometimes no Dutch Pentecostal member. Could possible different perception of miracles play a role in this situation? If so, briefly explain?

19)What do you recommend for the Classical Pentecostals in general concerning the issue of miracles?

## **Appendix B: Interviews with 4 DCP Leaders**

The four respondents are labeled as follow: Interview One, R1, Interview Two, R2, Interview Three, R3 and Interview 4, R4. The “R” stands for respondent. R1 and R2 are members of Pinkstergemeente Agape while R3 and R4 belong to Evangeliegemeente De Oase.

### **Interview One, R1**

Respondent 1 (R1) is 45 years of age and originally hails from Italy. He studied at the Continental Theological Seminary and now serves as a pastor of Pinkstergemeente Agape. He also serves as the director of Master’s Commission Europe. My interview with him took place at the premises of the church he now pastors.

#### **(i) Context**

Eric: Where do you come from?

**R1:** I am an Italian. I was born in Italy.

Eric: Where is your current residence?

**R1:** Hoorn, 35 kilometers North of Amsterdam.

Eric: What is your profession or occupation?

**R1:** Pastor and director of some discipleship schools.

Eric: Would you please give a short history about your religious / Christian background?

**R1:** I was born into a family of unbelievers. When I was 4, my parents left me in Italy because they had to find a house in Belgium. They left me to my grandmother who was a Christian. She taught me how to write and also read Bible. She could not speak about the Law to the family. My father once said to her, ‘if you speak to me about Jesus I will kill you.’ So my grandmother thought, ‘if I teach my grandchild, he would be able to speak to the family.’ And so it was, when I came to Brussels, my parents were in deep marital problem. My parents became alcoholics. My mother tried a few suicidal attempts. So arriving in that family back 2 years later, I started praying for them and encouraged them. Within 6 months, my mother gave her life to Jesus. 3 months later, my father also became a Christian.

Eric: What kind of church or denomination were you involved in?

**R1:** Assemblies of God church

#### **(ii) Miracle Significance and Teachings**

Eric: What do you consider as a miracle?

**R1:** A miracle is everything we do not expect or which we could not do by ourselves, which comes outside of our strength

Eric: Do you believe in the miracles of the Bible?

**R1:** I do believe.

Eric: What do you think were the purposes of miracles in the Bible?

**R1:** The Bible says there are different purposes, the purposes of signs, the purposes of restoration, the purpose of increasing our faith. There are different reasons why God is answering through miracles.

Eric: What would you say about some school of thoughts that believe that miracles were bound to a certain age, groups or places?

**R1:** It means that those people do not live a life of faith, the life of intimacy with God. Once you start living a life of intimacy with God, you realize that miracles are happening. You need to be close to God in order to see the miracles.

Eric: What do you think is the place of miracles in the Pentecostal churches today?

**R1:** I think there are differences from churches to churches which is very sad. There are churches which really follow miracles. There are others too who have taken too much compromises and they try to please people and therefore have reduced the power of miracles. I know about some Christian Pentecostal institutions which also have reduced the power of miracles and the power of the Holy Spirit which I find very sad.

Eric: What would you say has been the historical and theological position of your church on the subject of miracles?

**R1:** The church has been founded by a person who was very charismatic and strong in faith, of miracles and of the Holy Spirit. In the last years, the church has seen some miracles. We really believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. Specifically, we really follow what the Bible says about miracles, we believe what the Bible says about miracles and miracles are there for us based on what God wants for us. So we are not proclaiming our own will but God's will and prays for God's will.

Eric: Is there a specific focus of miracles in your sermons or what do you teach the congregation about miracles?

**R1:** Every Sunday, we pray for miracles during the service. We pray and ask people to raise hands. During the Easter, for example, we had prayer cards for everybody asking for miracles. At the end of the service we took the cards and we presented them in front of God. In every service, we take a special part for miracles.

Eric: Is there any personal testimony of a miracle that happened to you or is there any clear case in your church whereby you realized that this was a miraculous occurrence?

**R1:** I really have other testimonies. I remember 3 years ago, we went to a mission trip in Macedonia and I was praying for a woman who I didn't know was blind. When I prayed for her, she just recovered in front of me.

At the moment, the last one which is one week old happened as follows. I have a brother and a sister with a child who had fibrosis. Just three weeks ago the doctors gave the baby 24 hours of life to live. As a result, we contacted all the churches to pray for him. Since then the baby took two kilos instead of dying. I could give you lots of others but this is the latest.

Eric: What was your immediate reaction after the miracle or in the days following?

**R1:** The first reaction is really praising God, having a happiness which comes from the inside. And it is like a happiness of being so much in peace with God. You feel like God is doing something amazingly, it is incredible, it is like an admiration. That is the right word; you are in admiration of what is happening.

Eric: Has experiencing of a miracle changed the way you think or react with other people? If so, how?

**R1:** Yes. A miracle can change people. A miracle will also not change people. I saw a family whose child was raised from dead but the father did not accept enough to follow Jesus and only thought it was a coincidence.

Eric: What kind of influences do miracles bring on the lives of the members of your church and possibly the people around?

**R1:** Thanksgiving. Every time there is a testimony, we see the whole church in an atmosphere of thanksgiving to God realizing that we are so small and that God is so big.

### **(iii) A Comparative View of Miracles**

Eric: As the pastor of this Dutch Pentecostal church, what has been your experience with the African initiated Pentecostals concerning miracles?

**R1:** I am relatively new in Holland. I come from Brussels, and in Brussels, we have a lot of African churches of which the New Jerusalem is an example. It is a very big church in Belgium at the moment. And they are people who really live in the life of miracles. They do not only believe in miracles but all of their life shows the life of miracles. There is a different attitude compared to what we call the 'European' or 'Dutch'. We would expect a miracle while the African who I know would live on miracle, and that's the different kinds of mentalities, different mindsets I perceive.

Eric: Do you perceive any difference or similarities about both beliefs and doctrinal views of miracles?

**R1:** I see the difference. Of course, African people are much more opened to everything that has to do with miracles. I think it also has a lot to do with the background and culture. The Africans are much more opened to everything spiritual compared to Dutch people who are more pragmatic people, a more reserved people and everything that is supernatural is a bit strange. I think that is the biggest difference.

Eric: I have visited some Dutch Pentecostal churches in Amsterdam only to discover either a few or sometimes no African Pentecostal member. Could possible different perceptions of miracles play a role in this? If so, briefly explain.

**R1:** I don't think only miracles but all the charismatic aspects, yes. I was just speaking at a meeting before this interview about this church which I have been pastoring 9 months ago. I remember 4 or 5 years ago, the asielzoekerscentrum (refugee center) here, we had a lot of African people in our church. Most of the people left simply because they were too vocal for the rest of the church. So many times the church said, 'you pray too hard' or 'you sing too hard' or 'you worship too hard.' So for the African people they would feel like, we do not feel welcome here because we cannot express our worship in the way we can. I am praising God because in the last 9 months, we have started seeing more colour people which is a great blessing. So I think besides the miracles, there is all the cultural, the spirituality, the stream and the expression of your faith which makes it become part.

Eric: What do you recommend for the Classical Pentecostals in general concerning the issue of miracles?

**R1:** The miracles are some things which God has in store for us, and He is the giver of miracles, the maker, I would say. I think we should have faith in what God does for us. Now, for my side I think that we should not run after the miracles, we should run after Christ. Unfortunately I see people running after a healer and I would say if somebody prophesies we call him a prophet, if somebody heals we call him a healer. So if somebody prays for somebody and the person accepts Jesus how should we call that person, a savior? There is only one savior, there is only one healer and that is Jesus Christ. So I believe that once we follow Christ, God through Christ will give us what we need. If we start to search for miracles and for the supernatural without searching Christ we are ruined beings... I encourage everybody to follow Christ.



## **Interview with R2**

Respondent 2 (R2) is 26 years of age. He studied at Bible School de Wittenberg Zeist, Master's Commission Amsterdam North and Groene Hart Lyceum. He is a dedicated member of Pinkstergemeente Agape. My interview with him took place in Amsterdam.

### **(i) Context**

Eric: Where do you come from?

**R2:** I come from the Netherlands.

Eric: Where is your current residence?

**R2:** Amsterdam North

Eric: What is your profession or occupation?

**R2:** Right now I do many things but my main occupation is catering

Eric: What do you do also in the church?

**R2:** I am part of the worship team, a pianist and singer, part of the Youth Ministry as a Youth leader.

Eric: Would you please give me a short history about your religious / Christian background?

**R2:** In short, I used to be a Baptist. In the Baptist church a great focus was on sound doctrines but not so much of the life of the Holy Spirit which I was very much attracted to. Earlier on, I realized that that was where one needed to find holiness, which was where one could find guidance as a Christian, from the Holy Spirit. So when I heard of the Pentecostal church, I was drawn into it, and I felt spiritually drawn into their ways.

### **(ii) Miracle Significance and Teachings**

Eric: What do you consider as a miracle?

**R2:** Personally, I consider a miracle as something that is extraordinary, something which is out of anything one is used to or accustomed to. So it is something supernatural to me.

Eric: Do you believe in the miracles of the Bible?

**R2:** Definitely, yes.

Eric: If so, what do you think were the purposes of miracles in the Bible?

**R2:** Within the Bible, there is a great deal where they are called signs. They are signs because they point toward Jesus and to the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. These to me means, it is something that tells of what is to come, a taste of the supernatural kingdom.

Eric: What would you say about some school of thoughts that believe that miracles were bound to certain age, groups and certain places?

**R2:** I think it would be foolishness. For me personally, miracles are connected to the supernatural. But the word 'supernatural' has one word in it that is very much related to it which is 'natural'. We do believe in the 'natural' but we don't believe in the 'super' part. Yet as human beings we can sometimes perceive sounds, colours and stuff that are around us but we can't experience it because it is out of our range or whatever. So for us, to say it is bound to a certain age, a certain time that is saying like grains are only going to grow in 2001 during the Summer time. It is foolishness because grain will grow wherever it is.

Eric: What or where do you think is the place of miracles in the Pentecostal churches today?

**R2:** I think sometimes it has a small place or minor place. There is no a heavy focus. I am looking at this church for the moment, there is no a strong focus on it. We are focusing more on it but the focus is more towards holiness rather than the supernatural. I mean both are good things but I think if you don't have the miracle, you are little bit lacking the salt in your meal.

Eric: What would say has been the historical and theological position of Pinkstergemeente Agape on the subject of miracles?

**R2:** I think their view has been that miracles are happening and they are real and that is it. That is probably from the theological point of view and doctrinal point of view. They have more view points but I don't know them by heart.

Eric: Is there a specific focus of miracles in the sermons of the church? Or what does the church teach about miracles?

**R2:** Within the church I would say that there has been a new trend. The church has been in a down position but a guy from New Zealand helped us to build us up again. He has a strong focus on miracles. What he would do sometimes is that, during services he would just ask, 'is there anybody sick, raise your hand?' And he would say, 'I trust God for miracles. I believe miracles are for today. So if you are around somebody put your hands, pray for them in the name of Jesus and we are going to believe for them to be healed.' So this trend, which is more of awareness towards miracles, is slowly picked up by some people in the church.

Eric: Is there any personal testimony of a miracle that happened to you or is there any clear case in your church whereby you realized that this was just a miraculous occurrence?

**R2:** I have had that awesome experience over a healing that didn't happen to me but to somebody that I prayed for. To me personally, I once had a pain in my ear and it wouldn't go away. I was worried about it so I started praying. I was like, 'God, my ears is hurting, and I want it to be healed. I know you have the power to do it but what would you like me to do?' And He said, 'be at peace, I will take care of it.' And I said okay and I left it for Him. After a week, everything was gone.

There was a boy who had an iron pole fell on his knee during a program that we organized. As a result, his knee was bruised from the inside and he couldn't walk. But we were getting near to the end of our program so basically we had a lot of stuff to finish. Unfortunately, this guy wasn't able to participate. And I was like, 'this cannot be, come on! This is the end, he needs to be part of this, you know, he cannot be left out.' And I knew this guy would not come and ask for prayer. So I said to the people, 'guys, I keep thinking about this, I think we should pray for Tobias, which was his name. Because he needed healing and God could heal so I want to pray for a healing miracle. And it was picked up by the group saying, 'let's go.' And directly, it was after lunch time so we gathered and everybody looked at me, 'you made the proposal.' I said, guys, 'I don't know if there is faith in the house to pray. I don't believe in faithless prayer.' After making this faith statement, some of them responded, 'yes of course, I just believe we need to pray.' So we started praying and for some time, the prayer faded out. After this we asked Tobias how his knee was. And he said, 'still hurting, still in pain.' His response silenced everybody. But one girl suddenly stood up being fired up with the Spirit of God and said something very powerfully. She said, 'It is not a matter of if we have the faith, it is the matter of if we put our faith into action.' And so suddenly this whole group just started praying again. This was a different prayer. You could feel the faith from that prayer. And so at some point, this guy started screaming, pulled his leg toward himself and started to jump again and again. We asked him, 'How is your knee?' And he said, 'you see me jumped, it is gone, it is gone.' And then we knew that this was a miracle because bruises don't heal like that.

Eric: What was your immediate reaction after the miracle of the healing that you experienced in your ears, and the following days?

**R2:** Well, for once you become very happy because you realize that your God is real and He cares. Totally thrilled and so amazed because we are not talking about anybody but about somebody who made the heaven and the earth, somebody so higher than president Barrack Obama. And He comes into my circumstance and has attention for me, it is like Mr. Universe, Mr. Awesomeness coming to me, oh it is amazing!

Eric: What about the other story, the one about Tobias. What was the influence that the miracle had on him or the people around?

**R2:** We were all in awe and full of worship, very worshipful atmosphere. We were very thankful when it happened because it was just an amazing thing.

**Eric:** Has experiencing of a miracle changed the way you think or react with other people? If so, how?

**R2:** It has made me realized that there is far more to any circumstance that we can possibly think of. It has made my mind opened to possibilities like such as believing that I can prayer for the sick to be healed regardless of the sickness one may have. Apart from that, it fires one's heart up for more miracles and basically to share your God with other people.

**Eric:** What kind of influences do miracles bring on the lives of the members of your church and possibly the people around?

**R2:** From the Bible there are different reactions towards miracle. Some people believed but some others did not when a miracle was performed. I believe this is a general way with every human being. Those are the two general things that you see. People are confronted with the truth of reality, you cannot go around it, either you believe it and go with it or disbelieve it and turn away.

**Eric:** So have you seen this experience in your church before?

**R2:** I have seen the good part. I have yet to experience people that really will walk away and say, no, this is from the devil. I know that it happens to some people but I have not seen it yet.

### **(iii) A comparative view**

**Eric:** As a Dutch Classical Pentecostal leader in your church, what is your experience with the African Initiated Pentecostal churches on the issue of miracles?

**R2:** A miracles is very primitive thing. By this I mean it comes from very deep within. I would say it goes back to this force that has created everything. And what you see in the Dutch society is very 'civilized'. We have reason, we have clear thinking, and we have a lot of stuff. And so whatever happens, a lot of Dutch would kind of be reasonable and down to earth about anything. They look at it from a distance and observe it. Well, with African people, I see that they are in a good way embrace it more. You know when something happens they are over joy about it and then they stay closer to that essence. I would say, the Dutch tend to use more of their minds (like reasoning, observing).

**Eric:** Do you perceive any differences or similarities about both (Dutch Classical Pentecostals and African Initiated Pentecostals) beliefs and doctrinal views of miracles?

**R2:** I think there are differences but more a cultural ones. When you come back to what we really believe in, we actually believe in lots of things the same. It comes from

God; the miracles are not the main focus of anything. It is only pointing towards, you know... There are some differences but it is mostly cultural in the true sense of pure doctrine. I think there are tones of similarities, you need faith, you need the Holy Spirit, and you need to be in Jesus etc.

**Eric:** I have visited some Dutch Classical Pentecostal churches in Amsterdam only to discover that either few or sometimes no African Pentecostal member. Could possible different perception of miracles play a role in this situation? If so, briefly explain.

**R2:** Probably yes. Because when you do disagree on certain points of course, it is going to have an influence.

Eric: What do you recommend for the classical Pentecostals in general concerning the issue of miracles?

**R2:** Go for it. A miracle is not a bad thing. If a miracle was a poison and it would kill you, I would say, oh stop it right away. But it heals people, it delivers people, it sets people free. What is the bad in that? There is only profit and I think one of the things that we should learn to do is; Pentecostals, let's take this life, the life that Christ lived, the life of the Holy Spirit and not any other spirit. Let's embrace a miracle, let's search for it, let's think out of it, let's feel out of it, let's breathe it, whatever that is engulfed in the life of Christ, we can use to make a difference in order to shine Christ's light. What I stimulate for everybody and for the churches is, basically, the road to miracles is the road toward Christ.

### **Interview with R3**

Respondent 3 (R3) is over 60 years of age. She studied at the Centrale Pinkster Bijbelschool. She has taught as lecturer at Azusa Theological Seminary, Amsterdam. She is currently an associate pastor and teacher at Evangeliegemeente De Oase. My interview with her took place in Zeist.

#### **(i) Context**

Eric: Where do you come from?

**R3:** I was born in The Hague, the Netherlands

Eric: Where is your current residence?

**R3:** Zeist, the Netherlands

Eric: What is your profession or occupation?

**R3:** Pastor, Teacher

Eric: Can you please tell me a short history of your Christian/ religious background?

**R3:** I was born into a Pentecostal family. My father was a pastor. I received my calling for the work of the Lord when I was a girl. I had a theological training and worked as a teacher and a pastor for many years.

## **(ii) Miracle Significance and Teachings**

Eric: What do you consider as a miracle?

**R3:** Something you did not expect. There can be many areas – there can be a healing, restoration of a relation, repentance etc.

Eric: What do you think were the purposes of miracles in the Bible?

**R3:** I think that the Biblical purpose is to confirm Jesus' ministry, to confirm that he is the Son of God. Miracles in the church are to confirm that God is working... the confirmation of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Eric: Do you believe in the miracles of the Bible?

**R3:** Yes, I do believe

Eric: What do you think is the place of miracles in the Pentecostal churches today?

**R3:** I still think that in the Biblical way; to confirm that Jesus is Lord, to show the world that God is still there. People are in need and God wants to help, to intervene, to heal and which is a blessing for the person and at the same time as a testimony to the world. God is present in the church. God is still working in the world.

Eric: What would you say has been the historical and theological position of your church on the subject of miracles?

**R3:** I would say that the miracles of the Bible did not stop at the end of the Bible. So, historically and theologically, it is where God is present where God is at work. There are miracles that were in the time of the Bible. It is never said that in the time of the Bible it is finished and miracles are finished. No, in the church it continues till all the ages. There is a continuation of miracles because God is still present in his church. We also believe God can heal the sick by his divine power and also through medication.

Eric: Is there a specific focus of miracles in your sermons? Or what do you teach the congregation about miracles?

**R3:** There is not a specific focus but when the Bible story tells about a miracle, then, we say, miracles still happen. So it is not like every Sunday we are going to preach about miracle. We teach the church that miracles can happen. There is not an automatism - you push the bottom and you have a miracle. There are two things, you have the preaching, and when in the Bible portion there was a miracle you referred to, people can always come and ask for a prayer for a miracle after the service. We

do not have too often an invitation, we have it once in a while where people can come forward and be prayed for. There is a room for miracles. Concerning healing miracles, we raise awareness that God can do it in different ways. He can do it without medicine and also through medicine. Sometimes God intervenes and the sick don't need medicine anymore or don't need hospital treatment. But many times people need it and so we pray that God will work His miracles through the medicine to heal the sick.

Eric: Is there any personal testimony of a miracle that happened to you or is there any clear case in your church whereby you realized that this was a miraculous occurrence?

**R3:** I think actually people say after some services that, 'because of the prayer, I was touched by God, I received a healing, God was there etc.'

Eric: To what extent does a miracle influence the members of your church?

**R3:** Happiness and the enthusiasm to give testimonies. Miracles do bring encouragement and stimulating effects upon the people.

### **(iii) A Comparative View of Miracles**

Eric: With your well of experiences as a Dutch Classical Pentecostal pastor, do you perceive any difference or perhaps similarities among the African Initiated and Dutch Pentecostals concerning both beliefs and practices of miracles?

**R3:** Both have different measures of emphasis. In my opinion the Africans preach and teach more about miracles, more emphasis on what you see or hear. The Dutch Pentecostals lay lesser emphasis on miracles although both groups believe in miracles.

Eric: I have visited a couple of African Initiated Pentecostal churches in Amsterdam South- east only to discover either few or sometimes no Dutch Pentecostal member. Could possible different perception of miracles play a role in this situation? If so, briefly explain?

**R3:** Possibly a small part in it. I don't know certainly

Eric: What do you recommend for the Classical Pentecostals in general concerning the issue of miracles?

**R3:** We should not forget that God is doing miracles, even today. We should have it in our sermons preached. It is sometimes easy to fall into certain patterns. Dutch pastors are too careful because of past experiences of forcing people to testify to being healed meanwhile they were not really healed. If you are too careful too, you may not preach or teach about it. Children are troublesome yet we can't avoid them.

## **Interview with R4**

Respondent 4 (R4) is 64 years old. She studied Missiology and Pastoral Theology in Belgium and is currently part of the pastoral team of Evangeliegemeente De Oase. She serves as an editor and creative officer of Tears Organization. My interview with her took place at the church's premises.

### **(i) Context**

Eric: Where do you come from?

**R4:** I come from Utrecht but was raised in Amsterdam.

Eric: Where is your current residence?

**R4:** Doorn, the Netherlands

Eric: What is your profession or occupation?

**R4:** Editor and creative Services officer, Preacher and Counselor and a former missionary

Eric: Can you please tell me a short history about your Christian/ religious background?

**R4:** I do not come from a Christian family. My mother came from a mixed family (Catholic and strict reformed). My father came from a mixed family (Jewish and Reformed). After I tried to commit suicide, some Baptists visited me in the hospital. They took me to church. I was converted and baptized. After growing into faith I quitted my job (police officer) and went to Bible College in Belgium. After finished my study I went to Brazil and 2 years later to Bolivia to work as a missionary. Because of very bad health conditions the Red Cross brought me back to Holland. After recuperation I joint an organization called Tea. Through contacts with partners overseas I realized being in need of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I was baptized and went to India for a study of 'the power of the Holy Spirit amongst Hindus and Muslims. I became a member of Evangeliegemeente in 1986.

### **(ii) Miracle Significance and Teachings**

Eric: What do you consider as miracle?

**R4:** Miracles are those direct changes that come from above and almost always positive, always positive. A miracle gives life.

Eric: What do you think were the purposes of miracles in the Bible?

**R4:** Miracles were meant for unbelievers. Naaman was an example in the Bible. He was a gentile who experienced a miraculous healing of his leprosy. Thus miracles are



signs on a larger degree meant for peoples who are yet to come inside the church of Christ.

## **(ii) Miracle Significance and Teaching**

Eric: Do you believe in the miracles of the Bible?

**R4:** I believe hundred percent in the miracles of the Bible

Eric: What do you think is the place of miracles in the Pentecostal churches today?

**R4:** It is still alive. Our church believes and embraces miracles.

Eric: What would you say has been the historical and theological position of your church on the subject of miracles?

**R4:** Our church has always believed in the miraculous. That has not changed; we have our historical and theological position rooted in the Bible. We have not seen much healings though. Many haven't spoken about it.

Eric: Is there a specific focus of miracles in your sermons? Or what do you teach the congregation about miracles?

**R4:** Every now and then, it comes up. We preach about miracles periodically. Sometimes, some of the people come forward to be anointed.

Eric: Is there any personal testimony of a miracle that happened to you or is there any clear case in your church whereby you realized that this was a miraculous occurrence?

**R4:** Personally, I had two heart attacks that nearly cost my life. God intervened and I was healed completely. It was later confirmed in the hospital that all the scars in my heart were totally gone.

I have also been a witness to tens of thousands of people in India, many from different religious backgrounds who received healings during healing sessions as a result of the power of God during my missionary work there.

**Eric:** If so, to what extent does a miracle influence the members of your church?

**R4:** Whenever a miracle is performed in our church, the people feel dumbfounded. But whether miracles or not, we still love God, and no matter what.

## **(iii) A Comparative View of Miracles**

Eric: With your well of experiences as a Dutch Classical Pentecostal leader, do you perceive any difference or perhaps similarities among the African Initiated and Dutch Pentecostals concerning both beliefs and practices of miracles?

**R4:** No difference in beliefs but difference in out working. It may also have to do with both expectations in approaches to miracles. The Africans seems to be little more extreme than the Dutch. Maybe different cultures also play a role in this.

Eric: I have visited a couple of African Initiated Pentecostal churches in Amsterdam South east only to discover either few or sometimes no Dutch Pentecostal member. Could possible different perception of miracles play a role in this situation? If so, briefly explain?

**R4:** I do not really know if miracles have something to do with this situation. However, I think it may be different cultural perceptions.

**Eric:** What do you recommend for the Classical Pentecostals in general concerning the issue of miracles?

**R4:** Classical Pentecostals should confess by usurping the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit and putting themselves or their mission on the throne (not glorifying them). This should be a regularly returning confession through which the Lord Himself will be uplifted and glorified of which miracles are all about. Classical Pentecostals should thus review their perspectives on the issue of miracles, for a miracle in itself neither changes a man nor opens the way to a lifestyle that conforms to the Kingdom of Christ.

Remember that ten lepers were healed and only one came back to give glory to the Lord. It is the touch of Christ that challenges a man to open up for the heart of the Kingdom and that, only that values a miracle.

## **Appendix C: Interviews with 4 AIP Leaders**

The four respondents here are labeled as follow: Interview Five, R5, Interview Six, R6, Interview Seven, R6 and Interview Eight, R8. The “R” stands for respondent. R5 and R6 are members of Maranatha Community Transformation Center while R7 and R8 belong to Pentecost Revival Church.

### **Interview with R5**

Respondent 5 (R5) is 55 years of age and currently serves as the head pastor of Maranatha Community Transformation Center. He studied at Tyndale Theological Seminary, Netherlands. He has led MCTC for over a decade now. This interview took place in person and in his office, Amsterdam.

Eric: Where do you come from?

**R5:** I’m from Nigeria

Eric: Where is your current residence?

**R5:** Amsterdam

Eric: What is your profession or occupation?

**R5:** I’m pastoring a church now, that is, MCTC

Eric: Would you please give a short history about your religious/ Christian background?

**R5:** I was born into an Anglican home. My dad and mom were Anglicans. So I was raised the first 12 years of my life in an Anglican church. I later became a Pentecostal believer courtesy of my brother. I also had other religious experiences when I was growing up. I went to mosque with one of my uncles and I was surprised that my dad just let me go. I have even gone to the Catholic church with my friends when I was growing up because in our village all these people did things together, Catholic, Anglican and Lutherans and the Baptists, they worked together. I think that has helped me, growing up and even now, to have an open mind to people that do not belong to the Pentecostal faith.

### **(ii) Miracle Significance and Teachings**

Eric: What do you consider as miracle?

**R5:** Life is a miracle. The existence of life itself is a miracle. Anything that we cannot explain with this mind is a miracle - a healing, deliverance... For me, life is full of miracles.

Eric: Do you believe in the miracles of the Bible?

**R5:** Sure, I believe in the miracles of the Bible.

Eric: If so, what do you think were the purposes of miracles in the Bible?

**R5:** I think the key purpose of the miracles is to let people know that the kingdom of God is here. Because when John sent his disciples to Jesus to find out if he was the Messiah. Jesus said, 'the blind see, the lame walk etc...In essence, the kingdom of God has come.' And apart from that, miracle is just to let people experience some of the blessings of God, the blessings of life because Jesus said I came that you may have life and have it abundantly.

Eric: What would you say about some school of thoughts that believe that miracles were bound to certain age, certain groups and certain places?

**R5:** It is really unfortunate because there should be no controversy about miracle and the period of miracle. I think it has always been there and will always been there until the world comes to an end. Even before Jesus came miracles had been there, so how can some people say miracles are limited to certain age and times? The apostles in the Scripture and even in our own times, we have seen a lot of miracles. I don't believe miracles are limited to certain age and period.

Eric: What do you think is the place of miracles in the Pentecostal churches today?

**R5:** I think miracles have a very important role to play. To help people know that the kingdom of God has come like Jesus said. For me, I think in the church, miracles should have a very central place in our administration to do.

Eric: What would you say has been the historical and theological position of your church on the subject of miracles?

**R5:** Theologically, God is a God of miracles. The creation of life itself and the earth is a miracle, he spoke and it was there. Historically too, we trace miracles into the Bible. The Bible is a record of the miracles of God...

**Eric:** Is there a specific focus of miracles in your sermons? Or what do you teach the congregation about miracles?

**R5:** I teach them about Jesus, not about miracles because Jesus is the miracle. So, I preach Jesus and when Jesus is preached, definitely, you are preaching miracle. I believe Jesus is the one who carries all these healings, deliverance and so on.

Eric: Is there any personal testimony of a miracle that happened to you or is there any clear case in your church whereby you realized that this was a miraculous occurrence?

**R5:** I remember a woman who came to our church and could not see. We prayed for her and her eyes opened and she could see clearly.

Personally, in 2002 God did something that shook my faith. I was the general secretary of GATE (Gospel from Africa to Europe). We were organizing a conference that time for all the pastors in Europe. Most of the pastors did not have money. So we were supposed to pay more than half of their hotel costs. Consequently, we have to look for funds to subsidize them. There was a Dutchman that was also in the board. So, he said he would raise the funds and that he knew the churches and organizations to approach. I made a list of them and stated how much each would

give because we had to raise ten thousand in total. The Dutchman calculated everything and said it was not a problem.

So we went to the hotel and signed a contract. At that time I asked him, 'Brother Otto, do you really want me to sign this contract?' And he said, 'yes, I will raise the money, no problem.' And the condition of the contract was that, three months before the time we can cancel some amount of the debt without any charge. Six weeks before the time we have to pay half. Three weeks before the time we have to pay fully if we cancel the conference. So we left and were happy that everything was settled.

Exactly three weeks before the time, the guy called me and said he had not been able to raise any money. It's like I was not hearing what this guy was saying...where would I get ten thousand to pay back. I said, 'Brother Otto,' and he said, 'yes, I am sorry, Moses, I have tried, I don't have time and there is nothing I can do!' He hanged the phone. I remember that day I was alone in my room. I knelt down tears in my eyes. I said 'God, you have to help me because I don't know where I can get ten thousand Euros. I am the only one who signed this contract.' I prayed very shortly and then pulled out my drawer. I saw the names of the organizations that we had applied to before for fund and they never gave. But they were the only three that I had. So I wrote them a letter saying we are organizing this conference and ...You can't believe it. A week before the conference, I raised all the ten thousand Euros. Exactly the amount we needed, not more and not less. I said, 'this can only be God, this is a miracle.' We had the conference and it was wonderful.

Eric: If so, what was your immediate reaction after the miracle or in the days following?

**R5:** Everybody was excited. It also brought about the praise of God.

Eric: Has experiencing of a miracle changed the way you think or react with other people? If so, how?

**R5:** Well, I think it strengthens faith. Our understanding of God is also encouraged when we experience miracles.

### **(iii) A Comparative View of Miracles**

Eric: As an African Pentecostal leader living in the Netherlands, what is your experience with the Dutch Classical Pentecostal church concerning miracles?

**R5:** I think it varies. Even the church Pentecostal classical, within this cluster there are still a lot of varieties so you can not generalize it. I have contacts with several of them and they are in different groups like VPE (a group itself), the Four Square Gospel and a lot of free Pentecostal churches that do not belong to any group. But I think generally speaking, they all believe in miracles. There are some that are skeptical but very few as I can remember because I have really interacted with lots of them. I think they expect miracles, they believe in miracles but still some are skeptical.

Eric: Do you perceive any differences or similarities about both beliefs and doctrinal views of miracles?

**R5:** The African, no doubt, they just go for it. The Dutch are very cautious. Even when there is a miracle, they are very cautious to say it is a miracle. But the Africans even when there is no miracle, they claim there is a miracle.

I think it is the environment. The environment we grew up from is an environment of miracles because our lives totally depend on God, that's the way we have been brought up. Even for some people in Africa, they have to pray before they can eat. In Africa, we pray for everything – for rain, even for electricity... a miracle to have light. But here in the Netherlands, the environment is such that it does not challenge people's faith to expect a miracle because nearly everything is provided. If you are not working they give you money, your health insurance is there... So that plays a very important role in the African Pentecostal believers' approach, understanding and beliefs in miracles.

Eric: I have visited a couple of Dutch Pentecostal churches in Amsterdam only to discover either few or sometimes no African Pentecostal member. Could possible different perception of miracles play a role in this situation? If so, briefly explain?

**R5:** I can't say yes to that because I don't know whether it is the issue of miracles. But I know it is the issue of demography. I think demography contributes to that difference in congregations.

Eric: What do you recommend for the Classical Pentecostals in general concerning the issue of miracles?

**R5:** Well, I will recommend that, one: to examine the life of Jesus himself. Because his life is evidence of miracles, he was born of virgin's birth, not in a natural way. He was a miracle child. And the teachings of Jesus too are crucial. I think we should study it critically to find out that he came to establish the kingdom of God... I think the kingdom of God itself is the kingdom of miracles because it is a supernatural kingdom; it is a spiritual kingdom... So anything that is supernatural, definitely, is a miracle. So I will encourage them to study the life of Jesus and his teachings... revisit Jesus' life and what he came to do and I think that they will be convinced that God has called us to lay hands on the sick and they shall be healed, to cast out demons...to bring life where there is no life, bring hope where there is no hope, to enjoy life where there is no enjoyment, those are miracles.

## **Interview with R6**

Respondent 6 (R6) is 34 years of age. He completed his tertiary education in Sierra Leone and currently works as a social worker. He has been a staunch member of Maranatha Community Transformation Center (MCTC) for more than 5 years. My interview with him took place at the MCTC premises.

### **(i) The Context**

Eric: Where do you come from?

**R6:** I'm from Sierra Leone

Eric: Where is your current residence?

**R6:** I live in Amsterdam now

Eric: What is your profession or occupation?

**R6:** I am a social worker. In the church, I serve as an organizer of prayer and also in charge of the videoing of the sermons during the service. I'm also a freelancer in any other thing that comes up.

Eric: Would you please give a short history about your religious/ Christian background?

**R6:** I was born into a Christian family. There came a time that I had to make a personal decision to really dedicate my life fully to Christ and ever since then, I have not regretted it. I have been a Pentecostal all my life.

### **(ii) Miracle Significance and Teaching**

Eric: What do you consider as miracle?

**R6:** It is a supernatural thing and that with the natural mind you cannot get the whole concept. A miracle is not something you can say, 'oh I know how it works.' Miracle is something specifically done by God that we have no answer and we cannot say we played a part in.

Eric: Do you believe in the miracles of the Bible?

**R6:** I do believe in the miracles of the Bible.

Eric: If so, what do you think were the purposes of miracles in the Bible?

**R6:** The purpose of miracles in the Bible was to draw man's attention back to his maker. Because God created man and has a solution to every need of man. God makes miracles so that people can realize our dependence on Him. Miracles are also there to glorify God.

Eric: What would you say about some school of thoughts that believe that miracles were bound to certain age, certain groups and certain places?

**R6:** I don't agree with them. Miracles are universal things. A miracle can happen to anybody. It is not bound to the Jews alone neither to the gentiles alone. So I don't believe in that school of thought that says that it belongs to a particular age, group or places.

Eric: What do you think is the place of miracles in the Pentecostal churches today?

**R6:** Let me correct this notion as a regard to miracle in the Pentecostal church.

Pentecostalism is not all about miracles. It is also about bringing people, reconciling them back to Christ. A miracle in the course of a Pentecostal service can happen even at a time unexpected. But if the aim of coming to church is just to receive a miracle, I think it is a wrong foundation.

Eric: What would you say has been the historical and theological position of your church on the subject of miracles?

**R6:** The historical part of it, which means miracles taken place in the church, the simple answer is, yes. A lot of people in the course of the services that have been prayed were healed from whatever infirmities they had. Theologically, we preach miracles but we don't make it the only emphasis. You know, miracle is just one of those things that happen, part of the things that are included in the package of salvation.

**Eric:** Is there a specific focus of miracles in your sermons? Or what do you teach the congregation about miracles?

**R6:** Our sermons or teachings are not based on the miracles. We teach the undiluted word of God. Knowing God and having a relationship with him. I think that is the beginning of a miracle. In one of the sermons, the pastor said that, 'your life in itself is a miracle.' We also don't rule out that people should go to their doctors for consultations and examinations as far as certain miracles are concerned.

Eric: Is there any personal testimony of a miracle that happened to you or is there any clear case in your church whereby you realized that this was a miraculous occurrence?

**R6:** I was sick in 2006 to the point of death. I lost all hope. I wouldn't sit here to tell you this if it had not been for God, my case would have been a forgotten case by now.

In the church there is a sister, for security reasons I don't want to mention her name. The doctors gave her a mandate that she would not live for more than six months because of a cancer virus. Today, we are thankful to God that she is still living and God has healed her from that virus.

Eric: If so, what was your immediate reaction after the miracle or in the days following?

**R6:** It brought me back to the school of thought that, when you seek me you will find me. I wouldn't say that I was seeking God when this miracle happened. But it really brought me back to my knees. It humbled me.



**Eric:** Has experiencing of a miracle changed the way you think or react with other people? If so, how?

**Philip:** As a person I believe in miracles. I believe that God initiated miracles, it is bread for children of God, healing and it is something that when you a follower of Christ you can't separate miracles from yourself. I mean they go hand in hand. When I tell people, it depends on the case you have, I say, the miracle is that you have to go back and make peace with God. That is a starting point or a set-off point. And when you make peace with God and not just because you want a miracle in your life, then he will speak to you, your mindset will be broaden and you will see that what you think is not possible means nothing to God. So it changed my perspective to life.

**Eric:** What kind of influences do miracles bring on the lives of the members of your church and possibly the people around?

**R6:** Generally, every child of God is a miracle and there is a point where God does extraordinary things in their lives. Miracles enable the church to grow. When you tell somebody that this is what God did for me, they will want to be part of that miracle.

### **(iii) A Comparative view of Miracles**

**Eric:** As an African Pentecostal leader living in the Netherlands, what is your experience with the Dutch Classical Pentecostal church concerning miracles?

**R6:** I think here, there are cultural differences. I'm going to say it in two ways. One, having an African background, I'm not saying that we are born to believe in miracles, I'm not saying that all we are serving God for is a miracle. Studying the word of God and seeing what miracle is and knowing what miracle all about, believes that miracle is part of my salvation package. Now, in the Western perspective, they believe that the Africans need miracles. Because for them they have insurances, they have everything, so what do they need miracles for? But I believe that that is a wrong view of life because God can do all things. There is no kind of illness that God cannot heal.

It is a pity that when you tell a Pentecostal Westerner that, this is what it is, they just settle for it. Let's say, they went to a hospital and the doctor declared them, you have this you have that. Sometimes, God wants you to grow. God wants you to challenge him with those things. For an African, when you say that, he would tell you, 'I don't settle for that that is not what the word of God says concerning me.' But the westerner would think that because the doctor has declared it, he would accept it. I mean God is a God of healer, so why not tell him? It is not about having things set in place and they are all working well, we have good roads, jobs, we have children, this and that. But there is a point where you also need to understand God for yourself. So I think this is where we differ, from the western perspective and the African perspective.

**Eric:** Do you perceive any differences or similarities about both beliefs and doctrinal views of miracles?

**R6:** There are different views but there are also some Pentecostals here in the west societies who believe in miracles. I mean, I hear the pastors talking about miracles.

So I don't think some of them have different perceptions about miracles than I do. When you sit down and interview some of them they would say that a miracle is a supernatural thing. And so, I think it is the ability to transfer this knowledge or information to your followers that changes the whole concept. So in other words, if you don't do that we still have these different views about miracles.

Eric: I have visited a couple of African Initiated Pentecostal churches in Amsterdam South east only to discover either few or sometimes no Dutch Pentecostal member. Could possible different perception of miracles play a role in this situation? If so, briefly explain?

**R6:** No, I don't think that has to do with miracles. I think that is where integration comes in. The Dutch society wants the foreigners to integrate in their culture. It is a two-way thing. The African Pentecostalism is about making noise, shouting and praising God, making the arena very joyous. But the Western Pentecostal is doing it, but very softly. So it has nothing to do with miracles but cultural differences.

Eric: What do you recommend for the Classical Pentecostals in general concerning the issue of miracles?

**R6:** We need to have an open mind. We need to accept what God says it is. It is something we ourselves cannot do, whether you are from the African background or the Western background, it is open minded thing. We all need to seek God for ourselves. You know the Scriptures says, Moses knew the ways of God but the people of Israel knew the acts of God. So we really need to also know God for ourselves and then understand what the definition of miracles actually is. It is not a transferrable thing. I can only explain it from the scriptural point of view but accepting it is the other person's responsibility.

## **Interview with R7**

Respondent 7 (R7) is 48 years old. He had his formal education in Ghana. He is a trained pastor, a missionary and licensed counselor. He currently serves as the general overseer of Pentecost Revival Church (PRC) and the chairman of the migrants' Pentecostal Council of churches in the Netherlands. My interview with him took place in his office in Amsterdam.

### **(i) Context**

Eric: Where do you come from?

**R7:** I'm a Ghanaian by origin.

Eric: Where is your current residence?

**R7:** Amsterdam

Eric: What is your profession or occupation?

**R7:** I am a minister of religion, a chaplain in the detention, a chairman of the Pentecostal Council of Churches and the chairman of the migrant churches in Holland.

Eric: Would you please give a brief history of your religious or Christian background?

**R7:** I am a Pentecostal. I am a missionary that came here. I started the church of Pentecost here in Amsterdam in the early 1980s. I opened about 13 branches in Holland before I was a national head of church of Pentecost.

### **(ii) Miracles Significance and Teaching**

Eric: What do you consider as a miracle?

**R7:** A miracle is anything that supernaturally happens.

Eric: Do you believe in the miracles of the Bible?

**R7:** I believe in the Bible, so I believe every teaching in the Bible.

Eric: What do you think were the purposes of miracles in the Bible?

**R7:** For the Lord to show that he is sovereign, that he is above everything.

Eric: What would you say about some school of thoughts that believe that miracles were bound to a certain age, groups or places?

**R7:** No, I don't believe in that theology. Miracles are still happening now in our years and in our days and in our century. I can testify about a lot.

Eric: What do you think is the place of miracles in the Pentecostal churches today?

**R7:** No, miracles cannot have a place but Pentecostalism believes in divine gifting. The early church is a Pentecostal church and many people don't want to believe it. But you can see the Bible says in the book of Acts, when the Holy Ghost came upon 120 believers in the Upper Room, they became bold and miracles started happening. And so Pentecostalism believes in miracles.

Eric: What would you have been the historical and theological position of your church on the subject of miracles?

**R7:** We experience daily miracles events in our ministry. My theological position, I believe in miracles and what the Bible teaches about them... You see it from 1 Corinthians 12, the gifting of the Holy Ghost; to others he gave them the gift of word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, the word of faith, the word of healing and miracles.

Eric: Is there any personal testimony of a miracle that happened to you or is there any clear case in your church whereby you realized that this was a miraculous occurrence?

**R7:** We have a lot; the whole church is a testimony. We are Christ centered and we follow Christocentric principles, and so the whole church is a miracle. I know recently there is a lady that gave birth. They had taken the womb and still the lady gave birth. It happened here in De Kandelaar. This was an outstanding miracle.

Eric: What was your immediate reaction after the miracle or in the days following?

**R7:** Because you know it is something that is from God and as his child, you don't feel like a servant. So I can call him Abba Father. We cherish Him and we worship him and not because of the miracles but because he is our father.

Eric: Has experiencing of a miracle changed the way you think or react with other people? If so, how?

**R7:** No, since I believe in the totality of God and I know in his own time things can happen. Anywhere they mention the name of the Lord Jesus, I know miracles can happen. I'm not astonished because I know who he is.

Eric: What kind of influences do miracles bring on the lives of the members of your church and possibly the people around?

**R7:** When the church emphasizes on a miracle, it helps the church. Last time, I was busy telling them that healing and miracles; the author of it is God, not a human being.

### **(iii) A Comparative View of Miracles**

**Eric:** As an African Pentecostal leader living in the Netherlands, what is your experience with the Dutch Classical Pentecostals concerning miracles?

**R7:** Well, Pentecostalism is Pentecostalism. So the same ways I believe in miracles, my Dutch colleagues also believe in miracles. But they are liberal theology but I can't see liberal theology in Pentecostalism. Since I have been in the west affiliating with these Pentecostal churches, they also believe in the Bible, they believe in miracles.

**Eric:** Do you perceive any difference or similarities about both beliefs and doctrinal views of miracles?

**R7:** No. My point of view is difference in traditions.

**Eric:** I have visited some Dutch Pentecostal churches in Amsterdam only to discover either a few or sometimes no African Pentecostal member. Could possible different perceptions of miracles play a role in this? If so, briefly explain.

**R7:** No, a miracle happens when God wants it to happen and so irrespective of all the traditional differences, the Dutch Pentecostals experience miracles, the African Pentecostals experience miracles. That is a fact because we believe in them and the Dutch Pentecostals also believe in miracles.

**Eric:** What do you recommend for the Classical Pentecostals in general concerning the issue of miracles?

**R7:** I think we should just focus on the author and finisher of our faith. And we should try to take the culture out of our services and let the church be a universal church because that is what Christ came for. The church should be holistic in that concept of believe and strategy.

## **Interview with Respondent 8**

Respondent 8 (R8) was born in the Netherlands but is originally from Ghana. He is 24 years of age and has completed Joke Smith College, Amsterdam. He is a member of Pentecost Revival Church and serves as an elder and a youth leader in this ministry. My interview with him took place at Bijlmerdreef 1239, De Kandelaar in Amsterdam.

### **(i) Context**

Eric: Where do you come from?

**R8:** I was born in the Netherlands but my parents come from Ghana

Eric: Where is your current residence?

**R8:** Amsterdam north

Eric: What is your profession or occupation?

**R8:** I'm a student. At the moment also I'm working

Eric: Would you please give a short history about your religious/ Christian background?

**R8:** My biological father is a Muslim and my mother a Christian. But I was not raised as a Muslim. I started going to church with my step-father after my parents were divorced. At the age of 17, I really gave my life to Christ.

Eric: So which denomination? Was it a Catholic, Pentecost or any other?

**R8:** Pentecost

### **(ii) Miracles Significance and Teachings**

Eric: What do you consider as a miracle?

**R8:** I would consider miracle as the things that God actually does that is unusual. But sometimes, the normal things can be miracles, too. For instance, if you wake up from your sleep, it is a miracle. So I believe that the fact that God has given a life, it is a miracle.

Eric: Do you believe in the miracles of the Bible?

**R8:** I definitely believe in miracles.

Eric: If so, what do you think were the purposes of miracles in the Bible?

**R8:** To me, one of the purposes is to be a remembrance of what God can actually do. Because, sometimes as human beings we forget about the things that God can do. Like for example, when the people were led from Egypt to the Promised Land, the Bible says that after the Joshua generation came a generation that did not know the Lord or the things that he had done.

Eric: What would you say about some school of thoughts that believe that miracles were bound to certain age, certain groups and certain places?

**R8:** Of course, I believe that certain miracles can be bound to certain ages and groups. But I also still believe that God has not ceased performing miracles.

Eric: What do you think is the place of miracles in the Pentecostal churches today?

**R8:** Of course, there is a place of miracles in the church. But even outside the church when a soul is won and comes into the church, it is a miracle.

Eric: So specifically, in the Pentecostal churches where do we see miracles today?

**R8:** In the church but also on the streets.

Eric: What would you say has been the historical and theological position of your church on the subject of miracles?

**R8:** Since at the age of ten that I have been part of this church, I have experienced miracles myself. I have witnessed healings and miracles of people who could not receive children received children.

Eric: So what is the theological position of your church on the subject of miracles?

**R8:** Our church believes in miracles. One of our tenets says we believe in divine healing and also in medication.

Eric: Is there a specific focus of miracles in your sermons? Or what do you teach the congregation about miracles?

**R8:** We teach them about the miracles that God has performed in the Bible, at our present age and also the possibility of miracles in future expectations.

Eric: Is there any personal testimony of a miracle that happened to you or is there any clear case in your church whereby you realized that this was a miraculous occurrence?

**R8:** One lady that I had to work for, for her wedding. She got married for years and couldn't have a child. After praying and fasting, she received a child. To me personally, that was an experience that I have noticed of God performing a miracle.

Eric: If so, what was your immediate reaction after the miracle or in the days following?

**R8:** Well, it really built my faith in Christ. It was really a boost. It made me thanked Him the more and trusted him the more and continued my worship for Him.

Eric: Has experiencing of a miracle changed the way you think or react with other people? If so, how?

**R8:** It does not necessarily change the way I think but mostly confirmed. So miracles, to me, have become more of a confirmation than changing. The only exception is a change in the sense that it has made me believed more in God.

Eric: What kind of influences do miracles bring on the lives of the members of your church and possibly the people around?

**R8:** One thing people mostly do is that they spread the news. So it works as a testimony to people outside. And I believe it makes the church to increase in quantity and in quality (quantity in the sense that the church grows in numbers) and (quality in the sense that the members themselves grow as well).

### **(iii) A Comparative View of Miracles**

Eric: As an African Pentecostal leader living in the Netherlands, what is your experience with the Dutch Classical Pentecostal church concerning miracles?

**R8:** To me, the Dutch have a more knowledge of God, a more knowledge aspect of miracles, a more knowledge even about the Bible and the Christian beliefs but the relationship aspect I haven't seen it so far. It might be there but I have not really witnessed that.

Eric: Do you perceive any differences or similarities about both beliefs and doctrinal views of miracles?

**R8:** Not many differences, only in the way may be we pray. We pray more aggressive and the Dutch are quieter. But I believe God is still performing miracles even among the Dutch and among the Africans as well. I have not really been able to see the differences.

Eric: What do you think about both groups expectations of miracles?

**R8:** I think African Pentecostals have a certain deep hunger for miracles but I wouldn't know how it would be with the Dutch.

Eric: I have visited a couple of African Initiated Pentecostal churches in Amsterdam South east only to discover either few or sometimes no Dutch Pentecostal member. Could possible different perception of miracles play a role in this situation? If so, briefly explain?

**R8:** I don't think so. I don't think it would have to do with any different perception of miracles but more a tradition or cultural side of the whole thing.

Eric: What do you recommend for the Classical Pentecostals in general concerning the issue of miracles?

**R8:** What I would recommend is that the Dutch Pentecostals should teach more about miracles. Because it is like they see or read what is in the word but I don't know if they actually do believe.

The African side needs to emphasize on miracles as well, but we shouldn't let culture influence our beliefs. We should be a universal church so that other people from different background and cultures can also come so that together we can lift up God.



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