Perspectives on Koinonia lacks the total dimension of koinonia by which the Christian community is described in Scripture. Fellowship, brotherhood and inner disposition of goodwill, toward other members of the group among other things is all well and good, but what Acts 2:42 says is not simply that there were good relationships within the community. The passage in Act 2:42 is not speaking about a brief idyllic moment in the early life of the church. Thus, "invisibilist" concepts which see all true Christian spiritually united in Christ and are missing the more concrete bonding of Christ's body, lack the total "Perspectives on Koinonia."

Luke's perspective in Acts 2 and 4 was the understanding of the Christian koinonia that had been at the very heart of Paul's ministry. For Paul the goal is equality (2 Corinthians 8:13-15) and the method is commonality of goods (Acts 2 and 4). Therefore, koinonia means "partnership," as in a common business venture. More than a feeling of fellowship, it involves sharing goods as well as feeling. It is a total sharing that includes the material as well as the spiritual. Total sharing is only possible through perfect obedience.

Dr. Jesse Miranda, District Superintendent
Pacific Latin American District
Assemblies of God
645 S. Fifth Avenue
La Puente, California 91746

Perspectives on Koinonia: A Response

The report "Perspectives on Koinonia" marks the end of the third five year phase of the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue (1985-1989). It is more a catalogue of differing perspectives than the record of an emerging consensus or a statement of agreement. Indeed some substantial differences remain. From the beginning, the primary purpose of the discussions has been to develop a climate of mutual understanding (5). But the fact that for the first time several of the Pentecostal churches sent officially appointed representatives to participate in the dialogue indicates a growing acceptance of the dialogue by the worldwide Pentecostal community (4).

The choice of the topic koinonia was a most happy one, for it raises the ecumenical question of Christian unity. As the report recognizes, the theme of koinonia has proved especially fruitful in the on-going reflection of the various churches on their own identities and self-understandings (9). A footnote observes that the Lutheran World Federation after its Eighth General Assembly in February 1990 now describes itself as "communion of churches," (10) a term which also captures the self-
understanding of the Roman Catholic and the Anglican communions as well as that of the churches represented by the Consultation on Church Union (COCU).

The theme of *koinonia* is also a happy choice because it raises the fundamental ecclesiological questions that are so much at issue between Roman Catholics and classical Pentecostals. The report cites Acts 2:42 as expressing a biblical understanding of *koinonia* that is important to both Roman Catholics and Pentecostals (10). But this text also brings up precisely those areas in which Roman Catholics and Pentecostals have been most divided, namely, authority and doctrine (“the apostles, teaching”), ecclesiology (“fellowship”), and worship (“the breaking of bread and the prayers”). It was in these three areas that I found the greatest differences between Roman Catholics and Pentecostals in the report.

1. Authority and Doctrine. While Roman Catholics place emphasis on the faith of the entire church and on a collegial teaching authority, Pentecostals show a strongly individualistic tendency in matters of authority and doctrine. In discussing the interpretation of Scripture, Pentecostals acknowledge their “skepticism on any claim that the whole body of faithful cannot err in matters of belief.” Instead, presupposing the clarity of Scripture, they believe that “each Christian can interpret Scripture under the guidance of the Spirit and with the help of the discerning Christian community” (26).

Pentecostals have a point when they note their doubt that Roman Catholic church order satisfactorily expresses what *koinonia* demands, particularly in restricting full power to the hierarchy (87). Catholics at present are struggling to make the way authority is exercised in their church more inclusive.

On the other hand, the lack of a strong teaching authority and the emphasis on private interpretation has left the Pentecostal churches seriously divided among themselves, as the report recognizes in pointing to the “Oneness” or “Jesus Name” Pentecostals (29, note 6) who in being opposed to a Trinitarian formulation of faith depart significantly from the historic Christian tradition. The report acknowledges that an individualistic emphasis on a direct, personal relation to the Spirit makes it difficult for many Pentecostals to submit to ecclesial authority (75) and to recognize that the Spirit dwells within the entire community (76).

2. Ecclesiology. Citing the fact that the Pentecostal Movement is less than a century old, the Pentecostals acknowledge not having a developed ecclesiology (11). Perhaps there is a connection between this lack and their ready acceptance of denominationalism (34), as well as the disinterest many Pentecostals have shown in the past for the ecumenical movement.

But in arguing that the distinctions between the visible and invisible dimensions of the church should not be used to justify separation between Christians (35) and in stating that the “present state of visible