



Pentecost as the Future of Creation

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13-18 May 2025

INTRODUCTION

In John 16:7 Jesus announces to his disciples: “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.” How could Jesus’ departure be to the disciples’ advantage? He has just assured them that they will be hated, cast out of the synagogues and persecuted; that people will kill them believing that in so doing they are offering a sacrifice pleasing to God (John 16:2-3). How could it be better if He leaves them alone in the face of this forthcoming suffering? Furthermore, who is this intangible, enigmatic Helper, whose presence is supposed to exceed the benefits of Jesus’ companionship? The announcement of the Spirit’s pending arrival is joined with the mandate given by Jesus to the disciples to bear much fruit to the glory of God the Father (John 15:8)—the fruit of Christ, the great vine, of whom in the mystery of salvation they are made the branches. In the same breath, Jesus gives them also the commandment to love one another as He has loved them (15:12). This is a self-giving, self-sacrificial love, for “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (15:13). Loving one another with Jesus’ love (in bearing forth His fruit) witnesses/testifies of Him, authenticating His identity and their discipleship (15:8). Indeed, persecution and martyrdom became part of the early church’s witness. As Tertullian famously remarked, the blood of the martyrs became the seeds of the church. Undoubtedly, the shadow of the cross looms large over this conversation, and this is not just the shadow of Christ’s cross. Those who follow Him, who are called by His name, also have to do some dying and do it daily. The cross is unavoidable, inescapable if they want to follow Jesus on that journey of discipleship (Matt. 16:24). They have to die to themselves so that no longer they but He may live in them (Gal. 2:20-21). His cross, or rather He Himself, is to become the model, the form, the content of their daily life and for this they desperately need the Spirit who alone enfleshes God’s word in its receptive hearers so that they may become Christ’s

flesh—His living, resurrected body—to the world. This Christifying journey demands that they be joined to the Spirit as Christ is. They need the Spirit in order to follow and become like the Spirit-bearer. It is not surprising then that St. Seraphim of Sarov insists in his pneumatological eschatology that the goal of the Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit.¹

Indeed, the Christ event in its entirety—from the incarnation (Matt. 1:18-20) through the death on the cross (Heb. 9:14) and the resurrection (Rom. 1:4) – is the plan, mission and action of the Spirit. Consistent with this pneumatic outlook, Vladimir Lossky asserts that Christ came so that the Spirit can come. In his reading of the biblical narrative, Pentecost is not merely a continuation of the incarnation or its sequel. It is its very purpose. In Lossky's words, "Pentecost is thus the object, the final goal of the divine economy upon earth."² "The creature has become fit to receive the Holy Spirit"³ and be the dwelling place and in-fleshed reality of the Trinitarian *koinonia* in the cosmos.⁴ As Frank Macchia states (echoing Eugene Rogers), "To put it christologically, the Word took on body from the Spirit in order to mediate the Spirit to all bodies...Incarnation is fulfilled at Pentecost."⁵

The event of Pentecost and the confession of Christ as Spirit-Baptizer are traditional focal points of genuinely Pentecostal theological reflection and spirituality.⁶ The Christocentricity of the so-called "full" or "fivefold gospel,"⁷ viewed as the distinct template

¹ St. Seraphim of Sarov, *On the Acquisition of the Holy Spirit: Conversation with Motovilov* (<https://orthochristian.com/47866.html>)

² Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), p. 159.

³ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology*, p. 159.

⁴ Daniela C. Augustine, *Pentecost, Hospitality and Transfiguration: Toward a Spirit-inspired Vision of Social Transformation* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012), p. 23.

⁵ Frank D. Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer: Christology in Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), pp. 123-4.

⁶ Simon Chan, "Jesus as Spirit-Baptizer: Its Significance for Pentecostal Ecclesiology," in John Christopher Thomas, ed., *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), p. 139.

⁷ For an expounded reflection on the Fivefold Gospel see Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2004).

of Pentecostal theological inquiry, highlights this confession as essential for the church's understanding of her identity and mission. Wolfgang Vondey offers a succinct articulation of the connection between Pentecost and the full (or fivefold) gospel within Pentecostal theology in his proposal that "Pentecost is the core theological symbol of Pentecostal theology, and its theological narrative is the full gospel."⁸

Undoubtedly, Pentecost serves as the contextual origin, dialogical anchor and ceaseless source of inspiration for Pentecostal theological reflection and the present paper is not an exception. It presents the event of Pentecost as the future of humanity and the rest of creation, upholding a vision of Pentecost's cosmic reach, stretching from the very act of creation to the *eschaton*. This vision asserts that everything in creation (every speck of dust, every particle of matter, including the human body in all of its intricate complexity) is created to be joined to the Spirit—in other words, is created for Pentecost.⁹ In view of this assertion, the paper spotlights human ontology, affirming that from the beginning humanity is created as a charismatic creature in the image and for the likeness of its prototype and *telos*—Christ, the Spirit-bearer. In continuity with this understanding, the paper proceeds further with a reflection on the church, the Spirit-bearing communal body of Christ, as an ongoing Pentecost. As such, the church embodies the eschatological destiny of all creation in which Christ is "all in all" (Eph. 1:23). This is an eschatological glimpse of the church circumscribing the cosmos as one grand, charismatic, ecclesial *macro-anthropos*, who has covered the earth with the worship of God.

THE COSMIC SCOPE OF PENTECOST

⁸ Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel*. Systematic Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology 1 (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 1.

⁹ Daniela C. Augustine, *The Spirit and the Common Good: Shared Flourishing in the Image of God*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), p. 206.

Perhaps the most vivid depiction of Pentecost's cosmic reach as the destiny of all creation comes to us from Sergius Bulgakov. For him, Pentecost as the *telos* of creation is "anticipated and prepared from the foundations of the world which has always been vivified by the Holy Spirit."¹⁰ For Bulgakov, the book of Genesis depicts the life-giving, incubating hovering of the Spirit over the surface of the waters (Gen. 1:2) as a prototypical "first *cosmic* Pentecost by anticipation," and the act of the creation of Adam [with God's breath entering his nostrils (Gen. 2:7)] as a second, this time "*human* Pentecost," revealing humanity's inherently charismatic ontology.¹¹ Further, Bulgakov gives us the image of Jesus' miraculous conception as being "the Pentecost of the Virgin."¹² As the Holy Spirit descends upon Mary in response to her willingness and readiness for service (Luke 1:38), she presents herself as a pneumatic sanctuary—a home of God's Spirit-bearing Word made flesh—amidst humanity (John 1:14). Bulgakov describes the Spirit's descent upon Christ during his baptism in Jordan as anticipation of the "universal Pentecost" which is to come in the Spirit's outpouring upon all flesh on the day of Pentecost.¹³ In this breathtaking vision of the Spirit's world-making and world-mending, Pentecost is revealed as the origin and eschatological future of creation, and presents the only sufficient hermeneutical key to unlocking biblical cosmology, soteriology, anthropology, Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology.

¹⁰ Sergius Bulgakov, 'Pentecost and the Descent of the Spirit', pp. 182-7 in Nicolas Zernov and James Palin, eds., *A Bulgakov Anthology* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1976), p. 184.

¹¹ See the section on humanity's charismatic ontology in Daniela C. Augustine, 'Theology of Economics: Pentecost and the Household of the Spirit', in Wolfgang Vondey, ed. *The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology* (Routledge, 2020).

¹² Mary's free will is essential for the incarnation. The embodiment of the Word has to be a free act of love; the beginning of the new/renewed creation is to echo the beginning of all beginnings. In the incarnation's mystery, as depicted by the resurrection dismissal *Theotokion*, Mary's womb 'became more spacious than the heavens' for she carried in it her Creator.

¹³ Sergius Bulgakov, 'Pentecost and the Descent of the Spirit', pp. 184-5. Many Pentecostal scholars agree that Pentecost represents the *telos* of redemption. See for example, Steven Studebaker, *From Pentecost to the Triune God: A Pentecostal Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), Frank Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, pp. 302-9; Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel*. Systematic Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology 1 (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), pp. 155-74; Daniela C. Augustine, *Pentecost, Hospitality and Transfiguration*, p. 79.

In the Eastern liturgical calendar, Pentecost is celebrated as the feast of the Trinity. This is not accidental. Pentecost reveals the *telos* of the Trinity's work of creation, redemption, and renewal of the cosmos, and (as we will see further in this paper) inaugurates the church as a Trinitarian theophany. Pentecost is an invitation to all humanity and the rest of creation to enter the life of the Triune God, the life of the Spirit that hosts all that is and circumscribes all time and space in the unconditional hospitality of the creator.¹⁴

PENTECOST AND CREATION AS AN EUCHARISTIC FEAST

Lifting its cosmological lens, Pentecost's economics of the Spirit reveal the world as an Eucharistic feast that is made to be shared with the other towards the fostering of the deepest communion that joins matter and Spirit into one cosmic community (Acts 2 and 4). This vision of the world reveals all matter as made to be saturated by the Spirit—to be a Spirit-bearing body. Therefore, as suggested earlier, from the beginning creation is made for Pentecost. By participating in it as Spirit-bearing charismatic creatures, human beings have to learn solidarity with others in the shared cosmic nature that each one of them hypostatizes and yet all have in common. As Dimitru Staniloae points out, “A separation of cosmic nature taken to the limit between human individuals is impossible.”¹⁵ Accordingly, the God-given limitations of the material world also point to creation's intentional pedagogy on becoming like God—the proto-communal Trinity. Sharing life in communal solidarity with others in mutual safekeeping and faithful stewardship of creation, leads to the realization that the only way matter can meet all existential needs is through the generosity of the Spirit. This in-Spirit-ed perspective, enfleshed by the Spirit in the life of the Pentecost's community, presents humanity's economic life as a charismatic activity in all of its aspects—production,

¹⁴ Daniela C. Augustine, *Pentecost, Hospitality and Transfiguration*, pp. 15-30.

¹⁵ Dimitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 2. *The World: Creation and Deification* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2005), p. 2.

distribution and consumption. It upholds epicletic economics as a visible mark of humanity's Eucharistic existence and provides an antidote to unrestrained, self-indulging consumerism, which commodifies the world, abandoning its sacramental purpose and distorting the vision of the fellow human from a co-celebrant in the Spirit's cosmic liturgy to a competitor forever shrinking material resources.¹⁶

Pentecost's economics of the Spirit present the world as given to humanity by God in self-sharing as a gift of life so that humanity may, in turn, learn to share it with the other and the different. Indeed, the world is a gift with a pedagogical purpose—helping humanity “to grow spiritually”¹⁷ in the likeness of its Creator. According to Dimitru Staniloae, this pedagogy develops through the “dialogue of the gift” between the recipient and the giver in which the world is to be continually received with gratitude and offered back to God (in the Eucharist and daily communal commensality) as an act of self-giving¹⁸ for the life of the world. The gift's Christoforming pedagogy teaches giving to the other more than one has received from them (Matt. 25:14-30). One adds to the gift his/her very life in the form of creative labor before offering it back to God. Thus, grain and grapes are transformed through the *askesis* of human work into bread and wine before being offered to God.¹⁹ Ultimately, the Eucharistic nature of the cosmos, is to transform through the Spirit everyday work of world-making into a liturgical act of home-building for the other. Human creative labor is to

¹⁶ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), p. 17.

¹⁷ Dimitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, p. 22.

¹⁸ Staniloae, *The Experience of God*. The author states: “The paradox [of the return of the gift] is explained by the fact that the gift received and returned draws the persons close to one another to such an extent that the object of the gift becomes something common and comes to be the transparent means for the fullest communion between persons. And not only is the gift something common, but it is also increased through the life which the persons communicate to one another through the love manifested in the gift they make; in this way the persons give themselves as a gift, and through this giving they grow spiritually.” (p. 22) “The dialogue of the gift between God and the human person lies in the fact that each bestows himself upon the other.” (p. 23)

¹⁹ For more on the liturgical nature of human creativity see James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* ((Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2009), p. 199, and Daniela C. Augustine, “The Liturgical Teleology of Human Creativity and the City of God as *Theosis* of Culture,” *Cultural Encounters: A Journal for the Theology of Culture*, vol. 10, No. 2 (April, 2015).

become a priestly sacramental enactment of God's love for His creation—the very love which hosts the cosmos in self-sacrificial nurture and care for all creatures and demands the same of humanity as a faithful stewardship of God's household.

HUMANITY AS A CHARISMATIC HOMO ADORANS

As humanity's prototype and *telos*, Christ, the Spirit-bearer, is paradigmatic for understanding human ontology and vocation. Alexander Schmemmann asserts, the triadic royal, priestly and prophetic dimensions of the Christic vocation as ontological categories, inherent characteristics of humanity in its pre-lapsarian state. He states that one of the Bible's unique revelations about human ontology is that before the royal, priestly and prophetic offices became associated with a particular human being, they belonged to the very reality of being human as humanity's distinct "calling and dignity."²⁰ According to Schmemmann, scripture's anthropological account depicts humanity's kingship, priesthood and prophethood as created, fallen, and, finally, redeemed in Christ. The author asserts that Christ's kingship, priesthood and prophetic office are "rooted above all in His human nature; that they are not exceptions but "integral part" of His humanity. He is the Last Adam, the perfect (complete) human being, the redeemer and restorer of humanity itself to its "wholeness and totality." Thus, the soteriological meaning of these three offices is found in their "ontological character," in their "belonging" to the very nature of humanity "assumed by Christ for its salvation."²¹

The ontological human vocation in the cosmos is to mirror this triadic Christic vocation. In light of this assertion, Schmemmann describes humanity's priestly and prophetic vocation as inscribed from *the beginning* within human ontology alongside the royal mandate

²⁰ Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water and Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Press, 1974), pp. 82, 95, 100. On this foundation, Schmemmann argues for the priesthood, prophethood and kingship of all believers as redeemed vocational dimensions of human ontology.

²¹ Schmemmann, *Of Water and Spirit*, p. 95.

for just stewardship of all creation.²² Scripture constantly articulates the essence of all three ontological dimensions of human vocation (the royal, priestly and prophetic) as *charisms* of the Holy Spirit—as the Spirit’s movement within the world in enactment (and embodiment) of the divine will through consecrated/anoointed human agency. Therefore, from the beginning, humanity is created to move in and with the Spirit and to be an in-Spirit-ed, pneumatized sanctuary of God’s breath (His living and enlivening presence) within the cosmos (Gen. 2:7).

This is why, in the act of creation, God summons humanity into existence as the special charismatic creature raised from the clay by the indwelling Spirit. Created in the likeness of the proto-communal Trinity, humanity is also a creature made to be with and for the other (God, the fellow human and the rest of creation). Marked by its priming for communion with the other, humanity has the capacity to hear God’s Word and respond to it in prayer as a creature whose ontological actualization is to be attained through partaking within God’s communal discourse, within the conversational communion of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). As Schmemmann states, humanity is, therefore, first and foremost *homo adorans*, a worshipping creature, *the priest* ministering before God on behalf of the entire creation.²³ In its priestly and liturgical essence, humanity is to offer an unceasing intercession on behalf of the world, taking it in prayer before its Creator. To be capable of prayer means (in the words of H.A.H. Bartholomew I) having “the capacity to offer the world back to God in thanksgiving, and it is only in this act of offering that we become genuinely human and truly free.”²⁴ Prayer in and through the Holy Spirit, transforms humanity’s worship into an extension of the Trinity’s liturgical acts of creation-making and creation-mending. In prayer, redeemed humanity joins the Spirit’s intercession for the healing of the cosmos, partaking in the Spirit’s

²² Schmemmann, *Of Water and Spirit*, p. 95.

²³ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, p. 15.

²⁴ H.A.H. Bartholomew I, *Encountering the Mystery* (New York, NY: Doubleday 2008), p. 132.

“groanings too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26). Prayer as world-mending becomes a divine-human partnership—breathing, speaking, groaning and moving with, in and through the Spirit toward creation’s theotic *telos*—the cosmic Pentecost, in which the world has become the Spirit’s community of all flesh (Acts 2:17).

Often theologies which justify greedy, unrestrained exploitation and destruction of nature perceive the first human beings as the perfect, complete project (the very crown of creation) for whom all exists; having irrevocable, royal dominion over the created world. In contrast, understanding Christ as being the prototype and *telos* of humanity, presents the first Adam as a good but still unfolding creation, an ongoing project, whose *telos* is the Last Adam—the visible icon of the invisible God and, therefore, the one fully human, pneumatized, Eucharistic being. Therefore, the human being is a primer for creation’s movement toward Christofomation in and through the sanctifying/Christifying agency of the Holy Spirit. Life in the Spirit is growing in the freedom of divine, cruciform love towards all that exists²⁵—the totality of the cosmos; it is the free-willed journey into the likeness of God, in which humanity is transfigured by the Spirit “from glory to glory” (2 Cor. 3:18) in a perpetual ascent toward Christ-likeness. In the words of Schmemmann, it is “the very communion with the Holy Spirit that enables us to love the world with the love of Christ,” and the joy of the Kingdom (as life in the Spirit) “makes us remember the world and pray for it.”²⁶

If Christ represents redeemed humanness in union with the Spirit, then we can understand the true original meaning and teleological intent of the triadic human vocation only in light of its fulfillment in and through Him—His life, character and mission amidst and

²⁵ Echoing St. Isaac the Syrian, Patriarch Bartholomew I discusses sanctification in terms of “love for the whole of creation,” seeing the world as a “cosmic liturgy” or celebration of the essential interconnection and interdependence of all things.” *Encountering the Mystery*, p. 94.

²⁶ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, p. 44

on behalf of all creation.²⁷ Therefore, in contrast to fallen humanity's violent dominion over creation, Christ's dominion is one of self-giving to the other so they may live life to the fullest. Beholding the life of Christ as the Spirit's vision of the anointed *homo adorans*, we realize that there is "not kingship alone and not priesthood alone"—they belong together "as fulfillment of one in the other"—thus, "royal priesthood."²⁸ Therefore, as Schmemmann points out, the power of humanity over creation is "fulfilled in *sacrifice*" and in "*sanctifying* the world, by "making" it into communion with God"²⁹ as the Holy Spirit transforms human life itself into "a "liturgy," a service to God and communion with Him"³⁰ for the life of the world, for the flourishing of all His creatures.

THE CHURCH AS CONTINUING PENTECOST

It is hard to overstate the significance of the event of Pentecost for Christian ecclesiology. Pentecost ushers the Church into history as an eschatological reality³¹—the life of the Spirit as the life of the age to come³²—and is, therefore, essential for understanding the nature, marks and mission of the church.

The Church's worship reveals her eschatological essence since it unfolds in/with/by the Spirit. The Church's worship is epicletic—a perpetual invocation and anticipation of the Spirit—and as such, the arrival of the ever-coming and ever-present Spirit constitutes the Church as a continuous, ceaseless Pentecost. The adventing Spirit carries the worshipping Church into the eschaton—her home—her origin and destination. In this homecoming, the

²⁷ Schmemmann, *Of Water and Spirit*, pp. 95-96.

²⁸ Schmemmann, *Of Water and Spirit*, p. 95.

²⁹ Schmemmann, *Of Water and Spirit*, p. 96.

³⁰ Schmemmann, *Of Water and Spirit*, p. 97.

³¹ Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshipping Community* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), p. 32. As Chan states, "to speak of the church as temple *of the Spirit* is also to recognize it essentially eschatological character, since the Spirit is the Spirit of "the last days.""

³² Daniela C. Augustine, *The Spirit and the Common Good*, p. 64.

Church enters “the eight day”³³—the day beyond time, where she leads all of creation in worship. Since the worship of the Church takes place in heaven/in the *eschaton*, as Schmemann points out, each day of the week on earth (and not just Sunday) is a day for worship.³⁴ In the Spirit, every moment of time is vested with a cosmic Eucharistic anticipation, revealing the sacramental purpose and potentiality of all creation. In the Church’s pneumatic worship, the cosmos—space, time and matter—are reclaimed by eternity, making each day the Lord’s day and proclaiming Christ’s lordship over all creation.

Consistent with the above assertion, the overarching ecclesiological framework of the *Encyclical of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church* (Crete, 2016) also highlights the centrality of Pentecost in its succinct systematic definition of the Church: “a divine-human communion in the image of the Holy Trinity, a foretaste and experience of the eschaton...a revelation of the glory of the things to come... *a continuing Pentecost*...a prophetic voice in this world that cannot be silenced, the presence and witness of God’s Kingdom “that has come with power” (cf. Mark 9.1).”³⁵ This definition displays the pneumatic emphasis of Eastern Christianity, which Pentecostals find compelling and reassuring. It is precisely the reality of the church as “a continuing Pentecost” that seems to hold together in a harmonious whole the multiple dimensions of this complex definition, outlining the trinitarian, charismatic and eschatological dynamics of the Spirit-baptized faith community. As mentioned earlier, Pentecost is celebrated as the feast of the Trinity,³⁶ for it reveals the church as a theophany of the communal body of the Son, doing the will of the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit.³⁷ As such, the Church continues the ministry of the

³³ Alexander Schmemann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1966), pp. 76-80; Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, p. 81.

³⁴ Schmemann, *For the Life of the World*, p. 52.

³⁵ *Encyclical*, I.1.

³⁶ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976), p. 239.

³⁷ Daniela C. Augustine, *Pentecost, Hospitality and Transfiguration*, p. 16.

resurrected Christ (the Spirit-bearer) as the living extension of His character and mission. Pentecost's descent of the Spirit marks, therefore, the transference of messianic anointing from Christ (the head) to His communal body on earth, presenting the church as the charismatic prophethood and royal priesthood of all believers.³⁸ Simultaneously, Pentecost marks also the beginning of the *eschata* and asserts the advent of God's future in the midst of the communal body of Christ as the entrance to the new *aion* of the fullness of God's Kingdom on earth.³⁹ In this eschatological in-breaking, (in the words of Simon Chan) Pentecost introduces something new in the present age, something beyond "just an extension of Christ's mission on earth."⁴⁰ It uplifts the prophesying community of faith as the embodiment of the very future of the world – the sacred space where human history meets its eschatological unfolding with the demand for and inevitability of transfiguration. As the embodiment of this future on earth, the church faces the world with the face of Christ – the ultimate destiny of all existence. Further, the event of Pentecost (as articulated in the narrative of Acts 2) visibly outlines the marks of the church ushering on the stage of salvation history the community of faith as the *one, holy, catholic* and *apostolic* koinonia of the Spirit.⁴¹ This is the community of the new humanity and the entire new creation is its cosmic scope; for as noted earlier, the Church as "communion of the Holy Spirit"⁴² is the visible expression of creation's pneumatic *telos*.⁴³

³⁸ Schmemann, *Of Water and Spirit*, p. 103. Schmemann expounds on this thought in light of the sacrament of chrismation, described as the believer's personal Pentecost.

³⁹ Therefore, according to Schmemann, Pentecost, reveals the Church "as creation renewed by Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit." Alexander Schmemann, *Ecclesiological Notes*, paper read at the Institute for Contemporary Theology, Montreal, July 1965, p. 35.

⁴⁰ Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, p. 32.

⁴¹ See Daniela C. Augustine, *Pentecost, Hospitality and Transfiguration*, p. 17.

⁴² *Encyclical*, II.6.

⁴³ Sergius Bulgakov, "Pentecost and the Descent of the Spirit," pp. 184-5. As Bulgakov states, the "descent of the Holy Spirit is the fulfilment of Christ's work and the realization of God's conception of man, since man was created to be the temple of the Holy Spirit together with the world of nature of which he is meant to be the head and the soul." Indeed, as noted earlier, Pentecost is the end of creation and as such is, according to Bulgakov, "anticipated and prepared from the foundations of the world which has always been vivified by the Holy Spirit."

The experience of Pentecost reveals the Holy Spirit as the sustainer of the Church's unity as well as the guardian and assurer of her diversity.⁴⁴ The gift of Pentecost is manifested in the recovery of the speech of the other, and in regained mutual understanding amidst the polyphony of many tongues. Therefore, without Pentecost's unity-weaving self-pouring of the Spirit, there is no possibility for mutual ecumenical understanding,⁴⁵ even when all are gathered in one place and seem to be speaking the same language.

As I have argued elsewhere, rethinking the marks of the church in light of Pentecost exposes the scandalous⁴⁶ and grievous reality of church divisions as being driven by forces antithetical to the Spirit's work of reconciliation and unity-building within Christ's body. Pentecost's radical inclusion of the other, uplifted in its capacious polyphony and daily commensality (through the all-enlivening life of the Spirit), circumscribes in God's unconditional hospitality all others across ethnic, racial, cultural, socio-economic, gender divides. It highlights the Spirit's cosmic *sobornost* as catholicity that is both cosmopolitan and ecological,⁴⁷ extending to the global village and the non-anthropoc other. Indeed, Pentecost's vision of the cosmos (in the words of Steve Studebaker) is a "green cosmopolitan world."⁴⁸ It is the inauguration of redemptive renewal for both the city (humanity's cultural project) and the garden (God's first [agri]cultural project delegated to humanity), culminating in their eschatological communion within the City of God.⁴⁹ Also illuminated by Pentecost, the apostolicity of the church, as the continuation of the mission of Christ in the power of the

⁴⁴ Metropolitan Kallistos, *The Orthodox Church* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 242. As Metropolitan Kallistos points out, "The gift of the Spirit is a gift to the Church, but it is at the same time a personal gift, appropriated by each in her or his way."

⁴⁵ Sergius Bulgakov states that "the positive spiritual basis of Christian 'ecumenism'" is experienced as "a breathing of God's Spirit in grace, as a revelation of Pentecost." "By Jacob's Well," in *A Bulgakov Anthology*, eds. Nicolas Zernov and James Palin (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pbs, 1976), p. 102.

⁴⁶ Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, pp. 211-12.

⁴⁷ Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), pp. 33-5. Here McFague articulates the notion of 'ecological catholicity'.

⁴⁸ Steven Studebaker, *The Spirit of Atonement: Pentecostal Contributions and Challenges to the Christian Traditions* (London: T & T Clark, 2021), p. 196.

⁴⁹ Daniela C. Augustine, *Pentecost, Hospitality and Transfiguration*, pp. 136-8

Spirit, becomes the gospel-proclamation to all of creation—mandating a spirituality of sustainability and building an infrastructure of life that seeks the flourishing of all God’s creatures.⁵⁰

Indeed, Pentecost is not just the constitutive event of the Church, but the Spirit’s transfiguring presence that makes the Church an unceasing Pentecost. As such, the Church waits for and moves with the Spirit (Acts 1:4).⁵¹ The believers wait for the ever-coming, yet ever-present Spirit so that they may be made “fit for God by God...By the *Spirit* for the Word,”⁵² for the Spirit alone makes the Word flesh, both in the virgin birth and at Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit’s *kenosis* transforms the hundred-and-twenty in the Upper Room into Christ-bearers and a living extension of his resurrected Spirit-bearing body on earth. In a manner similar to the event of the incarnation, as the Spirit descends upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost, Christ is conceived in them and they are empowered (Acts 1:8) towards Christ-likeness. Individually and corporately, they become *theophorous* (God-bearing) and bear forth (as an enfleshed Word) the one who is the light and life of the world, the one who summons all of creation into the Trinity’s redemptive cosmic embrace.

Renewed as a living temple of God’s presence, humanity finds itself reflecting the spaciousness of divine love for the other and the different from oneself. As the Spirit makes humanity partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), love for God becomes love for his entire world, and the creature experiences and manifests the likeness of the Creator as perfect love for the whole of creation (both anthropic and non-anthropic). Embodying the life of the Spirit, the believers find themselves apprehended into the Trinitarian communal life.⁵³ This is

⁵⁰ See Daniela C. Augustine, “Reading the Creed in the Light of Pentecost: An Eastern European Pneumatic Reflection,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* (19 March 2025).

⁵¹ Daniela C. Augustine, *Pentecost, Hospitality, and Transfiguration*, pp. 119-122.

⁵² Karl Barth, *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: The Theological Basis for Ethics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), p. 7.

⁵³ Sarah Coakley emphasizes the Holy Spirit’s work of incorporating of humanity into the Trinitarian communal life, and of its “reflexively” in the believers. *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay ‘On the Trinity’* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 111.

the ongoing, eschatological, pneumatic life of the believer's personal and communal Pentecost experienced as theo-/Christoformation.

CONCLUSION

As Steve Studebaker states “the Holy Spirit is the telos of redemption and, therefore, the divine person that consummates the fellowship of the triune God.”⁵⁴ Christianity's pneumatological foundation uplifts the confession of the Spirit as “the Lord of and Giver of Life,” who moves all creation from origin to *eschaton*, redeeming and mending the broken world. The Spirit moves in/with creation, leading it toward its theotic/pneumatic destiny of becoming the pneumatized body of the Spirit-bearing Last Adam—the one who is to become all in all through the agency of the Spirit until the world becomes one cosmic, charismatic, ecclesial *macroanthropos*.⁵⁵ This is precisely the world's destiny depicted in John's eschatological vision of the Church as the Bride of the Lamb—the City of God—a trans-continental, global holy of holies, a living home for the divine presence which hosts all that lives, a Spirit-filled sanctuary that has covered the earth with God's glory (Rev. 21, 22).⁵⁶ Since the beginning, this is the soteriological project of the Spirit—a theotic, in-Spirit-ed creation. In this cosmic eschatological vision, every speck of dust, every molecule of matter is permeated by and enlivened with the Spirit. This is the eschatological completion of Pentecost – the Spirit has saturated “all flesh,” joining it into one cosmic pneumatic community. Though now we still see “as through a glass dimly” (1 Cor. 13:12), the shimmering glow of this eschatological vision in-breaks within the present in the worship of

⁵⁴ Studebaker, “A Pentecostal Third Article Theology,” p. 1.

⁵⁵ Daniela C. Augustine, *The Spirit and the Common Good: Shared Flourishing in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2019), p. 17.

⁵⁶ For more on the City of God in relation to divine hospitality see Daniela C. Augustine, *Pentecost, Hospitality, and Transfiguration*, especially pp. 67-69, 133-138.

the Church, in her presence on earth as an ongoing Pentecost and a living icon of the future of the world. And then suddenly ... everything is luminous and illuminated.

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