

## Chapter 12

### Healing God's Creation: A Contribution of Pentecostal Understanding of Divine Healing to Ecotheology in Response to the Global Ecological Crisis (Gani Wiyono)

#### Abbreviations

C	Carbon
H	Hydrogen
O	Oxygen
N	Nitrogen
P	Phosphorus
S	Sulfur
Cl	Chlorine
Ca	Calcium
K	Kalium
Na	Natrium
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid

#### Introduction

As I began writing the draft of this paper, the air quality in Jakarta, where I live, was recorded as the worst in the world.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, the leading causes are the industrial activities and the use of fossil-fuelled transportation by the residents of Jakarta and its surrounding cities which continue to produce pollutants almost twenty-four hours a day.

In another part of Indonesia, in a region known as Puncak, Central Papua, extreme weather has caused severe drought and cold. As a result, the local population has suffered crop failure and is in danger of starving to death. The latest news I received reported that six people have died of starvation so far.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tim | CNN Indonesia, "Foreign Media Highlights Jakarta's Worst Air Pollution in the World [Media Asing Soroti Polusi Udara Jakarta Terburuk di Dunia]", *CNN Indonesia*, 16<sup>th</sup> August 2023, [Available at: <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/internasional/20230816092108-113-986655/media-asing-soroti-polusi-udara-jakarta-terburuk-di-dunia>], [Last accessed: 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024].

<sup>2</sup> Anugrah Andriansyah, "Jokowi: Famine in Central Papua Triggered by Extreme Weather [Jokowi: Kelaparan di Papua Tengah Dipicu Cuaca Ekstrem]", *VOA Indonesia*, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023, [Available at: <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/jokowi-kelaparan-di-papua-tengah-dipicu-cuaca-ekstrem/7205348.html>], [Last accessed: 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024].

A few weeks ago, at the end of July 2023, Hurricane Doksuri hit the Philippines, Taiwan, China, and Vietnam, causing extensive damage in the affected areas. Even in Beijing and the surrounding provinces where it passed through, they received the heaviest rainfall in 140 years, resulting in millions of people evacuated, dozens of people reported missing, and twenty-one deaths. According to climate experts, rising sea temperatures caused by the climate crisis are to blame for the extreme weather in China.<sup>3</sup>

July 2023, according to *Scientific American*, was the hottest month on record; based on evidence in sediments, ancient ice sheets, and other palaeoclimate data, it was the hottest month in the last 120,000 years.<sup>4</sup> Analysis of available data also suggests that such a significant temperature rise links to the abundance of greenhouse gases produced by fossil fuel use.

Unchecked global emissions of greenhouse gases have the potential to bring the planet to the brink of global collapse. If, by 2030, the threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial average temperatures is exceeded; experts predict climate disasters so extreme that humans will find it challenging to adapt. Heat waves, violent storms, melting glaciers, rising sea levels, extreme floods, and droughts will trigger food shortages and infectious diseases, potentially taking millions of human lives by the end of the twenty-first century.<sup>5</sup>

Climate change is not the only environmental problem humans face. Plastic pollution also poses a serious threat to freshwater and marine ecosystems across the globe. A study in the

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<sup>3</sup> Damien Gayle, “Aftermath of Typhoon Doksuri Brought Beijing Floods, Meteorologists Explains”, *The Guardian*, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2023, [Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/aug/02/aftermath-of-typhoon-doksuri-brought-beijing-floods-meteorologists-explain>], [Last accessed: 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024].

<sup>4</sup> Andrea Thompson, “July 2023 is Hottest Month Ever Recorded on Earth”, *Scientific American*, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2023, [Available at: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/july-2023-is-hottest-month-ever-recorded-on-earth/>], [Last accessed: 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024].

<sup>5</sup> Sarah Kaplan, “World is on Brink Catastrophic Warming, U.N. Climate Change Report Says”, *Washington Post*, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023, [Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2023/03/20/climate-change-ipcc-report-15/>], [Last accessed: 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024].

journal, *Science*, states that twenty-four to thirty-four million metric tons of plastic are dumped into the ocean every year. This figure is predicted to rise sharply to fifty-three to ninety million metric tons annually by 2030.<sup>6</sup> The scale of ecosystem damage due to plastic pollution remains unknown. Nevertheless, clearly, apart from causing the death of marine animals such as sharks, rays, and whales, plastic decomposition – microplastics – has appeared in almost every ecosystem on Earth, from the Equator to the Antarctic.<sup>7</sup> Humans, as plastic users, are no exception. Studies show that microplastic particles are found in human bodies and faeces.

The Earth is not doing well. The Earth is sick. The ecological crisis that began with the advent of the Industrial Revolution and worsened in recent decades now threatens the survival of all species on the planet.

Many humans have attempted to find the roots of this ecological crisis to prevent a global ecological disaster. The once dominant approach involved looking for the causes of this ecological crisis in technology, population density, and other material elements. While such a material approach is valid, the fundamental causes of the global ecological crisis are more spiritual than material. What people do with their environment is strongly influenced by what they believe about themselves in relation to their Creator and other living beings and objects around them. Lynn White raised this kind of understanding in her controversial work in 1967,<sup>8</sup> claiming that an anthropocentric understanding of Christian theology had caused ecological

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<sup>6</sup> Stephanie B. Borrelle et al., “Plastic Pollution: Predicted Growth in Plastic Waste Exceeds Efforts to Mitigate Plastic Pollution”, *Science* 369(6510), (18<sup>th</sup> September 2020): 1515, [Available at: <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aba3656>], [Last accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2024].

<sup>7</sup> Gita Laras Widyaningrum, “Latest Study: The Earth’s Plastic Waste Problem Is out of Control [Studi Terbaru: Masalah Sampah Plastik di Bumi Sudah di Luar Kendali]”, *National Geographic*, 21<sup>st</sup> September 2020, [Available at: <https://nationalgeographic.grid.id/read/132346281/studi-terbaru-masalah-sampah-plastik-di-bumi-sudah-di-luar-kendali>], [Last accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2024].

<sup>8</sup> Lynn White Jr, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis”, *Science* 155(3767), (10<sup>th</sup> March 1967): 1203-07, [Available at: <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.155.3767.1203>], [Last accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2024].

degradation.<sup>9</sup> A similar conclusion emerged from the observations and reflections of the great Iranian Islamic thinker, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who states that the ecological crisis is essentially a spiritual crisis of modern humans.<sup>10</sup> If White and Nasr's observations are correct, theology plays a significant role in helping humans prevent further ecological damage.

From the Christian side, ever since White launched a sharp critique of the significant role of Christianity in ecosystem degradation, a wide range of ecotheology works have emerged, encouraging active involvement of Christians to prevent the continuation of the ecological crisis on our planet. As the youngest tradition of Christian thought, Pentecostals have been included. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Pentecostal thinkers have begun to explore and produce ecotheology-oriented works.<sup>11</sup> Admittedly, there have not been too many, and ample room remains to explore ecotheology from a distinct Pentecostal perspective.

In light of the above consideration, in this paper, I explore divine healing, one of the facets in the full gospel theology of the Pentecostals (whether four-fold or five-fold), as a source for building a typical Pentecostal ecotheology. Why choose healing? First, because healing serves as one of the dominant characteristics in the message and praxis of Pentecostals. Second, healing connects Pentecostals with the larger Christian tradition. As Amanda Porterfield points out, "Healing is a persistent theme in the long history of Christianity, threading its way over time

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<sup>9</sup> White, "Historical Roots", 1205-06.

<sup>10</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Spiritual and Religious Dimensions of the Environmental Crisis", *The Ecologist* 30(1), (Jan/Feb 2000): 18-20, [Available at: <https://traditionalhikma.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/The-spiritual-and-religious-dimensions-of-the-environmental-crisis-Seyyed-Hossein-Nasr.pdf>], [Last accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2024].

<sup>11</sup> See Anita Davis, "Pentecostal Approaches to Ecotheology: Reviewing the Literature", *Australasian Pentecostal Studies* 22(1), (2021): 1-33, [Available at: <https://aps-journal.com/index.php/APS/article/view/9572>], [Last accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2024], for a brief but useful description of the development of Pentecostal ecotheology. Some important works on ecotheology from Pentecostal Perspective include, A.J. Swoboda, "Tongues and Trees: Towards a Green Pentecostal Pneumatology" (PhD diss., University of Birmingham (United Kingdom), 2011), [Available at: <https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/3003/1/Swoboda11PhD.pdf>], [Last accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2024]; Amos Yong (ed), *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth: Pentecostal Forays in Science and Theology of Creation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009); A.J. Swoboda (ed), *Blood Cries Out: Pentecostals, Ecology, and the Groans of Creation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014).

through ritual practice and theological belief, and across space through the sprawling, heterogeneous terrains of Christian community life and missionary activity.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, by using healing as a source to build an ecotheology, I speak about the need for ecological awareness for Pentecostals and people from other Christian traditions.

### **Divine Healing within Pentecostalism**

Divine healing and the doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit are undoubtedly the most prominent features of modern Pentecostalism. From the beginning, Pentecostal preachers proclaimed the availability of God’s power to touch and heal the weak and sick in their evangelistic campaigns. Even today, healing is one of the most influential spiritual advertisements to attract people to revival services on both small and large scales. Not surprisingly, some researchers see healing as critical to Pentecostalism’s growth and global expansion.

How do Pentecostals view healing in their tradition? According to Kimberly Alexander, the answer to this question varies. Some see healing as a sign of God’s coming Kingdom,<sup>13</sup> while others see healing as part of Jesus’ finished work on Calvary.<sup>14</sup> Although the theories of soteriology underlying their healing beliefs and practices may differ, they agree on one thing: they emphasise the materiality of salvation.

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<sup>12</sup> Amanda Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 3.

<sup>13</sup> See Candy Gunther Brown, *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) and Joseph W. Williams, *Spirit Cure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Wesleyan Pentecostals believe that healing is a foretaste of the coming Kingdom, while non-Wesleyan Pentecostals believe that as justification and sanctification, healing is provided for all in the Atonement. Just as justification and sanctification should be received by faith, so too with healing. For a fuller explanation of these two models of Pentecostal healing, see Kimberly Ervin Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing: Models in Theology and Practice* (Dorset, UK: Deo, 2006): 195-225.

This emphasis on the materiality of salvation distinguishes Pentecostal theology from the classical (and to a large extent modern) Protestant theology, which, “since Luther[,] has retained its radical distinction between salvation and well-being and denied that salvation can be partly experienced in the realm of bodily existence in the world.”<sup>15</sup> However, for Pentecostals, salvation is not identical to the betterment of earthly conditions. In other words, the materiality of salvation as manifested in physical healing exists as one aspect but not a gospel in and of itself. However, if the materiality of the salvation is omitted or neglected, the gospel they preach will not be a full gospel. Guy Duffield and Nathaniel Van Cleave, two Pentecostal theologians from the Foursquare Church, say, “Salvation for the soul and healing for the body are inseparable benefits of Christ’s Atoning Work.”<sup>16</sup> Like two sides of a coin, both are essential; one cannot exist without the other. Thus, both should be preached together.

Even though Pentecostals seem right to recover the material dimension of salvation – often omitted or neglected by the classical Protestant tradition – they generally limit the concrete application of this understanding only to the individual-physical-economic realms: supernatural healing for the sick person and economic miracles for those in need. They seem slow in applying this understanding in cosmic realms in the present age of ecological crises. This shortage may be partly due to the apocalyptic eschatology of Pentecostals. Having been influenced by dispensationalism, some Pentecostals see the current world as destroyed in a cataclysmic event and replaced by a new world – thus discontinuity between the present world and the world to come. Thus, for some Pentecostals, it seems pointless to talk about or fight for preservation of

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<sup>15</sup> Miroslav Volf, “Materiality of Salvation: An Investigation in the Soteriologies of Liberation and Pentecostal Theologies”, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26(3), (Summer 1989): 453.

<sup>16</sup> Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (San Dimas, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1987): 412.

the world we live in today. What Todd Strandberg, a dispensationalist, says may represent a typical Pentecostal attitude toward environmental crisis:

The main job of a Christian leader is to guide lost souls to redemption. I can only ask where the Bible even hints that saving the whales and fighting global warming are part of the Great Commission. Dealing with environmental problems needs to be left to the politicians. In my view, any preacher who decides to get involved in environmental issues is like a heart surgeon who suddenly leaves an operation to fix a clogged toilet.<sup>17</sup>

To cure the deficit, Pentecostals must extend their theology of healing – to understand it at both personal and cosmic levels. In this regard, two concepts described below, deep incarnation and a vision of the sacred cosmos, can help Pentecostals construct a cosmic healing theology.

### **Deep Incarnation**

St Gregory of Nazianzus' dictum:<sup>18</sup> "For [w]hat is not assumed is not healed,"<sup>19</sup> was born amid a polemic with Apollinarianism that rejected the perfect humanity of Jesus (i.e., that the Logos substitutes the human spirit/mind in the human nature of Jesus Christ).<sup>20</sup> St Gregory's dictum emphasises the importance of the Logos being perfectly human to save humanity ideally because if only the body and soul are embraced, then only the body and soul are saved, excluding the human spirit/mind. How then? In his following sentence, St Gregory writes: "what

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<sup>17</sup> Todd Strandberg, "Bible Prophecy and Environmentalism", *Rapture Ready*, 8<sup>th</sup> August 2016, [Available at: <https://www.raptureready.com/2016/08/08/bible-prophecy-vs-the-environment/>], [Last accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2024].

<sup>18</sup> St Gregory Nazianzus (330-390), along with Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, was one of the famous Cappadocian Fathers. His *Letter 101* to the presbyter Cledonius was probably written in the spring of 382 or the spring of 383. See Bradley K. Storin, "Gregory of Nazianzus, Letter 101 to Cledonius", in Mark DelCogliano (ed), *Christ Through Nestorian Controversy*, vol. 3 of *The Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022): 483.

<sup>19</sup> Storin, "Gregory", 392.

<sup>20</sup> Apollinarianism believes that the Logos substitutes the human mind in the human nature of Jesus Christ.

is united to God, will be saved.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, St Gregory states that only by uniting humanity with Christ, who is truly God and truly human, can humanity experience salvation.

The next question that arises is, are only humans saved? What about non-humans? Are they also saved? Answering this question, John Zizioulas, the late orthodox theologian, holds that non-human beings will be saved through human intercession; in other words, human beings become the mediators (priests) who will elevate or bring creation before God so that, in the end, they gain sacredness and salvation in God.<sup>22</sup> Zizioulas’ understanding is seen as too anthropocentric, placing humans above nature.<sup>23</sup>

An alternative view worth considering is called deep incarnation. Danish theologian, Neils Gregersen first introduced the term *deep incarnation*,<sup>24</sup> which means that the Incarnation not only joins Jesus to humanity but also extends beyond humanity to all living creatures and the cosmic dust of which all earthly life is constituted. Elizabeth Johnson, a feminist theologian who developed Gregerson’s initial ideas, explains further:

In the incarnation, Jesus, the self-expressing Wisdom of God, conjoined the material conditions of all biological life forms (grasses and trees) and experienced the pain common to all sensitive creatures (sparrows and seals). The flesh assumed in Jesus connects with all humanity, all biological life, all soil, the whole matrix of the material universe down to its very roots.<sup>25</sup>

So, the Incarnation, in this kind of understanding, is not merely a historical event that occurred in a particular time and space (Bethlehem, 2000 years ago); the deep incarnation is a cosmic event in which matter becomes part of God himself.

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<sup>21</sup> Storin, “Gregory”, 392.

<sup>22</sup> John Zizioulas, “Orthodoxy and the Ecological Crisis”, in John Chryssavgis and Nikolaos Asproulis (eds), *Priest of Creation: John Zizioulas on Discerning an Ecological Ethos* (London: T&T Clark, 2021): 58.

<sup>23</sup> See Emmanuel G. Singgih, *Introduction to Ecological Theology [Pengantar Teologi Ekologi]* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kanisius, 2021): 136.

<sup>24</sup> “Deep Incarnation” first appeared in Neils H. Gregersen’s “The Cross of Christ in an Evolutionary World”, *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 40(3), (2001): 192-207.

<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Ask the Beast: Darwin and the God of Love* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014): 196.



Biblical support for deep incarnation can be found in several texts. One of these is the Gospel of John 1, which presents a Christology from above. The Logos, described as being one with God and through whom all things were made, is said by John to have been incarnated into flesh (*sarx*): “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, NIV).<sup>26</sup> It is interesting how John uses words in the prologue of his Gospel. He uses the word *sarx* (flesh). Indeed, this word has been used negatively in the Pauline corpus as an antithesis of the Spirit (for example, in Gal. 5:19-23). However, in this passage, *sarx* is not negative! The rise of docetism, which introduced an anti-material Christology, seems one of the reasons why John wrote his Gospel.<sup>27</sup> John refutes this understanding of Christology. For John, materiality itself is not inherently evil! That is why the Logos became *sarx* (flesh). The emphasis on materiality (as an antidote to gnostic docetism) rather than on the human person may be the reason why John ignores the word *anthropos* or *aner* (which exclusively refer to the human being) and chooses *sarx*, with a broader scope. The *sarx* of John 1:14 “which the Word became not only weds Jesus to other human being in species; it also reaches beyond us to the whole biological world of living creatures and the cosmic dust of which we are composed.”<sup>28</sup> The Incarnation, then, for John has a cosmic significance.

The understanding that *sarx* has a broader meaning than just man appears further in St. Bonaventure’s (1221–1274) understanding of the Incarnation. In one of his sermons, he says:

As a human being, Christ has something in common with all creatures. With the stone, he shares existence; with plants, he shares life; with animals, he shares sensation; and with the angels, he shares intelligence. Therefore, all things are said to be transformed in

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<sup>26</sup> All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version.

<sup>27</sup> See the work of Udo Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John: An Investigation of the Place of the Fourth Gospel in the Johannine School*, trans. Linda Maloney (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992).

<sup>28</sup> Johnson, *Ask the Beast*, 197.

Christ since – in his human nature – he embraces something of every creature in himself when he is transfigured.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, Bonaventure believes that the Incarnation has a cosmic scope, encompassing living beings with consciousness and cognitive abilities and inanimate objects such as sands and stones.

Unfortunately, the dominant theological reflection has generally limited the Incarnation in the flesh to the human realm. The understanding that the Logos became human could explain why a dominance of anthropocentric soteriology exists until today. That indeed cannot be wrong. However, the scientific era in which we live today understands humans as an inseparable part of the existence of the rest of creation synchronically and diachronically. Synchronically, humans are not only *homo sapiens*, *homo faber*, or *homo economicus*; they are also *homo ecologicus*, which means that humans cannot exist and survive without existential connection with other existences outside themselves (whether non-human living things or inanimate objects, for example, water, air, sunlight, etc.) that serve as their living space and source of life.

Diachronically, based on the dominant understanding of science today, materially, humans exist as the result of a long process of evolution of the universe that began with the big bang that produced stardust 13.7 billion years ago. Stardust produced the universe and the Earth, and from the Earth came life, ranging from the simplest to the most complex, including *homo sapiens*.

In the Incarnation, Jesus became part of this material universe. His body, like ours, is composed of the elements C, H, O, N, P, S, Cl, Ca, K, and Na, also part of the elements found in stardust.<sup>30</sup> Like us, the DNA in his cellular structure makes Jesus part of a community of

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<sup>29</sup> Bonaventure, *Sermo I, Dom. II, in Quad.* (IX, 218). This translation is quoted from Dahan Lee, “The Ecological Meaning of St Bonaventure’s Theology of the Created World”, Ph.D. diss., (Australian Catholic University, 2020): 108.

<sup>30</sup> Kerry Lotzof, “Are We Made of Stardust?” *Natural History Museum*, [Available at: <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/are-we-really-made-of-stardust.html>], [Last accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2024].

common ancestors. When he lived for about thirty-three years on Earth, like us, he also became *homo ecologicus*, adrift and inseparable from the existence of other living things and other objects that existed outside himself.<sup>31</sup>

If all elements of the cosmos come within reach of Jesus's Incarnation and, if the Incarnation involves a radical embodiment that reaches down to the roots of human biological and material existence, then in using the dictum of St Gregory of Nazianzen, "for that which is not assumed, is not healed" as a kind of formula, we can say all creation (not only human) will be healed.

This kind of soteriological expansion will bring consequences to one of the facets of Pentecostal's full gospel theology, Jesus as the divine healer. Humanity now can understand Jesus as the one able to cure not only the sick body but also the sick creation – thus creating an ecotheology from a Pentecostal perspective.

### **A Vision of Sacred Earth**

Like the Christian traditions that developed in the post-Enlightenment West, Pentecostalism was heavily influenced by the Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm that shaped modern worldviews. Briefly, the Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm<sup>32</sup> can be described as follows:

- Subjectivism-anthropocentric: Rene Descartes' creed: *Cogito Ergo Sum* (I Think Therefore I Exist) clearly describes the form of consciousness of the subject that leads to

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<sup>31</sup> It is important to clarify that the concept of deep Incarnation does not suggest that the divine nature shown in the incarnation of Jesus was simultaneously infused into all aspects of the created world. (I thank Dr Frank Macchia for raising this issue during the Q&A session.)

<sup>32</sup> Rene Descartes and Isaac Newton are the figures shaping modernism. Descartes was the pioneer of rationalism, while Newton was the scientist who built modern science with classical Newtonian physics dominant in the scientific world before the birth of quantum mechanics in the twentieth century.

himself (human), which is the basis for the formation of anthropocentrism and the hierarchical order of the universe. (Humans are superior to the universe.)

- Dualism: Subject-Object, Mind-Body. The sharp separation between mind and body, subject consciousness, and external reality (object) has had a tremendous impact on the mind of modern man. Nature that was once considered as “You” (to borrow a term used by Martin Buber) has now become “It” to exploit in such a way as to benefit the subject (human).
- Mechanistic: This means that nature is seen as a lifeless machine with no symbolic meaning, value, or sense of ethics and aesthetics. Alfred North Whitehead writes, “Nature is a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colourless, merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, meaninglessly.”<sup>33</sup> The consequence of this mechanistic understanding is that humans can do anything to this lifeless nature for their benefit.

This Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm has led to the secularisation of the cosmos. Once considered sacred and with intrinsic value, the universe is now considered nothing more than an object with only instrumental value.

One can see the influence of the Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm in Pentecostalism in the practice of Pentecostal congregational life, which is very focused on humans and their life problems with only a minimal concern for ecological issues. Even if such concern exists, it more accurately appears as charity rather than as engagement or advocacy on ecological issues. Seeing this kind of condition, Harold Hunter, a Pentecostal theologian who cares about ecological issues, offers a sobering reflection that summarizes well the dilemma facing Pentecostals:

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<sup>33</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Science, and Modern World* (New York: The Free Press, 1967): 54.

Thus, even those Pentecostals who prohibit cigarette smoking and drinking alcohol find themselves passively taking in many of the same chemicals and seem little concerned about keeping enough air for future generations to breathe. [...] One of the gifts of the Pentecostal Movement to the Twentieth Century was its commitment to the possibility of physical healing. Yet, how does the movement now respond to caring for God's creation when the sickness of creation makes us ill?<sup>34</sup>

How can Pentecostals reverse the desacralisation of nature without going back to a paganism that often identifies nature with God, the Creator (pantheism)? The answer may lie in the willingness to embrace panentheism! Unlike pantheism, which identifies God with His creation, panentheism sees the Divine as inseparable, always present and involved in the world of His creation, without the need to be qualitatively identical with His creation. Various versions and explanations of panentheism exist; however, the most relevant one to present here is Jürgen Moltmann's panentheism, since he gives ample space to the Holy Spirit, often closely associated with Pentecostalism.

### **Jürgen Moltmann's Panentheism**

Moltmann argues that too strict a separation between God and His creation is the cause of ecological degradation. In *God in Creation*, he writes: "The ruthless conquest and exploitation of nature which fascinated Europe during this period [modernity] found its appropriate religious legitimization in that ancient distinction between God and the World."<sup>35</sup> To overcome the problems of overemphasising God's transcendence, we need a model that gives space to God's immanence without sacrificing or discarding His transcendence. According to Moltmann, God is

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<sup>34</sup> Harold D. Hunter, "Pentecostal Healing for God's Sick Creation?" *The Spirit and The Church*, 2(2), (November 2000): 153-54.

<sup>35</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1985): 13-14.

never distant and separate from His creation but present and involved in it. However, one should not equate or identify God with His creation because, at one time, creation did not exist. This idea of *creatio ex nihilo* “indicates God’s self-distinction from the world and entails that the world is neither in itself divine nor an emanation from God’s eternal being”.<sup>36</sup>

Moltmann then borrows the idea of *Shekinah* from ancient Jewish religious literature (for example, the Mishnah and the Talmud)<sup>37</sup> and Kabbalistic traditions to describe God’s transcendence and immanence. *Shekinah* is the embodiment of God’s promise to His people that he will dwell within the midst of his people. At the time of the Exodus, God’s *Shekinah* was a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, leading the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land. The *Shekinah* was also present in the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle of Moses, and the Temple of Israel in Jerusalem. In the time of the Exile, the *Shekinah* of God became a partner in suffering as the people of Israel lived in misery in a foreign country. So, the *Shekinah* is none other than God himself, present in a particular time and space.<sup>38</sup> However, God’s local and temporal presence must be distinguished from himself, which the universe cannot contain. Moltmann writes:

The Shekinah is not a divine attribute. It is the presence of God himself. However, it is not God in his essential omnipresence. It is his special, willed, and promised presence in the world. The Shekinah is God himself, present at a particular place and time. “When two sit down together to study the Torah, the Shekinah is in their midst.” The descent and habitation of God at a particular place and time among particular people must, therefore, be distinguished from the very God himself, whom even the heavens are unable to contain. The Shekinah is certainly the present God, but this presence is distinguished from his eternity. If the Shekinah is the earthly, temporal, and spatial presence of God, then it is at once identical to God and distinct from him.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Steven Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening of Theology: The Ecological Models of Rosemary Radford Ruether, Joseph Sittler, and Jürgen Moltmann* (Atlanta, GA: Scholar Press, 1995): 116.

<sup>37</sup> *Shekinah* shows up for example in *Pirkei Avot* 3:2 (the Mishnah), *Berakhot* 6 and *Menachot* 43b (the Talmud).

<sup>38</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1996): 266.

<sup>39</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994): 48.

Furthermore, Moltmann understands this *Shekinah* to be the Holy Spirit himself.<sup>40</sup>

The Holy Spirit, the *Shekinah* of God, dwells in the universe. He is in us, others, and the rest of creation.<sup>41</sup> However, interestingly, by dwelling in the universe, God does not dissolve in the universe, as classical pantheism does. Thus, we can metaphorically summarise Moltmann's panentheism with the words, God who is at once "above" and "within the world".

If God is present in creation, and creation serves as his dwelling place through the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit (cosmic pneumatology), then the universe remains sacred and has intrinsic value in itself. The next question arises: how does Pentecostal divine healing relate to the vision of a sacred universe? At first glance, there seems no connection between the two, but as shown in the following paragraphs, they can be linked through resacralisation.

### **Body Resacralisation in Divine Healing**

Jonathan Baer states that incipient or early Pentecostals "resacralised the body and rejected secular authority on it".<sup>42</sup> Their views stood diametrically opposed to the typical Reformation Protestants' view, which tended to desacralise the body. Philip Mellor and Chris Shilling explain that the Protestant Reformation brought about not only a transformation of beliefs that led to the separation of Church and State, the promotion of individualism and rationalism, but also what they call a re-formation of embodiment.<sup>43</sup> In general, medieval Catholicism, the background for the birth of the Reformation, saw the body as sacred. This sacredness of the body is obtained through "a collective effervescence of social relationships that

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<sup>40</sup> Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 51.

<sup>41</sup> Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 51.

<sup>42</sup> Jonathan R. Baer, "Redeemed Bodies: The Functions of Divine Healing in Incipient Pentecostalism", *Church History* 70(4), (December 2001): 765.

<sup>43</sup> Philip A. Mellor and Chris Shilling, *Re-Forming the Body: Religion, Community, and Modernity* (London: Sage, 1997): 98.

can be typified as sacred eating communities”.<sup>44</sup> In the Eucharist, for example, when individuals gather together as a sacred eating community, God incorporates himself into the body of the individual as bread and wine, thereby incorporating the individual into the body of Christ.<sup>45</sup>

In contrast, Reformation Protestantism views the here-and-now world (including the body) as entirely profane, utterly detached from the sacred. Even the association of embodied people sacralised through the Eucharist is seen as nothing more than a profane association. When the world is entirely profane, with God far away as the radical transcendence, the world, on the one hand, becomes closed to what Max Weber calls “magic”<sup>46</sup> and utterly open to the intervention of human ratios. Thus, there was a strict separation between the supernatural and the natural, which led the Protestant reformers to reject all forms of present-day miracles (cessationism). According to this view, all miracles, including divine healing, had been limited to the apostolic times, whose function was to aid the establishment of Christianity. Divine healing and other miracles emphasised in Catholicism as signs of God’s presence in the universe were seen as the work of Satan to deceive humanity. Consider what John Calvin says:

We may also fitly remember that Satan has his miracles, which, though they are deceitful tricks rather than true powers, are of such a sort as to mislead the simple-minded and untutored (1 Thess. 2:9-10). Magicians and enchanters have always been noted for miracles. Idolatry has been nourished by wonderful miracles, yet these are not sufficient to sanction the superstition either of magicians or of idolaters.<sup>47</sup>

For John Calvin, all-present-day miracles are counterfeit miracles, not genuine miracles performed by the power of God. Such understanding (cessationism) had dominated traditional

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<sup>44</sup> Mellor and Shilling, *Re-Forming the Body*, 16.

<sup>45</sup> Mellor and Shilling, *Re-Forming the Body*, 16

<sup>46</sup> See Jack Baberlet, “Magic and Reformation Calvinism in Max Weber’s Sociology”, *European Journal of Social Theory* 21(4), (29<sup>th</sup> October 2017): 1-18, [Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431017736996>], [Last accessed: 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024], for a detailed interpretation of Weber’s magic.

<sup>47</sup> John Calvin, *Institute of the Christian Religion Vol. 1*, trans. by Ford L. Battles, edited by John T. McNeill (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2006), 17.



Protestantism at least until the rise of Charismatic Protestantism in the second half of the twentieth century.

Early Pentecostals challenged this traditional Protestant belief to desacralise the body and its intended consequence, namely the denial of post-apostolic miracles. For them, the body was a site of divine grace and power. The sacred was not experienced in abstract terms but in tangible and physical ways. The experience of the Holy Spirit's infilling power was authenticated through trances, body shaking, and speaking in tongues. The apex of experience of the sacralisation of the body is undoubtedly divine healing since it represents "not only bodily expressions but also concrete physical change".<sup>48</sup>

Just as resacralisation of the body paved the way for healing the sick body among early Pentecostals, resacralisation of Earth should also pave the way for healing the sick creation. As the human body, Earth is the temple of God because the Holy Spirit is present and permeates all elements of the Earth. God desires to heal not only the sick body but also the sick Earth. Thus, the expansion of divine healing theology from the micro level (human body) to the macro level (cosmos) might be an alternative ecotheology that can be offered by Pentecostals to the body of Christ.

### **Epilogue**

I close this chapter with an idea from one of Jesus' most famous stories, the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37), highlighting two points. First, this story explicitly deconstructs the traditional understanding of whom we should love. In Jesus' time, those to be loved were people of the same nation and religion. However, Jesus deconstructs this understanding! We are to love

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<sup>48</sup> Baer, "Redeemed Bodies", 765.

everyone, including those seen as enemies! At the beginning of the twenty-first century, amidst the ecological crisis that has hit the world, we must deconstruct the traditional understanding we have inherited, which sees our neighbours as only fellow human beings. Our neighbours should now be not only human beings but also the (non-human) elements of creation on this Earth.

Second, in the story of the Good Samaritan, we find the healing process experienced by an injured person. The person cannot heal himself; he needs help to experience recovery. The Good Samaritan helps in the healing process. Right now, “our neighbour” – the Earth – is sick like the wounded man in the story. It looks like she cannot help herself! In such conditions, we Pentecostals can act as the Good Samaritan for the Earth. One of the things that we can do to help heal the Earth is to change the theological perspective of our people: we should extend healing not only to the sick in body but to the sick earth as well.

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### **Abstract**

The global ecological crisis is an undeniable fact. Evidence of the existence of this ecological crisis can be found everywhere in the form of the emergence of global warming that triggers climate change with the result of extreme weather (very heavy rain and long drought), the reduction in the volume of glaciers on the earth's surface and the rise of seawater that threatens the lives of humans living on the coast.

As part of the Christian tradition, Pentecostals can contribute meaningful thoughts to prevent this destruction of the earth with one of its theological legacies – the Full Gospel Theology. There are four or five aspects of the Full Gospel: Salvation, Divine Healing, Holy Spirit Baptism, and Sanctification. These four or five aspects of the Full Gospel of Pentecost can all be used to build a typical Pentecostal constructive ecotheology. However, in this paper, only one aspect of the Full Gospel, divine healing, will be explored.

The paper opens with contemporary data that illustrates that the ecological crisis is not a myth; the next section highlights the common understanding of divine healing in the minds of modern Pentecostals, which stems from the understanding that salvation includes not only spiritual but material dimensions as well. It will then be explained why this doctrine of divine healing

eventually tends to be confined to the individual-physical realm within the community of Pentecostals. Finally, a way out to extend the doctrine of divine healing to the cosmic realm is done primarily by using two concepts: deep Incarnation and a vision of the sacred Earth.