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Towards Holistic Healing: A Pentecostal Ecotheological Perspective

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Abstract: Pentecostal ecotheology presents a holistic approach to healing that recognises the inherent worth of all creation and the interconnectedness of human and nonhuman creation. It draws on the Pentecostal full gospel and the experiences of biblical Pentecost to inspire an expansive pneumatology that transcends an anthropocentric soteriology and views the entire cosmos as the altar where human and nonhuman creation can tarry for and experience the sacred presence, power, and conviction of the Holy Spirit with a sense of eschatological urgency such that (inter alia) repentance from ecological transgression becomes normative. This framework envisions all of creation participating in the Spirit's presence, power, gifting, and renewal. Leveraging Pentecostal ecotheology for holistic healing involves intentionally engaging, replicating, and contextualising the pneumatological experiences of the biblical Pentecost. It also involves embracing the pneumatological continuity between us and the biblical charismatic communities, enabling us to administer healing in contemporary environmental contexts through the Spirit's anointing. Engaging in ecotheological intercession, overcoming the creational desacralisation that leads to the mechanistic exploitation of creation, and adopting a Spirit-born sense of solidarity with creation are further essential strategies for leveraging Pentecostal ecotheology for holistic healing.

Keywords: Pentecostal ecotheology; holistic healing; full gospel; pneumatology; environmental; creation; Holy Spirit; eschatology; mission



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1. Introduction

Pentecostals pride themselves on the completeness of their 'full gospel' (otherwise known as the fivefold gospel). They contrast this to what they perceive to be a deficient evangelical gospel, especially in its supposed cessationist downplaying of the baptism in the Spirit and accompanying charismata. However, what many traditional Pentecostals do not readily realise is the insufficiency of their so-called full gospel from a Pentecostal ecotheological viewpoint.

That lacuna stems from the anthropocentric nature of typical Pentecostal soteriology. It is the pride that makes Pentecostals construe the incarnation and the entire redemption narrative purely in human-centred terms, as opposed to a biocentric or all-inclusive soteriology. A consequence of that deficiency is the reluctance and apathy many Pentecostals display with regard to environmental issues. That is why there is a desperate need for a holistic Pentecostal ecotheological approach to the Pentecostal theology of healing. A chief goal of this article, therefore, is to consider how the biblical healing motif can be reconceived through a holistic Pentecostal ecotheological lens. A significant outcome of this re-conception, it is profoundly hoped, will be to enhance Pentecostal engagement with ecological concerns (Davis 2021, p. 5). To achieve that, it is necessary to first explore the main contours of the Pentecostal full gospel, which is mainly based on Wolfgang Vondey's outline. Then, we will zero in on ecotheology as a theological imperative before exploring the shape of a Pentecostal ecotheological lens, considering how Pentecostal ecotheology

can be leveraged to the planet's ecological advantage, and then we will wrap things up by way of a conclusion. Before proceeding, it is necessary to point out that the objective this article seeks to address pertains to Pentecostals' ecotheological reluctance rather than a broad-based exploration of generic Christian ecotheology.

2. Review of the Classical Pentecostal 'Full Gospel'

While it is indisputable that the Pentecostal movement is not monomorphic (Straub 2016, p. 214), Archer (2007, p. 301) proposes that an effective approach to developing a Pentecostal theology aligned with its identity is by rooting it in pneumatology and structuring it around the full gospel, also known as the fivefold gospel, and previously known as the foursquare¹ gospel (before the sanctification element was added)—comprising Jesus Christ as saviour, sanctifier, Spirit baptiser, healer, and imminently coming king. Moreover, this full gospel serves as the core narrative convictions of the Pentecostal community (Archer 2007, p. 312). Echoing this, Anderson (2013, p. 56) defines the core of Pentecostalism in terms of the fivefold gospel. Likewise, Vondey (2020, p. 173) views the full gospel as a theological hermeneutic which encompasses Pentecostal articulations of their inherent narrative theology—primarily in terms of the fivefold methodological framework of spiritual experiences that emanate from the day of Pentecost (serving as Pentecostal theology's foundational symbol).

Significantly, unlike many evangelicals who believe in “cessationism”—the doctrine that miraculous gifts of the Spirit largely ceased with the close of the Apostolic Age—Pentecostals believe that there is an unbroken continuity between early church charismata and the experience of today's church (Straub 2016, p. 208; Clark 1997, p. 289). It should be noted that coupled with the dispensationalist dogma, the cessationist doctrine is used to rationalise the absence of spiritual gifts in sections of the body of Christ today (Clark 1997, p. 289). However, as far as Pentecostals are concerned, healing and all other charismata are available today, serving to demonstrate the presence of the Holy Spirit and the inauguration of the kingdom of God (Matthew 12:28, 1 Corinthians 2:4).

The full gospel can also be understood as a liturgical narrative that invites people to engage with Pentecost through a hermeneutical and experiential movement towards and away from the altar (Vondey 2020, p. 173). Pentecostals highlight the experiences and practises presented in Luke-Acts without denying the Johannine and Pauline perspectives such that the Lukan focus provides the main interpretive lens for the broader theological discourse, where the outpouring of the Spirit serves as the blueprint for Pentecostal theology's practises and convictions (Vondey 2020, p. 174). Moreover, according to Vondey (2020, p. 174), a theology based on the day of Pentecost serves as the thematic interpretive framework that fosters an experiential connection with the events of Pentecost. Pentecostal theology enables believers to participate today in the experiences of the original day of Pentecost.

Elaborating on the meaning of experiencing Pentecost, Vondey (2020, p. 174) highlights that its logic starts from the spiritual (*pneuma*) realm culminating in the word (*logos*) realm in the sense that the movement's theology is driven by a pneumatological imagination resulting from one's Spirit-guided encounter of Pentecost; that simultaneously Pentecostal theology revolves around Jesus Christ where Pentecost points to the crucified, resurrected, and exalted Jesus who has released the Holy Spirit from God's right hand (Acts 2:14–36). Furthermore, being saved by Christ is succeeded by the pneumatological promise applicable to present and future generations (Acts 2:39). Thus, the full gospel seamlessly encompasses Spirit-Christology, viz, “the work of Christ and the Spirit” (Vondey 2020, p. 174). That means the full gospel is simultaneously and holistically Christ-centred and Spirit-centred.

This Pentecostal theology, stemming from a Spirit-Christology based on the Spirit universally outpoured (Acts 2:17), delves into the heart of Pentecost historically and theologically to connect with its convictions and practises resulting in an encounter-based spirituality that continues, replicates, and expands the original Pentecostal experience

(Vondey 2020, p. 174). Rather than being a common hermeneutical tool, Pentecostal Spirit-Christology involves an essential link to the day of Pentecost that continually fashions “the pneumatological and Christological imagination. . .from Pentecost to Pentecost”, in the sense that present experiences with the Spirit are viewed as partaking of the original encounter (Vondey 2020, p. 174). Thus, the original Pentecost symbolises and determines the Pentecostal theological hermeneutics’ aim of preserving the accessibility, validity, and perpetuation of Pentecostal experiences (Vondey 2020, p. 174). Concerning what may be termed the arena of such experiences, Vondey (2020, pp. 174–75) explains that in Pentecostal theology, it is the “altar call” that epitomises and actualises believers’ immediate encounter with and response to Christ and the Spirit’s outpouring as in the biblical Pentecost.

Furthermore, the full gospel is neither strictly defined nor theologically sequential but serves as a diverse theological narrative reflecting the structure of Pentecostal worship, spirituality, and praxis (liturgy) at the altar (Vondey 2020, pp. 175–76). Thus, its innate fivefold narrative, identified by diverse essential encounters with the Spirit, constitutes a heuristic theological paradigm, where the five motifs do not necessarily function in a linear but in a balanced weblike manner such that access to Pentecost at the altar can happen from any motif (Vondey 2020, p. 176). Moreover, the full gospel serves as a theological hermeneutic as well as a narrative of interconnected contemporary Pentecostal experiences that reflect the original Pentecost (Vondey 2020, p. 176). Thus, emanating from a commitment to partake in the biblical Pentecost, full gospel theology is free from contemporary theological restrictions such that it operates through a continuous hermeneutical process that constantly brings theology to and from the altar in an activity that stems from and aims toward Pentecost, and ultimately achieving Pentecost through experiencing God directly (Vondey 2020, p. 176). In addition, the full gospel emanates from the “liturgical space” and tension between Pentecostals’ free experiential spirituality and dogmatic theological reflection, and thus, the full gospel can be understood as a distinct hermeneutic where experience is understood as a personal confirmation of God’s revelation (Vondey 2020, p. 176). In the same vein, Davis (2022, p. 114) explains that despite the differences in time and space between the Day of Pentecost and today, contemporary believers can still experience Pentecost through altar-call rites that illustrate the full gospel. Thus, the full gospel serves as a fivefold hermeneutical narrative, that is, the filter through which Pentecostals can “interpret, describe, read, engage, critique, and comment on various areas of inquiry” (Davis 2022, p. 114). This figurative interpretation of Pentecost allows Christians to envision the continual rebirth, reduplication, and renewal of the Pentecost experience within the church across generations through the Spirit (Davis 2022, p. 114).

Before proceeding, it is necessary to point out that the usage of the term ‘altar’ in a Pentecostal context does not specifically or necessarily refer to a particular space in the architecture of a church building. Rather, like on the day of Pentecost, the altar refers to one’s encounter with the outpoured Spirit and response to God’s activity—regardless of the availability or absence of a traditional central focus point in the sanctuary (Vondey 2020, p. 175). In short, therefore, an altar call concerns the facilitation of an encounter with and response to the Holy Spirit in any appropriate manner and context as the Spirit leads. It is necessary to point out here that such a conception of the Pentecostal altar will come in handy when we shall discuss ecotheology.

Now, having briefly explored the meaning of the full gospel in general, we can now survey each of its five motifs. Starting with the motif of *salvation*, Vondey (2020, pp. 176–77) asserts that it is the full gospel’s foundational rationale and entrance representing a simultaneously soteriological, redemptive, transformative, converting, hospitable, and liberating encounter with God. Furthermore, Vondey (2020, p. 177) explains that every aspect of the full gospel is a result of grace and can function as a route to the altar and salvation. The full gospel’s comprehensive salvation encompasses a broad spectrum of soteriological experiences such as deliverance from sin, satanic powers, the worldly system, economic, ideological, and economic bondage, as well as participating in the divine nature, rebirth, healing, and holy living (Vondey 2020, p. 177). Significantly, Vondey (2020, p. 177) asserts

that the full gospel impacts the personal, spiritual, physical, communal, socioeconomic, and ecological aspects of the movement's soteriology. Likewise, Yong (2005, pp. 91–95) presents an expansive view of the Pentecostal fivefold gospel from a Lukan Spirit-soteriology that encompasses seven dimensions of salvation, namely: personal, family, ecclesial, material, social (including racial, class and gender reconciliation), and cosmic salvation. While the scope of this article does not permit an elaborate discussion of Yong's expansive view of the soteriological motif, suffice it to say that salvation in this conception is perceived in ever-widening circles starting from the individual, including the immediate family and stretching to the wider society and the entire cosmos. Thus, it illustrates the nature of a holistic Pentecostal soteriology. Similarly, Swoboda (2011b, p. 146) lauds Pentecostal theology's holistic and cosmic nature, arguing that that is what enables it to serve as an effective ecotheological springboard, where we are no longer preoccupied with human interests at the expense of the rest of creation (Swoboda 2011b, p. 147).

Regarding the second motif of the full gospel, Vondey (2020, pp. 177–78) explains that *sanctification* acknowledges God's call to and the believer's passion for holiness (1 Peter 1:15–16), often expressed through expectantly tarrying at the altar for Pentecost, unlike salvation which is tantamount to a movement to the altar. Thus, sanctification involves purification from sin and the pursuit of perfection (2 Cor. 7:1) through tarrying, consecration, and surrender at the altar for Christ's presence and the Spirit's outpouring (Vondey 2020, p. 178). Furthermore, Vondey (2020, p. 178) defines sanctification as "an active waiting for the encounter with Christ and immersion in the sacred presence of the Holy Spirit" akin to the upper room experience (Acts 1:13–14), where believers' inner conflict, grief, confession, conviction, humility, introspection, and correction are possible.

To Vondey (2020, p. 178), the third motif of the full gospel—*Spirit baptism*—entails a profound, intimate experience where the reborn and sanctified believer receives the Spirit's empowerment for godly living in an exceptional encounter. In addition, Vondey (2020, pp. 178–79) explains that Spirit baptism occurs subjectively and objectively—where one's personal encounter with the Holy Spirit impacts one's affective disposition, resulting in a greater internal orientation towards God and people and where baptism in the Spirit kindles one's selfless fervour towards the external church, world, and all creation. Thus, Spirit baptism "is both a personal experience of grace and a communal, universal, and eschatological manifestation of the kingdom of God in the world"—where its main manifestations include "praying through" (persisting in fervent prayer until one receives a clear sense of spiritual breakthrough), kerygma (preaching), laying on of hands, glossolalia, prophecy, and other charismata (Vondey 2020, pp. 178–79). Significantly, Vondey (2020, p. 179) elaborates that reception of Spirit baptism empowers the church to participate in and witness to "the final sanctification of creation" while simultaneously introducing a socio-critical approach that equips the church to act as a counterforce in the world, displaying the Spirit's charismata, and sharing in the suffering of creation as it anticipates complete redemption. It is noteworthy that this conception of Spirit baptism apparently depicts the full gospel as transcending a purely anthropocentric focus. This feature will also come in handy later in this article's ecotheological discourse.

Concerning the fourth motif of the full gospel—*divine healing*—Vondey (2020, p. 179) asserts that it signifies an extension of one's Spirit baptism experience *beyond* the altar to the world and typically operates in connection with specific acts of faith, such as faith declarations, hands-laying, and anointing with oil. Moreover, Pentecostal healing practices tend to be diverse and contextualised beyond strictly biblical patterns; transcending exclusively physical healing, this motif often encompasses such areas as employment, family schisms, marriage issues, racial conflict, politics, and environmental challenges (Vondey 2020, p. 179). Once again, the potential expansiveness of the Pentecostal full gospel beyond exclusively human interests cannot be overstated.

In the same vein, Vondey (2020, p. 179) elaborates that the full gospel's healing motif "proclaims that wholeness and restoration are the universal will of God for the salvation of all creation²". While suffering, illness, persecution, and death are common biblical

themes associated with experiencing God's redeeming presence, Pentecostals address these challenges by invoking the biblical symbol of Pentecost, focusing on healing through God's power availed by Christ's atonement and experiencing the Spirit (Vondey 2020, p. 179). Furthermore, Pentecostal healing theology revolves around three liturgical overlapping dynamics: first, saved, sanctified, and Spirit-filled believers approach the altar for healing; in turn, healed saints take the altar to the world; and third, healed sinners come to the altar to be saved (Vondey 2020, p. 179).

Significantly, Vondey (2020, p. 180) points out that the Pentecostal theology of healing has been reshaped over the years by the necessity of reconciling the fundamental tension between expectation and experience—the brokenness of our world evidenced by unhealed believers, wars, acts of nature, epidemics, private misfortunes, and so forth. While Pentecostal theology connects healing both to the atonement and to the ongoing search for atonement, its insistence on the availability and global extension of the Pentecost experience forms the core of its most practical and challenging demands within the full gospel liturgy (Vondey 2020, p. 180).

Turning to the fifth motive of the Pentecostal full gospel—*eschatology*—Vondey (2020, p. 180) explicates its function in terms of “participation in Pentecost transformed by an apocalyptic urgency” where Spirit-filled believers are both drawn from the altar to the world and returned to the altar for fresh encounters with God. Put differently, an apocalyptic emphasis is both centrifugal and centripetal with respect to the altar such that the movement's eschatological mandate encompasses evangelising the unsaved, proclaiming Christ as king, and bringing the lost into the kingdom of God (Vondey 2020, p. 180). Furthermore, this “apocalyptic expectation of the inbreaking of the kingdom already manifested in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (at Pentecost and beyond) permeates the reading and practices of the other gospel motifs” (Vondey 2020, p. 180). That means all the Pentecostal full gospel motifs are tied to eschatology, the ultimate fulfilment of God's kingdom, and are framed as preparatory steps for engaging with and witnessing to the world while also serving as a testimony of God's presence and the future reality of His kingdom (Vondey 2020, p. 180). This provides an eschatological impetus to continually preach the full gospel until its ultimate culmination (Vondey 2020, p. 180).

Vondey (2020, p. 180) further explores the concept of eschatological practises within Pentecostal theology, highlighting how these practises are central to the church's mission and transformation of the world. Moreover, Vondey (2020, p. 180) sums up the importance of these eschatological practises in terms of their relevance to Christian mission, worship, and theology, arguing that these practises anticipate and celebrate an eternal Pentecost, grounded in an apocalyptic vision. Thus, the Pentecostal eschatological mission encompasses both “urgent evangelisation and long-term social transformation” (Vondey 2020, pp. 180–81). The movement's eschatological mission includes both the urgent harvesting of souls into the kingdom of God and the transformation of society in the long run. In other words, the Pentecostal eschatological motif is not just about anticipating the eschaton, but it includes welcoming the present-day inbreaking of the kingdom of God through the Spirit³ in the entire cosmos. The relevance of this perspective to ecotheology cannot be overstated. Meanwhile, we now turn to the meaning and imperativeness of ecotheology.

3. Ecotheology as a Theological Imperative

In simple terms, ecotheology is the theology of ecology or ecological theology, where the concept of ecology⁴ refers to the totality of interrelated organisms (human and non-human) and their environment (Davis 2021, p. 4). On the other hand, a more complex rendition defines ecotheology as “an expanded theological horizon of the relation of God, human and nonhuman creation across several fronts” (Davis 2021, p. 25). According to Lamp (2021, p. 75), the concept of ecotheology has diverse nuances ranging from a historical exploration of how Christianity has interacted with the environment to a search for ecological expressions of primary Christian tenets and to proffering an ecological hermeneutic

capable of engaging with secular as well as interfaith groups. Similarly, Nothwehr (2019, pp. 68–81) defines ecotheology in terms of ecojustice, as does Habel (2016, pp. 92–109).

In the same vein, Conradie (2020, pp. 2–3) depicts ecotheology as a hermeneutic that possesses both a critical and a constructive capacity, where its critical dimension offers an ecological evaluation of Christianity as well as a Christian evaluation of ecological destruction. Thus, by critiquing Christianity from an ecotheological perspective, the risk of anthropocentrism is mitigated, while addressing environmental degradation helps avoid the trap of secularisation (Conradie 2020, p. 3). Ecotheology's constructive dimension concerns its contribution to Christian authenticity as well as its contribution to the interdisciplinary conversation on sustainability (Conradie 2020, p. 3). Further, Conradie (2020, p. 3) contends that ecotheology has five key prophetic-cum-pastoral tasks, viz: decoding the signs of the times, identifying root causes, perceiving the Holy Spirit's direction, relating the narrative of God's work, and envisioning a better world. Obviously, this portrayal of ecotheology highlights its holistic and cosmic scope. In sum, ecotheology is a biblical ecological hermeneutic that is intentionally cosmic, critical, constructive, prophetic, and pastoral. These ecotheological competencies speak to its imperativeness. In other words, these capacities (and others) highlight the indispensability of ecotheology in our cosmic home, which is plagued by a plethora of ecological challenges. Furthermore, this article makes the bold claim that not only is Christian ecotheology essential in combating our contemporary environmental crises, but a specifically *Pentecostal* ecotheology—that is, an ecotheology turbocharged by a pneumatological dimension—is desperately needed in our troubled earthly home. Thus, the next section briefly surveys the shape of a Pentecostal ecotheological lens.

4. Overview of the Pentecostal Ecotheological Lens

According to Lamp (2021, p. 72), an effective Pentecostal ecotheology transcends the rather superficial environmental overtones typical of the ecological wisdom style, which also typifies an exclusively anthropocentric soteriology. On the contrary, a viable Pentecostal ecotheology comprises at least four key motifs. First, a valid Pentecostal ecotheology is *holistic* (Swoboda 2011b, p. 146). That means not only does it encompass the full gospel discussed above, but it also acknowledges the comprehensive role of the Spirit in all creation. Such a holistic Pentecostal ecotheology is decidedly Christological, pneumatological, and integrative. The full gospel's five motifs serve as narrative convictions that enable members of the movement to relate their theology beyond religious platitudes (Archer 2007, p. 312). As a result, its capacity to mobilise more believers to participate in creation care is boosted tremendously.

Second, a relevant Pentecostal ecotheology is *biocentric*, referring to the recognition of the intrinsic value of all life forms, ecosystems, and the biosphere regardless of their utilitarian value from a human perspective (Swoboda 2011b, pp. 207–8). Moreover, Swoboda (2011b, p. 215) asserts that environmentally friendly Pentecostals consider the pursuit of human solidarity with all creation to be part and parcel of an authentic Spirit-filled piety. Thus, there is solidarity between the biocentric Spirit and broken creation, while the Spirit also invites all wounded creation to participate in the community of the Trinity, such that the Spirit is understood to be “wounded alongside wounded creation” and thus relating with a sense of intimacy and closeness to creation's suffering, contrary to an overemphasis on God's transcendence from creation (Swoboda 2011b, p. 215).

Third, an effective Pentecostal ecotheology is *pneumatological*—in the sense of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in all creation, inspiring, enlivening, and empowering human involvement in environmental issues and sustainability (Yong 2011, p. 9). It should be noted that this pneumatological nature unfolds in several ways. In the first place, going beyond the anthropocentric conception of Spirit baptism discussed above as part of the Pentecostal full gospel, Swoboda (2011b, pp. 275–83) explains that the *Spirit baptised creation* ethic envisions the Holy Spirit filling not only the church but the entire cosmos comprising human and nonhuman creation to such an extent that all creation can be viewed as the

work of the Spirit⁵. Furthermore, Swoboda (2011b, pp. 291–97) proposes the *charismatic community of creation* ethic, which acknowledges the holistic pneumatology of the church and creation, where the barriers separating human and nonhuman creation are dissolved. In short, this dissolution is made possible by reconciling the concept of the Spirit poured out on all flesh (Acts 2:17) and the Spirit filling the entire universe (Ephesians 4:10). It is noteworthy that this conception transcends the typical Pentecostal understanding of the charismatic community, where the empowerment of the Spirit through the charismata is exclusively reserved for the church. In contrast, this expansive view of the Spirit's charismatic community is inclusive—recognising the empowerment and presence of the Spirit in all creation that has been groaning together in anticipation of redemption and the Parousia (Romans 8:19–23). It should be clarified that the term 'charismatic' in our context denotes being endowed with gracious gifts, that is, gifts of the Spirit (Fee 2011, p. 72). As Paul explains, these charismata are imparted "for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7). Therefore, the concept of a charismatic community of creation connotes the giftedness of all creation by the Spirit for the common good, that is, for the purpose of adding value to other members of the earth community. Viewed this way, nonhuman creation ceases to be voiceless, passive, and valueless. In fact, as Habel (2000, p. 47) asserts, humans must desist from the tendency to relegate biblical allusions to nonhuman creation's expressions of worship, warning, and protest, et cetera, to poetic licence. Instead, we must take seriously the fact that the heavens declare the glory of God (Psalm 19:1), the land mourns (Jeremiah 12:4, 11), birds teach, bushes instruct, fish declare, and all creation groans (Job 12:7–8). Indeed, as Jesus teaches the first disciples, we can genuinely learn how to avoid stress from the birds of the air, the lilies of the field, and the grass of the field (Matt. 6:26–30). Thus, the charismatic community of creation ethic imports that creation exists as a mutually edifying community through the various charismata endowed by the Holy Spirit.

Writing from a South African Pentecostal perspective, Ngwena (2024, p. 7) asserts that Pentecostal worship embodies the Holy Spirit in community connection, and ecological spirituality unifies humanity with the natural world. This interconnectedness emphasises the importance of nurturing relationships not only with one another but also with the environment, encouraging a collective responsibility for stewardship and care (Ngwena 2024, p. 8). This collective responsibility calls for innovative practises that blend spiritual beliefs with sustainable actions, inspiring communities to actively engage in environmental protection as a fundamental expression of their faith (Ngwena 2024, p. 10).

In addition, Swoboda (2011b, pp. 310–21) points out that the *holistic Spirit of creation* embodies creation, Jesus, and the church in a comprehensive fashion. This holistic Spirit significantly aids our understanding of both the individual's role within the church and the role of every participant in creation as part of the larger cosmic framework—enabling us to view the church and creation as interconnected and dynamic wholes, where all parts are mutually dependent. Lastly, the pneumatological nature of Pentecostal ecotheology can be understood in terms of the *eschatological Spirit of the ecological mission*, which broadens the scope of the mission to encompass social justice, political change, and ecological repentance in anticipation of the *Parousia* (Swoboda 2019, p. 225)—beyond an exclusively evangelistic focus. In brief, this notion stems from both Testaments' anticipation of an eschatological future when the Messiah's advent and the Spirit's outpouring would bring salvation, deliverance, and the kingdom of God for the benefit of all creation⁶.

Fourth, another characteristic feature of Pentecostal ecotheology is its *glossolalic* character, mainly in the sense of metaphorical 'tongues of fire' (Swoboda 2011a, p. 103). That means the movement's ecotheology resembles the experience of glossolalia (speaking in tongues) in terms of its mystery, unintelligibility, and diversity while being authentic, powerful, and necessary at the same time (Swoboda 2011a, p. 103). Thus, metaphorical 'tongues of fire' also require interpretation, as do literal tongues, per Pauline instructions (1 Cor. 14:13). According to Swoboda (2011a, pp. 103–4), examples of Pentecostal ecotheological 'tongues' that require interpretation include *Pentecostal social justice theology* and *Pentecostal creation theology* inter alia. To illustrate, from an ecotheological context, the 'fire' nuance of

the Spirit baptism experience signifies the purifying, enlightening, and 'shekinah' glory functions of the Pentecostal social justice and ethical living message (Yong 1998, p. 46). In practical terms, this feature may translate into addressing such ethical and ecological matters as corruption, environmental degradation, pollution, waste management, and so forth.

In the same vein, writing from a West African perspective, Odey et al. (2023, pp. 1–10) present a holistic and biocentric Pentecostal ecotheology that intertwines theology, environmental ethics, and practical conservation, highlighting how sacred places—rivers, mountains, and valleys—are vital both spiritually and ecologically, reflecting traditions from the Old Testament and African spirituality. They argue that Pentecostalism reinterprets biblical mandates, such as "till and keep" in Genesis, as a call for sustainable stewardship rather than exploitation, fostering environmental responsibility among adherents (Odey et al. 2023, p. 6). Practical expressions of this ecotheology include establishing sacred sites for biodiversity preservation, engaging with environmental organisations, and promoting eco-conscious practises like vegetarianism and sustainable land use (Odey et al. 2023, p. 6). Moreover, Odey et al. (2023, p. 9) maintain that rituals using natural resources and burial practises respecting biodiversity further demonstrate this integration.

To sum up, an effective Pentecostal ecotheological lens is holistic, biocentric, pneumatological, and glossolalic. That means it encompasses both the full gospel's five motifs (salvation, sanctification, Spirit baptism, healing, and eschatology) as well as all creation; it recognises the intrinsic worth, interdependence, and Spirit-saturation of all members of the earth community, as opposed to being purely anthropocentric; it acknowledges the active involvement and activity of the Holy Spirit in our cosmos in terms of creating, recreating, enlivening, empowering, endowing with charismata, embodying, and inspiring human and nonhuman creation as well as broadening the church's mission through the eschatological Spirit of ecological mission to include earth care; it includes the deciphering, interpretation, and resolution of the ethical conundrums that plague our planet today. Having thus gained clarity about the basic shape of an effective Pentecostal ecotheology against the backdrop of the Pentecostal full gospel, it is now possible to explore how such an ecotheology can be leveraged towards the holistic healing of our earthly home (*oikos*).

5. Leveraging Pentecostal Ecotheology for Holistic Healing

In the first place, it should be noted that holistic healing in the context of this article concerns both the involvement of the Pentecostal full gospel, acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit's role in all creation, as well as the recognition of the intrinsic worth of all members of the earth community—human and nonhuman—inclusive of their habitats, systems, and overall cosmic environment. To reiterate our earlier discussion, the Pentecostal full gospel's fivefold narrative framework enables believers to engage today in the experiences of the original day of Pentecost. That means our goal is to replicate the Pentecost event's spiritual experiences today. Otherwise, without intentionally moving from Pentecost to Pentecost, our Pentecostal ecotheology would be 'Pentecostal' in name only. Now, how can ecotheology be engaged Pentecostally? How can the spiritual experiences of the biblical Pentecost be replicated today? To begin with, following the Lukan pattern, informed believers must heed Jesus' injunction to desist from presumptuously venturing into mission and instead "wait for the promise of the Father", that is, the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4–5). As Swoboda (2019, p. 195) asserts, a subsequent experience of Spirit baptism is integral to the effective implementation of Christ's mission (Swoboda 2019, p. 195). The enormity, gravity, and eternal significance of the mission Christ was bequeathed to the church could not be entrusted to trial and error or to a business-as-usual religiosity. Without supernatural assistance, it would have been 'mission impossible'.

Inasmuch as early church disciples, notwithstanding their three-year-long training at the feet of the Messiah and mentor *par excellence*, lacked the necessary power to effectively represent Christ's kingdom to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), so do contemporary believers. Without the Paraclete's empowerment, the first disciples ran the risk of misrepresenting the

gospel mission or being overwhelmed by the adversities lurking in the field (much like the sons of Sceva⁷). This is the very point Maston (2015, p. 178) maintains, arguing that Jesus redirects the disciples from focusing on when the kingdom will come to their immediate mission of proclaiming the gospel in the power of the Spirit, and thereby advancing the kingdom of God rather than waiting for a dramatic, climactic event. Similarly, those living in this late modern era also run the risk of distorting the Lord's ecological mission unless we also intentionally wait for the promise of the Father first. The task to which we are called is still a daunting, grave, and eternally significant one. It cannot be left purely in the hands of human ingenuity. In my view, many well-meaning folks today are doing more harm than good to our global environment and ecosystems because of their presumptuousness.

It must be emphasised here that the mandate to tarry for the Spirit's empowerment is not a call to procrastination, considering the urgency of our planet's environmental challenges. For, once again emulating the Lukan model, Jesus' promise to his disciples was neither open-ended nor indeterminate. Rather, he assured them, "For John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit *not many days from now*" (Acts 1:5, emphasis added). Sure enough, Luke records that the 120 early church disciples only waited (albeit in one accord, prayerfully and constantly) for ten days, that is, from the day of Ascension to the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:3, 14; 2:1). Thus, the Pentecostal ecotheological view is that contemporary believers can also emulate the early church's waiting and similarly experience the Spirit's baptism and empowerment equally speedily, knowing that time is of the essence, or considering what Vondey (2020, p. 180) calls "an apocalyptic urgency". By faith, contemporary ecologists can be "endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49) for the daunting cosmic ecological mission confronting us today.

Thus, Pentecostal ecotheology's quintessentially *pneumatological* nature enables it to administer holistic healing. As Anderson (2020, p. 124) cogently argues, Pentecostals' proclivity to integrate spiritual and physical realms seamlessly predisposes them to ecological participation. They achieve this in part because of the *Spirit-filled creation ethic* that signifies not only human believers' Spirit-filled experience but also that of all members of the created order (Swoboda 2019, p. 193). The pneumatological logic here is that any entity (human or nonhuman) that is filled with the life-giving Spirit is necessarily a recipient of new life, health, resurrection power, and vitality, as well as being a partaker of the divine nature⁸. In addition, the *charismatic community of creation ethic* recognises the giftedness of all creation by the Spirit beyond the endowment of human believers with the Spirit's gifts of grace (charismata). It acknowledges that all members of the earth community are anointed and can heal, edify, and add value to fellow earthlings through the Spirit. Thus, as humans engage with fellow members of the earth community (flora and fauna), we can simultaneously contribute to the wellbeing of creation and be ministered to, healed, and blessed by nature with a deep sense of gratitude. Furthermore, the *holistic Spirit of creation* aids our understanding of individuals' role within the church and the role of every participant in creation as part of the larger cosmic framework, enabling us to view the church and creation as interconnected and dynamic wholes where all parts are mutually dependent and symbiotic. Simply put, as human and nonhuman members of creation, we all need each other. Therefore, for instance, when we advocate for the preservation of national parks, green spaces in urban communities, and wetlands in rural areas, we are not doing those entities a favour; the benefits are mutual.

Another leverageable pneumatological dimension concerns how *the eschatological Spirit of the ecological mission* broadens the scope of the mission to encompass social justice, political change, and ecological repentance in anticipation of the Parousia (Swoboda 2019, p. 207). Notably, this ethic is quite compatible with the *glossolalic* (tongues of fire) motif discussed earlier that signifies purification or sanctification through the Pentecostal social justice and ethical living message (Yong 1998, p. 46). That means ecologically sensitive and eschatologically conscious believers are not just passionate about evangelistic campaigns in anticipation of Christ's imminent return, but they also recognise ethical and ecojustice campaigns as legitimately integral to their gospel mission. Therefore, participation in

climate change, environmental, and social justice events is not extraneous to the gospel but integral to it. Consequently, the typical dualism between sacred and secular campaigns is potentially dissolved. Holistic healing becomes possible.

The above is made possible by another key element of the Pentecostal ecotheological perspective discussed above, namely, the Pentecostal *presupposition of continuity*. Thus, Pentecostals believe in the continuity of today's church, not only with the early church but also with the believing community of the pre-Christian biblical era (see Resane 2022, p. 4). That means such examples as Elisha's healing of the waters of Jericho and the land (2 Kings 2:19–22), Moses' healing of the bitter waters of Marah (Exodus 15:23–25), Isaiah's vision of the future restoration of the wilderness and desert (Isaiah 35:6–7), and the psalmist's depiction of God's ability to transform the most desolate places into sources of life and sustenance (Psalm 107:35–36) are taken seriously by Pentecostal ecotheologists. Thus, Pentecostals believe that the earth's polluted water bodies today can also be healed through Spirit-guided and empowered prayer and practical action. Likewise, our world's unproductive lands, desertification, deforestation, and endangered ecosystems can be healed through Spirit-led intercession and interventions. Furthermore, what prevents the Spirit-baptised body of Christ today from emulating Jesus' decisive intervention under the unction of the Spirit to rebuke adverse weather⁹ and climatic phenomena? I am of the view that contemporary followers of Christ must not confine their demonstration of the Spirit's power to human deliverance from demonic oppression at the expense of, and neglect of, the plethora of ecological, environmental, and climatic predicaments afflicting the earth today. As Swoboda (2019, p. 202) explains, Pentecostal ecotheology envisions the promise of signs following believers-in-mission as encompassing nonhuman creation alongside humanity (Mark 16:17–18). It should be noted that such venturing out on Christ's holistic mission represents what Pentecostal theology understands as a movement away from the altar. That leads us to the *crucial role of the altar call* in Pentecostal ecotheology.

As previously discussed, it is at the altar where believers' sanctifying encounter with Jesus and the sacred presence of the Spirit takes place, resulting in an opportunity for introspection, conviction, confession, and correction, inter alia (Vondey 2020, p. 178). Now, it is this article's contention that, from a Pentecostal ecotheological perspective, the introspection, repentance, and confession that take place at the altar should not be confined to traditional ecclesial formats—such as those concerning interpersonal conflict, jealousy, envy, lust, pride, and adultery. Rather, in an ecotheologically conscious church, penitents should experience the creational, biocentric, and cosmic Spirit's conviction concerning ecojustice in general and such 'sins' as failure to recycle, air pollution, water bodies pollution, soil erosion, and so forth, as Nothwehr (2019, pp. 71–74), albeit writing from a Catholic perspective, clarifies. No longer will believers be callous, nonchalant, or dismissive of legitimate environmental transgressions. When we ask the Heavenly Father to “forgive¹⁰ us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”, we include our ecological trespasses. Thus, a Pentecostal ecotheological altar call is neither purely ecclesial nor is it exclusively anthropocentric; it is biocentric.

Moreover, in Pentecostal ecotheological conception, the altar is not confined to the four walls of a church's sanctuary but encompasses the entire realm where the presence and power of the Spirit manifest (which is the entire cosmos). That means an expansive pneumatological paradigm situates all members of the earth community on the virtual altar to receive salvation, deliverance, sanctification, empowerment, and healing through the experiential presence of the Holy Spirit. To put it tersely, to a Pentecostal ecotheological mind, the whole world is an altar. Thus, all creation can be envisioned as actualising its immediate encounter with and response to Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit as in the original Pentecost (see Vondey 2020, p. 175). Illustratively, when ecotheologically sensitive believers pray that part of the Lord's Prayer¹¹ that says, “Your kingdom come, you will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”, they mean it seriously and literally. Such Pentecostal ecotheological believers profoundly understand that through the biocentric, cosmic, and eschatological Spirit of Pentecost, the reign and will of God can prevail through-

out our earthly home. As Paul clarifies to first-century Roman believers, the kingdom (reign) of God consists of peace, joy, and righteousness in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). Applied ecotheologically, the implications of this notion have far-reaching repercussions. Among other things, they portend the possibility of environmental tranquillity, jubilation, and justice—that our planet desperately needs. Ecotheologically sensitive Christians can legitimately believe God for, pray for, and advocate for the conservation of our earth's ecosystems, biodiversity, and ecojustice.

Emanating from our earlier conversation above, another crucial nuance of the Pentecostal full gospel that can be leveraged for holistic healing is its *Spirit-Christology*, which continually shapes the pneumatological and Christological imagination from the biblical day of Pentecost to contemporary experiences of Pentecost (Swoboda 2019, p. 206). It is profoundly significant that what may be termed the theatre of this simultaneously Spirit-centred and Christ-centred Pentecostal theology is the earth to which the incarnate Christ-Logos (John 1:1–14), conceived through the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), going about under the Spirit's anointing healing all who were oppressed of the devil (Acts 10:38), bearing earthlings' iniquities on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24), resurrecting on the third day by the same Spirit who lives within and also quickens us (Rom. 8:11), ascending to the right hand of the Father to release the Paraclete therefrom (Acts 2:14–36), culminating on the original day of Pentecost when the Spirit is poured out all flesh (Acts 2:17), and that is also promised to all future earthlings (Acts 2:39).

In brief, the full gospel's Spirit-Christology highlights God's active interest and involvement in, as well as his extraordinary validation of the earth community. In addition, it conscientizes today's church to overcome our late modern society's problem of desacralising creation—where human and nonhuman nature is divested of its sacred status. It cannot be emphasised sufficiently that such desacralisation has led to the tendency to perceive all creation mechanistically. In turn, such a mechanistic mentality has been and still is responsible for the reckless exploitation of the planet's natural resources over the years, not to mention the air pollution, water pollution, habitat destruction, soil degradation, ocean degradation, deforestation, and myriads of other ecological issues that have plagued our cosmic home. On the contrary, a perspective governed by the full gospel's Spirit-Christology is ecotheologically reverential, responsible, and redemptive. Thus, this holistic Pentecostal soteriology is committed to the deliverance, healing, and restoration of all creation.

Furthermore, we previously learned from Vondey (2020, p. 179) that the Pentecostal *Spirit baptism motif* of the full gospel can be conceived of as a grace encounter as well as a collective, all-embracing, and eschatological embodiment of God's kingdom on earth that also empowers the church for participation in and witnessing to “the final sanctification of creation”. Additionally, it has also been established that Spirit baptism equips the church to act as a counterforce to the world through the manifestation of gifts of the Spirit and sharing in the suffering of creation as it anticipates complete redemption. This aligns squarely with the previously discussed *biocentric* nature of Pentecostal ecotheology, where biocentric refers to the attitude of recognising the intrinsic value of all life forms and the solidarity between the biocentric Spirit and earth's broken or vulnerable creation. Biocentrism emphasises the proximity and immanence of God, unlike an overemphasis on God's transcendence from creation. The significance of that Spirit-born sense of closeness, identification and solidarity with creation cannot be overemphasised with holistic healing in mind. Rather than a detached, otherworldly, and cerebral attitude towards creation, it speaks to the church's heartfelt compassion for and empathy with the earth and all its human and nonhuman residents.

Imagine a world where, analogous to Jesus's visceral compassion¹² to heal various people during his earthly ministry, contemporary believers are also intensely motivated for earthkeeping, creation care, and the healing of our land, inter alia. Imagine a world where the Spirit, wounded alongside suffering creation, intercedes not only for human supplicants but also for all creation with groans that cannot be uttered (Rom. 8:26). Imagine a world

where the ardent intercessory vigils various Pentecostal-Charismatic churches convene all over the world include “standing in the gap¹³”, not only for ecclesial and evangelistic needs, but also for the weather systems of our planet, the devastating wildfires that ruin human and nonhuman lives across the globe, the senseless wars ravaging innocent lives on every continent, the socioeconomic injustices prevalent in most countries of the world, the rampant corruption that exacerbates developing countries’ poverty, the natural disasters that wreak havoc on our blue planet, and the severe droughts and famine afflicting already vulnerable regions of the world. It is our strong contention that if the Pentecostal Spirit baptism motif—with its claims of gracing the church with kingdom-of-God authority, power, and charismata through the Spirit—is to be taken seriously, then the church cannot behave like innocent, uninvolved bystanders amidst the ecological challenges strangulating our cosmic home. No longer would adverse weather reports be objects of mild, half-hearted, or indifferent scruples. We would be promptly cured of our desensitised attitudes towards the environment. Neither would practical ecological action be relegated to or reserved for fringe climate justice activists, eco-warriors, extinction rebels, green advocates, and so forth. If we truly possessed a like-precious faith and anointing as the prophets and apostles of old, then we also, through the Spirit like Elijah¹⁴, would intervene to make a difference even in our climatic conditions.

Then, as [Vondey \(2020, p. 179\)](#) advocates, the Pentecostal divine healing motif would fulfil its designation as an extension of the Spirit baptism beyond the altar to the world. Likewise, the full gospel eschatological motif would fulfil its designation as a centrifugal and centripetal participation of Spirit baptised believers away from the altar and back to the altar in engaging with and witnessing to all creation, driven by an apocalyptic urgency ([Vondey 2020, p. 180](#)). To reiterate, the Pentecostal eschatological motif would not just be about saving souls in anticipation of the eschaton, but it would include evoking the intervention of God’s kingdom through the Spirit in the entire cosmos—saving all life forms, be they human or nonhuman. Such an eschatological full gospel would be eternally significant, ecologically relevant, and ethically pertinent.

6. Conclusions

We can conclude that Pentecostal ecotheology offers a unique perspective on holistic healing that emphasises the importance of recognising the intrinsic worth of all members of the earth community and leverages an expansive conception of the Pentecostal full gospel. It also involves intentionally engaging, replicating, and contextualising the experiences of the biblical Pentecost. These pneumatological encounters include recognising the entire cosmos as the theatre (altar) where human and nonhuman creation can tarry for and experience the sacred presence and power of the Holy Spirit with a sense of apocalyptic urgency. We have also established that the Spirit-filled creation ethic signifies all creation’s reception of the Spirit’s newness of life, resurrection power, healing, and divine nature beyond a humans-only pneumatology. Additionally, the charismatic community of creation ethic and the holistic Spirit of creation signify the giftedness and empowerment of all earthlings by the Spirit to be instruments of holistic symbiotic blessing. Moreover, the eschatological Spirit of ecological mission broadens the scope of mission beyond anthropocentric evangelistic campaigns to encompass climate change, environmental, and social justice campaigns. Similarly, leveraging Pentecostal ecotheology for holistic healing also involves adopting the presupposition of continuity between today’s believing community and the biblical charismatic communities—where we can also heal our polluted waters and unproductive lands as well as address adverse weather conditions through the Spirit’s anointing. Furthermore, introspection, repentance, and confession of ecological transgressions should become normative on the church’s altar. Leveraging Pentecostal ecotheology for holistic healing also includes praying in earnest for the kingdom and will of God to prevail all over the world such that the Spirit’s tranquillity, jubilation and justice prevail on earth. Moreover, leveraging Pentecostal ecotheology for holistic healing involves embracing the Spirit-Christology’s validation of the earth community (through the incarnation, crucifixion,

resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost), which in turn overcomes the church's problem of creational desecralisation that leads to the mechanistic exploitation of nature. We have also established that a Pentecostal ecotheological Spirit-born sense of identification and solidarity with creation enables heartfelt and visceral compassion for and empathy with all creation that, in turn, motivates ecologically sensitive believers to administer healing to our sick creation and to ardently stand in the gap for our world's troubled weather and ecological systems, inter alia. By embracing Pentecostal ecotheology, the church can awaken to its sacred role as both steward and healer, actively participating in the Spirit's work and embodying a holistic gospel that heals not only the soul but also the earth in anticipation of God's kingdom that would break through into a world renewed and redeemed.

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Notes

- 1 The Pentecostal fourfold or four-square version of the full gospel revolves around Christ as Saviour, Spirit-Baptiser, Healer, and Soon-Coming King, while the fivefold version adds Christ as Sanctifier. See Swoboda (2011b, p. 144) notes.
- 2 See Paul's depiction of creation groaning and anticipating God's deliverance and redemption (Romans 8:19–22).
- 3 For instance, Jesus links his ability to expel demons by the Spirit with the arrival of God's kingdom (Mat. 12:28), and Paul associates the Spirit's peace, joy, and righteousness with the kingdom of God (Rom. 14:17).
- 4 Etymologically, ecology and economy both stem from the same Greek root, *oikos* or "household". Thus, they concern related but different rules for managing the earthly household. See Swoboda (2011a, p. 11).
- 5 This understanding is based on an interpretation of Ephesians 4:7–11 against the backdrop of Psalm 68 and Acts 2, where Christ is depicted as "filling all things" through his Ascension and decent by the Spirit at Pentecost.
- 6 See Isaiah 40:5; Joel 2:28–32; Isaiah 11:8–9; Isaiah 61:1–3; Luke 4:18–19; Luke 12:49.
- 7 Luke records that the sons of Sceva, having been impressed by the extraordinary miracles God was doing by the hands of Paul, presumptuously took it upon themselves to exorcise evil spirits without due empowerment and were soundly overpowered, disrobed, and wounded (Acts 19:11–16).
- 8 See Paul's assertion that if the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, he will also give life to your mortal bodies (Rom. 8:11), Paul's quest to know Christ and his resurrection power even more (Phil. 3:10), and Peter's teaching to the effect that through his divine power (the Spirit) God has given us everything necessary and great promises for living a godly life, sharing his divine nature, and escaping the world's corruption (2 Pet. 1:3–4).
- 9 See the Synoptic Gospels' account of the occasion when the raging tempest and sea billows sought to drown Jesus and his crew enroute to a mission across the Lake of Galilee, but Jesus boldly commanded the weather's compliance (Matt. 8:23–27, Mark 4:35–41, Luke 8:22–25).
- 10 See Matt. 6:12.
- 11 See Matt. 6:10.
- 12 See Matt. 9:36; 14:14.
- 13 "Standing in the gap" is a popular synonym for intercessory prayer among Pentecostals, derived from Ezekiel 22:30, where Yahweh laments the dearth of intercessors on behalf of the land.
- 14 See James 5:16b–18, where the author argues that believers' fervent prayers have the same capacity as the prophet Elijah's who effectively locked and unlocked the rain in Israel in his generation.

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