

**Catholicity, Full Gospel, and Fullness of the Spirit:  
A Pentecostal Perspective on the Third Mark of the Church<sup>1</sup>  
Part 2**

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**Part 2: Pentecostal Perspectives on Catholicity**

In Part 1, I have clarified some key issues regarding the meaning of the term ‘catholic’ in order for us to speak the same language and to highlight aspects of the conversation important to my argumentation. In the same context, I have also highlighted some of the important theological corollaries and ramifications related to the use of this term.

In Part 2, I will attempt to outline some key features (as I see them) in the distinctively Pentecostal understanding of catholicity.

**‘Full Gospel:’ The Emerging Pentecostal Consciousness of  
Catholicity**

Now, what is distinctively Pentecostal on the topic of catholicity? This question takes us to one of Pentecostal identity—in other words, what makes Pentecostalism, Pentecostalism. The understanding of the ‘marks’ of the church can only be derived from the theological self-understanding of any tradition. Against the common misunderstanding, according to which the center of Pentecostalism is primarily and merely

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<sup>1</sup>This essay is a slightly revised version of two earlier presentations of mine: “Full Gospel, Fullness of the Spirit and Catholicity: Pentecostal Perspectives on the Third Mark of the Church,” Paper read at the Annual Meeting of the Joint Consultative Group between the World Council of Churches and Pentecostals, Bossey Ecumenical Institute, Geneva, Switzerland, Nov 14-19, 2010. “Full Gospel, Fullness of the Spirit, and Catholicity: Pentecostal Perspectives on the Third Mark of the Church,” Presentations at the “Theological Positions Colloquium at Continental Theological Seminary, Brussels, Belgium, Feb 16-17, 2011. Subsequently it was published as “Full Gospel, Fullness of the Spirit, and Catholicity: Pentecostal Perspectives on the Third Mark of the Church,” in *Pentecostal Issues, Ecclesiology & Ecumenism*, ed. C. Donovan Barron and Riku Tuppurainen (Sint-Peters-Leeuw, Belgium: Continental Theological Seminary, 2011), 77-99.

pneumatocentric (i.e., the focus on the work of the Holy Spirit), it must be argued that since its inception, Pentecostalism has been embedded and anchored in an encounter with Christ as being depicted in His manifold role as Justifier, Sanctifier, Baptizer with the Spirit, Healer of the Body, and Soon-Coming King.<sup>2</sup> It is the Full Gospel that sets the tone for Pentecostal spirituality. When visiting a typical Pentecostal worship service, one is struck by the frequent mention of the name Jesus (whether in prayer or praise or testimonies or sermons); whereas the Holy Spirit is invoked usually in relation to the work of Jesus.

Early Pentecostals, in looking at other churches, worried about whether those churches were still missing something important about what Jesus Christ is doing through the power of the Spirit. Jesus was preached as Savior (to which Pentecostals said “Amen”). Similarly, they affirmed the talk about Jesus as Sanctifier, and so forth. But what they saw missing were some crucial roles of Jesus as depicted in the Gospels and in the book of Acts—namely, His healing ministry, empowerment by the Spirit, and fervent expectation of his Second Coming.

Pentecostals were convinced that the Full Gospel (a gospel that was “whole,” “not missing anything,” the catholic gospel) had all of the wonderful blessings from Christ. Of course, at times the term ‘Full Gospel’ was used by Pentecostals in a way that bordered on ideology, the implication being that other churches’ gospel is not as full or as complete. While that kind of implicit critique no doubt was in mind by those who coined the term, in its best theological sense, it is rather an attempt to identify the basic elements of a biblical gospel. As such, it needs to be heard both as a legitimate self-identification and a call to other churches to pay attention to what Pentecostals perceive to be the forgotten or lost parts of the Gospel.

Now, how does this outlook and terminology relate to classic marks of the church, and especially to catholicity? Ironically, Pentecostals have affirmed the substance of the classical creeds, but their attitude towards creeds and creedal formulations has been either pejorative or superficial. Why is it that they, in the first place, did not feel comfortable or compelled to speak of catholicity and the other marks of the church?

“When we ‘came out’ for Pentecost,” wrote well-known British Pentecostal spokesperson Donald Gee, “we came out not merely for a theory or a doctrine; we came out for a burning, living, mighty experience that revolutionized our lives.”<sup>3</sup> This emphasis on experience rather than on creeds is expressed even more clearly in a statement from

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<sup>2</sup>See the determinative study by Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987).

<sup>3</sup>D. Gee, “Tests for ‘Fuller Revelations,’” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, February 14, 1925.

the first years of the Azusa Street Mission: “We are not fighting men or churches, but seeking to replace the dead forms and creeds . . . with living, practical Christianity.”<sup>4</sup> For most Pentecostals, creeds indicated a departure from apostolic faith for two reasons—(1) because of their lack of concern with practical Christianity, and (2) because of their origin in and support for an episcopacy alien to the priesthood of believers and the idea of church as a voluntary community of “believers.”<sup>5</sup>

Of course, this is a mistaken assessment of the value of creed; yet we should give hearing to the first generation of Pentecostals before passing judgment. Their criticism did not mean that Pentecostals were in principle opposed to the statements of doctrine; in fact, they would even occasionally admit that there is some value in creeds.<sup>6</sup> However, as Pentecostal theologian Frank Macchia rightly notes, Pentecostalism sought “to discover direct access to the church of the apostles through the mediation of the Holy Spirit.” The implication is, of course, that “mediation” through some agency other than the Holy Spirit (e.g., sacraments) was not regarded as ‘apostolic.’<sup>7</sup>

With all those reservations against formal, (‘dead’) recitation of creedal statements, it is remarkable that non-thematically—and perhaps we could even say ‘against their will’!—Pentecostals from the very beginnings of the movement affirmed the four marks of the church. One way to bring this orientation to light is to look at the very first brief statement of faith drafted by Pentecostals on Azusa Street of Los Angeles, California, the birth place of global Pentecostalism: “The Apostolic Faith Movement stands for the restoration of faith once delivered unto the saints—the old time religion, camp meetings, revivals, missions, street and prison work and Christian Unity everywhere.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>*Apostolic Faith* 1, no. 1 (1906): 2.

<sup>5</sup>Gerald T. Sheppard, “The Nicene Creed, *Filioque*, and Pentecostal Movements in the United States,” in *The Spirit of Truth: Ecumenical Perspectives on the Holy Spirit*, ed. Theodore Stylianopoulos and S. Mark Heim (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1986), 405; see also my *Spiritus ubi vult spirat*, 350-58.

<sup>6</sup>See, e.g., Myer Pearlman, *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1937), 71, which has been one of the most widely read textbooks among Pentecostal students.

<sup>7</sup>Frank D. Macchia, “The Church as an End-Time Missionary Fellowship of the Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective on the Significance of Pneumatology for Ecclesiology,” paper presented to Pentecostal/National Council of Churches Dialogue, March 12, 1997, Oakland, California, 20-21. The United-Reformed missionary bishop of South India, Lesslie Newbigin, spoke to this concern of Pentecostals in his remark that the Pentecostal understanding of the church is neither dominated by the word nor sacrament, but by the direct experience of the Holy Spirit as it was believed to have been shared originally among the apostles and early followers of Jesus. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God* (London: SCM Press, 1953), chap. 4.

<sup>8</sup>*Apostolic Faith* 2, no. 1 (September 1906).

The phrase “stands for the restoration of the faith once delivered unto the saints” (from Jude 3) clearly suggests that the apostolic faith was in mind here and that a certain body of knowledge was intended to be understood as constituting that faith. That body of knowledge—following the template of the fivefold Gospel (or the fourfold Gospel in which Jesus’ role as Savior encompassed both justification and sanctification)—could be summarized as statements concerning (1) justification, (2) sanctification, (3) baptism in the Holy Ghost, (4) healing, and (5) Christ’s return.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, and that is my main claim in this essay—that for Pentecostals, the notion of the Full Gospel means what catholicity in its qualitative sense means in older Christian tradition.

Hence, it can be argued (and this is of immense importance ecumenically) that the above statement of the Apostolic Faith Movement encapsulates the essence of the confession—“One holy catholic apostolic Church,”<sup>10</sup> although Pentecostals do not so often use the creedal language of older churches.<sup>11</sup> Cecil M. Robeck summarizes the main elements of this commitment to the apostolic confession based on the preamble quoted above:

The explicit commitment of these early Pentecostals to “Christian Unity,” and their honest recognition of their role as a restoration movement within the Church points toward their affirmation of the oneness of the Church. Identification with their Wesleyan-Holiness roots articulated through references to the “old time religion” and “camp meetings” with their deep commitment to personal sanctification, underscore their belief in the holiness of the Church and its impact on the personal lives of each individual Christian. Their recognition that the Church in which the Apostolic Faith Movement participated was “everywhere” is an explicit affirmation of the catholicity of the

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<sup>9</sup>*Apostolic Faith* 2, no. 1 (September 1906), under the title “The Apostolic Faith Movement.” These statements were accompanied by a brief apologetic note designed to alleviate any charge of sectarianism which might be raised against the movement.

<sup>10</sup>*Perspectives on Koinonia: The Report from the Third Quinquennium of the Dialogue between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders* (1985-1989), #34.

<sup>11</sup>Cecil Robeck notes that although Pentecostals in general are anticreedal, it was not to negate the truths which the creed was intended to exalt and protect, but rather, it was to deny that the creed was sufficient to the task. Scripture, and in some cases experience consistent with Scripture, was more important than creed. Cecil M. Robeck: “A Pentecostal Perspective on Apostolicity,” paper presented to Faith and Order, National Council of Churches, Consultation on American Born Churches, March 1992 (unpublished), 2-3.

Church. And their self-designation as the “Apostolic Faith Movement” is sufficient to demonstrate some kind of commitment to the apostolic nature of the church and a deep concern to contribute to a restored or enhanced apostolic character of the Church.<sup>12</sup>

Of course it is true that these embryonic Pentecostal statements of faith did not say everything about catholicity or of other marks of the Church. That would be too much to expect. But they do point in the same direction as Christian tradition in its creedal statements.

### **‘Fullness of the Spirit’ and ‘Fullness of Catholicity’ in Ecclesial Communion**

That the Holy Spirit is not at the center of Pentecostal spirituality does not mean that, therefore, the Spirit’s role is not important. It is, but always in relation to Jesus Christ and, of course, the Father in a healthy trinitarian grammar. Indeed, Pentecostal sensibilities go well with the ecclesiological consciousness of early Christian tradition as it linked the confession of faith in the church and her catholicity with the article on the Holy Spirit. Without in any way diminishing the christological foundation of the Church, which (after all) is the Body of Christ, there is also an equally important pneumatological moment to the coming of existence and life of the church. The current Roman Catholic Catechism makes this significant statement when speaking of the church-constitutive meaning of the fullness of the Spirit:

This fullness of the Spirit was not to remain uniquely the Messiah’s, but was to be communicated to the whole Messianic people. On several occasions Christ promised this outpouring of the Spirit, a promise which he fulfilled first on Easter Sunday and then more strikingly at Pentecost. Filled with the Holy Spirit the apostles began to proclaim “the mighty works of God,” and Peter declared this outpouring of the Spirit to be the sign of the messianic age. Those who believed in the apostolic preaching and were baptized received the gift of the Holy Spirit in their turn.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Robeck, “A Pentecostal Perspective on Apostolicity,” 2 (emphases in the original).

<sup>13</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, # 1287 (New York: Doubleday, 1995), p. 359.

This statement could, of course, be written by Pentecostals<sup>14</sup> as a Pentecostal contribution to the ecumenical consciousness of catholicity being the importance of its pneumatological ramification.

In an important recent essay the title of which has been used for the heading of this section,<sup>15</sup> Evangelical theologian Evan F. Kuehn forges a robust connection with the biblical promise of the fullness of the Holy Spirit upon the people of God and the claim for the fullness of catholicity.<sup>16</sup> In other words, catholicity is a dynamic concept, a charismatic reality—as the location of the marks of the church in the third article of the creed (that being on the Holy Spirit) indicates. On the one hand, this is something on which Pentecostals have always insisted; whereas on the other hand, as Pentecostal theologian Simon Chan of Singapore reminds us, there must be a healthy mutuality between the acknowledgment of the Spirit’s work in the individual (typical Pentecostal emphasis) and in the community (typical traditional churches emphasis). Indeed, nothing less than what Chan calls “ecclesial pneumatology” is needed to find a proper balance:

That is to say, the primary locus of the work of the Spirit is not in the individual Christian but in the church. The coming of the Spirit on Jesus at his baptism is often regarded as a model for the Spirit’s baptism of individual Christians. Rather, Jesus’ baptism should be regarded as representative of the Spirit’s coming upon the church, his body. To be baptized into Christ is to be incorporated into a Spirit-filled, Spirit-empowered entity. Spirit-baptism is first an event of the church prior to its being actualized in a personalized Spirit-baptism.<sup>17</sup>

In a programmatic work, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*,<sup>18</sup> Pentecostal theologian Frank Macchia

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<sup>14</sup>The context for the catechism’s remarks on the fullness of the Holy Spirit has to do with the sacrament of confirmation. There are no biblical or traditional reasons why a wider and more inclusive application of the idea would not be appropriate.

<sup>15</sup>Evan F. Kuehn, “‘Fullness of the Spirit’ and ‘Fullness of Catholicity’ in Ecclesial Communion,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11, no. 3 (July 2009).

<sup>16</sup>Kuehn takes his point of departure in the way post-conciliar Roman Catholic theology uses the expression “fullness of catholicity” in a semi-technical sense in references to clarify the status of churches and ecclesial communities within the church of Christ and the expression “fullness of Spirit” mainly in relation to the sacrament of confirmation. Both in Kuehn’s essay and in mine here, these expressions are used in a more inclusive and non-technical sense.

<sup>17</sup>Simon Chan, “Mother Church: Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology,” *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 22, no. 2 (2000): 180.

<sup>18</sup>Frank Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006).

constructs a robust theology of Holy Spirit baptism combining individual and communal dimensions. For Macchia, Spirit baptism is a thoroughly and genuinely communal event. He further believes that his project can best be done in critical and mutually informing ecumenical dialogue with other views and the best of the movement's tradition. Having confessed that "With their individualistic understanding of Spirit baptism, . . . [Pentecostals] have lacked the conceptual framework in which to understand its connection to the Church's communally gifted life,"<sup>19</sup> Macchia also issues this important call—"The Spirit is the Spirit of communion. Spirit baptism implies communion. That's why it leads to a shared love, a shared meal, a shared mission, and the proliferation/enhancement of an interactive charismatic life."<sup>20</sup> Even speaking in tongues, the most distinctive gift for many Pentecostals, is not unrelated to the *sanctorum communio*. Since no believer compasses the wholeness of charismata, the fullness of God can only be experienced in solidarity koinonia with others in the church body.<sup>21</sup>

In the fourth phase of the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal International Dialogue (1991-1997), the koinonia-building aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit through charisms (i.e., gifts), empowerment, and other energies was wonderfully highlighted:

The life of Koinonia is empowered by the Holy Spirit; in recent times many have experienced that power through "the baptism in the Holy Spirit." This presence of the Spirit has been shown in a fresh activity of biblical charisms, or gifts (cf. 1 Cor 12:8-11) reminding all Christians to be open to charisms as the Spirit gives to everyone individually, whether these gifts are more or less noticeable. Some of the charisms are given more for personal edification (cf. 1 Cor 14:4a), while some provide service to others, and some especially are given to confirm evangelization (cf. Mk 16:15-20). All of them are intended to help build up the koinonia.<sup>22</sup>

The distinctively Pentecostal emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit as the principle of communion can be found in the distribution and availability of spiritual gifts in all their richness. In that light, the

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 155.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 156.

<sup>21</sup>Frank D. Macchia, "Sighs Too Deep for Words: Towards a Theology of Glossolalia," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1 (1992): 65.

<sup>22</sup>"Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness: Final Report from the Fourth Phase of the International Dialogue (1990-1997) between the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders," IV, #27.

reflection by the leading Roman Catholic pneumatologist Yves Congar (a French Dominican) on catholicity through the lens of the Spirit's work and energies is highly significant. In his classic work, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, he speaks of the Spirit as "the principle of catholicity." Catholicity of the Church is always in the nature of the "earnest-money" (cf. Eph 1:13). Echoing the sentiments of Pentecostals with deep yearning for the fullness of the Gospel and fullness of the Spirit, Congar says that this "earnest-money is quite substantial, since, even though the Spirit does not at present develop the fullness of that activity by which he will enable God to be 'everything to everyone,' he is even now the eschatological gift that is substantially present to the Church and active in the Church."<sup>23</sup>

The Pentecost event with its pouring out of the Spirit and ensuing missionary commitment is indeed a call and vocation for the Church to become catholic in outreach for all peoples. The power behind the vocation is the empowerment of the Church by various charisms that are meant for the mutual building up of the community and service to all.<sup>24</sup> Only in dependence on "the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit, then, the Church is able to be completely open to accomplish its catholicity, which is also the catholicity of Christ."<sup>25</sup>

Importantly, Pentecostal theologian Amos Yong builds on the work of Congar as he offers a constructive discussion of the four marks.<sup>26</sup> According to Yong, the first Pentecostal response to Congar's pneumatological and missiologically oriented dynamic definition is "Amen!" At the same time more robustly than Roman Catholics, Pentecostals want to look at catholicity first from the perspective of the local church and each member serving therein with the plethora of charisms:

Here pentecostal charismology . . . informs Pentecostal ecclesiology and vice versa. The church charismatic flows from the manifestation of the gifts through each member, which serves the common good (1 Cor 12:4-7). Each member's gifting is essential precisely because he or she constitutes the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-27). Individual members constitute local congregations, which combine, finally, as the church catholic. In understanding both the charismatic giftedness and the

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<sup>23</sup>Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith, three volumes in one (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 2:24.

<sup>24</sup>See further Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:25-26.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:35.

<sup>26</sup>Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 134-51; on catholicity, see pp. 143-46.



ecclesial constitution of the church, pentecostals therefore emphasize the particularity of local congregations and individual members.<sup>27</sup>

### Mission and Catholicity: A ‘Glocal’ Gospel

The first Pentecostal church’s statement of faith (analyzed above) highlights the quantitative dimension of the Pentecostal consciousness of catholicity—namely, that the Gospel should be preached everywhere. This is a highly important aspect of the ecclesiological texture of Pentecostalism. In many ways, this movement can be described as a dynamic, charismatically endowed missionary community or a community of communions to highlight its diversity, pluriformity, and continuing dissemination all across the globe.

Reformed missiologist Charles E. Van Engen has recently argued for a more robust theology of catholicity through the lens of mission and the global church. In order to illustrate the dynamic nature of *The Locality and Catholicity in a Globalizing World*,<sup>28</sup> he coins the term “glocal,” which is, of course, an attempt to mesh together “local” and “global.”<sup>29</sup> His main thesis is simply this:

In the twenty-first century, the church of Jesus Christ needs to become self-consciously what it in fact already is: a glocal church. . . . [A] healthy congregation of disciples of Jesus lives out its catholicity by intentionally and actively participating in Christ’s mission . . . that dynamically fosters the glocal interaction between the global and the local.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 143.

<sup>28</sup>Subheading in Charles E. Van Engen, “The Glocal Church,” in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, ed. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 157-79. The term was invented at the turn of the twentieth century in the interdisciplinary debate about the meaning of “globalization.” See further: Susan H. C. Tai and Y. H. Wong, “Advertising Decision Making in Asia: ‘Glocal’ versus ‘Regcal’ Approach,” *Journal of Managerial Issues* 10 (Fall 1998): 318-19; James N. Rosenau, *Distant Proximities: Dynamics beyond Globalization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

<sup>29</sup>The often-used term “global” theology in the conversations engaging contextuality is a term that has to be used with great care. The term “global” may easily fall into the trap of being understood in the sense of modernist “universal” ideas. The only meaning of the term “global” that contemporary theology can accept is the “communion” of “local” interpretations in mutual dialogue with each other. In other words, the only “global” is “local.” See further, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen and William Dyrness, “Introduction” to *Global Dictionary of Theology*, ed. William Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, ass. eds., Simon Chan and Juan Martinez (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), vii–xiv.

<sup>30</sup>Van Engen, “The Glocal Church,” 157.

While catholicity includes more than just extension of the Church to all corners of the Church, it also has that element as an essential aspect of that notion. Pentecostal sensibilities are expressed in a most remarkable way in the statement from *The Nature and Mission of the Church*—“Mission thus belongs to the very being of the Church. . . . All four attributes relate both to the nature of God’s own being and to the practical demands of authentic mission.”<sup>31</sup>

In Pentecostal spirituality and church life, the promise of Acts 1:8 became the programmatic statement. Pentecostals believed that all men and women, young and old, educated and unlearned, Blacks, whites, Latinos, and others were energized and equipped by the same Holy Spirit to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Whereas Pentecostals have much to learn from older traditions concerning the importance of continuity and tradition as essential aspects of catholicity, their specific contribution to the Church Universal is the lived-out dynamic spirituality which constantly yearns for empowerment for witnessing and outreach.

### **Catholicity and Diversity: The Liberationist Impulse**

As already mentioned, diversity (-in-unity) belongs to the texture of catholicity. That principle applies not only to the diversity of communities which form together the one Body of Christ, but also to persons in the community and groups of persons within those communities. If the Church (the local church consisting of real people) is catholic, then also every member of the Church is catholic. Hence, we can speak of the catholic personhood.<sup>32</sup>

To this catholicity belongs the overcoming of sinful barriers and sinful structures, which resist the fullness of the Gospel but not legitimate, God-willed diversity. Rather than being deleted (as in the modernist illusion of ‘universal nature’), racial, sexual, economic, cultural, and other diversities will be affirmed, purified, sanctified for the sake of love and the work of the Gospel. The truly catholic vision of the end-time Church gathered before the throne of the Lamb in all her diversity and pluriformity serves as the paradigm here:

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb,*

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<sup>31</sup> *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper no. 198 (Geneva: WCC, 2005), #35.

<sup>32</sup>For a programmatic discussion, see Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 259-82.

*clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Rev 7:9, 10).*

Singaporean Pentecostal Simon Chan remarks, "It is in this light of the Spirit's constituting the church as catholic that we can begin to appreciate the ecumenical impulse of the Pentecostal pioneer William Seymour at the Azusa Street Mission." Chan surmises that this illiterate former Methodist preacher might have been the only person at the time "who clearly understood the real significance of the Pentecostal outpouring, because he saw it as the event to bring into existence a church supremely marked by an all-transcending catholicity."<sup>33</sup>

As a result of this catholic vision, not only men but also women, not only Whites but also the colored,<sup>34</sup> not only the educated but also the unlearned, not only the 'mainliners' but also the 'sectarians,' worshipped, ministered, and glorified the one Lord of the Church. All ethnicities and both genders had access to ministry because of the end-time pouring out of the Holy Spirit. "The color line was washed away by the blood of the Lamb," the early Pentecostals confessed.<sup>35</sup> Ironically, even the Los Angeles Times, a bastion of liberal rhetoric, found this kind of socio-political inclusivism appalling and horrendous!

Pentecostal church historian Douglas Nelson brings to light this extraordinary diversity-in-unity/unity-in-diversity thusly:

Amid the most racist era of a totally segregated society, a miracle happened. For the first time in history a miniature global community came together beyond the color line, meeting night and day continuously for three years, inviting everyone to enter the new life in fellowship together. The original vision for a new society—forged again in the USA during 250 years of black slave experience—became an historical reality in the church.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Chan, "Mother Church," 185.

<sup>34</sup>I try to avoid the term "colored" not only because in the past it was used in a somewhat pejorative sense but more importantly, because it mistakenly implies that whites are colorless!

<sup>35</sup>For historical and theological analysis of these developments, see my "Free Churches, Ecumenism, and Pentecostalism," in *Toward a Pneumatological Theology*, ed. Amos Yong (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002), chap. 4.

<sup>36</sup>D. J. Nelson, *For Such a Time as This: The Story of Bishop William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival* (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 1981), 11, quoted in Chan, "Mother Church," 186.

Although subsequent generations of Pentecostal churches too often were no better than their mainline counterparts in maintaining this original vision of diversity and unity, nonetheless, this heritage is an essential part of the movement's history and is yet another contribution to the Church Universal.

African American/Black Pentecostals have often highlighted the significance of this aspect of catholicity. In the initial consultation that featured African American perspectives on the Apostolic Faith (held in December 1984), participants addressed “the unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity of the Church of Jesus Christ,” with the self-understanding that African Americans were marginalized within American society, within American churches, and within the Church at large. They had hoped to make a substantive contribution to the “common expression of the faith.”<sup>37</sup> At the same time, they also leveled a powerful critique at how many white Christians in North America and in Europe have interpreted the Apostolic Faith in a way that has allowed them to oppress Christians of color. The participants of that consultation made clear their suspicion of any attempt to talk about unity that from the beginning did not take seriously the political, economic, and cultural diversity and instead defined the marks of the church merely in spiritual terms.<sup>38</sup>

With regard to catholicity, these Black Pentecostals sharply critiqued traditional interpretations of catholicity that they viewed as being driven by western norms—norms by which many Africans and African Americans had been deprived of full participation in the life of the Church. They repudiated these norms as being heavily influenced by the sins of racism, sexism, and classism because they discourage fellowship with many Christians of color both near and far.<sup>39</sup> By building walls between older Christian denominations and these newer expressions of Christianity, they argued, the older denominations were guilty of denying “the catholicity of the Body of Christ.”<sup>40</sup>

That issue is addressed directly by Moltmann's linking of catholicity with ‘partisanship’ for the weak, underprivileged, and marginalized. The reason for partisanship is in the example of Jesus, who “turned to the

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<sup>37</sup>“Toward a Common Expression of Faith: A Black North American Perspective,” in *Black Witness to the Apostolic Faith*, ed. David T. Shannon and Gayraud S. Wilmore, Faith & Order/USA (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 65.

<sup>38</sup>“Toward a Common Expression of Faith: A Black North American Perspective,” 65. For these references and discussion in this section I am indebted to Cecil M. Robeck, “The Apostolic Faith Study and the Holy Spirit,” presentation given at the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches on July 19-23, 2007, in Oberlin, Ohio (unpublished).

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

sinners, tax-collectors and lepers in order to save the Pharisees and the healthy as well.” Similarly, “Paul turned to the Gentiles in order to save Israel too.” Thus, this “form of partisanship does not destroy Christian universalism,” which belongs to the notion of catholicity, but rather makes accessible to all the blessings of the Full Gospel, as I have named it in this study.<sup>41</sup>

### **In Lieu of Conclusion: Towards a Mutual Acknowledgment of the Apostolicity of the Whole Church**

In both parts of this explorative essay, I have suggested that the distinctively Pentecostal understanding of catholicity is rooted in the notion of the Full Gospel, the center of Pentecostal spirituality. Linked with that is the deep desire for the fullness of the Holy Spirit for the sake of empowerment for mission and service. As the Spirit was poured out on the Church, it also led to the experience of an inclusive, affirmative, diversity-in-unity/unity-in-diversity as a way to make accessible to all men and women the blessings of the Gospel and the ministry of Christ. Let me name these four interrelated dimensions of the Pentecostal idea of catholicity as follows:

- “Christological” (Full Gospel)
- “Pneumatological” (Fullness of the Spirit)
- “Missiological”
- “Liberationist”

Now this is not all that catholicity includes and embraces, nor is it meant to be. No single church can embody the wholeness of catholicity apart from others, for there is mutual dependency and mutual contribution. Pentecostals have much to learn from others, but they can also make a contribution. Hence, there is the urgent call for other churches—together and in mutual love—to continue seeking for a common understanding and acknowledgement of an ever growing sense of catholicity, until the Lord of the Church comes and brings to completion this hope.

Unfortunately, as mentioned, different churches have their own take on the notion of catholicity; and that often leads to the contesting of the catholicity of some other churches. Certainly, Pentecostal churches have experienced this. In the 1986 National Council of Churches (USA) consultation on *Confessing the Apostolic Faith from the Perspective of*

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<sup>41</sup>Moltmann, *Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 352. Along the same lines, Moltmann speaks of “holiness in poverty” (352-57) and “apostolate in suffering” (357-61).

*the Pentecostal Churches*, it so happened that, “From the start the nature of the ‘Apostolic Faith’ confessed by the Pentecostal churches was questioned by some representatives of Faith and Order.”<sup>42</sup> Pentecostals have committed similar kinds of ecumenical ‘sins’ by denying the fullness of the Gospel in other churches.

I find the precept of Ormond Rush (a Roman Catholic) helpful in the search for mutual acknowledgment of the apostolic nature of the Church. This precept serves as well for the common search for catholicity: “Instead of comparing and contrasting traditions, both parties attempt to interpret together the apostolic tradition. If each can recognize in the other’s interpretation ‘the apostolic faith,’ then surprising agreement and common ground can be achieved.”<sup>43</sup>

And the Princeton Proposal’s comment likewise embodies that spirit:

Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians and their institutions also have a unique role. All churches may benefit from their vitality, their zeal for evangelism, and their commitment to Scripture. They demonstrate a spirit of cooperation with each other and sometimes with others that breaks down old barriers, creates fellowship among formally estranged Christians, and anticipates further unity. The free-church ecclesiologies of some Evangelicals bring a distinct vision of unity to the ecumenical task.<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, Pentecostals who engage in the careful task of studying the actual church life of other Christian communities would be enlightened by the richness of spiritual experience, depth of prayer life,

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<sup>42</sup>Robeck, “Apostolic Faith,” 9-10. Most of the papers from this conference were published in *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 9, no. 1 (1987). They were also published as a separate volume for National Council of Churches under the title *Confessing the Apostolic Faith: Pentecostal Churches and the Ecumenical Movement* (Pasadena, CA: Society for Pentecostal Studies, 1987). Many of the papers were also published in *One in Christ* 23 (1987). On this particular point, see, Jeffrey Gros, FSC, “Confessing the Apostolic Faith from the Perspective of the Pentecostal Churches,” *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 9, no. 1 (1987): 8-10.

<sup>43</sup>Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 67.

<sup>44</sup>*In One Body through the Cross*, #67 (pp. 55-56). See also my “Unity, Diversity, and Apostolicity: Any Hopes for Rapprochement between Older and Younger Churches?” in *Believing in Community: Ecumenical Reflections on the Church*, ed. Peter de Mey, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium (Leuven: University of Leuven, 2011; forthcoming).

**commitment to service, and other evidences of the Full Gospel in all its diversity.**

