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THE SPIRIT IN CREATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP: A PRELIMINARY PENTECOSTAL RESPONSE TOWARD ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGY

Agustinus Dermawan

1. Introduction

The driving motive of this paper is an attempt to humbly respond toward certain concerns and challenges that stir my mind as a Pentecostal. Initially it began when Wonsuk Ma, in his lecture, expressed his concern regarding the ignorance of Pentecostals toward environmental issues. He stated, "There has been very little attention given by the Pentecostals to environmental issues, or how to care for God's creation."[1] He believes that traditionally Pentecostals have ignored these aspects.

However, it seems Pentecostals are not alone. Tony Campolo observes,

> You know that the problems related to the destruction of the environment are now severe. And what is making matters worse is that people in general, and Christians in particular, don't seem to care. Even though Christians have been commissioned by God to be good stewards of His creation, they appear to be the least concerned with what is going on. And of all the Christians, those who call themselves evangelicals have the worst record. Studies show that the more zealously committed people become to evangelical churches, the less concerned they are about the horrible things that are happening to the environment. We "Bible-believing, born-again, Spirit-filled Christians," more than any others, seem to have turned deaf ears to the

[1] From the distributed material provided by Wonsuk Ma for "The Spirit of God in Old Testament" course, September 2002, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio City, Philippines.

> pleas to save God's creation from what has to be called sinful exploitation.[2]

A lack of concern toward environmental issues has developed into an avoidance attitude by many Christians who are highly suspicious of the possible infiltration of New Age ideas into the church. Tragically, it is because ecology is a major theme in New Age thinking some believe infiltration can happen through shared concern for the environment.[3] I believe that infiltration may happen anytime, but we will be naïve if we withdraw ourselves from any ecological concern because of that suspicion. Certainly, this is a challenge for us to develop a Bible-based theology.[4]

Furthermore, the East Asia Christian Conference (EACC) document "Confessing the Faith in Asia Today" mentions nature as one of the points of entry where the gospel may be expected to relate most meaningfully to the life of Asian people today.[5] Perhaps this is because in the East, generally speaking, there is a deeper sense of kinship between humans and nature than is in the West.[6] This is certainly an opportunity and at the same time a challenge for me, as God has placed and allowed me to be born in an Asian country, to contribute at least thoughts which express my concern toward ecological problems.

Regarding placing blame on Christianity, Christians from various traditions attempt to respond. Broadly speaking, Lawrence Osborn classifies Christian responses into three categories: reaction, reconstruction and re-examination. In the reaction category, typically

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[2] Campolo, *How to Rescue the Earth*, p. 3.

[3] Ron Elsdon, *Greenhouse Theology: Biblical Perspectives on Caring for Creation* (Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1992), pp. 17-18.

[4] The same challenge has been realized and responded by Campolo, *How to Rescue the Earth*.

[5] The EACC at its first Asian Faith and Order Consultation in Hong Kong, 1966, singled out four points of entry at which the proclamation of the gospel may be expected to introduce itself to Asian people today. These are Asian's experience of nature, society, religion, and suffering. This is taken from the entire volume of Douglas J. Elwood, ed., *Asian Christian Theology*, *Asian Christian Theology: Emerging Themes* (Revised Edition of *What Asian Christians Are Thinking*) (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980).

[6] Masatoshi Doi, "Religion and Nature," in *What Asian Christians Are Thinking: A Theological Source Book*, ed. Douglas J. Elwood (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1978), pp. 119-130 (119).

they respond negatively to the adverse criticism of traditional Christian thought and practice in relation to the environment. Christians in the reconstruction category have accepted the environmentalist critique of Christianity, even without looking at what Christian tradition affirms about the non-human creation. Re-examination is a middle way. They acknowledge the criticism, but attempt to offer solutions from the fundamental tenets of Christian belief.[7]

This paper may be considered as a re-examination, working under an umbrella of Pentecostal tradition. In our discussion, the Spirit in creation will be assumed to be a decisive answer toward the environmental issues. Furthermore, I also intend to find a model, which could effectively serve the community of believers, especially in Asia. I have to admit, however, that at this point I do not have a model; nonetheless, I would like to suggest some qualities which may stimulate us to find certain models

Obviously we may not be able to cure a problem if we do not identify the problem itself. Thus, it is a task of our discussion to re-examine the Pentecostal tradition and identify any possible problem(s).

Ecumenical discussions are beyond the scope of this paper. The main intention is to re-examine the Pentecostal tradition, and determine how to develop theological responses to environmental stewardship issues. At this point, this paper may not propose practical strategies, since the primary intention is a theological one, which needs further development. In this sense, my sub-title "A Preliminary Study toward Ecological Theology" pronounces my intention.

2. The Roots of Pentecostal Ignorance to the Environmental Issues

Frankly speaking, apart from Ma's statement referred to in the introduction, I do not know whether Pentecostals really lack concern toward environmental issues or not. I tried to recall if I had encountered any form of concern that expressed Pentecostal attention to environmental issues, as I grew in Pentecostal traditions. I have to admit that the only time I heard the word "nature" being appreciated was during times when we had a church retreat, camping and recreation. Recently I attended a service in the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), Baguio, and I heard the pastor preach the series of "Stewardship

[7] Lawrence Osborn, *Guardian of Creation: Nature in Theology and the Christian Life* (Leicester: Apollos, 1993), pp. 61-62.

of God's Creation" within two Sunday services.[8] Comparing this to my experience in attending various Pentecostal services, it is significant. For the past three years I have had the opportunity to attend various Pentecostal services in Baguio, Philippines including services at the seminary chapel, but I have not heard a single sermon which communicates any concern regarding environmental issues. Certainly, this very subjective observation may not be valid enough to be an indicator that Pentecostals lack concern toward nature, but at least this gives a supportive impression toward Ma's comment.

A question to be raised is: "Why do Pentecostals have such a tendency?" Let me put it in more a direct way: "What are the roots of the Pentecostal ignorance of our environmental stewardship?" In the following discussion, I would like to present at least two roots of the Pentecostal ignorance: otherworldliness and pessimism. Understandably otherworldliness and pessimism are caused by certain ideas such as pre-millennialism, pretribulation, the imminence of *parousia*, and in this sense otherworldly and pessimistic attitudes may not appear to be "roots." However, I prefer to identify them as the "roots" because they are manifested attitudes that have caused Pentecostals to have a lack of concern about environmental problems.

2.1 Otherworldliness

It is not my intention to judge the issue of otherworldliness in terms of right or wrong. That will be beyond the scope of the present discussion. Rather, the issue will be discussed in terms of how otherworldliness can be the root of Pentecostals' ignorance toward the environmental issues.

According to Russell Paul Spittler, a prominent writer in the area of Pentecostal spirituality, "otherworldliness" is one of five implicit values, which govern Pentecostal spirituality.[9] It can be seen in early Pentecostalists. They were not to engage in worldly activities—mixed swimming, theater attendance and card playing. It is interesting that most available photos of William J. Seymour, the Azusa Street pastor, show

[8] I attended United Church of Christ in the Philippines, Westside of Burnham Park, Baguio City on September 1 and 8, 2002.

[9] The other values are experience, orality, spontaneity, and biblical authority: Russell Paul Spittler, "Spirituality, Pentecostal and Charismatic," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess, et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 804-805.

him without a tie, which many early Pentecostals thought "worldly."[10] Even though, as Spittler observes, otherworldliness is fading among North American Pentecostals (I believe it is also true among non-western Pentecostals), there are still some who tend to think this way.

Discussing "otherworldliness," it may be helpful if we can trace its origin from a historical perspective. Following American historian Timothy L. Smith, John Stott calls this value "The Great Reversal."[11] It is important to note that otherworldliness, which was in accordance with the withdrawal of Evangelicals from social concerns, initially emerged at some point during the first thirty years of the twentieth century, in which Pentecostalism was born. I contend that, since early Pentecostalism was born during this period, inevitably early Pentecostals had been influenced by this notion. In order to see the link between otherworldliness in Pentecostals and "the great reversal" among Evangelicals, we can identify some elements that still remain in Pentecostalism with what Stott has identified as five reasons for this withdrawal into pietism.

First it is a reaction against theological liberalism in the early part of the twentieth century, when Christians were preoccupied with the proclamation of the gospel and defense of historical biblical Christianity. "When evangelicals were busy seeking to vindicate the fundamentals of the faith, they had no time for social concerns."[12]

Secondly, it is reaction against the so-called "social gospel," involving the politicization of the kingdom of God and a Christian vision of utopia on this earth.[13]

Thirdly, it reflects the widespread disillusionment and despair that followed the First World War and its attendant exposure of the depths of human evil. "Earlier social programmers had failed. Human beings and human society appeared to be irreformable. Attempts at reform were useless."[14]

The fourth, it reflects the spread of pre-millennialism, through the teaching of J. N. Darby and its popularization in the Scofield Bible. Stott says pre-millennialism:

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[10] Spittler, "Spirituality, Pentecostal and Charismatic," p. 805.

[11] John Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christian Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1984), p. 6.

[12] Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christian Today*, p. 6.

[13] Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christian Today*, p. 6.

[14] Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christian Today*, p. 8.

> Portrays the present evil world as beyond improvement or redemption, and predicts instead that it will deteriorate steadily until the coming of Jesus, who will then set up his millennial reign on earth. If the world is getting worse, and if only Jesus at his coming will put it right, the argument runs, there seems no point in trying to reform it meanwhile.[15]

Fifthly, it reflects the identification of Christianity with middle class society, "who tended to dilute it by identifying it with their own culture."[16] This leads to a portrait of a religious-minded person who is preoccupied with saving his own soul, an other-worldly orientation, and is indifferent at best toward social systems that perpetuate social inequity and injustice.[17]

From the list above, we can identify at least two elements found in Pentecostalism: pre-millennialism and the notion of being religious/ heavenly minded. Pre-millennialism apparently has colored the early Pentecostalists, as William Menzies, one representative of much of Pentecostalism, asserts,

> Millennial expectation formed an important part of the message of the early Pentecostalists. Imbued with a sense of the nearness of the end of the age, and the Pentecostal revival was the harbinger of the cataclysm, the cry was heralded abroad, "Jesus is coming soon."… It is interesting to observe that four of the 16 items in the Statement of Fundamental Truths adopted in 1916 were eschatological in substance, indicating the relative importance in the Pentecostal message from early years of the coming end of the age.… These statements commit the Assemblies of God to premillennialism.[18]

Moreover, this eschatological view is not only in the early Pentecostalists, but it is inherited to all Pentecostals in general. As D. J. Wilson states, "In general, Pentecostal eschatology may be characterized as premillennial, expecting the second advent of Christ prior to the establishment of the thousand-year kingdom of Revelation 20."[19]

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[15] Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christian Today*, p. 8.

[16] Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christian Today*, p. 8.

[17] Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christian Today*, p. 8.

[18] William W. Menzies, *Anointed to Serve: The Story of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1971), pp. 328-29.

[19] D. J. Wilson, "Eschatology, Pentecostal Perspectives on," *Dictionary of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, pp. 264-68 (264).

The typical pre-millennialism approach can easily find references to environmental disaster in the Bible as sure signs of the last times. War, famines and earthquakes are perceived as a kind of "affirmation" of the "sign of the times."[20] Along with this discussion, Tony Campolo makes an observation,

> It is no surprise to me that those evangelical preachers who make a big thing out of this kind of premillennialist theology are also the preachers who seem least concerned about environmental issues and the impending ecological disaster. Personal salvation that fosters personal holiness seems to be the limit of their concern.[21]

Otherworldliness implies simple dualism between the world and heaven. Pentecostals often say, "This world is not my home," or "The real world is the eternal one, 'up there' in heaven." Spittler points out that the social and economic deprivation of the earlier Pentecostals pronounced the contrast between their own situation and the pearly gates and golden streets of heaven.[22] This "heavenly"-mindedness leads them to focus only on such activities which they consider as spiritual (e.g. saving souls), and neglect activities that are considered as secular (e.g., the correction of social ills, environmental concerns). Spittler asserts, "Otherworldliness linked with experiential individualism makes it nearly impossible for Pentecostals to comprehend the notion of structural or systematic evil." Then he correctly connects it with the spiritual-mindedness of Pentecostals, "…except to say that the Devil controls unredeemed human society."[23] In this regard, Denton Lotz, general secretary for the Baptist World Alliance, rightly comments, "There

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[20] As it is quoted in D. William Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), p. 22, Alexander Boddy, "Seven Signs of His Coming," *Confidence*, December, 1910, pp. 281-88 listed seven different signs: 1) the times of the gentiles are at an end; 2) the return of the Jew to their homeland; 3) the prophecy of Daniel's image with feet of iron and clay, an image which Boddy saw fulfilled in the current political situation of pre-World War I Europe; 4) the great apostasy of the church; 5) an increase of earthquakes and other natural disasters; 6) the gospel proclaimed to the nations as witness; and 7) the Latter Rain message being outpoured.

[21] Campolo, *How to Rescue the Earth*, p. 3.

[22] Spittler, "Spirituality, Pentecostal and Charismatic," p. 805.

[23] Spittler, "Spirituality, Pentecostal and Charismatic," p. 805.

seems to be a conflict between those who emphasize saving souls and those who emphasize saving trees."[24]

2.2 Pessimism

It is apparent that pessimism is a part of the Pentecostal perception in viewing the world. They often say, "The world passes away," or "This world is not my home, I'm only passing through…. I can't feel at home in this world anymore." A song of yesteryear that partially reflects some of the attitudes we have towards caring for the world we live in. Therefore, Spittler has rightly observed, "Cultural pessimism makes the correction of social ills inappropriate as a feature of any contemporary ecclesiastical agenda."[25]

Pessimism, particularly in Pentecostalism, most likely comes from Pentecostal eschatology. Pentecostals believe that the Second Coming of Christ is imminent. It was particularly apparent among early Pentecostalists. They focused on the imminence of the *parousia*, and seeing the outpouring of the Spirit in the "baptism" as empowerment for effective evangelism of the entire world before the end came.[26]

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the early part of the twentieth century is seen by Pentecostals as an important sign of the end. A sense of urgency has been an important motivation for missionary endeavor and evangelism, making the Pentecostals the fastest-growing segment of Christianity, which they attribute to the work of the Spirit. Further, this sense of urgency has not only facilitated the Pentecostals rapid growth, but it also injected a sense of meaningfulness in the life of Pentecostal members. Robert Francis Martin observationally notes,

> Pentecostals felt themselves obligated to spread the gospel of Christ as widely as possible before the imminent judgment of God descended upon mankind. This theological note of urgency served a vital social

[24] Denton Lotz, quoted in Campolo, *How to Rescue the Earth*, p. 3.

[25] Spittler, "Spirituality, Pentecostal and Charismatic," p. 805.

[26] For further discussion, D. William Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), ch. 2, "Conception: The Pentecostal Message."

> function. It provided a clearly defined social role of significance for a number of persons who had failed to find such roles in other contexts.[27]

Many also believed that Christ would not return until the gospel has been preached to the ends of the earth. They have a major duty, therefore, to facilitate his return by spreading the good news. "Their *real* concern was to engage in activity which would hasten the return of Christ," says Faupel.[28] Since the end is near, they are indifferent to social change and have rejected the reformist methods of the optimistic postmillennialists[29] and have concentrated on "snatching brands from the fire" and letting social reforms result from humankind being born again.[30]

This expectation, as Steven Bouma-Prediger examines, negates any rationale for preserving the earth since the second coming of Jesus will usher in a completely new form of existence.[31] Campolo sarcastically states, "Some of these preachers…can even point to a coming ecological holocaust as a kind of 'good news.' They see it as a 'sign' that the second coming of Christ is at hand. And they greet the news of a disintegrating environment with a shout of 'Maranatha!'"[32]

3. Theology and Strategy: Old Testament Spirit Tradition.

As I did this research, I realized that many people blame Christianity for the present ecological crisis. For instance, Lynn White, whom many believe has served as an initiator for Christian theologians to pay serious

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[27] Robert Francis Martin, "The Early Years of American Pentecostalism, 1900-1940: Survey of a Social Movement" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1975), p. 81.

[28] Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel*, p. 21.

[29] Previously the postmillennial vision of Edwardian revivalism combined with the optimistic soteriology of Wesleyan Perfectionism were the context of mid-nineteenth century of America, in which the American Holiness movement had evolved and influenced the emergence of the Holiness-Pentecostal tradition. See Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel*, pp. 43-76.

[30] Wilson, "Eschatology, Pentecostal Perspectives on," p. 267.

[31] Steven Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening of Theology: The Ecological Models of Rosemary Radford Ruether, Joseph Sittler, and Jurgen Moltmann*, AARA 91 (Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1995), p. 3.

[32] Campolo, *How to Rescue the Earth*, p. 94.

attention to ecological issues, published an article in *Science* magazine in 1967. He blamed Protestant Christianity, and more specifically, Calvinism, for the orientation toward nature that has led to ecological disaster.[33] Frederick Elder, supporting White's opinion, claims that "Christianity has fostered a dangerous subject-object attitude toward nature, which separates man from nature and promotes a utilitarian mentality, leading to exploitation."[34] Arnold Toynbee contends that the Genesis 1:28 command to have dominion and subdue the earth not only permits but direct humankind to dominate and exploit creation.[35]

In response to criticism against Christianity, H. Paul Santmire outlines the possible and, in his view, necessary task involved in responding to the above arguments and in developing an "ecological theology."

By extracting Santmire's theological tasks, this paper is primarily concerned with two. First, it intends to renew critical attention to biblical studies in order to reconsider and reconceive certain fundamental biblical concepts.[36] Second, the fundamental task is to find a root metaphor or basic image, or a cluster of such images, that is able most adequately and effectively to inform a Christian perspective.[37]

3.1 The Spirit in Creation: A Critical Attention of Biblical Studies

As far as the Pentecostal is concerned, the creation spirit tradition is one of the spirit traditions that is rarely touched. Perhaps it is because this tradition is not in a charismatic category.[38] It is obvious that Pentecostals

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[33] Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 10 (March 19670, pp. 1203-1207, taken from Campolo, *How to Rescue the Earth*, p. 21.

[34] Frederick Elder, *Crisis in Eden: A Religious Study of Man and Environment* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), p. 19.

[35] Arnold Toynbee, "The Religious Background in the Present Environmental Crisis," in *Ecology and Religion in History,* eds., David and Eileen Spring (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 146, taken from Steven Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening of Theology: The Ecological Models of Rosemary Radford Ruether, Joseph Sittler, and Jurgen Moltmann*, AARA 91 (Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1995), p. 2.

[36] H. Paul Santmire quoted in Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening of Theology*, p. 8.

[37] Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening of Theology*, p. 9.

[38] Wonsuk Ma, "The Empowerment of the Spirit of God in Luke-Acts: An Old Testament Perspective," in *Spirit and Spirituality: Essays in Honor of Russell P.*

are more excited to explore charismatic aspects of the Spirit's activity, since it is a part of Pentecostal uniqueness. Further, Pentecostal theology and praxis are often exclusively based on the book of Luke-Acts through which Luke carefully selected two specific Old Testament Spirit traditions: the leadership and the prophetic Spirit traditions.[39] Inevitably, thus, Pentecostals are more charismatic-oriented.

It is my belief that Pentecostals need to explore more the creation Spirit tradition in order to develop an ecological theology. This exploration will serve as a fulfillment of the first theological task. However, I have to admit that this discussion is not a final discussion in itself. It requires a further development, beyond the capacity of this paper.

In the Old Testament, the word *ruach* occurs about 380 times. The phrase *ruach Yahweh* is used in 27 passages. The meaning of the word is so complex, and the periods from which the relevant writings date are so widely separated, that it is impossible to find a simple semantic pattern for the word's usage, or to construct a single, unified concept for what is meant.[40] The Hebrew word for *ruach* may mean wind, movement of air, breath of mouth, breath of life, Spirit of God or spirit of man.[41]

The occurrence of the Spirit of God[42] in Genesis 1:2 represents the creation Spirit tradition.[43] Stanley Horton comments that the Spirit of God in this verse is associated with God's creative activity.[44]

Spittler, eds. Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies (London: T. & T. Clark, forthcoming), p. 16 divides the function of the divine Spirit into two broad categories: charismatic and non-charismatic. Leadership Spirit and prophetic Spirit are categorized as charismatic level, and creation Spirit, the Spirit as God's agent, the Spirit as a part of God's existence, the Spirit as a reference to God himself are categorized as non-charismatic level.

[39] Ma, "The Empowerment of the Spirit of God in Luke-Acts," p. 24.

[40] A. Heron, *The Holy Spirit in the Bible, in the History of Christian Thought and in Recent Theology* (Philadelphia and London: Fortress, 1983), p. 3.

[41] Tormod Engelsviken, "The Gift of the Spirit: An Analysis and Evaluation of the Charismatic Movement from a Lutheran Theological Perspective," Part 2 (Ph.D. dissertation, Aquinas Institute of Theology, Dubuque, Iowa, 1981), p. 325.

[42] There has been deep disagreement among scholars about the correct interpretation of the phrase רוח אלהים. Some scholars such as von Rad, Speiser, Schidt, Westernmann see this as simply a description of the primeval chaos and therefore translate it "a mighty wind." But other scholars such as Cassuto, Kidner, and Gispen, as well as older commentators such as Gunkel, Skinner, and Procksch prefer the traditional translation "the spirit of God." See Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books,

The image of the "hovering" of the Spirit of God over the waters on the creation narrative expresses an interesting point. The word "hovering" is only used in Deut 32:11: "…like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young" (NIV). Michael E. Lodahl has proposed a nice insight which views that this image is an echo of Exodus 14:21. He affirms, "For just as God's *ruach* parted the chaotic seas through which the liberated Jews passed, so the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters of the chaotic void, *preparing* the waters for God's creation (v. 2)."[45] Then there is a divine unpredictability suggested in Genesis 6, when God the creator becomes God the destroyer by allowing the watery chaos to break forth and swallow the earth. Once more God's wind passes over the chaos in 8:1, causing the water to subside and *preparing* for a new creation through Noah. This scenario, according to Lodahl, presents "God's Spirit is God's animating personal presence, imparting life to all creation."[46]

Kenneth A. Mathews has viewed the word *ruach* in Genesis 1:1 from different angle, but achieved the similar conclusion,

> Yet the Mosaic community may have understood *ruah* as having a double sense, "wind" as the prototype of the "Spirit" because of Israel's experience at the Red Sea, where God sent a mighty "wind" to part the waters and deliver Israel from the Egyptians…. Hence, for them, their God of salvation was equally at work in creation, the "wind" of God (1:2) enveloped the mighty waters of the earth as he *prepared* to transform them. Also in the flood account the "wind" (*ruah*) at God's direction blows across the "earth" (*'eres*) taming the floodwaters (8:1a), *preparing* for the return of the dry earth—creation anew.[47]

1987), p. 16. For more appealing argument of traditional translation see Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapter 1-17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 111-14.

[43] Wonsuk Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes: The Spirit of God in the Book of Isaiah*, JSOTSup. 271 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), p. 31.

[44] Stanley Horton, *What the Bible Says about the Holy Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1976), p. 17.

[45] Michael Lodahl, *Shekhinah/Spirit: Divine Presence in Jewish and Christian Religion*, Studies in Judaism and Christianity (New York: A Stimulus Book, 1992), p. 43.

[46] Lodahl, *Shekhinah/Spirit*, p. 44.

[47] Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary 1A (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996), p. 135.

Theologically Mathews concludes that "God was sovereignly superintending the condition of the earth and *preparing* the way for his creative word."[48]

In Engelsviken's terms, the Spirit is a life-giving force, which God's Spirit as the divine breath has given life to all animate nature.[49] The life-giving Spirit is manifested with re-creation and restoration Spirit in a different context in Ezekiel's great vision of the dry bones in the valley (Ezek 37:1-14). As far as the Spirit of God and creation are concerned, we, along with Engelsviken, can conclude, "*Ruach* denoted God's active and creative presence throughout creation."[50]

Further, Engelsviken identifies the significance of the creation narratives in Genesis 1 and 2. These two creation narratives represent complementary information of the creation Spirit. He significantly points out, "Gen. 1:2 and 2:7, however, the Spirit of God, God's wind and breath, forms the bond between lifeless matter on the one side and all living organisms on the other."[51] The connection between lifeless matter and all living organisms is expressed poetically in Psalms 104:29-30,

> When you hide your face, they are terrified,
> When you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.
> When you send your Spirit, they are created,
> And you renew the face of the earth (NIV).

Based on this psalm, Jürgen Moltmann argues, "This presupposes that God always creates through and in the power of his Spirit, and that the presence of his Spirit therefore conditions the potentiality and realities of his creation." Continuing his argument, Moltmann draws his point, "The further assumption is that the Spirit is poured out on everything that exists, and that the Spirit preserves it, makes it live and renews it."[52] In supporting his argument, Moltmann claims, for example, that, "John Calvin was one of the few people to take up and maintain this

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[48] Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, pp. 135-36.

[49] Engelsviken, "The Gift of the Spirit," p. 370.

[50] Engelsviken, "The Gift of the Spirit," p. 370.

[51] Engelsviken, "The Gift of the Spirit," p. 328.

[52] Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation, the Gifford Lectures 1984-1985*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1985), p. 10.

conception: *'Spiritus Sanctus enim est, qui ubique diffusus omnia sustinet, vegetat et vivificat'*."[53]

However, it seems that Moltmann fails to develop this concept of an omnipresent Spirit who sustains and enlivens all things, so that he argues that "the concept of creation in the Spirit" is "still awaiting theological development even today."[54]

Nonetheless, the discussion above offers a certain point that is worthy to be noted. Through the life-giving Spirit, the Creator God is himself present in his creation. Moltmann names it as "the fountain of life." This implies, according to Moltmann, that "everything that is, and lives, manifest the presence of this divine wellspring."[55] This means that God does not merely confront creation in his transcendence; but entering into it, he is also immanent in it.[56] This idea, however, raises a question how to distinguish God from creation. This may even lead into confusion between this idea with the number of Asian religious traditions. For instance, in Hinduism, "God is not understood as 'outside' nature, but as manifested in and through it."[57] This suggests that generally the idea might not be applicable in an Asian context.

Therefore, I agree with a proposition of Bouma-Prediger. He proposes,

> An adequate Christian ecological theology must not just emphasizes both divine transcendence and immanence, but must affirm that God's relatedness actually *depends* upon God's otherness. In other words, divine transcendence and immanence are not, as is often assumed, contradictory or incompatible, as if one entails the contrary of the other.[58]

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[53] Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 11.

[54] Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 10.

[55] Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 11.

[56] Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 9.

[57] "Man and Nature: A Workshop Report," in *Asian Christian Theology: Emerging Themes*, pp. 113-19 (114).

[58] Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening of Theology*, p. 286.

As a result of his proposition, Bouma-Prediger refers to what Loren Wilkinson suggests, "God is lovingly involved with creation *because* God is other than his creation."[59]

3.2 Searching for a Model

The discussion above brings a point that the presence of the Spirit in creation expresses God's involvement in his creation. Wilkinson identifies that Christians have often called this involvement "providence," for it is characterized by God's gracious providing.[60] The involvement with his creation has been manifested most significantly by the atoning work of Christ: to redeem not only humankind but also the whole creation.

As it is related with our second theological task, we need to find a root metaphor or basic image, or a cluster of such images that is able most adequately to inform a Christian perspective. The central question here concerns which model of or analogy for the God-human-world relationship is best able to express God's intimate relatedness to the world and yet also maintain a strong distinction between God and creation, and what is the human role in that relationship.

Ian Barbour provides helpful typologies of common models of the God-creation relation. There is: 1) the classical or monarchial model in which the relationship between God and creation is like that between a ruler and his kingdom; 2) the deist model in which God is like a clockmaker and the world is like a clock; and 3) neo-Thomist model which posits that God is to the world as a worker is to a tool; 4) the kenotic model in which God is like a parent and the world is like a child; 5) the existentialist model in which God is to the world as a person is to an object; 6) the linguistic model which envisions God as an agent and the world as an action; and 7) the embodiment model in which the world is construed as the body of God; and finally 8) the process theism model in which God is analogous to the leader of community, which is the world.[61]

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[59] Loren Wilkinson, *Earthkeeping in the Nineties: Stewardship of Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 278, quoted in Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening of Theology*, p. 287.

[60] Wilkinson, *Earthkeeping in the Nineties*, p. 278.

[61] Ian Barbour, *Religion in an Age of Science* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990), ch. 9.

This is not the place to engage in an extensive discussion of this important and complex issue. Nonetheless, I agree with Bouma-Prediger that the agential model (number 6) is the most promising on the mark. As he argues,

> Compared to the process and embodiment models, the agential model better preserves important claims about divine freedom and grace and is thus most in harmony with scripture and tradition. The agential model also seems best able to redeem the claim that divine immanence is contingent upon divine transcendence. That is, by speaking of God as an agent who intends and brings to completion certain actions, this model shows promise not only in linking divine relatedness and otherness, but in showing how the former is dependent upon the latter.[62]

Certainly Bouma-Prediger's argument is correct, but I feel that the agential model is too abstract. If it is so, this model may miss the point, for one of the main purposes of making a model is to concretize an abstract one to be more concrete. I would like also to raise a practical question such as how this model will serve as a stimulator for people to make a positive response toward their environment, if this model is hard to understand by common people, for instance, our congregations. Perhaps theologically this model is appealing for some of us, but practically it most likely may not serve as an effective model, a model that moves people to act accordingly.

It is clear that we need a model that is theologically and biblically appropriate and at the same time is able, even powerful to change perception and move people's heart and hands to care for their environment.

While we are thinking about this need, allow me to share an experience. Perhaps this sharing experience brings us to a certain applicable model. We, Indonesians, call our country *Ibu Pertiwi* which literally means "mother earth." *Ibu Pertiwi* symbolizes *tanah air Indonesia* (literally it means "the land and water of Indonesia"). This means the whole of the land, water, and any living creatures which live on, and all natural resources belong to *Ibu Pertiwi*. Thus, the country is often pictured as a mother who is grieving when something bad happens to Indonesia; any ecological, social, economical and even political concerns. For instance, when Indonesia was facing economical crisis in 1998, in February of the same year, some mothers protested agasint the

[62] Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening of Theology*, p. 289.

rareness of formula milk. Interestingly, they addressed the situation as hurting *Ibu Pertiwi*.[63] It is still very clear in our memory when the Bali blast happened on October 12, 2002. This action was also considered as piercing the heart of *Ibu Pertiwi.* Then, a call for making peace in *Ibu Pertiwi* has been made.[64]

The concern for *Ibu Pertiwi* has been expressed through an anonymous song as follows:

Kulihat Ibu Pertiwi (I see Ibu Pertiwi)
Sedang bersusah hati (She is sad)
Air matanya berlinang (Her tears are falling)
Mas intannya terkenang (She remembers her gold and diamond)

Hutan, gunung, sawah, lautan (Forests, mountains, field, and seas)
Simpanan kekayaan (they are kept treasures)
Kini Ibu sedang lara (Now Ibu is suffering)
Merintih dan berdoa (grieving and praying)

The second stanza of this song is a response from the children of *Ibu Pertiwi*, that is, anybody who considers themselves Indonesian.

O, lihat, Ibu Pertiwi (O, look here Ibu Pertiwi)
Kami datang berbakti (We are coming to dedicate ourselves)
Lihatlah putra-putrimu (Look at your children)
Menggembirakan Ibu (Coming to make Ibu happy)

O, Ibu, kami tetap cinta (O, Ibu, we still love you)
Putramu yang setia (Your faithful children)
Menjaga harta pusaka (keep the treasure)
Untuk Nusa dan Bangsa (for the islands and the nation)

From these lyrics, we can grasp that there is strong relationship between *Ibu Pertiwi* and the Indonesian people. It is like a mother and her children. The symbol of *Ibu Pertiwi* is a relational symbol. The figure of a mother is also very concrete and familiar to us. Every one knows what a mother is, so whose heart would not be moved when he/she sees his/her mother grieving? It is also apparent that the relationship between *Ibu Pertiwi* and Indonesian people is based mainly on intuitive and

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[63] "Pantau: Kajian Media dan Jurnalism" (www.pantau.or.id/txt/22/12.html, February 2002), checked: January 20, 2003.

[64] "Kompas" (www.kompas.com/kompas-cetak/0210/25/opini/perp.35.htm, October 25, 2002), checked: January 20, 2003.

mystical relational. We cannot see when *Ibu Pertiwi* is sad with our bare eyes, but we can only feel. Moreover, the beauty, peace and prosperity of the nation represent the happiness of *Ibu Pertiwi.* Its beauty represents esthetical values.

Conclusively, we can say that the symbol of *Ibu Pertiwi* has served as an effective symbol to awaken people's concern for ecology, the economy, politics and their nation, because it is understood relationally, concretely, intuitively, mystically and esthetically.[65] Therefore it is my contention that in order to have an effective model with regard to ecological concerns, especially in an Asian context, the model must be able to be understood relationally, concretely, intuitively, mystically and esthetically. On the top of those qualities certainly it must be biblically and theologically appropriate.

By observing those qualities, what model may serve as an adequate and effective model which fosters an attitude of respect and care for the earth, especially in the Asian context, as far as environmental issues are concerned? I will leave this question as an open challenge for every one of us who is concerned about global ecological problems, how our children will live and eventually how Christians' witness should be representing God's love in this world.

4. Conclusion

Having identified that Pentecostals have little or no concern toward environmental problems, an urgent calling, therefore, is heralded for Pentecostals to re-evaluate and re-examine the otherworldliness and pessimistic attitudes.

Inevitably, a recognition toward the Spirit of God as the life-giving spirit, present in God's creation demands respect to his creation. Moreover, the presence of the Spirit of God in creation expresses an important message that God is lovingly involved in creation.

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[65] This conclusion is influenced by a workshop report in the All-Asia Consultation on Theological Education for Christian Ministry held in Manila, March 1977, which conclusively introduces that some features of Asian approaches to "Man and Nature" is understood relationally, intuitively, mystically, and esthetically. I have added a point "concretely" which I believe is one of the most significant points of model. See, "Man and Nature: Workshop Report," in *The Human and the Holy: Asian Perspective in Christian Theology*, eds. Emerito P. Nakpil and Douglas J. Elwood (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1978), pp. 64-70 (65).

The involvement of God in creation requires a model to inform Christianity. At this point I do not have any model, but I have identified certain qualities, which hopefully will help us in finding an adequate and effective model(s). This should be a challenge for us to find a biblical model, and at the same time practical model.