

## INTERPRETING VATICAN II: “A NEW PENTECOST”

THOMAS HUGHSON, S.J.

*Pope John XXIII's prayerful phrase “a new Pentecost” linked Vatican II with the Holy Spirit and has interpretative potential. It focuses the pneumatological dimensions of the epochal event and documents. The article considers Pentecost in the constitution of the church, emphasizes the pneumatological difference, underlines the finality of Vatican II toward renewal in the church's (now dialogical) mission, and concludes to a completeness in the council.*

THE VOCABULARY ASSOCIATED with the Second Vatican Council includes a descriptive phrase, “a new Pentecost,” and imagery linking the council to Pentecost.<sup>1</sup> The phrase and image have, I contend, interpretative capacity. Theological exploration of that potential brings a focus

THOMAS HUGHSON, S.J., earned his Ph.D. from the University of St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto and is now associate professor of theology at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His areas of special interest include systematic theology in cultural context (functional specialty of communications), public theology, and the work of John Courtney Murray. He has most recently published “Theology: Also (Green) Religious Experience Seeking Understanding,” in *Encountering Transcendence: Contributions to a Theology of Christian Religious Experience* (Leuven University, 2005); and “Beyond Informed Citizens: Who Are ‘The Wise’?” *Forum on Public Policy* 2.1 (2006). In progress are two books—*Prophetic Witness in the United States: Documents of Christian Social Concern*, and *Christ and Social Justice*—and an essay, “Social Justice in Lactantius's *Divine Institutes*? Report and Exploration.”

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Pope John Paul II, Homily of John Paul II: Mass of Pentecost, Sunday 3 June 2001, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/homilies/2001/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_hom\\_20010603\\_pentecoste\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20010603_pentecoste_en.html); Audience of Pope John Paul II with the National Service Committee of the Italian “Renewal in the Spirit,” Rome, April 4, 1998, [http://www.icrs.org/johnpaul\\_ii.htm](http://www.icrs.org/johnpaul_ii.htm); and 1998 address to lay movements and ecclesial communities, <http://www.ccr.org.uk/champion.htm> (all accessed October 28, 2007).

In “George Weigel: The Impact of John Paul II's Pontificate,” an interview published in July 2002 by the online Zenit News Service, Weigel replied without hesitation to a question about how John Paul II saw Vatican II: “Like Blessed John XXIII, John Paul II thinks of the Second Vatican Council as a new Pentecost—a privileged moment in which the Holy Spirit prepared the Church for a springtime of evangelisation” ([http://www.ad2000.com.au/articles/2002/jul2002p8\\_1056.html](http://www.ad2000.com.au/articles/2002/jul2002p8_1056.html) [accessed October 28, 2007]).

on the Holy Spirit into answering the question, what happened at Vatican II? The interpretation has to be tentative and preliminary because, as a biblical allusion originally within a prayer, “a new Pentecost” carries rich meaning and connotation but lacks the definite, agreed denotation of a doctrinal proposition. Nonetheless, “a new Pentecost” carries an important and, in the end, a decisive perspective on Vatican II.

### VATICAN II AND PENTECOST

The link between Vatican II and Pentecost goes back to the spring of 1959 following Pope John XXIII’s announcement on January 25 of a forthcoming council. References to a new Pentecost began appearing in talks by John XXIII from that time on.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the “image of the new Pentecost was henceforth habitually associated with the council, until it was sanctioned by the Pope’s prayer for the council.”<sup>3</sup> His December 25, 1961, apostolic constitution *Humanae salutis* (Of Human Salvation) convoked the council. He devoted its concluding six paragraphs to “An Invitation to Prayer.” He directed the summons to “each individual member of the faithful and the entire Christian people . . . the secular and regular clergy,” entrusting the council’s success to the prayers of children . . . and to the sick and to the suffering.”<sup>4</sup> The fourth paragraph added, “To this chorus of prayers, we invite also all Christians of churches separated from Rome, that the council may be also to their advantage.”<sup>5</sup>

The fifth paragraph invoked a striking Lukan image to describe all separated Christians congregating in 1961 on spiritual common ground, as if prolonging the impact of Pentecost. “May there be repeated thus in the Christian families,” John XXIII urged, “the spectacle of the apostles gathered together in Jerusalem after the Ascension of Jesus to heaven . . . in communion of thought and of prayer with Peter and around Peter.”<sup>6</sup> He associated all now separated “Christian families” with the apostles in a continuation of the spiritual situation in the upper room in Jerusalem on Pentecost. The association was a present fact, not a prospect of “return,” because it consisted in “communion of thought and prayer with Peter and around Peter . . .” for the council’s benefit to all Christians. John XXIII’s recourse to Pentecost opened the horizon of the prayer and of the council first of all to the Holy Spirit and then to all Christians. This anticipated the bold stroke of inviting other Christian communities to send official observ-

<sup>2</sup> Giuseppe Alberigo, “The Announcement of the Council: From the Security of the Fortress to the Lure of the Quest,” *History of Vatican II* 1:1–54, at 41–44.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 42.

<sup>4</sup> John XXIII, *Humanae salutis*, in *Documents of Vatican II*, gen. ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J., trans. ed. Joseph Gallagher (New York: Guild, 1966) 703–9, at 708–9.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

ers. He ended the paragraph, “And may the divine Spirit deign to answer in a most comforting manner the prayer that rises daily to Him from every corner of the earth.”<sup>7</sup>

The prayer to the Holy Spirit followed in the sixth paragraph:

*Renew Your wonders in our time, as though for [by] a new Pentecost (Renova aetate hac nostra per novum veluti Pentecostem mirabilia tua)* and grant that the holy Church, preserving unanimous and continuous prayer, together with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and also under the guidance of St. Peter, may increase the reign of the Divine Savior, the reign of truth and justice, the reign of love and peace. Amen.<sup>8</sup>

The phrase “as by a new Pentecost” (*novum veluti Pentecostem*) modifies the verb in the preceding vocative clause, “Renew Your wonders (*Renova . . . mirabilia tua*),” and so has an adverbial function. Translating the Latin *veluti* with “as” carries the meaning of “just as if,” with a comparative sense close to a simile that enlarges in bolder words the meaning of, “Renew Thy wonders.”<sup>9</sup> Whatever the precise grammar of the imprecation, papal and subsequent usage spread out the meaning of the phrase so that “as by a new Pentecost” came to refer to the whole reality of the council in all its historical, ecclesial dimensions, not only to the divine influence of the Holy Spirit besought in, “Renew Your wonders.” Subsequent usage likewise usually dropped the words, “as by (*veluti*),” shortening the phrase to “a new Pentecost,” and this will be the case here as well.

“A new Pentecost” did not occur inside the structure of a direct, unequivocal attribution stating outright that “Vatican II will be (or is, or was) a new Pentecost,” though it connoted hope and expectation in that direction. Unquestionably the Lukan reference puts Vatican II in conjunction with Pentecost. Most important, descriptive comparison of Vatican II (*veluti*, as if) with Pentecost can be considered an incipient initial “interpretation” of the council. John XXIII’s phrase starts interpretation by placing Vatican II in an immediate positive relationship not first of all with its predecessor, Vatican I, or other earlier councils but with the narrative of Pentecost in Acts 2. Theological reflection only expounds the proto-interpretation offered by John XXIII’s linkage.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 709.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. Italics added to the English and Latin invocation. For the Latin text of *Humanae salutis* see *Acta apostolicae sedis* (hereafter *AAS*) 54 (January 31, 1962) 5–13, at 13. Jared Wicks pointed out to me that Abbott and Gallagher (*Documents of Vatican II*) erred in translating the Latin preposition *per* in the phrase “*per novum veluti Pentecostem*” as “*for* a new Pentecost,” instead of “*by* [by means of] a new Pentecost,” which accords with the Latin meaning. The latter, “by a new Pentecost,” will be followed here.

<sup>9</sup> According to the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (1982), *velut/veluti* can introduce similes or metaphors, with a translation of “just as” or “just like.”

The prayer and the phrase asserted more than “an enduring belief that the Holy Spirit would guide the deliberations of general councils,”<sup>10</sup> and more than belief that the Spirit who descended on Pentecost continues to indwell, unify, and sanctify the church. Taking those beliefs for granted, the prayerful phrase went on to join appeal to the Pentecostal event shortly after Jesus’ death and resurrection with anticipation of something eventful in the sixth decade of the 20th century.

The pope’s opening address on October 11 did not invoke Pentecost. His words directed conciliar participants to the main orientations of the council: the church’s bearing witness to the centrality of Christ in human history, *aggiornamento* in service of witness, and communication of “the goods of divine grace which, by raising human beings to the dignity of children of God, are the most efficacious safeguards and aids toward a more human life.”<sup>11</sup> This focus on Christ cannot be construed as a relapse from prayer to the Holy Spirit into the kind of ecclesiastical position that some Eastern theologians often have reproached as a Western Christocentrism typically reluctant to think and speak about the coequality of the Spirit.

For one thing, the very purpose of the pope’s directive on behalf of renewed witnessing to Christ parallels and stands in the line of the effect of renewed witness due to the Spirit’s descent narrated in Acts 2. The mission of the Spirit draws the church and hearers of the gospel toward Christ. No outcome could express more clearly the work of the Spirit. For another, this address differs in genre from the prayer. It charts an approach for the council and speaks to a smaller audience, not to the whole of Christianity but to those in the council hall. In that respect, the discourse, although not programmatic, is more technical and ecclesiastical, but it in no way contravenes prayer for “a new Pentecost” that remains the deepest context.

Does the pope’s address disclose something about Vatican II and the postconciliar church not equally well expressed in other attributions such as “reform,” “*aggiornamento*,” or “renewal”? It does. Above all, it points to a primacy of influence from the Holy Spirit. From Acts 2 it brings a Lukan salvation-historical perspective on the church’s reception of the Spirit’s influence that the more generic “reform,” “*aggiornamento*,” and “renewal” lack. John XXIII’s invoking of the Holy Spirit for “a new Pentecost” and continued use by others can be understood to subsume without diminishing “reform,” “*aggiornamento*,” and “renewal” by situating them

<sup>10</sup> Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* (New York: Paulist, 2004) 26.

<sup>11</sup> Andrea Riccardi describes the start of the council in “The Tumultuous Opening Days of the Council,” *History of Vatican II*, 5 vols., ed. Giuseppe Alberigo; Joseph Komonchak ed. English version (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995–2006) 2:1–67, at 17, quoting John XXIII, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesiae*, allocution to inaugurate Vatican II, session 1, October 11, 1962, AAS 54 (1962) 786–95.

within the scope of the primacy of the Spirit's gracious divine initiative in Luke's salvation-historical perspective.

"Reform," "*aggiornamento*," and "renewal" describe thinking, deciding, and acting by church leaders and members that actualize in ecclesial modes the church's reception of and cooperation with the Spirit's influence. This ecclesial actualization receives the Spirit's influence and may be thought of as somewhat like an ecclesial scale and modality of created grace as the effect and reception of uncreated grace. Accepting an interpretive capacity in "a new Pentecost," then, involves attention not only to created ecclesial effects—created ecclesial grace, as it were—but also to their uncreated source, the Holy Spirit. That acceptance brings interpretation of Vatican II into harmony with a renewed focus on uncreated grace in the theology of grace.

John Paul II later would say that the Spirit "was the protagonist of the council from the time the Pope convoked it, declaring that he had received the idea as an interior voice from on high that resounded in his spirit."<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Alberigo comments that "the reminder of Pentecost . . . placed in the foreground the action of the Spirit and not that of the pope or the church, just as had been the case with the apostles and disciples who had been the objects of the Spirit's mighty and indeed overwhelming action."<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, church-wide prayer to the Holy Spirit for a renewal "of Your wonders, as by a new Pentecost," broadened conciliar concerns past correcting a particular error in doctrine, reforming a specific area of church life and discipline, or updating. In light of the *lex orandi, lex credendi* principle, this breadth of vision lends "a new Pentecost" significance beyond other summary descriptions of the council. "A new Pentecost," a trope, situates the council before a New Testament background and a domain of meanings associated with the person and mission of the Holy Spirit. The trope cannot be dismissed out of hand as a transient lyrical allusion born of a pope's private meditation and thus consigned to a realm of authorial intention with less than decisive hermeneutical import.

Subsequent usage indicates that the image of a new Pentecost came to express a broad-gauged, intuitive framing of the council, whether prospective or retrospective, that has entered into an unsystematized vocabulary surrounding Vatican II. Usage of "a new Pentecost" by a number of authors, now referring to the origin of the council, now to the influence of the Spirit during the council, now to the Spirit's role in postconciliar reception, grounds my assumption that the Lukan allusion indicates a domain of associated meanings rather than a single, fixed concept. The following sections seek to center these meanings in a view of Vatican II as a council

<sup>12</sup> John Paul II, Homily of John Paul II.

<sup>13</sup> Alberigo, "Announcement of the Council" 43.

in which ecclesial reception of the Holy Spirit's mission appropriated and renewed the church's original Pentecostal horizon. The event, documents, and reception of Vatican II have renewed the original Pentecostal horizon and for that reason have to be interpreted in its light.

As noted above, "a new Pentecost" entered the public life of the Catholic Church in the published papal prayer for the council that was proposed also to the whole of Christianity in the closing paragraph of the apostolic constitution *Humanae salutis*. With that, "a new Pentecost," referring to what the church petitioned the Holy Spirit to do in the near future, passed from private authorial intention and occasional talks—albeit at the highest level of authority—into the public, textual, and pastoral life of the church. It has to be acknowledged that no conciliar act approved "a new Pentecost" as a shorthand description of Vatican II. Nor did any conciliar document officially attach it to, or assign it an interpretative role for, Vatican II. It did not enjoy the kind of recommendation for insertion into the Divine Office awarded to a bland petition that the Lord God bring a happy outcome to the council.<sup>14</sup>

Still, a prayer that has circulated widely among the faithful can become a *locus theologicus*, especially when one of its phrases comes to represent a council in subsequent papal and theological use. After all, liturgy, preaching, prayer, and exemplary practice of discipleship carry some content essential to and constitutive of Christianity. These elements belong to a kind of content that Robert Doran has identified in his development of Bernard Lonergan's thought on the nature of systematic theology. Lonergan's *Method in Theology* (1972) equates the mysteries of faith with the dogmatic content of faith while Doran's recent work expands them to include nondogmatic, nondoctrinal meaning.<sup>15</sup>

According to Doran there is Christian meaning constitutive for Christianity that "resides more in the domain of *permanently elemental meaning*, meaning that perhaps forever will be better expressed in the very symbolic, esthetic, dramatic terms of Scripture than in any possible dogmatic clarifications."<sup>16</sup> Not all Christian meaning in Scripture and tradition, Doran argues, can be conceived and taught in the theoretical propositions of doctrine and dogma. Some meaning remains embedded in pretheoretical, often symbolic manner, for example, in the structures, acts, prayers, and rites of liturgy, as well as in modes of Christian practice transmitted by

<sup>14</sup> See the apostolic exhortation to clergy, *AAS* 54 (February 28, 1962) 66–75, at 74.

<sup>15</sup> Robert M. Doran, S.J., "Bernard Lonergan and the Functions of Systematic Theology," *Theological Studies* 59 (1998) 569–607; and Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> Doran, "Bernard Lonergan" 570, and *What Is Systematic Theology* 21–24, 128–29.

humble example, by the orientations of discipleship according to the great spiritual traditions, and by normal pastoral operation of institutional structures.

Nondoctrinal, constitutive Christian meaning that arises from and mediates divine revelation has not been a gigantic fossil preserved intact for the gaze of future generations. It has been in a process of continual interaction with persons and societies in diverse, changing cultural contexts. Patristic authors heard, spoke, and wrote about the word of God in such an outstanding and effective way that their texts enjoy a privileged, permanent position in tradition. And Christians in each era and culture have received the word of God mediated by Scripture and tradition, including especially liturgy. Their lives, transformed by conversion, embody and transmit something of that core meaning of Christianity that can irradiate countless of their particular statements and deeds. May not John XXIII's prayer to the Holy Spirit be among those words in the church that appropriate a scriptural passage (Acts 2) and then express a nonpropositional, not dogmatically defined meaning of Pentecost for the church?

True, Constantinople I (381 CE), in reliance on the Cappadocians, defined as dogma the distinct divine personhood of the Spirit. And Trent, Vatican I, and Vatican II all defined elements of the church in dogmatic formulas. Yet Constantinople I did not determine the meaning of Pentecost in the way Chalcedon formulated crucial aspects of the mystery of the Incarnation. Nor did Trent and Vatican I define how Pentecost entered into the constitution of the church. Nor did Vatican II settle in dogmatic propositions just exactly what a council is in reference to Pentecost and the Holy Spirit. A general understanding of councils, but not a defined dogma on their nature, belongs to the gathered resources of traditional church teaching, conciliar invocations of the Holy Spirit, theological doctrine, and canon law.<sup>17</sup> How the church or any council, and Vatican II in particular, relates to Pentecost cannot be considered a closed question, although denial of a link can be considered a dead end after chapter 1 of *Lumen gentium*.

On the eve of Vatican II the heritage of church teaching and theology linked Pentecost to the church largely in the framework of Mystical Body ecclesiology. Vatican II went beyond Mystical Body ecclesiology in significant respects in regard to the mission of the Holy Spirit without refusal of the many contributions from the Pauline idea, even on the Spirit, as taught

<sup>17</sup> Only the first seven councils, Nicaea I (325 CE) to Nicaea II (787 CE) held in the East and with decrees published in Greek, are councils of the undivided church. Constantinople IV (869–870) is a separate case yet counts among the total of 21 councils recognized by the Catholic Church as “ecumenical.” Latin was the language of the last 13. See Norman P. Tanner, *The Councils of the Church: A Short History* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2001) 46–51.

by Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis*. That conciliar advance opened up theological space for postconciliar reception of "a new Pentecost" as an interpretation of Vatican II.

### FRAGMENTARY RESSOURCEMENT

While not confined to or determined by whatever John XXIII had in mind when he coined the phrase, "a new Pentecost," those words cannot be separated from an epochal, unexpected decision to call a council, announced on January 25, 1959, by this aging, gentle successor to St. Peter. A fragmentary *ressourcement*, his reference to Pentecost invited attention primarily to the origin of the church, not to 20 intervening councils including Vatican I, and connoted a reawakening of what the church is in all ages and contexts.

At the same time, and perhaps surprisingly, John XXIII's decision to convoke Vatican II could not have taken place except in continuity with and respect for the teaching on papal primacy by Vatican I. John XXIII was a thoroughly Vatican I bishop of Rome. His inspired initiative in announcing, convoking, and opening the council exercised papal primacy in unalloyed, sovereign mode. Calling a council was a primal act of pastoral governance of the whole church by (benevolent) *fiat* in service of the truth of the gospel, renewal in the church, and freedom in Catholics to live their faith more fully in a changed world that the Word of God continued to address. John was aware of "this action as an exercise of papal primacy, requiring no participation by anyone else."<sup>18</sup> He did not have to await clearance by committees, run it past advisors, or depend on anyone else's approval, not the Roman Curia's, not the world's bishops', not theologians'.

In fact, it is doubtful that the Roman curia, the bishops, and the theologians favored calling a council in 1962.<sup>19</sup> Even eminent theologian and influential *peritus* Yves Congar acknowledged his own early misgiving that, "from the theological point of view, above all in regard to the unity of the Christian churches, it seemed that the council was being held twenty years too soon."<sup>20</sup> Without what can be seen as a characteristically Roman Catholic exercise of papal primacy in unilateral fashion, Vatican II would not have taken place any more than the twelve preceding councils, from

<sup>18</sup> Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, trans. Matthew Sherry (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2006) 2; originally published as *Breve storia del concilio Vaticano II [1959–1962]* [Bologna: Mulino, 2005].

<sup>19</sup> Giuseppe Alberigo, "Transition to a New Age," *History of Vatican II* 5:573–644, at 574–76.

<sup>20</sup> Yves Congar, O.P., *Mon journal du concile*, ed. Eric Mahieu (Paris: Cerf, 2002) 2, quoted in Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II* 2.

Lateran I (1123 CE) to Vatican I, would have.<sup>21</sup> Councils have not come out of deliberations ending in consensus. The ecclesial acts that have initiated councils have been executive decisions on the part of a recognized authority at the highest level, whether emperor, empress, or pope. John XXIII's charismatic exercise of papal primacy set the event of Vatican II in motion.<sup>22</sup>

Earlier, in 1948, Pope Pius XII had taken steps toward reconvoing Vatican I to finish its truncated ecclesiological agenda; before him Pope Pius XI had contemplated the same closure.<sup>23</sup> However, what John XXIII envisioned was more than resumption of a conciliar agenda broken off by the 1870 Italian *resorgimento*. Instead, he wanted something unparalleled in any of the 20 preceding councils.<sup>24</sup> He alone decided on the name "Vatican II." "By naming the future council 'Vatican II', he was putting it beyond doubt that it would be a "new" council, and even "a new Pentecost," not the final phase of Vatican I.<sup>25</sup>

John's inspiration had a negative effect in one respect. He did not want the council he summoned to resume typical conciliar purposes, some of which were familiar from Trent and Vatican I—resolving a doctrinal controversy, defining a dogma, indicting errors, restoring proper discipline, clarifying jurisdictions. Not that he overlooked the importance of dogma, doctrine, and church governance. Rather, taking their validity and fruitfulness for granted, he wanted to move beyond safeguarding "the substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith" in order to consider "the way in which it is presented."<sup>26</sup> He expected that the council would "reinvigorate faith, doctrine, Church discipline, religious and spiritual life," and contribute "to the reaffirmation of those principles of the Christian order which also inspire and govern developments in civic, economic, political, and social life."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See Tanner, *Councils of the Church*, chaps. 2 and 3.

<sup>22</sup> On the meaning of "event" in historical study, see Joseph A. Komonchak, "Vatican II as an 'Event,'" *Theology Digest* 46 (1999) 337–52.

<sup>23</sup> Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II* 4; and Alberigo, "Announcement of the Council" 45–49.

<sup>24</sup> See John W. O'Malley, S.J., *Tradition and Transition: Historical Perspectives on Vatican II* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1989), and "Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?" *Theological Studies* 67 (2006) 3–33.

<sup>25</sup> Alberigo, "Announcement of the Council" 50.

<sup>26</sup> John XXIII, "Pope John's Opening Speech to the Council," Abbott, *Documents of Vatican II* 710–19, at 715.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Struggle for the Council during the Preparation of Vatican II (1960–1962)," in *History of Vatican II* 1:167–356, at 170. In a helpful summary of the pope's vision for the council at 167–71, Komonchak quotes and translates these remarks from John XXIII's November 14, 1960, address to the members and consultants of preparatory commissions; see *Acta et documenta Con-*

The approach he proposed was for a pastoral, not a dogmatic, council, but this did not mean isolation from the world to concentrate entirely on matters internal to the pastoral life of the church. Rather, “it was for the sake of its redemptive significance precisely in the modern world that he urged the Church’s renewal.”<sup>28</sup> John XXIII wanted an ecclesial *aggiornamento* to renew the church in “a very clear and well-defined correspondence with the spiritual needs of the present hour.”<sup>29</sup>

In opening the council on October 11, 1962, John XXIII declared: “The Catholic Church, raising the torch of religious truth by means of this Ecumenical Council, desires to show herself to be the loving mother of all, benign, patient, full of mercy and goodness toward the brethren who are separated from her.”<sup>30</sup> His originating vision and ecumenical intent, of course, did not of themselves instantly generate the content of conciliar documents. For example, seven weeks after the pope’s opening declaration, the schema on the church distributed on November 23, 1962, in eleven chapters framed the church mainly as the visible, social Mystical Body of Christ with pellucid structures of authority, jurisdiction, and membership, all under the Petrine office.<sup>31</sup> Resistance to moving be-

*cilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando: Series II, Praeparatoria*, 4 vols., vol. 1, *Acta Summi Pontificis Joannis XXIII* (Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1964) 39.

<sup>28</sup> Komonchak, “Struggle for the Council” 170.

<sup>29</sup> John XXIII, in the address of January 25, 1959, convoking the council; quoted by Alberigo, “Transition to a New Age” 5:573.

<sup>30</sup> John XXIII, “Pope John’s Opening Speech to the Council,” in *Documents of Vatican II* 710–16, at 716. Klaus Wittstadt details conciliar logistics in “On the Eve of the Second Vatican Council (July 1–October 10, 1962),” in *History of Vatican II* 1:405–500.

<sup>31</sup> In the *Schema constitutionis dogmaticae ecclesiae*, chapter 4 gave high importance to papal primacy, chapter 7 took up the magisterium in light of ecclesial and papal infallibility, and chapter 8 located the central problem of modern society in the crisis of authority that affects even some in the church (*Acta synodalia sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani Secundi*, vol. 1, *Periodus prima, Pars IV, Congregationes generales XXXI–XXXVI* [Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1971] 12–91).

The schema had numerous ties to Vatican I. For example, Giuseppe Ruggieri links chapter 8 to Vatican I. The principle of authority, “had been the central point in post-Tridentine ecclesiology” because “the Protestant denial of the principle of authority” came to be seen as “the cause of all the evils of the modern age,” and this view was “made official in the introduction to the Constitution *Dei Filius* of Vatican I” (“Beyond an Ecclesiology of Polemics: The Debate on the Church,” in *History of Vatican II* 2:281–357, at 294). Stephen Schloesser, S.J., “Against Forgetting: Memory, History, Vatican II,” *Theological Studies* 67 (2006) 275–319, explores how the mid-century context shaped the conciliar task.

It seems that the schema in chapter 8 did not lack consciousness of modern history or awareness of the church’s European context. It proceeded, however, from a thoroughly negative interpretation of that history and of contextual influence on the church.

yond this approach resurfaced during the second session of the council in 1963.<sup>32</sup>

And yet, under papal auspices and apart from whether or not the council fathers thought about the council as “a new Pentecost,” an emerging majority of the assembled bishops exercised Christian freedom from fear and a bold witness right within the conciliar proceedings. Substantively, the bishops embarked on a theological *ressourcement* in tackling a series of contested topics, from the sources of revelation, the nature of the church, and ecumenism, to religious liberty, relations with the Jewish people, and a redefined relation to modernity.<sup>33</sup>

Procedurally there was a willingness evincing enough interior freedom on the part of commissions to review, reconsider, and substantially revise drafts of a number of preparatory schemas that had reflected some dogmatic theology current in Rome. This process involved a structure of commissions on specific themes under the coordinating commission that sent drafts to the commissions for deliberation and revisions; the process passed through many phases as commissions reworked drafts for general debate, and then reworked them again after the general assemblies. John XXIII, knowing in advance about a council’s complexity, nonetheless referred to and prayed for “a new Pentecost.”

### DESCRIPTIONS

As part of a prayer, “a new Pentecost” harbored noteworthy expectations until 1965, and afterward turned into a retrospective description with interpretative meaning.

Paul VI embraced its vision. His apostolic brief, *In Spiritu Sancto*, read by Archbishop Pericle Felici, general secretary of the council, closed the council on December 8, 1965, with a final proclamation as bold as had been John XXIII’s opening prayer for “a new Pentecost.”<sup>34</sup> Paul VI declared that, “The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, assembled in the Holy Spirit and under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom we have

<sup>32</sup> Opposition on behalf of an ecclesiology more in line with Vatican I, subsequent papal teaching, and *Mystici Corporis* reappeared in debates on the *textus receptus* following Paul VI’s address on September 29, 1963. See Alberto Melloni, “The Beginning of the Second Period: The Great Debate on the Church,” in *History of Vatican II* 3:1–115.

<sup>33</sup> Tanner (*Councils of the Church* 5, 110) notes an ascending level of authority in three genres of conciliar documents: from the three declarations, to the nine decrees, to the four constitutions. See also Francis Sullivan, S.J., “Evaluation and Interpretation of the Documents of Vatican II,” in *Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium* (New York: Paulist, 1996) 162–74.

<sup>34</sup> Paul VI, “Papal Brief,” *Documents of Vatican II* 738–39.

declared Mother of the Church, and of St. Joseph, her glorious spouse, and of the Apostles SS. Peter and Paul, must be numbered without doubt among the greatest events of the Church.”<sup>35</sup> Although it did not use “a new Pentecost,” Paul VI’s affirmation of the council as “assembled in the Holy Spirit” and coupled with his declaring Vatican II one of “the greatest events of the Church” was in the vicinity.

In 1975, prior to his becoming archbishop of Munich and then a cardinal in 1977, Joseph Ratzinger recalled how in 1962 he saw bishops from all over the world gathering for the council. This reminded him of what Eusebius of Caesarea recounted when he too witnessed such diverse bishops assembled at Nicaea from the four corners of the then known world of the Roman Empire. “Nicaea,” Ratzinger said in pointing to the view of Eusebius, was “a new Pentecost, the true fulfillment of the Pentecostal sign, for now the Church was actually speaking in all languages.” He applied the Eusebian description to Vatican II: “The council is a Pentecost—that was a thought that corresponded to our own experiences at that time; . . . it reflected what we experienced on our arrival in the city of the council: meetings with bishops of all countries, all tongues, far beyond what Luke [in *Acts 2*] could have imagined and, thus, a lived experience of real Catholicity with its Pentecostal hope.”<sup>36</sup>

A complication came later, but not a retraction. The early description had not faced many of the difficulties after the council. In 1982 Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger quoted, not without a touch of humor, one suspects, Gregory of Nazianzen’s reply to an imperial invitation to attend a follow-up to Constantinople I. Gregory responded, “To tell you the truth, I am convinced that every assembly of bishops is to be avoided, for I have never experienced a happy ending to any council; not even the abolition of abuses . . . but only ambition or wrangling about what was taking place.”<sup>37</sup>

This less than sanguine appraisal of Vatican II can be understood, I suggest, as disenchantment that remains open to an original reality once a capacity to stir optimistic enthusiasm has waned in view of disappointing facts that have to be reckoned with: by 1982, a decline in religious practice in Western Europe and elsewhere, a precipitous drop in numbers of religious and clergy in many regions, and a divide between Western culture

<sup>35</sup> Paul VI, *In Spiritu Sancto*, <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/P6CLOSIN.HTM> (accessed October 29, 2007).

<sup>36</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, trans. Sr. Mary Frances McCarthy, S.N.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987; originally published as *Theologische Prinzipienlehre: Bausteine zur Fundamentaltheologie* (Munich: Erichewel, 1982) 367.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 368, quoting from Gregory of Nazianzus, Epistle 130 “Ad Procopium,” as found in Gregory of Nazianzus, *Briefe [von] Gregor von Nazianz*, *Briefe* in GCS 53, ed. Paul Gallay (Berlin: Akademie, 1969) 59 and *passim*.

and Christianity. There is no reason, though, to think that Pope Benedict XVI has renounced the image of a new Pentecost so dear to John Paul II.

In 2002 Cardinal Walter Kasper delivered “The Renewal of Pneumatology in Contemporary Catholic Life and Theology” to an international conference of theologians from a number of churches.<sup>38</sup> He remarked that “when Pope John XXIII opened the Second Vatican council . . . , he expressed the hope of a renewed Pentecost.”<sup>39</sup> Kasper commented that conciliar ecclesiology had taken new account of the Holy Spirit and that Catholic theology after the council had departed from any narrow, “purely Christocentric and, in particular, any purely institutional view.”<sup>40</sup> Theological and ecclesiastical developments in this direction remain incomplete, Kasper observed, and so in that respect John XXIII’s hope has yet to be realized, at least fully.

Kasper did not discount the image of “a new Pentecost” as the horizon within which the Catholic Church proceeds in light of Vatican II, although he treats it mainly as a direction for the church’s future. Aware of how far the church still is from fully realizing what the Spirit gives, he acknowledged that “we are certainly a long way from being able to speak of a new Pentecost in our Church.”<sup>41</sup> He meant the Catholic Church, not the whole of Christianity. He saw Pentecostal renewal as underway, however, not as failed or nonexistent, as if John XXIII and Vatican II had been misguided. He accepted that “the many elements that can be collected together do permit a budding confidence that the hope for a renewed Pentecost is not purely utopian.”<sup>42</sup> This rendition of “a new Pentecost” succeeds in detaching it from the surge of optimism following Vatican II.

Kasper’s prospective rather than retrospective view keyed especially on hope for Christian unity, an ecumenical outlook John XXIII had built into his prayer. Realization of hopes for Christian unity has not been accomplished. Consequently, the obvious distance between the present divisions and a future unity also measures the gap between Vatican II and fulfillment of “a new Pentecost.” So acute was Kasper’s sense of how far Christians are from unity, and so from fulfillment of “a new Pentecost,” that he even wondered if “we find ourselves, similar to Mary and the disciples after the Ascension of Jesus in the pre-Pentecostal situation of the call ‘Veni Sancte

<sup>38</sup> Walter Kasper, “The Renewal of Pneumatology in Contemporary Catholic Life and Thought,” in *The Holy Spirit, The Church, and Christian Unity: Proceedings of the Consultation Held at the Monastery of Bose, Italy (14–20 October 2002)*, ed. D. Donnelly, A. Deneux, and J. Famerée (Leuven: Leuven University, 2005) 9–33.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 13.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 14.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

Spiritus!” In regard to Christian unity, “a new Pentecost” has yet to be realized. However—and much in Kasper’s address allows this thought—in other respects Vatican II was the beginning of the church’s renewal by the Spirit.

Brief descriptions by significant leaders have carried forward reception of John XXIII’s prayerful phrase, “a new Pentecost.” They cannot be deprived of interpretative content simply because they occurred in passing comments rather than in an argument on behalf of an interpretation. They identified in a summary way what the council was, pointed to its distinctive and original aspects, and in doing so directed attention to the influence of the Holy Spirit coming upon the church on the first Pentecost. Postconciliar continuation of John XXIII’s image, whether retrospective or prospective, described the council in reference to Pentecost. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Cardinal Kasper in their descriptions all have affirmed at least the principle that Vatican II can be understood especially in reference to the Holy Spirit and to Pentecost.

### INTERPRETATION

What would a more developed interpretation be? The foregoing authors did not appeal to the one book, Léon-Joseph Cardinal Suenens’s *A New Pentecost?* (1974),<sup>43</sup> that had expounded Vatican II in terms of John XXIII’s phrase. The book has excellences and limits as an interpretation of the council. The cardinal archbishop of Mechlin-Brussels played a major role during the council. On that basis he meditated prayerfully on a profusion of ways in which the council opened the church anew to the person and mission of the Holy Spirit. His vision is centered in the Holy Spirit and points to the importance of the Charismatic Renewal but does not make it the single or chief realization of “a new Pentecost.” In fact the breadth of his vision is remarkable; it includes attention to how first the conciliar proceedings (not without struggles) and then the documents respected impulses of the Spirit already at work in theology and pastoral practice on matters of liturgy, revelation, the church, bishops, the laity, mission, and the church in the world. The gracious influence of the Spirit led to renewal, ecclesial updating, commitment to ecumenism, episcopal affirmation of charisms among the laity, the impact of the Charismatic Renewal, and new forms of witness through service in the world.

Suenens focused on how an exchange of diverse and potentially divergent gifts within the church, including a new appreciation for Christian freedom,

<sup>43</sup> Léon-Joseph Suenens, *A New Pentecost?* trans. Francis Martin, (New York: Seabury, 1975; originally published as *Une nouvelle Pentecôte* [Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1974]).

serves to unify rather than divide the church. He interpreted the event of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–41) by recourse to Paul’s insight into how one and the same body of Christ has many parts, how one and the same Spirit gives many gifts and ministries (1 Cor 12:4–11). He outlined the missionary orientation of Acts 2 and how the Spirit guided mission throughout the rest of Acts,<sup>44</sup> only to follow this immediately with a shift to the variety of charisms from the one Spirit serving the one body of Christ, something not to the fore in Acts 2.<sup>45</sup> It is fair to say that Suenens appropriated a Pentecostal interpretation of Vatican II in light of Paul’s emphasis on the Spirit as liberating (Rom, Gal) and unifying (1 Cor). This could be seen as an intuitively canonical-critical interpretation of Acts 2. As will be seen, and without necessarily hewing tightly and exclusively to a historical-critical reading, I think there is a significant theological advantage in keeping Acts 2 in reference first of all to the missionary emphasis in the rest of Acts.

Suenens’s account might be read as more idealistic than the weathered views of Benedict XVI and Cardinal Kasper. However, there can be no gainsaying the acuity of Suenens’s ecclesiological principle on the essential role of the Holy Spirit. He approved Pope Pius XII’s *Mystici Corporis* on the inseparability and mutual complementarity of the institutional and charismatic dimensions of the church.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, he went beyond Mystical Body theology by admitting that “in western Christianity we have a tendency to describe the church in Christological terms and to consider it as a reality wholly constituted and given structure by Christ—to which the Spirit then comes to bestow life and movement. But this is false. The Holy Spirit, no less than Christ, builds the Church.”<sup>47</sup> Focus on the role of the Spirit in the formation of the church was a theologically significant step taken by Vatican II in chapter 1 of *Lumen gentium*.

Suenens followed Aquinas in distinguishing the visible mission of the Spirit on Pentecost from the invisible mission of the Spirit in Christians after Pentecost. The invisible mission occurs in “an increase of grace by which someone moves to a new state or a new act of grace . . . for example, when someone progresses in the grace of working miracles or prophecy or . . . martyrdom or renounces his goods, or undertakes any difficult work.”<sup>48</sup> This turn to an understanding of the invisible mission of the Spirit to the church in individual souls dovetails with his attention to how each Christian shares in Pentecost at baptism. Perhaps an ecclesiological application was implied. It was not explicit.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 21–25.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 25–32.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 5–9.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 86, quoting Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1, q. 43, a. 6.

Suenens did not ask about a broader idea of the invisible mission of the Spirit. Could what Aquinas referred to as “an increase of grace by which someone moves to a new state or a new act of grace” be expanded to apply to an act of the whole church represented in a council, and not only to the act of an individual? Was Vatican II in particular a corporate, ecclesial event in which the bishops and the whole church received an invisible sending of the Spirit that Aquinas described in terms of decisions and actions by individuals? A corporate, ecclesial application of the invisible mission of the Spirit at Vatican II would meet one of Aquinas’s criteria for an invisible mission of the Spirit, undertaking a “difficult work.” That would have been a way to interpret Vatican II as “a new Pentecost.” And yet Aquinas, with his idea of the invisible mission, does not develop the difference between the mission of Christ and the mission of the Spirit, since both cause grace in the justified. On that basis there is no passage from theological anthropology back to an ecclesiology emphasizing the distinct mission of the Holy Spirit and Pentecost. This is to overlook what I will call the “pneumatological difference.”

More recently, Australian theologian Ormond Rush has given thought to “a new Pentecost.” In *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles*, he argues that “Vatican II, as ‘a new Pentecost,’ now requires of us a new pneumatology, that is, a new theology of how the Holy Spirit works.”<sup>49</sup> In chapter 4, “A New Pentecost, A New Pneumatology,” Rush adverts to trinitarian grounds for designating Vatican II “a new Pentecost.” The Spirit in the Trinity is “the *dynamis* of giving (*traditio*) and receiving (*receptio*) between Father and Son and between the Triune God and humanity.”<sup>50</sup> Further, “In the process of divine self-communication between the Triune God and humanity, the Holy Spirit is the Dialogue who enables response to God’s Address to humanity and whose way is the way of dialogue.”<sup>51</sup>

During Vatican II the bishops undertook a new connection to the great tradition of the church that involved a “micro-rupture” from the preceding “Constantinian, Gregorian, Counter-Reformation, Plian” elements of the tradition that had been impeding reception of the gospel in contemporary conditions.<sup>52</sup> In Rush’s telescoping of a complex, multilevel process, a majority of the bishops moved away from these elements in rejecting and causing to be revised in major ways almost all drafts from preparatory commissions that the coordinating commission sent to the conciliar commissions. The exception was the document on the liturgy. On most topics

<sup>49</sup> Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II* 26.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 70.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 70.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 77.

the bishops in effect started anew. “That decision to ‘start again’ was a radical reform decision, a desire for micro-ruptures for the sake of continuity with the great tradition.” Rush’s analysis pinpoints the decisions on preparatory schemas as a special locus of the Spirit’s influence.<sup>53</sup>

The emerging majority of bishops did not adopt—with the important exception of the exemplary text on renewing the liturgy—the main content and approach of the schemas. They set out in another direction. Rush is right that this was a signal moment. I agree with the substance of his view. There remains the question of how best to formulate it. His language of radical reform and of a clean break comes too close to ascribing to the council a leap out of the past.

Such a drastic change could be thought to ignore currents of reform and renewal alive in Catholicism, for example, before and after the council of Trent, itself a council of reform and renewal. Moreover, there is continuity between Trent and Vatican II precisely in a renewed search for fidelity to the gospel in response to new conditions. And there is a golden thread of continuity from Pope Leo XXIII’s *Rerum novarum* through Pope Pius XI’s *Quadragesimo anno* and John XXIII’s *Pacem in terris* to Vatican II’s *Gaudium et spes*.<sup>54</sup> All these documents consider and interpret in light of the gospel new socioeconomic and political conditions and consequent problems in religion, culture, and everyday life. Rush makes the important point that, “just as Vatican II was an event where a re-reception of scripture and tradition took place, so too the reception of Vatican II itself is now *only one element . . .* in the church’s wider ongoing reception of revelation.”<sup>55</sup> In this, though Rush does not insist on it, Vatican II is like, and in continuity with, earlier councils. Keeping Vatican II open to, and in some manner of dialogue with, preconciliar Catholicism prevents postconciliar theology from uncritically presupposing a modernist pretension to final superiority just as postmodern reaction against the Enlightenment has discredited this sense of surpassing everything in the past as an undifferentiated idea of progress.

Rush emphasizes that the episcopal majority at the council initiated an ecclesial reform and renewal that places a demand on the faithful, notably the laity, to appropriate a role of historical agency as members of the

<sup>53</sup> Rush distinguishes a hermeneutic of authors, of texts, and of reception. His accent here on the influence of the Spirit in the origins of the documents, and so on a hermeneutic of authors, does not minimize the importance of analyzing the texts in their proper and interrelated contents, and in general emphasizes a hermeneutic of reception of the texts.

<sup>54</sup> This is not to ignore the question whether or not Catholic social teaching has a constant theme giving it continuity and, if so, what it is, but to affirm a tradition of concern for the larger, institutional dimensions of social existence.

<sup>55</sup> Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II* 67.

church and within the church. Exercise of that agency involves countless struggles to “understand, interpret, and apply the Gospel anew in a thousand new situations.”<sup>56</sup> The bishops received their inspiration and accomplished their work during the council. This reception of the gospel passed into the documents, thence to ecclesial renewal and assimilation of both, especially by the laity. According to Rush this now is the primary mode of reception of Vatican II that theologians have a responsibility to reflect on in a new Pneumatology.

Insofar as church members assimilate the documents, *Dei Verbum* especially, and then seek ever-new fidelity to the gospel in all manner of cultural and individual circumstances, they receive the council. “Reception is the assimilation and ‘making one’s own’ of another reality.”<sup>57</sup> Rush’s concentration on the postconciliar impact of the Spirit brings out an aspect of catholicity—the multiple and diverse cultures, geographies, and situations into which laity actively receive and make their own the event and documents of Vatican II.

Calling Vatican II “a new Pentecost” would not require saying that the Pentecostal renewal ceased in 1965, nor that, as Kasper muses, it lies mainly ahead. Rush holds that “the same Holy Spirit at work during a council is at work in the history of reception of that council and its documents.”<sup>58</sup> In Rush’s view, with which I concur, the work of the Spirit summed up as “a new Pentecost” includes the event of Vatican II, the production of its documents, and postconciliar reception. Still, the task of reception surely falls also to postconciliar bishops and clergy along with the laity on whom Rush, for many sound reasons, focuses.

### EXPLORATION

Exploring the interpretative implications of “a new Pentecost” does not consist primarily in an inquiry into conciliar Pneumatology. The net result of the conciliar documents was not a synthesis of church teaching on the Holy Spirit nor a unified development of it. Rather, and more modestly, Congar remarks on the 16 documents that six “elements of true pneumatology . . . were present at the Second Vatican Council”:<sup>59</sup> (1) a christological focus on the Spirit of Christ; (2) the church serves Christ’s Spirit; (3) a

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 70.

<sup>59</sup> Yves Congar, “The Pneumatology of Vatican II,” trans. David Smith, vol. 2, part 1, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3 vols. in 1 (New York: Crossroad, 1997; originally published as *Je Crois en L’Esprit Saint* [Paris: Cerf, 1979–80]) 1:167–73, at 167. In *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Congar may underrate what can be gained from scattered conciliar references to the Spirit. See, for example, a helpful synthesis by Sr. Mary Cecily Boulding, O.P., “The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Documents of Vatican II,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 51 (1985) 255–67.

trinitarian view of the economy of creation and grace; (4) the Spirit as source of charism(s) and renewal in the church; (5) the Spirit as principle of communion among local churches; and (6) some recognition of the Spirit active in history.<sup>60</sup> He considered these six elements less than a conciliar Pneumatology. Nor does exploring “a new Pentecost” entail collating the 258 references to the Holy Spirit in the documents, a technique that Congar thought would not yield a conciliar Pneumatology, such as it was.<sup>61</sup>

My proposal here is that more than six principles articulated in the documents linked Vatican II to the Holy Spirit. The council assemblies, the production of documents, and reception all took place under the influence of the Holy Spirit. “A new Pentecost” does not primarily refer to teaching on the Spirit but to influence from the Spirit. As an interpretation it has an orientation toward the Spirit active in dramatic fashion in and on the church in a variety of ways with different effects. “A new Pentecost” situates the six principles within the original horizon that opened up around the church on Pentecost due to the Spirit’s new self-gift to which Acts 2 bears witness. Prospective and retrospective use of “a new Pentecost” implies that this horizon can become or can be renewed as that of Vatican II, and not only that the church can advance in Pneumatology, essential as that may be.

Roughly speaking, a horizon is the scope of a person’s or community’s vision and interest from a central, defining standpoint.<sup>62</sup> Difficult to locate and objectify, some horizon frames and informs a person’s or community’s self-understanding, words, and deeds. In the case of the Catholic Church at Vatican II, “a new Pentecost” signifies the importance of both the original horizon, imparted along with the gracious outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost in Jerusalem, and its renewal in the 20th century through the council. Apart from this grace of a renewed horizon, the conciliar documents that registered the six elements to which Congar drew attention would remain bounded within what approximated a pre-Acts 2 horizon allowing for a Christocentrism that had difficulty assimilating the ecclesiological implications of Constantinople I’s teaching on the coequality of the Holy Spirit with Christ in divinity and in redemption. The solution is not,

<sup>60</sup> For example, *Unitatis redintegratio* on ecumenism affirmed the Spirit active in the ecumenical movement in the history of modern Protestantism prior to Catholicism’s commitment to it. See Michael A. Fahey, S.J., “The Ecumenical Movement Inspired by the Holy Spirit,” in *The Holy Spirit, the Church, and Christian Unity* 119–36.

<sup>61</sup> Congar, “Pneumatology of Vatican II” 167.

<sup>62</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1972) 235–36.

of course, Pneumatocentrism but a trinitarian appreciation for the difference between the mission of Christ and the mission of the Holy Spirit.

Appropriating the mission of the Holy Spirit along with the mission of Christ into the defining standpoint of Catholic ecclesiology presents a more profound challenge than did arriving piecemeal at specific statements on the Holy Spirit that add up to the six principles noted by Congar, important as those are. In Western theology, the coming of Christ has been the prepossessing *missio Dei*, and yet “a new Pentecost” stands as an invitation to appropriate the mission of the Spirit and secures an initial interpretation of its relation to Christ. For it cannot be agreed any longer that Pentecost and the mission of the Spirit changed nothing except to impart to the believers gathered in Jerusalem a new and fearless zeal. This kind of underestimation of Pentecost seems inevitable in Mystical Body ecclesiology, despite its crucial locating of the ultimate principle of church unity in the divine Spirit, not in the office of pope.

And that is why “a new Pentecost” directs attention not only to Vatican II but to Pentecost itself and encourages emphasis on an advance in *Lumen gentium*'s, Suenens's, and Congar's understanding of Pentecost. It is another question whether or not and to what extent this advance has been assimilated into the teaching of the church, even with consensus that conciliar documents contain some form of underlying, implied, nonsystematized communion ecclesiology.

### Pentecost

Before the council Congar had described the mission of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost as giving the church its inner law and its soul.<sup>63</sup> He stated about the origin of the church that “the Lord had settled the elements which were to make up the Church in the course of his public life. He instituted the apostolic office and made the choice of the Twelve, giving the primacy to Peter.”<sup>64</sup> In this way, “gradually, the structure of the Church was built up. Then at the end of fifty days, [Christ] gave it its living principle, the Holy Spirit.”<sup>65</sup> Pentecost had the effect of “placing the Church in the world” and completing the work of Christ, because the Spirit “interiorises it within men and gives it living impulse.”<sup>66</sup> The mission of “Christ established the apostolic mission but the Holy Spirit makes the mission actual

<sup>63</sup> Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Church: Studies*, trans. A. V. Littledale (Baltimore: Helicon, 1960); originally published as *Esquisses du mystère de l'église* and *La Pentecôte: Chartres 1956* (Paris: Cerf, 1956).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 21.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

and works together with the Apostolate to make it fruitful and to assure the validity of the hierarchical functions.”<sup>67</sup>

On Pentecost the Spirit became the law and soul of Christ’s Mystical Body.<sup>68</sup> This was a common preconiliar understanding of Pentecost. Had John XXIII already grasped the inadequacy of this understanding? His prayer does not describe Pentecost ensouling the church; his ecumenical imagery surrounding the phrase “a new Pentecost” would have been difficult if not impossible to propose on the basis of a Mystical Body ecclesiology that maximized clarity on church boundaries and membership.

After Vatican II a different view of Pentecost characterized Congar’s three-volume work, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*. He came to a new way of formulating the contribution of Christ and the Spirit to the origin of the church. Patrick Mullins briefly notes this evolution in Congar’s ecclesiology as arrival at the position that the Spirit coinstituted the church insofar as the Spirit instituted its charismatic dimension and dynamic.<sup>69</sup> Mullins accents the coequality and complementarity of institutional and charismatic elements in the origin of the church. He points out that for Congar after the council, “the ecclesial means of grace (the Word, the sacraments and the apostolic ministry) were instituted gradually throughout the apostolic era by Jesus and the Spirit acting inseparably.”<sup>70</sup> Congar no longer relegated the whole instituting of the church to Christ’s work, since the Spirit too was active with Christ throughout Christ’s public ministry and in the apostolic era. Mullins emphasizes that Congar’s coming to this recognition attests to the unity “with which the glorified Christ and the Spirit operate in the Church.”<sup>71</sup>

I would like to detail a bit more Congar’s point of arrival in the interests of expanding the significance of the coequality of the mission of the Spirit

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 21–42. A strangeness is that a body/soul analogy leads in just the opposite direction. According to Aristotelian hylomorphism—and Platonic dualism seems out of the question in regard to Catholic understanding of the physical and mystical body of Christ—there can be no bodily formation apart from a life-giving, organizing, unifying soul. The soul cannot be added as a life-principle at the moment of birth of an already formed but inert body, since the soul is precisely that which imparts structure, form, organization, and life to bodily formation.

According to the logic of a body/soul analogy, then, Mystical Body ecclesiology should have said that the Spirit was animating the church all along the gradual emergence of its institutional structure from Christ’s words and deeds, from the conception of the church onward as it were, rather than only at a finishing moment at Pentecost when the Spirit is described as if quickening a fully-organized body.

<sup>69</sup> Patrick Mullins, “The Spirit Speaks to the Churches: Continuity and Development in Congar’s Pneumatology,” *Louvain Studies* 29 (2004) 288–319, at 305.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 305.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 307.

with the mission of Christ. I affirm with Congar and Mullins the following principles: the complementarity of the two missions, Pentecost as completion of the paschal mystery and the unity of the charismatic and institutional in the one economy of redemption. But I also want to argue that Catholic theology does not have to let that complementarity and functional unity monopolize thought about the two missions from the outset. There does not have to be a rush to the unity and complementarity. There can be a dwelling also upon the distinctness of the missions and its theological implications. There can be—and “a new Pentecost” supports this—a theological moment of amplifying the significance of the distinctness between the two missions.

The premise is the coequality of the two missions in regard to the origin and continuity of the church, and that is what Congar came to after the council. After a brief account of this premise in Congar’s study, I will take up the pneumatological difference. Volume 1 of *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* expanded on the activity of the Spirit throughout the life and ministry of Jesus, emphasizing Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan. His public ministry already involved the mission of the Spirit. Volume 2 retained Congar’s preconiliar affirmation that “the Church . . . is historical and visible and its ‘founder’ is Jesus, who is always living and active in it and is its lasting foundation.”<sup>72</sup> But then something new emerged. “Both in its life and its origin,” Congar insisted, “the Church is the fruit of two ‘divine missions.’”<sup>73</sup> As Mullins remarks, it was already the case that Pius XII’s *Mystici Corporis* taught that the Church was constituted by a double mission.<sup>74</sup> In that respect Congar’s proposition was not altogether new. But for Pius the two missions were Christ’s personal mission partially communicated to the apostles as a juridical mission of authority, and the invisible mission of the Spirit in souls.

It is not too much to say that, in *Mystici Corporis*, the mission of the Spirit on Pentecost was an auxiliary activity. The church itself already had come to birth from the side of Christ on the cross. All structures were in place. Christ’s suffering and death centered and generated the church. Pentecost came along afterward as an event of anointing the apostles with new strength and power. In this account the mission of the Spirit did not constitute the church as much as it entered in to strengthen and assist what Christ already had constituted in completeness. Congar reaches a wider notion and a bolder formulation of the mission of the Spirit in the title of a subsection, “The Two Missions: The Spirit as the Co-instituting Principle

<sup>72</sup> Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* 2:7.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Mullins, “The Spirit Speaks” 296 n. 40.

of the Church.”<sup>75</sup> The language of “co-instituting” for the Spirit’s activity in the church was new and not part of earlier Mystical Body ecclesiology. Nor did any conciliar document put things this way.

The new position did not locate the instituting of the church solely in what was inaugurated by Christ alone through initiatives during his public ministry and postresurrection appearances. Congar argued from a parallel in the institution of four sacraments whose dominical origin the New Testament does not clearly describe: confirmation, holy orders, marriage, and the anointing of the sick. He observed that Christ left it up to the church, guided by the Holy Spirit, to determine the outward, ritual expression of these sacraments, though he intended each special grace. Something like this pertained to apostolic office too, and to that extent Christ left the institutional structure of the church unfinished in its outward expression.

What settled, for example, the exact shape and manner of apostolic succession in a threefold sharing in apostolic ministry—bishop, priest, deacon? “Did the succession in their ministry not begin with the initiative of the Holy Spirit, at least in the form of a mono-episcopacy?” Congar asked.<sup>76</sup> In other words, the Spirit guided the church, the apostles, and their successors in determining the outward expression of apostolic succession. Christ in his public ministry and in appearances after the resurrection did not institute the offices of deacon and presbyter, and did not mandate succession to the original apostles in a threefold structure with the bishop at the center or top. In that sense the Spirit co-instituted apostolic office and the sacrament of holy orders. This attributed more to the Spirit than animating with divine power what Christ already had fully determined and established, as Mullins also notes.

Congar went on to consult Irenaeus’s analogy of the Father’s “two hands” and Didymus the Blind’s reference to the Spirit as “author, leader and promoter of the Church.”<sup>77</sup> This patristic witness “must mean that the Spirit did not come simply in order to animate an institution that was already fully determined in all its structures, but that he is really the ‘co-instituting’ principle.”<sup>78</sup> And that is Congar’s position on the mission of the Spirit in the genesis of the church. Pentecost was more than the finishing event in which the Holy Spirit descended on a completely structured Mystical Body as its divine “soul” or inner form and “law.” Instead, the Spirit co-instituted elements in the Body as well as poured out love, life, energy, and became the source of the charismatic dimension of the church.

Pentecost, therefore, belonged to the constituting of the church as a

<sup>75</sup> Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* 2:7.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* 10.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* 9, quoting Didymus the Blind, *Enarr. in Ep. 2 S. Petri*, 3, 5 (PG 39.1774).

<sup>78</sup> Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* 2:9.

whole, including some of its institutional structures. Congar's postconciliar theology lifted the mission of the Spirit to genuine coequality with Christ in the economy of redemption and in the church. Christ and the Spirit enact coequal missions. This means that the Spirit cannot be secondary to Christ, as if Christ's adjutant. Nor can the Spirit be imagined as the church's divine assistant. The coconstituting effect of the Spirit on the church likewise involves the church's codependence (for lack of a better word) on the Spirit no less than on Christ. Thus the church does not exist in, possess, and proceed from a Christocentric, institutional solidity of interlocking structures accompanied by a side-possibility of unpredictable spiritual impulses due to the Spirit, but exists and acts in all aspects and dimensions in radical dependence on the somewhat unpredictable action of the Spirit penetrating every institutionally formatted decision as well. For example, there are few more visible operations of an institutional structure in the church than a pope publicly and formally acting to govern the church. And there could be few such acts more evidently possessed of a charismatic dimension than John XXIII's decision and action toward a new council.<sup>79</sup>

For that reason "a new Pentecost" cannot be matched only to the charismatic element in the church, though that element is real and "a new Pentecost" encapsulates a perspective on the church insisting on its coequality with institutional structures. That is one reason why it is misleading to conceive the Spirit's renewing effects at and after Vatican II only or primarily as Charismatic Renewal, valuable as that movement has been in terms of spiritual growth and spiritual ecumenism. But the Pentecostal effect at Vatican II touched liturgy, episcopal office, understanding of revelation, ecumenism, interreligious relations, and the church-world relationship too. Matching "a new Pentecost" only with the charismatic element in the church, especially with Charismatic Renewal, is a shortcoming in one or two of John Paul II's remarks on "a new Pentecost."<sup>80</sup>

Liturgical renewal, for example, has given new prominence to the eucharistic *epiclesis* invoking the power of the Spirit upon the gifts of bread and wine. Invoking the Spirit expresses and enacts a constitutive and constant dependence of the eucharistic community and presider on the Spirit for the transformation of the gifts, no less than the institution narrative expresses and manifests continuity with Christ's words and acts at the Last Supper. The *epiclesis* also has broad ecclesiological significance. The com-

<sup>79</sup> For other instances of the Spirit at work in the charismatic element of the church, see Bradford E. Hinze, "Releasing the Power of the Spirit in a Trinitarian Ecclesiology," in *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology*, ed. Bradford E. Hinze and D. Lyle Dabney (Milwaukee: Marquette University, 2001) 345–81, esp. 368–72.

<sup>80</sup> See above n. 1.

plete church exists in constitutive and constant dependence on the Holy Spirit no less than in fidelity to Christ. Pentecost brought about the outpouring of the Spirit that codifies the church, placing the church within the horizon of the Spirit and not only the horizon of the gospel message. The Eucharistic *epiclesis* manifests the nature of the church.

The church has what Kasper calls an “epicletic structure,” as well as a charismatic dimension that is nowhere more active than in saints.<sup>81</sup> This means that “the Church does not ‘have’ the Holy Spirit nor is the Holy Spirit at the disposal of the Church.”<sup>82</sup> The church “can and may ask for the coming of the Holy Spirit and can be certain that this plea will be heard.”<sup>83</sup> In this light John XXIII’s prayer to the Spirit for a renewal of wonders as by “a new Pentecost” was already a kind of an ecumenically oriented *epiclesis* upon the whole council. “A new Pentecost” expresses and carries an epicletic vision of the church and Vatican II. The phrase is a simple heuristic by which to penetrate to a profound pneumatological dimension of the church in full accord with the teaching of the council that keeps focus on the Holy Spirit linked to Christ, as Congar observed.

### The Pneumatological Difference

Discussion of the coequal missions of Son and Spirit precisely in their distinctness from one another can now proceed. At the outset, though, it is appropriate to acknowledge a theological reflex built up in Catholicism from historical experiences with Montanism, Joachim of Fiore, and Reformation splits between the visible and invisible church. Apprehension about emphasis on the distinctness between the missions of Son and Spirit as a potential source of division and factions in the church probably has led to regularly immediate statement of the economic and ecclesial complementarity of the two missions. And it is true that to affirm economic unity and coordination is vital. There are not two economies, one of Christ, another of the Spirit. Yet the one economy of redemption initiated by the Father manifests and operates with a real, internal difference between Christ and the Spirit.

Inquiry into that difference—or into economic unity for that matter—has to take account of another principle in trinitarian theology. The principle of incommensurability accepts and applies limits in human thought and language about God that are due to the difference between uncreated

<sup>81</sup> Walter Kasper, “The Renewal of Pneumatology in Contemporary Catholic Life and Thought,” in *The Holy Spirit, The Church, and Christian Unity* 9–33, with a nod to Congar at 22. Congar discussed an epicletic aspect in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* 3:267–74.

<sup>82</sup> Kasper, “Renewal of Pneumatology” 22.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

and created. Arising from revelation and faith, affirmation of the distinctness of Father, Son, and Spirit by relations of origin no less than profession of faith in their unity or any other attribute involves human thought and language built up from individual and communal human experience, understanding, judgment, love, and decision. What human speech and word gain from created realities cannot be adequate to uncreated divine reality.

Accordingly, the unity of God in three divine modes of subsistence, persons, in one and the same divine nature and in trinitarian *perichoresis* exceeds any created unity and so any human comprehension beyond what revelation makes available and even then only to a limited extent. This excess of divine reality and this limit in human thought pertain also to inner-trinitarian distinctions. They too surpass real and not only rational distinctions among created realities. Three human persons in the same family or joined in bonds of friendship are distinct, and may cooperate toward the benefit of others. That cannot begin to compare with the divinity, unity, or distinctness in the immanent and economic Trinity. This limit pertains to a social as well as to a psychological analogy for the Trinity.

There is real otherness in the Trinity, and incomprehensible communion too. The Father is not the Son, the Spirit is not the Son. There is an inner-trinitarian difference between the procession of the Son and the procession of the Spirit.<sup>84</sup> The mission of the Son is the procession plus a temporal effect. The mission of the Spirit is the procession plus a temporal effect. Neglecting the Son–Spirit difference in the economy by minimizing the difference between the mission of Son and the mission of the Spirit does violence to the mystery of the Trinity. Deepening recognition of that difference might be felt to be perilous to the solidity of the postconciliar church in its institutional reality. That cannot suffice to warrant ignoring the pneumatological difference. That difference is the economic, historical, soteriological manifestation and consequence of the immanent, inner-trinitarian distinctness between the relation of origin constituting the Son and the relation of origin constituting the Spirit. The mission of the Spirit is not the mission of the Son, even though the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, or in the common Western formulation, from the Father and the Son [*Filioque*] (but not from the Son’s humanity).

<sup>84</sup> Eastern theology of the Trinity has reserved the term “procession” to the Holy Spirit, whereas Western theology speaks generically about two “processions,” generation of the Son and spiration of the Spirit. See Bernard Lonergan’s Thesis 4, “*Spiritus Sanctus procedit a Patre et Filio tamquam ab una principio et unica spiratione*,” *De Deo trino, Pars analytica* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1961) 235; and David Coffey on the differences between the two processions articulated through the psychological analogy, about which he has doubts: *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God* (New York: Oxford University, 1999) 28–29.

Theological attention to the pneumatological difference protects the mystery in the economic unity of missions, a unity that otherwise could easily be misunderstood as one divine mission with two aspects. That would be relapse into an informal modalism that would collapse the real distinction between the missions of Son and of Spirit. The Spirit, acting in concert with Christ in the economy of redemption, is really distinct from Christ and has a really distinct mission. The distinction is real, not a mental convention, because Christ's words and deeds in the New Testament present it as real, though not in a dogmatic, propositional format. Once revealed, the distinction between the two missions can be affirmed in many human languages and, potentially, formulated in multiple ways.<sup>85</sup>

The pneumatological difference is something for Catholic theology to dwell on so that customary insistence on the economic unity of the missions of Son and Spirit does not slide into an economic modalism that treats economic complementarity as if one divine mission with two aspects. Attention to the pneumatological difference does not stem from the hidden premise of rejecting the *Filioque*. Western trinitarian theology has its own grounds for exploring the difference, though the *Filioque* does not encourage this and has abetted a Christomonist tendency in Western Catholicism. For this Western theological reason in addition to consideration of the Eastern tradition, I favor the proposal to return to a pre-*Filioque* Creed.

The pneumatological difference arises from two affirmations in Western trinitarian theology: (1) the Spirit is a distinct person by relation of origin,<sup>86</sup> and (2) there is a difference between the temporal effect in the mission of the Son and the temporal effect in the mission of the Spirit.<sup>87</sup> The mission of the Son joins the procession (generation) of Son from Father to the temporal effect of an assumed human nature (incarnation). The mission of the Son takes place in hypostatic union, in the incarnation, and the whole of Christ's life—freedom, teaching, miracles, deeds, ministry, passion, death and resurrection, and intercession at the Father's right hand—expresses that union.

<sup>85</sup> For an approach to the distinct mission of the Spirit by way of the thought of Matthias Scheeben, see Ralph Del Colle, "The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit: Implications for the Church and Ecumenism," in *The Holy Spirit, the Church, and Christian Unity* 248–65.

<sup>86</sup> See Thomas Aquinas on the processions and missions, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 7, *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (1a 33–43)*, Latin text, English trans., intro., notes, and glossary T. C. O' Brien (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976) q. 43, 209–37.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* 213: "Mission includes an eternal procession, but also adds something else, namely an effect in time" (*temporalem effectum*) q. 43, a. 2, 3m. Q. 43 emphasizes the commonality of the two missions as invisible in the temporal effect of sanctifying grace, pointing to a distinction in effects of that grace: enlightenment from the Son and enkindling of affections from the Spirit. See q. 43, a. 5, 3m.

The mission of the Spirit joins the procession of the Spirit (spiration) from the Father through the Son to a temporal effect other than a parallel incarnation, other than an assuming of any created reality into hypostatic union. This temporal effect joined to the procession of the Spirit is the self-giving presence and personal influence of the Spirit in creation and history. In the economy, the Spirit produces an impact, a temporal effect, really distinct from a hypostatic (personal) union with a created reality, whether an individual nature, a selection of individuals, or the whole of creation.

The otherness of this temporal effect from the incarnation is the pneumatological difference in the economy of redemption. Because of that difference it makes sense to speak of “a new Pentecost” but not of “a new incarnation” or “a new paschal mystery.” The pneumatological difference underlies and makes possible continual newness precisely in and through the temporal effect in the mission of the Spirit—new gifts, inspiration of the Scriptures, surprising personal inspirations, unforeseen communal movements, organized local initiatives in service of neighbors.

Given Western Christocentrism other New Testament tropes involving the council were conceivable. For example, a council might be thought of more readily on the model of Christ teaching rather than the Spirit descending. Then a New Testament allusion might have petitioned for “a new public ministry,” “a new victory over evil,” “a new hearing of the gospel,” “a new liberation,” “a new care for humanity,” even “a new time of judgment.” The difficulty is apparent. The temporal effect in the person and mission of Christ is the entry into human life and history by Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is the unique historical agent whose activities in regard to the founding of the church have the once-and-for-all aspect of his whole redemptive work in time and history. The incarnation is definitive, irrevocable, unrepeatable, permanent, and in that sense finished, although Jesus’ salvific work mediating divine graciousness continues. The finished aspect of the incarnation makes attaching “new” to Christ, gospel, or faith difficult if not impossible since it seems at least to add something to Christ’s once-and-for-all revelatory person, mission, and founding activity.

Not so with the mission of the Spirit. In the case of the Spirit the temporal effect is diffuse in the sense of being directed to all human persons, most fully to Christ’s followers in their communion with Christ and the Father, and to all creation, rather than terminating in one hypostatic union. This temporal effect remains unfinished, still occurring, not physically located in a definite place, and acts especially from within human interiority. The Spirit’s temporal effect does not exert an influence through human agency as Jesus did and does. The Spirit influences history in a different manner, typified in the inspiration of the New Testament. But the Scrip-

tures do not contain the Spirit who rests nowhere yet acts everywhere through all ages in all societies and cultures. At any given time until the eschaton, the temporal effect in the mission of the Spirit is still underway, incomplete in realization in a way that the hypostatic union is not.

“A new Pentecost,” then, does not mean a second Pentecost, a second founding of the church, a second commencing of the coming of God’s kingdom. Rather, it signifies that the temporal effect in the mission of the Spirit is still moving toward the eschaton, remaining always new and renewing. The phrase, that is, not only places Vatican II under the auspices of the Pentecostal moment in the founding of the church; it also signifies renewal of the founding gift, which is the Spirit and a new horizon for human existence, though certainly it does not mean a refounding of the church. The founding gift of the Spirit opened up as well the church’s eschatological future in a way that the resurrection by itself did not.

“A new Pentecost” carries recognition that the mission of the Holy Spirit enters into creation and human history in a mode really and significantly different from the kind of human, historical agency made possible by the Logos’s assuming a human nature. Affirming and developing the inner-trinitarian and economic distinction of Son from Father has not produced theological fear about introducing a theoretical and practical split between an economy of the Father and an economy of the Son. The inner-trinitarian distinction revealed in the economic difference between Father and Son belongs to the identity of Jesus. In Western Catholic theology, however, there has not been parallel development of the economic difference between the mission of Christ and the mission of the Spirit. Yet this nonidentity belongs to what the church is and how Christians exist. Instead, there is a struggle to hold in tension the charismatic and institutional elements in the church. An overriding and understandable concern has been preservation of their unity, sometimes in terms of a dialectic or polarity between the authority of the Word of God and the obedience of faith on the one hand and the inspiration of the Spirit and Christian freedom on the other.

### **Mission**

The account of Pentecost in Acts 2 cues theology on the meaning of the difference, the nonidentity, in missions. One of the prominent features of Pentecost is a notable change in the community of believers. Before the descent of the Spirit they are one way, afterward another. Before Pentecost Christ’s followers lived a condition of faith in the risen Christ (though not everyone had direct experience of Christ risen) that left them inactive in communicating the gospel. In that sense they were not yet followers of Jesus in his defining purpose and direction. Their discipleship and the content of their faith and love was Christocentric, but it had not stretched

to the breadth and length and depth of Christ's own vision and love. It lacked the horizon and power of Pentecost.

Shocked by the crucifixion and bewildered by the resurrection, in Acts the little gathering at prayer seems at a loss for what to do next. Pentecost changed all that. Something new happened. The Holy Spirit came upon them all together, not scattered across the towns of Judea and Galilee, in a new depth and with communal effects. After the descent of the Holy Spirit, the believing community took up Christ's mission by starting to witness in public in Jerusalem. This made them followers, not merely devotees, of Christ. They had heard and believed Jesus and his message; this had been faith as obedience to the word of God. It was not yet the freedom in the Spirit to communicate the gospel at personal risk.

Pentecost enabled them to testify to what they had seen and heard, what they had come to accept, whom they had come to recognize as Messiah. Pentecost transformed the little frightened church, so that believers could participate effectively in Christ's mission. Despite belief renewed and transformed by the resurrection, they had not yet been able to appropriate the mission communicated to them by Christ, and that was the defining purpose of their being called into discipleship. This was not a matter of their sinful blindness or slowness to believe. Believing, they simply lacked a capacity to do more, especially in adverse circumstances. They lacked what would be given. To conceive the interim between resurrection and Pentecost only in terms of human limits due to sinfulness would be to ignore the deeper powerlessness that is simply the gap between human capacities and the divine content and purpose of Christianity. Christianity was sent into a mission with a divine dimension that human resources could not suffice to fulfill. Pre-Pentecostal faith in Christ proved inadequate to taking on a share in Christ's mission.

This means that, unlike the view in Mystical Body theology, the paschal mystery of Christ reached its end, finality, and completion in Pentecost. The mission of the Holy Spirit not only caused the conception of Christ in Mary's womb, anointed him at the river Jordan, and assisted him throughout his mission and ministry. The Pentecostal descent of the Spirit was also that for the sake of which Christ acted and suffered. Neither in public ministry nor in the postresurrection period did Christ turn over the community's already designated though nascent modes of operation, the structures, to the apostles or disciples as if to their autonomous realm of careful prudence guided by the *memoria Jesu*.

Rather, Acts 2 presents Pentecost as something other than maximum energizing of a fully-fledged church. The reverse is the case. The church became church only on Pentecost and in this became assistant to, instrument for, and acting in dependence on the Spirit. The Pentecostal church inaugurated a new phase in Christian existence that succeeded Christ's

public ministry and postresurrection manifestations. Before Pentecost the church did not yet exist, though there were essential elements. Afterward, the church existed and acted as an instrument of the Spirit. This means that the institutional structures Christ and the Spirit coconstituted existed and functioned in dependence on and in service of the Holy Spirit. That dependence resulted, of course, in a strengthened christological focus since now they adhered to Christ-as-sent-and-sending.

*Lumen gentium* states that, “just as the assumed nature inseparably united to the divine Word serves Him as a living instrument of salvation, so, in a similar way, does the communal structure of the church serve Christ’s Spirit, who vivifies it by way of building up the body (Eph 4:16).”<sup>88</sup> Far from conceiving the mission of the Spirit in terms of animating an already fully constituted structure, here the “communal structure of the Church” is said to serve, to be an instrument for, Christ’s Spirit.<sup>89</sup> An instrument acts in dependence on a principal influence or cause—here, the Holy Spirit. In regard to the institutional and charismatic elements in the church, this reliance of the instrument on a source means that the institutional element is the instrument of both the Holy Spirit and the charismatic element. Acts 2 and following reveal this.

Pentecost and the ensuing mission revealed the whole church in its social, communal reality, including the successors to the apostles and visible ministry, as deriving not only from the once-and-for-all life, ministry, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus but also in complete, constant dependence in unexpected ways on the mission of the Spirit who acts to provide ever new guidance in service of Christ’s mission. To overlook the radical nature of the church’s dependence on the Spirit in the church’s being and acting is to succumb to ecclesiastical Pelagianism. Romans says that the Spirit is poured out into our hearts, and in light of Augustine’s teaching on grace this outpouring is ordinarily understood in reference to individual

<sup>88</sup> *Lumen gentium* no. 8, *Documents of Vatican II* 22. The initial schema spoke of the church’s reality as like the human nature taken up as an instrument of the divine nature of the Word. The final approved text says that the visible social structure of the church serves the Spirit somewhat as the human nature of Christ serves the divine nature of the Word: “Sicut enim natura assumpta verbo divino ut vivum organum salutis, Ei indissolubiliter unitum inservit, non dissimili modo socialis compago Ecclesiae Spiritui Christi, eam vivificanti, ad augmentum corporis inservit (see Eph 4:16)” (in *Constitutionis dogmaticae Lumen gentium: Synopsis historica*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Franca Magistrelli [Bologna: Istituto per le Scienze Religiose, 1975] 37).

<sup>89</sup> On the ecumenical import of this statement from *Lumen gentium*, see Joseph Famerée, “The Holy Spirit in Vatican II and in the Statements of the Catholic-Orthodox Theological Dialogue,” in *The Holy Spirit, the Church, and Christian Unity* 137–57, at 138.

believers within the church. But on Pentecost it is true as well of the whole church in its visible, social reality. “A new Pentecost” interprets the epicletic structure of the church as not only a confident invoking of the Spirit in the face of what exceeds human capacities but as a Spirit-dependent community through the length and breadth of all its activities, both institutional and charismatic, in expressing reception of the Spirit.

From Acts 2 onward this dependence is portrayed above all in regard to witness and mission. The dependence goes beyond an epicletic structure of the church insofar as the church acts from within that dependence not first of all in prayer and worship but to bear witness to Christ. Acts 2 presents an ecclesial posture of confident activity undertaken in the power of the Spirit being received rather than of activity awaiting the Spirit’s coming. That had happened. It made the church dependent on the Spirit, and the manifestation of dependence was the action of witness.

How does or can the communal structure of the church serve Christ’s Spirit? The answer from Acts 2 and following is clear. Luke describes the descent of the Spirit bringing about the fearlessness, boldness, and zeal enabling the earliest community to take up public witness and to communicate the gospel. The inescapably primary effect of the Spirit on Pentecost is mission. The church serves the Spirit by being the human vehicle for witness to Christ and is able to do so only because of and in dependence on the Spirit. Mullins points out that “Congar describes the Pentecost Spirit as the active dynamism of the divine plan of salvation by means of the apostolate and missionary activity of the Church. . . . Like the Apostles, all those who receive the Spirit at Pentecost are given power for testimony.”<sup>90</sup> The newness of Christianity does not lie in the mission, message, and person of Christ alone.

John Paul II took a bold stance on the Spirit’s animation of the church’s mission. He asserted that “‘of course Jesus entrusts this work to human beings: to the apostles, to the Church. Nevertheless, in and through them the Holy Spirit remains the transcendent and principal agent for the accomplishment of this work in the human spirit and in the history of the world.’ The Holy Spirit is indeed the principal agent of the whole of the Church’s mission.”<sup>91</sup> And Vatican II was clear on the missionary nature of the church. “A new Pentecost” draws to the fore the finality in the mission of Christ to the Pentecostal mission of the Spirit as something continually operative in the church. Vatican II was a reawakening to it.

<sup>90</sup> Mullins, “The Spirit Speaks” 300, referring to Congar, *Mystery of the Church* 146–204.

<sup>91</sup> See John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, chap. 3 n. 21, [http://www.vatican.va/edocs/ENG0219/\\_P5.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/edocs/ENG0219/_P5.HTM) (accessed October 29, 2007), quoting *Dominum et vivificantem* (May 18, 1986) 42, *AAS* 78 (1986) 857.

In this way “a new Pentecost” also accents a diffused, underlying finality inherent in Vatican II toward mission, a finality *Lumen gentium* and *Ad gentes* on the missionary activity of the church locate in the trinitarian *missio Dei* and the nature of the church, as well as in Christ’s mandate. A renaissance of the church’s missionary nature as *missio Dei* is an essential dimension of the event and documents of Vatican II associated with “a new Pentecost.” However, conciliar reframing of the church’s mission in reference to the Spirit does not thereby support a resurgence in 19th- and early 20th-century approaches to mission. Conciliar teachings on religious liberty, on the action of God in other religions, on dialogue with atheism, on the relative autonomy of the sciences and other disciplines, on the irreplaceable role of personal conscience, and on dialogue as a defining principle in the life of the church have to revise appropriation of the missionary nature of the church.<sup>92</sup>

“A new Pentecost” interprets Vatican II as an event and set of documents that generate renewal of the church’s mission. The phrase opens up an understanding of the council as an event in continuity with Pentecost at which the original mission of the church came to realization. The conciliar practice and principle of dialogue begin to renew the actualization of the missionary dynamic of the church. No prior contingent mode of actualization, such as postmedieval Western missionary activity, Protestant and Catholic alike, can be taken for granted as a normative precedent. “A new Pentecost,” by projecting a pneumatological horizon, invites continual revision of missiology in light of and in service to the Holy Spirit as the source and guide for mission.

The most telling document for this invitation may be *Gaudium et spes*. Its church/world vision was not the most obvious successor to preconconciliar antimodernist policy. Yet in moving the church from defining itself against modernity to a careful, discerning dialogue that was a new way to bear witness to the gospel, *Gaudium et spes* has a Pentecostal aspect. It represents a redefined relationship with the world in which the church is called to witness to Christ, a leaving behind of the upper room shuttered against a world seen as unremittingly hostile. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* commends “respectful dialogue with those who do not yet accept the Gospel,” so witness in the mode of dialogue enjoys official approbation.<sup>93</sup> Effective witness was an effect of Pentecost and may be seen likewise as the immanent finality to which Vatican II as “a new Pentecost” tends. Discovering that finality toward mission leads to the recognition that *Ad gentes* has a

<sup>92</sup> For a model of mission as “prophetic dialogue” see Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2004) 348–95.

<sup>93</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, Mo.: Liguori, 1994) no. 856.

more significant role among the documents and in reception of the council than is often thought. In light of “a new Pentecost,” *Ad gentes* can be read as a conciliar statement that the finality of the church and the council is toward mission in bearing witness to Christ in the power and freedom of the Spirit.

### CONCLUSION

According to Catholic tradition the Spirit assists all councils, but descriptions of Vatican II in terms of “a new Pentecost” affirm something beyond this. Comments on the council by John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Cardinal Kasper in the vocabulary of “a new Pentecost” make sense only if understood as affirming a special, not a generic, moment in the church’s relation to Pentecost and the Spirit. The books by Suenens and Rush are clear on this. Reference to Pentecost links Vatican II to the mission of the Spirit in originating the church and thus to a plenitude that goes beyond regular assistance to councils to speak about a fundamental renewal of the church—certainly not a refounding—by reconnection with the gift of an originating fullness.

Interpreting Vatican II as “a new Pentecost” conveys a decisive theme not to rival a christological interpretation but by orienting the church’s memory of Vatican II to the Holy Spirit, and in this way completing the invaluable historical-theological reconstruction of Vatican II. A pneumatological interpretation makes clear that no reckoning of what happened at the council can be considered definitive apart from a reference to influence from the Holy Spirit and to the church’s constitutive relation to the Holy Spirit. The council was a historical event with a divine dimension.

How can the council be understood as observable human participants engaged in activities formally if not materially accessible to historical research, and at the same time as subject to an invisible divine influence from the Spirit? In other words, I have begged an underlying methodological question. In regard to Vatican II, how do the data, methods, narratives, interpretative outlines, and conclusions of historical and historical-theological study exemplified in the *History of Vatican II* relate to systematic theology? Or are the two specializations converging as aspects of one task? This large question would want to look to Bernard Lonergan on human interiority, the ecclesiology of Joseph Komonchak, and Robert Doran on interiority becoming history. An answer would have to be able to explain how and why the fractious nature of the council did not render the proceedings impervious to the Spirit. How, for example, does the so-called “Black Week” of November 14–21, 1964, with an apparently “ecclesio-political” decision by Paul VI, along with opposition by a minority of

bishops to the document on religious liberty, fit into a picture of Vatican II as a “new Pentecost”?<sup>94</sup>

Here it is enough to recognize that systematic theology performs the simple office of directing attention to the pneumatological horizon of Pentecost within which Vatican II transpired and which continues in reception. That is to open the council’s horizon to the divine reality that exceeds the church, is not at the church’s arbitrary disposition, and that yet grounded and in some real way guided modes of human activity in the council and continues to enable its reception. The impact of the Spirit through Vatican II has been and is the church’s more explicit, more definite regaining of what the Spirit communicated to the church on Pentecost in fulfillment of the paschal mystery. The Pentecostal impact, because the Spirit acts, has to be regained, reappropriated, and reapplied from the human, ecclesial side, not in a refounding but in a renewal of the founding of the church on Pentecost.

As O’Malley has well explained, the style, rhetoric, and purpose of the documents of Vatican II do not resemble those of earlier councils.<sup>95</sup> A pneumatological interpretation points to what this unusual status means. The distinctiveness does not make Vatican II an anomaly among other councils, nor an abnormal event off to the side of the church’s history as an unusual “charismatic” moment that future councils can redress by once more emphasizing the primacy of institutional and juridical matters. Instead, in light of “a new Pentecost” the distinctiveness becomes a sign that Vatican II was inspired to undertake a fuller task, to initiate a more comprehensive renewal and reform, to approximate more closely what all councils seek—that in continually shifting contexts the church coconstituted by Christ and the Spirit be what it was given and is being given to be.

Vatican II then is not an atypical council that some might see side-stepping a more stringent conciliar heritage of preoccupation with dogma, doctrine, and canons. Rather, as “a new Pentecost,” Vatican II becomes the paradigm compared to which predecessor councils can be seen to be more limited in the scope of their renewal, reform, and updating. In that perspective Vatican II fulfills to a greater degree what a council is; it is the fullest kind of council, and as such is the concrete norm, compared to which other councils can be evaluated as to the scope and fullness of their participation in the originating grace of the church.

<sup>94</sup> See Luis Antonio G. Tagle, “The ‘Black Week’ of Vatican II (November 14–21, 1964),” *History of Vatican II* 4:386–452.

<sup>95</sup> John W. O’Malley, S.J., “Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?”