BLOOD CRIES OUT

Pentecostals, Ecology, and the Groans of Creation

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Maximus the Confessor and a Deeper Actualization of the Apostolic Dimensions of Pentecostal Movements

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In his now famous and controversial 1967 lecture, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," medieval historian and Presbyterian layman Lynn White, Jr. suggested that many of the unhealthy and unsustainable attitudes toward and treatment of nature found in modern times were to a great extent made possible by the dogmas of especially medieval and modern western Christianity. In contrast to older pagan systems, which viewed humankind as one part of a much larger and animated whole, from the perspective of these dogmas human beings could be seen as separate from and superior to nature and free to objectify and exploit it for their own ends.

In light of this, White challenged the churches to "rethink" how their faith might lead them to view their relationship with nature, calling them to move beyond exploitation, and even notions of "stewardship," to a deeper mutuality he termed "a spiritual democracy of all God's creatures." As possible alternative Christian resources for this reform, White

called attention especially to St. Francis of Assisi, but also the more ancient eastern Christian traditions.[1]

Meanwhile, in a recent contribution towards the construction of a distinctly Pentecostal ecotheology, A.J. Swoboda has argued that in order to recapture its original vitality, to discover within itself its latent vision for enriched relationship with the creation, and to in general more faithfully fulfill its calling in our time, Pentecostalism must enlarge and extend some of its rich core concepts such as Spirit-baptism, Charismatic Community, Holistic Spirit, and Eschatological Mission. He goes on to suggest that Pentecostals will be aided in this important task of enlargement and extension by engaging with other, non-Pentecostal communities, including the witness of the early eastern churches.[2]

Taking up these cues, I propose to explore one expression of this more ancient and eastern tradition, as found in the cosmic vision of Maximus the Confessor. After a brief sketch of his life and times and his relationship to the larger orthodox tradition I will attempt to lay out some of the chief features of both his theological and cosmological framework and his ascetic way of practice in community. I will conclude by suggesting that both this framework and way of practice can indeed help resource healing of humankind's relationship with one another and the other realms of the creation and that an appropriation of aspects of this stream of the Christian tradition in the coming decades can help global Pentecostal movements influence societies toward greater social and ecological health.[3]

Life, times and tradition

Maximus the Confessor (580–662 C.E.) was apparently born in Constantinople, where he received a classical education. At the age of thirty he became the proto-secretary of the Emperor Heraclius but after

1. White, "Historical Roots." See also Riley, "A Spiritual Democracy of All God's Creatures," who interprets White's thesis from within the context of his larger body of writings.

2. Swoboda, *Tongues and Trees*. Others have likewise encouraged Pentecostal engagement with the eastern traditions, notably E. Rybarczyk and C. M. Robeck in Rybarczyk, *Beyond Salvation*.

3. As many have pointed out, since the eco-crisis is an extension of the general relational and social crisis, the former cannot be addressed apart from the latter. See for example Brown, *Ethos of the Cosmos*, 25–27.

three years resigned his post to enter monastic life, which he pursued first in the nearby monastery of Chrysopolis, then later for a short time in Cyzicus and finally in Carthage (modern day Tunis) where he stayed for fifteen years.

With an empire threatened by Persian and later Islamic Arab incursions from without, and weakened within by still remaining divisions among the Christian churches over whether to speak about Christ as having one or two natures, various emperors proposed compromise formulas, attempting to unite the churches. The last one of these compromise formulas proposed that the churches speak of Christ as having two natures, but operative in only one energy (Monergenism) and one will (Monothelytism).[4] But in Maximus' mind, and in the minds of others, including the bishop of Rome, the principles of the Council of Chalcedon (451), with its characteristic affirmation of a hypostatic consubstantiality "without confusion (*asynchytos)*, without change (*atreptos)*, without division (*adiaretos*), and without separation (*achoristos*)," and the teachings of the Fathers sought to establish two distinct and actual natures in an ineffable union. And since natures have energies and wills, to say there was only one energy or will in Christ was to destroy the integrity of the natures.

The enforced imperial assertion temporarily had its way. Unable to assent either to the doctrine or to the right of the emperor to impose it on the churches, ultimately the elder monk had his tongue cut out and his right hand cut off. He died soon thereafter in exile at the age of 82. A mere twenty years later the doctrine that Christ had two wills—a divine will and a human will, in an ineffable, hypostatic union—was affirmed at the Sixth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople of 680. Widely considered to be the father of Byzantine Christianity, the Confessor is one of a small group of saints who belong equally to the spirituality of both the Eastern and Western traditions.[5]

Andrew Louth rightly states that for Maximus the orthodox tradition could be summarized as Scripture (absolutely primary), Fathers, Councils, Saints, and Sacraments.[6] In addition to the work of the Ecumenical Councils, some of the more prominent streams of the tradition feeding into Maximus' synthesis include: The monastic tradition, especially Evagrius, but also the Desert Fathers, the Macarian Homilies

4. The *Ecthesis* of 638.
5. Jaroslav Pelikan, in Berthold, *Maximus*, 1.
6. Louth, *Maximus*, 22.

and Diodochus of Photike; Origen; the Cappadocian fathers, especially Gregory of Nazianzus, "The Theologian"; The Alexandrian Christological tradition of Athanasius and Cyril; Pseudo Dionysius; and the post Chalcedonian Christology of Leontius and Justinian.[7]

Maximus has left a large body of writings, including works on monastic spirituality such as *The Ascetic Life* (AL), the four *Centuries on Love* (CC), and the two *Centuries on Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation of the Son of God* (CT), treatments of difficult interpretations of theology, including the *Ambigua* (Ambig.), commentaries on *The Lord's Prayer* (LP) and the *Mystagogia* of the church (Myst.), and of course, epistles (Ep.)

Since these writings are for the most part in response to specific occasional requests or issues and even more because his entire thought-world is so beautifully and co-inherently interwoven and *symphonic*, it is difficult to excise pieces of it. In addition, the dense richness and complex distinctions in the material makes for quite a bit of important detail. Nevertheless, for our purposes we can attempt to highlight a few of its main features.

Theological and cosmological framework

Union and distinction

Historically Maximus has been most well known for developing from the tradition a rich and mature Christology which is at once breath-takingly cosmic in scope and minutely coherent in detail. But as Hans Urs von Balthasar and others since him have observed, in addition to articulating the characteristic details of his Cyrilline Chalcedonianism he also takes those characteristics and turns them into metaphysical and ontological principles which he sees operative in all dimensions of creation and redemption, something Balthasar has called Maximus' "Chalcedonian logic."[8]

To illustrate how Maximus takes this "Chalcedonian logic" and expands it into a "fundamental law of metaphysics," "which discovers the

7. Maximus also utilizes certain philosophic tools, listed in Toronen, *Union and Distinction*, 17–34. Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 10–13 clarifies that Maximus probably knows these concepts in their original contexts, but utilizes them as they are employed in their "Christianized" form in the Fathers.

8. Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 65–70. Cf. Louth, *Maximus*, 50–51.

formal structure of all created being," Balthasar quotes two stunningly panoramic passages from the *Mystagogia*, where Maximus is showing how the Church reflects the mysterious structure of the universe. Here is the first:

> God created all things with his limitless power, brought them into being, holds them there and gathers them together and sets boundaries to them; in his providence, he links them all- intellectual beings as well as sensible- to each other as he does to himself. In his might, God draws up all things that are naturally distinct from each other and binds them to himself as their cause, their origin and goal; and through the power of this relationship to him as source, he lets them also be drawn toward each other. This is the power through which every being is brought to its own indestructible, unconfused identity, both in activity and in being. No being can permanently isolate itself through its own particularity or through the drive of its nature toward some other end; rather, everything remains, in its very being, bound and without confusion to everything else through the single, enduring relationship of all to their one and only source. This supreme power overshadows the individual relationships that are to be seen in every individual nature, not in a way that corrupts or eradicates or terminates them, but in order to dominate and illuminate them as the whole does its parts –or, better, in order to reveal itself also as the cause of whole things, thanks to which both the whole and the parts of the whole are revealed and come to be, while the power itself remains the radiant cause of them all. Just as the sun outshines the reality and the luminous activity of the stars, so the ultimate ground of being conceals the being of creatures: for as the parts come to be from the whole, so created beings come to be from their cause and are recognized in its light, and if they are totally possessed by their movement toward this cause, through the power of the relationship itself, then they tend to cease from their own individual being. For God, who is 'all in all' and infinitely exalted over all, is recognized by the pure of heart as the sole ultimate One, at the moment when their minds gather the intelligible meanings (*logoi*) of all things together in contemplation, and grow quiet before God as the beginning and cause and end of the world's being, the undivided root and ground that embraces all things.

> In this same way, the holy Church of God, made in God's image, reveals the same mystery to us and brings it to reality.[9]

Melchisedec Toronen has rightly pointed out that this extended "logic," found in so many passages throughout the Maximian corpus, rests not only on the Chalcedonian Definition, but finds its grounding also in the broader and earlier tradition of a more general simultaneous union and distinction. As a result we indeed find this principle or "rule" of simultaneous and extreme and radical union without confusion and distinction without separation running through virtually every area of Maximus' thought, including his conception of Trinity, Incarnation, Creation, Scripture and Church and the rich, mutual, dynamic coinherence of the elements of the ascetic practice.[10]

It is important to note that while Maximus will use concepts and terms such as "union without confusion" or "distinction without separation" in speaking about God and Christ, he also emphasized as much as any other eastern father that while we can use such terms or concepts, at the same time we must insist God is also utterly beyond any thought, conception, or human category, i.e. an apophatic principle.[11]

The doctrine of the logoi

In keeping with the tradition, Maximus is careful to maintain a distinction between the nature of the uncreated and the created. At the same time, through the presence of the Divine Logos in the *logoi* of each created entity the Divine beautifully and powerfully interpenetrates all of creation.[12] Pre-existing as potentialities of divine intentions in God but brought into being at the appropriate time by the Creator, the *logoi* then are particular expressions of the Divine Logos variously embodied within each entity of the creation. Every creature has its particular *logos* of being,

9. *Myst*. I, PG 91:664D–665C (trans. Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 68–69).

10. Toronen, *Union and Distinction*, 47–52. Similarly Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 427 finds "unity in differentiation" to be "the working idea of this thought."

11. In relation to the Divine, Maximus will use these kinds of terms "in a manner of speaking." See Toronen, *Union and Distinction*, 51. See also Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 81–97.

12. Maximus's most striking development of the doctrine of the logoi appears in *Ambig*. 7, 1077C–80D, found in Blowers and Wilken, *Cosmic Mystery*, 54–58. On the doctrine of the logoi in Maximus see Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*. For a concise tracing of the evolution of the doctrine from Plato to Maximus see Bradshaw, "The Logoi of Beings," 9–17.

its fundamental character and purpose. Creatures of all kinds, human beings, animals, insects, plants, minerals and so forth, even entities such as the commandments, the Scriptures or the virtues, have not only a presenting surface but also an underlying *logoi* of being which comprises its true nature, principle and meaning.[13]

Subsisting as the parts of the whole, the *logoi* are not only held together in God but are also oriented toward God, so that when we perceive and encounter not just the presenting surface of another entity but its true *logoi*, we are drawn toward God, in whom we find ourselves and experience more deeply our true unity with one another.

The role of humankind

Drawing especially on the writings of Gregory of Nyssa and Pseudo-Dionysius, and employing one of his characteristic phrases alluding to the tradition, in *Ambigua 41* Maximus asserts that, "they say the substance of everything is divided into five (natural) divisions," which he articulates as created and uncreated, rational and sensible, heaven and earth, paradise and the inhabited world (*oikoumene*) and male and female.[14] The human being, as a sort of microcosm, has a touch or place in each of the sides in each division: It is both male and female; it experiences the spiritual paradise but lives in the society of the inhabited world; it has a touch with and is destined for heaven while living on the earth; it is a composite of both rational and sensible; and though it is a creature, it is created in the image and likeness of the uncreated and through grace and participation may become completely whatever God is, save at the level of being.[15]

God did this, Maximus suggests, so that humankind could work as an integrator or unifier. From this "middle place" humankind could use

13. Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 228.

14. *Ambig*. 41, 1304D–5A; Louth, *Maximus*, 156–57.

15. The God-given task of mediation by various means works its way back through the divisions until, "finally, beyond all these, the human person unites the created nature with the uncreated through love (O the wonder of God's love for us human beings!) showing them to be one and the same through the possession of grace, the whole wholly interpenetrated (perichoresas) by God, and become completely whatever God is save at the level of being and acquire as a kind of prize for its ascent to God the most unique God himself, as the end of movement of everything that moves toward it, and the firm unmoved rest of everything that is carried towards it, being the undetermined and infinite limit and definition of every definition and law and ordinance, of reason and mind and nature." *Ambig*. 41, 1308B; Louth, *Maximus*, 158.

its natural powers to work to prevent natural distinctions from becoming separations. And when unnatural separations occur, it could work to bridge, reconcile, and heal them. [16]

The fall

But humankind was deceived into thinking that it could find fulfillment in sensory experiences alone. Instead of moving toward God, to whom it is naturally oriented and upon whom it is dependent, humankind moved unnaturally toward lower things, things less stable than itself, and crossed natural boundaries or limitations.

As a result humankind's perception became distorted and its natural drives disintegrated and it was not able to effectively play its God given part. Instead of unifying things that have become separated, humanity misuses its natural powers to separate that which is united. And because of humankind's intimate relationship with all the other realms of the creation they are affected as well. [17]

In Epistle 2 Maximus explains that in moving away from God and crossing natural boundaries, humankind "has brought into being from itself the three greatest, primordial evils, and (to speak simply) the begetters of all vice": "Ignorance", which means primarily ignorance of the Cause of all things; "Self-love" (*philautia*); and "tyranny", by which he means sometimes the tyranny now exercised over the minds and emotions of human beings by our own disordered desires, fragmented thoughts (*logismoi*) or disordered demonic forces and other times the tyranny we then impose on our sisters and brothers, our "kin". "For by the misuse of our own powers –reason, desire and incensive power – these evils are established."[18]

Of these three, which depend upon and sustain one another, the most central is *philautia.* In contrast to a healthy love of self, which Maximus calls a "spiritual" (*noera*) love, a love of the mind when it is attached to the divine, as "the mother of all (disordered) passions" and "the

16. As Maximus describes them, each one of the mediations or integrations is complex but extremely important for the healthy functioning of the interpenetrated and co-creative cosmos. For a fuller explication of the means of these mediations, beginning with the mediation of male and female in its true logoi of "bare" humanity, see Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 373–426.

17. At least since Athanasius, the east has understood the Fall and the redemption not only as anthropological but also cosmic events. See Louth, "Man and Cosmos," 68.

18. *Ep*. 2 PG 91:396D–97A (trans. Louth, *Maximus*, 87).

mother of all vices", *philautia* is a disintegrated, overly self-focused and ultimately destructive orientation, the general attitude which spawns all other disordered expressions. Because of this fundamental preoccupation we are unable to perceive the universe and other entities as they truly are, seeing things mostly or even only from our own individual perspective. In addition, this fundamental, disintegrating overly inward turn catalyzes a disordering of the soul, shattering our natural passion into divisive and destructive forces.

For Maximus the Fall does not directly affect the inviolate *logos* of humankind or any other realms of the creation, but their particular *tropos*, their mode of existence, or how we express that true nature. As Louth explains, it is "not that the natures are distorted in themselves, but rather that the natures are misused . . . In a fallen world the *logoi* of everything natural remains inviolate, but natures may act in a way (or mode, *tropos*) that runs counter to their fundamental *logoi*" [19] Nevertheless, as a result of this unnatural downward movement humankind became distorted in its perception and tyrannized by its now disordered desires. Unable to recognize the universe as it really is, and less able to govern its own integrated body-soul composite, it is unfulfilled and unable to perform its unifying role in the universe.[20] Additionally, because as a created being it is not self-moved, it is unable to achieve its reorientation on its own.

The incarnation

It is important to understand and remember that for Maximus, ascetic practice is never an entirely self-generated or self-empowered pursuit but an ongoing graced response to and partnership with God's love, manifest through the creation, through the revelation in the Scriptures and preeminently in the Incarnation of the Divine Logos, and experienced through the liturgy and sacraments of the community. Far from being a mere reaction to the fissure produced by humankind's downward movement in the Garden, the Incarnation has existed before the foundations of the world as an expression of the Mystery of the universe. Nevertheless through its manifestation, the unmoved Logos has accomplished for humanity and the creation what it could not accomplish for itself. By taking

19. Louth, *Maximus*, 57–58.

20. One of the things Maximus will say about evil is that it is what results when natural human capacities are either unfulfilled or misused. See Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 155.

humanity and all of creation into himself, and divinely living a truly human life, Christ recapitulated or "reinstituted" the natures and performed the initial mediations of the divisions humankind was unable to perform:

> Through himself he has, in accordance with nature, united the fragments of the universal nature of the all, manifesting the universal *logoi* that have come forth for the particulars, by which the union of the divided naturally comes about, and thus he fulfills the great purpose of God the Father, to 'recapitulate everything both in heaven and earth in himself' (Eph.1:10) . . . Thus he divinely recapitulates the universe in himself, showing that the whole creation exists as one, like another human being, completed by the gathering together of its parts one with another in itself and inclined towards itself by the whole of its existence . . . "[21]

As a result humankind can now be reconciled to its true nature and return from creating separation and division to working to complete and preserve the unity of created things. The free gift of "adoption by grace" is received through the foundation of baptism.[22] But in order to fully participate in that true nature and purpose the soul must journey out of its distortion, into clarity, and its ultimate fulfillment of transfigured deification in God.

Ascetic practice in community

If human beings were able to clearly perceive not only the presenting surface of Scripture, the virtues, other human beings and entities, but more importantly their true essence and meaning, and were able to understand and manage themselves, they would be better able to see their own true role in the larger whole, to enjoy its beauty and goodness and to relate to and partner with the other entities to preserve and heal the co-creativity of the unified cosmos. As it is, given the state of the planet, there is a manifest need to recover some of the ancient ascetic understandings and practices.

Maximus was, after all, a monk, and the monastic ascetical and liturgical tradition he inherited, which was developed over many years, took seriously the limitations and maladies which hinder people from

21. *Ambig.* 41, PG 91:1308D; 1312AB (trans. Louth, *Maximus*, 159,160).

22. *CT* 1.87.

reforming their *tropos,* and the means through which this reform can take place.[23]

Three-stage spiritual development

Maximus received, further developed and utilized a three stage model with which to conceive of the journey to spiritual recovery.[24] In the first stage, typically referred to as *praktike or praxis,* the goal is to overcome the tyranny of the passions and reintegrate them until the soul achieves a state of detachment from disordered drivenness, a stability or equilibrium known as *apatheia*.[25] This is achieved through following the commandments and practicing the virtues, including faith, fear of God, humility, considered to be a foundation, meekness, self-mastery, hope, gentleness, mercy, longsuffering, joy, peacefulness, and above all, love, which is also more than a virtue. This enables the soul to move into the second stage of contemplation of nature (*physike theoria*) and finally that of *theologike mystike*, a mystical knowledge beyond knowing, where the soul is deified in love.[26]

As a person becomes purified and freed from the passions they begin to become able to perceive not just the surface presentation of other people, beings and things but their true essence and meaning (*logoi*). Since these *logoi* are not only held together in God but also oriented toward God, the person is through these deep seated realizations and encounters drawn up toward and finally into God, in whom all of creation experiences the true unity of our being, and a deified transfiguration which restores a radiant transparency to personal and cosmic life. But the movement is not only upward, because once the movement toward the center of the radii has occurred and ineffable union is realized, there then can also occur outward or downward movement which can serve in other places to heal and preserve the dynamic, life giving and co-creating unity.

23. "His whole system," remarks Polycarp Sherwood, "is ascetical and mystical." *The Ascetic Life*, 28.

24. This description follows Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 335–37.

25. Maximus characterizes apatheia as "a peaceful state of the soul in which it becomes resistant to vice." *CC* I.35 Though often understood only in its negative sense of "detachment," it also then has the positive sense of serenity, stability, or even integrated passion, apropos of which Louth quotes Diodochus's striking phrase "the fire of apatheia." Louth, *Maximus*, 42.

26. For examples, see in Berthold, trans., Maximus, *CC* I.86; *CT* II.8; 1.37–39; I.51–56.

Predictably for Maximus these three stages are not traveled upon strictly one after the other in a purely linear fashion. Rather they are to be conceived of not only as movement toward a destination but also as an ongoing spiraling dynamic.[27]

Liturgical and sacramental community

Notwithstanding the role of solitude in healthy human life, or extreme callings on particular people, the reintegration of human and extra human life is worked out not in individual isolation but also within the rhythms and rituals of the community. The "agents of deification" then, to use Sherwood's phrase, include not only the virtues and commandments and intentional disciplines such as prayer, fasting, watches, Scripture reading, meditation, "sleeping on the ground," and so forth, but also (experiential) participation in the liturgy and sacraments.

It is not surprising that the two texts where Maximus discusses at length his understanding of Monad and Triad, in *On the Lord's Prayer* and in *Mystagogia* 23, both occur in the context of liturgical worship, for it is in worship that we experience a mystical knowing-beyond-knowledge of God, and therefore a fundamental (re)orientation to reality and our place in it. For example, Maximus says that when we confess the Trinitarian symbol or express worship toward the Triune God, because the symbol of union and distinction is the mysterious key to the universe, this intuited reality is communicated to us, imprinting itself in us, and we are shaped by it into its likeness.[28] And because of humanity's intimate connection with the other realms of the creation our personal and communal journey of purification unto transfigured deification affects the entire cosmos, causing our worship to become a "cosmic liturgy." This is not only because the rhythms and rituals present to us, draw us into, and create within us the very fabric of the universe but also because in participating in them we somehow, through our connection with it, help restore the fragmented cosmos. Humanity gathers up, says Maximus, the spiritual *logoi* of things as creation's gifts to honor God, intimating a deeply discerning and prayerful posture Andre Louf has termed a kind of "ecological priesthood."[29]

27. Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 432.

28. *Myst*. 23 (trans. Berthold, *Maximus*, 204–6); cf. *Ambig*. 10 PG 91:1193D, 1196AB (trans. Louth, *Maximus*, 145–46).

29. Louf, "Prayer and Ecology," 126.

Deification in love

Reading through *The Ascetic Life*, the *Centuries on Love* or the *Centuries on Knowledge*, one is struck by the complex and nuanced interweaving of an understanding of the human soul, the relationships between the various vices and how particular virtues combat and overcome them, and the generally nuanced and personalized nature of the monastic ascetical wisdom. The material is not naïve, but cuts deeply into the subtle hypocrisy which can, unbeknownst to them, lodge within monks, bishops, emperors, and lay people alike, though perhaps sometimes in different ways. There is material on holy relationship with and use of money ("The one who loves God surely loves his neighbor as well. Such a person cannot hold on to money but rather gives it out in God's fashion to each who has need." CC 1.23).[30] We find in these collections of monastic wisdom encouragements to eat and live simply, to not "misuse God's creatures for the service of your own passions," to take only what you need and to not abuse others but to treat them as a friend, loving as God does all others equally.[31]

And this is a particular, even crowning emphasis in Maximus. For whereas Evagrius conceives of the last stage of spiritual development as finally moving beyond the material into a state of mystical "pure mind," for Maximus deification is synonymous with love, even as God is love (1 Jn. 4:7-8).[32] As the fulfillment of the commandments and sum of the virtues and all good things, true love is one love, God's, and an equal love which "does not know 'mine and thine.'" [33] Toronen concludes, "Love, finally, draws everything into unity without violating the integrity of the particular. This is love which deifies, love which unites us one with another, love which unites us with God, which *is* God and makes us gods, or better said: it is God who is love which unites us with himself without

30. Berthold, *Maximus*, 37.

31. *CT* 2.41 (trans. ibid., 136).

32. "In fact, the most perfect work of charity and the end of its activity is to allow, through reciprocal attribution (i.e. communicatio), the individual characteristics (idiomata) of those who are bound together by it, as well their names, to become mutually useful, so that man is made god and God is called and appears as man." *Ep.* 2 PG 91:401B (trans. Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 432).

33. *Ep.* 2 PG 91:404D–5A (trans. Louth, *Maximus*, 91–92.

confusion, and which through us unites us one with another and with the whole world in a simultaneous union and distinction."[34]

But would Maximus extend this vision of love in union and distinction to our thoughts about and treatment of extra human being and ecosystems? Of course we don't know. But his most immediate heirs, the Orthodox churches, certainly see the intentions of this vision naturally trajecting to address aspects of our present ecological crisis.[35] Torstein Tollefsen, for example, suggests that given the tradition as explicated by Maximus and others, from the Orthodox point of view, "man should live in accordance with his *logos*, and actualize friendship, harmony and love among natural beings."[36]

Evaluation

The system is not perfect. But it seems to me, as White had suspected, this more ancient and eastern expression of the Christian tradition does offer significant resources for an alternative perspective to the objectification and exploitation about which he was concerned, in some ways even pointing towards the deeper mutuality for which he called.

Its radically relational theological and cosmological framework has the capacity to remind us of and possibly reorient us toward our profound interconnection and interdependence, first of all with God, but then also with one another and the other realms of the creation. The conception of the universe as comprised of entities in simultaneous union without confusion and distinction without separation calls for a protection of the integrity of beings and systems, including for example biodiversity. The re-enchantment or even re-sacralization of matter and nature through the doctrine of the *logoi* with its call to see beneath mere utilitarian objectification has the potential to redeem and enrich human and extra human relationships, restoring an appropriate humility, respect, and care. And the tradition's insistence on an apophatic dimension is not only consistent with our ongoing exploration and discovery of the universe

34. Toronen, *Union and Distinction*, 198.

35. For examples of Orthodox Ecotheology, see Chryssavgis and Foltz, *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration*; Chrysavvgis, in his *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer*, asserts, "The truth is that we respond to nature with the same delicacy, the same sensitivity, the same tenderness with which we respond to a human person in a relationship" (25).

36. Tollefsen, "Ethical Consequences," 399.

but also works to rightfully restrain presumptuous tendencies and the temptation to overreach.

Likewise it seems to me the ancient grace-empowered ascetic practice in community, with its fundamental orientation toward repentance, purification and restoration, contains rich resources for the healing of social and ecological relationships, and in a great many specific ways. For example, the monastic and liturgical vision as understood and practiced by Maximus possesses and develops an acute sense of the global, even cosmic power of personal, local acts. Could it be that our intuition to make personal, local acts which affect global systems, which seems to be corroborated by an analysis of global economic systems, also be supported by the tradition? Since the practical systems for discernment, deliverance, and restoration of the soul exhibit nuance and make great allowance for the difference in particular people, and since Maximus himself, especially in his later writings, uses the categories of the "science" of his day,[37] the ancient paradigm would not discourage further discovery of creation through natural science or the use of insights from social science for our recovery.

Conclusion

As a philosopher of the ancient east who arguably carries within himself much of the mature fruit of the early eastern Christian tradition and of classical Hellenistic culture, as a truly global, ecumenical person on so many levels, who lived in a time of tectonic global transition, it seems the vision of Maximus the Confessor can serve in general as a resource for societal recovery from some of the excesses and weaknesses of modernism.

But what about Pentecostals? Does this brief and initial exploration of one example of the earlier, eastern way show promise as an aid to an appropriate enlargement and extension of Pentecostal core concepts to serve the development of a Pentecostal ecotheology? While a detailed look at how facets of this eastern tradition might be able to inform each of Swoboda's four proposed enlarged categories—"Spirit Baptized Creation," "Charismatic Community of Creation," "Holistic Spirit of Creation," and "Spirit of Eschatological Ecological Mission"—is not possible in this space, I think we can provisionally answer in the affirmative. It seems

37. "Maximus, like the other Fathers of the Church, took for granted the scientific wisdom of his day and readily made use of it." Louth, "Man and Cosmos," 59.

for example Swoboda's claim that, "Spirit baptized people are aware of a deeper presence in all entities," can be buttressed, enlarged, and enriched through the eastern witness to the presence of the *logoi* in all entities of the creation.[38]

In addition, with respect to the general Pentecostal contribution to a healing of our social and ecological crises, we can imagine that the Pentecostal intuition of a more holistic or "full" gospel can likewise be buttressed and enlarged through the eastern witness to the fall and redemption as not just personal but cosmic realities, which would include the creation. Pentecostal efforts to help humanity recover from its lostness and brokenness through finding an experiential knowledge of the Lord and personal transformation can also expand through the rich resources of the eastern tradition's witness to mystical knowledge of God unto deification. And Pentecostal spiritual practices, such as prayer and fasting, and work with spirit deliverance and healing of the soul can be further enriched by the accumulated wisdom of the eastern monastic practice.

It's true that original Pentecostal visions of a restoration of "Apostolic" unity had decidedly primitivistic connotations. And through their history Pentecostals have exhibited ambivalence toward tradition.[39] But recently Pentecostals have begun to intentionally engage with the more historic and "apostolic" traditions, including those of the east.[40]

In his groundbreaking comparison of Pentecostal and early Orthodox approaches to becoming like Christ, Ed Rybarczyk helpfully points out that many of what appear to be great differences between the two traditions are a result of their very different "meta-contexts."[41] But especially when taking these different contexts into account, with their more holistic gospels, emphasis on experience and the power of worship, embrace of supra-rational and mystical dimensions, and concern with transformation unto holiness, the Pentecostal churches exhibit significant affinities with the ancient churches of the east. Rybarczyk notes that many of these shared visions came into Pentecostalism via the holiness move-

38. Swoboda, *Tongues and Trees*, 201.

39. On this, see Friesen, "Pentecostal Antitraditionalism."

40. As examples of recent Pentecostal engagement with the eastern traditions, see Rybarczyk, *Beyond Salvation*; and Kärkkäinen, "Ecumenical Potential." For a Pentecostal ecumenical engagement with the early church Fathers, see *On Becoming a Christian: Final Report of the Fifth Phase of the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue*.

41. Rybarczyk, *Beyond Salvation*, 324–26.

ments, through the "sieve" of John Wesley, who according to Rybarczyk not only knew, but preferred the eastern Fathers to those of the west.[42]

As one of the fastest growing religious movements in the world, and especially the majority world, Pentecostalism is in a position over the next several decades to help influence the way societies think about and relate to one another and the natural world. Perhaps these more ancient and eastern traditions, as expressed here in the cosmic vision of Maximus the Confessor, in this increasingly global era, could serve as an additional resource for a more faithful fulfillment of that role. As such, it might represent a timely, deeper actualization of the "Apostolic" dimensions of Pentecostal movements.

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42. Rybarczyk, *Beyond Salvation*, 10.

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