IS THE UNIVERSE OPEN FOR SURPRISE? PENTECOSTAL ONTOLOGY AND THE SPIRIT OF NATURALISM

by James K. A. Smith

Abstract. Given the enchanted worldview of pentecost-alism, what possibility is there for a uniquely pentecostal intervention in the science-theology dialogue? By asserting the centrality of the miraculous and the fantastic, and being fundamentally committed to a universe open to surprise, does not pentecostalism forfeit admission to the conversation? I argue for a distinctly pentecostal contribution to the dialogue that is critical of regnant naturalistic paradigms but also of a naive supernaturalism. I argue that implicit in the pentecostal social imaginary is a distinct conception of nature that is amenable to science but in conflict with naturalism.

Keywords: Philip Clayton; David Ray Griffin; laws of nature; miraculous; naturalism; pentecostalism; supernatural

PENTECOSTALISM, MODERNITY, AND THE DISENCHANTMENT OF THE WORLD

Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity is nothing if not fantastic. Particularly in its global expressions, pentecostalism[1] inhabits a world that is very much "enchanted." The world of pentecostal worship and spirituality replays what Rudolf Bultmann dismissed as the "mythical" world of the New Testament: a world of "signs and wonders," a space where the community expects the unexpected and testifies to events of miraculous healing, divine revelation in tongues-speech, divine illumination, prophecy, and other "supernatural" phenomena (Bultmann 1961).

A central feature of pentecostal spirituality is the unique combination of a gritty, material, physical mode of worship that is radically open to

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[*Zygon*, vol. 43, no. 4 (December 2008)]
 ISSN 0591-2385

transcendence. Thus, elsewhere I have argued that one of the core components of a Pentecostal-charismatic worldview is a sense of radical openness to God, with a distinct emphasis on the continued operation of the Holy Spirit in the world and the church.[2] However, this clearly has ontological implications that need to be worked out, and implications for pentecostal participation in (and appropriation of) regnant paradigms in the natural and social sciences—as well as paradigms that govern the science-theology dialogue. If an essential feature of pentecostal belief and practice is being open to God's surprises, this presupposes that the universe and natural world also must remain open systems. But this ontological claim seems to stand in opposition to two key affirmations of contemporary science: (1) what we could call *metaphysical naturalism*, which affirms (beyond strictly scientific evidence) that the universe is a closed system of natural processes, and (2) *methodological naturalism*, which, while it may remain agnostic with respect to metaphysical naturalism, nevertheless claims that science *qua* science must operate *as if* the universe were a closed system.

Given the enchanted worldview of pentecostalism, what possibility is there for pentecostal intervention in the science-theology dialogue? In asserting the centrality of the miraculous and the fantastic, and being fundamentally committed to a universe open to surprise, does not pentecostalism forfeit admission to the conversation? A pentecostal contribution to the dialogue would inevitably be gauche precisely because it would transgress an unspoken taboo in the parlor of the conversation—that one not question the science side of the conversation and, in particular, not ruin the party by calling into question the governing naturalistic assumptions of science. In such an environment, with a settled etiquette dominated by deference to "what science says," pentecostals would spill into the parlor as a rather rowdy bunch, refusing to defer to the implied rules of such parlor games. Response to pentecostals in the parlor of the science-theology dialogue could be like the response to the revival at Azusa Street, which was also dismissed by the gentry.[3]

In hope of avoiding such an awkward scene, I want to make a preliminary contribution to the science-theology dialogue *as* a pentecostal scholar working unapologetically from a pentecostal worldview. My project is a bit of a two-edged sword. On the one hand, I want to say that a pentecostal worldview need not (and should not) entail a naive supernaturalism, and even that the language of *super*naturalism is a kind of deistic hangover that is problematic. There is an element of internal critique here—that pentecostals have too often and too easily adopted a simplistic or hyper-supernaturalism. On the other hand, pentecostal spirituality is defined by the miraculous, by ontological surprises that naturalism wants to deny (or, rather, refuses to recognize). Thus I encourage pentecostals to push back against the regnant assumptions regarding naturalism that govern not only scientific practice but the parameters of the science-theology dialogue in

particular. If we run with the parlor metaphor, one might say that my goal is to dust off pentecostalism and show that it is not quite as boorish and naive as those in the parlor might suspect. However, I also suggest that an integral pentecostal engagement with science will not be simply a deferential guest. We are not out to ruin the party, but we are interested in loosening things up a bit—which may involve what could be a rather rude questioning of the host.

My central thesis is this: Embedded in pentecostal practice is a worldview—or, better, "social imaginary" (Taylor 2004, 23–30)—whose ontology is one of radical openness and thus resistant to closed, immanentist systems of the sort that emerge from reductionistic metaphysical naturalism. I believe that a pentecostal contribution to the science-theology dialogue should begin from and draw on this experience of the elasticity of nature as always already inhabited by the Spirit. This methodology for a distinctly pentecostal engagement is analogous to Alexei Nesteruk's model of engaging science from the distinctive "experience" of Eastern Christianity (Nesteruk 2003, 4). Nesteruk emphasizes the "specialness" of Orthodoxy's relationship to science as being rooted in the essential (and distinct) "theological underpinnings" regarding, for example, the nature of the human person as understood in the Orthodox experience. (For parallels between the East and Pentecostalism, see Rybarczyk 2002; 2004.) So, too, should pentecostal engagements in the science-religion dialogue begin from the distinctives of pentecostal experience and the distinct elements of the pentecostal "social imaginary." Such an approach is its own kind of empiricism that seeks to honor and take seriously the observation and experience of the miraculous (rather than, ironically, the sort of aprioristic naturalism that, in the name of scientific observation, rules such experiences out of court *de jure*).

Any pentecostal engagement with the sciences therefore must begin from an experience of the Spirit's transcendence and surprise, which is central to the nature of pentecostal worship and spirituality. However, pentecostal practice also attests to a strong sense of the immanence of the Spirit's presence and activity (Yong 2006). As such, a pentecostal ontology would resist dualistic or deistic supernaturalisms as well as naturalisms of various stripes, both reductionist and nonreductionist. This is why I suggest below that the understanding of nature that is implicit in pentecostal practice can find resources for articulation in the participatory ontology articulated by Radical Orthodoxy.[4]

In order to undertake this project, I first provide a map of naturalisms and the correlate supernaturalisms that they take themselves to be rejecting. I then sketch how a pentecostal ontology refuses the distinctions behind both these naturalisms and the rejected supernaturalisms. Instead, a pentecostal ontology, akin to Radical Orthodoxy's participatory ontology, is characterized as an *enchanted naturalism*, which differs from both reduc-

tionistic naturalism and naive supernaturalism. I show how this enchanted naturalism—a noninterventionist, enspirited naturalism—differs from a close cousin, Philip Clayton and David Ray Griffin's nonreductive naturalism (or monism). I note the important differences between these, because they share so many concerns in common. Finally, I indicate the opportunities and challenges that this ontology brings to the science-theology conversation.

Whose Naturalism? Which Supernaturalism? Topography and Taxonomy

A pentecostal engagement with science quickly runs up against the issue of naturalism. A "super"natural religion would seem to be at direct odds with the naturalistic orthodoxy of contemporary scientific practice as well as the widespread commitment to the incontestability of naturalism in the theology-science dialogue. The price of admission to the dialogue would seem to be giving up claims to supernatural phenomena of just the sort that are central to pentecostal spirituality and practice.

Of course, in a sense this is true for any Christian tradition that affirms, for example, the physical, bodily resurrection of Christ. However, the issue is intensified and also more mundane for pentecostalism precisely because the miraculous and supernatural are not only attributed to past events but are expected and witnessed in contemporary worship and experience. This would seem to bring us to an impasse: that pentecostals must either give up their claims to miraculous phenomena or remain outside science and the science-theology conversation.

However, upon closer inspection things are more complicated. Naturalism is a more contested concept than one might expect. Indeed, rather than speaking of naturalism we would do better to speak of naturalism*s*. This has a correlate implication: What such naturalisms reject under the banner of supernaturalism also is rather slippery. As such, we might legitimately ask whether the supernaturalism rejected by, say, Daniel Dennett is actually a description of the supernaturalism embedded in the pentecostal social imaginary. If supernaturalism for Dennett refers to an interventionist framework (a transcendent God intervening and interrupting the "laws" of nature), and if pentecostal spirituality actually rejects such an interventionist framework, Dennett's rejection would not constitute a rejection of pentecostal supernaturalism. In order to sort out the complexities of this terrain, we need to ask, in the spirit of Alasdair MacIntyre: Whose naturalism? Which supernaturalism? (1989)

I think we can identify at least two naturalisms. The *reductionistic*[5] naturalism of folks such as Dennett, Richard Dawkins, and Jaegwon Kim is a "nothing-buttery" naturalism: there is nothing but the material or physical, and thus all phenomena can be explained by reference to physical laws

and processes. There is no nonphysical something-or-other in the universe. This naturalism is a physicalism because all entities are physical entities. This is sometimes described as metaphysical as opposed to methodological naturalism insofar as it makes ontological claims about the sorts of things that constitute the furniture of the universe. Alvin Plantinga (and others) refers to it as philosophical naturalism, which he describes as "the belief that there aren't any supernatural beings" (Plantinga 2002, 1).[6] In any case, such reductionistic naturalisms are understood to be disenchantments par excellence, evacuating the world of any spirits or magic or mystery—any stuff that is not material and subject to the laws of matter.

The other set of naturalisms we can simply call *nonreductionistic* ones (Griffin, Clayton, Arthur Peacocke).[7] Nonreductionistic naturalisms are fighting on two fronts. First, they reject the reductive physicalism of the usual naturalisms. Second, they remain very critical of supernaturalism. Griffin, for instance, criticizes the reigning form of naturalism—what I have called reductionistic—as overreaching. He distinguishes this reductionistic naturalism, which he calls naturalism$_{sam,}$ with *sam* standing for "sensationist-atheistic-materialistic," from a more minimalist naturalism, called naturalism$_{ns}$, which is simply "nonsupernaturalist" (Griffin 2001, 22). Clayton articulates an "emergent" monism that simply "presumes" naturalism because "if we do not make [this presumption], science as we know it would be impossible" (Clayton 2004, 163).[8] However, his emphasis on the emergence of complexities, which then function as top-down causalities, yields a naturalism that does not assume that all phenomena can be explained by or reduced to physical laws. What makes Griffin's and Clayton's ontologies naturalisms is that they are still monisms, allergic to any dualism that would posit some ontological "stuff" that is not physical. There is nothing *super*natural, nothing beyond nature. Thus Clayton: "one must acknowledge an initial presumption in favour of metaphysical naturalism—though here the presumption is once again weaker than before. By metaphysical naturalism I mean the view that there are no things, qualities, or causes other than those that might be qualities of the natural world itself or agents within it" (2004, 164).[9] It takes only a little philosophical suspicion, it seems to me, to ask just what "natural" means in this claim.

What is interesting is that both of these appear to be rejecting the same supernaturalism—the interventionist kind. In fact, what seems to define both of these naturalisms is their rejection of any supernaturalism. In that case, naturalism seems to be defined as anti-supernaturalism (see Bergmann 2002, 83 n. 40). Thus, Dennett, in defining religion as a "natural" phenomenon, says that the claim amounts to saying that "religion is natural as opposed to *supernatural*, that it is a human phenomenon composed of events, organisms, objects, structures, patterns, and the like that all obey the laws of physics or biology, and hence do not involve miracles" (Dennett 2006, 25).[10] Similarly, when Griffin describes Alfred North Whitehead's

process philosophy as a form of naturalism, he emphasizes, "To say that it is a new form of *naturalism* is to say, and *only* to say, that it *rejects supernaturalism*, meaning the idea of *a divine being who could (and perhaps does) occasionally interrupt the world's most fundamental causal processes*" (Griffin 2001, 21). Although nonreductionistic naturalists such as Griffin and Peacocke seem to have room for a greater diversity of metaphysical furniture in the universe (stuff such as emergent minds and spirits), they share with reductionistic naturalists a conviction regarding the ironclad nature of natural "laws."

Indeed, the essence of naturalism often is less defined by an articulated conception of nature and more by an opposition to supernaturalism. Naturalism isn't quite sure what it is, but it is absolutely certain what it is *not*. This is confirmed by Owen Flanagan's topography of naturalism. Following Barry Stroud, Flanagan concludes that "anti-supernaturalism is pretty much the only determinate, contentful meaning of the term 'naturalism.'" So, while it's clear what naturalism is against, what it means positively is not spelled out. Instead, it remains "a very general thesis; neither what is 'natural', 'a natural law', or 'a natural force', nor what is 'non-natural', 'supernatural', or 'spiritual' are remotely specified. All the important details are left out or need to be spelled out" (Flanagan 2006, 433).[11]

All varieties of naturalism are marked by this trenchant rejection of the supernatural. As Flanagan summarizes, across the varieties of naturalisms, "some kind of exclusion of the supernatural, of the spiritual, is *required*" (2006, 436; emphasis added).[12] Naturalisms across the spectrum are defined by a rejection of both ontological dualism (no "stuff" other than natural stuff) and of the miraculous as violations of the laws of nature.

This common rejection of supernaturalism raises at least two questions. First, just *what* is being rejected? If, as we have seen, there are a variety of naturalisms, avoiding caricature requires us to admit that there may be a variety of supernaturalisms. If that is the case, we would need to determine just which supernaturalism is being rejected by naturalism. Could there be other models? Second, *Why* the rejection of supernaturalism? What is it that motivates the rejection of the supernatural, and often so vehemently?

On the first point, it seems clear that the supernaturalism being rejected is what I call interventionist supernaturalism. This assumes an ontology whereby a basically autonomous world operates for the most part according to a normal causal order—but this order is not closed, and therefore the system is open to interruptions or interventions from outside the system by a transcendent God.[13] Such interventions are taken to suspend the normal causal order and therefore cannot be explained or anticipated. Griffin summarizes his "ontological naturalism" as stipulating "that there are never any divine interruptions of the world's *normal* causal relations" and as "the doctrine that there can be no supernatural interruptions of the world's *normal* cause-effect relations" (2004, 182; emphases added).

This explains why naturalists are so keen to reject supernaturalism. Because science is governed by commitment to the regularities of cause and effect (and the successes of science have been the fruit of the predictive power of just such a normal causal structure), any theology that would remain viable must concede naturalism. Or, to put it conversely, to cling to supernaturalism is to forfeit the ontology that underwrites the overwhelming success of science. (Griffin is particularly critical of halfway attempts that opt for a methodological naturalism but cling to an ontological one [2001, 25–26].) This primary concern of acceding to the naturalism of science motivates the growing commitment to naturalism by theologians engaged in the theology-science dialogue.

I would describe this as a correlationist project: a theological project that cedes the "truth" of a particular sphere to a secular, and supposedly neutral, rational science and then seeks to correlate theological claims to conform to the standards established by the secular.[14] Bultmann remains a classic case. Science is the primary authority and the first to stipulate what is theoretically acceptable. Theology then looks for places that remain open to theological intervention. After science has made a first and preeminent claim to the territory, theology looks for little corners of the realm where it can set up shop. The natural sciences are taken to be objective arbiters of "the way things really are," and theology (and religious communities) are expected to modify and conform (correlate) their beliefs and practices to the dispensations of the scientific magisterium. Failure to accede to these conditions of engagement entails refusal of admission to the parlor.

Correlationism is starkly exhibited in the projects of Peacocke (2007) and of John Polkinghorne—and, in a way particularly relevant here, in Polkinghorne's account of the "Spirit" in the cosmos. As he says, he is out to "find room" for theology in contemporary cosmology and ontology (Polkinghorne 2006, 169). Quantum cosmology "that science puts forward" discloses an "intrinsic cloudiness" and unpredictability that leaves room for a hidden Spirit to be at work. He concludes that "the scientific picture" is "open to" the possibility of the Spirit's presence in the world (2006, 177). On this picture, science is the gatekeeper and bouncer. The gatekeeper will not tolerate unanticipated interventions but is perhaps open to leaving room for "cloudiness" as a space for theological claims ("fogginess" might be more apt!). In short, theologians are motivated to accede to naturalism because that is the price of admission for scientific respectability. This is repeatedly exemplified by Griffin (2001) and Peacocke (2007).

We see the same methodological push in Clayton's rich articulation of emergent monism. For instance, consider this example of a common trope in Clayton's work: "I have assumed, on the one hand, that if a given account of mental influence is incompatible with natural science, that would be a telling argument against it" (2004, 139). The general stance is one of

deference, because "our knowledge of physics represents the most rigorous, most lawlike knowledge humans have of the world" (p. 188). Theological claims must wilt before scientific knowledge. Otherwise one would "obviate" scientific study (p. 187).[15]

J. Wentzel van Huyssteen rightly criticizes Clayton's strategy (and that of Griffin and Peacocke). As he summarizes, Clayton's project is focused on what sorts of "altered notions of divine creation and providence would be required for any theology that would seek to be consistent with the natural sciences"; in doing so, "Clayton still seems to yield to an allegedly superior scientific rationality. . . . This move, taken to the extreme, could be fatal for theology, because it reveals a total commitment to the epistemic priority of science—and at the expense of theological boundaries" (van Huyssteen 2006, 657–58). He goes on to note a tension: "These arguments of Clayton suggest a proper epistemic respect for the natural limitations of scientific knowledge and scientific explanations but remain strangely in tension with his earlier argument for divine action at a personal level. . . . As became clear earlier, on this view God's action (and our theological understanding of it) clearly seemed to be limited by a 'superior' scientific explanation" (p. 659).

So, all varieties of naturalism reject supernaturalism. More specifically, they reject an interventionist supernaturalism—precisely because such interventionism is not scientifically admissible.

From a pentecostal perspective, this raises several questions. Could we imagine another option or ontological model? I would propose that the supernaturalism rejected by these naturalisms is not the ontology that is implicit in pentecostal spirituality and practice. If there can be a variety of naturalisms, could we on the other end of the continuum recognize some nuance and differences between what traffics under the banner of supernaturalism? Could we perhaps imagine something like a *non*interventionist supernaturalism?

Flanagan seems to leave the door open to this possibility. As he stipulates, naturalism requires the rejection of "the *objectionable form of* supernaturalism" (2006, 433; emphasis added). The qualifier is significant for my project. He suggests that the requirements of naturalism do not preclude affirming "spirituality or religion." They only require rejecting versions of such that espouse "supernaturalism in the objectionable sense" (p. 436). While Flanagan wants to leave this door open for naturalistic spiritualities, and while I suspect he would still find pentecostal claims to the miraculous "objectionable," he does at least make room for some nuance and complexity on the supernaturalist end of the spectrum. Does he not also leave the door open to the possibility of not only nonobjectionable spiritualities but also perhaps a nonobjectionable supernaturalism? If we make room for a variety of supernaturalisms, could we imagine a model of supernaturalism (I have reservations with the word) that might not fall

prey to aspects of the naturalist rejection (the ontological concern about interventions and interruptions) but nonetheless retains features that even the nonreductionist naturalist paradigm will not admit (such as miracles)?

Already the "super" prefix may be a misnomer. An alternative model—which I suggest is implicit in pentecostal spirituality—will both stretch and question it. Indeed, I have concerns that "super"-language almost inevitably communicates an interventionist dualism. But I have equal concern that *losing* the "super" means a collapse of transcendence, shutting down surprise, and ruling out pentecostal experience of the miraculous as a possibility. (In other words, we are seeking to retain immanence without reduction, and transcendence without dualism—a Chalcedonian challenge.) In what follows I suggest that this third way, rather than being described as a noninterventionist *super*naturalism, might be better described as an "enchanted naturalism" or an "en-Spirited naturalism."

Mapping the terrain of our discussion so far, we note at least these ontological options, plotted along something of a continuum:

(1) reductionistic naturalism (Dennett, Kim)	(2) nonreductionistic naturalism (Clayton, Peacocke, Griffin)	(3) enchanted naturalism, or noninterventionist supernaturalism (implicit in pentecostal spirituality)	(4) interventionist supernaturalism

The middle of the continuum is most interesting and most complex, because options (2) and (3) are fighting on two different fronts. These options are close to one another in some respects but different in others. I propose that (3), which I am saying is the ontology implicit in pentecostal spirituality, is unique because it rejects the notion of an autonomous, self-sufficient "world" that runs on its own steam, as it were. I think that, ironically, (1), (2), and (4) share very similar conceptions of the "world" as an independent, (basically) closed system to which God is "Other."[16] Granted, for (4), God can intervene and interrupt this order. But the "world" of (1) and (2) could be just the sort of world that would be left after the extrinsic God of (4) is eliminated.[17] Even nonreductionistic naturalism still accedes to the false dichotomy of Dennett's reductionistic naturalism—natural *as opposed to* supernatural, because both work with a static ontology of an autonomous universe and an account of causality that refuses surprise. But this is also true of (4), because even interventionist supernaturalism still works with a notion of an autonomous "nature." In contrast, the ontology of (3) would refuse such compartmentalizations and false dichotomies; it would refuse to see the natural as opposed to the supernatural, and vice versa. In fact, it would argue that one can have a

robust nature only insofar as it is charged by grace. This is just to say that model (3) works with a very different ontological picture of "nature."

In the remainder of this essay I argue that embedded in pentecostal practice and the pentecostal social imaginary are the resources for articulating a unique, noninterventionist supernaturalism. I do not mean to suggest that pentecostals in the pew (or rolling on the floor, perhaps!) would articulate it in this way. If pressed, they would largely speak in terms of interventionist supernaturalism. However, I am proposing that they should stop talking that way—because of their own pentecostal commitments. The ontological framework that is assumed by interventionist supernaturalism mitigates against the pentecostal experience of the Spirit *as natural*. Part of the genius and uniqueness of pentecostal experience is precisely that one does not see the Spirit's care and activity as exceptions or interruptions of the "normal" ordering of the universe. A feature of the strange and fantastic world of pentecostal spirituality is a sense that the miraculous is normal, that the surprises of the Spirit are normal, whereas interventionist language still presumes the steady, static ontology of nature that informs both naturalism and deism. When pentecostals adopt interventionist-speak, I believe that they are picking up a foreign tongue that is inadequate to articulate their own experience and the theological intuitions implicit in their spirituality. Pentecostal spirituality has the resources for a unique ontology. Because this ontology is walking a tightrope between naturalism and supernaturalism, I suggest that the elucidation and articulation of this aspect of the pentecostal social imaginary will find assistance in the "participatory" ontology associated with the *nouvelle théologie* and its contemporary rendition in Radical Orthodoxy.

A Pentecostal Intervention in the Science-Theology Dialogue

Embedded in pentecostal practice is an understanding[18] of the world that eschews the dualistic opposition of the natural and the supernatural. Pentecostal spirituality is not escapist, disembodied mysticism, and it is not merely pragmatic materialism. Pentecostal worship and practice are characterized by a kind of gritty materiality as space for work of the Spirit. Some pentecostal theologians have described pentecostal spirituality as sacramental in character (Macchia 1993). We might say that the ontology embedded in pentecostal practice is a material supernaturalism or a supernatural materialism. Again, our lexicon is limited as the very prefix *super-* has us falling back into old paradigms. Perhaps we need to adopt a strategy of the young Jacques Derrida, who recognized such inadequacies of language and suggested that we write *sous rature*, under erasure. In that sense, one might say that I am articulating a ~~super~~natural materialism. As such, it contests the natural/supernatural distinction (Yong 2005, 292–301)—

which is why I have argued that we need to revisit the identification of pentecostalism as a supernaturalism.

In this respect, the ontology implicit in pentecostal practice is very much akin to the vision articulated by those theologians associated with *nouvelle théologie*, particularly Henri de Lubac. Their earlier articulation of such a nondualistic supernaturalism can provide resources and conceptual tools for pentecostals to articulate the ontological understanding embedded in the pentecostal social imaginary. By eschewing the simple distinction between discrete realms of nature and supernature, de Lubac struggled to articulate a paradoxical phenomenon: that nature is oriented to the supernatural and that this orientation to the supernatural is natural (that is, constitutive of creaturehood). John Milbank notes the tightrope de Lubac was walking: "this insistence could appear to the ecclesiastical authorities at once 'radically' to threaten the gratuity of the supernatural and the revealed order, and 'conservatively' to threaten the autonomy of the natural domain of reason" (Milbank 2005, 10). Creation *is* (and nature *is*) insofar as it participates in and is indwelled by God, in whom we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Thus the shape of de Lubac's blurring of the natural/supernatural distinction[19] finds a more detailed ontological articulation in Radical Orthodoxy's participatory ontology (Smith 2004, chap. 6), which provides a dynamic sense of the God-world relation that would eschew both naturalism and supernaturalism.[20]

The shape of this theological or participatory ontology is nonreductive and incarnational. It affirms that matter *as created* exceeds itself and *is* only insofar as it participates in or is suspended from the transcendent Creator, and it affirms that there is a significant sense in which the transcendent inheres in immanence. "Things," then, and the created order in general, do not have any kind of "sheer" or autonomous existence, as if possessing some kind of inalienable right to be. Rather, being is a gift from the transcendent Creator such that things exist only insofar as they participate in the being of the Creator, whose Being is Goodness. Graham Ward writes that the very words of institution ("This is my body") in the Eucharist already require a more dynamic ontology (Ward 2001, 90–91).[21] If one begins with a radical sense of creation's dependence or gift-character, the autonomous stasis of materiality must be revised in such a way that this ontological scandal of the eucharistic pronouncement can be absorbed—just as the doctrines of Christ's bodily resurrection and ascension must entail a distinctly Christian ontology of materiality (Ward 2001, 91–93). "There is only one radical critique of modernity—the critique that denies the existence of the secular as self-subsisting, that immanent self-ordering of the world which ultimately had no need for God. . . . The Christian doctrines of incarnation and creation stand opposed to closed, immanentalist systems" (Ward 2001, 94). Thus, in order to counter the politics and epistemology of secular modernity, it is necessary to subject its ontology to

critique (and unveil its status as a *mythos*), then articulate the only counter-ontology that is able to do justice to materiality and embodiment as such. Such a participatory ontology provides grounds for rethinking the God-world relation and so reconsidering several key themes in science-theology dialogue, including questions about divine action in the world, the nature of scientific "laws," a nonreductive materialist account of the human person, and perhaps even a naturalized account of the sacraments. In sum, Radical Orthodoxy's participatory ontology provides the foundation for thinking about the reenchantment of the world in dialogue with science.

The key here is that this dynamic, participatory ontology refuses the static ontologies that presume the autonomy of nature. Although I would prefer to drop *nature* from our lexicon, working with it we might say that nature is always already suspended in and inhabited by the Spirit such that it is always already *primed* for the Spirit's manifestations. Pentecostals do not merely expect that God could "interrupt" the so-called order of nature; rather, they assume that the Spirit is always already at work in creation, animating (and reanimating) bodies, grabbing hold of vocal cords, taking up aspects of creation to manifest the glory of God.

Amos Yong has recently offered a "pneumatological assist" to this participatory ontology, which I received with thanks (Yong 2007; Smith 2007). Yong points to the Spirit as the agent of "suspension," the Triune person *in* whom the material world is suspended. This only further invites us to see Radical Orthodoxy as a resource, ally, or partner in the explication of distinctly pentecostal ontology. In response to Yong's pneumatological assist I have articulated an account of the God-world relation in the Spirit in terms of *intensities* of participation. While all that is participates in God through the Spirit, there are sites and events that exhibit a more intense participation. Phenomena described as "miraculous" are not instances of God breaking into the world, as if God were outside it prior to such events; they are instances of a unique and special mode of participation that always already characterizes creation.

The participatory pneumatological ontology I am proposing is not an interventionist model. It is not really a "super"naturalism. I am even somewhat cautious about adopting the language of an "open" creation, because this still seems to presume a picture of nature as basically autonomous but open to intervention by God from the outside. Such intervention language has at least two problems. The first is scientific, in that it fails to honor the overwhelming success of science predicated on the predictability of nature's lawlike regularity. It also tends to punt on questions about the *mechanics* of intervention. The second problem is theological, in that it assumes a picture of the world, and of the God-world relation, that cedes autonomy to the natural order akin to Deism. (I would call this the "discretion" model because it carves out "the world" as a discrete, autonomous realm that God then has to "enter," a closed system that God comes to

"interrupt" or in which God "intervenes.") This model—that God and the world are discrete—is shared by both naturalists who reject such interventions and supernaturalists who claim such interventions. Both basically see nature as an autonomous system; what they disagree upon is whether or not God can or does intervene in this discrete, closed system.

But should we think of the cosmos (nature) as a closed, autonomous system, as both naturalists and supernaturalists assume? Such an assumption rests on a theology of creation that is problematic because it is devoid of any sense of the essential, constitutive, dynamic presence of God the Spirit *in* creation.[22] Embedded in a pentecostal social imaginary is an understanding of the God-world relation that eschews the discretion model and refuses to grant nature the autonomy of a closed system. The Spirit is always already present at and in creation. The Spirit's presence is not a postlapsarian or soteriological visiting of a creation that is otherwise without God. The Spirit is always already dynamically active in the cosmos (world, nature). God does not have to enter nature as a visitor and alien; God is always already present in the world.[23] Thus is creation primed for the Spirit's action.

Nature as En-Spirited

According to this pentecostal ontology, nature is always already en-Spirited. It begins from a picture of creation that emphasizes the Spirit's essential and dynamic presence in nature. This nuanced, dynamic ontological picture makes it possible to account for both the *regularity* of natural processes and the *special action* of the miraculous (in contrast to even the nonreductionistic naturalism of Griffin and Clayton).

Regularity. Science's successes and insights are predicated on the regularity and (relative) constancy of natural processes. Naturalism claims that this must entail an understanding of nature as a closed system of laws, but this is not a properly scientific (empirical) claim. The affirmation of the Spirit's dynamic presence in creation is not opposed to recognizing that, for the most part, this presence is manifested by God's steady, sustaining care of the universe along the lines of what seem like laws. For pentecostals, it would be spurning God's faithful, steady presence to not recognize this. So it is important to assert that a pentecostal worldview does not require rejecting a sense of a steady, faithful presence of the Spirit in creation, even if it does remain open to the ways in which God might surprise us (ontological surprises!).

This is particularly important given that some pentecostal and charismatic traditions have been given to a kind of *hyper*supernaturalism that refuses medical (scientific) treatment of illness and disease. This is not only bad science, it is also bad pentecostal theology, working from a caricatured pneumatology that sets the Spirit in opposition to the creation that the

same Spirit sustains. There is nothing inconsistent about working from a pentecostal worldview and affirming a minimal disenchantment or methodological naturalism.

I emphasize this because some pentecostals have sometimes thought that the confession of God's dynamic work in creation required ignoring the steady, lawlike manifestation of the Spirit's presence in the world. While a pentecostal worldview affirms both the dynamic presence of the Spirit in creation and a nondualistic emphasis on bodily healing, some pentecostal traditions try to be more spiritual than the Spirit by rejecting the Spirit's more mundane operations that are discerned by medical science. Such hypersupernaturalism makes me think that a healthy dose of minimal disenchantment and methodological naturalism may be a better way to recognize all of the ways that the Spirit is dynamically present in creation.[24]

Special Action. Because nature is always already inhabited by the Spirit, it also is primed for (and not merely open to) special or unique singularities. These will not be anti-nature, because nature is not a discrete, autonomous entity. Rather, we can think of these special, miraculous manifestations of the Spirit's presence in creation as more intense instances of the Spirit in creation, or as "sped-up" modes of the Spirit's more regular presences (Lewis 1947). Augustine describes them as extraordinary actions that are meant to refocus our semiotic attention on the miraculous nature of the ordinary. A miracle is not an event that "breaks" any laws[25] of nature, because nature does not have such a reified character. Rather, a miracle is a manifestation of the Spirit's presence that is out of the ordinary, but even the ordinary is a manifestation of the Spirit's presence. Augustine enjoins us to see nature *as* miracle (1888, 8.2.1).

Conclusion

Naturalists, both reductionist and nonreductionist, tell us that the price of admission to the theology-science dialogue is naturalism. Thus the dialogue is a kind of Rawlsian original position that requires believers to strip down at the entry, leaving them only with what all "rational" persons hold in common. But paying that price of admission requires pentecostals to pawn what is essential to pentecostal spirituality: the Spirit's miraculous surprises. I have argued that the price of admission has been illegitimately inflated—that certain gatekeepers of science (and of the science-theology dialogue) have made the price of admission to science (and scientific respectability) metaphysical naturalism, or at least ontological monism, coupled with rigid conceptions of the laws of nature. I have offered an alternative description of nature that (1) points out the illegitimate inflation stemming from a conflation of science with naturalism and (2) provides a rationale for careful empirical observation and prediction without a

priori ruling out the miraculous. Such, I hope, encourages pentecostals to engage the sciences and begins to make room for pentecostals in the science-theology dialogue.

NOTES

A version of this essay was presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies (SPS) jointly held with the Wesleyan Theological Society at Duke University Divinity School, 13–15 March 2008. Research for this project was funded in part by the Science and the Spirit Research Initiative, funded by the John Templeton Foundation (Grant #11876). Their support is gratefully acknowledged.

1. By *pentecostal* I am referring not to a classical or denominational definition but rather to an understanding of Christian faith that is radically open to the continued operations of the Spirit. Thus I use the term in an older sense, which now would include "charismatic" traditions. Because the term *pentecostal-charismatic* is burdensome, in what follows I use the convention of small-p *pentecostalism* to refer to the broader renewal of Pentecostal/charismatic traditions. Some features that are unique to classical or denominational Pentecostalism (primitivism, initial evidence, and so forth) I do not view as essential to a distinctly pentecostal worldview. Thus I see significant resonance between catholic and pentecostal spirituality. This has been confirmed recently in the Pew Forum report on Hispanic Christianity, which indicates that 54 percent of Latino Catholics describe themselves as "charismatic" (Pew Hispanic Center 2007, 29ff.).
2. I articulate the elements of a distinctly pentecostal worldview in Smith 2003a, b, and expand it in Smith in press. My notion of *worldview* draws specifically on the continental heritage of the term, especially as articulated by Abraham Kuyper. Others have suggested that there is a distinctly Pentecostal worldview (see Poloma 2006, 154–56). I suggest below that the concept of worldview is helpfully supplemented and nuanced by Charles Taylor's notion of a "social imaginary" (Taylor 2004).
3. For an accessible and brief history of the Azusa Street revival that is attentive to issues of class, see Robeck 2006; for a global perspective that contests Azusa-centrism, see Anderson 2004.
4. I say more about this below, but for an introduction to this participatory ontology see Smith 2004, chap. 6.
5. For an account that happily owns up to the reductionism of this form of naturalism, see Devitt 1998.
6. The heart of Plantinga's argument against naturalism actually stems from his epistemological project, which he describes as a "radical naturalism." He seeks to demonstrate that "naturalism in epistemology flourishes best in the context of a theistic view of human beings: naturalism in epistemology requires supernaturalism in anthropology" (1993, 46; the argument is fully developed at 1993, 194–237).
7. There are complicated permutations here. For instance, Nancey Murphy is a physicalist, but only with respect to creatures and creation. Insofar as she maintains belief in a transcendent, immaterial God, her overall ontology remains dualistic—as she concedes—and therefore not a metaphysical naturalism. We might describe her position as a *creaturely naturalism*, but this would still be distinguished from pentecostal ontology because her account seems to have an element of deism about it, while at other points (Murphy 2006, 139) it seems to harbor a lingering interventionism.
8. Technically, and empirically, it seems to me that this claim is invalid. Both historically and in the present there are scientists who do experimental work who do not presume naturalism. Clayton concedes that "here the arguments are not decisive" (2004, 165).
9. Note that although Clayton does acknowledge God as separate from the world (2004, 187), such may be said to be, at best, a minimalist *theological* dualism; Clayton's ontology regarding the stuff of the world remains monistic.
10. Dennett also defines religion as "belief in a supernatural agent" and then stipulates that part of the defining creed of "brights" (Dennett's term for the "church" of enlightened anti-supernaturalists) is that they do not believe in the supernatural (2006, 21). Dennett has a

remarkably confident grasp of what constitutes "nature." Or, rather, one should say that, remarkably, Dennett—like most naturalists—spends little time interrogating the concept of nature. I would say the same tends to be true of discussions of nature in the science-theology conversation. For a destabilizing of such confidence, see Latour 1993; 2004.

11. Flanagan goes on to acknowledge a distinction that Griffin and others do not—a distinction between ontological and methodological naturalism, or what Flanagan calls "strong" versus "weak" naturalism. Weak naturalism simply emphasizes that "one should dispense with the supernatural in *explaining* things" (2006, 434). He concedes that one could be, say, a weak naturalist about economics but nonetheless an ontological nonnaturalist (pp. 434–35). I return to this distinction in a later section.

12. Note that rejection of the supernatural is "required" *in order to be a naturalist*. Flanagan does not articulate just *why* one should be required to be a naturalist.

13. This is the supernaturalism (or model of "miracle") rejected by David Hume ([1777] 1975, sec. X). He considers prophecy an instance of the miraculous. This should remind us that *supernatural* and *miraculous* seem to be almost synonymous here, which is why pentecostalism has such a vested interest in these issues.

14. I discuss correlationist methodology in more detail in Smith 2004, 35–37. I hint specifically about an application of this to the science-theology dialogue at 148 n. 19.

15. I criticize this stance of deference more specifically in Smith forthcoming.

16. I do grant that (2) is unique in this regard insofar as the panentheism that usually attends this position emphasizes the immanence of God to the world as the world's dynamic principle. This differs from pentecostal ontology (3) insofar as this "God" internal to the world, as it were, does not, would not, and cannot act outside of the laws of nature. The key difference between (2) and (3) is the question of miracles. I do not believe that nonreductionistic naturalism has shown sufficient reason to reject miracles apart from the desire to concede to "what science says." In terms I use below, I do not think reductionistic naturalism has ever questioned whether the price of admission to modern, scientific "respectability" is overinflated.

17. In short, it would be the kind of world that emerged after Duns Scotus' bifurcation of an "autonomous" world, culminating in Immanuel Kant. For discussion, see Smith 2004, 95–103.

18. On this (Heideggerian) notion of embodied, precognitive "understanding" (*Verstehen*) implicit *in* practice, see Taylor 2004, 25–26.

19. Indeed, does not the very notion of *creation* blur this distinction? See Yong 2006.

20. I allude to Griffin 2001 as a way of pointing to a sympathetic dialogue between Radical Orthodoxy (RO) and process thought, particularly if read alongside Milbank 2005. I would also suggest that the RO/Process dialogue could take place through a triangulating reengagement with the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (see de Lubac 1967; Grumett 2007).

21. It would be interesting to compare and contrast how Ward and Peacocke approach the Eucharist. For Ward, the Eucharistic pronouncement is an occasion for theology to "push back" on philosophy and science, and in particular the ontologies bequeathed to us by modernity. In Peacocke (2007, chap. 8), eucharistic theology needs to submit to revision on the basis of "what science tells us." Thus Ward and Peacocke represent two paths for pentecostals considering the theology-science dialogue. I would guess that walking down the path with Peacocke would entail the evisceration of pentecostal spirituality.

22. As I have suggested, a close cousin of my position (an enchanted naturalism or noninterventionist ~~super~~naturalism) is something like Clayton's panentheism. I am in some ways sympathetic to such panentheism (and would follow Jonathan Edwards on this score) except to the extent that it assumes an ontological rigidity to "natural law." Clayton's panentheism does not start from a sufficiently dynamic sense of the *contingency* of the laws of nature. This will require an account of the regularity of natural processes without attributing to them a reified lawlike character. In general, I find that process theologians such as Griffin and Clayton tend to ignore questions about science as a contingent, cultural institution and are somewhat naive about scientific practice, including the contingent role of metaphor (such as "law") in describing the world.

23. I have not yet figured out why Clayton and others are so allergic to vitalism; further work is required on this. For a beginning, see Kauamori 2005, 13–26.

24. Note, however, that this is an alternative description of what passes under the banner of methodological naturalism. I am not suggesting that pentecostals accede to methodological

naturalism in order to secure intellectual respectability or bow to "what science says." Rather, I am saying that the kind of attentive observation of nature that constitutes science yields fruit by recognizing regularity—without ramping such regularity up into an ironclad status of a law of nature. In this respect, I actually think I agree with Hume.

25. The current shape of the theology-science dialogue has failed to interrogate the notion of natural laws. My thanks to Matt Walhout for discussions on this point.

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