

Convincing the World: Pentecostal Liminality as Participation in the Mission of the

Paraclete

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Did the early Pentecostals regard themselves as servants to the wider church, bearers of the gifts of the Spirit, sent to bring a renewed focus on love, unity, holiness, and justice to all parts of the church? Or did they see themselves as the only true believers in the midst of apostates, heretics, and reprobates? What can be found among the early Pentecostals, as a people whose primary self-identity was as a people of the Spirit, that carried the Spirit's mission forward in unique or significant ways? Can the loss of such practices help explain the decline of the Pentecostal movement?

Narrating the Pentecostal movement through the lens of the Spirit's mission to the world is an attempt to give a normative account of Pentecostal liminality, to describe certain *communitas* commitments as ones that gave rise to the movement and propelled it forward. This study describes in detail how this understanding itself came to be something else, something quite damaging. Still, the general principle was that the Holy Spirit comes in power and blesses work that aligns with the Spirit's own mission. That is the primary presupposition at work here as well, that through understanding the mission of the Holy Spirit, we may find ways to align ourselves with that mission, to co-labor with the Spirit by privileging the liminal moment. Implicit in this claim is the denial that such alignment is automatic, guaranteed, or even self-sustaining.

The argument here is that the incompatibility of the Pentecostal ethos represented by these communal commitments with the uncritical acceptance of evangelical-fundamentalist theological accounts on the part of the second and third generation Pentecostals resulted in a loss of what constituted the Pentecostal movement as such. This dissertation begins with an exegesis of John 16.8-11 in an effort to articulate Pentecostal ethics in terms of participation in the Spirit's mission of convincing the world with regard to sin, righteousness, and power. The conclusions of this exegesis are that the entire world is in view throughout this passage; that the Spirit convicts all with regard to sin, defined as not believing in Jesus, righteousness, defined as following Jesus' example in a life of holiness, and power, defined as the Spirit's judgment on all forms of power that are self-aggrandizing as opposed to the cruciform mode of authority that must characterize the Christian life; and that the Spirit accomplishes this convincing work primarily through the life of the *communitas* the Spirit forms, embodies, and empowers. These results are then carried to the Pentecostal movement in its earliest instantiation and as it exists as a Christian subculture today, asking what Pentecostal liminality might look like, if the rubric of the Spirit's mission to the world is applied as a moment we are to participate in enduringly.

Dedication

Amy, you have lived patiently with this dissertation and me, shaping it and me for the better, believing in me even when I did not believe in myself. Thank you for sticking with me through the long, dark night. I could not have done this without you. This is the beginning of our work. I dedicate this to you because I am so grateful to be chasing down this dream with you, my partner, my friend, my love. *Ego agapo se.*

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1. Introduction

“The church is only the church when it exists for others.”¹ This work may be regarded as an affirmation of that statement, expounding on it by telling the story of one segment of the church where this was once, briefly, almost practiced, along with what that near miss looked like in the moment and moving forward (and away) from that moment. The earliest Pentecostal movement was born out of an understanding akin to this and a desire to be community in this way. That understanding and desire were quickly subsumed and are now all but forgotten, though clues remain in the old accounts, seldom read or given any credence, as no clear, unified vision is to be found there. Did the early Pentecostals regard themselves as servants to the wider church, bearers of the gifts of the Spirit, sent to bring a renewed focus on love, unity, holiness, and justice to all parts of the church? Or did they see themselves as the only true believers in the midst of apostates, heretics, and reprobates? It would make for a good story to say that they began with the former and degenerated to the latter, but the truth is, both sentiments are present from the beginning of the movement, though the second, virulent self-understanding was marked by its vociferousness and was reinforced by the opposition early Pentecostals met from other Christians. It is always hard to love one’s enemies, harder still when they should clearly be allies instead. The irony here is not

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 382.

that the second self-understanding clearly won out, but that its victory led directly to the loss of the distinctives that defined Pentecostals as such.

1.1 Pentecostal Disconnect

One main interest in this study is the disconnect between the Pentecostal movement as described in accounts of the early days of the movement and what I have observed growing up in the Pentecostal subculture. The Spirit does not move as described in those accounts, except in rare instances like Brownsville or Toronto which quickly become marginalized as extreme, controlled - not by external forces - but by power wielded within the movement itself. Even the most notable recent examples pale in comparison to those early accounts (some of which are likely exaggeration, but perhaps as many sanitized for public consumption).

The disconnect is most obvious, not in doctrine or polity, but in practice, which is both fitting and significant, as practice stands at the center of the Pentecostal movement and any account one would seek to give of it (as Land so effectively argued).² This must be considered in any effort dealing with early Pentecostal theology, as it was almost nonexistent in written form. It is a mistake to approach the newsletters, tracts, and sermons of the early days as though they were theological treatises. Such documents are

² Steve Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

better read through the lens of praxis as well, as are the historical accounts, whose veracity is often in question.

There are clues to the theology of the early Pentecostals in all these documents, especially those that carry the *mythos* of the movement forward to the later generations. For example, accounts of racial integration among the early Pentecostals are almost certainly exaggerated, yet they remain in the movement's lexicon long after segregation is thoroughly (re)entrenched. Something in those stories of integration remains compelling, maintaining a hold on the Pentecostal imagination that still dares to dream of being a community of the Spirit that it cannot achieve or sustain, even when it burgeons in some moment. The commitments the early communities had - the very ones that led to the move of the Spirit in the first place - are found in these stories. Actually, clues to these commitments, fragments of them, are found. There is no single place, no monolith, that lays out all that led to making these communities ones where the Spirit had the freedom to operate in ways and to degrees that other Christian communities, including the progeny of these same communities, were not open to, then or now.

1.2 Searching for a Normative Account

Just as there were no monoliths then, there can be none now. This is not an attempt to write *the* Pentecostal ethic because in the end that can never be more, less, or other than each one and each community hearing and obeying the command of God that

comes to them via the Spirit in their particularity.³ My goal here is to reflect on, make sense of, and synthesize clues I have observed in one particular strand of the Pentecostal movement (the Church of God). Others can and should reflect on other clues and fragments as they find them, and attempt other syntheses as they will.

What I have written here is meant as a conversation starter for how we might go about approaching Pentecostal ethics, what matters the subject should include, what I would like to see Pentecostal colleges, seminaries, and even Sunday Schools discussing and coming to grips with. Though this work is at times highly critical of the Pentecostal movement, I do not regard either it or myself as post-Pentecostal. The critique of the movement is not itself the primary aim here; that remains throughout casting Pentecostal practice in terms of the mission of the Holy Spirit as described in John 16. As such, I do not deal comprehensively with Pentecostal history, but have chosen narrative examples that seemed useful for my purpose here.⁴ What stories, teachings, and practices show sin as exposed in the face of love, self-sacrifice, and self-denial, such as can convict the world of sin, seeing the cruciform life followers of Jesus live for one

³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: II/1* (Edinburgh,: T. & T. Clark, 1936), 184.

⁴ This selectivity may lead some to conclude that this critique suffers from my own myopic choices of only those examples that fit my argument, that I have in essence gotten the arch of the Pentecostal story wrong. It is beyond dispute that something real and profound happened at the beginning of the Pentecostal movement, perhaps not as much as reported, but something significant enough to impact millions of people around the world and elicit stern opposition from many (both inside and outside the Christian family). It seems equally self-evident that those profound happenings do not occur now as they did then, if by no other evidence than the complete lack of resistance. Pentecostals may still be viewed as odd, but no longer as any sort of threat to the status quo.

another? What stories, teachings, and practices show righteousness as defined in terms of holiness, such as can convict the world into following the example of a Jesus we no longer see? What stories, teachings, and practices show power in its impotence before a justice based on the logic of prophetic authority, such as can convict the world that power as it knows it has been judged? As these convictions constitute the mission of the Spirit named in John 16, what can be found among the early Pentecostals, as a people whose primary self-identity was as a people of the Spirit, that carried the Spirit's mission forward in unique or significant ways? Can the loss of such practices help explain the decline of the Pentecostal movement? Can such an investigation lead to a normative account?

1.3 Holy Spirit as Subject

The choice of John 16 here is not arbitrary; it is based on the affirmation that the Holy Spirit did indeed engage with the communities that became the Pentecostal movement in ways and to degrees not typically seen in the history of the church, birthing what quickly became one of largest parts of the overall church, even as such engagement has waned.⁵ In that this is a theological endeavor, both the waxing and waning of the Pentecostal movement are viewed here as first and foremost the action of

⁵ This is not to say that such experiences are unique. Cf. Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991).

the Holy Spirit. The decline of the Pentecostal movement signals nothing less than movement away from the very communal commitments that elicited the Spirit's move in the first place, because those commitments were aligned with the Spirit's mission in and to the world. John 16.8-11 gives the clearest indication of what the Spirit's mission to the world entails. Narrating the Pentecostal movement through the lens of the Spirit's mission to the world is an attempt to ground Pentecostal ethics in those (former) communal commitments, the ones that gave rise to the movement and propelled it forward.

Many of the early accounts claim that their initial commitments were: love, unity, holiness, and an openness to experiencing a genuine move of God in real and tangible ways. This last point often got drawn out, as early Pentecostals endeavored to distinguish between emotionalism and real experiences of God's power,⁶ and also the dependence this last commitment had on the previous ones. Love, unity, and holiness were seen as the prerequisites to the experiences. This study will describe in detail how this understanding itself came to be something else, something quite different. Still, the

⁶ Due to the outwardly expressive (at times flamboyant) nature of charismatic experiences, Pentecostals were concerned from very early in the movement's history to distinguish genuine experiences brought on by the Spirit from those wrought only by human emotive overflow. In practice, these were not always easily distinguishable or necessarily mutually exclusive. The point here is that the early Pentecostals were more concerned with love and unity; openness with regard to expressions (charismatic or emotional) was regarded as necessary to maintain a loving, unified community. Primary concern later shifted to ensuring the expressions were genuine, a move concomitant with less focus on love and unity.

general principle was that the Holy Spirit comes in power and blesses work that aligns with the Spirit's own mission. That is the primary presupposition at work here as well, that through understanding the mission of the Holy Spirit, we may find ways to align ourselves with that mission, to co-labor with the Spirit. Implicit in this claim is the denial that such alignment is automatic, guaranteed, or even self-sustaining.

1.4 Need for Pentecostal Ethical Reflection

These observations and the need for a Pentecostal ethic along these lines have been previously stated: "The moral imperative facing contemporary Pentecostals is to rediscover the nature and power of those convictions that have shaped the best of their common life and character, regain their moral vitality, and operationalize the meaning of being the church."⁷ A Pentecostal ethic must be grounded in Scripture, and must also focus beyond the typical texts (e.g., Decalogue, Sermon on the Mount, or the Great Commandments), seeking to ground in Scripture, "the difference that the Holy Spirit makes in the moral and ethical realm."⁸

Pentecostal scholars have avoided this focus, offering explanations that are more obviously cognitive, seeking to avoid the more common Pentecostal error of emotional-experience based ethical considerations. These latter have plagued the Pentecostal

⁷ John Sims, "Exploring Pentecostal Ethics," in Donald N. Bowdle, Terry L. Cross, and Emerson B. Powery, *The Spirit and the Mind : Essays in Informed Pentecostalism* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2000) 218.

⁸ *Ibid.*

movement since its inception, where personal feelings of what is moral and judgments (typically of others) of what is not are projected as leadings of the Spirit, and the presence of emotional-ecstatic experiences (seen as ‘blessings’) are taken to be the Spirit’s seal of approval on the moral-ethical state of the person or community *in toto*. This is often accompanied by a “narrow biblicism that over-simplifies complex issues under the guise of ‘holding to the authority of the Bible,’” wherein appeal to the Bible becomes nothing more than a way not to hear or understand the ethical life the Spirit endeavors to draw us into.⁹ Instead, a better explanation may be found by employing a more holistic hermeneutic that seeks to understand the Christian life as life in the community of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Such a hermeneutic must emphasize the divine purpose in the story of human history, particularly as this finds its fullest expression in the person of Jesus Christ, so that what it means to live a Spirit-filled life is understood in terms of conforming to the likeness of Christ, the community of the Spirit is understood as the body of Christ, and all eschatological orientation looks to the breaking in of the kingdom of God. As the movement continues to grow and change, Pentecostals should neither avoid nor become obsessed with their own identity, but approach Pentecostal commitments with intentionality.

⁹ Ibid., 225.

A denomination or movement in the process of upward social mobility, settling comfortably into middle-class life styles, will find it difficult to move beyond a natural preoccupation with itself. But if the church is to be a community of character, engaging the world in the name of Christ, it must move beyond religious narcissism. A church that claims to 'live in the Spirit' must, by reason of its own character and mission, be one that is morally sensitive, cares deeply about human need and social justice, and commits itself to being an inclusive community.¹⁰

I am making quite a claim in asserting the move of the Spirit is intrinsically tied to certain community practices. This is not a unique claim by any means but certainly one tied to different practices from those typically claimed. Bonhoeffer's powerful ecclesiological assertion was a response to his own pointed question: "What protects us against the menace of organization?"¹¹ For most Christian churches, the core organizational principle is (or is directly connected to) the sacraments. There is also an intrinsic *deus ex machina* logic attached to these sacraments that defines them as such.¹² This logic has also found its way into Pentecostal thought, though again tied to practices other than the sacraments. A main part of what this study seeks to narrate is the shift from an emphasis on certain practices that preceded (and I will argue led to) the charismatic move of the Spirit to practices related to those charismatic expressions

¹⁰ Ibid., 233.

¹¹ Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 380. This is nearly the opposite of the conclusion Welker draws when he claims: "The Spirit also acts in structural patterns of life and experience that are still foreign and distant. The Spirit exercises an influence on them, by acting in turn through their reactions wills to lead to a fuller revelation and knowledge of truth." [Michael Welker, *God the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 225-6]. While the sovereign Spirit may act in (or in spite of) any human structure, there are modes of organization that run contrary to the Spirit's mission in the world.

¹² Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Eucharist*, Edited by N. D. Smith (New York, Sheed and Ward 1968), 89-90.

themselves, with the assumption that these practices would be necessarily blessed by the Spirit. In essence, certain Pentecostal practices came to be regarded as sacrament (though Pentecostals would rarely use such language) in that divine affirmation was assumed as automatic. This *deus ex machina* logic has proven fatally flawed and explains much of the decline in the Pentecostal movement.¹³

1.5 Normative Accounts Past

Another way of saying this is that Pentecostals (from very early in the movement) sought to give normative accounts for the charismatic experiences they were having. These efforts were done partly in response to external demands for justification of such activity and partly as an attempt to help others replicate the same experiences elsewhere as the movement rapidly spread. Normative accounts of the move of the Spirit are problematic though; “often the power and mystery of art and life cannot be explained by normative words.”¹⁴ The demand for justification must be resisted; the Spirit empowers but refuses to self-justify. To justify the Spirit is to deny the Spirit, because such an endeavor can only be done apart from the Spirit. The Spirit testifies only to Jesus Christ

¹³ Jean Zizioulas, *Being as Communion : Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 109.

¹⁴ Makoto Fujimura, *Refractions : A Journey of Faith, Art, and Culture*. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2009), 28.

and works to glorify Christ, not himself.¹⁵ The liturgical formulas and normative accounts of charismatic expressions were themselves a move away from the Spirit. In defining what it meant to be Pentecostal, the movement lost the very thing it sought to capture: “As important as these specific practices are for Pentecostal life, they cannot serve as ethical rubrics for the Christian meta-narrative with undergoing significant alteration to their basic meaning.”¹⁶ Normative accounts, by their nature, seek to control, to concretize, to possess; but in this case, that which cannot be controlled, concretized, or possessed; the wind blows where it will. Pentecostals went from being people with distinctive communal practices who had charismatic experiences to being people with distinctive charismatic practices. The communal practices were lost and subsequently the charismatic experiences waned as well.

Instead, the normative accounts became more determinative for, and more constitutive of, the community than the Spirit’s testimony to Jesus Christ, which is the only normative account the Spirit gives. Thus in creating these normative accounts, Pentecostals sought to regulate the Spirit instead of being governed by the Spirit.

Pentecostals were over-dependent on the theological traditions of their immediate past

¹⁵ Jn 16. 13-14: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

¹⁶ MayLing Tan-Chow, *Pentecostal Theology for the Twenty-First Century: Engaging with Multi-Faith Singapore*, Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology, and Biblical Studies (Aldershot, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 145.

and present surroundings, and unaware of how deeply incompatible these theologies were with communities they were trying to build. In particular, they adopted from fundamentalism a deep-seated confidence in their own ability to know the mind of God and to have a theological understanding not tainted with nuance or mystery. While this approach fit well with the overall fundamentalist project, it was not compatible with Pentecostal thought or practice. The cessationist logic inherent (and necessary) to fundamentalism should have made this incompatibility apparent, but it did not. Not only did Pentecostals create normative accounts, they did so based on the logic, hermeneutic, and framework of fundamentalism. No appreciation or theological support for the essential communal practices of the Pentecostal movement came out of those endeavors.

It is also important to be historically accurate in dealing with these communal commitments. In each, early Pentecostals made significant movement away from the traditions they came from. These movements were neither as drastic or permanent as they claimed, but they were real and congruent with the ethos of the movement. These movements were so different they required a very different theological-ethical account. Such an account was not made; Pentecostals relied instead on accounts from the traditions they had left or others that seemed congruent but were not. These accounts actually opposed the moves the Pentecostals had made. The uncritical use of them

undermined the Pentecostal movement itself. Having never been quite as radical as advertised, Pentecostals lost both the ideals to which they seem to have aspired and the genuine ethos that sparked such incredible growth and renewal. Early genuine charismatic experiences came to be replaced with manufactured charismatic practices, Pauline charisma turned to Weberian charisma,¹⁷ and idealistic goals with the myth of past/present achievement of said ideals, despite the severe amount of engineering required to redefine these ideals in ways that justified the will to power instead of prophetically calling it into question.

The communal commitments central to original Pentecostal ethos are visible in the historical accounts through the hagiography because they show what Pentecostals valued, much the way a fish tale indicates that a fisherman values large fish, whatever the actual size of his catch. Love, unity over doctrinal conformity, emphasis on real (not cultural) holiness, authority not based on hierarchy, equality of genders and races – all these were important to early Pentecostals, though none enjoyed anything approaching a full realization. The argument here is that this was a direct result of the incompatibility of the Pentecostal ethos represented by these communal commitments with the uncritical acceptance of evangelical-fundamentalist theological accounts on the part of

¹⁷ Cf. Yoder, John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community before the Watching World* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2001), 52.

the second and third generation Pentecostals.¹⁸ Communal commitments that began as ideals imperfectly implemented could have (with adequate theological support) developed into fuller realization. Instead, ideal became myth, the sickly sort of myth that reinforced the opposite of the original commitments, not one that sparked the imagination of the community to reimagine itself. But as recent stirrings with regard to race and gender have shown, the Pentecostal ethos remains, laying dormant within these communal practices, waiting to be reengaged by any who will commit to the mission of the Spirit.

This study is an attempt to articulate and argue for the communal practices that led to the move of the Spirit experienced by the early Pentecostals and narrate them based on the mission of the Spirit to convict the world with regard to sin, righteousness, and power and to offer theological alternatives more supportive of the Pentecostal ethos. Here we seek to align our practice with the mission of the Spirit, rather than assuming the Spirit will bless whatever practices we deem religious, spiritual, or even akin to practices the Spirit has blessed in the past. Charismata can be, and often are, emulated; such does not (necessarily) signal the Spirit's presence or the forwarding of the Spirit's mission. Instead, they can be just another instance of the menace of organization, and a

¹⁸ For example, a theological account of holiness requires a robust account of obedience (at least as robust as the one Aquinas gives); an account where real disobedience cannot even be defined (cf. Barth) is inadequate for Pentecostal use and works against the central ethos of the movement. This is the shape my argument will take in chapter five.

most insidious one at that.¹⁹ One of my main arguments here is that in its attempts to justify its existence and create recipes for its hallmark experiences, the Pentecostal movement moved away from being the sort of communities the Spirit gives special empowerment to; as it solidified its place as a movement, it lost legitimate claim to the description Pentecostal.²⁰ My other main argument is that Pentecostal theological reflection requires a broader range of dialogue partners to help it emerge from the debilitating effects of its relationship with fundamentalism.

1.6 Participating in the Paraclete's Mission

This dissertation begins with an exegesis of John 16.8-11 in an effort to articulate Pentecostal ethics in terms of participation in the Spirit's mission of convincing the

¹⁹ Instead of a move of the Spirit, they are a human approximation of the move of the Spirit.

²⁰ The temptation may be to see this as the typical way religious movements routinize over time, how movements go from more to less active, open, and free, how religious order, structure, and polity sets in over time and changes the movement from its first form into something quite different. Undoubtedly this dynamic was at work in the Pentecostal movement even from its inception and such a narrative could be easily (and perhaps usefully) constructed, but that is not the narrative I seek to build, not the story I want to tell. That story would best be told by a sociologist, or history of religions scholar, e.g., Margaret M. Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality* *Journal of Pentecostal Theology. Supplement Series 17* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). It might be very telling, but it would not be what this seeks to be, which is a theological study. I want to explore this from the perspective of what God was doing and what sort of human explanations were given to that divine action and how that divine action affected the people and communities involved. This is a theological ethics precisely because it involves how human actions related to divine actions, how organization acts as a theological menace. The focus (and aspect) of this study is to ask what practices among those who would be early Pentecostals worked to set the stage for the Spirit to act as the Spirit did and what human actions then stemmed from the Spirit's move and led to the Spirit not moving as such.

world with regard to sin, righteousness, and power. The conclusions of this exegesis are that the entire world is in view throughout this passage; that the Spirit convicts all with regard to sin, defined as not believing in Jesus, righteousness, defined as following Jesus' example in a life of holiness, and power, defined as the Spirit's judgment on all forms of power that are self-aggrandizing as opposed to the cruciform mode of authority that must characterize the Christian life; and that the Spirit accomplishes this convincing work primarily through the life of the community the Spirit forms, embodies, and empowers.

Participating in the Spirit's work of convincing the world regarding sin means demonstrating the love Jesus calls for in his last Johannine discourse, whereby those who do not believe come to understand who his followers are. For Pentecostals this means regaining the unity and inclusive anti-creedalism that characterized the early movement. It also means moving beyond the fixation with initial evidence that has plagued the movement from nearly the beginning, even though this entailed blatant self-contradiction. Pentecostal practice must consciously and deliberately work towards building unity in the larger body of Christ, embracing the ecumenical and catholic nature inherent in being a people of the Spirit.

Participating in the Spirit's work of convincing the world regarding righteousness means renewing the Pentecostal emphasis on personal and communal holiness. This

entails setting aside the debilitating debate on the nature of sanctification, recognizing at last the irony of how such diversion has robbed us of the early Pentecostal focus on being Christ's empowered disciples in the world. This involves coming to terms with the limitations of narrowly defined views of atonement and looking beyond our normal borders for help recasting holiness in terms of leading a virtuous life in the Spirit.

Participating in the Spirit's work of convincing the world regarding power means embracing the Spirit's message that all forms of worldly power have been judged, that the only legitimate form authority takes is cruciform. This involves interrogating our ability and willingness to speak prophetically to power in our life as a community of the Spirit; the fleeting Pentecostal leveling experiments with regard to race and gender are used to carry out this questioning. In a truly Pentecostal ethic, power must be understood as the power of the Holy Spirit, which always comes as power to liberate, power to equalize, power to obey the commandments to love God and each other, power to serve self-sacrificially, power to live the cruciform life of a disciple of Jesus. All other forms of power have been judged and are recognized as such by the pneumatic prophetic witness of the continued presence of the community of the Spirit in the world.

1.7 Narrating the Liminal Moment

This project is an exercise in normative historiography. It weaves together a specific exegetical account, a specific historical account, and a specific theological account in an

effort to narrate the Pentecostal liminal moment. Revival movements in general, and the Pentecostal movement in particular, are marked by liminality. These egalitarian moments where *communitas* emerges seem to be unstructured (or anti-structured), moments of liminal space and time. As such, they are always fleeting. This study attempts to narrate the structure of that liminality from a theological perspective, arguing that those rare moments provide examples of the Holy Spirit carrying out the divine mission to the world in specific, *communitas* producing ways.²¹

I begin, in chapter two, with a close reading of John 16.8-11, which describes the mission of the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete. I have chosen to focus on the Paraclete because I want to develop a normative account where the Holy Spirit is the central actor, but this requires moving outside the debate between Lukan and Pauline pneumatologies, as both are more anthropologically oriented, asking how humans relate to the Holy Spirit and the *charismata*.²² The question I am asking is fundamentally different: what might the Holy Spirit be up to in all this? Neither Luke or Paul address this as clearly as the Fourth Gospel does. In his Farewell Discourse, Jesus introduces the

²¹ For *communitas* and *liminality* cf. Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality* Journal of Pentecostal Theology, Supplement Series, 17 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures, 1966 (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995), and Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings: Selected Essays in Anthropology* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

²² I would also argue that the debate within Pentecostalism between a Lukan and Pauline pneumatology is over-determined by the same Evangelical hermeneutics and theological categories chapter four argues against.

Holy Spirit as the Paraclete and describes why the Paraclete is coming and what the Paraclete will do once he comes. The Paraclete comes to form a community that conveys to the world its sin of not believing in Jesus, holds up to the world the moral example of Jesus' way, and shows the world that its mode of rule stands condemned. Mining the Paraclete's mission to the world offers an account of the liminal moment.

Chapter three takes an entirely different approach to the question. One of the earliest liminal moments in the Pentecostal awakening occurred in a small schoolhouse in the mountains of North Carolina a full ten years prior to Asuza Street. The moment was unexpected, had not been sought out, and was fleeting indeed. But in the months following that moment, the leader of that group, a thoughtful man named Richard G. Spurling, recorded his reflections on what happened, more specifically on why he thought it happened.²³ He shared those thoughts with a few people over the next several years and even taught from them publicly on a couple of occasions to the growing movement's key leaders. Then he suddenly published them as a book in 1920, twenty-three years after writing the bulk of it.²⁴ Interestingly, he did not publish them through the denomination's publishing house, but did so independently because his goal was to warn the church that he founded that it was abandoning the principles on which it was

²³ Daniel Castelo explains that early Pentecostals "harbored certain impulses and intuitions that were quite important." [Daniel Castelo, *Revisioning Pentecostal Ethics: The Epicletic Community* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012), 2.] Spurling paid closer attention than most to these things.

²⁴ Richard G. Spurling, *The Lost Link* (Turtletown, TN: White Wing Press, 1920).

founded, principles of *communitas* that he saw as essential to the move of the Holy Spirit. Spurling argued that the church must be built on the principles of unity, liberty, and equality in order to be the body of Christ formed by the Holy Spirit. Spurling's account stands out as a call to return to the liminal moment when it is set in the context of the his church's 1920 reality, led by the charismatic A.J. Tomlinson, and far removed from Spurling's vision. I should note here that I do not deal with the excellent accounts that have been given of the Pentecostal movement's quick slide into Evangelical normalcy or in any way contest the historical-sociological accounts they give. I will argue in my conclusion that trading Pauline charisma for Weberian charisma is a mark of the loss of the liminal moment, a conclusion I see as congruent with the analyses that have been done. But this is not an historical account or a sociological account, but primarily a theological account. I place Spurling in a conversation with John the Evangelist and Thomas Aquinas that he would never have had, but I think in doing so I do remain true to his theological, ecclesiological vision.

Having established the Paraclete's mission and Spurling's vision, chapters four through six take it in turn to map the three constitutive parts of each with Thomas Aquinas' account of the theological virtues. There are three reasons for this. First, because Pentecostals need different dialogue partners: "classical Pentecostalism within America would do well to continue to distinguish itself from American Evangelicalism,

for the latter represents a number of sensibilities that are not commensurate with the Pentecostal ethos."²⁵ For example, chapter four will explain the deleterious effects that fundamentalism has had on Pentecostalism. The initial evidence doctrine so important to many Pentecostals is a fundamentalist mode of thought and destructive to the very practice it seeks to protect. Pentecostals need a non-reductive account of intellection if space is to be made in human experience for *charismata*. Thomas Aquinas provides such space with account of the intellective and affective souls. We also see that the fundamental problem with initial evidence, and all other tests of this sort, is they inhibit the formation of a community of trust, which is the foundation for Spurling's unity and the means by which the Paraclete convinces the world to trust Jesus.

Second, Aquinas' account of the virtues hinges on the infusion of the Holy Spirit. Here I disagree with Castelo somewhat. He narrates the account of the affections in Aquinas as from above to below and the virtues as an account from below upward. But, as I show in chapter five, Aquinas is quite clear that infusion makes the process work, that what the virtues give us is an account of the Holy Spirit affecting human behavior through the mode of habituation. While it is true that Aquinas begins with the lower virtues and works his way upward to charity, this should be seen as an ascent; Aquinas uses the same structure in his account of the virtues as Bonaventure does in the

²⁵ Castelo, *Revisioning Pentecostal Ethics*, 20.

Itinerarium.²⁶ This affords us an opportunity to discuss moral theology as virtue and holiness, human ascent and divine infusion, whereby the Paraclete revivifies Jesus to followers who no longer see him, through the virtuous lives they live together in *communitas*. The Paraclete accomplishes this by infusing us with hope, hope that drawing closer to the moral example of Jesus is possible for those so infused. It also gives space for, and makes necessary, the freedom Spurling envisioned. The virtuous life is essentially a life of obedience to the command of God that comes to each of us in our particularity; it has a fundamentally improvisational character, as Castelo beautifully articulates.²⁷ Both obedience and improvisation require freedom, the freedom found in the liminal moment.

The third reason stems from an understanding Spurling and Aquinas share. Throughout the *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas often argues that all things are ordered to their end, by which he means everything has a *telos* and is fundamentally defined by that *telos*. Humans are ordered to an end beyond our ability to reach, our *telos* is God's very self, our destiny is union with God. What orders us properly to that end is charity, which is both the form of all the virtues and God's own self. As chapter six explains, while the Holy Spirit infuses faith in the intellectual soul and hope in appetitive soul,

²⁶ Bonaventure, *The Journey of the Mind to God*, edited by Philotheus Boehner and Stephen F. Brown (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1993).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 95ff.

there is no correlative part of the human soul for the infusion of charity, because the infusion of charity is the infusion of the Spirit's own self, quite literally a baptism in the Holy Spirit. For Spurling, the lost link that gives his reflection its name is love, the same divine *agape* that Aquinas names charity. The extended analogy Spurling uses is of a divine railroad, the drive wheels are liberty, which runs on the track of Jesus' first commandment to love God (i.e., holiness), and equality, which runs on the track of the second commandment to love neighbor. Love is the link that holds rail cars together (before the title page is a picture of Spurling holding up an actual link, a large iron elliptical), the very basis on which the whole *communitas* operates. Key to his argument in *The Lost Link* is that the community must be marked by thorough equality, where each can participate and share as the Holy Spirit leads, where authority is expressed as service, not as control. This is incompatible with all worldly expressions of power. In the liminal moment, through a *communitas* marked by charity, the Paraclete exposes such power as condemned.

This is my attempt to narrate a Johannine pneumatology with existentialist-Thomist categories. It is a conscious effort to chart a different course for Pentecostal thought. It is a constructive account that involves a triple mapping of the Paraclete's mission with Spurling's post-liminality reflection and Aquinas' account of the theological virtues: the *communitas* of trust through its unity convinces the world of its sin, the *communitas* of

hope through its freedom convinces the world of righteousness, the *communitas* of charity through its equality convinces the world that power as it knows it stands condemned.

2. The Paraclete's Mission to the World

The space in the gospel narrative between the Last Supper and the arrest of Jesus carries a natural tension; the trajectory of the story becomes steep as the climax of the drama approaches. The author of the Gospel of John marks this change of pace with the exit of Judas and then employs the growing tension to highlight teachings and commandments of Jesus that are unique to the Johannine account. The middle of this farewell discourse introduces a character/concept new to John's Gospel. The Paraclete is promised as one who will come on the scene and make Jesus' imminent departure (which his followers are slow to process) not only less of a burden on them, but actually to their advantage (16.7).

Defining Paraclete

The word Παράκλητος has been the center of much debate. The standard definition comes from Liddell and Scott: "The history of the word παράκλητος throughout the whole range of known Greek and Hellenistic usage outside the NT presents the clear picture of a term deriving from legal activity, namely legal adviser, helper or advocate in the appropriate court."¹ But after an extensive review of ancient usage of the word, Grayston concludes, "The whole range of evidence for the appearance of παράκλητος in

¹ Henry Geroge Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, Roderick McKenzie, and Project Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, "The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon", University of California, Irvine <http://www.tlg.uci.edu/lj>.

classical and Hellenistic Greek, as a rabbinic loan-word, and in patristic texts denies that it is a term deriving from legal activity. Bauer was right when he said that 'the technical sense of advocate cannot be demonstrated'.² Instead, the most common meaning of the word in antiquity was less formal, more supportive, and decidedly not antagonistic (as a prosecutor would necessarily be): "The business of a *παράκλητος* is to give advice or to make a great person favourable to a suppliant. The word means something like supporter, sponsor, patron."³ Furthermore, with regard to our specific passage, "Yet in the Farewell Discourses, the Paraclete corresponds to no forensic office but is much more a prophetic teacher."⁴ Brown builds on Grayston's review of the pre-John uses of Paraclete, concluding that the term was used predominantly in describing the work of a "mediator or broker."⁵ A brokerage model not only agrees better with the usage we find in antiquity, it also works well with the Johannine themes of access, the mission of Jesus (and then the Spirit), and the important role clients (i.e., disciples) play in the theodrama.⁶

² Kenneth Grayston, "The Meaning of Paraklētōs." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (4, no. 13 (1981), 79.

³ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁵ Tricia Gates Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John : Johannine Pneumatology in Social-Scientific Perspective* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series. London ; New York: T & T Clark International, 2003), 181.

⁶ See Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John*, 193-6.

The English translation 'Advocate' (RSV, et al)⁷ is based on the thread of scholarship following Liddell and Scott, and the apparent juridical theme of this passage (i.e, conviction, judgment). But it seems much less appropriate in the other Johannine instances, leading other translations to choose a different English word that encompasses those other statements while using a single term for all instances. Occurrences of Comforter, Encourager, Intercessor, Teacher, Helper and the occasional transliteration show not only a linguistic difficulty but a conceptual one, as we still pause over what John meant in his distinctive description of the Holy Spirit.⁸

In examining the other Paraclete references, several characteristics stand out. First is that the Paraclete is actually *another* Paraclete (14.16) which echoes (or foreshadows) the description of Jesus as a Paraclete to the Father on behalf of his followers in 1 John 2.1.

⁷ A review of English renderings: "Helper" is the choice for the ESV, God's Word, Good News, J. B. Phillips ("divine helper"), NASB (with footnote: "*Paracletos*, one called alongside to help; or Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor"), NCV (with footnote: "'Counselor' or 'Comforter.' Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit."), NKJV, Worldwide English ("the one who is to help you"), and New Life Version. "Comforter" is used by the ASV, Amplified (see below), Darby, Holman CSB, KJV, Lamsa, Wycliffe, Tyndale, and Young's Literal. "Advocate" appears in the NIV (though the NIV 1984 and NIV U.K. both have "Counselor"), RSV, NRSV, and NLT (with footnote: "Or Comforter, or Encourager, or Counselor. Greek reads *Paraclete*."), and Lexham. Both the NIV Readers and The Message use "Friend," Douay-Rheims and the Jerusalem Bible transliterate "Paraclete," the CEV opts for "the Holy Spirit," and the Common English Bible has "Companion" (with "Advocate" as a footnote). The difficulty and variety is perhaps best summed up in the all-encompassing parenthetical placed in the text of the Amplified Bible: "Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Advocate, Intercessor, Strengtheners, Standby)."

⁸ Richard Bailey offers these possible meanings: "The Authorized Version rendering of 'Comforter' (which in the seventeenth century meant 'Strengtheners' or 'Fortifier' rather than 'Consoler') is inaccurate. It means literally 'called in to help' and is a technical word of the law courts for counsel or witness. Hence it is often translated 'Advocate,' but I think this name is bound to suggest to us a more legalistic idea than S. John intends. Possibly the word 'Champion' would best express its meaning. Philo uses the word, but in a different connection." [Richard Fitzroy Bailey, *The Gospel of S. John: An Introductory Commentary* (A Commentary for Schools. London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1940), 29.]

As both Jesus and the Spirit are named as Paraclete, we might expect them to share traits in common, and this is certainly the case. Like Jesus, the Spirit-Paraclete comes from the Father, and cannot be received or known by the world (14.16). Unlike Jesus, the Spirit cannot even be seen by the world, but this is a temporary difference, soon Jesus will no longer be visible to the world either (14.19). The Spirit will remain with and eventually be in Jesus' followers, and will teach them "all things," specifically aiding memory with regard to all that Jesus taught (14.26). Indeed, the Paraclete will testify about Jesus, alongside the followers who will testify (15.26-7). The Spirit will guide into all truth, but will also only speak what he hears, but will also disclose what is to come and in all glorifying Jesus, only taking what belongs to Jesus (nothing less than all the Father has) and sharing that. In terms of a strict theological consideration, the Father gives the Paraclete at Jesus' request (14.16), Jesus sends the Paraclete from the Father (15.26), the Paraclete proceeds from the Father (15.26), can only come after Jesus' departure (16.7), and is sent by Jesus (16.7). Aside from our pericope, the actions and characteristics attributed to the Spirit-Paraclete seem congruent with each other (bordering on redundant). We will need to consider if the action in 16.8-11 constitutes a departure from this, some disconnected mission of the Spirit-Paraclete, or if this statement can also be understood in this mode of guiding/teaching/reminding/testifying/revealing/glorifying.

There are two main reasons to look for help from this surrounding context. One is the Paraclete term John is filling with his meaning stands as the main subject of this multilayered, several clause sentence. Much goes on in 16.8-11, and the Paraclete is the actor throughout. The second reason is that the action the Paraclete performs, ἐλέγξει, is an even rarer term for John, occurring only here and in 8.46. Its unique appearance here makes understanding this passage more difficult still, especially as this is the primary verb in place through v.11. The Paraclete is the actor and ἐλέγχω is the action all the way through; what follows in this sentence stands in immediate relation to this actor and action and offers the best explanation for what John means by them.

The Paraclete's action toward the world

Ἐλέγχω can express a wide range of intensity, from pointing something out to someone, to bringing something to light, to convicting or convincing, to reproving and correcting, all the way to punishing and disciplining.⁹ Despite this wide range, many modern commentators view this action as primarily hostile, attacking, accusing, adversarial and prosecutorial in nature, even though this requires reading both

⁹ Aloisi explains, "Outside of the NT, ἐλέγχω has a broad semantic range... But the idea of rebuking another person or showing another person his sin for the purpose of repentance is the most common meaning of ἐλέγχω not only in the LXX but also in the NT. [John Aloisi, "The Paraclete's Ministry of Conviction: Another Look at John 16:8-11." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (47, no. 1 2004), 56-57.]

Westcott agrees, and yet only offers forensic examples: "The idea of 'conviction' is complex. It involves the conceptions of authoritative examination, of unquestionable proof, of decisive judgment, of punitive power." [Arthur Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London,: J. Murray, 1924), 228.].

παράκλητος and ἐλέγξει contrary to their most common meaning.¹⁰ This understanding may stem from the first and third concepts involved, sin and judgment, and their explanatory clauses which point to unbelieving and being condemned. More likely, this interpretation is based on a Pauline-Lutheran reading of the second concept, righteousness, though the explanation of the ascension of Jesus, does not seem to illuminate such a negative action for ἐλέγχω. Such action also finds no parallel in the other Paraclete descriptions. In 14.16, the Paraclete will be with, and dwell in, the disciples. In 14.26, the Paraclete will teach and remind the disciples of all that Jesus taught them. In 15.26, the Paraclete will testify about Jesus. If ἐλέγξει in 16.8 means to prosecute, then this marks a significant departure from the other aspects of the Paraclete's activity. This coupled with the rejection of the notion that a Paraclete was

¹⁰ Barrett asserts: "the primary meaning of the Greek word is 'legal assistant, advocate,' and with this meaning it was transliterated into Hebrew and Aramaic. This meaning however does not seem to be prominent in John's usage; there is a forensic aspect of the Paraclete's work, but he is a prosecuting rather than a defending counsel." [C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, Second Edition (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 462.]

See also J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2010), 833. Kellum acknowledges the grammatical structure here requires a consistent reading across all three clauses, yet still defines ἐλέγχω negatively: "The elaboration at [vv.] 9-11 is also brief and highly compact (comprised of a single sentence employing a series of items in a μέν/δέ/δέ formulation)... For this reason, it is best to understand ἐλέγχω in the sense of conviction in all three clauses, and the substance of this conviction as a negative condition within the world in each clause." (Kellum, *The Unity of the Farewell Discourse*, 179-80).[L. Scott Kellum, *The Unity of the Farewell Discourse : The Literary Integrity of John 13:31-16:33*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series (London ; New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), 179-80.] Breck: "the spirit of truth testifies to all things and brings all accusations." [John Breck, *Spirit of Truth: The Holy Spirit in Johannine Tradition* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991), 117.] See also, Fernando F. Segovia, *The Farewell of the Word: The Johannine Call to Abide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 232-5.

some kind of prosecuting attorney points to a more positive meaning of ἐλέγχω, such as 'convince,' which seems more in keeping with the wider Farewell Discourse.¹¹

According to Lutkemeyer, ἐλέγχω appears fifteen times in the NT and, "In every instance its use implies the action of a friend, trying to make someone see his mistake or fault or duty or opportunity."¹²

Drawing from the rest of the Paraclete passages helps us deepen what this convincing action entails. Martyn sees it as primarily glorifying Christ: "The Paraclete is even now showing Jesus in his glory. 'He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (16.14) The Word's dwelling among us and our beholding his glory are not events which transpired only in the past, an ideal period when the kingdom of God was on earth."¹³ This convicting is more than about proving wrong or prosecuting

¹¹ According to Barrett, this is the meaning, "used primarily by Greek moralists (e.g. Philo) of the conscience." (Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 486) Charlesworth argues for this meaning based on his examination of the Qumran literature: "That the sinner should be convicted of his own guilt is often the most important aim, and the nearest parallel aim of the Paraclete in Jn. 16:7ff which we can find in the Scrolls is associated with the verb *hōkīah* (Hiph. form of the root *ykh*), which more or less corresponds to the Greek *elenchein*. The meaning of the passages where the verb is used in the Scrolls is often best indicated by the word 'rebuke,' especially in the context of the duty of a member of the sect to rebuke his neighbor in order that the latter may purge his guilt in good time." [James H. Charlesworth and Raymond Edward Brown, *John and Qumran*. (London,: Geoffrey Chapman Publishers, 1972), 45.]

¹² Lawrence J. Lutkemeyer, "The Role of the Paraclete (Jn. 16:7–15)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (8, no. 220-9 1946), 221-2.

¹³ J. Louis Martyn, *History & Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, Second Edition (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 150-1

an offender, this carries the, “desire to produce an internal consent, a conviction which will move one to obedience.”¹⁴

There are two other things to account for with ἐλέγξει in this passage: the content that is being conveyed and the recipient of the action. The recipient of the action, the someone, stands as an accusative direct object, while the concepts in question are signified by περί with a genitive. For the three concepts in this sentence, John uses περί six times, one each for introducing and then explaining each concept. But just as there is only one main subject and verb, there is also only one object: the world is the object of the Paraclete’s ἐλέγχω. We have several concepts at work here, but only one object: the world. Unlike the rarity of Paraclete and ἐλέγχω, John used κόσμος seventy-seven times in his Gospel, often in key statements. Understanding the consistent yet complex way John uses this term will help us better understand the nature of the ἐλέγχω action and how that action fits with the Paraclete’s overall mission.

The concept of the world in the fourth gospel

Over half (39) of the instances of κόσμος in the fourth Gospel come in positive statements, including references to Jesus Christ coming ‘into the world,’ describing Jesus’ mission to the world (e.g., the Baptist’s early declaration that Jesus comes as the

¹⁴ Aelred Lacomara, “Deuteronomy and the Farewell Discourse (Jn 13:31-16.33),” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (36, 1974): 65-84.

one who “takes away the sin of the world” (1.29), the common euphemism for this mission: “light of the world” (8.12, 9.5, 11.9, 12.46), expressing God’s love for the world (3.16), and no less than ten statements that the world ‘may be saved.’ Taking these statements alone would lead one to conclude that the world is the object of God’s love and is being saved by the Son’s mission, as Jesus prays just before his arrest, “that the world may believe that you sent me” (17.21), “that the world may know that you sent me, and loved them, even as you have loved me.” (17.23)

However, most of the remaining instances (36) show another usage of *κόσμος* in John, one characterized by conflict and enmity between Jesus and his followers against those who either “cannot receive” (14.17), “do not know” (17.25), or most commonly “hate” either Jesus, his followers, or both. There is even one instance where Jesus instructs his followers to hate their own life in this world (12.25). Jesus tells Pilate his “kingdom is not of this world” (18.36), he gives his followers peace “not as the world gives” (14.27), and he even tells the Father his “prayer is not for the world” (17.9), but for those the Father has given to him. In all these passages the world stands in juxtaposition to Jesus and his followers.¹⁵ Included in this hostile world strand of thought are three passages that refer to ‘the ruler of the world,’ moving from the future tense, *νῦν ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου*

¹⁵ Except that estranged believers may also be in view, as Raymond Brown asserts in his exploration of the Johannine community. [Raymond Edward Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 63-6, 143-4.] While Brown’s argument is somewhat different, the inclusiveness of *κόσμος* in the Johannine corpus is what I want to stress here.

ἐκβληθήσεται ἔξω (“now the ruler of this world will be cast out,” 12.31), to the present, γὰρ ὁ τοῦ κόσμου ἄρχων (“for the ruler of the world is coming,” 14.30), which gives way to the perfect tense of our passage, ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου κέκριται (“the ruler of the world has been judged,” 16.11). The difference between the world’s hostility and its ruler’s is that hope remains for the world, as evidenced by Jesus’ prayer above, contrasted to the completed action of the ruler’s judgment.

These two emphases of *κόσμος* are twice explicitly juxtaposed in the fourth Gospel: “He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world did not know him” (1.10) and, “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than Light, for their deeds were evil” (3.19); there is also something of a dialectical approach in places, such as the conversation with Nicodemus. Jesus asserts that God so loves the world, demonstrated by sending his son, that he himself has not come to judge the world, but that those who do not trust in the sent son are already judged, as ones who hate God’s loving act of sending the Light into the world. The *κόσμος* is “the object of divine loving,” and yet stands, “in hostile antithesis to God.”¹⁶ God created and loves the world in an act of divine freewill (not out of necessity) and loves it still, despite its hostility to God. “Even as the world was created and illuminated by Him, it has ceased to be worthy of His love. But God did not in fact cease

¹⁶ Barth *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, 70.

to love it. Only now did He begin genuinely and supremely to love it.”¹⁷ The conviction and judgment of the world described by John occur, “not because God rejects it, but because He loves it.”¹⁸ All divine action toward the *κόσμος* in John is fundamentally characterized by this love - love in the face of hostility - particularly in the sending, first of the Son, then of the other Paraclete. Thus the primary action in this passage can be understood as a loving *ἐλέγχω*, a continuation of the divine mission to save the world that God loves.¹⁹

The subjects of the subordinate clauses in our pericope can also be considered with regard to how *κόσμος* is to be understood. Taken in aggregate, the three identified seem to cover the entire world: *οὐ πιστεύουσιν*, ‘they’ who do not believe - people in a present state of not having faith in Jesus, *οὐκέτι θεωρεῖτέ*, ‘you’ who no longer see Jesus - followers who are soon to lose sight of Jesus (so soon in fact that the verb here is present, not future, tense), and *ὁ ἄρχων*, the ruler of this world who has been judged (interesting that the perfect tense is used here pre-crucifixion). Who has been left out? Non-believers, believers, and the powers are all accounted for. Indeed, John uses a good deal of

¹⁷ Ibid., 71.

¹⁸ Ibid. Godet: “The world in which such conviction is to be produced is not, as the Fathers, De Wette, and Brückner think, men decidedly lost, to whom the Holy Spirit will demonstrate the righteousness of their condemnation. Ver. 11 proves that the prince of this world alone is actually judged. If the world is the object of the HS's reproof, this is because it is still capable of salvation.” [Frédéric Louis Godet S. Taylor, and M. D. Cusin, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*. 3 vols. Clark's Foreign Theological Library 4th Series, Vol Li, Liii, Lvi (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899), 179.]

¹⁹ Bailey affirms this: “Christ is still 'the propitiation for our sins; and not only for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole World.’” (Bailey, *The Gospel of S. John*, 34.)

repetition in the farewell discourse to drive home another dialectic: the followers of Jesus are not of the world just as Jesus is not of the world (having been born from above, 3.3), yet his followers remain in the world, with Jesus explicitly not asking the Father to remove them from the world (17.15), despite his own desire that they join him with the Father (17.24). As ones still belonging in the world,²⁰ even the believers are legitimate recipients of the Paraclete's loving ἐλέγχω of the world.

The Paraclete convinces the world

Thus, it is not adequate to regard the convicting action of the Paraclete as a negative convicting directed solely at unbelievers, as this fails to adequately explain the elaborate grammatical construction. This is why Schnackenburg argues that sin, righteousness, and judgment, "are not points of accusation."²¹ The three are listed together in a series, yet the first two are seemingly opposite, while the third is a different sort of thing; what brings these three into a series together is not any intrinsic quality within the three. The only thing they seem to share here is that they are specific modes of the Spirit's convincing work. Schnackenburg maintains that what we have here is "the image of a

²⁰ "Within the world, and therefore as a witness directed and appointed to it, there are men who belong to it, yet who do not perish but have everlasting life. In the setting up of this witness within the world the atonement is shown to be an atonement which is made for the world." (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, 73.)

²¹ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*. vol. 3 (New York: Crossroad, 1982.), 129. I focus on Schnackenburg here because his interpretation is thorough and pays attention to the grammatical symmetry of the passage. Cf. D.A. Carson, "The Function of the Paraclete in John 16:7-11," *Journal of Biblical Literature* (98, no. 4, 1979), 549-50.

cosmic trial,” which draws on and develops “ideas that already existed in Judaism in connection with God's eschatological judgment,” where the Paraclete is specifically “an advocate of God who argues Jesus' case.”²² He affirms that the Spirit convicts the world of its sin, which is not believing in Jesus, through the agency of the community of faith, but instead of following the grammatical construct John is developing, Schnackenburg shifts to the righteousness belonging to Christ, with the community of faith (though named specifically here in the second person) having no agency in this second mode. Agency is affirmed for the community in the third mode, not by any specific action, but by its existence: “The children of God are withdrawn from his power because they have, through the Spirit, the strength to avoid sin and are, in the community of the Son of God, protected from the grip of the evil one.”²³

Despite affirming that in this passage “the structure is quite consistent,” Schnackenburg does not carry this through far enough to see the meaning conveyed by the structure.²⁴ He has no agency for the community of faith with regard to the Spirit's convincing according to righteousness, and the agency he affirms for the other two modes of conviction do not draw on Jesus' discourse here in John or bear any necessary connection to the convincing work of the Spirit in the given mode. How does being

²² Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 130.

²³ *Ibid.*, 132.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

“protected from the evil one” serve to convey conviction to the ruling power of the world? Why is faith named as the means of agency for the first mode, when John specifically names love as the means (a claim which Acts 4 also makes)? Schnakenburg's reading seems both too fixed on the forensic image and not focused enough on the parallel structure at work in this passage.

Taking the grammatical construction together with how ill-fitting it is to see the subjects of the secondary clauses in vv. 10-11 as objects of the convincing act (particularly *θεωρεῖτέ* and *ὁ ἄρχων*), it is possible to interpret the convincing act as being done upon the entire *κόσμος* in all three parts of the initial summary statement (as opposed to primarily the first), reading the subsequent *περί* clauses in vv.9-11 not as explaining the direction or cause of the conviction, but the means by which the conviction is carried out.²⁵ This reading allows for a different answer to common questions regarding this passage: “The question may be raised whether conviction is experienced by both believers and unbelievers, or by unbelievers alone. And if the Spirit does convict believers, in what way is this conviction different from that which comes to

²⁵ This is essentially the position Barrett takes, though he only applies it to the first subordinate clause: “John seems to be giving the fundamental ground of conviction of sin (and righteousness and judgment) rather than stating the content of sin (and righteousness and judgment). The present verse, then, will have the following meaning. The Spirit, operating upon the conscience of men, through the witness of the church, will convince them of their sin.” (Barrett, 488) Here the only ones who are convicted are they who do not believe and only of their sin. The remaining two clauses have no place in this understanding.

the world?"²⁶ The answer here is that all of the Paraclete's convincing work is the same in its content and direction, as we will see, the Spirit convinces the world through the life of the church.

In this interpretation, ὅτι is acknowledged as introducing each of the three as explanatory (not causative) clauses.²⁷ BDAG explains the use of ὅτι in this passage: "ὅτι alone is used for εἰς ἐκεῖνο ὅτι with regard to the fact, in consideration of the fact that (but it is possible that... the causal force of ὅτι comes to the fore)."²⁸ While causality seems to make sense with the first περί clause, it makes less sense with the second, and no sense with the third. While it seems logical for the world to be convicted because they do not believe, it does not seem logical that disciples not seeing Jesus and a ruler condemned would be causes for the Paraclete to convict the world. Schnackenburg struggles with whether this passage has a forensic character and whether ὅτι should be read as factual (that) or causal (because), but he is clearest on how this conviction is carried out: "We

²⁶ Aloisi, "The Paraclete's Ministry of Conviction," 65.

²⁷ E.g., Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John; a Commentary* (Philadelphia,: Westminster Press, 1971), 563; Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John* (trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 532; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 129; George Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (reprint of 1889 ed.; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1974), 187. By contrast, Westcott offers a causative (and spiritualized) reading: "because...because...because. Three distinct facts answering to the spiritual characteristics of the world, of Christ, and of the prince of the world, are stated, which severally form the basis of the action of the Spirit. The conjunction is not to be taken simply as explanatory ('in so far as'), but as directly causal; 'because this and this and this is beyond question, the innermost secrets of man's spiritual nature can be and are discovered.'" (Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 229).

²⁸ William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Edited by Walter Bauer and Frederick W. Danker. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 589.

are not told precisely how this activity that is attributed to the Paraclete takes place in the concrete, but, according to 15.2f, there can be no doubt that he makes use of the disciples or the believing community in it.”²⁹ Moreover, it is not only proclamation that John has in view here, but the entire life of the community: “It is also not simply by means of the disciples’ proclamation that the Paraclete gains a hearing with regard to the world - we ought rather to think at the same time of the existence and the life of faith of the community in this context.”³⁰

Still, it is a struggle to read these clauses together in a unified way: “If the second and third clauses could be ignored, the first could reasonably be taken as explanatory. However, John’s structure is so clearly parallel that the three *ὅτι* clauses should be interpreted in the same way.”³¹ The “significant difficulties in interpreting all three clauses as explanatory,” and the fact that, “most who try to interpret the clauses this way end up shifting the meaning at least slightly,” are overcome by understanding *κόσμος* as comprehensive here.³² Righteousness is less of a problem if it applies to the

²⁹ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 129.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

³¹ Aloisi, “The Paraclete’s Ministry of Conviction,” 62.

³² *Ibid.*

“you” who do not see (as part of the world), than if it must be made to apply to the unbelieving world.³³

As such, this interpretation reads the ὅτι clauses as continuative and explanatory not causative. The point here is that the Paraclete’s action in this statement is not reactionary, not triggered by unbelief, ascension, or judgment; this action is central to the Paraclete’s mission as another one sent to reconcile the world to God. The causality here is the same as in 3.16 for the Son’s coming. The love God has for the world is the impetus for the Paraclete being sent, the purpose of the Paraclete’s mission. What causal force we may allow here is not a cause of the convincing, but of the three particular forms the convincing takes. This understanding comes out more clearly in Abbott’s translation:

“He will convict the world about sin and about righteousness and about judgment; in the first place (μέν) about sin, [*I say this*] because they believe not on me; in the next place (δέ) about righteousness, [*I say this*] because I go unto the Father and ye no longer

³³ “No one doubts that sin refers to the world’s sin, but most commentators are loath to interpret verse 10 as meaning that the Paraclete convicts the world of its righteousness. How can unbelieving people be convicted of their righteousness?” (Ibid.) This requires reading ὅτι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ὑπάγω καὶ οὐκέτι θεωρεῖτέ με as more than a parenthetical comment, as Aloisi does. This is problematic, however, as the benefit of Jesus going away is the overall theme that binds this discourse together. As Kellum notes, this is meant to be good news: “The major point that is overlooked in the conversation is that the conviction of the world is an advantage to the disciples. One is then compelled to see perhaps multiple benefits for the disciples in the conviction of the world (including evangelism and empowered ministry) In light of the hostility of the world in the previous passage, the role of the Paraclete in convicting the world is welcome information.” (Kellum, *The Unity of the Farewell Discourse*, 180.)

behold me; in the next place (δέ) about judgment, [*I say this*] *because* the prince of this world hath been judged."³⁴

John's carefully organized grammatical structure significantly impacts what the key words mean in this context. The initial indicative subject-predicate with a direct object phrase (ἐλέγξει τὸν κόσμον) anchors this sentence grammatically and conceptually, provided we pay attention to the symmetry and do not settle for an interpretation that works for one clause, but not the others. As Carson explains:

Most of the more believable interpretations offered to date manifest a significant built-in discontinuity of this type. Some, for instance, take two of the ὅτι clauses causally and the other as an explicative. Others want ἐλέγξει to mean 'convict' in [the first clause], but 'prove wrong about' or 'convince' in [second and third]. All such interpretations are extremely difficult to disqualify in their elements; but they remain unconvincing as total packages because they resort to an atomization which ignores the integrity of the structure.³⁵

The elaborations that follow in vv.9-11 have this entire clause as an understood antecedent. Expanding this grammatical shorthand, we have these three full statements:

- The Paraclete will convict the world about sin in that they do not believe in me.
- The Paraclete will convict the world about righteousness in that I go to the Father and you see me no longer.
- The Paraclete will convict the world about judgment in that the ruler of this world has been judged.

³⁴ Edwin Abbott. *Johannine Grammar* Diatessarica: 6 (London, A. and C. Black, 1906), 158.

³⁵ Carson, "The Function of the Paraclete in John 16:7-11," 548-9.

Instead of allowing the first (or third) subordinate clause to tempt us back into a juridical reading of this passage, it seems better to understand the primary clause in light of John's overall thought (drawing on the other Paraclete passages and how *κόσμος* functions as a meme in John), so that the subordinate clauses draw meaning from the primary clause, and further illuminate in the direction it sets. As such, *κόσμος* should be taken in its fullest Johannine sense, encompassing the world as the object of God's love that stands in opposition to God and that includes some who have put trust in God. This is quite different from what we find in much NT scholarship,³⁶ where *ἐλέγχω* only applies to the first part of the Paraclete's work here, with *κόσμος* defined as "unbelievers, to the godless world," for whom the Spirit "acts as a counsel for the prosecution."³⁷ The Paraclete is most often compared to a prosecutor here, despite the evidence to the contrary cited above.³⁸ Reading Paraclete here as a legal, accusatory role is also at odds with the other Johannine Paraclete statements, as described above.³⁹

³⁶ The focus on convicting with the regard to the world and its' sin only often dovetails with defining *ἐλέγχω* as primarily a hostile action (see above). A notable exception is Ridderbos, *Gospel According to John*, see 522ff.

³⁷ F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1983), 318. Bruce distances this work from, "the Spirit's inward work which results in true conversion, [as it] is not the aspect of his activity which is in view here."

³⁸ Cf. Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 833-4, Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 318, and Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 961, for the all-too-common Paraclete as prosecutor reading. Why Grayston's evidence continues to be ignored is a question that lies beyond my scope here.

³⁹ This is highlighted by statements like this from Dodd: "We must suppose that for John *παράκλητος* has become a fixed title for the Holy Spirit in the Church, so that he uses it even where the specific functions of the advocate are not in view." [C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. (Cambridge Eng.:

Such a reading also pays little attention to the specific naming of other actors in this passage: they who do not believe, you who see Jesus no more, the ruler who has been judged. Instead, the assumption is that *κόσμος* refers to those who do not believe, only to the world in its hostility toward God. Of course, those who read world in this way, and see the Paraclete as prosecutor, naturally read the verb forensically, though *ἐλέγχω* does not usually carry this connotation, but that of conscience-moving, as noted above. As the world is the object of God's love, this passage is explaining, not some specific forensic element of an individualized justification scheme, but the nature of the Spirit's mission to the world. Those who do not believe, those who no longer see Jesus, the ruler who has been judged are not separate recipients of different forms of *ἐλέγχω*, but participants in the theodrama, the story of God loving the world, the world being hostile to God, and the world being saved by God. Each actor here has a different role, yet roles related to each other through each being related to the Paraclete's convincing mission.⁴⁰ The

University Press, 1953), 415.] It is also telling that Dodd sees the forensic prosecutorial action he reads in 16.8-11 as the specific function of the advocate, with the other Paraclete passages not fitting well.

⁴⁰ My understanding of these relations is consciously dependent on von Balthasar: "The departure of Jesus, which apparently brings his finite acting to an abrupt end, is 'good for you' (Jn 16:7): only thus is his drama opened up for all his fellow actors; only thus does it become the stage for the action of God's indwelling in men and their dwelling in him. This area is both open and empty: it is empty because of the Son's disappearance ('good for you'), which in turn makes possible the sending of the Spirit. The sending of the Spirit will imply both communication and dialogue between heaven and earth as well as the universalization of the process, the phenomenon, of Jesus; thus there will be a genuine distribution of roles to the actors in the form of 'mission,' 'charisma.' So the paradox referred to reaches its climax. The entire

Paraclete comes alongside to help, convincing the world that it is loved by God, is hostile to God, and is being saved by God. Reading the subordinate clauses in light of this understanding and the wider Johannine context brings us to an understanding of what this ministry to the world looks like and how it gets done.

Sin: they do not trust

In the first subordinate clause, *περὶ ἁμαρτίας μὲν, ὅτι οὐ πιστεύουσιν εἰς ἐμέ*, John's juxtaposition of sin and believing is most interesting. John handled his grammar carefully throughout his Gospel so that sin is always a state - people have sin in John - while believing is always an action, never a state, never a noun, never a mental assent, but always an action.⁴¹ As such, the best English rendering of *πιστεύω* in John is trust, "to believe in a moral sense, not a mere act of the intellect."⁴² Thus *ἁμαρτία* in this context

acting area is an atmosphere of reciprocal indwelling and interpenetration on the part of God and man/world, but it is not something static. Since it is set in motion by the temporal, finite process and departure of Jesus, it is a perduring event; and, in this perduring event, new players can continually act their parts, appearing onstage and leaving it, without their personal acting - and the entire play of world history - being condemned as an absurd and futile finitude. God has always been on his way to meet the world; the incarnate Son has always been in the process of returning to his Father. This means that the necessarily finite world drama takes place in the open realm of the Spirit, where men appear on the world stage and depart from it, to be endowed with gifts and robbed of them. In this they are in harmony with the theodramatic meaning, which is ultimately trinitarian." [Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, 5 vols (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), III: 54-55.]

⁴¹ Sin is spoken of as a state one is born in (9.34) and can die in (8.21). Forms of the verb *πιστεύω* appear 48 times in the Gospel of John; the cognate *πίστις* does not appear.

⁴² Edwin Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary; a Comparison of the Words of the Fourth Gospel with Those of the Three, Diatessarica*, Pt. 5 (London, A. and C. Black, 1905), 21. However, some commentators deny that this carries any moral-ethical meaning, e.g.: "In fact John is not interested in purely ethical matters, nor is he concerned

may be defined as being in a state of mistrust toward God, which lies at the heart of the hostility the world has toward God.

The Paraclete persuades the world that it does not trust God and does so through the community of trust the Paraclete establishes and maintains. Bruner specifies the locus of this activity: "Through the church's preaching, the Spirit moves men to believe and he convicts them of unbelief in Jesus Christ."⁴³ But how do the Spirit and the church communicate this? How does the church preach this? We may look to Jesus' prayer for this, where he asks the Father that those who do not trust may come to do so, not through hearing a sermon, but through the living witness of the church in its unity: "that they may all be one; even as you Father are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may trust that you sent me." (17.21) It is through unity (built on trust) that the church shows itself to be a people who trust God. The world sees this unity and is convinced of its own fundamental mistrust, or at least has the opportunity to be so.

to correct false ideas of the world. The whole point of his gospel is to bring men to a decision, and this is what he is concerned with in these verses." [Barnabas Lindars, "Dikaiosynē in Jn 16,8 and 10," In *Mélanges Bibliques* (Gembloux, Belgium: J Duculot, 1970), 285.]

⁴³ Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit; the Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 279.

Moral excellence: you no longer see me

The second subordinate clause, *περι δικαιοσύνης δέ, ὅτι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ὑπάγω καὶ οὐκέτι θεωρεῖτέ με*, finds the lone use of *δικαιοσύνη* in John coupled with the claim that is repeated so often in this discourse: “I go to the Father, and you see me no longer.”⁴⁴ Not seeing Jesus any longer was an imminent reality for his disciples and an existing reality for John’s readers. Jesus has already told them that the world will no longer see him, though they will (14.19). Here he seems to contradict that by saying they will not see him any longer, and (in a repetitiveness that needs to be read aloud to be fully appreciated) John reiterates both of these statements no less than four times (each) in 16.16-19, through Jesus stating, the disciples questioning, and Jesus articulating the request for explanation they were reluctant to make: “you will see me no longer... you will see me.” As the request for clarification is explicitly acknowledged, but not given, the entire dialogue in 16.16-19 may be the Gospel writer’s way of cleverly driving his point home, particularly with the paradox in 16.16 of believers who both do not see and do see Jesus.⁴⁵ This may refer to the near term post-resurrection appearances,⁴⁶ but it more

⁴⁴ This statement is repeated five times in this discourse: 14.19; 16.10, 16, 17, and 22; it also implied in 14.26, 16.7, and 17.24.

⁴⁵ The departure of Jesus, which is intended as good news, is the overall theme of the Farewell Discourse (see f.n. 33 above).

⁴⁶ You no longer see me, “might refer to the cross, when Jesus was removed from them. Or it might look through the cross to the ascension when His bodily form was finally taken away from them.” [Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John; the English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 699.]

likely refers to parousia or the promise of the Paraclete's coming for John's readers. He makes stronger claims to have seen the resurrected Lord in other passages; this back and forth adds nothing to that. The latter seems more in view in the first occurrence of this not seeing in the farewell discourses: "I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete... whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you... Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me." (14.17-19) In other words, you will see me because you will see the Paraclete. The negated *θεωρέω* in v.10 may indicate that the Paraclete somehow makes up for or takes the place of beholding Jesus, enabling the followers to continue doing what Jesus had done himself and begun to teach them to do as well.

But even if this is comforting to the disciples, it does not further the Paraclete's mission in that the world still cannot see the Paraclete or know the contents of this conviction directly: "Until Jesus returns to take them with him to his heavenly dwelling place, believers shall not see him physically but only in and through his Spirit, the Paraclete."⁴⁷ This is not to say that the Spirit does not engage in interior conviction of the individual; the goal here is not to challenge the concept of prevenient grace or in any

⁴⁷ Tricia Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John*, 713.

way seek to limit how the Spirit may operate in the world.⁴⁸ That is a basic theological error, one that fundamentally misunderstands the nature of the Holy Spirit. It is here in John's Gospel that we learn the Holy Spirit can no more be controlled or regulated than the wind. Our passage specifically addresses how the Holy Spirit, as the Helper of the church, conveys to the world the truth about itself: that it is loved by God, hostile to God, and being saved by God. The Paraclete carries out this mission by creating and sustaining a people who trust God, who follow Jesus, and who are governed by the Holy Spirit.

The question that remains here is what exactly is to be seen. The world is convicted of righteousness and Jesus is no longer seen, so what is it that the world needs to see for the Paraclete's message here to get through? As this is the only time John uses *δικαιοσύνη* there is a tendency (more by assumption rather than review) to read this through the lens of Rom. 1.18 - and that as interpreted by Luther. This is taken to be the

⁴⁸ Bultmann explains the conviction in view here does not, "take place in the inward workings of men's consciences, but in simple historical facts which speak with complete clarity - though of course, they speak only for ears that believe, For these facts are not the historical effects of Jesus' life, in so far as these can be seen as phenomena of world-history, but the existence of Jesus' disciples, in so far as his word is alive within them. Just as the judgment of the world took place in his coming, because it was the coming of light (3.20), so it continues to take place in the continuing proclamation of his word by the community. It is not Christian polemic or apologetic as such that is thought of here. For this presupposes that there is a common basis for discussion and persuasion, and that one can point to criteria by which the world can recognize that it is in the wrong. But the lawsuit is played out on a higher level; the world itself does not begin to realize that the existence and preaching of the Christian community is its own conviction; it cannot perceive the Paraclete (14.17); it cannot grasp the basis for the judgment." (Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 562.) While I disagree that the world contains its own righteousness as Bultmann claims (p. 566), the understanding he expresses here of this passage referring to the Paraclete convincing the world through the life of the church is the basic premise I am arguing for here.

righteousness of Christ, with the second subordinate clause essentially restating the first: unbelievers are convicted for not believing and for not believing in the righteousness of Christ.⁴⁹ How this relates to the disciples no longer seeing Jesus is less clear; it is suggested that Jesus' disappearance via ascension proves his righteousness once and for all, though this is never so much as hinted at in any of the going away to the Father statements in John. It is also unclear why unbelievers are to be forensically convicted regarding the condemned status of the ruler of the world. In short, a forensic-legal understanding of this passage is not satisfying.⁵⁰ This statement does not stand apart from the other Johannine Paraclete statements or from his overall theme. Reading this as a forensic appeal to an disembodied concept misses that in John's Gospel, the righteousness, or innocence, or victory of Jesus is proven through what is seen as much

⁴⁹ This is the approach Barrett takes, where meaning is "determined by the theme of judgment, and signifies the innocence of Jesus," or perhaps "that *the world's* righteousness is false," or "John may by the noun δικαιοσύνης mean justification (cf. Paul)." (Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 488) Also, Hatch: "The Fourth Evangelist, like the Apostle Paul, expresses by means of a forensic figure the Christian's experience of forgiveness." [William H. P. Hatch, "The Meaning of John Xvi, 8-11," *Harvard Theological Review* (14, 1921), 105.] Stenger that both the moral reading and the forensic reading are too narrow, that both are contained in the eschatological reading (as in Bultmann, see below). I would argue that this tends to overemphasize the third subordinate clause and that in any case, the moral sense is at least contained in that reading, making the focus here appropriate: "Das wird der Paraklet der Welt, die Jesus für einen Sünder haltend (Jo. ix 24) sich selbst für gerecht hält (Jo. ix 40) eröffnen. Man wird darum 'Gerechtigkeit' in Jo. xvi 8,11 weder verengend als Gerechtigkeit in dem moralischen Sinne von Rechtschaffenheit noch auf Gerechtigkeit in dem juristischen Sinne des Rechthabens, des Sieges im Prozeß festlegen dürfen." [Werner Stenger, "Diakaiosuna in Jo. Xvi 8.10," *Novum Testamentum* (21, 1979), 7.]

⁵⁰ Another alternative that maintains the continuity of the sentence is to read δικαιοσύνης ironically or with an implied negative connotation, "either as self-righteousness or unrighteousness." (Kellum, *The Unity of the Farewell Discourse*, 180. See also, Carson, "The Function of the Paraclete in John 16:7-11," 562f. Michaels and Aloisi follow Carson's lead on this.) My own view is that the second person plural θεωρεῖτε in the second subordinate clause works against what is otherwise a strong pull toward parallelism here.

as through what is understood conceptually, as the not seeing in this case is highlighted. As such, it would seem that what the world is to see from the church is akin to what it saw from Jesus, the Spirit-Paraclete enabling the church to carry on the same visual witness. This is essentially an extension of the interpretation put forward by Carson: "the passage 16:7-11 concerns the world but is addressed to the disciples. It simultaneously informs the disciples what the Paraclete will do to the world and encourages the disciples to understand that they are not abandoned in their witness."⁵¹ Taking this a step further than Carson does, 16:7-11 is addressed to the disciples because it is through them that the Paraclete will accomplish this mission to the world. This stands in agreement with the interpretation of Theodore of Mopsuestia:

My righteousness will also be revealed by the words I preached among them with great integrity and the works I performed with such equity. The divine plan for my passion, in addition, will become evident from all of this because my suffering was not useless or in vain, but was for the condemnation of Satan. Indeed, when the sick are healed, the dead are raised and the demons are exorcised through the power of the gift of the Spirit; then, through all these works, Satan's condemnation will become self-evident. If I committed evil or taught false doctrine, I would justly be punished according to my actions and would be all the more despised after my death. And my disciples would also necessarily share with me in this same contempt. But when the presence of the Spirit through the accomplished miracles evidences the contrary, and when it also elevates my disciples in great glory, then the condemnation of Satan

⁵¹ Carson, "The Function of the Paraclete in John 16:7-11," 564. Carson gives the most comprehensive catalog of the different approaches taken to this passage.

will be known and the manifestation of my glory will become evident.
The sin of my enemies, on the other hand, will be punished.⁵²

In other words, righteousness in this instance may be taken to refer to the totality of the witness of Jesus' life and actions brought to bear on everyone he encountered. His teachings, moral example, miracles, responses to challenges, and subversion of the religious-political system are all in view here.⁵³ Just as believing in John is not merely mental assent, righteousness is not merely the content of mental assent, but the shape life takes for all who would follow Jesus, seeing him only through the Paraclete.⁵⁴ Godet affirms this: "We have here a description of the moral victory to be gained over the

⁵² George Kalantzis, *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Early Christian Studies: 7 (Strathfield, NSW: St. Pauls Publications, 2004), 135.

⁵³ Moral excellence (as used in this section's header) is not a sufficient term to encompass all that is listed here, but it serves to draw distinction away from the Pauline-Lutheran reading that has become enmeshed with the term righteousness. 'Moral excellence' is suggested by Hatch, "The Meaning of John xvi, 8-11," 105. Lutkemeyer interprets this passage similarly: "the mission of the Spirit is to sanctify, to perfect." [Lutkemeyer, "The Role of the Paraclete (Jn. 16:7-15)," 223.]

⁵⁴ My argument here is based on this from Carson: "During the days of his earthly ministry, one of Jesus' functions was, as we have seen, to expose the so-called righteousness of the world. This was accomplished not only by Jesus' more dramatic works, like the cleansing of the temple, but by the purity of his life (cf. 8:46) and the witness of his signs. So focal has been this aspect of his ministry that Jesus can say, just a few verses before the passage under study, 'If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. . . . If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father' (15:22,24). By his words and deeds, Jesus has set the world's self-vaunted righteousness against the backdrop of his own matchless righteousness and thereby brought home to the world the inadequacy of its own righteousness. Jesus has convicted the world of its righteousness. Now, however, he is departing to his Father's presence: who will continue this particular ministry? Our passage provides the answer: the coming Paraclete will convict the world of its righteousness because Jesus is going away to the Father." (Carson, "The Function of the Paraclete in John 16:7-11," 562)

world by the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the disciples. The preaching of St. Peter at Pentecost, and its results, are the best commentary on this promise.”⁵⁵

Judgment: the ruler of the world has been judged

This leads to the final subordinate clause, *περὶ δὲ κρίσεως, ὅτι ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου κέκριται* (which Theodore seemed more focused on), the Paraclete will convict the world with regard to judgment in that the ruler of the world has been judged. As noted above, the three ‘ruler of the world’ passages (12.31, 14.30, and our 16.11) move from the future tense, to the present, to what we have here, the perfect passive. This is an action done upon the ruler of the world and it is a completed action. Just as the previous clause had a forward-looking present (you no longer see me, even though in the moment this was not literally true), the tense here likely indicates, not that the action has been completed, but that it is an assured outcome.⁵⁶ It is important to note that it is not the world that stands condemned here, but the ruler of the world, which further supports our non-hostile reading of the Paraclete’s action toward the world. Though the action with regard to the ruler is a completed action, and, as noted before, the object of conviction remains the world and the means of convincing remains the church. Here again, the Paraclete comes alongside those who can receive his ministry and helps them to convey

⁵⁵ Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, 179.

⁵⁶ This stands in contrast to the epochal understanding of the Qumran community Schnackenburg describes [Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 391].

a message of conviction to the world, in this case a message that the world's mode of rule stands condemned. It is inoperable and ultimately self-defeating. Instead, it is governance by the logic of the cross that is alone legitimate rule: "...The vindication of Jesus by God in the highest exercise of his authority, as the regime of love and self-surrender."⁵⁷ Unlike the Synoptics, John does not depict the disciples arguing over who among them is the greatest.⁵⁸ But John finds another way to address the issue of leadership and authority, dealing with it Christocentrically (as one might expect). It is in John that Jesus is both clearly stated as equal to the Father and at the same time dependent on the Father, only doing what the Father directs him to do. The Spirit he and the Father are sending will operate in this same loving, selfless way, where "the cross is not seen as defeat, but as victory."⁵⁹ The implication is clear that the disciples will be dependent on the Spirit, and yet Jesus has called them friends. Just as the Paraclete carries on his mission through the church, it is only through the Paraclete that the

⁵⁷ Ridderbos, *Gospel According to John*, 534. Also, Lacomara: "The love that is to be expressed in mutual charity is nothing less than the love that found supreme expression on the cross. Because the Passion, the foundation of this law is new and, strictly, unparalleled, the law of charity is not a repetition of a former stipulation, but the enunciation of a new code by which the new community is to be bound together and united to Jesus." (Lacomara, "Deuteronomy and the Farewell Discourse," 77.)

⁵⁸ This argument appears in the triple tradition: Mark 9.33-37, Matt. 18.1-10, and Luke 9.46-50. Mathew and Luke also record either a second incident (Matt. 20.23-28 and Luke 22.24-27), or else this serves as a reminder of what was previously related. Either way, the teaching Jesus gives seems to be the subtext of the John 13 foot washing episode: "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves." (Luke 22.25-27)

⁵⁹ Carson, "The Function of the Paraclete in John 16:7-11," 565.

church carries on its mission.⁶⁰ As the one who leads them into all truth and guides them into all Jesus taught and did, it is the Paraclete who governs the church, exercising rule in just the opposite manner as the ruler of the world. The church is to govern itself likewise and in so doing the ruler of the world is revealed to be condemned, not in some mythic, cosmic way, but judged as a ruler. For the community set on carrying out this aspect of the Paraclete's mission, "the challenge [is] to confront structural sin and evil."⁶¹ This is what is in view with the conviction that the ruler of the world has been judged. This comes under the rubric of justice, but justice redefined. This is justice as defined by the logic of the cross, not the equal distribution of power and rights, but the willing embrace of powerlessness.⁶² In always and only testifying to Jesus, the Spirit only operates with this form of justice. All injustice and even worldly forms of justice inhibit the free operation of the Spirit in and among community.

⁶⁰ Brown highlights this key feature of the Paraclete as broker: "exclusivity is a key feature of brokers. A broker needs to be the only means by which her clients can attain access to a certain patron." (Brown *Spirit in the Writings of John*, 226-7.) John portrays Jesus as the exclusive broker to the Father; the Spirit is another Paraclete filling this same role.

⁶¹ Eldin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward an Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1993), 6.

⁶² "By Christ's victory through death Satan has been proved weaker than God, selfishness than love, and this victory will be proved again by the power of the Spirit in the Church proving that the standards of the World must fall before the standards of God. In this mysterious sentence, then, is contained a prophecy of the Church's power within and over the World - just in so far as its members are wholly led by 'the Helper.'" [Bailey, *The Gospel of S. John*, 193.]

Thus the Paraclete convinces the world, but the world cannot receive the Paraclete. How, then, does the Paraclete convey this convincing? Only through the church.⁶³ This passage describes the mission of the Holy Spirit to the world carried out by the church through the Spirit's agency. The world comes to understand that it does not trust the God who loves it by seeing those who do trust in God's love. The world comes to understand that it does not engage in right living by seeing people who follow Jesus. The world comes to understand that its ruler has been condemned by seeing people who are under the Spirit's governance. But this governance, this empowering, this entrusting are not guaranteed actions of the Paraclete with regard to any group calling itself the church. As those who remain in the world, believers are also legitimate recipients of the Paraclete's loving conviction. This brings us back to Bonhoeffer's concern about the menace of organization. The church often proves itself beholden to the very power

⁶³ This point is made superbly by R. E. Brown: "The implications for the Christian life of this understanding of the role of the Paraclete in Johannine thought are dramatic. The presence of the Paraclete among Christians differs from the presence of Jesus during his ministry in an essential feature: the Paraclete is invisible to the world (14,17), because the Paraclete is within the disciple. The only way that the Paraclete can exercise his ministry is through Christians and their way of life. If the Paraclete is to bear witness to Jesus, this is through the witness of Christians to Jesus. The only way that the world can know that Jesus' death was not the end is because the Spirit which animated Jesus is alive in his followers. This is how the Paraclete proves the world wrong about sin, justice, and condemnation, and shows that Jesus is triumphant with the Father, while the Prince of this world has been condemned (16,8-11) - namely, that two thousand years after his death his presence is still with his disciples; his Spirit is still alive; the Paraclete through the Christian is still glorifying Jesus and bearing witness to him. And in the very first verse of the Paraclete passages (14,16) John explains the specific way in which the presence of the Paraclete finds realization, i. e., when the Christian disciple loves Jesus and keeps his commandments. 'If you love me and keep my commandments, then at my request the Father will give you another Paraclete to be with you for ever.'" [Raymond Edward. Brown, "The Paraclete in the Light of Modern Research," *Studia Evangelica* (4, 1968), 165].

structures that have already been condemned. The help the Paraclete brings to the church in carrying out this mission is directly related to the degree that the church is working to carry out this mission, the one defined by the Paraclete, not any random mission the church may set for itself. The Paraclete does not simply anoint whatever the church is doing. The Paraclete works to support where, and to what degree, the Paraclete's mission has been engaged by the followers of Jesus.

What follows are descriptions of ways in which one part of the Pentecostal movement uniquely (and briefly) aligned itself with the Paraclete's mission and subsequently pulled away from that mission. Each involves a theological struggle central to creating and sustaining a community of the Spirit, one engaged in the Spirit's mission to the world.

3. R. G. Spurling and the Church of God

For a Church of God ministerial candidate or seminary student, there is an almost Melchizedek quality to R. G. Spurling. Little is known about him prior to 1886, when he helps found and ostensibly leads the fledgling denomination, initially known as the Christian Union. Then he quietly steps aside and allows a more naturally gifted leader to take over in 1903 (in a group known for its fanfare, the lack of any for this transition is itself a picture of Spurling the man: quietly significant). Then Spurling fades from the scene in the late 1910s, seeming to have less and less influence in the movement. The founding of the Christian Union in 1886 seems to have been precipitated by the antagonistic rhetoric and exclusionary practices of the Landmark Baptist congregation Spurling and his father Richard had been affiliated with. It seems reasonable to take these statements from *The Lost Link* to be veiled autobiography:

“Shall God say by His Spirit, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, while your elder says not so? You must go and exhort because you are not learned. Then you are disheartened and souls are lost.”¹

“See the little preacher in the stand riding some hobby, branding all others as heretics or devils.”²

¹ Richard G. Spurling, *The Lost Link* (Turtletown, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1920), 36.

² *Ibid.*, 37. He gives a more explicit autobiographical sketch on pp.46-49.

3.1 Pentecostal Stirrings

Spurling did not dispute the Landmark narrative, that creedalism was the root of much evil in the church, that even the various Protestant denominations had been deeply affected, that creedalism had been afflicting Christians everywhere since Nicaea. But Spurling diverged sharply on one crucial point. Where Landmarkism drew the conclusion that it alone had the 'Bible truth,' Spurling saw in this outcome the same spirit at work, the same destructive divisiveness that drove creedalism. Instead, Spurling held that, "the germ of life in the true Church was now in men's organizations," finding a proto-ecumenism both logically and spiritually necessary, unless 'no creed' should become itself merely another creed.

This ecumenical spirit is evident in the fellow founders of the Christian Union. Spurling partnered with the very ones who were likely the targets of the attacks launched by the unnamed diminutive preacher from his hobby, other disenfranchised Baptists and those with Wesleyan-holiness backgrounds willing to listen to his call for unity, liberty, equality, and above all, following the law of love, instead of the law of faith. The work of the fledgling group went well early on, enjoying modest growth in a sparsely populated area. Things took a dramatic turn in 1896 when a number of people experienced glossolalia at a series of revival meetings at Shearer Schoolhouse. Unlike the xenolalia experience of Agnes Ozman four years later in Kansas, this event does not appear to have been the result of seeking a specific expression (Parham had been

teaching on xenolalia prior to Ozman's experience), but more of a spontaneous occurrence.³ Unlike the Asuza Street expression that would come ten years later (itself a product of Ozman's experience), the Shearer Schoolhouse event was not much publicized, did not immediately come to define the Christian Union theologically, and did not become widespread. But it did produce three specific, and related, effects. First, it gave the Christian Union momentum, sparking considerable growth. The Shearer Schoolhouse revival saw numbers above 100, which then curtailed due to "patterns of fanaticism," only to rebound; Tomlinson held a brief tent meeting in 1905 where 80 people were added, the same year the denomination grew to four churches, spanning the southern Appalachian area of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia.⁴ Second, it sparked a round of persecution and harassment from the wider community, complete with homes destroyed by arson (and in one instance, dynamite), and at least one volley of gunfire (which was returned).⁵ Third, the move of the Spirit led Spurling to reflect on

³ These revival meetings seem to have had holiness as their focus; if participants were seeking an experience, it was likely the Wesleyan sanctification experience of 'the heart strangely warmed.' It is also probable that later meetings focused somewhat on Irwin's fire-baptized holiness, but as Coulter explains, "While Irwin was a regular contributor to and an holiness evangelist supported by *The Way of Faith*, he did not enter the southeast until December of 1896. By this time, the initial Shearer Schoolhouse meeting had already occurred, which suggests that Fire-Baptized Holiness (FBH) theology may not have impacted the first meeting. By 1897, however, the impact had been felt and court records show that Bryant was a target of persecutions." [Dale Coulter, "Founding Vision or Visions? The Sources of Early Church of God Ecclesiology" *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 21 (Jan. 2012), http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj21/Coulter.html#_edn10]. See also, Wade H. Phillips, "Baptist Rejection of Holiness Revives the Church of God," *Church of God History & Heritage* Summer/Fall (2002): 8-9.

⁴ Conn, Charles W. Conn, *Like a Mighty Army: A History of the Church of God, 1886-1995* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 1996), 52, 64.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 38-41.

what was going on with his growing flock and to begin to write what would later become *The Lost Link*.

3.2 Drafting The Lost Link

Spurling had drafted parts of what would become *The Lost Link* in 1897, inspired by the Shearer Schoolhouse revival and the persecution that followed, which served as a living reenactment of all the creed-born violence he had read about in Orchard's history.⁶ There is some debate on this point, whether *The Lost Link* should be seen as primarily an older work, published later, or a work not fully realized until nearer its 1920 publication date. Robins lists it as published in 1896 and republished in 1920. Coulter sees some significance in the differences between the early draft and the later publication.⁷ Jacobsen sees the choice to publish the work in 1920 as a move of protest against the direction Tomlinson was taking the denomination:

One of the most significant events in the history of this merged fellowship took place in 1896 at a series of revival meetings where some participants experienced the power of God in a way that caused them to break forth in undecipherable speech. No one knew quite what to make of this at the time, but later the Church of God would look back on this event as the beginning of the church's journey into Pentecostalism. It was in this context, immediately following this unusual revival that Spurling wrote the original manuscript draft of *The Lost Link*. At that point the text was literally a handwritten manuscript, and it is hard to know how

⁶ G.H. Orchard, *A Concise History of Foreign Baptists: Exhibiting Their Distinct Communities, with Their Orders in Various Kingdoms, under Several Discriminative Appellations from the Establishment of Christianity to the Present Age, with Correlative Information, Supporting the Early and Only Practice of Believers' Immersion: Also Observations and Notes on the Abuse of the Ordinance, and the Rise of Minor and Infant Baptism*, Edited by J. R. Graves (Nashville: Graves, Marks, & Rutland, agents of Tenn. Publication Society; New York: Sheldon, Lamport, & Co., 1855).

⁷ Coulter, "Founding Vision or Visions?"

widely it may have circulated within the limited membership of the Christian Union. *The Lost Link* would not be published in print form until 1920. By that time many of the egalitarian ideals championed in *The Lost Link* had been pushed aside by the leadership of the Church of God, and its publication may reflect a mild protest of sorts against that development. This textual history makes it hard to know exactly how to interpret the meaning and significance of this little book. Because *The Lost Link* was not widely circulated at the time of its first drafting, it could be construed as a kind of private reflection on faith that should perhaps be ignored when discussing the history of published Pentecostal theology. But I think that would be a misconstrual of the real importance of this work. Spurling's musings give us a tremendously helpful glimpse of the very earliest attempts of southern Pentecostals (or perhaps proto-Pentecostals is the better designation) to articulate their own homespun vision of faith. What we find is something considerably different from Parham's point of view. Spurling's neighborly egalitarian perspective stands in sharp contrast to Parham's cosmic and eschatological vision of Pentecostal faith.⁸

Coulter makes an important point in separating the 1920 publication from what comes before. There is no record in the early Church of God documents or publications to support the notion that *The Lost Link* was in any way circulated prior to 1920. This also strengthens the key insight Jacobsen makes, in that the 1920 publication comes to be understood as a more intentional act, a deliberate move by Spurling to some end. It is also true that some of the same themes appear in articles, talks, and sermons Spurling gave prior to 1920, in particular an address to the annual General Assembly in 1913 where he used his full railroad analogy (complete with diagram) to make the points that are key for my purpose here.⁹ Thus, *The Lost Link* may be taken as both the product of

⁸ Douglas G. Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), Kindle edition, chapter 1.

⁹ *Minutes of the 8th General Assembly, 1913*. The railroad analogy is discussed in full later in this chapter.

Spurling's reflection coming out of the 1896 Pentecostal experience and his response to the direction the church was taking under the ever-increasing control of A. J. Tomlinson, who regarded Spurling as his spiritual father, and yet governed the church contrary to the principles under which Spurling had founded it.

3.3 A. J. Tomlinson's Church of God

The name itself, "the Church of God," was primarily chosen by Tomlinson¹⁰ as an indication that this organization was a theocracy, both identical to the church of the New Testament¹¹ and the exclusive locus of the body of Christ on earth. This was essentially the same claim the Landmarkers had made and that Spurling had rejected. While

¹⁰ The name was officially adopted in 1907, but Tomlinson's own account of his ordination by Spurling on June 13, 1903 indicates this was his idea from the beginning, part of the prophetic vision he received on that day: "[Spurling] took the Bible and gave it to me. He handed it to me and said, 'Will you take this as the Word of God, believe it and practice it, obey its precepts and walk in the light as God is in the light?' Nobody else had said it. Nobody else had stepped out boldly like that and declares THIS IS THE CHURCH OF GOD. Right here I gave my hand to Brother Spurling, who was not a Church of God member exactly like we are, but he and others were spiritually good. But they never brought up and said we are the Church of God. I said it myself, and because I said it God has been honoring it ever since." (*A. J. Tomlinson: God's Anointed*, p. 12f, cited in H. D. Hunter, "A. J. Tomlinson's Emerging Ecclesiology," *Pneuma* 32, 3 (2010), p. 380.) The actual adoption of the name was itself a microcosm of how Tomlinson led and came to dominate the denomination: "The decision of... 1907, it would seem, brought to fruition three years of tactful influence, during which time A. J. led his fellow pastors to 'discover' the name for themselves. He accomplished that aim so fluently, I would argue, that others later remembered the idea as having been their own." [R.G. Robins, *A.J. Tomlinson: Plainfolk Modernist*, Religion in America Series (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 205.] Robins cites several conflicting claims as evidence of his argument.

¹¹ This statement from the *Minutes of the Fourteenth General Assembly (1919)* shows that "the Church of God" was used alternately to mean the early church and the organization they founded/renamed in 1903. Tomlinson indicates no sense of a gap or difference between the two, such that Paul is a product of the Church of God: "One of the greatest men that the Church of God ever produced, said of himself. I 'was unknown by face unto the Churches of Judaea which were in Christ: but they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.'" (Gal. 1: 22,23)." Like Paul, John Wesley was also part of the Church of God: "Where did John Wesley get the doctrine of sanctification as a definite and instantaneous experience subsequent to justification? From the Church of God." [A.J. Tomlinson, *The Last Great Conflict*: (White Wing Publishing, 2011, original 1913), 136.]

Spurling promoted maximal freedom to follow Christ as each one saw fit, Tomlinson insisted that the 'True Church' required perfect organization and governance, which he was uniquely capable of providing.

One of the first issues to arise in the organization Tomlinson was constructing was the process for selecting and ordaining pastors. This was first officially discussed at the 1907 General Assembly, where Spurling argued that the normal process should be for each congregation to select their own pastor, though he allowed (possibly under pressure from Tomlinson) that appointments could be made if necessary, reasoning that Paul had done this on occasion.¹² This issue was revisited two years later, with Spurling holding the same position, which seemed to hold sway. The solution there placed heavy emphasis on the local church selecting their own pastor through the guidance of the Spirit, with the assembly playing a facilitating role only, though it also placed potential duty with the overseer if need arose.¹³ This reflected the position of Spurling more than Tomlinson, who likened a church choosing its own pastor to a child choosing its own father.¹⁴ The General Assembly moved away from Spurling and toward Tomlinson both in 1910 and 1912 on this issue, with the end result that Tomlinson (by then the "General Overseer") had nearly complete and final authority over all pastoral placements and ordinations:

¹² *Minutes of the Second General Assembly, 1907*, 4.

¹³ *Minutes of the Fourth General Assembly, 1909*, 3.

¹⁴ Robins, *A. J. Tomlinson*, 206.

It is understood that all bishops, deacons and evangelists can set churches in order so far as to administering the obligation and joining them together by the right hand of fellowship. Such churches thus organized can recommend who in their judgment are fitted or qualified for bishops, deacons or evangelists and report the same to the State Overseer, who in turn will take up the matter with the General Overseer, and plans will be arranged for examinations and ordinations. It is not expected that the General Overseer do all the ordaining, but none to be done without conferring with him either in person or by letter, if such has to be done before the General Assembly meets.¹⁵

It is worth noting that Spurling was unable to attend the 1912 General Assembly, where this reversal took place, as indicated by a letter he sent, that was read for the assembly.¹⁶

This move toward centralized power was clearly the work of Tomlinson exerting his will on the rest (as Robins so ably demonstrates), even against the stated beliefs of the others leaders like Spurling, and this remains the policy and practice of the Church of God to this day. Tomlinson was removed from the church in 1923, but the denomination remains as he shaped it, despite how contrary to the Pentecostal ethos this may be.

We can see four things at work here. First, Spurling's preferred position was one that maximized unity, freedom, and equality. Second, Spurling was unwilling to insist his preferred way become a rule, as such a move would violate his own stated principle. Third, the end result under Tomlinson's leadership was an enduring practice for the denomination completely contrary to the precepts Spurling was trying to instill in the

¹⁵ *Minutes of the Seventh General Assembly, 1912*, 17-18.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

group. Fourth, Tomlinson achieved the result he desired by shrewd maneuvering rather than building genuine consensus. Disdaining taking votes, a lack of vocal dissension was taken to mean universal support. This fourfold dynamic was repeated in several key areas of development for the young organization.

3.3 Inclusive or Exclusive?

That Spurling intended his anti-creedalism to be inclusive, rather than exclusive can be seen in the 1910 Teaching Statement he helped draft.¹⁷ A committee comprised of Spurling, Tomlinson, M. S. Lemons, and T. L. McLain were appointed the task of developing the Teaching Statement.¹⁸ One of Spurling's deepest commitments was that each person have the freedom to read and interpret Scripture and that differences in interpretation not be occasion for divisions in the church.¹⁹ Contrasting that sentiment with *The Book of Doctrines* written by Tomlinson (likely with his son Homer), leads me to conclude that the 1910 Teaching Statement should be regarded more a reflection of Spurling's thought and approach, than Tomlinson's:

¹⁷ I am using the title 1910 Teaching Statement in keeping with what appears in later Church of God General Assembly Minutes. This statement appears in the 1910 minutes: "A committee consisting of M. S. Lemons, R. G. Spurling, T. L. McLain and the general Moderator [Tomlinson] was appointed to draft examination questions with Bible references for same for the examining of candidates for the ministry." (*Minutes of the Fifth General Assembly, 1910*, 2) The statement in this form first appears in the *Church of God Evangel* on Aug. 15, 1910.

¹⁸ *Minutes of the Fifth General Assembly, 1910*, 2.

¹⁹ Coulter: "Spurling came to the conclusion that no church body had the right to bind the conscience of Christians. Individual believers must be free to read the Bible and interpret it as they felt God would have them. While the church remained responsible to help shape the consciences of its members, it could not bind them. Spurling wanted to ensure that persecution over differences of belief would not occur in the new movement he founded." [Dale M. Coulter, "The Nature of the General Assembly: A Judicial Body Only," *Church of God History and Heritage* (13, 2006), 9.]

The Church of God

Stands for the whole Bible rightly divided. The New Testament is the only rule for government and discipline. Below is given some of the teaching that is made prominent:

1. Repentance - Mark 1:15, Luke 13:3, Acts 3:19.
2. Justification - Rom. 5:9, Titus 3:7.
3. Regeneration - Titus 3:5
4. New Birth - John 3:3, 1 Peter 1:23, 1 John 3:9.
5. Sanctification subsequent to Justification - Rom. 5:2, 1 Cor. 1:30, 1 Thes. 4:3. Heb. 13:12.
6. Holiness - Luke 1:75, 1 Thes. 4:7, Heb. 12:14.
7. Water Baptism - Matt. 28:19, Mark 1:9, 10, John 3:22, 23, Acts 8:36-38.
8. Baptism with the Holy Ghost subsequent to cleansing. The enduement of power for service; Matt. 3:11. Luke 24:49-53, Acts 1:4-8.
9. The speaking in tongues as the evidence of the baptism with the Holy Ghost - John 15:26, Acts 2:4, Acts 10:44-46, Acts 19:1-7.
10. The full restoration of the gifts to the church - 1 Cor. 12:1, 7, 10, 25, 31, 1 Cor. 14:1.
11. Signs following believers - Mark 16:37-20, Rom. 15:18, 19, Heb. 2:4.
12. Fruits of the Spirit - Rom. 6:22, Gal. 5:22, 23, Eph. 5:9, Phil. 1:11.
13. Divine healing provided for all in the atonement - Ps. 103:3, Isa. 53:4-5, Matt. 8:17, Jas. 5:14-16, 1 Pet. 2:24.
14. The Lord's Supper - Luke 22:17-20, 1 Cor. 11:23-26.
15. Washing the saints feet - John 13:4-17, 1 Tim. 5:9, 10.
16. Tithing and giving - Gen. 14:18-20, Gen. 28:20-22, Mal. 3:10, Luke 11:42, 1 Cor. 16:9, 2 Cor. 9:6-9, Heb. 7:1-21.
17. Restitution where possible - Matt. 3:8, Luke 19:9.
18. Pre-millennial second coming of Jesus. First to resurrect the dead saints and to catch away the living saints to meet him in the air. Matt. 24:27, 28, 1 Cor. 15:51, 52, 1 Thes. 4:15-17. Second to reign on the earth a thousand years. Zech. 14:4, 1 Thes. 4:14, 2 Thes. 13-10, Jude 1:14, 15, Rev. 5:10, Rev. 19:11-21, Rev. 20:4-6.
19. Resurrection - John 5:28, 29, Acts 24:15, Rev. 20:5, 6.
20. Eternal life for the righteous. - Matt. 25:46, Luke 18:30, John 10:28, Rom. 6:22, 1 John 5:11-13.
21. Eternal punishment for the wicked. No liberation nor annihilation - Matt. 25:41-46, Mark 3:29, 2 Thes. 1:8, 9, Rev. 20:10-15. Rev. 21:8

22. Total abstinence from all liquor or strong drinks. - Prov. 20:1, Prov. 23-29-32, Isa. 28:7, 1 Cor. 5:11, 1 Cor. 6:10, Gal. 5:21.
23. Against the use of tobacco in any form, opium, morphine, etc.-Isa. 55:2, 1 Cor. 10:31, 3
24. Meats and drinks - Rom. 14:2, 3, 17, 1 Cor. 8:81 Tim. 4:1-5.
25. The Sabbath - Hosea 212, Rom. 14:5-6, Col. 2:16, 17, Rom. 13;1, 2.²⁰

This theologically sparse document served as the only statement of faith for the Church of God until 1948, and even then remained unaltered and in use until 1974.²¹

Seeing this statement as primarily Spurling's work (or at the very least heavily influenced by him) is in keeping with Coulter's argument that Spurling was still the primary leader of the movement at this point,²² and with Robins' suggestion that Spurling was "the chief interpreter of Scripture for the Church of God."²³ We can give special attention to a couple of points here. First, the matter of sanctification is worth noting because it was (and remains) a point of contention for the Church of God and Pentecostals generally. The Teaching Statement asserts that sanctification takes place subsequent to justification and references these verses for reflection:

²⁰ *Church of God Evangel*, Aug. 15, 1910, 3. Also, *Minutes of the Seventh Annual Assembly, 1912*, p. 30-31

²¹ Well, almost unaltered. The Teaching Statement was expanded in 1917 to include: "26. Against members wearing gold for ornament or decoration, such as finger rings, bracelets, earrings, locketts, etc., Isa. 55.2, 1 Pet. 3 3, I John 2-..1 6. 27. Against members belonging to lodges-Math. 5.31, John 18.20, 2 Cor; 6.14-17, Jag. 5.12. 28; Against members swearing - Matt. 5.34, Jas. 5.12. 29. Against members going to war-Ex. 20..13, 2 Chron. 28.3, Psalm 120.7, Math. 5;38-48;6.14, 15: 26: 50-56, Luke 22.49-52, John 18.10, 11, 36, Rom.12.19." (*Minutes of the Thirteenth General Assembly, 1917*, 65.) The last teaching was dropped in 1921 (*Minutes of the Sixteenth General Assembly, 1921*, 72). None of these changes, nor the later insertion of "initial" in front of "evidence" on the tongues statement (9) warrants any notation in the Church of God Minutes. That significant change happened sometime after 1923, at the latest by 1948.

²² Coulter, "Founding Vision or Visions?"

²³ Robins, *A. J. Tomlinson*, 193. The full quote carries a slightly different connotation, one in agreement with my overall argument here: "Spurling may have been the chief interpreter of Scripture for the Church of God, but Tomlinson was its chief interpreter of the Holy Ghost."

- Rom. 5.2: Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
- 1 Cor. 1.30: And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,
- 1 Thess. 4.3: For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;
- Heb. 13.12: So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.²⁴

Taking the brief statement that sanctification comes after justification and these four verses leaves one with quite a range of what could pass as an acceptable doctrine of sanctification; there is a lot of room under this umbrella. This is intentional. It is in keeping with Spurling's commitment to unity, liberty, and equality. Each person is free to, and the implication here is that each one is responsible to, wrestle with these key verses and come to an explanation that fits within these wide parameters, makes sense of their own experience, and is useful for explaining the matter to others. This is anti-creedalism at its most inclusive, most constructive, most habituating.

This approach left ample room for two very different views to coexist within the Church of God. Those coming in with Reformed or Wesleyan backgrounds were able to keep their basic soteriological frameworks. From 1910 to 1923, there are 552 instances of the word sanctification in the official organ *The Church of God Evangel*, plus 3698 instances of 'sanctified.' Some of these describe an instantaneous (or near-instantaneous)

²⁴ ESV.

experience of sanctification, while others relate stories and/or encourage readers to seek sanctification. The bulk of the appearance of the 'sanctified' uses comes in published reports of various revival meetings, e.g., "Brother C. S. Dickerson of Christopher, Ky., and Brother Chas. S. McQuin closed a meeting here in which 5 were saved, 6 sanctified and 5 filled with the Holy Ghost. 6 or 7 will follow the Lord in 'water baptism and a church will be set in order soon, reports Pattie Ann Hogan, Saint Helen, Ky."²⁵

Tomlinson does not seem to have taken a more explicit position than this, but in his tenure as the Church of God's General Overseer, this particular issue never became a point of heated contention. He had no great stake in either the finished work or entire sanctification positions, and thus let the matter be, in keeping with his overall leadership strategy.

3.4 Problems with Initial Evidence

Tomlinson did have a vested interest in another point of disagreement, however, one that was near the center of one of the greater crises of his leadership of the Church of God. While the Shearer Schoolhouse revival led to no specific doctrinal or liturgical conclusions regarding *glossolalia*, these did come to the young movement via Asuza Street. The renewed focus on the tongues phenomenon was accompanied by the teaching that tongues represents the initial evidence that a person has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. There is a great deal to unpack in that last sentence, and I will

²⁵ *Church of God Evangel*, Sept. 3, 1921, 2.

do so in the next chapter, but with regard to our present story, the point is that the early, Spurling-led Christian Union/Holiness Church did not teach this, nor was it involved in the move of the Spirit they experienced. Even in the 1910 Teaching Statement, the key word “initial” is significantly absent. The Teaching Statement gives these verses for the point on tongues as evidence:

- Jn. 15.26: “But when the Paraclete comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.
- Acts 2.4: And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.
- Acts 10.44-46: While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God.
- Acts 19.1-7: And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John's baptism.” And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.” On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. There were about twelve men in all.²⁶

As with sanctification, this statement and these verses may be reasonably taken in more than one way. The Parham doctrine of tongues as test, the initial evidence of

²⁶ *ESV*.

Spirit baptism is possible in that nothing here overtly contradicts it; but neither does anything require it. The promise of the Paraclete in John does not mention tongues at all. The three Acts passages are here because these are the only three instances in Acts of people speaking in any kind of tongues. A careful reading of Acts 2 shows that experience to be more specifically one of *xenolalia*, where a person speaks in a human language they cannot otherwise speak in, while speakers of that language hear the person praising God and witnessing about Jesus. Cornelius' story in Acts 10 best fits Parham's model, but it also calls into question the *ordo salutis* that separates justification, sanctification, and Spirit baptism. The story of John's disciples in Acts 19 can be taken as evidence for tongues as initial evidence or for prophecy as initial evidence, introducing the possibility that spiritual manifestations other than tongues may accompany Spirit baptism. Thus, those holding to Parham's view and those who rejected it could both reasonably claim to be adhering to the Church of God's Teaching Statement.

3.5 Losing the Link

Prior to the existence of this teaching statement, and likely a prime factor both in its development and the elision of 'initial,' there was a rather onerous episode of the very sort of doctrine-fueled conflict that Spurling found so appalling. The episode revolved around a dispute over the initial evidence teaching Tomlinson had readily adopted from Parham (perhaps via Cashwell). One of the leaders of the Church of God, J. H. Simpson, disagreed with this. He held that other gifts of the Spirit could also stand

as evidence of Spirit-baptism. Unlike the sanctification question, Tomlinson was adamant on this point, likely for the reason Robins gives: "A. J. And most of the church's leaders instinctively understood that, if that were the case [tongues not the exclusive initial evidence], they had as well pack up and go home to ordinary holiness."²⁷ Tomlinson was by all accounts a master of managing the chaos of the most exuberant Pentecostal services and depended on tongues to carry his campaign forward. Initial evidence doctrine played an important promotional role; any suggestion to the contrary had to be quelled swiftly and thoroughly. Tomlinson held a meeting to confront Simpson and in the end bade him "goodbye."²⁸

The matter did not end with the expulsion of Simpson: "Over the succeeding months he and his family disrupted services and worked behind the scenes to undermine A. J.'s authority."²⁹ Not long thereafter, Tomlinson appointed a young minister, John B. Goins, to serve as his assistant pastor for the Cleveland Church of God, caring for the church while Tomlinson was away conducting revival services in Florida. In Tomlinson's absence, Simpson and Goins came to the same understanding regarding initial evidence, and furthermore, put in place the restrictions Paul laid out regarding tongues:

If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let

²⁷ Robins, *A. J. Tomlinson*, 194.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.³⁰

While these instructions would later come to be accepted almost universally among Pentecostals, they posed an unwelcome threat to Tomlinson, who boasted having once personally interpreted fifteen messages in one service.³¹ Correspondence went back and forth between Tomlinson, Goins, and others at the Cleveland church, with the result that Tomlinson was removed as pastor, his credentials ostensibly revoked from afar.³² He responded with two more letters, “two masterpieces of epistolary persuasion,” enlisted the help of two other Church of God leaders, M. S. Lemons and W. F. Bryant, and politically “outmaneuvered” Goins, regaining support in a packed meeting.³³ Though the affair was concluded, the epilogue was eventful: “Goins’s team did not take losing in a sportsmanlike manner. Amid threats of dynamite and arson, the city police had to help the Holy Ghost keep order in the house. In the coming days, A. J. would have to ride out a protracted trial, a church brawl, and an open letter enumerating the fanatical abuses Goins had witnessed at Cleveland.”³⁴

³⁰ 1 Cor. 14.27-33, *ESV*.

³¹ Robins, *A. J. Tomlinson*, 193.

³² *Ibid.*, 197-8.

³³ *Ibid.*, 198, 200.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 201.

Robins does a wonderful job of revealing all the hidden maneuvering, but for my purpose here, I would like to focus on what Spurling would have learned about these events. The ouster of Simpson, Tomlinson, then Goins, the contentious meetings, the brawl, police involvement, and trial certainly would have come to his attention. He likely heard various first hand accounts from Simpson, Lemons, Bryant, and Tomlinson.³⁵ Everything he heard could only have confirmed what he wrote in 1904:

Men pray for unity and exalt the very thing that brings discord. They pray for love to flow from breast to breast but hold to their creed which bursts asunder their brotherly love and destroys it. They read Christ's prayer that all His children be one as He and His Father was one, yet they hold to a confession of faith that makes it impossible for God to answer it.³⁶

Though Tomlinson did regard initial evidence as necessary to his success, for Spurling these damaging results were evidence against the very doctrine that was coming to define Pentecostals.

3.6 Tomlinson's Legacy

The focus on Tomlinson and his ability to pull power to himself with an almost gravitational force is warranted, because while the Church of God removed him in 1922 and later disclaimed all of his *ex cathedra* pronouncements,³⁷ in some sense he remains the Overseer for Life - the life of the denomination - because the Church of God has

³⁵ Spurling and Simpson spoke in the same session twice during the 1908 General Assembly, indicating they had some level of interaction. (*Minutes of the Third General Assembly, 1908, 2, 5.*)

³⁶ Spurling, "Dangers and Hindrances to the Cause of Christ," *The Way* (June 1904), 1.

³⁷ Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 307.

never moved away from the power structure he built around himself. These decisions were made uncritically and pragmatically, and yet have never been revisited. For all his flaws, Tomlinson was committed to promoting the role of women in ministry,³⁸ and was responsible for bringing African-Americans to the General Assembly in 1919, after having (in typical Tomlinson fashion) brought the matter up two years prior to lay the groundwork for greater equality in the church: "There was much shouting when he spoke about the colored people. Then the speaker said, 'Let the devil's prejudice forever disappear and yet, let us ask God for wisdom about how to do.'"³⁹ This same vacillation is seen with regard to the role of women in ministry, as we will see in chapter six. Still, the early General Assembly meetings show that the hearts of these people were closer to what Spurling expresses in *The Lost Link* than these sensational stories would have us think.

3.7 The Lost Link

The circumstances surrounding the publication of *The Lost Link* leave questions not easily resolved. First, what significance can be read into the timing of the publication? Much of the material was written in 1897⁴⁰ or 1904⁴¹ and we have record of

³⁸ This was a separate issue in the Goins affair. Goins had disallowed women to speak in the church, whereas women comprised some of Tomlinson's most reliable practitioners of corporate *glossolia*. Tomlinson argued strongly in one his letters from this episode for an expanded role for women to express gifts and participate in the service. See Robins, *A. J. Tomlinson*, 197-8.

³⁹ *Minutes of the Thirteenth General Assembly, 1917*, 24.

⁴⁰ Spurling, "An Appeal," 1897.

⁴¹ Spurling, "Dangers and Hindrances to the Cause of Christ," *The Way*, June 1904.

Spurling teaching some of it in 1913.⁴² Yet he chose to release it for a wider reading in 1920. Why? Second, why did Spurling self-publish? Tomlinson was still in good standing, as General Overseer, director of the publishing house, and (based on their later relationship) as Spurling's friend. Was the Church of God (which is to say, Tomlinson) not interested in publishing a book by its founder and revered elder? Was Spurling not interested in having the work officially sanctioned? As noted above, these issues lead Jacobsen to conclude that the 1920 publication was a form of "mild protest" against the ecclesiastical turn the Church of God was making.⁴³ The mildness of the protest was certainly in keeping with Spurling's gentle nature. However, the protest was about more than church government. It casts an ethical vision for their Pentecostal movement, one altogether contrary to Church of God practice - then and now.

3.7.1 Love

Love is the primary commitment for Spurling. His goal was the union of all Christians, but his plan looks nothing like the ecumenical approach as we know it. It might have more in common with the how the Church of South India organized during Lesslie Newbigin's time. But it does not resemble the doctrine-laden conversations we now engage in, even among Pentecostal scholars who are seeking to engage with their

⁴² *Minutes of the Eighth General Assembly, 1913*, 38-9: "Brother Spurling's address was given by the use of a chart which makes it difficult to reproduce. The first showed the heavenly Jerusalem. The second was the woman sitting on the beast which had seven heads and ten horns with a golden cup in her hand. The third was the heavenly railroad with the two golden rails with the heavenly engine on the track, which about the third century developed into several side tracks, narrow gauge, representing the creeds."

⁴³ Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*, Kindle edition, chapter 1.

peers in various theological discussions. The conversations we engage in begin and end with the assumption that though we are all Christians, there is something separating us that makes your perspective on a theological matter intrinsically different than mine, that our goal is to understand each in place. The most we seem to hope for is mutual understanding, respect, and acknowledgement. These were not enough for Spurling. From the outset of *The Lost Link* he identifies denominational divisions with the “spiritual Babylon”⁴⁴ of Rev. 17.18. He does not make the easy and more common identification with Rome specifically, but with the entire development of “many false systems” that began with the political take over of the church at Nicaea, which has left us with an “organically fallen” church.⁴⁵

3.7.2 Unity

The people in all these churches are still “God's people,” but they are living in Babylon, in bondage under laws Christ never commanded them to obey.⁴⁶ “Hear the blessed Redeemer saying, 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples.' Here He makes love the great discerning law.”⁴⁷ For Spurling this is the foundation “upon which the Church was based,” a foundation that makes the church dependent on the Holy Spirit for keeping this command and living in the unity

⁴⁴ Spurling, *The Lost Link*, 8.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 9-10.

Christ called and prayed to the Father for.⁴⁸ Comparing this ideal to the reality we see, Spurling asks, “Are they led by the Spirit or by men? Are they standing on God's law of love or on some article of faith or creed? Do they make laws to suit themselves?”⁴⁹ There is no way to answer this last question other than, yes, all churches make laws to suit themselves. They construct standards and rules with required adherence. Such rules have various levels of grounding in Scripture, but many do carry the threat of disfellowship for noncompliance. The reality is that all churches are led by humans, hopefully ones who are led by the Spirit, but the human factor is always there. The key for Spurling is in maintaining that, “Christ did not leave anything undone,” by which he means that no necessary teaching, doctrine, or law needs to be added to what Christ taught. Subsequent teaching may be helpful, but it must be held loosely enough to allow, “every member equal rights and privileges to read and understand and practice God's Word as they see it.”⁵⁰

This even carries into core understandings of what it means to come to faith and enter into the community of the church. Spurling's admonishment here is telling: “Don't do as I did. I thought repentance, faith and baptism was God's law but I find it only brings us to where we ought to keep God's law.”⁵¹ Aware of the door he may have appeared to open to licentious-minded readings of Scripture, Spurling immediately

⁴⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

confronts the idea that allowing freedom of interpretation must lead to such ends. He grounds his rebuttal, not in broadening his thesis, but in redoubling it, defining the law of love more sharply still: "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus is the Christ is of God or, in other words, every spirit that is of a Christlike, self-denying, brother-loving spirit is of God."⁵² Abuse of the freedom that the Gospel brings is itself evidence that the abuser has not understood or committed to obeying the law of love. "For centuries we have been under creeds or doctrines and instead of unity it makes division; instead of peace they make strife; instead of unity they bring discord; instead of love they bring hatred."⁵³ For Spurling, this is the real test, whether a doctrine or practice builds unity or has the opposite effect. "It is a slanderous falsehood to say that Christ gave a law that caused confusion, malice and strife. Do you not know that they are the cunning works of men and have proved destructive to all the true elements of religion, love, liberty, equality, being led of the Spirit and sanctification?"⁵⁴

3.7.3 The drive wheels: liberty and equality

This leads to the central analogy that gives *The Lost Link* its name, where his understanding of sanctification takes shape. A man surrounded by the mist of tall mountains and deep valleys, Spurling describes this world as a wilderness where one

⁵² Ibid., 13.

⁵³ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 29.

can almost see “a fair and happy land,” yet a land one cannot possibly reach.⁵⁵ Christ came and built a railroad bridging this wilderness to that happy land, with several key components in its construction. The first two are the rails on which the train rides. These “golden rails” are the two commandments Christ gave to love God and love neighbor, those on which “hang all the law and the prophets.”⁵⁶ The church itself is the train that rides these rails, propelled by “the great drive wheels, the law of liberty and equality.”⁵⁷ Spurling goes on to mention the atoning nature of Christ's death, but he does not see this as the central work of the Incarnation, nor something Christ accomplishes alone. “The King's Son turns to his chosen ones and says, Will you help Me to pay the debt, will you take up your cross and follow Me? That is, walk in this world as I have walked denying yourself of the lusts and pleasures of this world, and not you only, but all that will may help Me redeem the world and share in the glory that shall be revealed?”⁵⁸ The Holy Spirit is described as the Guide and the “fire that makes the power,” that drives the engine along these golden rails.⁵⁹ The analogy concludes with Satan and church leaders replacing the golden rails with narrow-gauged wooden ones, creeds and doctrines of human construct, which lack “the golden link of God's law.”⁶⁰ It is interesting that Spurling does not suggest that the train itself was or should be replaced, nor does he

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 14-15.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 16.

mention an alternate source of fuel. His point is that the train only operates properly when those drive wheels ride on the golden rails. The lost link is love, love defined in terms of both of the laws Christ gave, in terms of liberty and equality, and in terms of imitating the self-sacrificial nature Christ demonstrated in the Incarnation. Only under these circumstances can the power of the Holy Spirit operate to its fullest potential. Deviating from the law of love, even for the sake of doctrine, impedes the work of the Spirit.

3.7.4 The law of love v. the law of faith

Spurling dates the construction of the “wooden rails” to 325 A.D. and the adoption of the Nicene Creed.⁶¹ The content of the creed itself was not the issue. Spurling's concern was the spirit that produced it and continues to exert an influence in the church. This is not the Holy Spirit, but a spirit of disunity, division, and at times even hatred and murder. We may see the Nicene Creed as a point of commonality, something most Christians can affirm together, but it comes down to us, “through blood and through strife.”⁶² For Spurling the creed represented “the beast that was and is not and yet is, ascending into his political ecclesiasticism, that is, state and church united, compelling God's people to worship idols.”⁶³ Spurling admits “some truth” in the creed itself, but his argument is against the lie carefully wrapped in truth, the lie that ends

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 17.

⁶³ Ibid., 17-18.

justify means.⁶⁴ We cannot use what was originally an instrument of violence and political usurpation of the church without being corrupted in the process. This is the problem with some modes of ecumenism, the notion that if two sides can come to a statement of doctrine both can agree on, then fellowship can occur. Fellowship cannot be dependent on doctrine, unity cannot be based on conformity. Where does this leave liberty? What happens to equality? It is also noteworthy that Spurling does not hearken back to the earliest church of Acts 2-4; it is not to an idyllic existence that he calls the church. Following Orchard,⁶⁵ Spurling relates, "during the greater part of the three centuries the churches remained about as they were established and were independent of each other, neither were they joined together by association, confederacy or any other bond but that of charity. Independence and equality formed the basis of their internal constitution."⁶⁶ The work of "Constantine and his council" served to "rend the asunder the church as never before...which resulted in an almost instant departure from God's law and raised a spirit of malice, strife and persecutions. Thus the blessed record of God's holy church was blackened by Christians persecuting each other."⁶⁷ The ensuing years after Spurling penned these words saw the early Pentecostals experience such persecution (both internally and externally) first hand, showing that the violence against the Arians was neither an anomaly nor something that can be excused via historical

⁶⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁶⁵ Orchard, *A History of Foreign Baptists*, 110, 175.

⁶⁶ Spurling, *The Lost Link*, 35.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

contextualization. Hatred and violence are never as far from us as we might suppose, “because every church or denomination's internal laws are contrary to Christ's law.”⁶⁸

For Spurling, the only binding laws are the commands to love God and neighbor.

Obedying these commands constitutes holiness in the truest sense and puts a community on the golden rails, where they must ride on the wheels of liberty and equality.

3.7.5 Holiness in freedom

Holiness also entails the freedom and responsibility of each one to study Scripture and come to an understanding they can fully embrace and put into practice. “Others will say it will not do to have no creed or article of faith, it is too liberal. This brings up another question. Does every Christian have a right to read the Bible? If they do then it is true they have a right to believe as they understand it. To teach them if they do not practice as they believe, it is hypocrisy and a sin, so read and practice as you think will please God best.”⁶⁹ Spurling claims it hypocrisy to insist that someone confess belief in what they do not understand, what they either cannot or will not practice. Instead of coerced mental assent to a creed, he calls for communities made up of people who study, who are traditioned by Scripture and the act (both individual and communal) of wrestling with the text and coming to understanding, which is the opposite of the method most often employed: “The commandment of God has been so

⁶⁸ Ibid., 37.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 40.

abused that no sect of earth is willing to let their brother read, believe and practice for themselves. Read it like we see it and do as our doctrine says or we will exclude you from our church."⁷⁰ Such coercion fails to grasp that the process of reading and coming to terms with truth is essential to the discipling process. To force 'belief' in a creedal system short circuits spiritual development and makes faith a lie.

3.7.6 Organization without the menace

This leads to Spurling's third main point, that churches must be structured around a commitment to liberty and equality, where there is only power to serve, never to control. Nowhere is his vision in *The Lost Link* more at odds with the church he founded than on the issue of authority. "What about church identity, apostolic succession and ministerial authority? All such claims are a failure."⁷¹ It is interesting how Spurling lumps these together, especially given the emphasis Tomlinson placed, and indeed the Church of God still places, on ministerial authority, of the clergy as a class removed from the laity, accessing authority and prone to challenges unknown to those outside their ranks. Spurling sets all this aside as yet more evidence that the church is captive in Babylon. "But someone will say, If all are to be free and equal we will just have no outward church as the kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall we say, Lo here nor Lo there, for behold the kingdom of God is within

⁷⁰ Ibid., 14.

⁷¹ Ibid., 32.

you.”⁷² Spurling takes time to address the perceived dichotomy between the invisible and visible church, protecting against those who would read him as arguing for the invisible church only. He affirms that “every child of God has the kingdom of heaven in them,” just as the Israelites were God's people even while in Egypt.⁷³ But Israel only came to be when they agreed to live by God's covenant and the church came to be when it accepted Christ's laws and agreed to live in covenant under these laws of love. The kingdom is thus neither an invisible entity with no necessary bond of fellowship, nor is it an entity distinguished by human laws and government. “Between the two extremes there is a wise and reasonable middle ground of truth which unprejudiced and honest Spirit led Christians can surely find in the words and acts of the Savior and his followers under the leadership of the Holy Ghost.”⁷⁴

Spurling insisted that these three, unity, liberty, and equality, as the expression of trust, hope, and charity were essential qualities for any church that would be Pentecostal. He ties all of this directly to the move of the Holy Spirit:

God's Church from creeds must now be freed,
That caused so many hearts to bleed;
But jewels some have brought at last,
To make another golden calf.

A chain of doctrine now appears,
That's cursed the sects for many years;
Be truth or false just which it may,

⁷² Ibid., 41.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 42.

It drives God's Spirit power away.

When their churches first begun,
By the Holy Spirit they were run;
But when their creeds each church had took,
The Holy Spirit them forsook.⁷⁵

The Spirit had moved at the Shearer Schoolhouse because they sought not to drive the Spirit away, setting aside their doctrinal differences, embracing unity, allowing for maximal freedom in the pursuit of holiness, and exercising leadership only in a mode of service. Spurling's warning in *The Lost Link* was that the Church of God was already in danger in 1920 of going back on these commitments, which would drive the power of the Spirit away again. This was his critique of Tomlinson, of the leaders who were already positioning themselves to oppose Tomlinson, and it stands as a valid critique of the denomination today.

3.8 The Menace of Organization

Bonhoeffer observed that too often in human endeavors the very act of organizing brings a certain menace, a dehumanizing tendency. Far from being exempt from this phenomenon, religious organizations are particularly prone to it, such that religion *qua* religion is opposed to the community Jesus founded, the communities the Spirit of Jesus still forms, embodies, and empowers. This seems to explain Spurling's argument well. This menace has a number of identifying characteristics including

⁷⁵ Ibid., 43-4.

a preoccupation with metaphysics, individualism, a *deus ex machina* logic (mentioned in the introduction to this work), partiality, and a tendency to privilege select people while subordinating others.⁷⁶ For Spurling, initial evidence doctrine, creedalism, the sanctification debate with its misunderstanding of that as an event of God filling a spiritual, moral, or intellectual gap, the routinization of charismata, the escapism of fundamentalist-dispensationalist eschatology, the assumption that certain liturgical formulas automatically guarantee the move of the Spirit - all of these are the menace of organization expressed as *deus ex machina* logic and a preoccupation with metaphysics.

The sanctification debate more centrally expresses menace as partiality, compartmentalizing religion to such an extent that what is meant to specifically address the moral life is prevented from doing so. Holiness is reduced to a checkbox, while the Spirit's power to develop a virtuous life in freedom are ignored, and liberty is thereby denied. Finally, while initially enjoying significant moments of equality, the Pentecostal movement is marked by the menace of racism, misogyny, socio-economic discrimination and false exaltation of clergy; the privilege of the few and the subordination of many. Nowhere within Pentecostalism are these things more evident than in the Church of God, despite its founder's stated vision and desire. The privileged character of menacing religion is "the guarantor and continuation of the existing order, power structure, and

⁷⁶ Eberhard Bethge and Victoria Barnett, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 872ff.

ways of thought."⁷⁷ The usurpation of power and maintenance of the worldly status quo are altogether incompatible with a community empowered by the Spirit, Who only empowers according to Jesus' mode of power, that is powerlessness, authority expressed without power.

3.9 The Paraclete, Spurling, and theological virtues

Communal characteristics that act as safeguards against the menace of organization have been described in two very different, yet I want to argue complementary ways. Spurling argues for the central importance of unity, liberty and equality. The Paraclete comes to convince the world regarding its mistrust of God, the justice Jesus calls his followers to practice, and condemned state of worldly power. From this point forward, I am going to map a third account on top of these two. For Thomas Aquinas the theological virtues are the capstone of his account of the moral life, of the Christian life. Moreover, the theological virtues are defined as such because they come to us extrinsically via infusion by the Holy Spirit, or what a Pentecostal might call an infilling, indwelling, or baptism in the Holy Spirit. I will argue that Aquinas and Spurling are in agreement regarding the source of Christian life and community and this is precisely the Paraclete's mission: either the Holy Spirit forms, embodies, and empowers Christian life and community existentially, or else what we have is something other, something less than, the body of Christ on earth.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 876.

The remainder of this project involves a trifold mapping (as a dad with daughters who have beautiful, long hair, the image I have is of braiding, interweaving) of the Thomist theological virtues, with the proto-Pentecostal insights of Spurling, and the Johannine mission of the Paraclete. I will argue that the Spirit comes to form a community of trust - trust of God and one another - whereby the world is convicted of its fundamental failure to trust Jesus as the Son of God. The Spirit also comes to embody - literally, through infusion of charity to instantiate in disciples - the theological, intellectual, and moral virtues the growth of which is an atomized description of the process of sanctification, whereby disciples become holy and their communities become witnesses to the moral life of Jesus, thus convincing the world of righteousness in the absence of an ascended Lord. The Spirit further empowers the community to exercise authority in one mode and one mode only: the same charity, the infusion of which enables the development of virtue, here the only law Jesus Christ left his church for governance, whereby all leadership is in the mode of loving, self-sacrificing service, where no one is excluded based on any unloving prejudice, thus convincing the world of all its modes of worldly, unsanctified (ab)uses of power.

The mission of the Spirit is to build such trusting, virtuous, loving communities. This characterizes all the Spirit's work in the world. The extent to which people cooperate with the Spirit's mission determines the extent to which the Spirit's empowerment and giftings are made available. The Spirit is always pressing forward,

empowering and gifting as much as we allow. Our participation does not enable the Spirit so much as our non-participation disables the Spirit's mission in specific moments. The Pentecostal movement in general, and Church of God history in particular, provide examples of both cooperation with the mission of the Spirit and noncooperation, resistance to the mission of the Spirit, both faithful tradition and irresponsible tradition. The only appropriate response to this history is to rejoice over the good and repent over the evil.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Present Age* (HarperCollins, 1962) 43.

4. Convincing the World to Trust

The first point of convergence to consider is the Paraclete comes to convict the world of not believing in Jesus by forming a community of faith that is fundamentally characterized by unity. This requires a certain understanding of faith, one that Spurling was quite comfortable with, but one unlike that of most Pentecostals or the Protestant-Evangelical tradition that they persist in identifying with. But it is clearly the understanding of faith found in the Fourth Gospel and finds resonance outside the Evangelical tradition. Faith in the Johannine corpus is trust, a posture of trust toward Jesus, toward the Father, toward the Holy Spirit, toward those who join in community with us as the body of Christ. Faith is nothing other than believing and believing is nothing other than trusting.

If we think of faith as cognitive assent to a set of doctrines, we fundamentally misunderstand the trust-faith Jesus came preaching and practicing. This is a common misconception because trust-faith is not control and control is not trust-faith, but control is precisely what religious leaders so often want to erect and employ, and just as often what religious people allow (or want) to be employed over against them. This is the opposite of trust in Jesus, which always brings liberty, always brings equality, always brings trust, hope and love. Trust is a hallmark of people who believe in Jesus; just the sort of witness a world that does not believe in Jesus needs to see. Trust leads to unity and is undermined by controls such as creeds and tests. Trust requires patience, the

patience not to force someone to feign acceptance of a doctrine they do not yet understand or refuse to accept. This need not bring sound doctrine into mortal jeopardy but it does require a good deal more work from those called to teach and it requires remaining in loving relationship with those with whom we disagree. Such work is especially important for Pentecostals, since as many as a third of their number do not find the doctrine of the Trinity necessary or compelling.¹

That faith in this understanding is more than mental assent is evident in that faith is the first (in order of generation) of the theological virtues, that is, it comes by way of infusion by the Holy Spirit: "Accordingly, as regards the first of these, faith must needs be from God. Because those things which are of faith surpass human reason, hence they do not come to man's knowledge, unless God reveal them."² The Spirit reveals truth to us (one of the primary tasks of the Paraclete) and enables us to trust that what God tells us is true.³ The action of faith is initiated by the Holy Spirit as theological virtue and our response (as such because it is always a secondary, reactionary action) takes place within the intellectualive soul:

For it must be noted that in man there is a twofold principle of movement, one within him, viz. the reason; the other extrinsic to him, viz. God...human virtues perfect man according to his interior and exterior actions. Consequently man

¹ Oneness Pentecostals are well represented each year at the Society for Pentecostal Studies gathering, making discussions interesting, fruitful, and at times perilous.

² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Edited by of Piperno d Reginald (London: R. & T. Washbourne, Ltd., 1914-38) II-II 6.1.

³ "Faith makes us adhere to God, as the source whence we derive the knowledge of truth, since we believe that what God tells us is true." (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II 17.6.)

needs yet higher perfections, whereby to be disposed to become amenable to the Divine inspiration. These perfections are called gifts, not only because they are infused by God, but also because by them man is disposed to become amenable to the divine inspiration...for those who are moved by Divine instinct, there is no need to take counsel according to human reason, but only to follow their inner promptings, since they are moved by a principal higher than human reason.⁴

The distinction here between intellective soul and reason is important, because the former encompasses a good deal more than the latter. "The intellective soul is that by which existence takes hold of my whole self, my body and my senses and my thought as well, and is that by which the prime matter itself which it informs is maintained in existence."⁵ This involves intuition (knowledge of our own subjectivity), preconscious knowledge, practical knowledge, poetic knowledge, and mystical knowledge - none of which is knowledge by mode of knowledge, but knowledge by a mode of inclination that is imperfect, fragmentary, and shaped by the fluid multiplicity in which revelation is delivered to us (e.g., through Word, sacrament, and immediate revelation) and yet has an ontological structure founded on the dynamic unity of its source, i.e., the very Unifying Spirit of God. The more we grow accustomed to the inner life the better we decipher the astonishing nature of the divine inspiration that moves within us yet without us.⁶ Clearly, this is unlike any other act of the human intellect and cannot be reduced to an act of human reason without doing serious violence to the very foundation of what it means to believe, that is, that faith involves all of the intellective

⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 68.1.

⁵ Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* (Greenwood Press, 1975), 48.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 52ff.

and sensitive self.⁷ This distinction does not merely hold for the initiation into faith, we exist in a perpetual state of dependence on divine assistance to believe, we never get to a point where we need no more help in this regard: "Thus faith can have no mean or extremes in the point of trusting to the First Truth, in which it is impossible to trust too much... since it is impossible to trust too much in the Divine assistance."⁸ Faith comes by the initiation of the Holy Spirit as the first of the theological virtues by generation and as a theological virtue, faith continues to receive necessary illumination through the infusion of charity, the Spirit inflaming the heart to love, whereby all the other virtues (including faith and hope) are beneficiaries of divine empowerment.

The argument above can be summarized thus: faith is a divine activation. But it is not an automatic or guaranteed activation, in fact it is a shatterable divine activation in that human efforts can block the divine assistance in the same way a person can (in a limited, temporary, but very real way) block out the sun.⁹ A primary way such blockage occurs is by failing to recognize that faith is much more than reason giving assent (this is

⁷ "In this way thought is, properly speaking, the movement of the mind while yet deliberating, and not yet perfected by the clear sight of truth. Since, however, such a movement of the mind may be one of deliberation either about universal notions, which belongs to the intellectual faculty, or about particular matters, which belongs to the sensitive part, hence is that to think is taken secondly for an act of the deliberating intellect, and thirdly for an act of the cogitative power. Hence is proper to the believer to think with assent: so that the act of believing is distinguished from all the other acts of the intellect, which are about the true or the false." (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II 2.1.)

⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II 17.5.

⁹ "But what is important to set forth here with unmistakable clarity is that the created existent contributes nothing of its own, does nothing, adds nothing, gives nothing... which would make of the shatterable impetus an unshatterable impetus or an impetus that comes to grips with existence. Not to nihilate under the divine activation, not to sterilize that impetus, not to have the initiative of making the thing we call nothing, does not mean taking the initiative, or the demi-initiative... it does not mean acting on one's own to complete, in any way whatever, the divine activation." (Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 106-7.)

later and lesser in the process), by leveling faith into a flattened, one-dimensional, rational endeavor. Such is characteristic of modernity, both in its liberal and fundamentalist formulations. As with Evangelicals, within the Pentecostal context, the leveling process came by placing "reflection in the hands of an abstract power," creedal and doctrinal formulations shorn of their intuitive, dependent character.¹⁰ The creedal tendency for Pentecostals likely began as an effort to protect against the emotional excesses that accompanied the Pentecostal experience from the beginning of the movement, but this proved a lethal cure.¹¹ Failing to appreciate their incompatibility with fundamentalism (for which they held a fatal attraction), Pentecostals soon traded their foundational trust for rigid doctrines that nihilated the divine impetus, touching precisely at their point of distinction: covenant lost to creed and trust lost to test.

4.1 The incompatibility of fundamentalism

Pentecostals were not immune from the liberal/fundamentalist debate that dominated headlines and theological thought during the first half of the twentieth century in America. Whether framed in terms of Cartesian mind vis-à-vis extended space, Kantian objective vis-à-vis subjective, or the more quotidian theory vis-à-vis praxis, Pentecostals chose the former, finding the allure of 'objective truth' preferable,

¹⁰ Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*, 54.

¹¹ "Enthusiasm may end in disaster, but leveling is eo ipso the destruction of the individual." (Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*, 54.)

despite what this cost in terms of their ability to narrate Pentecostal experience.¹² Rather, Pentecostals showed typical fundamentalist overconfidence in their ability to possess objective, propositional knowledge in matters of faith, and even echoed cessationist mistrust of any epistemic value of Pentecostal experience.¹³ Pentecostal experience may be allowed on biblical grounds, but this amounts to a difference of biblical interpretation only, no theological value is placed on affective-subjective experience. Unlike Aquinas, the sensitive soul is rejected as a locus of knowledge and bracketed off from any role in the activity of faith.

More recently, Pentecostal scholars have begun to recognize the scantiness of fundamentalist systems for supporting Pentecostal thought and practice. Pentecostal theology requires, “a means of understanding that moves from experience to testimony to doctrine to theology and back again in an ongoing dynamic that is more implicit than explicit, more oral than written, more affectively-rational than principled-rational, more narrative than strictly propositional.¹⁴ This marks a radical departure from second generation (essentially fundamentalist) thought, rejecting both the certainty of

¹² Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 168f. (At no point prior to Steve Land’s landmark work on Pentecostal orthopraxy and orthopathy did Pentecostals articulate an appreciation that this dialectic, in any formulation, falls under the Nietzschean nihilist critique.)

¹³ Don Bowdle presents this view well: “An informed Pentecostalism will, by all means, critique the whole of pneumatology. It will affirm the biblical and disavow any ‘feeling theology’ born of an emotionalism that too long has complicated the Pentecostal venue.” (Donald N. Bowdle, “Informed Pentecostalism: An Alternative Paradigm,” in *The Spirit and the Mind: Essays in Informed Pentecostalism*, eds. Terry L. Cross and Emerson B. Powery (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), 15.)

¹⁴ Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 45.

fundamentalism and the doubt of theological liberalism in favor of what both preclude: faith. This places confidence, “not in the competence of our own knowing, but in the faithfulness and reliability of the one who is known,” trusting in the guidance of, “the Holy Spirit leading the followers of Jesus into the fullness of truth...to enable us to draw out the meaning of that which has been given once and for all in the incarnation and to explore the ultimate limits of space and time with the aid of the divine Spirit.”¹⁵ As modes of thought within the reigning plausibility structure of modernity, both fundamentalism and liberalism avoid dependence on trust and as such cannot serve as a foundation for forming a community of trust whereby the Paraclete can convict the world of its fundamental mistrust. Both innately demonstrate the very mistrust for which the world is convicted.

4.2 Spurling: covenantal unity

Such a posture of trust lies at the heart of the early Pentecostal rejection of creedalism. The foundational doctrines of the Christian faith as expressed in the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed were not at issue for most Pentecostals, certainly not for Spurling. At issue was the long history of violence, oppression, and division wrought in the defense of doctrinal purity; such violence routinely used creeds as a weapon against others. Sinful effects cannot have faith as their cause, where the end is

¹⁵ Lesslie Newbigin, *Proper Confidence: Faith, Doubt, & Certainty in Christian Discipleship*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 67.

control and domination of others, some means other than trust has been used, as ends are always defined by their means.

Faith is trust in the Spirit to lead people into truth and patience with others as they undergo the process of being so led. This is by no means a novel concept:

"Therefore, as regards the primary points or articles of faith, man is bound to believe them, just as he is bound to have faith; but as to other points of faith, man is not bound to believe them explicitly, but only implicitly, or to be ready to believe them, in so far as he is prepared to believe whatever is contained in the Divine Scriptures. Then alone is he bound to believe such things explicitly, when it is clear to him that they are contained in the doctrine of faith."¹⁶

Aquinas could leave room for people to grow in faith because unity and security were secured by the Magisterium. Evangelical Protestants (including but not limited to fundamentalists) looked to doctrine for unity and security. For the Pentecostal, these can come only by the Holy Spirit, the Pentecostal tradition must have as its, "central element is the conviction that the Christian life is a matter of the experienced power and presence of the Holy Spirit today," which cannot be supplanted by any amount of correct doctrine or continuity of apostolic succession.¹⁷ While this may seem less secure, less trustworthy, less likely to result in significant unity, and more prone to human manipulation, it was the mode of unity for the earliest church. A significant amount of doctrinal variation is evident between the canonical Gospel accounts, as well as the Lukan, Pauline, Johannine, and Jamesian theological visions. Each enjoys textual support without any

¹⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 2,5.

¹⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church*, Kerr Lectures 1952 (New York, Friendship Press 1954), 112.

clear ascendancy of one vision. Likewise, authority rests at various times with Peter (Acts 10), James (Acts 15), or with Paul (Galatians 2). Unity among the New Testament church was not based on singular authority or a unified doctrinal vision, it was based on the ongoing work of the Paraclete, the primary actor to which each of the New Testament human actors gave supporting roles. In its basic posture of looping back to the New Testament church, this feature is one Pentecostals must revivify.

In comparison to magisterially or doctrinally based traditions, the Pentecostal tradition's basis in trust-faith reflects, "a revolutionary element which could be dangerously subversive," except that the Spirit provides the needed security against error and disunity; and that just to the extent that Pentecostals remain in a position of Spirit-dependence over against self-reliance.¹⁸ The loss of this necessarily humble posture brings disastrous results, as there is no Magisterium and no sure doctrinal foundation left in place – Pentecostals are always working without a net.

The work of the Spirit is such that it brings about unity, never division, within the church; this is essential to the Paraclete's mission to the mistrustful world. It is for the Paraclete's work that Jesus prays in John's Gethsemane prayer: "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in

¹⁸ Ibid., 125.

us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”¹⁹ Thus any part of the church claiming to be ‘Spirit-filled’ or describing itself as ‘Pentecostal’ must necessarily be concerned about the real unity of the church. Pentecostal theological, political, and practical commitments must be (re)constructed on a foundation of trust in the Spirit and an overriding commitment to participating in the Spirit’s work of building communities of trust. Commitments that undermine trust and unity must be rethought as they impinge on the Paraclete’s mission and Pentecostal identity as such.

Spurling was committed, not only to the necessity of trust and unity, but also to the need for continual rethinking of doctrine: “For this reason, Spurling saw covenant union as superior to creedal union. Covenants were more alive and flexible, able to be reformed and to grow naturally with the growth of the ‘saints in the light.’ They were conducive to growing relationships; whereas creeds were notorious, historically, for being static and fixed, and thus for resisting the work of the Spirit in leading and guiding the church ‘into all truth and righteousness.”²⁰ Growing relationships, developing disciples in their understanding, these are characteristics of the virtue-infusing Spirit. Doctrinal formulas and specific interpretations have their place in serving the Paraclete’s mission, but these always remain “working documents.”²¹ As for the alternative: “it would be an act of sinful pride to assert that one had the final truth on

¹⁹ John 17.20-21 NRSV.

²⁰ Wade H. Phillips, “R. G. Spurling and the Church, *Church of God History and Heritage* (Summer 1998), 4.

²¹ Ibid.

matters of interpretation. Instead, these decisions are human attempts to wrestle with complicated problems in the light of scripture and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. There always remains the possibility that more light will shine upon the scriptures as the Spirit continues to guide the church.”²² The logic of Spurling’s theological-ethical commitment informed the Church of God’s 1910 Teaching Statement, for which he served as primary author and editorial guide.

4.3 Unity over Uniformity

For years, when a person came forward in a Church of God service, they would be given a card to fill out. There was a space for the person’s name, the date, questions asking if they were a member, would like a pastor to visit them, or if they had a prayer request, and then there were three checkboxes:

Today, did you receive:

- salvation
- sanctification
- baptism in the Holy Spirit

Behind these checkboxes lay quite a theological framework. Behind the last one lay the initial evidence doctrine which I will give attention to later in this chapter. The middle one has been a troublesome one for the Pentecostal movement, and particularly the Church of God, largely because of an assumption regarding the first. The prevailing

²² Dale Coulter, “The Nature of the General Assembly: A Judicial Body Only,” 9.

narrative states that many early Pentecostals had backgrounds in the Wesleyan holiness movement and thus regarded sanctification as both a second event, subsequent to conversion, and a process beginning from that moment, dealing with the human sin nature.²³ But other early Pentecostals hailed from a more Reformed background, with an understanding that sanctification was completed, i.e., finished, along with justification and regeneration, with all the work done on the cross.²⁴ Synan's basic argument that the Pentecostal movement may be broadly defined as a continuation of the concept that "one may receive later effusions of the Spirit after initiation/conversion," can hardly be questioned (especially given the checkboxes) but behind that broad stroke lies a complex history and the various Pentecostal denominations are not so easily divided.

Within the Church of God, both strands of thought coexisted under the spacious 1910 Teaching Statement. Then in 1942, the General Assembly decided rather abruptly that a statement of faith was needed.²⁵ A committee was formed to craft articles of faith and did so, working only from the 1910 Teaching Statement and their own personal views. Years later, church historian James Beaty wrote to the surviving committee members, asking for their recollections of the process. Earl Paulk recalled:

²³ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 1-8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 14-17.

²⁵ The timing of this decision seems to coincide with the denomination's push to join the NAE. According to Church of God historian David Roebuck, this was not the case (personal interview). That the decision was "abrupt" is noted in all three of the letters cited below.

The charge that was given the committee to draft the Declaration of Faith was in fact on very short notice. It was, however, to be an adequate "Statement of Faith," but not a complete doctrinal study. To us it seemed important to have a statement of faith and then allow a place for a complete study for the individual ministers. It is not that I am jealous over the work done by the committee years ago, but I yet believe that a simple "Declaration of Faith" may help us to avoid many unnecessary doctrinal fights. This seems to be an area left to the classroom and to the minister's individual study.²⁶

Visible here are the remains of Spurling's influence, where unity takes precedence over doctrine and all are allowed their own place for complete study. What Paulk only alludes to is that further attempts were made to broaden the statement (and thereby lessen the place for individual study). Fellow committee member James Cross focused on those attempts:

The Council authorized the same committee to continue work and broaden the separate articles. After prolonged sessions we could not agree on an enlarged statement and carried our report to the next session of the Council. As you are aware several attempts have been made by several committees appointed to enlarge the statement. So far we have been unable to agree on an enlargement. The Executive has also worked on a broader statement, but so far have not been able to reach agreement. Perhaps we should leave the Declaration as it is and forego any attempts to broaden the statement.²⁷

Cross seemed only to have arrived at Paulk's conclusion by way of resignation. We have the fullest account of the inner disagreement from committee chairman James Slay:

²⁶ Earl P. Paulk, Letter to James M. Beaty, March 6, 1981 (Cleveland, TN: Pentecostal Research Center Archives).

²⁷ James A. Cross, Letter to James M. Beaty, March 7, 1981 (Cleveland, TN: Pentecostal Research Center Archives).

We were to bring back to the next Assembly an enlarged Articles of Faith. The committee met in the basement of Lee College Library. I appointed subcommittees to work on portions of the Articles. I appointed Paulk, R. P. Johnson, and Evan M. Ellis to work on sanctification. Paulk and Johnson were 'finished work' men, Ellis was supra-second definite instantaneous work. Ellis overpowered the other two and threatened to bring the matter up as the Assembly if it was not written to please his bias. The men came to me with their dilemma. I called the Gen. Overseer (Chesser). After some discussion we agreed to bring the original Declaration back to the Assembly.²⁸

Though the Church of God is typically placed in the Wesleyan-influenced category, here we see both strands pulling against each other. The categorization is not unfair, though, because true to its enduring legacy as A. J. Tomlinson's denomination, what the committee could not resolve, executive fiat did. By 1946, the Church of God required, "That the editor-in-chief of the Church publications, the president, Board of Directors, vice-president, and faculty members of Lee College and all other Church of God schools sign a contract that they will not teach, publish, or allow to be taught or published anything contrary to the teaching of sanctification subsequent to the New Birth, or any other established doctrine of the Church."²⁹ The 'finished work' men remained free to teach what they would from their pulpits, but what their children would learn at college and what their people would read in the *Church of God Evangel* had been secured against them. This debate itself shows evidence of the enduring

²⁸ James L. Slay, Letter to James M. Beaty, March 11, 1981 (Cleveland, TN: Pentecostal Research Center Archives).

²⁹ *Minutes of the 41st General Assembly of the Church of God, 1946.*

influence of Spurling's commitment to relationship over creed, to unity over doctrinal uniformity.

Still, the logic of the checkbox works against the spirit of Wesleyan sanctification, whereby the 'heart strangely warmed' is not the achievement of sanctification, nor a stop along the way to some other momentary religious experience, but the beginning of a lifelong process. What gets lost in this debate is the focus on holiness, on becoming the sort of people who embody the lifestyle and practice of a Jesus no longer seen by any other means (this will be the focus of chapter five). The problem lies not within the sanctification debate itself; it is only a symptom of the problem. This back and forth among Pentecostals is the result of theology not matching practice. There is a basic understanding that the Holy Spirit continually convicts believers of sin, continually prods us to holiness (yes, even after Spirit-baptism), but this understanding does not get theological explication and it does not fit in a checkbox approach, whether there are two checkboxes or three. Our soteriology goes wrong at the beginning, being over-determined by a satisfaction theory of atonement, which leaves us incapable of narrating holiness in a way that is intelligible.

4.4 Pentecostal Event Logic

The checkbox mentality belies an *ordo salutis* over-determined by a satisfaction model of atonement (borrowed uncritically from fundamentalism), upon which a second (and perhaps third) discrete event is added for Spirit baptism (and at times

sanctification). None of these events denote movement, development, personal transformation, or further integration into the unity of the community so much as they are categories without meaning. This logic undermines the unity the Paraclete seeks to build both in the community and within the individual self.

Satisfaction theory begins with the understanding that human sin offends the holiness of God and that offense requires satisfaction. But satisfaction can be nothing less than death: "This is the arrangement God made with humanity at the beginning: the soul that sins, that one shall die."³⁰ The key to this theory is that "this penalty is 'negotiable' ... that is another can pay it. It is not uniquely personal in that only I can die the death I owe to God. A death is a death."³¹ But as everyone has his or her own sin to reckon with, only a sinless person could conceivably die in another's place, in which case "that death would have the quality of being transferable."³² If we further imagine that this sinless person were somehow more than just an ordinary human, "it might be possible that his or her death could apply to many people, or to all humanity."³³

But this theory has serious problems. The satisfaction theory begins with 'the soul that sins, that one shall die' but this datum comes from Ezekiel 18.20, where its meaning is clearly a denial that someone can bear the punishment for someone else's

³⁰ John Howard Yoder, *Preface to Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2002), 294. This is almost precisely what Bonhoeffer says: "In order to be freed from their sins, sinners must die. Whoever has died is justified from sin." (*Discipleship*, 209)

³¹ Yoder, *Preface to Theology*, 294.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 294.

sin. This works directly against the satisfaction theory. More importantly for our purpose here, satisfaction theory fails to acknowledge that the salvific work of God toward humanity essentially involves a movement from separation to reconciliation, from disunity to unity: “salvation is not primarily the remission of guilt or the cancellation of punishment; it is reconciliation (reestablishment of communion) and obedience, that is, discipleship.”³⁴ The satisfaction model fails to account for the threefold reconciliation that occurs between God and the person, within oneself, and between the person and the community of faith one is brought into union with. A more comprehensive account is required: “We seek some relationship between atonement and Jesus’ discussions of the kingdom his forgiving people, his teaching people, his making of people a church – a body of disciples – and his sending people into mission.”³⁵ Such an account needs to articulate the regenerative movement whereby a person is reconciled to God, brought into continuity with the self, and union with the community, where “Pentecostal-charismatic events” are understood as linked moments within the Paraclete’s mission and not as discrete events only.³⁶

Placing too much focus on the Christian life as a series of discrete experience events brings about the (unintended) consequence of undermining the unity essential to the Spirit’s project. If justification is only a transaction between the Father and Jesus,

³⁴ Ibid., 300.

³⁵ Ibid., 306.

³⁶ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 115.

then the person being justified has not been brought into unity with God. Whereas, if justification involves the Spirit infusing trust-faith into the one being thereby justified, then union with God becomes the focus. This reconciliation also extends to the self being healed such that continuity with the self is restored, where repentance means redemption of one's past, a healing of memory, rather than a singular moment that disregards the power of God to redeem a person's entire life.

The over-narration of event also fails to give proper attention to the communal aspects of the Spirit's infusion of trust. Belonging to the community of faith is an essential part of the Spirit's work, both in bringing the individual to faith in Jesus, and in carrying out the Paraclete's mission to the mistrustful world. It might seem that tension lies between an individualist tendency and some sort of 'catholic' tendency (not an unwarranted assumption given the thoroughly American character of early Pentecostalism and the not infrequent, pejorative use of the term catholic), but the atomistic event-driven tendency destroys both individual identity and the essential sense of belonging to the community of faith. The Paraclete creates trust: trust in God who calls us to be reconciled, trust that all of ourselves – all our past and constitutive elements – are redeemed, trust in the community into which we are called and formed.³⁷

³⁷ This section was informed by possible selves theory, a conceptual model that explores how humans approach life transitions (such as religious conversion) by imagining what a future identity might look like once the given transition has been made. Self-esteem is a driving motivation for such imagining, esteem specifically informed by values given in a contextual-ecological mode of development, that is to say, possible selves are socially constructed: "an individual's possible selves are grounded within

4.5 Initial Evidence Doctrine

The prime example of this event driven logic for Pentecostals is, of course, the doctrine of initial evidence which understands glossolalia to be the lone and necessary sign that a person has been baptized by the Spirit and is from that moment forward open to receiving and operating in the gifts of the Spirit. As these gifts are necessary for ministry, Spirit baptism is an important social achievement and speaking in tongues is an event the community values highly. There can be no denying that for many Pentecostals, the movement was not about the Holy Spirit doing something for the benefit of the wider church, but the Spirit reestablishing the 'true' church - as opposed to the rest which were 'apostate' churches. This exclusivist posture was there from very early and characterized Pentecostals' relationships with other Christians, other Pentecostals, and even between individuals within the same community.³⁸ This attitude is epitomized in the initial evidence doctrine, originally advocated by Parham, and often a staple of Pentecostal theology and practice.³⁹

developmental, interpersonal, and sociohistorical contexts." [Curtis Dunkel and Jennifer Kerpelman, *Possible Selves: Theory, Research, and Applications* (Nova Science Pub Incorporated, 2006), 42.] Other key motivations include a desire to maintain continuity of identity, a desire for a sense of belonging to a community, and the need for meaning in one's life. Each of these desires map with elements of the Paraclete's mission to the world but are in some respects undermined by Pentecostal thought and practice.

³⁸ Wacker describes this as the "ecumenism of the carnivore." [Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 178.]

³⁹ Charles F. Parham, *Kol Kare Bomidbar: A Voice Crying in the Wilderness* (Kansas City, MO: Charles F. Parham, 1902; reprint, Baxter Springs, KS: Robert L. Parham, 1944), 35, quoted in Douglas Jacobsen, *Thinking*

My own experience with initial evidence is indelibly marked by the face of a dear childhood friend. Both our families attended the Plant City (FL) First Assembly of God (from well before we were born) until we were teenagers, when the whole of both families moved to the only other Pentecostal church in town, the Plant City Church of God. I first spoke in tongues when I was eight.⁴⁰ My friend was deeply spiritual in his own way, but was quiet and not prone to public display. These were not good personality traits for a young Pentecostal and my friend suffered a great deal over a number of years as one after another of our leaders tried to 'get him through' to Spirit baptism. This went on for years. A good boy grew into a good man, faithful to serve in a variety of ways, practicing holiness and exhibiting maturity. But these things never mattered. Countless times, he was singled out, brought to the front, had hands laid on him and everyone listened closely, waiting for him to achieve what everyone had to achieve in our Pentecostal subculture. My friend and I never discussed it (*glossolalia* was generally not a topic for discussion), but I knew him well enough to see the pain and discomfort on his face. I also knew that what kept this religious torture going was his own integrity, not to feign what he had not experienced, not to give in to what they

in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 48-49.

⁴⁰ It is legitimate to question whether this was a genuine experience of the Spirit or mimicry based on what I had observed, but that is a question I honestly cannot answer and it is beside the point of this narrative (though the issue will show up again in the next chapter).

wanted. This is the legacy of initial evidence for me, a source of damaging religious practice that has led to the wounding of many.

There are important questions regarding glossolalia. Why does the Holy Spirit move in this way? What was it about the early Pentecostal movement that led to the Spirit acting in a way not often seen in the history of the church?⁴¹ Initial evidence doctrine offers only a paltry answer to these questions. The Holy Spirit has not poured out gifts to distinguish some from others, to create a division between those who have and those who have not been baptized in the Spirit. That runs completely contrary to the mission of the Paraclete. The Spirit comes always to convict the world and the Spirit convicts those who do not believe by sustaining groups of Christians who love each other in unity, who show themselves to be Jesus' disciples by the love they have for one another. The Pentecostal teaching and practice of initial evidence works against the mission of the Spirit and thus works against the Pentecostal movement itself. The gifts of the Spirit are not intended to cause one to devalue one's own conversion or divide the church into those who are gifted by the Spirit and those who are not. Participation in the Spirit's mission of convincing world necessarily begins by setting this destructive doctrine aside and focusing instead on how Pentecostals can serve to build unity into the body of Christ.

⁴¹ Though this is not nearly as unique as Pentecostals like to think. Cf: Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991).

4.6 A Living Tradition

Instead of this atomizing tendency, these events, including all Pentecostal/charismatic experiences, need to be understood as components of an overall ecclesial experience, as different, complementary parts of “a truly living tradition” formed by the Paraclete as part of the convincing mission.⁴² The Paraclete is responsible for passing on and deepening the teachings and practices of Jesus and does this attending to, preserving, extending and empowering the teachings and practices of the communities of trust formed by the Spirit’s initiating and ongoing infusion.

The teachings of the trust-community are founded on the Gospel of Jesus Christ as related in the New Testament and passed on through the historical tradition of the church, which has at no time been abandoned by the Spirit. This is both an appeal to Scripture but also an appeal to church tradition down through the centuries; it is not a *sola Scriptura* appeal as such an approach is fraught with the same tendency to disunity this chapter has been arguing against and it is not an appeal to apostolic succession, which will be addressed in chapter six. The foundation here is trust: trust that the founding documents of our faith were inspired and preserved by the Holy Spirit (which takes Pentecostals out of the quixotic quest for inerrancy), trust that the same Spirit has spoken to commentators and preachers down through time, and trust that the same Spirit will lead us – as a community – into understanding Scripture in our own time.

⁴² Simon Chan, "The Church and the Development of Doctrine." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* (13,1: 2004), 67.

Such teachings may be summarized into creeds to aid in teaching and memory, but such can never be formalized or binding, but stand only as working documents, as the Paraclete works out the convincing mission in us.

The Paraclete's work with regard to practices will be the focus of the next chapter, as that work most centrally involves the second aspect of the convincing mission. Even there, though, unity is a fundamental mark as, "these practices are not just what we do, they are the Spirit's concrete works through which he fulfills his own sanctifying mission in the triune economy of salvation."⁴³ Unity serves as one of the marks assuring us that the work is indeed the Spirit's work and not an unholy work that we are trying to sanctify. In one sense, the atomizing and unhelpful tendencies described in this chapter (and in the ones that follow) are attempts to secure some kind of guarantee of truth, of fidelity to the Gospel of Jesus, through doctrine, practice, or authority. The only guarantee is the Spirit, the only assurances are when we see the sort of convincing activity that the Spirit always engages in. What drives us into unity is of the Spirit. What divides us is not. Those who seek unity find themselves participating in the Paraclete's mission and are thus empowered to co-labor with the Spirit. Those who fight against the Paraclete's mission should not expect such empowerment.

⁴³ Ibid., 69.

5. Convincing the World to Hope

The Paraclete convicts the world of its mistrust by forming communities of trust. The Paraclete further convicts the world of justice by infusing those same communities of trust with hope that they can grow to embody the virtues of Jesus who is no longer seen. People who follow a Jesus they no longer see need hope that they can still grow to be like him, that sanctification can still take place, that real holiness is possible. Growth in the virtues is not possible without hope. Hope makes holiness possible, enables the virtuous life, allows the follower of Jesus to pursue discipleship in liberty, marked by improvisational freedom, that understands the creative power of the moral act.

5.1 Hope as a Theological Virtue

Hope is the second theological virtue. It is a virtue because it informs human action, directing humans to their proper end, which is happiness. "Hope has the character of virtue from the fact that it attains the supreme rule of human actions: and this it attains both as its first efficient cause, in as much as it leans on its assistance, and as its last final cause, in as much as it expects happiness in the enjoyment thereof."¹ Hope is a *theological* virtue because, like faith, it is infused in us by the Holy Spirit, and as such points us to perfect happiness and goodness. "Hope makes us adhere to God, as the source whence we derive perfect goodness, i.e., in so far as, by hope, we trust to the

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II 17.5.

Divine assistance for obtaining happiness."² Human virtues, both intellectual and moral, are available to all humans as part of our created nature, but are affected by our fallen, sinful state and thus insufficient to direct us perfectly to the goodness and happiness that are the ends suitable to us as creatures created good by God. Theological virtues come to us as gifts that enable us to move towards those ends otherwise unattainable.

We are saved by hope. Again, we hope to obtain an end, because we are suitably moved towards that end, and approach thereto; and this implies some action. And a man is moved towards, and approaches the happy end by works of virtue, and above all by the works of gifts, if we speak of eternal happiness, for which our reason is not sufficient, since we need to be moved by the Holy Ghost, and to be perfected by His gifts that we may obey and follow Him.³

In chapter four we discussed how trust-faith moves the intellective soul and does so in ways that surpass the lower parts of the intellective soul, those same parts that unfortunately modernity mistakenly views as superior. In the same way, hope moves the appetitive soul and does so in a way that surpasses the lower parts of the appetitive soul, just those parts that humans in our sin tend to overvalue.

Habits are known by their acts. Now the act of hope is a movement of the appetitive faculty, since its object is a good. Now the act of the virtue of hope cannot belong to the sensitive appetite, since the good which is the principal object of this virtue, is not a sensible but a Divine good. Therefore hope resides in the higher appetite, called the will, and not in the lower appetite, of which the irascible is a part.⁴ II-II 18,1

Aquinas makes the last distinction about the irascible faculty because hope as a human passion resides there, among the passions that denote movement only but not

² Ibid., 17.6.

³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 69.1.

⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II 18.1.

also rest (the concupiscible passions denote both).⁵ Hope as a theological virtue is not part of the irascible faculty, but it does denote movement and as such is the middle term of the theological virtues, both in respect to generative order and order of excellence. This means that the Paraclete infuses hope into persons who have already received and responded to an infusion of trust; trust comes before hope in this regard. It also means that charity, being the apex of all the virtues, comes after hope in terms of generation, but increases both hope and trust by its infusion. Or, to put the matter in Spurling's terms, unity leads to liberty and liberty leads to equality, and equality increases both liberty and unity. Hope is the important middle term here because it generates action that is obedient and free, virtuous and improvisational, or more accurately the Holy Spirit generates such action by the infusion of hope.

5.2 Hope as an Infused Virtue

The earliest Pentecostals were holiness people, not all of the Wesleyan tradition per se, but all were people intent on purifying their lives, setting aside all sin and distractions to follow Jesus. They often used the language of perfection to describe the goals they felt led to pursue. The premise of this chapter is that in setting such goals and placing emphasis on such intentions, the earliest Pentecostals aligned themselves with the second part of the Paraclete's convincing mission and thus enjoyed a deep infusion of hope to enable their pursuit of perfection. They were hampered in this endeavor

⁵ Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 25.

almost immediately by the countervailing influence of fundamentalism. "As Pentecostalism increasingly took on the characteristics of American fundamentalism, holiness teaching lacked the integrating center of perfecting love that gave Wesleyan holiness its depth and character."⁶ Early Pentecostals were further hampered in that they were unaware that their pursuit of perfection was not a new quest for them, not even for Wesley, but one with deep roots in Christian tradition. As Aquinas explained, "The power of those naturally instilled principles does not extend beyond the capacity of nature. Consequently man needs in addition to be perfected by other principles in relation to his supernatural end."⁷ In other words, sanctification must be the work of the Holy Spirit, infused virtues are the basis upon which holiness must be, can only be, built and its fundamental orientation is toward human fulfillment and happiness.⁸

Indeed, Aquinas goes so far as to name the fullest expression of moral virtue with the term *infused moral virtues*. A truly Pentecostal understanding of sanctification can be nothing other than a life that exhibits infused moral virtue; the gifts of the Spirit come primarily to accomplish the goal of holiness: "The gifts are bestowed to assist the virtues and to remedy certain defects...they accomplish what the virtues cannot."⁹

⁶ J.A. Martin, "Spirit, Apocalypse and Ethics: Reading Catholic Moral Theology as a Pentecostal," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 17(2008), 246.

⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 63.3.

⁸ By contrast, "it is common to hear Pentecostals give some variation of the phrase, 'God is not interested in your happiness, but in your holiness' - which seems a poor estimation of both words." (Martin, "Spirit, Apocalypse and Ethics," 246.)

⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 68.8.

Perhaps ironically, holiness language and charismatic language rarely find convergence in Pentecostal thought or preaching, since sanctification is only ever a layover to one's destination:

Whereas it was understood for Wesley that growth in holiness entailed both process and crisis, Pentecostals often reduced sanctification to an instantaneous experience necessary to move from salvation to Spirit baptism. Pentecostals inherited a watered-down version of John Wesley's teaching, focusing on instantaneous sanctification an absolute sinlessness, resulting in inadequate, legalistic and trivialized conceptions of sanctification. There was no longer room for process, and thus there was not as pronounced a need for Christian community to steer one towards a life of holiness.¹⁰

While early Pentecostals focused on pursuing holiness for its own sake, very quickly holiness became a means to an end (primarily *glossolalia*) and lists of sins (e.g., tobacco, alcohol, jewelry) were offered (often by those same early leaders, including Spurling) making routine and uniform what had been informal and varied. Coupled with a tendency to abuse spiritual gifts, such routinization can have deleterious effects. "The larger vision of a coherent, moral life in the spirit of Aquinas and Wesley also risks getting lost when the doctrine of tongues as *initial* evidence of Spirit baptism is detached from other evidences. The isolation of tongues can be at the expense of a fuller understanding of the holy life."¹¹ The lack of understanding and practice of holiness becomes most problematic in cases where *glossolalia* itself becomes routinized and even falsified. Such occurrences are not uncommon and without recourse to Spirit-directed

¹⁰ Martin, "Spirit, Apocalypse and Ethics," 246.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 247.

holiness, there is no means of legitimate correction of such excess. In other words, when *charismata* are divorced from holiness, then the practice of things like *glossolalia* are removed from more basic virtues like truth telling. If *glossolalia* comes by the power of the Spirit, but telling the truth does not (or does not in the same way), then the former may be done at the expense of the latter. Pentecostals over-narrate those brief moments that resist narration (*charismata*) and we under-narrate all the work the Spirit does in our everyday lives.¹² This is how Aquinas narrates the everyday operation of the gifts of the Spirit:

Now the Holy Ghost is not in a man without his gifts. Therefore his gifts abide in man. Therefore they are not merely acts or passions but abiding habits. Accordingly the gifts of the Holy Ghost, as compared with the Holy Ghost Himself, are related to man, even as the moral virtues, in comparison with the reason, are related to the appetitive power. Therefore the gifts of the Holy Ghost are habits whereby man is perfected to obey readily the Holy Ghost.¹³

The Holy Spirit infuses hope into those who already trust, whereby we are enabled to obey in freedom all that the Spirit commands, operating in the gifts of the Spirit in order to make Jesus visible to the world. As obedience, this involves action of a certain character. As obedience in freedom, this cannot be confined to a specific set of rules, which would make Spirit-infusion and Spirit-dependence unnecessary, removing both freedom and real obedience (since obedience can only be given in freedom,

¹² In a quest for proof-texts for initial evidence doctrine, Pentecostals miss the reticence the author of Acts shows in giving too much detail in this regard. Arguments from silence are generally poor ones, but this would seem a notable exception. We could take a lesson in focus from the text.

¹³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 68.3.

coercion can only elicit complicity). The character of obedience can best be narrated (in a way that maintains freedom) by means of virtue language, where the theological virtues are understood in their relation to all the virtues.

5.3 Spirit Infused Virtues

It is common knowledge that Aquinas, in his Treatise on Habits in the *Summa Theologica*, follows the *Nicomachean Ethics* closely. Even so, the ordering of the virtues in the *Summa* lets us know early on that Thomas is charting quite a different course from Aristotle. In the *Ethics* the course moves upward with regard to the role reason plays in activity; this can be seen in the course of Aristotle's argument, which moves from the virtues of character, through the virtues of thought, to the goal (which we will get to below). In the *Summa*, however, the course runs just the opposite, from the intellectual, through the moral, and to the theological, which most closely relates to the goal Aquinas has in view.

5.3.1 How Aquinas orders the virtues

We can see this progression in Aquinas by tracing his line of thought through the *prima secunda*. In question 57, he asserts that the intellectual virtues can be found in habits of the mind, specifically in wisdom, science, understanding, and art. These are lesser and different from the other virtues, however, except prudence, which "is a virtue

most necessary for human life,"¹⁴ and includes counsel, judgment, and command,¹⁵ and as such is the height of the intellectual virtues, to the point of moving into the moral virtues. The next question teaches us that not every virtue is a moral virtue, some are only intellectual (wisdom, science, and art) and can exist apart from morality; other intellectual virtues (understanding and prudence) require moral virtue. Also, the moral virtues may exist apart from the intellectual virtues, except prudence, which seems to be both intellectual and moral, or at least where the two divisions meet. It is difficult to nail this down, because while Aquinas introduces prudence under the intellectual virtues, he goes on to say that moral virtue consists of four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude;¹⁶ though there is also a unity of "overflow" among them.¹⁷

Up to this point, Thomas's moves may be regarded merely as a shuffling of the Aristotelian deck, but beginning with question 62 the discussion takes a turn completely foreign to the Philosopher's thought. Faith, hope, and love are given as the theological virtues, which are generated in us by the Holy Spirit in the order listed, although in terms of perfection their order is just the opposite. Scripture is driving Aquinas' thought; the revelatory insight of Paul in 1 Cor. 13 shapes Thomas's thought with regard to progression in the virtues, because the superiority of love over the other theological virtues is made analogous to the superiority of the theological virtues to the others. The

¹⁴ Ibid., I-II 57.5.

¹⁵ Ibid., I-II 57.6.

¹⁶ Ibid., I-II 61.2.

¹⁷ Ibid., I-II 61.4.

intellectual virtues are first in order of generation, but it is not the highest in perfection. Habits are distinct with respect to their objects: the intellectual are ordered to perfect intellect, the moral are ordered to perfect appetite, and the theological are ordered to God. The first two are comprehensible to us; the latter is not. It is beyond our comprehension or reach; its perfection is such that only God can bring it about in us, through infused faith, then hope, and ultimately love.

This at last is where the Philosopher and the Doctor part ways, as it seems unlikely that Aristotle would have responded favorably to the inclusion of faith, hope, or love in a list of the virtues. I think Aquinas is even imagining his probable response in the following objection:

Further, the theological virtues are [supposedly] more perfect than the intellectual and moral virtues. Now faith is not reckoned among the intellectual virtues, but is something less than a virtue, since it is imperfect knowledge. Likewise hope is not reckoned among the moral virtues, but is something less than a virtue, since it is a passion. Much less therefore should they be reckoned as theological virtues.¹⁸

Regarding as evidential things that cannot be seen and maintaining desire for things beyond the reach of possession are not steps along the path to Aristotelian happiness. Aquinas knows this, and he admits as much in the response to this objection, but note how he overcomes the conceded objection:

Faith and hope imply a certain imperfection: since faith is of things not unseen, and hope, of things not possessed. Hence, faith and hope, in things that are subject to human power, fall short of the notion of virtue. But faith and hope in

¹⁸ Ibid., I-II 62.3.

things which are above the capacity of human nature surpass all virtue that is in proportion to man, according to 1 Cor. 1.25: *The weakness of God is stronger than men.*¹⁹

This move may be regarded as genius or fideist (depending on the attitude of the evaluator), but one adjective certainly applies: Christian. If Aquinas is nothing more than a Christianized Aristotle, then he is a well Christianized Aristotle, since charity – a concept foreign to Aristotle – is given the place of highest importance.²⁰ Just as the starting point for the virtuous life is concomitant with the start of the Christian life, the progression is quite simply (simply stated at least), faith to hope to love. The moral and intellectual virtues are in us by nature, but the theological virtues are not. While the former virtues are perfected by habituation, the theological virtues come by infusion²¹ – but this does not imply the absence of development. They do not all come at once, but in the order Paul gives us, as we grow in Christ. Since the theological virtues are the highest of the virtues, progression in them implies progression in the intellectual and moral as well. You may have some of the lesser virtues without their betters, but by the time you ascend to the virtue of love, you will have all the rest, else you will not have attained to that virtue at all. Thus, growth in the Christian life is brought about both by

¹⁹ Ibid., I-II 62.3.

²⁰ “As Milbank has reminded us, the ascendant Christian virtue of charity is utterly foreign to Aristotle. We cannot, then, begin with Aristotle’s virtues and fill in the gaps with Christianity, nor can we, as Christians, defend virtue first and Christianity later, the strategy we find prevalent in MacIntyre.” [Stanley Hauerwas, *Christians among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics* Edited by Charles Robert Pinches (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 68.]

²¹ As a Pentecostal, I want to read this as Spirit-baptism, an infilling of the Spirit.

infusion and by habituation working together by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

Love is the consummation of faith and hope, just as the theological virtues are the consummation of the intellectual and moral. This is a recurring theme in the *Summa*: “The cumulative sequence of nature-grace-glory describes humanity’s growth towards God in the Thomistic vision.”²² Recognizing this sequential structure helps one to see that the theological virtues, and specifically charity, are not merely addenda tacked onto the end, but are altogether central to Thomas’s thought. “Despite the wide range of contexts in which Thomas treats love and the several definitions he gives it, a coherent vision emerges from the *Summa*, a vision in which charity appears more centrally than in any other Christian theology.”²³ Love, for Aquinas, carries two basic assumptions. First, it is based on knowledge, or rather, faith that is based on knowledge, because, “*No one can love what he does not know.*”²⁴ Second, love implies likeness, as Williams emphasizes by focusing on Aquinas’ understanding of *theosis*, which brings us to our final question.

5.3.2 What is the goal of the virtuous life?

If Aristotle and Aquinas have commended to us a path they genuinely wish for us to tread, then it would there must be some final goal, some *telos* toward which they mean for us to strive. For Aristotle the highest good is happiness (*eudaimonia*), because

²² A. N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 72.

²³ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 27.2.

“happiness above all else appears to be absolutely final in this sense, since we always choose it for its own sake and never as a means to something else.”²⁵ Defining what *eudaimonia* is, however, proves a difficult task. Aristotle begins by dismissing the notion that it may be found in gratification or the honor of the political life, and he also sets aside the Platonic idea of the good as insufficiently abstract for the practical purpose he has in mind. Aristotle then introduces the concept of proper function (*ergon*) and seeks to use this as a tool to help him define happiness:

Are we then to suppose that, while the carpenter and the shoemaker have definite functions or businesses belonging to them, man as such has none, and is not designed by nature to fulfill any function? Must we not rather assume that, just as the eye, the hand, the foot and each of the various members of the body manifestly has a certain function of its own, so a human being also has a certain function over and above all the functions of his particular members?²⁶

Irwin argues against this being a rhetorical question, and thinks it best to “take the question as a genuine question that Aristotle does not think he has answered yet.”²⁷ By posing this question, though, Aristotle has moved from an abstract consideration of happiness, to a more concrete discussion on the purpose and function of humanity. If we

²⁵ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, The Loeb Classical Library, Edited by H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), 27-28.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Edited by Terence Irwin (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub. Co., 1999), 184.

can successfully determine what our *ergon* is, we also should be in a better position to say something constructive about *eudaimonia*.

At least, this would seem to be the case. In practice, laying a finger on *the* essential quality of humanity is no easy thing. All functions we share with plants or animals are obviously disqualified. Some also argue for the exclusion of anything that only provides support for higher forms of activity. This is the approach Thomas Nagel takes in arguing that our function as humans consists in transcendent, contemplative thought: "Men are not simply the most complex species of animal but possess as their essential nature a capacity to transcend themselves and become like gods. It is in virtue of this capacity that they are capable of *eudaimonia*."²⁸ This seems too restrictive, however, to account for what Aristotle has in mind for the function of humanity. The analogies he gives – the carpenter, shoemaker, eye, foot, or hammer all carry out their functions on a regular basis. A hammer might be used on rare occasions to prop up the lid of a broken toolbox, but we would not consider such a solitary instance to add to the account of its function. By Nagel's definition, happiness would be quite rare, except perhaps among theologians, but I have known too many theologians to think this can be true. Irwin serves us well again by drawing together the statements made in the *Ethics*

²⁸ Thomas Nagel, "Aristotle on Eudaimonia," in Amélie Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (University of California Press, 1980), 13.

with the vision of humanity found in *De anima*. He concludes concerning the function argument:

Its point is not that human beings should aim at the maximum possible difference from other living organisms but that living well for them will require the good use of characteristically human capacities and activities; the good use will be the use that promotes happiness. Aristotle makes clear that practical reason is part of the human essence and that the good life for human beings will involve the use of this essential property.²⁹

It is rare enough to find this theory put into practice without making matters worse by opting for an overly restrictive view of human function. It is also important that we recognize that Aristotle is supremely concerned with reality, with the successful navigation through this life. To prudently observe the mean, to choose the good through the proper use of rational desire, and to leave a good legacy for one's descendants – these are the goals Aristotle directs us toward. This may seem quaint and rustic to some, but the value of this prize, and the difficulty in reaching it, should not be underestimated. It will require at least all of our resources to become this happy, virtuous person, and there are few who reach the end, even if they know the way.

Beatitude, perfection, deification, *theosis* – whichever term you prefer, the goal that Aquinas pursues is nothing short of union with God. This union both requires and

²⁹ T. H. Irwin, "The Metaphysical and Psychological Basis," in Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, 49.

at the same time realizes the perfection of the human, and is a critical element of the *Summa*: “Thomas’s theological ethics center on beatitude, understood as eschatological participation in the divine life, attainable only in union with Christ.”³⁰ This moves well beyond the state of *eudaimonia*, which is always a mean between extremes; here there can be no excess, and ultimately there will be no deficiency either. This is central to the vision of Jesus Christ and is wholly alien to Aristotle’s thought, though this does not necessarily imply a critique of the Philosopher, as MacIntyre notes:

Aquinas does not merely supplement Aristotle, he shows Aristotle’s account of the teleology of human life to be radically defective. That radical defectiveness in understanding turns out to be, on Aquinas’ view, not only or so much a radical defectiveness in Aristotle’s account as a radical defectiveness in that natural human order of which Aristotle gave his account.³¹

Aristotle has described human nature well for Aquinas, but human nature, even for all its potential in achieving intellectual and moral virtues, is never able by itself to transcend above its own nature, even though its goal lies in such transcendence. Still, our efforts are involved in the process (which is ultimately why Aristotle remains important for Thomas) as Williams explains:

The realms of nature and the supernatural are portrayed as quite distinct in view of what is possible in each. Yet from the perspective of how persons attain the ends of either, the two realms overlap completely. Grace does not add to the human person by creating new faculties and thus changing essentially the structure of the human being but by extending the range of possibility of those faculties the person already possesses. Grace is both foreign to us, in the sense

³⁰ Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2002), 132.

³¹ Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 205.

that its effects lie beyond the attainment of our nature itself, and yet natural to us in that it does not violate or alter the composition of our nature, working instead through that nature.³²

The link between our nature and the divine nature, which serves as the link between the questions on the virtues and the one on the beatitudes, is the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is where God works in us and we also work ourselves, where it all comes together for Thomas: “[they] are not merely acts or passions but abiding habits. The gifts of the Holy Ghost are habits whereby man is perfected to obey readily to the Holy Ghost.”³³ We have come at last to the heart of Aquinas’ vision, where grace and work are joined, where we learn by practice to cooperate with God’s objective to make us into the divine image, what Edward O’ Conner calls, “the most complete and lucid account of Thomas’ ‘theory of the divinization of man by grace through the action of the Holy Spirit, teaching, guiding, and strengthening’ – not then, merely a decorative pious appendix.”³⁴ This is an account of moral development that should appeal to those of the Pentecostal-holiness tradition: “when a man begins to make progress in the acts of the virtues and gifts, it is to be hoped that he will arrive at perfection, both as a wayfarer, and as a citizen of the heavenly kingdom.”³⁵ The Spirit is willing to work this process in all, but theosis cannot begin until the infusion of faith-trust has been received. The goal, then, for Aquinas is the deification of humanity which will be fully realized in the

³² A. N. Williams, *The Ground of Union*, 37.

³³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 68.3.

³⁴ Cited in Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 132.

³⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 69.2.

eschaton, but which also should begin in this life, empowered by the gifts of the Spirit, and evidenced by the fruits of the Spirit.³⁶ It should also be evident that without a proper account of the end, the end to which hope aims, an adequate description of holiness is rendered impossible. Hope brings about movement, movement toward a goal. Holiness is not the opposite of happiness, it is the means to happiness.

5.3.3 Existing in the Structure of Our Description

This brings us to the heart of the matter – the movement of the human will, and the influence brought to bear on it by that which is exterior to it. In *De Malo*, Thomas describes this process at work. He explains that the devil and his agents cannot be the cause of human sin directly, but only through *persuasion*. While Thomas remains open to the possibility that this could come in the form of a visible appearance (as was the case in Christ's temptations), most often this is accomplished invisibly. “This can be done in three ways: the intellect, the internal sense, or the external sense,” that is, “the human intellect can be helped by an angelic intellect to know something after the manner of illumination... For although an angel cannot directly cause an act of the will, nevertheless, the angel can make an impression on the intellect.”³⁷ Again, this is based on the logic that “a corporeal nature is naturally moved locally by a spiritual nature, but

³⁶ The importance of Gal. 5, 1 Cor. 12, 14, and Matt. 5 can hardly be overstated in this section of the *Summa*.

³⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil*, Edited by Jean T. Oesterle (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 119.

it is not naturally formed by it directly, but by some corporeal agent.”³⁸ Thomas explains that demons may interfere with digestion, and often pay close attention to how we react to certain stimuli - monitoring our heart rates and other bodily signs to guess the cogitations of our hearts.³⁹

Two things stand out here as being important for our consideration. First, we have Thomas’ claim, which might well be chided today as superstitious and foolish, that the demons work on the ‘sensitive part’ of the soul – both “the imagination and the sensitive appetite”⁴⁰ – for the purpose of provoking the will to sin. Simultaneously, however, we find Thomas protecting the integrity of the human will;⁴¹ he is very careful to describe the influence of evil spirits as just that, an *indirect* cause of human sin that does not wholly mitigate the voluntariness of the human will, and thus the concomitant guilt. This distinction is helpful to note in the case of demonic influence, because it is perhaps more clearly stated, or easier to appreciate the importance of, with regard to human guilt and sin. The same principle applies, though admittedly harder to consistently hold to, when we consider the matter of divine influence on the human will. Much is often made of Thomas’ assertion that “only God can move the will nonviolently”⁴² but Aquinas is equally clear that God does not move the will of

³⁸ Ibid. Thomas cites Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* on this point as well.

³⁹ Cf. Aquinas, *On Evil*, 511.

⁴⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 80.2.

⁴¹ Holiness narratives must do this as well.

⁴² Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 9.6.

necessity, but only *contingently*.⁴³ God has established the human will as that part of each human that strives for good (whether true or apparent), and thus as the Universal Mover, God is the initiator of the motion of the will. Having established this framework in creating us, God works within it, meaning that grace is bestowed on us in such a way that we can in fact receive it, as it is amenable to our (unfallen) nature.⁴⁴

What does this mean? Is grace rendered common and un-divine? Of course not. This simply means that grace is brought to bear on our lives in such a way as to change who we are, to transform us into people who act in accordance with the grace and righteousness that God has bestowed on (in) us. This manner of living may alternately be described as living a 'virtuous' life (as it would be most unfitting for a righteous person to not also be a virtuous person). Thomas explains: "The Holy Ghost moves the human mind to that which is in accord with reason, or rather to that which surpasses reason; whereas the fleshly, viz. the sensitive, appetite draws man to sensible goods which are beneath him."⁴⁵ Just as the angelic spirits attend to those parts of the human that are most apt for influence, so too (and even more so) the Holy Spirit makes use of these 'access points' to deliver the grace of God into the human life. God's purpose in

⁴³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 10.4.

⁴⁴ "God moves man's will, as the Universal Mover, to the universal object of the will, which is good. And without this universal motion, man cannot will anything. But man determines himself by his reason to will this or that, which is true or apparent good. Nevertheless, sometimes God moves some specifically to the willing of something determinate, which is good; as in the case of those whom He moves by grace."
[Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 9.6.]

⁴⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 70.4.

doing this is to conform us into the likeness of Christ; it is to this goal that all of the Spirit's efforts aim, and such conformation makes full use of the human structure as Thomas has described it. This, finally, is what makes Aristotle so appealing to Thomas, because in his keen powers of observation, the Philosopher came to understand that the paths of virtue and vice are carved out with the same tool. Habituation lies at the very root of humanity and employs all the constitutive elements we have named. By our habits we are formed (and reformed); God has created us in this manner, the angels and demons understand this and make use (or misuse) of it, and Aristotle describes it better than anyone prior to Thomas.

5.3.4 Infusion as Habitual Gift

As such, Thomas' definition of virtue as that, "which God works in us, without us"⁴⁶ is dependent on a proper understanding of habituation. Such an understanding, begins, for Thomas, with the grace of God: "grace may be taken in two ways; first as Divine help, whereby God moves us to will and to act; secondly, as a *habitual gift* divinely bestowed on us."⁴⁷ Furthermore, the grace of God, this habitual gift, is nothing other than the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit: "now the Holy Ghost is not in a man without His gifts. Therefore, His gifts abide in man. Therefore they are not merely acts of

⁴⁶ Ibid., 55.4.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 111.2.

passions, but *abiding habits*.”⁴⁸ Thomas is not careless with his terminology, the recurring language is not mere coincidence, but reflects great order of thought. Virtues result from habituation. Virtues are divided into three categories: intellectual, moral, and theological. A sharp distinction is made between the intellectual and moral taken together as acquired virtues vis-à-vis the theological: “acquired virtue...is not of the same species as infused virtue.”⁴⁹ Indeed, while sharing the common mode of habituation, infused and acquired virtues differ according to both their species and order. With regard to species, intellectual and moral virtues are in us by nature in that we are adapted to them, that is, we are able and hopefully do acquire them, whereas theological virtues are wholly from without, being infused in us. With regard to order, the end of those virtues we acquire can only be directed within the limited purview of fallen humanity, while the end of the infused virtues is precisely that which is beyond our acquisition: “the power of those naturally instilled principles does not extend beyond the capacity of nature. Consequently, man needs in addition to be perfected by other principles in relation to his supernatural end.”⁵⁰

Still, virtue results from habituation. Therefore, theological virtues must result from habituation that is not acquired (brought forth from within one’s own resources), but infused from without. That is to say, the Holy Spirit must habituate us. It is clear that

⁴⁸ Ibid., 68.3.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 63.4.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 63.3.

Thomas views the work of the Spirit within us as one characterized by habituation, because within his hierarchy of virtues, he creates space for another category: the gifts of the Spirit. These are placed just below the theological virtues, and yet still above the moral and intellectual virtues, due to their infused origin. Thus we have four levels in Thomas' account of the virtues with each level governing those underneath it, while the order is reversed in terms of order of appearance.

There are two ways in which one thing precedes another. One is in order of perfection and dignity, as love of God precedes love of our neighbor: and in this way the gifts precede the intellectual and moral virtues, but follow the theological virtues. The other is the order of generation or disposition: thus love of one's neighbor precedes love of God, as regards the act: and in this way moral and intellectual virtues precede the gifts, since man, through being well subordinate to his own reason, is disposed to be rightly subordinate to God.⁵¹

The gifts are specifically bestowed to assist the virtues in remedying certain defects in sinful human nature: "we need to be moved by the Holy Ghost and perfected by His gifts that we may obey and follow Him."⁵² The reciprocal relationship between the gifts and the different species of virtues demonstrates again a deep interconnectedness, centered in charity. As we will see in the next chapter, the Holy

⁵¹ Ibid., 68.8.

⁵² Ibid., 69.1.

Spirit infuses God's own life, bringing into the human life the divine presence that is most fundamentally characterized by love.⁵³ "Charity can be in us neither naturally, nor through acquisition by the natural powers, but by the infusion of the Holy Ghost, Who is the love of the Father and the Son, and the participation of Whom in us in created charity."⁵⁴ Put more simply: "Charity denotes union with God."⁵⁵ The Holy Spirit infuses faith into the intellectual soul and hope into the affective soul, but charity does not reside in any specific locus of the soul, but is an infusion of the Spirit's own presence.

5.4 Obedience

The preceding discussion is necessary in order to give a detailed account of how infusion of the theological virtues brings about the operation of all the virtues. This is particularly pertinent in this chapter devoted to hope as the middle term in the theological virtues, the locus of movement. The danger in such an extended discussion is that the motion itself might get lost, that reflection might replace action. Reflection alone always allows "one some way of escape" from the requirement to act.⁵⁶ As such, the main focus must remain on obedience in discipleship. This is what Spurling sought to do with his 1910 Teaching Statement: encompass the range of biblically defensible views on

⁵³ Paul Waddell explains: "The argument of this book has been that the primacy Thomas gives charity in his moral theology reveals an interconnectedness between the passions and the virtues, as well as the virtues and the Gifts." [Paul J. Waddell, C.P. *Friends of God: Virtues and Gifts in Aquinas* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 123].

⁵⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II 24.2.

⁵⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II 24.12.

⁵⁶ Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*, 42.

matters, in a way that reflection itself becomes an act of obedience, searching Scripture and listening to the Spirit with regard to what holiness requires. The problem with the sanctification debate within Pentecostalism is that it renders obedience unnecessary⁵⁷ and holiness unintelligible, and in so doing impedes the mission of the Spirit. As discussed in the previous chapter, this reveals a weak doctrine of atonement. What is needed is a more robust understanding of the central role of obedience in redemption. "Redemption is a change of masters, and the New Testament use of this term is one of the strongest statements of the truth that the concern of God in atonement is our obedience, not our guilt."⁵⁸ This understanding of obedience makes it clearer that the Paraclete carries out the mission of convincing the world by showing the world that it is the world, juxtaposing against it a people marked by holiness, who follow in the example of the ascended Lord they now see only see in the Spirit's transforming power at work in their own actions and in the actions of those in their trust community. The centrality of action itself must be emphasized.

The object of hope is a future good, difficult but possible to obtain. Now a thing is possible to us in two ways: first, by ourselves, secondly, by means of others. Wherefore, in so far as we hope for anything as being possible to us by means of the Divine assistance, our hope attains God himself, on Whose help it leans. It is therefore evident that hope is a virtue, since it causes a human act to be good and to attain its due rule. He who hopes is indeed imperfect in relation to that which

⁵⁷ Fully formed expressions of evangelical thought, such as we find in Karl Barth, cannot narrate disobedience.

⁵⁸ Yoder, *Preface to Theology*, 301.

he hopes to obtain, but has not as yet; that he is perfect, in so far as he already attains his proper rule, viz., God, on Whose help he leans.⁵⁹

Holiness involves difficult action, but action that may be obtained through divine assistance. This is what infused hope communicates to us, both what we are required to and that we can fulfill those requirements. Hope communicates this through conviction, which is not a matter of cognitive recognition so much as it is a mastery of the will over cognition, of action itself over the intellectual that such action is good:

It is the same with the theory of liberty regarded as an indetermination, not potential but active and dominating, and as the mastery of the will over the very judgment that determines it. There is here, in the last analysis, a primacy of exercise over specification which shocks every philosophy of pure essence and which has meaning only because at the indivisible instant when will and intellect determine each other, the act of the will causes the subject to exist, *decidedly*.⁶⁰

This is particularly the case when the specification, judgment, and determination are done by someone else, divorced from the Spirit's ongoing work in growing the individual through infused habituation, as is common with rigid, legalistic approaches to pseudo(holiness) so common among Pentecostals.

The Paraclete does not participate in such approaches as they have nothing to do with the convincing mission. The Paraclete convicts followers of Jesus as such, whereby discipleship is understood in terms of following the example of Christ, though not in a limited way that imitates "the historical sequence of Jesus' life in its movement to the Cross: the Spirit given to believers always embraces the totality – the journey to the

⁵⁹ Aquinas, *ST Summa Theologica*, 17.1.

⁶⁰ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 49-50.

Cross, the Passion, the Resurrection and Ascension.”⁶¹ The hiatus between Jesus’ movement toward the ‘hour’ and the ‘hour’ itself is altogether missing from the Paraclete's second mode of conviction. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is involved, there is nothing against these phases being simultaneous, even if particular forms of inner distress and darkness exclude a concomitant experience of consolation. The Christian is both crucified with the Lord and risen with him: both these *existenciales* stamp his existence, simultaneously and inseparably.”⁶² This bespeaks a paradox, wherein “the sufferings of the God-man are all-sufficient, but within those sufferings a place has been left for the disciples; thus Jesus predicts that those who are his will share his destiny.”⁶³ Here the entirety of Jesus' example is made available as a model for the Paraclete's convincing work, as all aspects of the kerygmatic ministry will at times need to be displayed. It is in this context that all the charismatic gifts of the Spirit must be understood. The Paraclete may convict us to pray for the sick that they may be healed. The Paraclete may convict us to cast out demons that the oppressed may be delivered. The Paraclete may convict us to feed hungry crowds of people, to prophesy, to preach, to live in voluntary poverty, yes even to speak in tongues. All these must be understood first as acts of the Holy Spirit and second as moments of obedience where we respond to the command of the Paraclete and in so doing testify to the holiness of Jesus Christ.

⁶¹ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 4:384.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 386.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 388.

5.5 Freedom

Though these are acts of the Paraclete, they are not automatic or guaranteed. They involve obedience precisely because a hiatus exists between the Spirit's act of initiation and our act of responding. This hiatus creates space for freedom so that our participation is indeed obedience, a movement of the will, and not merely coerced response. Hope enables and is defined by the movement that crosses this space. Humans are in a constant state of choice, choosing whether or not to obey God, a state defined by real freedom to make either choice. Such freedom is an absolute necessity because "God is agape and agape respects the freedom of the beloved."⁶⁴ The constant state of choice we exist in is defined by an absolute uniqueness of the instant, irreducible to any chain of anterior events and determination: "The same moral case never appears twice in the world. No knowledge of moral essences, no casuistry, no chain of pure deduction, can exempt me from my judgment of conscience."⁶⁵ The Spirit gives us moral direction in way that protects our integrity, so that obedience and freedom are both increased in us in the act of following the Spirit's leading. "The Saints receive moral direction from the Spirit of God in the depths of their incommunicable subjectivity. The Saints always amaze us. Their virtues are freer than those of a merely virtuous man. They have their own kind of mean, their own kinds of standards. But they are valid only for each one of them. They are not generalizable, universalisable, they are good, the best of all moral

⁶⁴ Yoder, *Preface to Theology*, 309.

⁶⁵ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 60.

acts. But they are good only for him who does them."⁶⁶ The direction of the Holy Spirit is higher than that of the moral virtues and far above any sort of Kantian universal in that the Spirit alone offers moral direction that is unified without becoming abstract. Abstraction is enemy of freedom; it is a leveling process. "The leveling process is not the action of an individual but the work of reflection in the hands of an abstract power. Enthusiasm may end in disaster, but leveling is *eo ipso* the destruction of the individual."⁶⁷ The direct command of the Holy Spirit to the individual in his or her particularity cannot be replaced with any ethical principle, moral code of conduct, or rule-based construct without the loss of responsibility, freedom, obedience, and actual holiness. "One can do anything 'on principle' and avoid all personal responsibility... repentance and responsibility cannot easily strike root in ground where everything is done, 'on principle'."⁶⁸ The command of God comes to us, we cannot create it or codify it, we can only obey in freedom, understanding that our action is always a response, never a first cause. The only causative power we have is the "power to nihilate, to make the thing that is nothing."⁶⁹ Attempts to supplant the Holy Spirit's role as the one who convicts to obedience can only be destructive and against the Paraclete's mission to the world.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 64.

⁶⁷ Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*, 54.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 75.

⁶⁹ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 122.

This does not mean we have no creative power. Quite the opposite, when we leave codification behind we find that holiness has an improvisational quality: "The divine plan is not a scenario prepared in advance, in which free subjects would play parts and act as performers. We must purge our thought of any idea of a play written in advance, at a time prior to time - a play in which time unfolds, and the characters of time we departs. On the contrary, everything is improvised, under the eternal and immutable direction of the almighty Stage Manager."⁷⁰

Moral acts have creative power. Obeying the command of the Paraclete as it comes to each of us in our particularities creates communities of trust and erects innumerable living examples of the life and ministry of Jesus (the Paraclete comes as the Spirit of Jesus to continue the Son's mission). The possibilities here are quite literally infinite. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom," freedom for obedience, freedom for discipleship, freedom for holiness, freedom for self-sacrifice, and ultimately freedom for death.⁷¹

5.6 Freedom unto Death

The cross is the convergence of ultimate obedience and ultimate hope – in the surrender to death. Christ experienced real hope, because “for the sake of obedience, he has renounced his divine foreknowledge...even his supernatural, human knowledge in God is made use of by him only to the extent that it is necessary for his task.”⁷² In this way, Christ demonstrates for his followers what it means to live pneumatologically

⁷⁰ Ibid., 122-3.

⁷¹ 2 Cor. 3:17.

⁷² Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 5:128.

(which is another way of saying christologically)⁷³ and prepares us to receive Pentecost, which is itself an eschatologically oriented gifting that facilitates our missionary life. It is the church that carries on the task of Christ, and the nexus of obedience, death and hope are found in all the church's efforts: "we are to work on earth and do what God requires of us, and this work will bring forth fruit; we have the right to harvest this fruit – but in heaven. Our entire temporal life has its fruit in heaven."⁷⁴ This second mode of the Paraclete's convincing mission finds its fullest expression in that hope consumes death itself: "In reality, no one ever dies his own death, for the death he is to die is swallowed up in the Lord's death."⁷⁵ Thus the hope of the Christian is both a horizontal and a vertical hope, and is only properly understood in relation to obedience unto death, with suffering inherently characterizing the trajectory to death.

Obedience signifies our movement toward heaven, while hope signifies the movement of heaven toward us. These movements collide at the moment of death, such that, for Christians, "death, which had been a physical event at the end of their earthly lives, shifts into the center of their existence, not dividing it into two but, on the contrary, uniting the two aspects of their freedom."⁷⁶ Obedience can only be described as such because it exists within finite freedom: "Man is created as *imago*, an abiding image, even if obscured by sin, and he is intended to unfold in the direction of similitude by the

⁷³ Cf. Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 5:148.

⁷⁴ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 5:136.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 140-41.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 112.

exercise of freedom of choice."⁷⁷ Obedience is only possible because of the infusion of hope, and yet obedience remains a matter of finite freedom; we can (and too often do) choose the way of disobedience. Freedom assures that this is a real choice, creating space where hope can create the movement that fundamentally defines hope *qua* hope. Hope serves as the "link between earthly and heavenly things,"⁷⁸ and this link is epitomized in death: "where death belongs to man and not man to death, the temporal world has been shattered and invaded by the eternal world...it is the saints and the real believers who possess the good death."⁷⁹ This means the disciples of Christ are those who are able to embrace, "the perspective that life, suffering and death are wedded together in that whole movement of transcendence whereby earthly life goes toward the coming of the kingdom of God"; indeed, "without the ferment of death, finite life would not be life."⁸⁰

The Paraclete's infusion of hope makes such transcendent movement possible, whereby those so infused revivify Christ to the world, exhibiting the very same obedience in hope that characterized Jesus' life and mission:

In obedience lies the unity of Christ's life, a unity that will persist undiminished into the night of the Cross, when every sight and feeling of the Father is taken from him. Christ invites his Church to follow him even into this absolute obedience, 'which must be like dying in the very presence of God.' On the Cross, Jesus is deprived of the sight of the Father," and can only respond in "a trusting self-surrender to God."⁸¹

⁷⁷ Ibid., 113.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 115.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 117.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 123.

Obedience in freedom, freedom unto death, requires the kind of habituation only available through Spirit-infused virtues. This is how the Paraclete convicts the world with regard to moral excellence, by empowering us to follow in trusting self-surrender, even as we are deprived of the sight of Jesus. Self-surrender also fundamentally characterizes all the Holy Spirit's infusing and gifting. This is a far cry from typical Pentecostal practice, where operating in gifts is more likely a matter of self-aggrandizement. Both holiness and *charismata* must be understood as movement in hope to obey in freedom (unto death) the command of the Holy Spirit by self-surrender to the Holy Spirit. This requires specific habituation.

5.6 Pentecostal Habituation

The habituation Pentecostals need is not practice in following this or that specific rule or command or in applying some pre-thought casuistry to their lives with the goal of achieving uniformity with some principle, standard, or essence. None of these engenders the freedom unto death that must characterize people empowered to participate in the Paraclete's convincing mission. The habituation that is needed is in following the command of God as it comes to each in his or her particularity, as the Spirit infuses hope and a vision of the self each can become, a self characterized by freedom. The habituation we need is practice in listening to the Spirit's call, increasing sensitivity to the Paraclete's conviction to grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ, whom we 'see' as the Spirit makes him visible to us through each other in a community of trust.

As stated in chapter four, the only protection of unity here is the Spirit's own presence. Following different commands, where one is free to do what another is forbidden from doing, might lead to confusion or bifurcation. Conformity seems a safer alternative, but the cost is high: liberty, hope, and the Paraclete's empowerment are incompatible with human, arbitrarily constructed uniformity. Where freedom is abandoned for coercion, obeying is abandoned for complying and the result is only a pseudo-holiness; the treasure for which everything is sold turns out to be fools' gold. The Paraclete will not operate in such environments because they are invariably built on a mode of power that the Paraclete specifically condemns, as we will see in the next chapter.

6. Convincing the World to Love

Love is the law that governs the community of the Spirit, the community of trust and hope, not the law of faith understood as something other than trust, not a moral law understood as something other than the motion of hope. The Holy Spirit only empowers the formation and continuation of communities of love expressed in equality, in a perfection of union. "That perfection does not consist in reunion with an essence by means of supreme accuracy and copying the ideal; it consists in loving, and going through all that is unpredictable, dangerous, dark, demanding, and insensate in love; it consists in the plenitude and refinement of dialogue and union of person with person to the point of transfiguration."¹

6.1 Charity as a Theological Virtue

The account of the theological virtues culminates in charity. Love is the cause of all the passions,² love affects union³ and *mutual* indwelling,⁴ every action reveals a love of some kind for something,⁵ such that when love is directed at an unsuitable good, this wounds the lover.⁶ Charity is the perfection of love in that it is always directed to a suitable good, and its agency lies beyond the sinful self: "charity is not something

¹ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 58-9.

² "There is no other passion of the soul that does not presuppose love of some kind." [Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I-II 27.4.]

³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II. 28.1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.2.

⁵ "Every agent acts for an end... Now the end is the good desired and loved by each one. Wherefore it is evident that every agent, whatever it be, does every action from love of some kind." [*Ibid.*, 28.6.]

⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.5.

created in the soul, but is the Holy Ghost Himself dwelling in the mind.”⁷ This does not negate voluntariness with regard to action, the space for obedience, the space between the Holy Spirit’s influence and the exercise of human freewill is maintained: “given that the will is moved by the Holy Ghost to the act of love, it is necessary that the will also should be the efficient cause of the act. [Because] no act is perfectly produced by an active power, unless it be connatural to that power by reason of some form which is the principle of that action.”⁸ We can put this another way. The form and principle here are nothing other than the mode and species of charity that propel the act, specifically the act of love, to a certain end (order). This mode and species must be infused in us because they were taken away in the fall and are no longer a native part of human nature, nor are we able to integrate them naturally once they are infused. Charity remains the infusion of the Spirit’s own self that we may attain the virtuous end: “for us to perform the act of charity, there should be in us some habituated form superadded to the natural power, inclining that power to the act of charity, and causing it to act with ease and pleasure.”⁹

Charity is not a passing pleasure or emotion, but the very meaning of being alive.¹⁰ At stake here is the virtuous life in *toto*: “charity is included in the definition of every virtue, not as being essentially every virtue, but because every virtue depends on

⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II. 23.2.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 120.

it in a way.”¹¹ This may be taken as a recapitulation of the famous assertion that “charity is the form of all the virtues.”¹² We can take this a step further and focus on the mode, species, and order of virtue itself. If charity is the form of virtue, then charity is the species of virtue. The mode or principle of virtue can only be habit, while the order or end of virtue may be said to in keeping with each of the three categories of virtue, each with its proper end. Still, charity belongs only naturally to God; charity is not in us apart from infusion by the Holy Spirit. “Charity is superior to the soul, in as much as it is a participation of the Holy Ghost.”¹³ Therefore, while all that we will expresses our love (whether rightly or wrongly directed), our love can only be ordered rightly by adherence to the divinely provided mode, species, and order of love, which is the infusion of the Spirit’s own self, the theological virtue of charity. This is so because the natural inclination of our own mode, species, and order has been diminished by sin, while the virtue and grace of our mode, species, and order has been altogether taken away by sin. As such, we require divine assistance in order to love rightly, to express our will and love according to the truly human mode, species, and order. This comes in the divine act of infusion, whereby the Holy Spirit indwells us and creates love in us. At the same time, we must recognize that the Holy Spirit is not present within a person without the Spirit’s gifts also being present.

¹¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II. 23.4.

¹² *Ibid.*, 62.4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, II-II 23.3.

It is thus the infusion of the theological virtues, concomitant with the empowering gifts of the Spirit that habituate the Christian according to the virtues. Whether any virtue on the moral or intellectual levels is possible without the Spirit misses the point that *with* the Spirit these virtues pass beyond possibility and attain to actuality. This builds on everything that has been said to this point. The Paraclete carries out the mission of convincing the world by creating communities of trust and hope, thereby showing the world its sin and savior. That the infusion of the Spirit happens in community, and only in community, cannot be overstated here. The virtues affords us a detailed description of how the convincing work of the Paraclete moves us into becoming those very people bound together by love. "God is faithful: by Whom you are called unto the fellowship of His Son. The love which is based on this communication, is charity: wherefore it is evident that charity is the friendship of man for God."¹⁴ Not only friendship of humans for God, but also friendship of humans for each other. The community of trust and hope is fundamentally a community where people trust each other and hope for the best for and of each other. There is freedom within this framework for each one to pursue a path of holiness that does not look precisely like what others may take without thereby sacrificing unity and there is freedom for each one to operate in the gifts that the Spirit may give to him or her. Those who no longer see Jesus find that we see Jesus in each other, that revelation of God and knowledge of

¹⁴ Ibid., II-II 23.1.

self both come through loving the other.¹⁵ "Only by loving do we attain to the supreme level of existence, existence as self-giving."¹⁶

Just as unity and liberty are necessary for the community of the Paraclete's mission, equality is also essential and is evidence of the Spirit's infusion of charity. "But in the order of perfection, charity precedes faith and hope: because both faith and hope are quickened by charity, and receive from charity their full complement as virtues. For thus charity is the mother and the root of all the virtues, inasmuch as it is the form of them all."¹⁷ Only a community whose essential character is built on the love of the Holy Spirit can be a community where unity in trust and the hopeful pursuit of holiness are possible and become, and remain, actual. All the gifts of the Spirit and infused virtues begin and end with charity: "Wherefore, just as the moral virtues are united together in prudence, so the gifts of the Holy Ghost are connected together in charity: so that whoever has charity has all the gifts of the Holy Ghost, none of which can one possess without charity."¹⁸ As the form of all of the virtues, charity creates the structure whereby virtues are possible and the community of the Spirit can exist as such. Charity is essential in constructing the community where virtue may be pursued and sanctification may take place, because charity is the presence of the Spirit of Jesus himself.

¹⁵ "Friendship reveals the self." (Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 120.)

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 62.4.

¹⁸ Ibid., 68.5.

6.2 Charity and the Logic of the Cross

“Now the form of an act always follows from a form of the agent.”¹⁹ The agent throughout this study is the Paraclete, but as Jesus makes clear in his Farewell Discourse in the Fourth Gospel, the Paraclete that he will send will do nothing more, less, or other than carry on the same mission he has begun, the mission characterized most essentially by the form of one act: his death on the cross. As the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit’s acts follow this same form, taking on the form of the one on whose behalf the Paraclete carries out the convincing mission. Like ancient Israel, the community of the Paraclete must be the people of God giving up power and living in weakness, choosing to trust in God rather than themselves, as the prophet declared: “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.”²⁰ In exemplifying Jesus to the world, the Paraclete calls us to live in a certain way, to live as Jesus did, as participants in the mission of the Spirit of God to the world, as ones who stand in opposition to worldly power and thereby testify that it stands condemned.

The central question the world brings, both to Jesus and to those who live by his Spirit remains: ‘by what authority do you do these things?’ In asking this, the world gets closer to the heart of the matter than we tend to with our doctrinal preoccupations:

¹⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II 23.8.

²⁰ Zech. 4.6.

What have traditionally been thought of as 'dogmatic questions' are more foreign to the import of the original texts in many cases than is the problem of power. We have the record of Jesus dealing explicitly with whether he should be king or whether we should love our enemies, and with what we should do with wealth; only very indirectly can we get from his teachings any help on the metaphysics of the incarnation.²¹

The ruler that stands condemned is the totality of the powers and principalities (the ambiguity of this language is intentional), which are congruent with modern power structures, including religious, intellectual, moral, political, and economic structures. It is true that these powers have their origin in "the creative purpose of God," but to call them 'orders of creation' tends to autonomize the powers.²² Instead, Jesus has broken the sovereignty of these fallen powers by living free of them. He was never a slave to the powers, which led him to the cross – and to the acceptance of the cross. The community of the Paraclete lives in this same freedom or it does not exist as such: "unless it [the church] demonstrates in its own life and fellowship how believers can live freed from the powers. We can only preach the manifold wisdom of God to Mammon if our life displays that we are joyfully freed from his clutches."²³ In participating in the Paraclete's mission of convincing the world, we show its power condemned by living free of such power.

²¹ John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 135.

²² *Ibid.*, 140. Yoder notes that this mistake has been made often in Protestant theology, most notably by H. Richard Niebuhr.

²³ *Ibid.*, 148.

This effectively recaptures the power struggle that the early Pentecostals experienced, but actually expands it to encompass a broader vision than Pentecostals have typically had. But what does it look like to live such a life – freed from the powers? How does one begin to think and respond to the world from this new, liberated position? Such a life can only be lived as a part of the church – the community of trust, hope, and charity. “The church must be a sample of the kind of humanity within which, for example, economic and racial differences are surmounted.”²⁴ Living free from the powers and experiencing the Paraclete’s infusion take the form of following the way of Jesus, i.e., the way of the cross. “His life is a life according to the Sermon on the Mount; the cross is the meaning of His moral teaching.”²⁵ This is that certain way we are called to live, this is how we live free of the powers, we live in the way of the cross. The cross is not a discrete event detached from the end of Jesus’ ministry, nor is it the ‘real,’ ‘spiritual’ work Jesus came to do so that his other actions and his teachings lose meaning or exemplary value. All the actions and teachings of Jesus stand together in continuity, and in the cross they are all recapitulated and brought to summation. The way of the cross is the way of powerlessness, the rejection of ‘efficacy’ as a metric and an acceptance of what Jesus taught us: that “we find life by way of the cross, power by means of weakness, wisdom by means of foolishness.”²⁶

²⁴ Ibid., 150.

²⁵ John Howard Yoder, *The Original Revolution*, (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press. 1988), 136.

²⁶ Ibid., 165.

The cross is the very form of our fellowship, in fact it is the height of trinitarian fellowship. Christ's forsakenness on the cross becomes the model for the Christian life, both for the individual and the community. It is the very form of, "Christian fruitfulness, which takes place in solitude,"²⁷ first, which then leads to, "ecclesial community that arises from the trinitarian relationship with God meditated to the individual by Christ."²⁸ The individual thus represents the church – *in persona ecclesiae* – in carrying out her mission to witness, "with or without an explicit commission."²⁹ Pneumatological power is made available directly to the theological individual, not to ecclesiastical power structures that deny such explicit commission, which evince, "an environment that mistakenly imagines it is of the Church."³⁰ Only worldly power asks, 'by what authority do you do this,' even when such power is wielded by the church.

The problem is that while such a claim might seem theologically warranted, it is deeply troubling on a practical level. This is precisely where trust and hope must take on their theological meaning and show the depths of nonconformity they entail:

In the deep nonconformity of mind to which the gospel calls us, we cannot accept the analysis according to which one kind of action (suffering servanthood) is right from the point of view of revelation, but some other pattern is equally right from the practical perspective. This denies the lordship of Christ and shuts him up in the monastery or the heart. There is clearly a double standard in the

²⁷ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 3:450.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 452.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 453.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 455.

world, not between discipleship and common sense; between obedience and rebellion.³¹

Here we see congruence with Spurling's thesis in *The Lost Link*. Taken together, both he and Yoder would have us understand how deep our 'nonconformity of mind' needs to be. This message of revival and restoration is not compelling because it evokes feelings of nostalgia or stirs up the emotions of the hearer; it works because the way of the cross is the path the disciple of Jesus Christ must take. Yoder explains that the believer's cross is not an inexplicable suffering, or an inward wrestling of the soul, or some pious form of pastoral counseling; rather, it is "the price of social nonconformity...the end of a path freely chosen after counting the cost...the social reality of representing in an unwilling world the Order to come."³² Taking this path involves a deep nonconformity of mind because faith – far from being the detached mental category it is in much of Protestant theology – turns out to have a strong, inherent connection with obedience: "faith is obeying when it is not visible that it 'pays' or 'works'."³³ As we saw in John, faith is trust demonstrated in action. This, then, is the rejection of all theological and ethical constructs based on effectiveness arguments – they demonstrate a lack of trust and faithfulness.³⁴ They may be likened to Jesus rejecting the cross in Gethsemane on the basis that he could not see how this would bring about the

³¹ Yoder, *Original Revolution*, 181.

³² Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 96.

³³ *Ibid.*, 125, f.n. 31.

³⁴ This, of course, is a much more consistent understanding of all the cognates of πίστις.

kingdom. It certainly did not seem the most effective or practical way to proceed – so thought Peter and Judas Iscariot. What ‘works’ in the ‘real world’ cannot be the criterion for our ethical constructs or casuistic reasoning. The difference between the logic of casuistry and the logic of the cross,³⁵ between human wisdom and the foolishness of God, is the difference between condemned power and the life-giving, self-sacrificing power of God. Jesus confronts us and convicts us. He calls us to take up our crosses and follow him. This is the convincing work that the Paraclete continues, whereby the power of the world is revealed as judged.

6.3 Charity: Perfection, Increase, and Loss

Not only is such self-sacrifice the highest expression of love, it is the apex of human existence. "The summit of wisdom and of human perfection is to love *lovingly* the sovereignly personal principle of every act of existing; not only to love it, but also - nay above all! - to be loved by it; in other words, to open oneself to the plenitude of its love descending into us and overflowing from us so that we may continue through time its work and communicate its goodness."³⁶ The communication of this goodness comes by way of all the virtues; they speak of the very presence of God as they are governed by the Spirit's infusion. "Wherefore as the intellectual virtues are more excellent than the moral virtues and control them, so the theological virtues are more excellent than the

³⁵ Yoder cites only 1 Cor. 1:22-24 (Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 126), but it is at the beginning of that pericope, in v. 18, where Paul uses the phrase 'Ο λόγος γὰρ ὁ τοῦ σταυροῦ.

³⁶ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 53.

gifts of the Holy Ghost and regulate them."³⁷ This is precisely Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 13, which interrupts his discussion of the gifts in chapters 12 and chapters 14: the theological virtues, trust, hope, and charity, regulate the gifts of the Spirit as they are the primary modes of the Spirit's infusion. The gifts are specific out workings of these three and work in ways that enhance and further the love that initiates and regulates the gifts. Love is given, makes all possible, and pulls all into itself. "Love as the immaterial super-existence in which the beloved is or becomes, in the lover, the principle of a gravitational pull or intentional connaturality by which the love tends inwardly towards existential union with the beloved, as towards its own being from which it has been separated, and thus loses itself in the reality of the beloved."³⁸ This existential union is not limited to a relationship between the individual and God, as such a relationship alone lacks perfection in that it excludes the neighbor. Perfect love of God extends also to our neighbor, who becomes the beloved, otherwise it is inadequate and imperfect love of God.³⁹ The Holy Spirit infuses charity in us, which forms the virtues in us, whereby we come to love lovingly God and neighbor, both becoming the beloved. Charity is the perfection of love because it is the infusion of the Spirit's own self so that all acts of charity take their mode, the mode of perfection, from the Spirit as agent.

³⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 68.8.

³⁸ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 49.

³⁹ Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 27.8.

While acts of charity enjoy the mode of perfection due to the Spirit's agency, there remains the ongoing possibility of increase or decrease. We can advance in charity:

Charity increases by being intensified in its subject, and this is for charity to increase in its essence. Charity does not actually increase through every act of charity, but each act of charity disposes to an increase of charity, in so far as one act of charity makes man more ready to act again according to charity, and this readiness increasing, man breaks out into an act of more fervent love, and strives to advance in charity, and then his charity increases actually.⁴⁰

Unlike acquired virtues, with the theological virtues there is no vice of excess only a vice of depravity. However much we increase in charity, in giving of ourselves to the beloved, we can yet reach higher. "This measure surpasses all human power: so that never can we love God as much as He ought to be loved, nor believe and hope in Him as much as we should. Much less therefore can there be excess in such things. Accordingly the good of such virtues does not consist in a mean, but increases the more we approach to the summit."⁴¹ As charity increases in us, so our union with the beloved, both God and neighbor, is made stronger and comes to more thoroughly characterize all of our existence. Loving self-giving is cruciform charity, the very foundation of life itself. To lose one's life is most truly the way to find it.

But just as charity can increase in us, it can also decrease. As discussed above, the only truly creative power we have is the power to nihilate, *ex nihilo in nihil*:

Charity, being an infused habit, depends on the action of God Who infuses it, Who stands in relation to the infusion and safekeeping of charity, as the sun does

⁴⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II 24.5.

⁴¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II 64.4.

to the diffusion of light in the air. Consequently, just as the light would cease at once in the air, were an obstacle placed to its being lit up by the sun, even so charity ceases at once to be in the soul through the placing of an obstacle to the outpouring of charity by God into the soul.⁴²

This was the most fundamental argument Spurling sought to make in *The Lost Link*, that through our unloving actions we could block the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which entails a cessation of the infusion of charity without which the gifts and the virtues are rendered impossible. The choice here is not quite binary, the possibility for a diminishing exists: "Now, if it decrease, this must needs be either through an act, or by the mere cessation from act. A movement of the free-will is requisite in the infusion of charity. Wherefore that which diminishes the intensity of the free-will conduces dispositively to a dimunition in the charity to be infused."⁴³ We may find comfort here that the infusion of charity may be diminished without ceasing altogether. We should also note that such decrease can come not only from overt acts, but even through the cessation of charitable acts. Charity increases as charitable acts are practiced. Charity decreases as charitable acts cease to be practiced. Acts that are unloving, acts that break our union with the beloved cause a cessation in the infusion of charity. Since the theological virtues exist together, unloving acts will also likely be mistrustful and unhelpful acts. As the Paraclete's entire mission hinges on the infusion of charity, such

⁴² Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II 24.12.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 24.10.

unloving acts place us outside participation in the Paraclete's mission and thus outside the Spirit's empowerment.

6.4 Opportunities for Charity in the Church of God

Most often, such unloving acts occur in the misuse of authority by leaders who take cues, not from the Holy Spirit, but from the very worldly powers that stand condemned, where, "...authority will normally be physically recognizable by power."⁴⁴ If a leader in the community of the Spirit tries to use worldly power, "he would *eo ipso* have lost his cause. By using power he would have defined his efforts as essentially identical with those of other men, and yet an Apostle is only what he is through his paradoxical heterogeneity through having divine authority."⁴⁵ The exercise of divine authority is incompatible with worldly power: the ruler of this world has been condemned. As such, the only legitimate authority within the community formed and sustained by the Paraclete is authority that comes in the mode of trust, in the species of hope, and in the order of charity. All other modalities of authority, even those that come charismatically, are under the Paraclete's condemnation of the ruler of this world. Human charisma can mimic the move of the Holy Spirit, even copying the *charismata*, but at the end of the day nothing really changes, everyone goes "quietly home - having

⁴⁴ Kierkegaard, *This Present Age*, 105.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

spent a very pleasant evening."⁴⁶ The Paraclete's mission of convincing the world looks very different, in that blockages preventing the infusion of charity are removed and the community of trust and hope lives in an equality only possible between ones who love and their beloved.

The contrast between legitimate exercise of authority in obedience to the Spirit and illegitimate use of worldly power is stark, and yet very often there is intermingling, either a clear back and forth, or a mixture that becomes difficult to parse. An example of the latter was the Church of God's failed attempt at denomination-wide economic sharing. Tomlinson proposed at the 1920 General Assembly that all tithes from all the churches should be sent to headquarters in Cleveland where funds would be distributed evenly among all the churches. As was often the case with Tomlinson, the matter was put to a 'negative vote,' that is, a brief moment was given for objections and when none were voiced the matter was put down in the minutes as having received unanimous support.⁴⁷ This was very likely a case of the abuse of worldly power. Yet, beginning in January 1921, all the churches complied with this directive. They sent all their tithes and offerings to Cleveland and waited for what would be sent back. In most cases, nothing or very little ever came back. No evidence of direct malfeasance was ever disclosed, but at the very least there was a gross mismanagement of the funds by Tomlinson who had

⁴⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁴⁷ *Church of God General Assembly Minutes 1920*, 3.

too much responsibility, too much power, and just too much to do. What makes this interesting as an example here is that at the General Assembly of 1922 the pastors agreed to renew the program for another year. Despite the fact that many of them had gone unpaid for a year and had relied on their congregations to give them food to feed themselves and their families, they saw the value in equality and unity that the program had the potential to enhance in their community. They had misgivings, but their trust in the Spirit and in each other, their hope for who they might become together, their self-giving love prompted them to start over and go for it again. Seven months later the program was abandoned and never revisited, but for a brief moment they showed signs of being a community formed by the Paraclete. Race and gender are more enduring areas where the Church of God showed itself to be such a community, where it could do so again.

6.4.1 Race and the “Memphis Miracle”

I grew up in a small Florida town that (unbeknownst to me) had two Church of God congregations, a white one and an African-American one. The African-American church did not join us at regional or state events (at least not youth events). The two churches never did anything together. Though part of the same denomination, living in the same small town with a shared minority status as Pentecostals, they led very separate existences. The African-American Church of God in my town likely had deep roots in the denomination, as Bahamians and African-Americans had first joined the

Church of God in Florida under Tomlinson's ministry. He had established them and set them to work and they flourished. Their experience in the Church of God over the ensuing years is an embodiment both of the vying impulses of primitivism and pragmatism that characterized the Pentecostal movement and of the movement's repeated failure to embody the charity that carries out the Spirit's mission to convince the world that its power is condemned.

Reading Charles Conn's official history of the Church of God, *Like a Mighty Army*, one can easily come away with the impression that the denomination was (like the Assemblies of God) a nearly exclusive white movement. It is, as Joseph Jackson described it, "Euro-centric in nature."⁴⁸ But this is not an accurate account of the denomination's history or of the commitments of its founders. The first black man to join the Church of God was Edmond S. Barr, a Bahamian saved at a Tomlinson revival meeting in 1909 (likely during the Goins affair related in chapter three). Barr received the gift of tongues during those meetings and returned to the Bahamas, establishing the Church of God there. He was later joined by a retired white minister, R. M. Evans, who said of his coming, "we immediately looked up Brother and Sister Barr, who were making full proof of their ministry. We obtained a cottage and began to cooperate with

⁴⁸ Joseph E. Jackson, *Reclaiming Our Heritage: The Search for Black History in the Church of God* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God Black Ministries, 1993), 84.

them immediately.”⁴⁹ Despite this open statement in the church’s official organ, Evans was credited as being the first Church of God missionary, an error not corrected officially until 1992, and only changed in the final edition of *Like a Mighty Army* in 1996.⁵⁰ By itself, this is a small incident, but it speaks to the church’s inability to tell the truth about itself in the face of pressure from worldly power.

Such pressure was applied due to the Church of God’s Southern context. What was done more openly in Florida was not so openly done in Tennessee or western North Carolina without the threat of violent opposition. The young movement was already dealing with fierce opposition, adding more undoubtedly seemed unwise. Still, the record indicates as many as twelve black ministers attending the General Assembly in November 1913, held in Cleveland, TN.⁵¹ Perhaps the most significant moment of the growing church came at the 1919 General Assembly, where Tomlinson made these remarks in his opening statement:

Every subject on the program is of the utmost importance. But it is not expedient for me to call attention to every one separately, however I feel it my duty to mention one more. We have deviated from our former practice by giving a place on the program for our colored brethren. We have recognized them, and loved them and fellowshipped them as brothers and sisters and members, and given them opportunity for extemporaneous utterances, but this is the first time they

⁴⁹ R. M. Evans, “Missionary,” *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel*, March 1, 1909, 7.

⁵⁰ *Like a Mighty Army* exists in three editions, 1955, 1977, and 1996. Besides the additional material the newer editions add, each gives significantly different versions of some early events. Part history, part hagiography, it might prove a worthwhile exercise for an enterprising history student to lay out a full comparison of these versions of Church of God history.

⁵¹ There were two meetings in 1913, one in January, where 10 black ministers are listed (though race is not indicated), and the one in November, which added two and a note of race to the record. (*Minutes of the Eighth General Assembly, 1913; Minutes of the Ninth General Assembly, 1913.*)

have been given a representation on the program. We feel they are due this recognition. They are truly our brethren. From the mouth of the great apostle Paul came the sacred utterance that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being.” Our dark skinned brothers and sisters have received the Holy Ghost as well as we, and we have long ago learned that God is no respecter of persons. In certain places, and in some states of the United States, it is more expedient for them to have their own churches and schools separate, but when it comes to religion there is no boundary and we feel that it is good for them to be recognized in the Assembly.⁵²

It should be noted that Tomlinson was at the height of his power in the Church of God at this point; his use of “we” in this context may indicate only another *ex cathedra* pronouncement on his part. It is perhaps significant that within three years Tomlinson had been ejected from the Church of God (his overseership for life revoked). It is definitely significant that the Church of God of Prophecy that Tomlinson subsequently founded remained relatively more actively integrated in the ensuing years, while the Church of God segregated almost immediately after Tomlinson’s departure and largely remains so to this day. In this respect, they are decidedly not Tomlinson’s Church of God, and that not to their credit.

Upon segregation, leadership of the African-American Church of God was turned over to the newly created overseer of the ‘colored work’ (appointed by the General Overseer), and based on the records we have, this arrangement seems to have been agreeable to both sides. For years, the African-American churches thrived (even

⁵² *Minutes of the Fourteenth General Assembly, 1919, 13.*

through the Tomlinson split), establishing their own General Assembly, orphanage, school, and even building an assembly hall in Jacksonville, FL. The growth and positive developments were not acknowledged by Conn, however, as Jackson notes:

As a result of what historian Conn called “the lack of growth among blacks,” and for the first time in decades [1958], a white minister was appointed to the overseership of the colored work. J. T. Roberts was that man and Conn records his leadership as having been of extreme benefits to the colored work: “Under Robert’s guidance and evangelistic verve, the work soon showed a welcome, almost dramatic, new energy and motivation. New churches were organized and numerous new buildings were erected. There was a brief new vitality, with a resultant sense of identity among the membership of the Church. It seemed that the answer, though long in coming, had come at last.” This is the kind of optimism with which the white leadership of the denomination regarded the colored work having been put in the hand of a white overseer. It seems that all the success achieved under black leaders had been either negated or forgotten.⁵³

Jackson is citing the 1977 edition of *Like a Mighty Army*.⁵⁴ The 1996 edition retains its praise for Roberts and even doubles down with additional accolades, but it also acknowledges that the black congregations wanted a black leader, what Conn calls, “an understandable desire.”⁵⁵ Conn attributes the sentiment (and perhaps dismisses Jackson’s critique) as a product of “the ethnic torque that twisted the nation during the 1950s.”⁵⁶ There are a few things to note here. First, the Church of God broke a decades-long practice of having African-American leaders oversee the African-American congregations, what had been in place since Tomlinson set it in motion in 1919. The

⁵³ Joseph E. Jackson, *Reclaiming Our Heritage: The Search for Black History in the Church of God* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 1993), 43.

⁵⁴ Conn, *Like a Mighty Army* (1977), 311-2.

⁵⁵ Conn, *Like a Mighty Army* (1996), 378.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

denomination made this move in May 1958, nearly two and a half years after the Montgomery Bus Boycott had begun. Second, even as late as 1977, the prevailing view among the white leadership of the church had not significantly moved (if we may take Conn, a former overseer and official historian, as representative of the general attitude). Even in 1996, the acknowledgement is only begrudging, not demonstrating a real appreciation for Jackson's main argument, which was not just that African-Americans had not been allowed to lead, but more importantly that they had not been adequately trained and supported to do so. African-American students were not admitted to Lee College (the Church of God's flagship training institution) until after 1964, when the Civil Rights Act took the decision out of the hands of the white power brokers.⁵⁷ Beyond this, Jackson's critique goes to the very heart of what it means for the Church of God to be Pentecostal:

One must ask the question: what if there had been no civil rights struggles, and the secular society had not protested the inhumanity of segregation? Would the Church of God have continued to accept the prejudiced views of a sinful society? The church which should be in the forefront of the battle for equality among men is shown cowering in the shadows and living according to the dictates of the secular world. The *status quo* was accepted in order for the denomination not to 'rock the boat' of society.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Historian David Roebuck reports that African-American ministers questioned their exclusion from Lee: "Bishop Gooden reported asking Bishop Roberts why the denomination's Lee College did not admit black Americans. According to Gooden, 'He said we as the church cannot advance beyond the state. He said when the state of Florida integrates, and when the schools in the state of Florida integrate, then Lee College will be open to blacks.' Gooden concluded, 'And it did just like he said.'" [David Roebuck, "Unraveling The Cords That Divide: Cultural Challenges And Race Relations In The Church Of God (Cleveland, Tennessee)," Presented at the 40th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, 2011, 25].

⁵⁸ Jackson, *Reclaiming Our Heritage*, 50.

Unfortunately, the answer is quite clear. The Church of God would have hidden behind the shadows of its own pragmatically determined tradition, all sense of responding to the Spirit's infusion and loving the beloved completely lost.

The initial segregation of the African-American communities seems to have been a mutual decision, with both sides growing well during a difficult time in the Jim Crow South, but at the very least it must be described as a cessation of loving action.⁵⁹ The later refusal of the denomination to serve their own ministers by providing them proper training until mandated to do so by the federal government is worse than cessation, it can only be described as a blockage, an act against the mission of the Paraclete. It is also blockage that the leadership of the Church of God does not reflect the life of the Church of God: three-fourths of its members are not from North America but its leadership is 95% North American.

David Roebuck situates the racial issue historically:

A review of the history of race relations in the Church of God should provoke the denomination to seriously consider to what degree we have been faithful to our commitment to the Bible and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Regrettably the historical evidence demonstrates that too often Church of God members and leaders read the Bible on issues of race through the lens of southern culture rather than with a Spirit-led discernment. Blind loyalty to unjust laws precluded the possibility of a prophetic voice. While we may genuinely repent of such past

⁵⁹ The minutes of the 1926 General Assembly record the decision for complete segregation as arising from a request made by the African-American contingent. It is impossible to verify the veracity of that account, but both sides did continue on together, the African-American churches accepted the appointments made by the white General Overseer.

wrongs, we should at the same time question whether or not we might continue to be swayed by culture on other matters.⁶⁰

Blind loyalty might have been a workable excuse fifty years ago, but no such impediment exists now. There is no excuse for the blockage that persists with regard to race in the Church of God.

This is especially true given the “Memphis Miracle” and its aftermath. On Oct. 18, 1994, white and African-American Pentecostal leaders gathered in Memphis to reorganize the relationships between their respective denominations.⁶¹ Scholarly papers were given and intellectual efforts were made, but the key moment came when white Assemblies of God Pastor Donald Evans responded to a prompting of the Holy Spirit and washed the feet of African-American Church of God in Christ Presiding Bishop Ithiel Clemmons. Evans asked Clemmons for forgiveness, asked on behalf of white American Pentecostals, repenting of the past that the scholarly papers had been recounting. Evans reflected later that he felt like “a minnow among whales” that day, but also felt that he was able to obey the Holy Spirit in this act because he had “nothing to risk, no platform to jeopardize, no book sales that might be affected.”⁶² In other words, he was the least invested in worldly power and thus able to engage in a Paraclete action of charity, showing how condemned such worldly power is. When the Holy Spirit

⁶⁰ Roebuck, “Unraveling the Cords that Divide,” 29.

⁶¹ Donald Evans, “Donald Evans tells the story behind the 1994 ‘Memphis Miracle,’” audio recording, Flowers Pentecostal Resource Center, July 13, 2011 (<http://agtv.ag.org/vp-don-evans>).

⁶² Ibid.

comes, we are given the power to “start over,” to re-unite with each other and with God, to form again a community that trusts, a community that hopes, a community that loves.⁶³ Evans’ act of obedience that day led to an increase in infused charity that seemed outsized in comparison to the small act. But that small act done in great love, done in fact by the infused charity of the Holy Spirit, led to a breakthrough in the racial blockage among Pentecostals, at least some of them.

6.4.2 Gender and the Wait for a Miracle

The Church of God’s persistent institutional racism is rivaled only by its persistent institutional chauvinism. Unlike the African-American contingent, who have at least been (relatively) free (at times) to do their own thing, though never with adequate unity or support, the female contingent have had to suffer in place, under the constant control of their oppressors. And as brief as the early moment of racial integration was, the moment of gender - not actual equality, but as close an approximation as ever existed - was briefer still and even more partial. When Spurling first formed the Christian Union women comprised more than half the small congregation. Spurling was the only one with official authority (his father ordained him as bishop). I would like to conclude based on his overall position in *The Lost Link* that he led his small flock in a thoroughly egalitarian way, but there are simply no records to establish or contest such a claim.

⁶³ Ibid.

At the first General Assembly in 1906, 6 of the 21 participants were women. Melissa Murphy addressed the first Assembly, extolling the benefits of Sunday School, "which ultimately resulted in the Assembly recommendation urging every local church to hold the ministry every Sunday."⁶⁴ Regarding the 1906 Assembly, Stephenson notes:

First, though no mention was made of ministerial qualifications, the assembly decided that all of the local churches were to hold a prayer meeting at least once a week and whoever felt led of the Spirit was to take oversight of the gathering and order of this meeting. There were no delineations that the person must be a male. Second, it was concluded that a denominational assembly would gather every year and be composed of "Elders and chosen men (with the women) from each Church." While the denomination's policy of excluding women from the church's governmental affairs was not explicitly acknowledged until 1910, already female participation in these activities appears to have come as an afterthought.⁶⁵

Stephenson may be interpreting the parenthetical accurately here, but the whole thing sounds and feels more like the influence of Spurling who had not quite yet given sway to Tomlinson. No delineations or qualifications are present here because the whole affair was as informal as these prayer meetings. Spurling had no mind to restrict women because he had no mind to restrict or control anyone.

But restriction and control came as quickly as Tomlinson's ascendancy.

Tomlinson allowed a great deal of charismatic freedom in the services he conducted, women in particular operated more freely in the *charismata* under his ministry than

⁶⁴ Catherine Payne, "Women with a Pioneering Spirit," *Church of God History and Heritage* (13, 2006), 4. Note the egalitarian posture of the Assembly itself, making recommendations, not pronouncements, to local churches.

⁶⁵ Lisa Stephenson, *Dismantling the Dualisms for American Pentecostal Women in Ministry: A Feminist-Pneumatological Approach* (Brill, 2011), 16.

perhaps any other Church of God pastor (then or since) and this trend continued during his tenure as leader of the Church of God of Prophecy. But for Tomlinson what happened in service was completely removed from the business of running his denominations. The former was marked by freedom bordering on chaos, but the latter was always a matter of Tomlinson keeping as much control for himself as possible. He used various arguments (biblical when he could), but for Tomlinson it was probably less a matter of misogyny and more a matter of megalomania.

Whereas Spurling wanted to leave the pulpit open to whomever the Spirit would select, Tomlinson wanted to fill all the pulpits with the person he chose. A master of using other people's emotions and prejudices to achieve his own ends through their 'consensus', the restrictions of women's roles in Church of God ministries from 1907-1922 reflect more of Tomlinson's pathology than they do any established doctrinal position. This same argument can also be made with regard to many other enduring structural features of Church of God polity. It also helps account for the back and forth of the early period. Women fully participated in the Assembly of 1906, they were affirmed as evangelists and deaconesses in 1908, only to have their deaconess status revoked the following year, then given back provisionally to deacon's wives, and then at the pastor's discretion if need arose.

Even so, the pattern from 1907 onwards is a pattern of less freedom, more restriction, less equality, more disregard, less unity, more blockage. Prayer meetings

where anyone the Spirit designates could lead quickly become impossible, as the Church of God decided it was better suited to make such decisions itself. The prejudices Tomlinson played on were actually the dearly held beliefs of those who ousted him and inherited the power he had consolidated. They proceeded to wield that power according to those prejudices. All the wrangling during Tomlinson's reign ultimately did not matter, the place of women in ministry in the Church of God came to be the lowest place possible.

Ministers were (and still are) men ordained in a three stage process: exhorters were beginners, ministers-in-training; licensed ministers were the rank and file pastors, having exhorted for a year and completed some minimal level of training; ordained ministers were those who had been licensed for at least 15 years and had been granted promotion (this was not guaranteed) and comprised the voting body of the Church of God. The General Assembly that began as an egalitarian group of representatives from the congregations who met to discuss things, pray, and make recommendations morphed into a closed, self-selecting society who held all the power and privilege for themselves. They were truly Tomlinson's progeny. Women were afforded a level somewhat alongside, somewhat below the exhorter status; they were not ordained, not permitted to administer sacraments, allowed to preach and evangelize, but not allowed to teach. They were effectively stymied from responding in obedience to ministerial work the Holy Spirit might call them to do. Some exceptions and some further

restrictions came down through the years (as pragmatism warranted), but the overall effect was a near total marginalization of women with regard to ministry and a clear message that equality had no place in the Church of God.

Scholars have given various, related explanations for this phenomenon. Most follow a basic Weberian narrative, which I am sympathetic to. The narrative here, which I see as complementary, is a theological one in the strictest sense of the term. The sociological dynamics are worthy of study, but my claim here relates to the action of the Holy Spirit as the necessarily primary actor in any account that would claim to be Pentecostal. To the extent that women - or anyone - are denied the opportunity to obey the Spirit without restriction, to the extent that equality itself is subjugated under any humanly constructed model of what is fitting or proper or allowed, the Holy Spirit abandons such an effort as fundamentally opposed the Paraclete's mission to the world that essentially defines all the Holy Spirit's work. The Holy Spirit has a specific mission. We choose to participate with that mission or not. Choosing to participate means choosing unity, liberty, and equality, it means choosing to trust, to hope, to love, it means choosing against control, casuistry, and blockage. It means choosing to wash the feet of the beloved, confessing sins on behalf of others, trusting, hoping, loving the beloved lovingly. I would very much like to give you an account here of a "Memphis Miracle" with regard to Pentecostal misogyny, but if such a story exists, if such a starting over miracle has occurred, we have not heard of it yet. Many Pentecostal scholars have

argued for gender equality from a variety of valid perspectives, but these have yet to affect the life of our churches.

7. Conclusion

Church of God historian David Roebuck concludes that while Spurling had superior ideals, his Christian Union would have remained small without the charismatic leadership of Tomlinson.¹ I want to challenge the assumption that the Pentecostal movement was primarily a case of Weberian charisma succeeding as it is given to in our culture.

7.1 *The Dynamism of Pauline Charisma*

The real dynamism that explains the growth of Pentecostalism is genuine Pauline charisma. Leaders like Tomlinson have hampered the movement precisely by distracting it from the mission of the Paraclete and introducing the various forms of organizational menace described above. We will never know what Spurling's Christian Union might have become (not to mention that our measure of success is flawed) because Tomlinson usurped the authority of the Spirit and coopted the Paraclete's mission for his own self-aggrandizing one. Those who ousted Tomlinson did not exorcise his spirit. He remains overseer for the life of the denomination so long as the Church of God remains enslaved to the modes of deformation, disembodiment, and obstruction he saddled the movement

¹ "Although Spurling was significant to the early development of the Church of God, it is likely that, had he remained the most influential leader, the Church of God might never have been more than a few mountain congregations." [Roebuck, "Centralized Government in the Church of God," in *Passover, Pentecost & Parousia: Studies in Celebration of the Life and Ministry of R. Hollis Gause*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series: 35, Edited by Steven J. Land, Rick Dale Moore and John Christopher Thomas (Blanford Forum, U.K.: Deo Publishing, 2010), 222.]

with. I have discussed this matter with Dr. Roebuck and we at least agree that *The Lost Link* stands as Spurling's enduring challenge to institutionalization. The Assembly he began in 1906 with the stated proviso that such proceedings were for discussion and gaining more light only has become a fully centralized government with, "the full authority to designate the teachings, government, principles, and practices of the local churches composing said Assembly."² Nothing could be further from Spurling's vision or present more of an ongoing challenge to the unity, liberty, and equality he regarded as central to the church's very existence, to the trust, hope, and charity that are marks of the Spirit's *charisma* as opposed to merely human charisma.

7.2 Pauline vs. Weberian Charisma

Yoder defines charisma in these two contrary ways in *Body Politics*: Weberian or Pauline. The argument there is that Paul's message to the Corinthians was two fold: "everyone has a gift," and "let everything be orderly."³ Paul's focus with the Corinthians was primarily the latter, because they were running amok with expressions of gifts. But the first corrective is more often needed, "to challenge the concentration of authority in the hands of office-bearers accredited on institutional grounds."⁴ It was this corrective that was at work in the earliest Pentecostal movement; people operating out of a sense of

² R. Hollis Gause, *Church of God Polity*, 90; quoted in Roebuck, "Centralized Government in the Church of God," *Passover, Pentecost, and Parousia*, 215.

³ John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community before the Watching World* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001), 51.

⁴ *Ibid.*

gifting, not *ex officio*. At the same time, there was confusion from the very beginning of the movement between Pauline *charisma* and Weberian *charisma*.

Weber called one kind of leadership 'charismatic.' By this he designated the way in which, especially in a new movement, a powerful central leader can come to prominence because of some special capacity he or she has to gain the trust of many followers. Weber thereby gave the word *charisma* a meaning diametrically opposite to the pastoral intention Paul had when introducing it.⁵

Paul shifted the focus to the Giver of the gifts. There is language in the early Pentecostal writings that echoes this sentiment, but the overall practice of the early movement is indelibly marked with Weberian charismatic figures. The inability to distinguish between these opposing forms of *charisma* allowed for the development of organizational structures that grew up around (literally shaped by) these figures; structures that would in time undermine the core commitments that the Pentecostal movement was founded on. In shifting the language away from spiritual (pneumatic) to gifted (charisma), Paul, "moved the accent from the claim an individual would make to possess the spirit uniquely, to the acknowledgement that whatever one's role is, it has been given by the Spirit, and is thereby dependent or derivative, not a reason for pride."⁶ But this corrective was lost on the Pentecostals who (ironically) put so much stock in these very passages.

⁵ Ibid., 52.

⁶ Ibid., 51.

7.3 These Three Remain

This begs the question, why even bother? If this is the state of the Pentecostal movement, why not just move on? One answer lies in the recognition that served as the rationale in this study: for all their issues, early Pentecostals "harbored certain impulses and intuitions that were quite important."⁷ They may be lost, but the movement remains both consonant and dissonant with those early intuitions, so they are not entirely lost. They still spark the imagination to envision something like the epicletic community that Castelo describes, to envision Pentecostals as becoming more ecclesial than revivalist, understanding themselves as a community that is "Spirit-offered, Spirit-dependent, Spirit-enlivened, Spirit-empowered."⁸ This is founded on the notion that all pursuit of the good is pneumatically influenced, that the entire world is the theater of God's self-presentation, whereby the Paraclete convinces the world, through our Spirit-empowered trust, hope, and charity, that it stands in need of a savior who has come and defeated its powers. We participate in this mission as people existentially determined by the theological virtues.

7.4 Liminal as Normative

The entirety of my argument may be summarized as a call to privilege the liminal moment. The Paraclete comes to build a *communitas* of trust, hope, and charity.

⁷ Castelo, *Revisioning Pentecostal Ethics*, 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

Those characteristics should be at the core of everything we seek to do as the body of Christ. This argument cannot include specific prescriptions because such would violate the freedom necessary for the liminal moment as such. The most that can be said is that the liminal moment is pneumatologically privileged. Those who would participate in the Paraclete's mission to the world will do so by seeking to build trust, engender hope, and have their existential identity indelibly marked by charity.

This is the self-test that any community seeking to become a *communitas* should apply: does this action/structure/practice grow trust, hope, and charity in us toward God and each other? The only protection against heresy is the power the Holy Spirit to form a community of unity. This is trust. The only protection against lawlessness is the power of the Holy Spirit to embody the ethic of Jesus in a community of freedom. There is hope. The only protection against the abuse of power is the Holy Spirit empowering a community of charity, where authority is only exercised as service to the beloved. Such is love. It is messy. It is never the same twice. Each instance is unique, egalitarian, libertarian, and full of love.

How do we form communities of trust? How do we form communities of hope? How do we form communities of love? The very structures and systems that we operate with and under and which thereby are determinative over us must be fundamentally characterized by the theological virtues. I began by speaking about liminality in the introduction and here in the conclusion, yet liminality has not been in the forefront of

the discussions in the heart of this paper. That is intentional. By its very definition, liminality suggests impermanence; that the moment is fleeting. At the heart of my argument is the claim that the liminal moment should be the normative moment. That a *communitas* formed, embodied, and empowered by the Holy Spirit can in fact be sustainable and enduring. The validity of that argument may only be verified empirically.

The church is only the church when it exists for others. That existence is formed and sustained by the Holy Spirit's infusion of trust, hope, and charity whereby the Holy Spirit carries out the divine mission to the world to convince it of sin, righteousness, and judgment through a people marked by radical unity, liberty, and equality.

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