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ESCHATOLOGICAL PNEUMATOLOGY AS A THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR
EVALUATING THE PNEUMATOLOGY OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF GOD'S
GRACE IN BRAZIL

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematics
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
Gerson Luis Linden
May 2017

Approved by _____
Dr. Robert Kolb Advisor

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Dr. Robert Rosin Reader

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To Denise

Epigraph

“I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord or come to him; but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith. Daily in this Christian Church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins—mine and those of all believers. On the last day will the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.”(Martin Luther – Small Catechism)

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ABSTRACT

Linden, Gerson, L. “Eschatological Pneumatology as a Theological Framework for Evaluating the Pneumatology of the International Church of God’s Grace in Brazil.” Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2017. 238 pp.

The purpose of this dissertation was to understand the phenomenon of Neopentecostalism in Brazil, particularly as seen in the *International Church of God’s Grace* (ICGG), a large and well-known Denomination in Brazil, with communities in several countries in the world. This Denomination may be seen as part of a larger movement, as an expression of what has been called the third wave of Pentecostalism. On the other hand, the ICGG has peculiarities that make of it a religious experience of its own. The presence and importance of its founder and leader, Missionary R. R. Soares deserve special attention for anyone who studies the Denomination.

This study tries to provide an evaluation of the ICGG from the standpoint of Lutheran theology, as it understands the role of the Holy Spirit depicted in the New Testament. The specific focus was the eschatological role of the Holy Spirit. This choice was made for two main reasons. First, because it is possible to recognize the eschatological role of the Spirit as central in the witness of the apostles, especially if we understand Eschatology not only as the study of the last things, considered chronologically, but as the theological reflection of what is of ultimate importance in God’s work through Jesus Christ to the redemption of humankind. The second reason why “eschatological Pneumatology” was chosen as an instrument of evaluation of Neopentecostalism is the fact that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and of the Last Things are not strange to Pentecostalism since its beginning. Quite the contrary, they are some of the most important emphases of the movement. Therefore, this dissertation tried to show how this is also true, and to what extent, in the third wave of Pentecostalism in Brazil.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Pentecostalism changed the face of Christianity in the world. Since the beginning of that movement in the first years of the twentieth century, a series of critical shifts in theological reflection can be observed. Perhaps the most significant and theologically relevant is the new interest in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, His person and work, with a special focus on the gifts granted to the Church. Effects of Pentecostalism could be felt even in traditional historical Protestant denominations. On the one hand, Pentecostal theological emphases obligated those denominations to answer in both negative and positive ways about the role of the Holy Spirit in history, theology, and daily life. On the other hand, the charismatic movement played an important part in the history of those denominations. Even Lutheranism had a significant challenge during the second half of the twentieth century with a movement of renovation in the church that in Brazil gave origin to a Charismatic Lutheran Church.¹

It has to be noted that Pentecostalism is not a homogeneous phenomenon.² It developed in several ways, even to the extent of posing new emphases in theology and practice during its development in the twentieth century. Some scholars use the typology of three waves to explain the developments in Pentecostalism since its beginning in the first decade of the twentieth century. The third wave, which is the main object of study of this dissertation, is also known in

¹ That happened in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (IELB), a partner church of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. More recently (already in the twenty-first century) a similar movement caused a split in the largest Lutheran Denomination in Brazil, namely, the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB).

² This was observed in a general meeting of the Brazilian Association of Theological Seminaries several years ago, when the theme of study was “Pentecostalism in Brazil.”

Brazil as “Neopentecostalism.”³ The first major object of investigation in the dissertation is one of the largest representatives of this movement, called *Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus* (The International Church of God’s Grace, hereafter ICGG), founded in 1980 by his still current leader, the Missionary Romildo Ribeiro Soares (nationally known as R. R. Soares).

Pentecostalism had (and still has in some of its most significant representatives) a strong emphasis on Pneumatology, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Considering the beginning of the movement, the irruption of an intense ministry of the Spirit was understood as having a strong connection with the biblical teaching of the last things. Therefore, for Pentecostalism it would not be strange to speak about an “eschatological Pneumatology.” On the other hand, the third wave, Neopentecostalism, seems to challenge that original vision both in regard to the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit and its view of eschatology.

The importance of the work of the Spirit is a significant theme in the theology of the New Testament. Besides, Lutherans have a strong tradition of giving due weight to the role of the Spirit in the life of the Church and her confession. In order to access the Pneumatology of Neopentecostalism, the dissertation describes the “Eschatological Pneumatology” as a framework to study the movement. Within that framework, the dissertation reflects on the work of the Holy Spirit as deeply connected to the main eschatological event described by the New

³ In contrast to classical Pentecostalism, this movement has no emphasis on speaking in tongues as a sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and has not kept the characteristic distance that the original movement had towards society in general. It needs to be noted that in the United States the term “Neopentecostalism” generally refers to the Charismatic movement occurred in the main Protestant denominations. Alan Anderson, who has been doing extensive studies on the field on Pentecostalism, calls the attention to the difficulty with the term: “*neo-Pentecostal* is a fluid term that has been used in various ways over the past fifty years, at one stage referring to older church Charismatics, later to independent Charismatic churches, Third wave churches, and more recently to a wide range of newer independent Pentecostal churches that embrace contemporary cultures, use contemporary methods of communication, media, and marketing, form international networks or ‘ministries,’ and often have a prosperity emphasis.” (Allan Anderson et al., eds., *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010], 20). In this dissertation we will use the term here for what in the US is similar to the “Prosperity Theology” groups or, more popularly, “Health and wealth theology.” It is the way most Brazilian literature use the term, applying to the *International Church of God’s Grace*, for instance.

Testament, i.e., the irruption of God's kingdom in Christ's coming, life and soteriological work. In the same way, it considers how the Holy Spirit has an important participation in the end-times events which will occur at the second coming of Christ, especially the resurrection of the dead. This theological framework will be appropriated through a Lutheran lens that is grounded in the biblical witness to the soteriological and incarnational trajectory of the Spirit's work, including his operation through the means of grace.

The Thesis

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Brazilian "third wave" Neopentecostalism, particularly as embodied in the International Church of God's Grace (ICGG), is properly analyzed and assessed by an "eschatological pneumatology," that is, from the basis of a Lutheran account of the person and work of the Holy Spirit given in terms of consummation of all things in and through Jesus Christ.

The Current Status of the Question

The focus of the dissertation is the understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit by Neopentecostal denominations in Brazil, more specifically in the ICGG. Therefore it will be necessary to clearly depict what are the specific features of that denomination, considering its historical context, as a development of a much larger phenomenon, the Pentecostalism in Brazil and pointing to its most significant theological characteristics.

Pentecostalism in Brazil: The Three "Waves"

Pentecostalism is a complex and multifaceted movement. During the more than one hundred years of its history in Brazil several changes can be perceived. In order to better manage such a complex reality scholars have proposed different typologies and classification of the

denominations that apply to themselves the label “Pentecostal.” One of the most influential of those classifications was proposed by Paul Freston in his doctoral dissertation in Social Sciences.⁴ Freston promoted the typology of three waves to categorize different groups with distinct emphases, but that consider themselves to be Pentecostals.

When the first Pentecostals arrived in Brazil in the beginning of the twentieth century it was through missionaries coming from the United States. They brought with themselves a form of Pentecostalism that replicated the main emphases of North American movement, especially the centrality of the work of the Holy Spirit and his baptism with the external evidence of speaking in tongues. That was the first wave of Pentecostalism in Brazil (using Freston’s typology). The first two denominations created in that time were the *Assembleias de Deus* and the *Congregação Cristã no Brasil*. The *Assembleias de Deus* are today the largest Pentecostal and the largest Protestant church in Brazil. The *Congregação Cristã no Brasil*, with a rapid growth in the first decades is still one of the largest Pentecostal denominations in the country. Besides the stress on the baptism with the Holy Spirit, a premillennarian eschatology was (and continues to be) a strong doctrinal characteristic.

The second wave was the fruit of missionary work of Brazilian preachers and tended to emphasize spiritual healing, without losing the focus on the baptism of the Spirit and premillennarian eschatology. Some of the denominations under this classification and that had their beginning in the decades of 1950s and 1960s are: *O Brasil para Cristo*, *Deus é Amor* and *Igreja do Evangelho Quadrangular* (perhaps the only to have a direct dependence on a similar denomination in the United States - *The Church of the Foursquare Gospel*). A more intense use of mass media to communicate the message and preaching in public squares was in evidence in

⁴ Paul Freston, “Protestantes e Política no Brasil: da Constituinte ao Impeachment” (PhD diss., State University of Campinas. 2003).

those denominations, in a time of intense urbanization in the country.⁵

There are several common characteristics between the first and second types of Pentecostalism. For some scholars the second type could simply be considered a natural development. For others, the distinctions should not be overlooked. The first Pentecostals in Brazil were faced with Roman Catholicism dominating the religious environment, with its attitude of confrontation against any Protestant church. That created in the Pentecostals a feeling that Catholicism was an enemy.

The third wave is constituted by denominations born in the last quarter of the twentieth century, the most widely known of them being the *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* (The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, hereafter IURD), and the *Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus* (ICGG). The “Neopentecostals,” as those denominations are usually labeled, present as main characteristics emphases on prosperity theology and spiritual warfare.⁶ Healings, exorcisms and the promise of a better life in this world became constitutive marks.⁷ Given those emphases, the role of the Holy Spirit connected to a premillennarian view in eschatology is no longer at the center of teaching in this new movement.

Neopentecostalism in Brazil: A Multifaceted Reality in the Pentecostal Field

One of the first academic studies on the origin and development on Neopentecostalism in Brazil appeared in a doctoral dissertation by Presbyterian theologian Leonildo S. Campos, published in 1999.⁸ His book became an important reference to further studies on the new

⁵ Ricardo Mariano, “Os Neopentecostais e a Teologia da Prosperidade,” *Novos Estudos* 44 (1996): 25.

⁶ Mariano, “Os Neopentecostais e a Teologia da Prosperidade,” 26.

⁷ Alderi S. Mattos, “Movimento Pentecostal,” *Fides Reformata* 11, no.2 (2006): 38–39.

⁸ Leonildo S. Campos, *Templo, Teatro e Mercado: Organização e Marketing de um Empreendimento Neopentecostal* 2nd ed. (Petrópolis: São Paulo, São Bernardo do Campo: Vozes, Simpósio, UMESP, 1999). Dr.

movement. His specific target was the IURD, but his investigation helps to understand Neopentecostalism in general.

Campos works under the assumption that as is the case with human societies in general, the new religious movement did not cause a complete rupture with what came before. Leaders of Neopentecostal churches consider themselves to be in a line of continuity with the Pentecostal phenomenon. However, significant changes can be also identified. New theological emphases, such as prosperity theology and spiritual warfare where the devil and his hosts are identified as operating in some Brazilian religions, connected to a less rigorous ethical discourse, make of Neopentecostalism something new in the Brazilian religious field. Campos also lists among Neopentecostal features an openness to strategies of marketing applied to advance its influence in society.⁹

There is a discussion among students of the Pentecostal movement in Brazil about the place of Neopentecostalism in the general movement. Some scholars, as Gerson Moraes, underline the continuity in Neopentecostal churches when compared to classical Pentecostalism. Recognizing particular aspects in the new movement, Moraes prefers the term “Transpentecostalism” to point to the fact that even considering the differences the three waves share important elements in teaching and practices. His overall evaluation of the movement, though, is highly negative, accusing Neopentecostalism of deviating from the Gospel message that he sees as a strong characteristic of Pentecostal denominations. Paulo Siepierski, a Baptist theologian and historian, disagrees with the use of the term “Neopentecostalism” for the third wave, given the huge differences in relation to classical forms of Pentecostalism. For him the rupture of the new

Campos teaches in the Methodist University of São Paulo especially in the field of Social Sciences applied to the study of Religion.

⁹ Campos, *Teatro, Templo e Mercado*, 18–20.

churches in relation to Pentecostalism should be more emphasized and the third wave denominations should be considered as “Post-Pentecostalism”; in other words, in his evaluation Neopentecostals constitute a new religion.¹⁰ To a smaller number of scholars, continuity between the three waves is so strong that Neopentecostalism should be considered as a development of classical Pentecostalism, with small differences. Rangel Medeiros, for instance, in a study on the “Universal Church of the Kingdom of God” came to the conclusion that this denomination, as others classified as Neopentecostals, are genuine expressions of the characteristic message of Protestantism and more specifically of Pentecostalism.¹¹

There is an additional difficulty in the study of Neopentecostalism in terms of systematizing the subject. It happens if one begins with a general definition of the movement, trying then to apply it to every denomination under that label. Reality drives in another direction. If, on the one hand, the origin of those denominations put them historically in the same religious field, and there certainly are some doctrinal teachings common to all of them, on the other hand it is necessary to recognize significant differences between them. One example is the relation between the two major representatives of Neopentecostalism in Brazil, the IURD and the ICGG. Their origins are very close in time, their leaders began to work together for several years, and some of their theological accents have similar origins. But it is evident to anyone examining those churches that their differences, in preaching and practices, are no small matter.

Considering that, one of the challenges in the study of the ICGG is to identify the elements that define it, not only as part of the Neopentecostal movement, but as a denomination with specific identity in terms of theology and practices.

¹⁰ Paulo Siepierski, “Pós-Pentecostalismo e Política no Brasil,” *Estudos Teológicos* 37, no. 1 (1997): 51.

¹¹ Rangel de Oliveira Medeiros, “Além Do Dinheiro e Dos Demônios: O Neopentecostalismo no Brasil e na Holanda” (PhD diss., Federal University of São Carlos, 2011), 5.

The International Church of God's Grace (ICGG)

Neopentecostal denominations in Brazil have their identity deeply rooted in the life and deeds of their leaders. That observation is true in terms of the conclusions of popular assessments¹² and may be verified through a more rigorous evaluation. The place of the founder and leader is central to the particular church he leads. To understand the ICGG it is necessary, therefore, to know who R. R. Soares is.¹³

R.R. Soares¹⁴ was born in 1947 in a humble family with Roman Catholic and Presbyterian roots. According to his own account, he was converted in a Presbyterian church, but his encounter with Pentecostalism happened when he moved to *Rio de Janeiro* in his youth, in a church called *Igreja Pentecostal da Nova Vida* (Pentecostal Church of New Life). His participation in that church for several years had significant importance for his theological thinking. Two other experiences were fundamental for what would happen in the future, in his leadership of one of the largest and more influent Neopentecostal denominations in Brazil. One experience happened when he, still in his childhood, saw for the first time a TV set in a store. According to Soares, in that very day he promised to God that in the future he would use that communication medium to proclaim the gospel. Another important influence for Soares' future was the reading of two books: "Curai enfermos, expulsai demônios" (Heal the sick, expel demons), written by T. L. Olson, and "O nome de Jesus" (The Name of Jesus), of Kenneth

¹² It is common that those denominations are popularly identified by the name of their leaders. For instance, it causes no misunderstanding if one refers to "The Church of Edir Macedo," referring to the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (IURD), founded and led by the self-named "Bishop" Edir Macedo. That is also true in the case of the ICGG and in the World Church of God's Power (popularly known as the Church "of Waldemiro Santiago," the church founder and leader and self-named "Apostle Waldemiro").

¹³ The ICGG official homepage presents the "history" of the Church in only three short paragraphs that actually tell how Soares founded the Church and expanded its preaching to all Brazilian States and to several countries. <http://www.ongrace.com/portal/?historia=a-igreja-da-graca>

¹⁴ A fuller account of R. R. Soares life and leadership in the ICGG will be presented in chapter 3 of the dissertation.

Hagin. The importance of the reading of those books is highlighted in the Church's homepage:

The book "Healing the sick and Casting out Devils," written by the American preacher T. L. Osborn, was a milestone in the ministerial life of R. R. Soares. After reading it, Missionary R.R. Soares understood – and went on to practice – the doctrine of ordaining. Through this tenet, the Church believes that you should not ask for God's blessings, but rather claim them since they were already given to all mankind through the work Jesus did on the cross.¹⁵

After some time attending another Pentecostal church, the "Casa da Bênção" (House of Blessing), Soares and his brother-in-law, Edir Macedo, founded the "Cruzada do Caminho Eterno" (Crusade of Eternal Path) and then the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (IURD) in 1977. It was after a disagreement with Edir Macedo that Soares left the IURD and founded the ICGG in 1980.

There are no official statistics of the Church but it has spread throughout the country and in several other countries. Today the ICGG has its own TV network (RIT = "Rede Internacional de Televisão" – International TV Network) and a cable Network ("Nossa TV" – Our TV), promising to offer a programming for Christians.¹⁶ The ICGG is known especially for its daily TV program, "Show da Fé" (Show of Faith) where the Missionary dedicates most of the time preaching and praying. In his prayers, he usually directs his "determination" against evil forces that are causing pains in people. After that, he usually asks people to come forward and witness healings that happened to them during prayer.

Soares became a skilled business man, leading an enterprise that encompasses besides TV networks, an official newspaper and magazine, radio shows, internet and a publisher house. The ICGG is considered one of the most influent Neopentecostal denominations in Brazil today. A

¹⁵ "The Grace of God," accessed April 23, 2016, <http://english.ongrace.com/historia>.

¹⁶ Karla Patriota, "O Show da Fé: A Religião na Sociedade do espetáculo. Um Estudo sobre a Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus e o entretenimento religioso brasileiro na esfera midiática" (PhD Diss., Federal University of Pernambuco, 2008), 16.

national Magazine issued in September 2000 presented R. R. Soares as the face most seen in the Brazilian TV—at that time about 100 hours every week.¹⁷ That is not a reality only in the case of the ICGG. Neopentecostal leaders tend to monopolize the time in TV presentations of the Church. A discourse with many references to victory against evil forces and success in daily life also approximate the content of preaching in different Neopentecostal churches. However, there are peculiarities that should be noted. R. R. Soares, for instance, has become what seems to be the most acceptable among Neopentecostal leaders for outsiders, given the biblical emphasis in his preaching and teaching during the TV Shows.

Pneumatology and Eschatology in Pentecostalism and in Neopentecostalism

A strong connection between the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and Eschatology is not strange to Pentecostalism. Quite the contrary may be said. Despite the fact that people usually identify Pentecostalism with a strong emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit and particularly his activity in glossolalia, it should be noted that since the beginning, and even today in classical Pentecostalism representatives, eschatology has also had a key place in their overall doctrinal position.

The key place of eschatology in a Pentecostal view of Theology is stressed by Peter Althouse, in his study that underscores the prophetic role in early Pentecostalism and its engagement in the social involvement of the Christian faith.¹⁸ Althouse shows that according to the understanding of classical Pentecostalism what happened in the first Pentecost was the “former rain” of the Spirit being poured in the apostolic age. Likewise, the “latter rain” could be

¹⁷ Ricardo Valladares, “Templo é Dinheiro,” *Veja*, September 13, 2000, 140–41, accessed January 27, 2014, <https://acervo.veja.abril.com.br/index.html#/edition/1666?page=140&ion=1&word=soares>.

¹⁸ Peter Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days: Pentecostal Eschatology in Conversation with Jürgen Moltmann*. (London: T&T Clark, 2003). The author is a Pentecostal, who studied sociology, and tries to integrate Pentecostal theology and social justice, which in his view is an important element lacking in contemporary Pentecostalism.

identified with the Spirit coming in a special way to the church, being identified by the speaking in tongues and characterizing this time as key according to their premillennial dispensational eschatology. This latter manifestation was a way to prepare for the second coming of Christ, after a long time of apostasy in church history. Althouse recognizes that modifications have been happening in Pentecostalism during the twentieth century, but eschatology continues to be a fundamental belief.

Althouse, following several other students of Pentecostalism, attributes to William Seymour the central role in the beginning of the Pentecostal movement, considering the revival at Azusa Street in the first years of the twentieth century. Even if one attributes more importance to Charles F. Parham and his group, and his influence on Seymour, there was a peculiarity in Seymour's approach. For him, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit meant a change in the people's life and interrelationships. That would involve a fellowship between white and black people in a way that would adequately prepare for the second coming of Christ.¹⁹

Harvey Cox, in his classical study on the origins and impact of Pentecostalism in the religiosity of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, summarizes well what he calls the originality in Pentecostalism if compared to traditional forms of Protestantism. He shows how Pentecostalism provided answers to the spiritual emptiness with a spirituality that was not restricted to doctrines (creeds) and regular worship (ceremonies).²⁰ One of the aspects of that new spirituality was the role of the Holy Spirit as deeply connected to future Eschatology.

Pentecostal eschatology usually advocates dispensational premillennialism. In this view, history is divided into seven dispensations, each of them with some special challenge to

¹⁹ Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, 9. A fuller account of the history of Pentecostalism will be given in the second chapter.

²⁰ Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 81–82.

humanity demanding its decision before God. The optimistic view from postmillennialism, characteristic of some of the Holiness movements prior to the beginning of Pentecostalism, gave place to a pessimistic view about the future of society. For the majority of Pentecostals future hope means the expectation of a thousand years of peace followed by the final (and last) coming of Christ for general judgment. Such a view, with some particularities, continues to be a strong mark of Pentecostal stance about the future of creation.²¹

When we consider pneumatology and eschatology in Neopentecostalism, it is possible to observe a significant shift. There are few specific studies on that matter, since the main interest in scholars studying Neopentecostalism usually focus on prosperity theology and media practices that those denominations employ to achieve their goals. Neopentecostal denominations have premillennial theology, following classical Pentecostalism. However, the dissertation suggests that if on the one hand Neopentecostal theology is theoretically Premillennarian, on the other hand in practical terms its eschatology comes closer to Postmillennarianism²². That may be witnessed in the change of view towards the future in this life and this world. Neopentecostal theology is much more optimistic since the doctrine of determination assumes that the children of God have all the right to live a good, victorious and successful life here and now.²³

One of the few studies specifically dealing with Neopentecostal eschatology was offered by

²¹ For a detailed account of the change from postmillennialism to premillennialism in the Pentecostal beginnings, see: Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 143–67.

²² One of the leading twentieth-century postmillennial theologians, Loraine Boettner defines postmillennialism saying, “Postmillennialism is that view of the last things which holds that the kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit, that the world eventually will be Christianized, and that the return of Christ will occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace commonly called the *Millennium*.” (Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975], 4) Respected the differences between postmillennarian view and Neopentecostalism, there is a common optimism related to the effects of the advance of God’s kingdom in the world.

²³ Some of the most marks of Neopentecostal theology, the doctrines of determination, spiritual warfare and prosperity theology will be discussed in chapter 3.

Ana K. Pinezi, who compared the way traditional Protestant and Neopentecostal denominations consider redemption and its relation to this world.²⁴ Comparing the eschatology in a traditional protestant Denomination (Presbyterian) and in the ICGG, Ana Pinezi shows how in Neopentecostalism the category of future eschatology loses strength compared to historical Protestantism. The ICGG is dedicated to the liberation of people from present oppressions caused by demons. The eschatological (future) dimension, even present in theory, is seen as a distant time in the future and, therefore, irrelevant to solve problems that currently make life unpleasant.²⁵ Neopentecostalism stresses a present hope, where daily problems are solved when the believer learns how to be in possession of the blessing already provided for him by Christ.²⁶

The Dissertation in the Context of Current Scholarship

Neopentecostalism has been a focus of interest for academic studies in Brazil for some decades. However, dissertations, theses and academic articles on it have dealt mainly with sociological issues and not so much with the theology and doctrinal basis of the movement. Despite being important subjects for classical Pentecostalism, pneumatology and eschatology have not attracted the attention in studies on the third wave. Furthermore, the ICGG has been in some way considered as a low priority compared to the largest Denomination, the IURD. This dissertation intends to offer a contribution in that particular area, having as its first focus the pneumatology of the ICGG, but considering also its eschatology and the relation between both,

²⁴ Ana Keila Pinezi, “A Dimensão de Presente e Futuro Em Contextos Religiosos Diferenciados: Uma Análise Comparativa Entre Dois Grupos Evangélicos” (lecture, XXIV Annual Meeting of the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Social Sciences, Ribeirão Preto, SP, October, 2000), accessed January 25, 2010. http://portal.anpocs.org/portal/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&grid=4848&Itemid=357.

²⁵ Pinezi, “A dimensão do presente e futuro,” 20.

²⁶ Pinezi, “A dimensão do presente e futuro,” 14, 15, 19. Pinezi seems to excessively generalize her assessment of Protestant stance, of what seems to be a much more complex position. Despite that observation, Pinezi’s remarks are valuable in general assessment of Neopentecostalism compared to traditional Protestant churches (even the Lutheran Church of Brazil).

from the standpoint of the theology of the New Testament as confessed by Lutheran theology.

Main Aspects of Neopentecostal Spirituality

Pentecostalism in its original form gave to the Holy Spirit and his work a central position in theological reflection and in the life of the Church and of the individual Christian. Early Pentecostalism has been characterized fundamentally by the doctrine of glossolalia (speaking in tongues as the sign of having been baptized with the Holy Spirit). That is an undisputed assertion, but it has some limitations; for instance, it forgets that glossolalia is a phenomenon that occurs in other religious movements. Such reductionism precludes the observation of other distinctive elements in Pentecostalism that were present since the beginning. One of them is the missionary desire to reach the world with the gospel. Another significant and original characteristic was the conviction people had to be living in eschatological times. In this regard the teaching on the “latter rain” was of fundamental importance. Drawing from Acts 2, Joel 2 and James 5:7–8, Pentecostals highlighted the importance of the early and latter rain that God would provide. The early rain could be identified with what happened in Pentecost, according to Acts 2. And the latter rain was considered to be the Pentecostal movement, with that special provision of the Holy Spirit to prepare the church for the coming of Christ.²⁷ Therefore, without denying glossolalia’s central importance in Pentecostalism, eschatology should be also recognized as a key element for understanding the movement. Besides, Pentecostalism from the time of its origin reveals an understanding of a close relationship between the manifestation of the Holy Spirit and the end times.²⁸

²⁷ Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 27.

²⁸ Dayton calls the attention to the fact that what could be considered a weakness in Pentecostalism becomes its strength. The discontinuity with the largest part of Christian history when spiritual gifts could not be seen so frequently happens to be a form of legitimation of Pentecostalism (*Theological Roots*, 28). In other words, miracles

When one comes to the examination of Neopentecostal movement in Brazil and its pneumatology and eschatology, a shift can be identified. This dissertation shows that the ICGG (and other Neopentecostal denominations) may be considered as part of the Pentecostal movement. However, a sharp distinction can be perceived in what refers to both pneumatology and eschatology. In theoretical terms, doctrinal teaching did not change so much compared to the traditional teaching of Pentecostalism, but a pneumatological and eschatological development can be noted in the actual spirituality of the new movement.

Neopentecostalism has developed a kind of spirituality that appears to give the Holy Spirit a secondary place. The ICGG was chosen as representative of the Neopentecostal movement for three main reasons: first, because it is the second largest denomination of the movement and the second to be organized in Brazil; second, because despite some studies from the sociological point of view, that Denomination has not received the same attention that the first Church of the Neopentecostal movement (“Universal Church of God’s Kingdom”). There has not been found any specific study on its pneumatology and eschatology. Third, in a more subjective assessment, the ICGG was chosen as the specific object of this study because it presents itself as being closer to original Pentecostalism (and in some ways, to original Protestantism) in its preaching and teaching ministry when compared to other Neopentecostal denominations. In this sense, it may be considered a proper bridge between the Pentecostal original movement and the third wave phenomenon.

If one examines the “Show of faith” TV program of the ICGG and its official magazine, “Show of Faith,” it can be immediately noticed that the role of the Spirit receives less attention if compared to the 1st wave Pentecostalism. That can be explained by the typical model of

and tongues did not happen during a long time and are happening today (i.e., with the Pentecostal movement) because today is the time of the latter rain.

Christomonism in Neopentecostal preaching and teaching, in the shape of the theology of glory (prosperity). However, it would be wrong to conclude that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is completely neglected in the ICGG. The dissertation shows that even if pneumatology has no central place in the Church's doctrine, one can observe that there is a consistent teaching on the subject and whenever the Holy Spirit is mentioned, one can perceive a "Pentecostal flavor" of the discourse, so to speak. The role of the Spirit is witnessed both in relation with Christ and with the believers, giving attention to the economy of the Spirit, with no apparent interest in discussing the Trinitarian aspect.²⁹

Despite the fact that the history of the Denomination is not the first focus of the dissertation, it was necessary to give it some attention along with the development of its teachings, in comparison to the historical (traditional) teachings of the first wave Pentecostalism. The dissertation focuses chiefly on the doctrine taught by the church, giving special attention to how spiritual belief and life are expressed in its teaching. Among the most significant theological issues is the application of prosperity Theology and positive confession.

Positive confession, also known as the movement of "Word of Faith," began in independent Pentecostal groups in the United States after 1950.³⁰ Kenneth Hagin became one of the most important names of the movement. For him, "positive confession" means that believers have the power, promised by the Scriptures and acquired by Christ in his sacrifice, to bring to existence whatever they declare, confess or determine with their mouth in loud voice.

²⁹ In a "Show of Faith" TV program in January, 2014, R. R. Soares explained that Christ's work, victorious against the devil, has opened the doors to the believer take possession of any blessing he needs. Then he taught that Christ died in two manners — spiritually and physically. His spiritual death, said Soares, happened when the Father abandoned him on the cross; Christ's physical death happened in hell — Soares explained that Christ suffered in hell in such a way that the devil considered himself a winner. But then, he continued, the Holy Spirit came (to hell) and gave new life to Jesus — that was the resurrection and victory against the devil. ("Show da Fé," January 1, 2014)

³⁰ Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 220.

The other important component of Neopentecostal spirituality is prosperity theology.³¹ It seems that Robert McAlister, founder of the “Igreja de Nova Vida” (Church of New Life), was pioneer in Brazil of discussing financial prosperity in a Pentecostal environment. Two of his books deal specifically with the subject: “Como prosperar” (How to prosper) and “Dinheiro – um assunto altamente espiritual” (Money—a highly spiritual subject). In those books he gave orientations to believers to offer the tithe in order to have blessings in their financial life and he also criticized pastors who considered money as “the root of all evil.”³² R. R. Soares gives full support to MacAlister view, as can be seen in the ICGG’s official Magazine and TV Show.³³

With their prosperity theology, some new Churches (the third wave Pentecostalism) adapted to the new times, specifically to what David Martin, in his book, *Pentecostalism: The World their Parish*, has called a post-modern view of capitalism. He shows how the Neopentecostals³⁴ learned how to approach cultural tensions that come with post-modern capitalism.³⁵

³¹ “Prosperity theology” may be presented as “health, wealth and material success as the essential promises of the Christian faith” (Philip Jenkins, “The Case for Prosperity,” *Christian Century* [November 30, 2010]: 45). Considering that the death and resurrection of Christ “provided Christians with the ability to live in total victory, financial prosperity, and perfect health,” the proponents of prosperity theology maintain that through their faith Christians may have full control of success in their lives (Shayne Lee, “Prosperity Theology: T. D. Jakes and the Gospel of the Almighty Dollar,” *Crosscurrents* [Summer 2007]: 228).

³² Mariano, “Neopentecostais e a teologia da prosperidade,” 31, n. 13.

³³ Every TV show (“Show da Fé”) has a section called “Novela da vida real” (A real life soap opera) which focuses on a person or family member of the ICGG. It starts presenting how their life was before entering the Church, especially in terms of their failures in finance, job, debts, or in family life. Then the interviewer asks the person how things changed when he or she entered the Church and became a sponsor. Invariably the witness gives account that a new reality began, most of the times focusing on financial success, but also in family relationship.

³⁴ Martin does not use that term, preferring to consider those churches as “post-modern Pentecostals.”

³⁵ He takes two of the third wave Denominations (IURD and “Renascer em Cristo”) as examples of a new strategy of reaching people. IURD has been successful addressing young people from the underworld of drugs in such a way that several young pastors are former drug addicts and dealers. “Renascer” has reached people from educational high levels in society, as in media, entertainment sectors, middle class people who value pleasures that society can provide, but who are learning in the church how to avoid destructive pleasures (drugs, tobacco, alcohol, etc.). On the other hand their lifestyle, clothes, music are distinctively contemporary and distinguish them from the stereotype of classical Pentecostalism. (David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish* [Oxford: Blackwell, 2002], 80–81).

Jürgen Moltmann affirmed that “Pentecostal movements are eschatological movements.”³⁶ If that can be said about Pentecostalism in general (and Moltmann seems to be referring specifically to the historic Pentecostalism—what we are calling the 1st wave and perhaps also the 2nd wave), it should be asked if that saying would be true for the Neopentecostal movement. If we apply the categories of a-, pre-, and postmillennial eschatology, it is possible to observe a shift from the typical premillennial approach of classical Pentecostalism to a kind of postmillennial view in Neopentecostalism. At least, that is what can be noted in practical terms, considering the preaching and teaching of Neopentecostal Denominations.³⁷ The kingdom of God is, according to this last movement, effectively present today through the “spiritual” manifestations of healing and of personal and familiar success. There is progress happening today, and it depends basically on the believer’s confidence to “demand” (not ask for) blessings from heaven.³⁸

Another important element in Neopentecostal theology is the idea of spiritual warfare. To some extent, this concept occupies the space formerly claimed by eschatology. Ricardo Bitun suggests that the changes that Pentecostalism experienced during the final quarter of the twentieth century, mainly with the advent or addition of prosperity theology and spiritual warfare, have proposed, at least in practical terms, an anticipation of Christian parousia, by identifying the full blessings of the kingdom as being offered and received here and now.³⁹

³⁶ Peter Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, vii.

³⁷ It has to be noted that in terms of doctrinal witness, Neopentecostal churches continue in the line of Dispensationalism. The point we are stating is that such a doctrinal view does not seem to make much of an impression on the practical way of considering Christian life.

³⁸ That expression is taken from a “course of faith” that is offered in the homepage of the IIGD. Here again one can note the importance of the “positive confession” and “prosperity theology” as strong elements of Neopentecostalism.

³⁹ Ricardo Bitun, “Transformações no campo religioso pentecostal brasileiro: a antecipação da parúsia cristã,” *Ciências da Religião: História e Sociedade* 6, no. 2 (2008): 203–28.

According to Neopentecostal reasoning, there are two dimensions, material and spiritual, where evil forces and faith are in constant battle. The material world is under evil forces, and those forces can be dominated only by the believer's faith.⁴⁰ Poverty and material needs are consequences of the devil's influence, in such a way that the blessings announced by prosperity theology do not always become concrete in the believer's life. Demons are acting in all human affairs, and they use pagan cults as instruments of domination of people.⁴¹

Paulo Siepierski calls the attention to the fact that given the accent on spiritual warfare, Neopentecostalism (which he names "Post-pentecostalism") shows no particular concern with social structures. Since the spiritual realm dominates the material reality, problems in society can be explained by oppression caused by demons. The fact that Brazil is underdeveloped in several social aspects will not be solved unless people are freed from the domination of evil forces.⁴²

In Neopentecostal discourse AfroBrazilian cults (mainly "Candomblé" and "Umbanda") are dominated by such evil forces, called in those cults "orixás"⁴³. Bitun concludes that

⁴⁰ Bitun, "Transformações no campo religioso," 216.

⁴¹ A practical example of the importance of the spiritual warfare in the discourse of the ICGG could be witnessed in the TV program "Show da Fé," broadcasted on April 16, 2014. Soares based his message on Psalm 2:9 ("You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."). He applied the text saying that we cannot be pleasing with the enemy, but we have to reprehend evil, as Jesus used to do, in order that God's power come out of our mouth. During prayer the believer uses authority in such a way that every work of the enemy in his life is withdrawn. When the believer fulfills the requirements of God and receives the unction (Soares never explained what that really means), he shall reduce the enemy to nothing. If a person really enters God's communion, he listens to the Word and in time of disease, he can use authority (as a rod of iron) against the devil. Soares also alerts that the believer should not be double-minded during the battle against evil forces. He needs to be gradually growing in strength (going to Church and hearing the Word) so that he can fight the devil and all infirmities once for all. During his prayer, Soares mingles praises to the Father with words against the devil: "I use my authority as a minister of God to act against the evil forces and I command you to leave in the name of Jesus." He then speaks to the Father thanking for the people who have been freed from demon oppression. Later in another prayer Soares mentions witchcraft as something that is enslaving some people. He then speaks directly to the evil spirit and he "ties" that demon (that verb is very common in the language of fighting the devil). Soares then says: "I'm commanding you, evil spirit – take what is yours and go out. You are tied and you shall leave this person." After that prayer Soares asked people to identify who felt that God did something in their life in that moment. Some persons gave witness of being healed in that very moment.

⁴² Siepierski, "Pós-Pentecostalismo e política," 53–54.

⁴³ *Candomblé* is the name of an AfroBrazilian cult, which was brought by slaves from Africa to Brazil during the time of slavery (from the 16th to the 19th century). One of its major characteristics is the influence attributed to

Neopentecostalism made use of prosperity theology and spiritual warfare, which resulted in changing the understanding of the eschaton. The blessings of the kingdom are for here and now and the only hindrance to that is the influence of evil forces, but those enemies can be beaten by faith. Putting that faith into practice results in the capacity of the believer to enjoy the blessings of the future kingdom in the present time.⁴⁴

The Holy Spirit and His Eschatological Ministry

In order to assess Neopentecostal pneumatology from a Lutheran framework, the dissertation explores the intersection of pneumatology and eschatology. It aims to describe the role of the Spirit as it is presented in the New Testament, emphasizing how his work is deeply connected to eschatology. Such a connection is not something new in theological reflection, since several studies have called the attention to the end-times character of the Spirit. Actually, it may be noted that pneumatological studies usually point to the eschatological aspect of the Spirit's work. Few of them, though, have taken that perspective as a framework to expose in a more comprehensive way the ministry of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, when one considers that the doctrine of eschatology is sometimes explained without acknowledgement of a specific role of the Spirit, it is necessary and helpful to briefly describe how some theological resources in Pneumatology and Eschatology identify the role of the Holy Spirit in the events of the end

ancestors, the "orixás." These spirits command some specific areas of human life. They are believed to come during worship and dominate the spiritual leader who is conducting the religious Service. When the slaves were brought to Brazil they usually had to be baptized by Roman Catholic priests, but still conserved their cult. For that reason, the newly "converted" began to identify the *orixás* with some Catholic saints. *Umbanda* is a typical Brazilian cult, which was founded in the beginning of the twentieth century. It is a result of the union of Spiritism and *Candomblé* and has strong connections with some Roman Catholic doctrines and practices. Besides the communication with the *orixás*, *Umbanda* preserves belief (coming from Spiritism) in reincarnation (Ingo Wulfhorst, *Discernindo os Espíritos: O Desafio do Espiritismo e da Religiosidade Afro-brasileira* 4th ed. [São Leopoldo: Sinodal, 1996], 45–61.)

⁴⁴ Bitun, "Transformações no Campo Religioso," 224, 226.

times and how the Spirit's battle against Satan and his helpers is actually waged.⁴⁵ The theologians we have chosen to highlight contribute either by providing a reflection on the role of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostalism or similar movements in the church, or by introducing the importance of eschatology as a framework for discussing pneumatology, which is one of the main interests of the dissertation.

In his dissertation, the Reformed pastor T. David Beck dealt with a very similar subject to that which we discuss in this dissertation. His fundamental quest was to show how the Holy Spirit and Eschatology are interconnected in the teaching of the apostle Paul and of Jürgen Moltmann.⁴⁶

Beck divides his presentation on Paul's eschatological pneumatology into two aspects: the role of the Spirit in the Church (the corporate aspect) and his presence and life given to the individual believer. For Beck it is important to note that the corporate aspect is primary in Paul's theology.⁴⁷

Presenting the contribution of Jürgen Moltmann, especially in his first major work, *Theology of Hope*, Beck shows that eschatology is to be characterized by the centrality of Christ's resurrection as foundation for hope in the future.⁴⁸

With his understanding of the strong connection between the Holy Spirit and eschatology, Beck offers an alternative that, according to him, avoids both the institutional (Barth) and the

⁴⁵ It is noteworthy that a classical treatment in Dogmatics, as Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), 3:538, when explaining the doctrine of the last things has no reference to the work of the Holy Spirit. Even when he refers to 1 Cor. 15:44, the "spiritual body," Pieper does not even mention the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁶ T. David Beck, *The Holy Spirit and the Renewal of All Things: Pneumatology in Paul and Jürgen Moltmann* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2007). Beck at the time of writing the book was a pastor at King's Harbor Church, Redondo Beach, CA; today he is pastor of Sanctuary Covenant Church, in Sacramento. He did his doctorate at Southern Methodist University, in Dallas, Texas. This work has special interest for my dissertation, since one of the main points I try to demonstrate is exactly the deep connection between the Holy Spirit and Eschatology.

⁴⁷ Beck, *The Holy Spirit and the Renewal*, 49.

⁴⁸ Beck, *The Holy Spirit and the Renewal*, 125.

experiential (Wesley) models that are found in Protestant theology.

There are helpful contributions in Beck's insistence in connecting the Holy Spirit's role to the theme of biblical eschatology. However, his understanding of a deficiency in what he calls the "institutional" Pneumatology (identified by him with the traditional Protestant approach) reveals his failure to recognize the central connection between the soteriological work of Christ, given through the gospel to the individual as forgiveness of sins, with the ministry of the Spirit. As the promoter of the kingdom of God in his ministry and until the time of his second coming, Christ is the real presence of the future kingdom, whose presence and powerful action are realized in the present time by the ministry of the Holy Spirit in proclamation and the sacramental forms of God's promise.

One of the classical works on the Holy Spirit with special attention to the Pentecostal approach is *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, by Frederick D. Bruner.⁴⁹ He assesses the Pentecostal theology of the Holy Spirit through a careful examination of the teaching of the New Testament, concentrating in the book of Acts and 1 Corinthians 12–14. He also brings to the discussion a more systematic approach to the theme, discussing "the way of the Holy Spirit" and showing the contrast between the New Testament teaching and Pentecostal doctrine.

For the purposes of this dissertation, Bruner is a helpful resource, especially in his presentation of three main topics. Firstly, what he calls "the condition of the Spirit," i.e., the work of Christ that releases the sinner from the law. Secondly, exposing "the means of the Spirit," where Bruner shows the fundamental role of proclamation and baptism. Finally, Bruner points out "the evidence of the Spirit," which he explains as faith in Christ, which is expressed in assurance, expectation (hope), and love for the neighbor. Bruner also proves to offer a helpful

⁴⁹ Frederick D. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970).

contribution for our study when he summarizes Paul's teaching to the Corinthians related to the role of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual life of the believers.⁵⁰

A specific contribution from Luther's studies is given by Regin Prenter in his classical presentation of Luther's doctrine of the Holy Spirit.⁵¹ Prenter divides his presentation of Luther's testimony about the Holy Spirit into two major parts: before and in the controversy with the enthusiasts. One of his main claims is that Luther's doctrine of the Holy Spirit was not developed because of the controversy, but was already present and important in the so called "young Luther."

Prenter begins by showing how Luther could keep Augustinian language about the Spirit as infusion of love into the human heart, provided that he used that terminology in the evangelical sense. Luther gave a new content to that love, denying that the Spirit would infuse love so that man could keep the law not out of fear but out of love for God. For Luther, a true and spiritual love is actually to hate oneself as sinner and one's own sinful life, in accord to God who hates sin and evil in man. Such *odium sui*, which is godly love, is a work of the Spirit, not of man.

The external means used by God to do His work receive a special emphasis by Luther. They precede the internal work of the Spirit and that, Prenter shows, does not mean a mere rational objectivity. The Holy Spirit continues to be Lord using the means he has established as instruments for his ministry. Therefore, Luther cannot be accused of an *ex opere operato* understanding of the use of the external means, which brings benefits through human performance of ritual rather than through the power of the Holy Spirit in God's Word.⁵²

A contemporary Lutheran approach to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is presented by

⁵⁰ Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 318.

⁵¹ Regin Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, trans. John M. Jensen (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1953).

⁵² Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 292.

Leopoldo Sánchez in his book on Pneumatology⁵³ and in his doctoral dissertation.⁵⁴

Pneumatological Christology has a special focus on the baptism of Jesus, recognizing the importance of the event witnessed by the four Gospels, which is also part of Peter's proclamation (Acts 10:38).⁵⁵

Given the focus of the dissertation on the Pentecostal understanding of the Holy Spirit's work, it is particularly helpful the way Sánchez considers the theme of the spiritual gifts. In order to avoid extreme positions on the subject, he offers a way of dealing with the topic which is cautious and open at the same time. One should not overemphasize the gifts of some individuals in a way that the contribution of those who are weaker would be despised. In such a case the gift is put over the church, which is wrong. The key to properly receiving and confessing the gifts is their consideration as promoting Christ, the unity of the Church and the well-being of the neighbor.⁵⁶

The role of the Holy Spirit in the last things was underlined by Anthony Hoekema in a chapter of his book on eschatology.⁵⁷ He emphasizes two aspects of the role of the Holy Spirit. First, he points out to the presence and action of the Spirit in the life of the believers as: (i) the one who assures our affiliation with God; (ii) the "first-fruits" of eschatological salvation, where God is the giver and man the receiver; (iii) the "guarantee" of future blessings; and (iv) God's "seal" that assures the believer of not only belonging to God, but that he will be protected until the final salvation. The second focus is on the final resurrection of the believers. As the Spirit

⁵³ Leopoldo A. Sánchez M., *Pneumatología: El Espíritu Santo Y La Espiritualidad de La Iglesia* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2005).

⁵⁴ Leopoldo A. Sánchez M. *Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God's Spirit: Jesus' in the Spirit as a Lens for Theology and Life* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2015).

⁵⁵ Sánchez, *Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God's Spirit*, 106.

⁵⁶ Sánchez, *Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God's Spirit*, 143–47.

⁵⁷ Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 55–67.

was instrumental for the Father's action in the resurrection of Jesus, it will be through the Holy Spirit that God will raise up his children. Despite his fine exposition of the eschatological role of the Spirit in those two aspects, it can be noted that Hoekema does not develop the theme of the presence and action of the Spirit in Jesus' life and ministry as an eschatological role.⁵⁸ Besides, his work does not contain a more developed treatment of the Spirit's operation in bringing people from spiritual death to life in Christ through the new birth at conversion.

In his three-volume work on systematic theology, W. Pannenberg strongly emphasizes the concept of the kingdom of God and its relation to Church, Sacraments and the Holy Spirit, among other key theological topics.⁵⁹ For Pannenberg the work of the Holy Spirit is deeply related to eschatological events; however, for him, the ministry of the Spirit shows an eschatological character that is not uniquely futuristic:

Pneumatology and eschatology belong together because the eschatological consummation itself is ascribed to the Spirit, who as an end-time gift already governs the historical present of believers. Conversely, then, eschatology does not merely have to do with the future of consummation that is still ahead; it is also at work in our present by the Spirit.⁶⁰

The Holy Spirit plays a significant role in the resurrection of Jesus, as in the new life in faith of believers in the present time and in the "spiritual body," which is characterized as being permeated by the Spirit. Pannenberg uses two arguments to show a special role of the Spirit in the end times, as ultimately purifying those who will receive eschatological salvation. Working with Paul's argument of the change that will happen with the body (1 Cor. 15), he connects that with the idea of a purifying fire at the judgment. The second argument is the relation between the

⁵⁸ There is a brief reference to the fulfillment (in Luke 4:17–19 and Matt. 12:28) of Old Testament prophecy that the Holy Spirit would rest upon and equip the Messiah.

⁵⁹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 3 vols., trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

⁶⁰ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:553.

Spirit and God's glory that is in action at the judgment.⁶¹ Pannenberg's emphasis on the work of the Spirit helps to show the unity of the elements in the third Article. The creator Spirit is the same that sanctifies in this life through faith and that glorifies at the end.

Both Hoekema and Pannenberg make the important observation that the connection of the Holy Spirit with eschatology should be recognized as considering both the future events at the end of this world, and the current presence of the kingdom manifested when Christ, the King, came the first time. In fact, Jesus called attention to the activity of the Holy Spirit in His ministry, which brought the presence of God's kingdom (Matt. 12:28). And Paul connects the seal of the Holy Spirit with the believers' faith in the Gospel, and reminds them that the Spirit is God's guarantee of their future inheritance (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14). He is the same Spirit that brings about a new creation through baptism (Tit. 3:5).

Martin Luther also linked eschatology with the work of the Holy Spirit, for instance, in his explanation of the second petition of the Lord's Prayer. The kingdom comes, Luther says, when our Father gives us His Holy Spirit so that we may believe in His word and live with Him now and forever. This kingdom brings redemption and frees us from the devil. We are asking, therefore, that by the power of the Holy Spirit God's kingdom have free course among us in such a way that the kingdom of Satan be defeated, so that he has no power over us. Luther sees that battle of the Holy Spirit against Satan's kingdom happening during the whole time during which the gospel is proclaimed and coming to a close with that kingdom being completely annihilated, with the result that we may live in eternal and full justice and joy (Large Catechism III: 51, 54).

The dissertation explores that connection between the work of the Holy Spirit and the coming of God's kingdom in time (inaugurated eschatology) and in the final manifestation

⁶¹ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:622–25.

(future eschatology). It presents the eschatological work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament under three main topics. Those correspond also to what we understand Lutheran theology confesses as fundamental to depict the work of the Holy Spirit as eschatological. Those topics are:

(1) The Holy Spirit acting in the coming, ministry and messianic work of Jesus.

Fundamental for this connection is the recognition that the kingdom of God, considered as a dynamic reality, encounters its “place” in the person and work of Christ. That hoped for kingdom, the future reality that God has promised to his people, came before the time (proleptically) in Jesus, through the power of the Spirit.

(2) The kingdom of God continues to be in action in the world through the means of grace.

In absolution, baptism, the Lord’s Supper and in the proclamation of the word that brings Christ, the kingdom is coming by the Holy Spirit, who is at work through those means. In his eschatological work during the era of the history of the Church, the Spirit is the “down payment,” “guarantee” and “first fruits” of the future kingdom. By this action the Holy Spirit fights against the devil and his lies and false faith, by which he intends to replace God’s truth and true faith in Christ.

(3) The presence and work of the Spirit at the *parousia* of Jesus. The New Testament

testifies to the general resurrection of the dead at the occasion of Christ’s coming and the Apostles’ Creed confesses the resurrection in the third article, therefore united with the Holy Spirit’s work. Paul makes that important association in several places, where the Holy Spirit participates in the resurrection (for instance, Rom. 1:4; 8:11). A significant contribution is given by the apostle when he qualifies the resurrected body as being a “spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:44).

The Methodological Procedure Employed

The first and most important area of interest of the dissertation is the theology and practice of the ICGG, the second major Denomination belonging to the movement called as “Neopentecostalism.” The focus is specifically the pneumatology of the denomination, with the questioning to what extent is it a topic of primary importance for the church and if and how is it related to the teaching of eschatology.

The lack of theological studies analyzing the doctrinal content of the ICGG led us to work with three basic sources. First, some written material, mainly the monthly magazine, “*Jornal da Fé*,” that provided a narrative of the life of the Church in Brazil and other countries. Although the magazine does not present formal doctrinal studies, it reveals in practical terms the main aspect of the spirituality of the Church. The second source is the TV daily program, “*Show da Fé*.” Besides Soares’ messages, the program presents witnesses of people who claim to have had their life changed when they were introduced to the ICGG. The third instrument employed to understand the pneumatology and the eschatology of the church was the use of a questionnaire with a number of members of the Church. For that formal interview with people who attend the ICGG we used an instrument with objective questions and some space for personal comments on the issues of Holy Spirit and eschatology.

The study of biblical pneumatology, emphasizing the eschatological role of the Spirit was the constructive basis to access the theology of the ICGG. It is not an exhaustive study of the topic, but some fundamental aspects of the eschatological pneumatology are emphasized as a positive way to understand the role of the Holy Spirit in relation to the life of the Church and of the individual believer. For that reason, it was necessary to demonstrate how the Holy Spirit had a significant role in Christ’s life and mission and how he will be acting in the final events described by the New Testament.

The Chapters' Contents

After this introductory chapter, the dissertation presents a brief account of the history and most significant characteristics of Pentecostalism and Neopentecostalism in Brazil, especially disclosing the place of the Neopentecostal movement, with its similarities and particularities, in relation to classical Pentecostalism. Chapter three deals specifically with the history and most relevant theological emphases of the ICGG, i.e., elements of theology of prosperity, the concept and importance of positive confession and the place of spiritual warfare in the proclamation of the church. In order to briefly present New Testament teaching on the person and work of the Holy Spirit, considered as eschatological, chapter four develops the concept of “eschatological pneumatology.” For that purpose, we present the contribution of some representative theologians reflecting on the role of the Holy Spirit. After that the chapter describes how the Holy Spirit is, first of all, directly active in the anticipation of the coming of God’s Kingdom, through His role in Christ’s person and mission and also in His guidance of the life of the Church as the *Spiritus Creator*. Chapter four ends with the exposition of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and future eschatology, specifically dealing with his role in the general resurrection. In chapter five we present the main topic of the dissertation, discussing the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as confessed and taught by the ICGG, based on observations from the “Course of Faith,” available in the ICGG’s homepage, and on the Church’s official Magazine (“Show of Faith”), and also considering the answers given to the interview with Members of the church. Chapter six concludes the dissertation with an evaluation of the Pneumatology and most significant doctrines of the ICGG, as assessed from the point of view of confessional Lutheran theology.

CHAPTER TWO

PENTECOSTALISM AND NEOPENTECOSTALISM IN BRAZIL

In order to understand the theology and impact of Neopentecostalism and specifically of the ICGG it is necessary to identify its position in relation to the overall state of Pentecostalism in Brazil. For some scholars Neopentecostalism radically deviated from classical forms of Pentecostalism and should not even be counted in that movement. However, it is possible (and even necessary) to recognize its historical and theological connections to the original movement. For that reason, this chapter intends to give an overview of the historical beginnings and concept of Pentecostalism and Neopentecostalism as they can be witnessed in Brazil.

The origins of the movement in Brazil are deeply dependent on Pentecostal development in the United States. Therefore, we begin by offering a brief account on how Pentecostalism started in the Northern hemisphere, with some highlights of its theological characteristics, the impact of which can be perceived even today in Brazilian denominations that classify in that movement.

Despite the fact that there are several characteristics that may be identified in most of the Pentecostal churches, Pentecostalism is not a homogeneous movement. There are actually forms of Pentecostalism that differ in significant ways one from another. That is especially true when one examines the manifestations of what has been called “Neopentecostalism” in Brazil, which is the main topic of this dissertation. For that reason, we will also discuss the place and concept of “Neopentecostalism” compared to classical forms of Pentecostalism in Brazil.

The North-American Beginnings

The origin of the Pentecostal movement in Brazil is directly dependent on the coming of

missionaries from outside, specifically from the United States. Some remarks on the irruption of Pentecostalism in the Northern hemisphere are now in place.

In his important work on the beginning and influence of Pentecostalism, Harvey Cox shows that the movement did not arise in a vacuum. According to him, American Christians living in the final years of the nineteenth century had the conviction that a new epoch was up to begin. Events of healings and speaking in tongues were reported and Church meetings began to speak about the possible coming of a new Pentecost.¹

Since the beginning, a special role of the Holy Spirit and an ardent eschatological expectation could be witnessed in the movement. Cox attributes the fast and large growth of Pentecostalism to its practical response to what could be considered a spiritual emptiness in society. The movement went beyond creeds and ceremonies, proposing an “original spirituality,” which comprehended three dimensions: an original speech (tongues), an original piety (trances, visions, healings, joyful dances), and an original hope (a millenarian perspective for the future).²

Any account of the beginnings of Pentecostal movement in the United States, with consequences for a worldwide movement, has necessarily to refer to William Joseph Seymour and to what became known as the “Azusa Street Mission.”³

As already mentioned, Seymour’s movement did not come without a significant historical and theological context. In a brief, but consistent account, Allan Anderson, a world leader in studies on Pentecostalism, describes movements in the nineteenth century that had a key

¹ Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2001), 48.

² Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 81–82.

³ For a vivid account of the Azusa Street event, with several quotations of articles from local newspapers, and a detailed exposition of influences received by William Seymour, see: Cecil M. Robeck Jr., *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006).

influence on the beginnings and theology of Pentecostalism.⁴ In a position that is shared by the majority of scholars, Anderson considers the Holiness movement as the immediate source for Pentecostalism. That movement depended on a particular interpretation of John Wesley, specifically coming from John Fletscher (1729–1785). Beyond the emphases on a personal experience with the Holy Spirit and a high place for emotions, the teaching of the “second blessing” was particularly important for the irruption of the new movement in the Twentieth century. Such blessing was understood as a personal experience following conversion and identified with sanctification. Fletscher considered this second blessing as the baptism with the Holy Spirit.⁵

At the middle of the nineteenth century developments in the Holiness movement connected the teaching of the second blessing with the expectation of a world revival, which would be an expression of the “latter rains” that would open the way to Christ’s second coming. Another development happened in the understanding of the function of the spiritual gifts, as a special experience with the Holy Spirit. Spiritual gifts were no longer connected so much with sanctification, as in classical forms of Methodism and the Holiness, but with empowerment to serve. There were some teachers of the Holiness that even taught a “third blessing,” but that was not accepted by the majority (however had strong influence in the original Pentecostalism).⁶

Teachings on eschatology in the nineteenth century were also highly influential for the beginnings of Pentecostalism. Preachers of the Holiness movement and of North American

⁴ Allan Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*.

⁵ Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 25–26. In this dissertation, the expressions “baptism with/in/of the Holy Spirit” are taken as descriptions of the same event.

⁶ Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 27. This “third blessing” was understood as the baptism with the Holy Spirit, being considered distinct and separated from the “second blessing” (the personal experience characterized as sanctification). According to this position, there are three stages in salvation: justification, sanctification and baptism with the Holy Spirit.

movements of revivals (as the Keswick convention) were spreading the teachings of the British Plymouth Brethren, mainly the premillennial secret rapture proposed by John Nelson Darby. This became a common theme in meetings of the Holiness movement, despite opposition by Methodist leaders.⁷ In this way, the role of the Holy Spirit in a second (or third) experience was more and more connected to a specific eschatological view, a connection that would be strong in classical Pentecostalism.⁸

William J. Seymour was influenced by the teachings of the Holiness movements to a large extent, but not exclusively, to his encounter with Charles Fox Parham (1873–1929) and his movement, the “Apostolic Faith.”⁹ In his Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, Parham challenged the students to examine the book of Acts to discover what would be the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Their answer was: speaking in tongues. After a long time of prayers, one of Parham’s students, Agnes Ozman, received the special gift, in an experience that was followed by Parham and other students in the following days. Parham also opened a Bible School in Houston, Texas, where William Seymour became one of his students.¹⁰

William Joseph Seymour, born in 1870 in Centerville, Louisiana, like a large number of the original Pentecostals, was originally attending a Methodist Episcopal Church, a black congregation. After some time of involvement in a revivalist group in Cincinnati with a strong eschatological emphasis, the “Evening Light Saints,” Seymour attended a black church in

⁷ It is significant that a radical shift could be witnessed in the eschatology exposed by revivalists in the nineteenth century. A Postmillennial view was dominant among revivalists in the eighteenth century (Jonathan Edwards, for instance), for whom there was an expectation of an improvement in all aspects of life given the influence Christians would promote in the whole world. Civil war and other factors brought a more pessimistic view towards the future of society and the imminence of Christ’s coming to inaugurate a millennium became gradually the majority position (see Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 153–63).

⁸ Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 29–30.

⁹ For a much detailed account of Seymour’s trajectory and influences received by him, see: Robeck, *Azuza Street Mission and Revival*, 17–52.

¹⁰ Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 33–34.

Houston, where he met a woman, Lucy Farrow, who prayed in a strange language. It was through Farrow that Seymour was introduced to Charles Fox Parham. Despite his racism, Parham allowed Seymour to attend the school, but he could only listen to the lectures outside of the room. After some time in Parham's school, Seymour was invited to preach in a small congregation in Los Angeles. His teaching on glossolalia connected to baptism with the Holy Spirit provoked an early rejection by the leadership of that congregation.¹¹ After that he began to gather people in the house of Richard and Ruth Asberry, where on April 6, 1906, the members of the group decided to pray and fast until the experience of Acts 2 would happen to them. According to Cecil Robeck, it was on April 9, 1906 that Edward Lee, Seymour's friend and host, spoke in tongues.¹² The number of people attending the meetings increased so much that on April 14 the group moved to the Azuza Street, 312. It used to be a place where an African Episcopal Methodist Church had its worship. After the place had been abandoned by that congregation, it was used as a warehouse, until Seymour and his group began to use it as the center of the mission.¹³

As a sympathetic interpreter of the movement led by Seymour, Cecil M. Robeck Jr., like most scholars, shows the significant influence of several groups, mainly from the Holiness

¹¹ Sources are divided about the time Seymour was prevented to continue to preach. Some say that his first sermon caused a reaction by Mrs. Julia W. Hutchins, founder of the small holiness congregation in Los Angeles. Robeck (*Azuza Street Mission and Revival*, 62) has consistently argued that Seymour had more opportunities to preach, at least during a whole weekend in several meetings. Despite the fact that Mrs. Hutchins and Seymour had several points in common in their theological positions, the divisive issue was related to the meaning of baptism with the Holy Spirit. Robeck explains: "Seymour argued that baptism in the Holy Spirit was something that came to people who had already been converted *and sanctified*. Most holiness people, including Mrs. Hutchins, equated baptism in the Spirit with sanctification, and they did not see the ability to speak in tongues as connected to it all. According to Seymour, baptism in the Spirit did not impart purity; it brought empowerment for ministry." (*Azuza Street Mission and Revival*, 62–63) It is important to note that such difference would be the most significant issue that would separate from Seymour one of his early supporters, the Chicago preacher William Durham, with significant consequences for the future of Pentecostalism in the United States and worldwide. We will discuss Durham's role at the end of this section.

¹² Robeck, *Azuza Street Mission and Revival*, 67.

¹³ Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 48–56.

tradition, on the formation of Seymour. He acknowledges the fact that other places in the United States were witnessing Christian groups emphasizing the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit, and an imminent new experience that Christianity was experiencing. However, he argues that the movement initiated in the Azuza Street is the most significant event to understand what Pentecostalism really is. He develops four arguments to show such a key importance of that event:

First, it grew with unparalleled speed. The Azuza Street Mission was aggressively evangelistic. . . . The second reason to explore the story of Azuza Street is that it had a profound effect on other congregations. Pastor Seymour's vision of shared experience a communal cooperation between various Christian groups needs to be rediscovered . . . Third, "Azuza Street" rightfully continues to function as the primary icon expressing the power of the worldwide Pentecostal movement. The Azuza Street Mission continues to play a foundational role in the ongoing pursuit and understanding of Pentecostal and Charismatic spirituality. . . . The fourth important aspect of the Azuza Street Mission and revival is that it continues to serve as an example for its outreach to the marginalized—the poor, women, and people of color.¹⁴

Several aspects of Seymour's teaching were shared by other groups. However, his movement at Azuza Street combined some elements in a very specific way unparalleled to any other group: emphasis on sanctification, premillennial eschatology as a ferment for a vigorous mission work, a recognition of the baptism with the Holy Spirit by the external evidence of speaking in tongues, and openness to equality of men and women, black and white people.¹⁵

In a particular way it is important for the scope of this dissertation to note three aspects in the movement that will be important for the development of Pentecostalism even today. First, the place of personal experience in spirituality, which was directly connected to the significant role

¹⁴ Robeck, *Azuza Street Mission and Revival*, 6–13.

¹⁵ Robeck makes an important point showing that the newness of the Azuza Street movement was not the use of the term "Pentecostal" to define its identity. That name was already in use in other movements; however, it had another point of reference: "[it] was commonly used across the holiness movement at the time. It did not identify [...] as having sympathies with those who spoke in tongues, but rather, with those who held to two works of grace – salvation and sanctification. . . . Like the term 'Pentecostal', the phrase 'Spirit-filled' was language commonly used to denote teachers who were part of the holiness movement." (*Azuza Street Mission and Revival*, 31–32)

of the Holy Spirit in the life of those who were already converted and were living a holy life. As H. Cox points out:

There is a favorite saying among Pentecostals: “The man with an experience is never at the mercy of the man with a doctrine.” What was happening in the White-washed former warehouse was that people were experiencing things they had never experienced before.¹⁶

A second aspect of William Seymour’s teaching with repercussions for Pentecostal teaching worldwide was the expectation of the imminent second coming of Christ preceding a thousand years period. The earthquake in San Francisco, at almost the same time as the beginnings of Seymour preaching at Azuza Street, was for many people in that time a sign that the end was at hand. Therefore, a special role of the Holy Spirit and an eschatological perspective which led to an evangelistic emphasis in the life of the church became, from the beginning, strong marks of Pentecostalism in terms of theology and practice as well.

A third aspect that should be noted in the beginnings of Pentecostal movement, and in its development, is its “ability to adapt to diverse cultural contexts.”¹⁷ It is true to Pentecostal denominations in general, but Neopentecostalism in Brazil is the best example of that characteristic. In classical forms of Pentecostalism that adaptability coexists with a process of institutionalization, with development of a bureaucratic structure, increased importance given to theological education and some standardization of forms in worship. On the other hand, Neopentecostal churches seem to be more successful in keeping a dynamic that brings them closer to the beginnings of Pentecostalism in the United States and in Brazil, speaking the language of society and rapidly responding to new demands in creative ways.

Before presenting the early manifestations of Pentecostalism in Brazil, it is necessary to

¹⁶ Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 57.

¹⁷ Allan Anderson et al., eds., *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 1.

underline the role of William H. Durham (1873–1912), whose ministry in the United States had significant repercussions in the eruption of the movement in several countries, including Brazil.

One of the most significant ruptures in the original Pentecostalism happened when some Pentecostals understood that the teaching of a second blessing as instantaneous sanctification could not be supported by Scripture. That move was deeply influenced by the so-called “Keswick Convention,” a movement that organized annual meetings since 1875 and that promoted the position that the “second blessing” was to be identified with the baptism with the Holy Spirit. This blessing was no longer understood as sanctification, but as an empowerment for service and witness.¹⁸

William Durham, a former Baptist preacher in Chicago, now in the Holiness movement, defended the understanding that sanctification comes together with conversion. Durham received the baptism with the Spirit in the Azusa Street mission in March 1907. After some years he came from Chicago to Los Angeles to preach against Seymour’s idea of a three-stage salvation model. For Durham, the work of God’s grace happens in two stages; justification (encompassing sanctification) and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ Such difference between Durham and Seymour (and Parham) persists in contemporary times between those Pentecostals that teach a two-stage way of salvation and those who teach a three-stage. For Hollenweger, that difference “represents the most difficult theological problem facing the American Pentecostal movement.”²⁰

Durham has a significant place in the development of Pentecostalism in the United States

¹⁸ Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 28–29. For a full account of the history and emphases of the Keswick Convention, see: David Bundy, Keswick, *A Bibliographic Introduction to the Higher Life Movement* (Wilmore: First Fruits, 1975). Bundy characterizes the distinction between the Holiness movement and Keswick position by saying: “The Holiness-Keswick debate focused on two issues: original sin and the nature of sanctification. Holiness Movement clergy in the Methodist-Wesleyan context emphasized the instantaneous removal of original sin by an instantaneous removal of original sin by an instantaneous act of grace; viz, entire sanctification. Keswick maintained a Reformed view of sin and a gradual process of sanctification.” (43)

¹⁹ Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 45–46.

²⁰ Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, trans. R. A. Wilson (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 26.

and in other countries, since future leaders of Pentecostal denominations came to Chicago and assimilated Durham's teaching of the "finished work of Calvary." Among those leaders were: Aimee Semple McPherson, founder of the "International Church of the Foursquare Gospel"; Luigi Francescon (1866–1964), working with Italian immigrants in the United States and in Latin America, founder of the first Pentecostal mission in Brazil that became the *Congregação Cristã no Brasil* (Christian Congregation in Brazil); and Daniel Berg and Gunnar Vingren, Swedish missionaries, founders of the second Pentecostal denomination in Brazil, the *Assembléias de Deus* (Assemblies of God).²¹

Beginnings of Pentecostalism in Brazil

The first wave²² of Pentecostalism came to Brazil during the first decade of the twentieth century. Two denominations were created nearly at the same time: *Congregação Cristã no Brasil* (Christian Congregation in Brazil), founded in 1910, and *Assembléias de Deus* (Assemblies of God), 1911. For almost forty years, those Churches dominated Brazilian Pentecostal field. The *Congregação Cristã no Brasil* was initially limited to Italian community, given the origin of the founders, but soon perceived that it was necessary to target other groups in the country.

At the time of the arrival of the first Pentecostal missionaries, historical Protestant denominations were already working in Brazil: Anglicans, Lutherans, Congregational, Presbyterians, and Baptists. However, they all had a limited growth to that time and their influence in a national level was almost unnoted.

The *Congregação Cristã no Brasil* was founded by Luigi Francescon, an Italian who never lived in Brazil, but came eleven times to the country between 1910 and 1948. Born in Italy,

²¹ Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 46.

²² The metaphor of three waves to describe different phases of Pentecostalism in Brazil will be discussed in depth in the next section of this chapter.

Francescon migrated to the United States in 1890, working as an artisan in Chicago. Initially a member of an Italian Presbyterian Church, he was later baptized by immersion in a Holiness group. In his memoir, he tells that in 1907 he was baptized with the Holy Spirit, after coming to know William H. Durham and being impressed by his preaching. It was because of a prophecy by Durham that he and his friend G. Lombardi, understood they should preach the Pentecostal message to the Italian colonies in every country.²³ Francescon began to travel in the United States and Lombardi in Italy. He tells that in 1909 he received a new revelation that directed him to Argentina. In 1910 he came to *São Paulo*, Brazil.²⁴

After a difficult beginning, Francescon gathered the first group in São Paulo as a result of his preaching in a Presbyterian Church of Italian immigrants. One of the most significant aspects of this denomination is the complete lack of the use of mass media. It seems that Francescon's origin in Presbyterianism, with its characteristic stress on predestination, explains in part the conviction of the *Congregação Cristã* since its beginning that God will bring to them those he chose to save. Therefore the use of any public communication, by voice, image or writings, would be unnecessary.²⁵

In terms of administration the *Congregação Cristã no Brasil* rejects any complex organization, trying to subsist with minimal bureaucracy. There are no pastors or professional staff, but elders who serve voluntarily and are chosen based more on their age and the length of their membership in the church than on personal competence. Those elders are responsible for supervising worship, but preaching is performed by any member that feels called to announce a message in that particular meeting. During the history of the *Congregação Cristã* there happened

²³ Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 40.

²⁴ Freston, "Protestantes e Política no Brasil," 77.

²⁵ Freston, "Protestantes e Política no Brasil," 78.

no ruptures in the church. The unity has been also strengthened by the fact that there are no political ambitions inside the church and the unity beyond local congregations is strengthened through constant meetings between believers from different cities and through an annual national convention.²⁶

The *Assembléias de Deus*, today the largest Pentecostal Church in Brazil²⁷, was founded by two Swedish missionaries who migrated to the United States, whence they came to Brazil at the beginning of the twentieth century. Gunnar Vingren, with Baptist roots in Sweden, studied in the United States in a Baptist Seminary in Chicago and became a pastor, soon becoming a Pentecostal preacher. Daniel Berg was also from a Baptist family in Sweden and migrated to the United States when he was 18 years old. In a trip back to Sweden he found out that his friend and Baptist pastor, Lewi Pethrus, after some spiritual struggles, became Pentecostal. For that reason he and his congregation were expelled from the Baptist communion. That rupture was important for the Brazilian incipient Pentecostalism. Pethrus' congregation became a strong supporter of his friend, Daniel Berg, even sending more missionaries to Brazil in the future. Coming back to the United States, Berg became a friend of Vingren and both began to plan a missionary effort. The official narrative tells that a Pentecostal prophet told them they should go to a place called “*Pará*.” It was with a world map that they came to the knowledge that *Pará* was a Brazilian state, in the extreme north of the country.²⁸

Vingren and Berg began to preach in a Baptist congregation in *Belém*, capital of the state of

²⁶ Matos, “O Movimento Pentecostal,” 41.

²⁷ According to Census 2010, the *Assembléias de Deus* have more than 12 million members in a universe of 25 million Pentecostals and 42 million Protestants. At that time Brazilian population was little more than 190 million people. The *Congregação Cristã no Brasil*, that presented a faster growth in the first years, counts now with almost 2.3 million people. See http://biblioteca.ibge.gov.br/visualizacao/periodicos/94/cd_2010_religiao_deficiencia.pdf

²⁸ Freston, “Protestantes e Política no Brasil,” 70.

Pará. They did this seven months, when their teaching of the baptism with the Holy Spirit caused a schism in the congregation. The *Assemblies of God*, initially called *Missão de Fé Apostólica* (Mission of Apostolic Faith), began after that division with nineteen people. For two decades, the Pentecostal mission had strong connections with the Swedish Pentecostal group and secondarily with a Swedish community in the United States. In 1930 the headquarters of the *Assembléias de Deus* moved to Rio de Janeiro, at that time the capital of Brazil, and became an autonomous church. It was Lewi Pathrus, with his congregational view, who influenced the Swedish Mission to give all its Brazilian properties to the Brazilian church.²⁹

Given the strong leadership model adopted by the church, political discussions are frequent in national organization. Today, after a division in 1989, there are two “conventions” of the *Assembléias de Deus* in Brazil, one with its headquarters in Rio de Janeiro (*Madureira*) and the other in *Belém*. The “National convention of the Assemblies of God of *Madureira*” originated out of a conflict of a leader in Rio de Janeiro, Paulo Macalão, with Swedish missionaries. At that time the *Madureira* Convention represented a third of the national church.³⁰ One of the reasons for that division seems to be the fact that the *Madureira* group was aligned with some aspects with Neopentecostal practices. In 1990 pastors of that Convention became allied to Edir Macedo, leader of the largest Neopentecostal church in Brazil, the “Universal Church of the Kingdom of God,” in the process of creating a National Convention of Brazilian Pastors.³¹

The humble beginnings of Pentecostalism in Brazil gave place to a rapid growth in almost every state of the country. In a few decades, those two groups could be counted among the most numerous Protestant denominations. By contrast, traditional Protestants churches have shown

²⁹ Freston, “Protestantes e Política no Brasil,” 71.

³⁰ Matos, “O Movimento Pentecostal,” 42–43.

³¹ David Allen Bledsoe, *Movimento Neopentecostal Brasileiro: Um Estudo de Caso* (São Paulo: Hagnos, 2012), 57–58.

small numerical growth or even decrease in number of members.³² Zwinglio Dias, a Presbyterian pastor and University professor, reflecting on the one hundred years of Pentecostalism in Brazil, pointed out one of the reasons why that movement had such a powerful impact in the field of Brazilian Religion. In the first two decades of their existence, the two Pentecostal denominations (*Assembleia de Deus* and *Congregação Cristã no Brasil*) became isolated and attracted little negative reaction, being ignored by the Roman Catholic Church and historical Protestantism as a religion of primitive and ignorant people. During this time both denominations expanded in the Northeast and Southeast of the country (especially *São Paulo* and *Rio de Janeiro*) building a specific religious *ethos* among people socially disenfranchised, speaking a language that was facing their concerns of daily life. Quoting the sociologist Alexandre C. de Souza, Dias affirms: “Pentecostalism doctrinally assimilated social exclusion.”³³ If that can be said about classical Pentecostalism in Brazil, it is no less true regarding the movement begun in the 1970s classified as “Neopentecostalism,” with its triad “healing, exorcism, and prosperity,” as will be discussed later in this study.

Gerson Moraes, in his study of Neopentecostalism in Brazil (which he considers closer to Pentecostalism than the majority of scholars do), suggests that a strong distinction between Pentecostalism and traditional Protestant Churches can be explained by the difference between two concepts: “resistance” and “re-existence.” For him historical Protestantism has shown during its history an attitude of “resistance” to changes in the face of the characteristics of Brazilian

³² Allan Anderson et al wrote in 2010: “Within the past thirty years there has been an estimated 700 percent increase in the number of Pentecostal believers, who represent about a quarter of the world’s Christian population and two-thirds of all Protestants.” Anderson et al, *Studying Global Pentecostalism*, 2.

³³ Zwinglio M. Dias, “Um Século de Religiosidade Pentecostal: Algumas notas sobre a Irupção, Problemas e Desafios do Fenômeno Pentecostal” *Horizonte* 9, no. 22 (July-Sept. 2011): 378.

religiosity, as sentimentalism, intuition, and magical thinking related to religiosity.³⁴ Classical Protestantism, argues Moraes, has historically opposed a Brazilian religious ethos and understood as its mission to change that ethos. Religious culture was seen as a threat that should be faced and transformed. On the other hand, Pentecostalism lives a stage of “re-existence,” which means it is marked by the capacity of re-signification in face of cultural challenges. Such flexibility allows Pentecostals to be creative facing a culture of sentimentalism and magical thinking in the predominant religious culture.³⁵

Moraes’ distinction of “resistance” and “re-existence” may be helpful to partially explain Pentecostal growth in relation to what happens in historical Protestantism. There are certainly other factors that could be considered. Furthermore, much of what he proposes to be happening in Pentecostalism can be witnessed much more in Neopentecostal churches than in classical Pentecostalism. As will be considered later, one of the main characteristics of Neopentecostalism is its rapid adaptation to cultural changes, use of resources of modernity and a language that is modeled by society.

The Metaphor of the Three Waves

In his doctoral dissertation on Sociology, Paul Freston³⁶ studied Protestant participation in political life of Brazil in last decades of the twentieth century. His study became very influential

³⁴ Moraes understands “Brazilian religiosity” as a typical “mysticism of Brazilian people, born by influence of African and native religiosities, that have been present in the organization of Brazilian society since colonization. It left a legacy that affected not only Roman Catholicism, producing Brazilian popular Catholicism, as it was also of key importance to the acceptance of Pentecostalism, that frequently appeals to a magic thinking to answer its inquiries.” (Moraes, “Neopentecostalismo: Um Conceito Obstáculo,” 10)

³⁵ Moraes, “Neopentecostalismo: Um Conceito Obstáculo,” 12. In an acute analysis of Brazilian history in the last two centuries and the development of Protestantism and Pentecostalism in Brazil, Leonildo S. Campos comes to a similar conclusion of Gerson Moraes, pointing to the Pentecostals’ ability to assimilate Brazilian popular culture and using that in their preaching and witness. See: Leonildo S. Campos, “Pentecostalismo e Protestantismo ‘Histórico’ no Brasil: um Século de Conflitos, Assimilação e Mudanças,” *Horizonte* 9, no. 22 (July-Sept. 2011): 504–33.

³⁶ Freston, “Protestantes e Política no Brasil.”

for the research of Brazilian Protestantism and particularly Pentecostalism. He promoted the typology of the three waves to explain Pentecostalism in Brazil.³⁷ A unique feature in his work is the recognition of the interference that a researcher has on the object of study. He points out how the mass communications companies (“media”) are sometimes seen as a trustworthy source to understand Pentecostalism, at the same time that the Pentecostals’ declarations are seen with suspicion, and in need of a careful examination.³⁸

Three different groups are assessed by Freston to understand how studies about Pentecostalism are influenced by biased presuppositions. Firstly, he directs his criticism against the Media, which tends to picture Pentecostalism as being fanatical, misleading and active only among poor and non-critical people.³⁹ The second group that is seen as a non-objective evaluator of Pentecostalism is the Roman Catholic Church, which used to be almost the official Denomination in Brazil and highly influential in politics and by establishing social mores, and which is losing large numbers of people to Pentecostalism.⁴⁰ The third group that has given special attention to Pentecostalism and deserves a critical assessment, according to Freston, is the Academy, i.e., scientific studies mainly in Sociology of Religion. Pentecostals are usually presented in negative tones, as “fundamentalists,” retrogrades and extremely conservative in politics.⁴¹

³⁷ It may be noted that a metaphor of waves was used before Freston by David Martin to explain the history of Protestantism. He argued that Protestantism could be studied according to three waves: Puritanism, Methodism, and Pentecostalism. (Gerson Moraes, “Força Midiática,” 86)

³⁸ Freston, “Protestantes e Política no Brasil,” 6.

³⁹ One factor that has to be in mind, according to Freston is the fact that Edir Macedo, leader of the largest Neopentecostal Church in Brazil (The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God – Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus – IURD), bought a television channel some years ago (“Record”), which is challenging the hegemonic TV channels in Brazil.

⁴⁰ Roman Catholic descriptions of or statements about Pentecostalism usually picture that movement as consisting of “sects” that lead humble people into error or even that those Denominations have connections with North-American agencies (such as the CIA!).

⁴¹ Freston, “Protestantes e Política no Brasil,” 16.

Referring to the negative evaluation Pentecostalism usually receives, Freston lists three reasons: because it is popular (with almost no academic defenses), protestant (and in this way in a collision route with Brazilian culture shaped by Roman Catholicism), and because it works with a pluralist stance, which questions the syncretistic Brazilian religious tradition.⁴²

Freston's main contribution to the current study is his typology of three waves of implantation of Pentecostalism in Brazil. In his own words:

Brazilian Pentecostalism may be understood as the history of three waves of implantation of the churches. The first wave is the decade of 1910, with the arrival of the *Congregação Cristã* (Christian Congregation - 1910) and of *Assembléia de Deus* (Assemblies of God - 1911). These two churches had the field for them for 40 years, since their rivals were inexpressive. . . . The second Pentecostal wave comes in the 50s and 60s, when the Pentecostal field suffers a fragmentation, relationship with society is strengthened and three major groups (in the midst of several others, of lesser extent) rise: *Quadrangular* (Foursquare Gospel - 1951), *Brasil para Cristo* (Brazil for Christ - 1955) and *Deus é Amor* (God is Love - 1962). The context of such fragmentation [of Denominations] is the State of São Paulo. The third wave begins in the 70s and is strengthened in the 80s. The main representatives are *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* (The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God – 1977) and the *Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus* (The International Church of God's Grace – 1980). These Denominations bring an innovative actualization in terms of social insertion and opens the field of theological, liturgical, ethical and esthetical possibilities in Pentecostalism.⁴³

Each wave presents a set of components that can help their characterization. As was discussed above, the first wave, with *Assembleia de Deus* and *Congregação Cristã no Brasil* was directly connected to the North-American Pentecostalism, and came as fruit of the work of foreign missionaries. There was a strong emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the evidence of speaking in tongues, and also a stress on premillennarian eschatology and on evangelism. Despite their fast growth, for many years they were almost ignored in the Brazilian

⁴² Freston, "Protestantes e Política no Brasil," 19–20.

⁴³ Freston, "Protestantes e Política no Brasil," 66.

Protestant context.⁴⁴

The second wave came during a time of intense fragmentation of the Pentecostal field. The denominations under this classification were still connected to the classical Pentecostalism, but with a special emphasis on spiritual healing. This second wave coincided with the growth of urbanization in Brazil and rapid development of large cities. The beginning is marked by the arrival of the *Igreja do Evangelho Quadrangular* (The Foursquare Gospel Church) with new methods of evangelization, using modern mass media communications. At this time there was an increasing nationalization of Brazilian Pentecostalism, especially with the contribution of two other Denominations, *Brasil para Cristo* and *Deus é Amor*. The Church of the Foursquare Gospel had roots in the United States, but the other two were created by direct initiative of Brazilian preachers.⁴⁵

The third wave, here named as the “Neopentecostals,” came with a characteristic stress on prosperity theology. The denominations of this kind were pioneers of a middle class Pentecostalism, and invested strongly in mass media. Freston correctly argues that the third wave began in a time when Brazil was under a military dictatorship and a time of intense modernization especially in the area of mass communications. Besides, during that time urbanization encompassed two-thirds of the Brazilian population, with a movement of people to cities motivated by the “economic miracle,” as it was known during the 1970s. Now, in the 1980s, redemocratization of the country and depressed economy gave to Neopentecostalism an

⁴⁴ An evidence of the little attention received by Pentecostalism in its first decades was given by a study about Brazilian Protestantism in 1931. The *Assembléias de Deus* received only few lines in that report and the *Congregação Cristã no Brasil* was not even mentioned, despite the fact that at that time Pentecostals were already ten percent of the evangelical community in the country. See Alderi Souza de Matos, “O Movimento Pentecostal: Reflexões a Propósito do seu Primeiro Centenário,” *Fides Reformata* 11, no. 2 (2006): 39.

⁴⁵ Mattos, “Movimento Pentecostal,” 38–39.

environment in which its message of individual prosperity had strong effect.⁴⁶

The history of Neopentecostalism in Brazil witnesses the importance of the *Igreja de Nova Vida* (Church of New Life), founded by Canadian “bishop” Robert McAllister, who separated from the Assemblies of God in 1960 and was pioneer in a Pentecostalism for the middle class. Beyond large investments in mass media, that Church presented a less moralistic kind of Pentecostalism, very well adapted to a new target. It was also the first Pentecostal church in Brazil to adopt episcopacy. Perhaps the most important contribution of the *Igreja da Nova Vida* was training the future leaders of the largest Neopentecostal denominations, Edir Macedo (future founder of the *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus*) and Romildo R. Soares (of the ICGG).⁴⁷

Ricardo Mariano, a sociologist dedicated to the study of Pentecostalism and Brazilian Neopentecostalism, agrees with Freston’s typology and points out some other important characteristics that identify each of the waves. Those Denominations of the first wave (denominated by Mariano as “Classical Pentecostalism”) presented from the beginning a strong aversion to Roman Catholicism, a separation (almost asceticism) from the world and an emphasis on speaking in tongues. The second wave (Mariano’s “Neoclassical Pentecostalism”) had a theological shift to an emphasis on divine healing (not so much speaking in tongues, without ignoring that), an intense use of radio broadcasting, and an itinerant evangelism using tent meetings. The third wave (“Neopentecostal”) tended to abandon the attitude of avoidance of engagement with society and societal issues, having a strong tendency of accommodation to the world, participation in national politics, and an intense use of mass media. Theologically, the third wave stressed prosperity theology and spiritual warfare (where the devil was characterized

⁴⁶ Freston, “Protestantes e Política no Brasil,” 66.

⁴⁷ Mattos, “Movimento Pentecostal,” 39.

as acting in AfroBrazilian cults).⁴⁸

It is important to observe that Freston's division of Pentecostalism has not attained unanimous approval among scholars. Paulo Siepierski, for instance, a Baptist theologian and historian, maintains that the second wave is much closer to the first wave than Freston's typology may suggest. For him, the "second wave is nothing more than an institutional unfolding of classical Pentecostalism."⁴⁹ Siepierski considers the *Igreja do Evangelho Quadrangular* [Four-square Gospel] as part of classical Pentecostalism or, as he prefers, "Neoclassic Pentecostalism." But he makes an important observation:

Eschatology was at the core of the Pentecostal message. It was clear for the first followers of Pentecostalism that baptism of the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues, was an empowerment in order to witness the good news . . . hastening Jesus' return as judge and eschatological King to judge and to reign over the nations. The *Igreja do Evangelho Quadrangular* was faithful to that vision when it arrived in Brazil. . . . but healing happened to become central. . . . Such an emphasis reflected a decline in the eschatological expectation that used to promote a deep devaluation of this world, strong sectarianism, and rigorous asceticism.⁵⁰

It is possible to note that the original emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in connection with eschatology appears to receive less and less emphasis as the second and especially the third wave develop. What was born as an evangelistic and eschatological movement, came to develop into strongly institutionalized organizations in the third wave much more interested in addressing current problems people face in their daily life (especially in terms of health and finances). The Pre-millennarian vision seems to lose its importance, giving place to a view that in several ways is closer to a post-millennarian view of eschatology.

Ricardo Bitun, a sociologist and author of several studies in Pentecostalism and Neopentecostalism, supports the view that an important shift may be identified when one

⁴⁸ Mariano, "Neopentecostais e a teologia da prosperidade," 25–26.

⁴⁹ Siepierski, "Pós-pentecostalismo e política no Brasil," 50.

⁵⁰ Siepierski, "Pós-pentecostalismo e política no Brasil," 43.

compares classical forms of Pentecostalism with Neopentecostalism. He proposes that the irruption and rapid growth of the third wave in Brazil should be understood in connection to the transition from a traditional society to the modern society, with emphasis on the competitiveness of the marketplace.⁵¹ Neopentecostal churches developed a theology that could assess and respond to challenges people face in their daily life in terms of health, employment, family harmony, poverty, etc. For Bitun, Neopentecostal leaders took the sacred to outside and brought the profane inside. Two theological positions—Prosperity Theology and the concept of Spiritual Battle—were (and are) key for the worldview Neopentecostalism proposes.⁵² Bitun affirms that for Neopentecostalism, at least in practical terms, there was an anticipation of the Christian parousia. He argues that the traditional future focus in the eschatology of classical Pentecostalism (and Protestantism as a whole) gave place to the expectation of prosperity and victory against evil forces and its consequences here and now.⁵³

Neopentecostalism: A Concept in Discussion

Generally speaking, scholars that assess the field of Pentecostalism and Neopentecostalism from the standpoint of sociological studies tend to consider Neopentecostalism as a development of classical Pentecostalism, even recognizing significant differences between this third wave compared to the first and second waves. On the other hand, it can be noted that theologians have more difficulty to harmonize Neopentecostal denominations with classical forms of

⁵¹ Ricardo Bitun, “Transformações no campo religioso pentecostal brasileiro: a antecipação da parúsia crista,” *Ciências da Religião: História e Sociedade* 6, no. 2 (2008): 203–28.

⁵² Those two ideas will be discussed in depth in chapter three of this dissertation.

⁵³ Bitun, “Transformações no campo religioso,” 216–17.

Pentecostalism.⁵⁴

Gerson Moraes, who wrote his doctoral dissertation about the ICGG, is critical of a systematization of the Pentecostal and Neopentecostal phenomenon. He calls the attention to the fact that the Brazilian religious field is undergoing constant mutation, with the result that the Denominations classified in the three waves coexist and share experiences, practices, rites, doctrines and habits.⁵⁵ He argues:

[I]t is possible to see the coexistence of the three Pentecostal waves in time and space. . . . Denominations coming from the first, second and third waves share experiences, liturgical and doctrinal practices. . . . As the anthropologist Ronaldo Almeida used to say, ‘the wave breaks in several directions’. The Pentecostal waves mix and it is impossible to say, in our days, what is exclusive to each one of them.⁵⁶

Given that mobility in Pentecostalism, and the constant transit between different models of Pentecostalism, Gerson Moraes prefers to use the term “transpentecostalism” instead of “Neopentecostalism” to refer to the third wave, and more specifically to the ICGG.⁵⁷

Paulo Siepierski also finds the term “Neopentecostalism” inadequate, for different reasons than Gerson Moraes. Siepierski argues that those third wave Denominations do not deserve the prefix “neo,” which usually expresses some continuity and not a rupture. For him, “Neopentecostalism” is a more appropriate term to designate charismatic renewal in Roman

⁵⁴ An important resource to understand the Neopentecostal movement is a book by Leonildo S. Campos, “*Templo, Teatro e Mercado*” (Temple, Theater, and Market), which is an examination of the largest Neopentecostal church in Brazil, the “Universal Church of the Kingdom of God” (*Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus – IURD*).

⁵⁵ Gerson Moraes, “Neopentecostalismo – um Conceito Obstáculo,” 4, 13.

⁵⁶ Moraes, “Neopentecostalismo – um Conceito Obstáculo,” 16–17.

⁵⁷ Moraes, “Neopentecostalismo – um Conceito Obstáculo,” 18. He uses the concept of “transmedia” as a model. People use different media—internet, TV, etc.—that do not nullify each other, but they use each other even as a reinforcement. In this sense, the ICGG presents characteristics coming from the classical Pentecostalism, as divine healing, for instance. But it has peculiarities, as an emphatic fight against AfroBrazilian cults, a strong emphasis on rituals of exorcism and spiritual warfare as a trademark!

Catholicism and historical Protestant Denominations.⁵⁸ He suggests the term “post-Pentecostalism” to refer to the third wave movement. Using the studies of Ricardo Mariano, another scholar dedicated to Pentecostal studies, he maintains that the most significant differences posed by Neopentecostalism are the emphases on spiritual warfare and prosperity theology. Besides, the Neopentecostal Denominations tend to be less strict in terms of external signs of sanctity, a strong characteristic of classical Pentecostalism. Referring to the ethical issue, Siepierski shows that the elimination of those external signs of sanctity is a consequence of the necessary accommodation to society imposed by prosperity theology and distances these Neopentecostal denominations from previous forms of Pentecostalism to the point that they no longer can be considered Pentecostals, but “post-Pentecostals.” Their distinguishing marks include the use of popular forms of religiosity, including the use of terms belonging to Roman Catholic and AfroBrazilian cults, and also the investment in commercial structures, and even the use of images related with consumerism and mass communications.⁵⁹

Siepierski is one scholar among many others who consider “Post-pentecostalism” as something radically different in the religious field. Speaking specially about the IURD, some consider it as a new religion, which should not even be considered Protestant or Pentecostal. In his evaluation of Post-pentecostalism Siepierski points that some of the key elements in Pentecostalism—Christocentricity, Biblicism and strong connection between faith and ethics—are somehow absent in Post-pentecostalism. For him, “Post-pentecostalism is genealogically Protestant, but not theologically. And that has deep sociological implications.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Paulo Siepierski, “Pós-Pentecostalismo e Política no Brasil,” 51. It is significant that in North-American literature, as in Siepierski suggestions, “Neopentecostal” normally refers to Charismatic renewal in historic Protestant Denominations. See, for instance: Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 52–54.

⁵⁹ Siepierski, “Pós-Pentecostalismo,” 51.

⁶⁰ Siepierski, “Pós-Pentecostalismo,” 52.

It has to be noted that several aspects that Siepierski attributes to (what he calls) Post-Pentecostalism apply directly to the “Universal Church of the Kingdom of God.”⁶¹ Some of those characteristics do not seem to apply to the ICGG. This is one of the challenges this dissertation faces, that is, to show that the label “Neopentecostalism” (or Post-Pentecostalism, or any other title that may be used) is a generalization that should be used with some restrictions when applied to all of those denominations usually considered. Each of those denominations has specific peculiarities, some of them closer to the classical Pentecostalism and others distancing themselves from that origin.

The sociologist Ricardo Mariano associates Neopentecostalism directly with prosperity theology, as a change in the original doctrine and values of Pentecostalism, in a sense that it happens to “put an end to the old Pentecostal asceticism” and “has tarnished the public image of this religious group.”⁶²

Despite the fact that most studies about Neopentecostalism reflect a negative point of view, some scholars consider the movement in a more positive way. Rangel de O. Medeiros wrote his dissertation on the discourse of leading representatives of Neopentecostalism.⁶³ He began to ask if those Denominations are really based on the prosperity theology or if there are several other elements that can be identified in their discourse. After his research, using bibliography and field research as well, Medeiros came to the conviction that those groups are not “supermarkets of faith,” as usually said in academic studies, but that they actually intend “to offer a complete

⁶¹ Hereafter designed as IURD (“Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus”) considered the first and largest Neopentecostal denomination in Brazil.

⁶² Mariano, “Neopentecostais e a teologia da prosperidade,” 24.

⁶³ He dedicates most of his research to the IURD, but also to some extent to the ICGG.

experience in life and religion.”⁶⁴

Medeiros criticizes some assessments made of Neopentecostalism that consider the believers as exploited victims or as lacking a real religious experience, charging that they are in those churches only to achieve the resolution for immediate problems (in health, money, etc.). He agrees with other scholars that there are elements of spectacle and the selling of religious goods, but he identifies and analyses other themes in the discourse that inform and shape the religious content and life (for instance, themes as family, salvation, search for a life in the Spirit, healing, affective life, resolution of emotional problems, among other subjects).⁶⁵ Medeiros maintains that it is possible to identify that “certain characteristics which have been always dear to traditional Pentecostalism, for example, reading of Scripture, the Holy Spirit and his manifestations simply are not lacking or and have not lost their importance, but they have been transformed.”⁶⁶ The same can be said, according to Medeiros, about moral patterns. It may be perceived, on the one hand, that a strict control on behavior as practiced in Pentecostal churches of the first wave is no longer adopted by IURD and ICGG. On the other hand, Medeiros argues, it doesn’t mean that there are no guidelines to be followed by members; what distinguishes Neopentecostal Denominations is, according to him, the way those guidelines are taught.⁶⁷

Given the reasons mentioned above, Medeiros claims Neopentecostal churches should be considered as legitimate representative of Pentecostalism. He uses the classical study of Hollenweger as a basic argument, according to which a group should be considered Pentecostal

⁶⁴ Rangel de Oliveira Medeiros, “Além Do Dinheiro e Dos Demônios: O Neopentecostalismo no Brasil e na Holanda.” (PhD diss., Federal University of São Carlos, 2011): 5. Beyond his examination of *IURD* in Florianopolis, capital of one Brazilian state, Medeiros also did part of the research in Amsterdam, Holland, where *IURD* has a local congregation.

⁶⁵ Medeiros, “Além Do Dinheiro e Dos Demônios,” 12.

⁶⁶ Medeiros, “Além Do Dinheiro e Dos Demônios,” 22.

⁶⁷ Medeiros, “Além Do Dinheiro e Dos Demônios,” 23.

if it profess at least two basic characteristics: (1) an initial baptism , and (2) the baptism of the Holy Spirit, being subsequent to the first and being usually (but not necessarily) associated with speaking in tongues. Medeiros maintains that this can be identified in the discourse of IURD and ICGG.⁶⁸

Allan Anderson, a scholar dedicated to the study of global Pentecostalism, underlines the difficulty of systematizing the subject, given the flexibility with which the term “Pentecostal” has been applied to distinct groups. He employs the concept of “family resemblance” to make a common point regarding the diversity of Pentecostal groups:

Wittgenstein argued that family resemblance does not mean that there is something that all have in common but that all have certain similarities and relations to each other. Describing or defining something must allow for “blurred edges,” so an imprecise definition can still be meaningful. Defining Pentecostalism may be considered in this way. The term itself is one with shortcomings but despite its inadequacy refers to churches with a family resemblance that emphasize the working of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹

As we will see in the next chapters of this study, even that emphasis can be questioned when one analyses the teaching presented by Neopentecostalism.

The observations above show the complexity of categorizing the Denominations usually considered Neopentecostals. That is even more complex considering the differences between the Denominations, for instance the IURD and the ICGG.

⁶⁸ Medeiros, “Além Do Dinheiro e Dos Demônios,” 25–26.

⁶⁹ Anderson, *Studying Global Pentecostalism*, 15.

CHAPTER THREE

THE INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF GOD'S GRACE: HISTORY AND DOCTRINES

Missionary R. R. Soares: Founder and Leader of the ICGG

Joseane Cabral da Silva, a sociologist who did an extensive study about the ICGG, concluded that “the discourse produced by the ICGG is based, fundamentally on the religious path of R. R. Soares.”¹ If one examines written and visual material produced by the Church he will probably agree with Silva that it is only possible to understand the ICGG by understanding the centrality of its leader. That is actually a characteristic that could be observed in Neopentecostalism in general, that the leader’s personal charisma legitimizes the message of the church.

Joseane Silva reflects on the fact that Soares is an “innate communicator.” Using Max Weber’s conclusions on charismatic leadership, she comments that such a communication skill is considered as a special anointment for his ministry, which sets him apart from others.

My understanding of such singularity is that it does not happen by chance. It symbolically delimits the distinction, in hierarchical and linguistic terms, between the Missionary [as Soares is known] and his followers, driving to the recognition of R. R. Soares as bearer of a special anointing. That is a way to signal to the followers and other people in leadership in ICGG about who actually has the charisma.²

Romildo Ribeiro Soares was born in December 6, 1947 in Muniz Freire, a small town in the State of *Espírito Santo*, in the central eastern region of Brazil. He was born in a humble family, with three brothers. His mother, Altamira Areias Soares, had a Roman Catholic origin,

¹ Joseane C. da Silva, “Mídia e Carisma na trajetória de Romildo Ribeiro Soares,” lecture, 11th Latin-American Congress of Religion and Ethnicity, Methodist University of São Paulo, July, 2006, accessed December 15, 2012, [http://www.jacareacademico.com/Texto% 206_ Mídia %20e%20carisma_Joseane.pdf](http://www.jacareacademico.com/Texto%206_Midia%20e%20carisma_Joseane.pdf).1.

² Silva, “Mídia e Carisma,” 6.

and his father, Atair Ribeiro Soares, for some time participated in Baptist and Presbyterian churches. Soares had to begin to work very early, learning the trade of shoemaker.

Soares, in an interview with a religious magazine, said that he became a Christian when he was six years old. He tells: “My mother was Roman Catholic and my father was a lapsed Presbyterian. I was the first [to become a real believer], and after me all the others came. I am Presbyterian by origin, Baptist in doctrine and Pentecostal by conviction.”³

Gerson Moraes, in his doctoral dissertation on the media strength of the ICGG, describes the event to which Soares refers as his conversion. That happened in 1953, when his family was invited to attend a Service of thanksgiving for the anniversary of the Presbyterian Church in Muniz Freire, whose temple was located nearby Soares’ house. His parents asked the children to represent the family. On that occasion, Soares had his first contact with Protestantism and, according to him, had his conversion experience that evening. Since that occasion, Soares began to participate in a Baptist church that had been founded by his grandfather.⁴

In 1958, during the time he was attending the Baptist church, Soares had his first contact with a TV set. The ICGG homepage tells the story:

When he was a child, visiting a neighboring city, he saw for the first time a TV set in a Department store. He saw a crowd in front of the showcase of the store, fascinated by what they were watching on that screen. Then he prayed: “Nobody is using this new invention to speak about the Lord, my God. Give me the means and opportunities and I will be in that screen speaking about your love.”⁵

In 1964, when he was sixteen years old, Soares moved to Rio de Janeiro with one of his brothers, working there selling clothes. For some years, according to his account, he left the church. In 1968 he went to a Service in the *Igreja Pentecostal de Nova Vida* (New Life

³ The interview was published in the religious magazine, *Eclésia* in July (Patriota, *Show da Fé*, 191).

⁴ Moraes, “A Força Midiática,” 77.

⁵ <http://www.ongrace.com/portal/?historia=r-r-soares> accessed January 26, 2014.

Pentecostal Church).⁶ In that place he began to see healings and exorcisms.⁷ That experience shaped the desire to be a pastor. In an interview with a national magazine, Soares told about another experience that was crucial to his decision to be a preacher and healer:

One day, my aunt called me by phone and asked me to visit a cousin in *Espírito Santo* who was very sick in a hospital. I went there with a friend from the church. He was really very sick. We closed our eyes and began to pray. Other people there saw that and asked us to pray for them. I began to see the demons manifesting themselves in those people and we expelled them in that same time. After some days my aunt told me that all those people were healed and out of the hospital. Then I began a church with that friend. It did not work. Then I left that church and founded the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God.⁸

Soares claims he had to abandon his dream of becoming a medical doctor in order to preach the gospel. According to the Church's homepage, in 1968 Soares had a scholarship to study Medicine in Moscow, Russia.⁹ It was probably at this time that he decided to present himself as R. R. Soares.¹⁰

In 1973, Soares married Magdalena Bezerra Ribeiro Soares, sister of Edir Macedo, future leader of the IURD, in the "New Life Pentecostal Church." Soares has five children.¹¹ After his

⁶ That Church was founded by Robert McAlister, a Canadian citizen, in 1960 in Rio de Janeiro. The Church exists even today and offers a Theology course. McAlister emphasized physical healing and spiritual liberation. He published several books mainly about demonology. Other emphasis present in his preaching and in books is offerings. He was a pioneer in charismatic movement for middle class people. McAlister broke his communion with the Assemblies of God in order to elaborate a less legalistic Pentecostalism.

⁷ *Show da Fé*, 69, April 2005, 46 apud Joseane Silva, 14.

⁸ *Veja* 36/39 edition 1822, October 1, 2003, 15.

⁹ <http://www.ongrace.com/portal/?historia=r-r-soares>, accessed January 26, 2014. In his TV program, "*Show da Fé*" on March 28, 2014 Soares was exposing 1 Tim. 1:5, stressing the need to obey God's commands, by which He blesses the believer, and that such obedience should take place even if it brings trouble to the person's life. He then told how God called him to be a preacher when he was up to go to Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow.

¹⁰ Soares told the reason why he chose to present himself in such a way: "I was attending worship in a Church in *Rio de Janeiro* when a pastor called: 'Romildo, would you come here, please?' I immediately stood when I saw a young man standing [the one who the pastor was actually calling]. And I thought: 'Oh, Jesus! I wonder if I become a pastor and that young man becomes a pastor as well. Both of us will be Pastor Romildo. I fear that someday he does something wrong and then people begin to say: 'Pastor Romildo did that.' . . . Then I remembered that North-Americans like to use the initials in their names and I decided to use R. R. Soares." (*Veja* 1822, October 1, 2003), 11.

¹¹ Moraes, "A Força Midiática," 81n 23.

marriage, in 1974 he was invited to attend another Pentecostal Church, “*Casa da Bênção*” (House of Blessing)¹² where he was offered the opportunity to preach. One year after that, on April 13, 1975, he and Edir Macedo, his brother-in-law, were ordained to the pastoral ministry by Cecilio Fernandes, leader of the *Casa da Bênção*.¹³

After some time as a member of the *Casa da Bênção*, Soares founded with Edir Macedo, Roberto A. Lopes and the brothers Samuel and Fidelis Coutinho, the “*Cruzada do Caminho Eterno*” (Crusade of Eternal Path), also known as “*Salão da Fé*” (Hall of Faith). Disagreements with the Coutinho brothers caused Macedo and Soares to establish the IURD on July 9, 1977.

In an interview with a national magazine, Soares told his and Macedo’s role in the beginning of IURD:

He was my assistant. I consecrated him as a pastor. In the 80s he had grown very much and I decided to leave the church to him. Once again I left. He was bright and very capable. From that work that we began, Macedo and others, several churches came to exist.¹⁴

Another version of the split maintains that there was a disagreement between Soares and Macedo motivated by financial issues, specifically related to a significant investment to rent a place to the meetings of the church. On July 8, 1980 there was a vote to decide the issue and Macedo’s position won the backing of the majority. According to Moraes, Soares received financial compensation to leave the IURD and then he founded the ICGG.¹⁵

It is important to note that for Soares the beginning of his ministry is identified neither with the foundation of the ICGG, nor with the IURD, but with his consecration in 1975 in the *Casa da*

¹² The first worship Service of “*Casa da Bênção*” was conducted in June 9, 1964, in Belo Horizonte. That Church had an Arminian theology of conversion, accepted the Pentecostal doctrine of Holy Spirit baptism, followed by speaking in tongues. It is usually classified among the 2nd wave group of Pentecostalism, but some scholars include it in the 3rd wave. (Patriota, *O Show da fé*, 193n 191).

¹³ Silva, “*Mídia e Carisma*,” 16.

¹⁴ *Veja*, October 1, 2003, 15.

¹⁵ Moraes, “*A Força Midiática*,” 82, 84.

Bênção. Two specific experiences are important to understand Soares' ministry. One happened in 1968 when he read a book written by T. L. Osborn ("*Curai enfermos, expulsai demônios*"—Heal the Sick, Expel Demons). The second experience occurred in 1984, when Soares read the book "*O nome de Jesus*" (The Name of Jesus), by Kenneth Hagin. From reading this work, Soares understood, particularly from an explanation of John 14:13, that instead of "beseeching," prayer means "demanding, determining." Since then, for Soares a prayer of faith should demand and not merely request. In other words, when confronted by problems in daily life, the believer should substitute the contrite and humble petition of Protestants for an attitude of boldness and determination.¹⁶

In a very significant statement, Soares himself explains the importance of reading Hagin's book:

I finished reading it on December 2, 1984. Since then I never took any pills, with the one single exception of an antacid medicine, fifteen days after, given a stomach problem, since I still had no full understanding of the message of real faith. What happened to my faith? Did it change? No, my faith did not change, but the way to use it changed; my understanding changed. During the reading of that book, two Bible verses were illuminated for me. For the first time I understood their meaning . . . John 14:13 and Mark 11:23. From that point my ministry had a 180-degree turn.¹⁷

That statement presents an important point about the way Soares understands the role of faith. An unanswered prayer for healing does not mean that the person has no faith, but that she has to take a further step, which is the understanding of the importance of determination in prayer. According to Joseane Silva, what Soares learned reading Osborn's and Hagin's books, the determination in prayer (or positive confession), came to be the most important characteristic of the ICGG, even becoming a strong distinction compared to the IURD, which is known much

¹⁶ Silva, "Mídia e Carisma," 14–18. That position can be witnessed in every program "Show da Fé," during prayers for the sick, for instance. Soares expression "I'm not asking, I'm actually demanding" is usually targeted to the demons that cause, according to him, sickness, financial and family problems. But it should be noted that it happens in prayers!

¹⁷ Soares, *Como tomar posse da bênção*, RJ, Graça, 2004, 15–16 apud Patriota, 197.

more by her emphasis on exorcism.¹⁸ That importance can be seen in a declaration at the ICGG home-page:

The book “Heal the sick, expel demons,” by the North-American T. L. Osborn, was a watershed in the ministerial life of R. R. Soares. After that reading, the Missionary understood — and began to practice — the doctrine of determination. From it the church understands that she should not beg God’s blessings, but claim them, given the fact that they had already been given to the whole humankind through the work Jesus accomplished on the cross.¹⁹

Soares’ importance for the identity of the ICGG should not be underestimated. The actual witness that the ICGG has to give is constituted by his writings, preaching, and teaching. As noted above, that is true for all Neopentecostal leaders in general. The key role of the leader in Neopentecostal churches has been noted by several scholars. Patriota calls the attention to the concept of “starlet”²⁰ in the society of the spectacle. She refers to the religious leader who is always exposed to be seen as an identifying mark of the church. That is true if one considers the three main Neopentecostal Brazilian churches.²¹ Patriota points out how the high exposure of R. R. Soares serves as a barrier to some possible rivalry that could be raised within the denomination. All other pastors work to promote the leader. The “starlet” concept helps to understand other two aspects of the way the leader is seen in Neopentecostalism: “as an unquestionable and incontestable leader and as a show-man.”²²

¹⁸ Silva, “Mídia e Carisma,” 15.

¹⁹ http://www.ongrace.com/portal/?page_id=7, accessed January 26, 2014.

²⁰ Karla Patriota uses the Portuguese term “vedete,” which is a reference to an artist who usually receives great roles in film or theater, or an artist who has a great reputation in varieties in the music-hall.

²¹ Besides the ICGG (R. R. Soares) and IURD (Edir Macedo), the chronologically third (*Igreja Mundial do Poder de Deus* – World Church of God’s Power) has also a strong leader — Waldemiro Santiago — formerly a pastor in IURD. Those three men occupy almost all the time of broadcasting in their respective churches.

²² Patriota, “Show da Fé,” 292–93. This high character attributed to the leader can be seen, for instance, in the reaction of some people when such leaders are questioned and accused. Then it is common to hear that one is not supposed to attack the Lord’s anointed servant!

Theological Emphases of the ICGG

The ICGG presents itself as a Christian denomination, as part of Protestantism and more specifically, of Pentecostalism. In its public preaching (in the *Show da Fé* TV program, for instance), in publications (the monthly magazine, *Show da Fé*), and in personal conversations and interview with members of that church its nature as part of Christianity becomes evident. The doctrines of Trinity, substitutive satisfaction for sin by Christ's work, and faith as the means to receive forgiveness and life are publicly confessed. In this section, we approach some specific features that characterize Pentecostal third wave denominations with special attention to what are emphases in the theology of the ICGG.

In its website the ICGG presents a "Course of Faith" in 12 lessons. The claim is made that the course has changed the form of believing of millions of people. The text declares that those principles were active in the life and ministry of Jesus and the apostles and that was the reason their ministries were successful. R. R. Soares then affirms: "I believe that if we apply the same principles today, the people of God can achieve the same success." And then comes the exhortation: "Strive to study, practice, and follow these 12 lessons. They will surely bless you and make of you a blessing to others."²³

When it comes to the content of the twelve lessons, the outside reader may be disappointed by the lack of a complete doctrinal account of the Church's belief, as encountered in historical Protestant or even Pentecostal denominations' websites. In fact, what can be seen is that the "Course of faith" does not intend to present a full account of what the ICGG believes. There is no article on Creation, Sin, Baptism, Salvation, Eschatology, etc. It instead presents practical aspects of the spirituality of the church with some explicit accents. Given the importance of that

²³ "Faith Course," accessed December 12, 2015, www.ongrace.com/cursofe.

course to understand the fundamental beliefs of the ICGG we summarize the twelve lessons as follows.

1. “Ordaining.” It begins with an exhortation to believers to show self-respect, since they have high value: “(Jesus) would not have paid so much for something of little or no value.” This serves as the basis for the lesson. Quoting John 14:13, “And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do,” the lesson makes its main point, which is extensively explored in Soares’ preaching and teaching:

According to Greek scholars, the word ask is not the correct translation. The word ordain should have been used instead. This is our first lesson. We do not have to ask for a blessing, but rather ordain, demand, command, and take possession of that which according to the Word rightfully belongs to us.²⁴

2. “The five steps to victory.” Based on Mark 11:22–23, Soares deconstructs the saying that “faith moves mountains.” He explains that by posing five steps to victory: (1) “Have faith in God”; (2) “Speak to the mountain”: The believer has to address the problem he is facing, and do that with authority, ordaining the problems to leave his life. “Faith never moved so much as a grain of sand. What moves mountains is the word. But what word? The Word of God? No, our word”; (3) “Do not doubt in your heart”: the believer has to believe that he will certainly receive what he has determined; (4) “Believe that what you say will come to pass”: the believer is to express that “what we have ordained has already begun to happen”; (5) “You will have whatever you say”: this is the step where the Lord acts.²⁵

3. “Our rights to God’s blessings.” Since Jesus has already borne our diseases, argues Soares quoting Matt. 8:17, believers should not ask for blessings, least of all saying, “if it is Your (God’s) will,” but they should simply claim what is theirs by right. That means a life with health

²⁴ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=1

²⁵ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=2

and material prosperity. Since the devil is the promoter of every evil, including illness and poverty, those who believe in God's words should tell Satan that he is no longer in charge of their lives. It is necessary to claim the blessings that are the believer's by right. Otherwise, "If you do not know your rights in Christ, or you know them but do not claim them for your life, you will not be succored . . . I believe this explains why so many suffer infirmities, financial privations or many other difficulties."²⁶

4. "The name of Jesus." Since the name of Jesus is the believer's supreme authority, he needs to use that name in order to "become a conqueror." That means to take a position and to become someone who dominates the situation. After using the name of Jesus against any evil, the believer should believe that the request have already been answered and should live under the certainty that the illness, for instance, no longer exists, even if the symptoms continue. Soares affirms: "Once we have learned that through the Name of Jesus we can ordain whatever we want, we will begin to live the abundant life that the Lord planned for us. We will then take possession of the position that God has said is already ours."²⁷

5. "Prayer." This lesson begins promising to teach "the formula for prayer—prayer that brings solutions even in seemingly hopeless situations." That formula can be found, says the lesson, in Isa. 43:26: "Put me in remembrance; Let us contend together; State your [case], that you may be acquitted." To put God in remembrance means that the believer reminds God of his promises, which actually means to remind himself and to give ear to the word of God. To contend together is call him to come to our aid in our battle, to find a promise he made referent to our situation, pray in the Name of Jesus and "launching ourselves against the enemy, commanding him to get out of our lives, our families, or our properties." Finally, to state the case

²⁶ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=3

²⁷ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=4

means to present our rights before God, declaring “that we will accept no verdict other than that which we determine.”²⁸

6. “Satan’s defeat.” This lesson explains who Satan is, how he entered the world and he still acts, despite the fact he was defeated by Jesus.²⁹

7. “Resist.” The devil is defeated and is restricted in his actions, but continues to attack God’s children not only with temptations, but with infirmities and other evils in daily life. Standing firm in the word and using the name of Jesus, the believer should order the devil to get out of his life and stop tormenting him. At the end of the study, the text presents a clear affirmation of a significant aspect of the teaching of Eschatology, exposing the position adopted by the ICGG: “

He is defeated. His career is almost over. First he was cast out of heaven; during the great tribulation he will be cast from the Earth’s heavenly sphere; during the millennium he will be bound in the bottomless pit for a thousand years, and then thrown into the lake of fire.”³⁰

8. “More than conquerors. “The lesson does not deny the reality of persecution in the life of believers, even though they are in fact victorious, thanks to Christ’s work. However, the same resignation does not apply to “infirmities and all physical, mental or spiritual problems” since “the believer can loudly state that he is free from them and declare he is more than a conqueror.” This needs to be done by the believer himself, since he received from God, because of the work of Christ, the authority once lost to the devil when man sinned. That is an interesting point about the rule of this world, which is exemplified by the words of an unclean spirit to Jesus (according to Luke 4.33–35), when he declared Jesus to be the Holy One of God. Soares explains:

²⁸ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=5

²⁹ The teaching of this lesson will be discussed at length below, under the section “Spiritual warfare.”

³⁰ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=7

Why did he say that? Because he knew that as God, the Lord Jesus had no legal right to act freely here on Earth. The right to rule the Earth had been given to man, but with Adam’s disobedience and sin, he lost this right to Satan (which is why the devil was the prince of this world until the victory of Christ on the Cross of Calvary).³¹

9. “The Word.” This lesson emphasizes that what we say produces practical results in life.

For that reason, a Christian needs to use “positive language” that creates a good “environment in which we will live in the near future.” Based on Mark 11:22–23, “Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says,” the lesson boldly states: “Pay close attention to the last statement of the Lord Jesus in this text: Everything you say will happen. It is clear here that our words can edify or destroy; heal or make sick; bring success or defeat; what we say will happen.”³²

10. “Confession.” This lesson together with the former one exemplify very well what has been called the “positive confession,” one of the main characteristics of Neopentecostal theology, which is clearly expressed by R. R. Soares and the ICGG teaching. We will discuss the “positive confession” principle in length below.

11. “Vain repetitions.” After condemning the use of vain repetitions in prayer, lesson eleven also exhorts to use good repetitions: “Repeating our position in Christ—demanding all evil to be bound based on what we believe—is not something vain, false or unproductive. . . . [W]e are affirming our determination to not give in to any argument; we are demanding our full rights.”³³

12. “Doing the work of God.” Quoting the words of Jesus in John 6:29, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent,” the lesson argues that it was not Jesus that God

³¹ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=8

³² www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=9

³³ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=11

sent, but the Word who became flesh (and, of course, says the lesson, the Word and Jesus are the same person). Therefore, to believe in Jesus is to believe in the Word, to practice this Word. In practical terms it means: “If you are sick or have some problem, stop asking everyone to pray and help you get something from God. Make up your mind to do His work right now. Become an obedient child, one who practices the Word.”³⁴

In these twelve lessons, some special accents may be identified. The course exposes three emphases of the ICGG, which can also be witnessed in the TV Show and publications of the denomination. We will now describe these three theological emphases that underline much of what this Neopentecostal church publicly teaches, especially through the words and actions of its leader, the missionary R. R. Soares.

Theology of Prosperity

One part of the ICGG daily TV program *Show da Fé* presents people who experimented a radical change in their life when they became active participants of the church and its projects. That section is named *Novela da Vida Real* (“A Real Life Soap Opera”). It focuses on a person or a family who was facing some difficulty in life, in terms of employment, finances, health, drugs, or even in relationships inside the family. The story has always a good end, presenting a new reality after the person has taken seriously the message of the church, normally by becoming an active donor for the projects of the ICGG.

The interpretation of what happens to the person or family in the *Novela da Vida Real* is a practical example of how “Prosperity Theology” works. R. R. Soares himself expressly endorses Prosperity Theology, as can be witnessed in a declaration to a Brazilian religious Magazine:

³⁴ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=12

I preach prosperity. I prefer a thousand times to preach a Theology called prosperity than a theology of sin, of lie, of defeat, of suffering... I clap my hands for Prosperity Theology. I do not believe in misery. It is a story for losers. They are all losers, whose churches are a real failure.³⁵

In his book, “Our covenant with God,” Kenneth Copeland, one of the most important preachers of prosperity, tells a story to illustrate what some Christian people are losing when they do not realize (and believe) all that God had provided them for their comfort in daily life. The story is about a man who was traveling overseas with few resources after paying for the trip. Having no money for food, he bought bread and cheese to consume in the ship to America. That was his food for several days. It was only at the end of his trip that he realized that all meals were included when he bought the ticket. Copeland applies that to a situation where God’s children do not take advantage of all blessings that rightly belong to them to enjoy.³⁶

The origin of Prosperity Theology is identified with the teaching of Kenneth Hagin, originally a Baptist, after that an Assemblies of God preacher, and then a self-proclaimed charismatic prophet. Hagin was born in 1917 in McKinney, Texas. His inborn physical weakness, especially a heart disease, caused him times of intense suffering, during which he had spiritual experiences that changed his life. Hagin tells that one of those experiences was his heart stopped three times and he felt he was going to hell, but in every time he was called by a voice coming from heaven that urged him to give his life to Christ. Another key experience was a vision when Christ taught him about the power of faith according to Mark 11:23–24. In his book, *I Believe in Visions* Hagin says that he had to learn a new way to pray, not hoping to be healed, but believing he was already cured, even continuing in his sickbed. After realizing that, Hagin

³⁵ *Eclésia* 5, no. 67, July 2001, 26.

³⁶ Andrew Perriman, ed. *Faith, Health and Prosperity: A Report on ‘Word of Faith’ and ‘Positive Confession’ Theologies* by ACUTE - the Evangelical Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth among Evangelicals (Waynesboro: Paternoster, 2003): xvii, xviii.

affirms, he was cured and began to preach divine healing as a right that every Christian person is supposed to enjoy. After receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Hagin became a preacher in the Assemblies of God for ten years (1939–1949). In 1952 he affirmed his status as a prophet. In 1966 Hagin began a radio program, “Faith Seminar of the Air” and in 1974 he founded the Rhema Bible Training Center, to propagate his view on the prosperity that a believer has to right to achieve.³⁷ That Rhema Center has expanded to other countries, including South Africa, where it became the seed of the beginning of a strong independent church in Johannesburg, the “Rhema Bible Church.”³⁸

In his book, *Chaves Bíblicas para a Prosperidade Financeira* (Biblical Keys for Financial Prosperity), Hagin affirms that one of the most difficult challenges in pastoral ministry is to convince people that God really wants them to be prosper. For him, many believers do not prosper because they do not obey what God has commanded them. The key for a change, suggests Hagin, is first of all to correct this way of thinking and then begin to think, speak and act according to what Scripture says about prosperity.³⁹

Other teachers of the theology of prosperity are Robert Tilton, Kenneth Copeland, Oral Roberts, Robert Schuller, John Osteen, and Norveller Hayes. Their preaching is sometimes also labeled, in a critical way of speaking, “health and wealth” theology. The basic idea is that the believer has the divine right, as a child of the King, to live in good health and material success. The challenge to the believer is to learn how to appropriate those blessings through the right use of faith.

³⁷ Perriman, *Faith, Health and Prosperity*, 2–3.

³⁸ Allan Anderson, “The Prosperity Message in the Eschatology of Some New Charismatic Churches” *Missionalia* 15, no. 2 (1987): 74. According to a short note in *Christianity Today*, at the time of Hagin’s death, September 19, 2003 there were Rhema Bible Training Centers in 14 countries; at that time 65 million copies of Hagin's books were in print (*Christianity Today* 47, no. 11 [November 2003]: 36).

³⁹ Kenneth Hagin, *Chaves Bíblicas para a prosperidade financeira* (Rio de Janeiro: Graça editorial, 2000), 7.

It has been proposed that roots of the theology of prosperity can be identified already in the pioneers who came from Europe to the United States. A connection between piety and prosperity was present in the minds of the colonizers in Virginia and Massachusetts. However, the puritans worked with the belief that a Christian person should work hard so that the whole community would be prosper, while prosperity preaching tends to be much more individualistic. Such a shift in thinking developed in part within the context of the great commercial expansion in the nineteenth century that provided new economic opportunities and the enhancement of self-determination and political and social individualism. Besides that economic and social aspects of this development, there was the growth of Arminianism, with its emphasis on the role of the individual and his choices. That provided a theological basis for an individualistic view for life.⁴⁰

Prosperity theology found its place in Pentecostal preaching in Brazil in late 1970s. Already in the Sixties, Robert McAlister, founder of the *Igreja da Nova Vida* (New Life Church), was pioneer among those dealing specifically with financial prosperity, connecting it to faith. In that decade he wrote the book, “*Como Prosperar*” (How to be prosperous), in which he gave instructions to the believers to be faithful in their tithes so that they could be economically blessed. In 1981 he published a book about the use of money and spirituality, *Dinheiro: Um Assunto Altamente Espiritual* (Money: A Highly Spiritual Matter). In that book McAlister criticized those preachers who thought money was root of all evil. At the same time, he also criticized an attitude of bargaining with God. Despite being critical of that attitude, MacAlister affirmed that if someone wants to guarantee his financial future, he should tithe and make offerings to the Lord.⁴¹

⁴⁰ For a detailed study on the North American roots of the theology of prosperity, see: Mark Hellstern, “The ‘Me Gospel’: An Examination of the Historical Roots of Prosperity Emphasis within Current Charismatic Theology,” *Fides et Historia* 21, no. 3 (Oct. 1989): 82–90.

⁴¹ Mariano, “Neopentecostais e a teologia da prosperidade,” 31.

Edir Macedo, founder and leader of the IURD and R. R. Soares' brother-in-law, is one of the most explicit preachers of prosperity in Brazil. He uses the language of debt that God has to those who faithfully tithe. In his book, *Vida em Abundância* (Abundant Life), he challenges the believers to tithe and then to charge God to fulfil His promises: "To tithe is to become a candidate to receive unmeasured blessings . . . When we pay the tithe to God, he becomes obligated (because he promised this) to fulfill His word, rebuking the devouring spirits."⁴² Macedo attributes to those spirits every disgrace in human life, including diseases, accidents, vices, social degradation, and any suffering that afflicts the person in his daily life.⁴³

R. R. Soares' preaching on prosperity may be considered a milder way of dealing with blessings, if compared to Macedo, even though he can also be a legitimate representative of Prosperity theology. Some examples of his preaching may illuminate and exemplify Soares' approach to that theology. In his monthly magazine, *Jornal Show da Fé* of January 2014, in a section "How to be freed from infirmities," an article tells an experience that happened in a worship service in Rio de Janeiro when Soares was preaching on Luke 13:1–17. Soares was teaching what a person has to do when he or she is oppressed by an infirmity and when it seems that there is no cure for such a condition. If there is a spiritual cause for that disease, only Jesus can cure. However, he asks, how could Jesus see the women mentioned in Luke 13 if she was bent over and as a woman at that time, she would stay behind men. Therefore, Jesus would not see her. Soares explains that when a person hears and truly receives Christ's message that person becomes illuminated and sets himself apart from others. Then Christ can see that person,

⁴² Mariano, "Neopentecostais e a teologia da prosperidade," 35.

⁴³ For a more detailed study on Prosperity Theology in Brazil, especially as seen in the IURD, see: Rodolfo Gaede Neto, "Teologia da Prosperidade e Diaconia," *Ensaio e Monografias* 17 (1998): 5–20.

completes Soares, and blesses him.⁴⁴

In his TV program, *Show da Fé* broadcast on January 28, 2014, Soares was encouraging people not to be satisfied with the current situation in which they are living, but they should seek God's blessings. He then spoke against an attitude of someone who says, "I'm poor, and was born this way, I have no success in life." Soares argued that since God shows no partiality, every believer may claim (not "ask for," but "claim") blessings. In that same program, Soares presented the reason why a believer does not enjoy the promised blessings. Any doubt in faith, say Soares, prevents a person to be blessed. He was explaining Col. 1:9, 10, specifically the phrase, "that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will." If a person hears God's word and feels God's action in his life, he should not stop, but go forward, seeking more and more of God's blessings. There are some people, concluded Soares, who stop there and do not enjoy what they have as their right.

Neopentecostal preaching considers the right to prosperity as a gift that is directly connected to the work of Christ. The Savior has not only redeemed humanity from sin and brought everyone into communion with God and eternal life, but he also frees the person who believes from consequences of sin, as they become manifest every day, such as diseases, family problems and business difficulties.

Positive Confession

A strong element in ICGG preaching is what became known as "positive confession," which is directly connected to prosperity theology. It seems that R. R. Soares was impacted by the idea behind the concept long before the time he could think it through. One of Soares' aunts tells what happened when he was still a young man, after they had a Bible study in family. They

⁴⁴ *Jornal Show da Fé* Como Se Livrar das Enfermidades. January 2014, 14.

read the account of Jesus healing Peter's mother-in-law. The young Soares was impressed by the fact that Jesus cured that woman using only his word. Soares was seated on a stump and began to consider the situation, tells his aunt. He said: "If I tell this stump to move its place, will that happen? Jesus only spoke and the disease obeyed his command." That was the first time, according to Soares' aunt, he reflected about spiritual healing using words, positive words.⁴⁵

The importance of a positive confession for the resolution of a problem is one of the emphases in Kenneth Hagin's teaching and had a strong influence on R. R. Soares' teaching. The evidence shows that in his view of changing a situation by the use of positive words, Hagin was dependent on teachings of Essek William Kenyon (1867–1948), a Pentecostal preacher with success in the 1930s and 1940s. Hagin denied he had used Kenyon's writings, affirming that his message has been given to him directly by God. However, given the similarities between his writings and earlier books by Kenyon, after 1979 he admitted he had read Kenyon's books, but not copied anything from them. He explained the similarities (sometimes word by word in extensive parts of his books) by the fact of both witnessing the direct word of God.⁴⁶ Kenyon became influenced by a movement called "New Thinking," originally formulated by Phineas Quimby (1802–1866), a student of occultism, hypnosis and parapsychology.⁴⁷ Quimby was known for developing some ideas about the ability people have to heal infirmities using their mind and had influenced Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the "Christian Science."⁴⁸

For Hagin, there is a huge difference between real faith and a mental knowledge that is reluctant and ineffective. A real faith refuses to accept the symptoms of any evil and acts as if

⁴⁵ Quoted by Gerson Leite de Moraes, "A força midiática da Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus" (PhD diss., Pontifícia Universidade Católica), 78, from the ICGG monthly Magazine "Revista Graça – Show da Fé."

⁴⁶ Alan B. Pierrat, *O Evangelho da Prosperidade* 2d ed. (São Paulo: Vida Nova, 1996), 29.

⁴⁷ Mariano, Neopentecostais e a teologia da prosperidade, 29.

⁴⁸ Patriota, "Show da Fé," 125.

healing has already been given. If the symptoms of a disease remain, it could be Satan's action trying to steal what belongs to the believer. If the believer made a negative confession ("It did not happen"), healing would be invalidated. The fact is that for positive confession a person should deny symptoms of his disease, including pains, since that would be the real test for faith.⁴⁹

Hagin's account of his healing was already mentioned above. He explains his healing as a direct consequence of using positive confession:

Paul said in Romans 10:9: "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord." That is not a confession of sin; nor is it a confession of weakness. Instead, it is a confession of Jesus Christ's lordship. And he continues, saying: "And believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." That is not a negative confession. It is a positive confession! In fact, Christianity is called a great confession. . . . [Confession is], first, to affirm something in which we believe. Second, it is to testify something that we know. And third, it is to witness the truth we embrace.⁵⁰

Hagin affirms that every person reborn in Christ already has God's promises in his life. He only needs to claim those promises, taking possession of them.⁵¹ Faith is the basis for positive confession. The believer should declare in faith that he already achieved what God has promised in Scripture and such confession will bring health and financial prosperity, among other blessings. Human words associated with faith are able to create divine realities. On the other hand, to confess negatively is to admit the existence of undesirable conditions.⁵² Hagin claims he received orientation to positive confession from Jesus himself, which should be expressed in four steps: (1) "Say it": in positive or negative form, since the individual will receive according to that which he wants. That explains the constant use of expressions as "I determine," "I declare," "I demand." (2) "Do it": the believer needs to do something concrete to modify reality. It means

⁴⁹ Perriman, *Faith, Health and Prosperity*, 43.

⁵⁰ Kenneth Hagin, *Pensamento certo ou errado* (Rio de Janeiro: Graça, 2000), 10.

⁵¹ Hagin, *Pensamento certo ou errado*, 22.

⁵² Patriota, "Show da Fé," 124,5.

to believe, to declare, and then to enjoy victory. The way they live will be key to receive the blessing. (3) “Receive it”: this is done through the action of the preachers that in their prophetic role not only reveal blessings, but also act as mediators of those blessings. They present themselves as those who are entrusted with authority to reveal to each individual in his reality the blessings God has prepared for them. (4) “Comment on it”: this is an important step so that others may come to faith. Here is the place for public witness of blessings that have been received.⁵³

The ICGG TV program, “Show da Fé,” exemplifies the use of positive confession. The role of the “Missionary” (as R. R. Soares is known) is important to determine, during prayer, that the devils depart from persons with specific physical pains. After prayer, the Missionary asks people to raise hands if they were healed from some specific pain, for which he prayed. A microphone is brought to some of those persons or they are called to come forward, and they are encouraged to tell publicly how their health was earlier, which pains they had, and how they now are well and with no pain. Depending on the specific healing, the Missionary asks some of them to do a physical activity to demonstrate they are healthy. Sometimes Soares uses Matt. 10:32–33 to exhort people to speak openly about the blessing received.

In its “Faith course” (Lesson 10: Confession), the ICGG affirms that few Christians have correctly understood the importance of a positive confession, with the result that they do not live an abundant life that belong to them. “The reason is that the people of God have not yet abandoned the negative way they face their problems and the attacks of the enemy.”⁵⁴ When a person continues to make a negative confession in life, he or she continues under the enemy’s oppression, and life runs toward complete destruction: “When you speak negative or pessimistic

⁵³ K. Hagin, *Compreendendo a Unção*, as quoted by Patriota, “Show da Fé,” 126–30.

⁵⁴ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/licoes.php?id=10, accessed December 26, 2015.

words, you are using the devil’s own language. This creates an evil atmosphere around you, and it will be extremely difficult for you to see what wonderful opportunities are actually in store for you.”⁵⁵ Then the “Faith Course” applies in practical terms what a negative confession is in a situation of disease:

Suppose symptoms of some disease appeared in your body. You then use the resources of modern medicine, and wait patiently to regain your health. You happen to meet someone who asks politely, “How are you feeling”? You answer almost with satisfaction that you haven’t been feeling very well; you feel a pain here and a pain there, and so on. You are confessing what apparently the truth is. This attitude gives the enemy authority to continue attacking you. You have just accepted that problem, even though unconsciously. We must emphasize that experiencing temptation through the symptoms of sickness does not mean that you are already sick, just as temptation to commit adultery does not make you an adulterer; it is when you accept the temptation (consummation) that you become truly sick. You might ask: “If I have the symptoms of a disease, should I lie and say I don’t have them”? No. The fact is that just by acknowledging the symptoms, you are already lying. The Lord God states in His Word that by Jesus’ wounds we have already been healed. How can anyone feel sick if God has declared that we are healed? Our problem is that we believe in things, in symptoms, in people, more than we believe in God.⁵⁶

To make a good (positive) confession is, according to the “Faith Course,” say the same thing God has spoken in His word and that means that in every bad situation in life the believer should confess “what the Lord says our position over all things is.” In this way the power of God is set loose and works in the believer’s life. If some people consider such language to be arrogant, it is only because they—people who live in defeat—do not understand that this positive confession is “of those who truly belong to the family of God.” The church today needs healing because it lives as a defeated people. It is the true confession that “will cause the true Church to appear.”⁵⁷

Three situations described in the ICGG’s monthly Magazine, “Jornal Show da Fé,”

⁵⁵ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/licoes.php?id=10, accessed December 26, 2015.

⁵⁶ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/licoes.php?id=10, accessed December 26, 2015.

⁵⁷ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/licoes.php?id=10, accessed December 26, 2015.

exemplify the use of positive confession in a time of suffering. A woman falls in her home, breaks her legs, and it seems that she would need a crutch for the rest of her life. However, based on Isa. 41:10, she “determines healing,” and she testifies that she has been already healed. Even when pain comes again to her, she is not discouraged and continues attending church, participating in the ICGG events and challenges; in this way she seeks a complete cure.⁵⁸ The second example tells the story of an epileptic woman who says she gets help from Jesus to gain victory over her infirmity. The Magazine article tells that she began to attend worship in the ICGG, where she learned how to “determine victory over that evil.” And she was completely cured.⁵⁹ In the same page, in a section entitled “miracles,” a woman with cancer goes to the ICGG and tells that during worship she prayed with faith “determining the miracle” and her request was immediately granted.⁶⁰

Spiritual Warfare

The existence and operation of the devil and demons are frequent themes in the ICGG preaching. On the one hand, it is affirmed that Christ, by his work, had defeated the evil forces and is the victorious Savior for all those who believe in him. On the other hand, the devil continues to have a significant role, even in the life of Christian people.

During the daily TV show, “Show da Fé,” in March 29, 2014, R. R. Soares was explaining Psalm 18, emphasizing the role of David’s enemies and affirming that in David’s time the devil was completely loose. He was defeated, said Soares, when Christ descended into hell after his physical death. This points to a curious approach Soares has related to a specific event happened

⁵⁸ Elaine Monteiro, ed., “Ela Estava Sentenciada a Usar Muletas” *Jornal Show da Fé* 8, no. 96 (January 2014): 9.

⁵⁹ Elaine Monteiro, ed., “Livre de Epilepsia após mais de 40 Anos de Sofrimento,” *Jornal Show da Fé* 8, no. 96 (January 2014): 22.

⁶⁰ Elaine Monteiro, “Câncer Sumiu Milagrosamente,” *Jornal Show da Fé* 8, no. 96 (January 2014): 22.

after Jesus' death, his descending into hell.

The importance of Christ descending into hell is stressed in several statements made by Soares. It seems that such explanation goes back to Kenneth Hagin, for whom the work on the cross was only part of the expiation of sin. In hell Jesus suffered spiritual death for three days. There he was brought to life again, defeating the devil in his own territory. That was the way Christ has done his part of the covenant, so that people can now, through their determination based on the promises of God, acquire the right to abundant life, where the devil has no power anymore.⁶¹ In some sense, the work of Christ is seen not only as propitiation with God but also as a relation with the devil, whose defeat opens to the believers the way to receive the blessing (normally associated to liberation from evils and improvement in family life and finances).

Neopentecostal preachers sometimes relate illness to demonic action that are associated with Spiritism. Far from denying that something is actually happening in Spiritism meetings, they attribute to evil entities what occurs in those sessions. Such consideration has made easier to explain to former believers of Spiritism what they faced when they were there. What they formerly considered to be spirits of dead people are now seen as oppressing demons. In such a way, adaptation to the new belief is facilitated.⁶²

The point made by Neopentecostal preachers is that Christ gave to the Church the power to “bind” Satan and the demons so that they will not be capable of oppressing people anymore. The verb “to bind” is employed several times in a technical sense of limiting Satan’s power over humanity. “It is bound” is an expression used even in T-shirts as a testimony that evil forces will not frustrate the believer’s life and his plans. What is behind that expression is the conviction that evil spirits inhabit this world and are always ready to make human life miserable. For that

⁶¹ Mariano, “Neopentecostais e a teologia da prosperidade,” 34.

⁶² Medeiros, “Neopentecostalismo no Brasil e Holanda,” 93–94.

reason, believers should use the power Christ gave “to bind Satan” so that through their determination they put him under chains.⁶³

One of the most interesting teachings Neopentecostal preachers hold regarding evil spirits is the existence of “territorial” spirits. Some evil spirits deal specifically with some area of human life, in which they operate bringing particular evils to the person. In a section called “Palavra amiga” (a friendly word) of the monthly magazine, “Jornal da Fé,” Soares answers questions sent to him. In one of those questions a lady tells him about her husband who, despite the fact that he had formerly been a worker in the church, got involved with another woman and left home. She asks if that means he was never a truly believer or if it could be the effect of witchcraft. Soares’ answer begins by saying: “There are unclean spirits who specialize in blinding men with such a devastating passion, so that they cannot see anything more beyond the person to whom they are attracted.”⁶⁴

Battles against Satan and the demons are not only waged in daily life by the believer. There are special events in Neopentecostal churches that provide help to those who felt themselves to be oppressed by evil. Such events are usually called “Liberation Services.” They commonly happen on Fridays, not by coincidence the day when Spiritism cults have their most important meetings to invoke the spirits of ancestors. Sometimes those liberation Services are also called “sessões de descarrego” (unload sessions) because of the belief that evil spirits may be “loading” people with illness, family or job problems, and should be invoked, faced with authority and determination, and defeated before the eyes of all those attending Service.⁶⁵

The “Faith Course” provided by the ICGG in its website and signed by R. R. Soares

⁶³ Bitun, “Transformações do Campo Religioso Pentecostal,” 222.

⁶⁴ R. R. Soares. “Palavra amiga,” *Jornal Show da Fé* 9, no. 104 (September 2014): 22.

⁶⁵ Crislaine Almeida, “O diabo na IIGD,” 6.

himself offers a lesson specifically on the subject of Satan's actions and defeat, and how believers should proceed in order to resist when the devil attacks. It begins with words that in themselves reflect the New Testament teaching about the devil: "He is defeated and cannot oppress us any longer. The Lord Jesus defeated him, and he did it for us. Not only did he defeat Satan, but He credited it to our account, as if we had defeated him ourselves. This is our privilege in Christ."⁶⁶

Soares understands that Satan's destructive power comes from Adam's sin, in the sense that since Adam's fall he "has had free passage on Earth, doing his dreadful deeds. The sin Adam committed gave him the 'right' to act in our world."⁶⁷ That problem was only solved when Jesus conquered Satan through the work of the cross. There is only one way Satan can still have power in the life of a believer: "if he allows him to, or if that believer is unaware of his rights in Christ." Therefore it is up to the believer to act in a positive way so that the devil has no power over him. Soares alerts:

We do not have to beg God to do something against the devil. . . . It is your duty to rise up and leave your captivity. Through the work of Jesus on the cross, you have already conquered the devil. Make him hear this from your lips. Acknowledge your liberty and begin to declare it boldly.⁶⁸

That active declaration by the believer should have an impact, according to Soares, upon all evils that affect daily life: "We must demand all disease to leave our bodies. If we are not free from all maladies, how will we be able to glorify God in our bodies? . . . Every time the devil brings some evil against you, rebuke him in the Name of Jesus, and make him flee." The believer has to exercise his rights, lest the promises of God become "useless."⁶⁹

⁶⁶ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/licoes.php?id=6, accessed December 26, 2015.

⁶⁷ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/licoes.php?id=6, accessed December 26, 2015.

⁶⁸ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/licoes.php?id=6, accessed December 26, 2015.

⁶⁹ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/licoes.php?id=6, accessed December 26, 2015.

The ICGG's official magazine, "Jornal Show da Fé," relates in very practical terms an example of spiritual warfare. The article, entitled "She won the war against the devil," begins by saying that Mrs. Costa had a bad heritage from their grandmother and mother: they attended rituals of witchcraft.⁷⁰ The result, according to Mrs. Costa, was a life with all kinds of needs, even lack of food, and she also became addicted to alcohol. She tells that a "process of liberation" began to happen when she watched a sermon on television. Mrs. Costa says: "I felt the Holy Spirit speaking to my heart that there was a way for my life. In that very day I asked my sister-in-law (who always spoke to me about Jesus) to take me to her Church." That Church was the ICGG, where she began to attend. She explains what happened then: "It was a time of war, because the demons did not want to let me go. When I was in the Church, I felt good, but not outside. I even expelled scum through my nose." The article completes saying that she was persistent attending the Church's "meetings of liberation" until she was completely freed from the demons. Today she works for the Church in Rio de Janeiro.⁷¹

The testimony given above, with the comments by the article's author, gives evidence of two important aspects in the concept of spiritual warfare in the ICGG. First, there is a connection between attending pagan cults, having some kind of addiction, and being dominated by the devil. Secondly, the demons continue to manifest themselves in the person's life, even with physical evidence, and continued to have dominion over her.

Soares' way of dealing with a question sent to him and shared in the official magazine

⁷⁰ The article does not say, but in Brazilian context it probably means that they attended African-Brazilian cults, as Umbanda. Those religions are heavily attacked by Neopentecostal denominations as places where the devil reigns. Formerly, it was usual for Neopentecostal preachers to name African-Brazilian cults (Umbanda, Quimbanda, etc.) as institutions where the evil spirits had their territory. As a result of some lawsuits by representatives of those cults against Neopentecostal churches, those preachers prefer to speak of people being involved in witchcraft and in this way becoming attacked by demons.

⁷¹ Amanda Pieranti, "Ela Venceu a Guerra Contra o Diabo," *Jornal Show da Fé* 9, no. 97 (February 2014): 15.

gives significant insight into his view of the operation of Satan in the life of someone claiming to be a Christian person. Mrs. Vasquez told she had earlier made a covenant with Satan and now, even after accepting Jesus, she still had the impression that the devil continued to interfere in her life. The evidence which raised that suspicion included: difficulty in relationships with friends, unemployment, and family difficulties (“my husband does not take care of any matter in the household, and I have to decide everything at home”), besides the fact that she was robbed three times. In his answer, Soares pointed to her three issues she should consider. First, he asked, “Is your conversion an authentic one? Were you really born again? If you are, the devil has no place in your life.” Then he advised her to study the Scriptures so that she can “take possession of the promises the Word gives, repudiating and nullifying every diabolic work in your life and in your family.” The third observation Soares gives is what he calls a “more intimate” issue. He questions if the former pact she had with the devil was making her still afraid of the devil. Soares explains: “Fear is one of the most efficacious weapons evil forces use to imprison people.” Then he completes advising her to read his book *Fear: Close that door*, which would be “of great help for your complete liberation.”⁷²

A significant point made by a Neopentecostal approach to the influence of evil in people’s lives is the fact that demons are real; the devil has his own personal identity, and therefore he is not limited to a subjective realm, but operates in an objective way.⁷³ He is able to control the life of people involved with pagan cults not only in their belief, but in their ordinary habits.⁷⁴

⁷² Elaine Monteiro, ed., “Abrindo o Coração,” *Jornal Show da Fé 2*, no. 98 (March 2014): 20.

⁷³ Crislaine Almeida, “O Diabo na Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus,” *Ciências da Religião: História e Sociedade* 8, no. 1 (2010): 12.

⁷⁴ Almeida, “O Diabo na Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus,” 11.

The ICGG As Evaluated from Outside

The fast growth and high visibility of Neopentecostal Churches have attracted the attention of scholars from theological and sociological fields. The Baptist historian and theologian Paulo Siepierski criticizes Neopentecostal theology for underestimating the effect of social structures on the life of people as a cause of problems and as an evil that should be attacked from the standpoint of Christian worldview. Since demons are responsible for all evils on people's lives, including sickness, unemployment, poverty, hunger, problems in personal relationship in family, Neopentecostals give little attention to the effects of bad politics and mistakes in the economic policies of governments and society in general. The spiritual sphere controls material reality, so that changes in life can only be achieved by neutralizing demons in the spiritual realm. That is what opens doors for the importance of the concept of spiritual warfare. Siepierski calls the attention to the fact that in some Neopentecostal contexts, there is the idea of territorial demons that act especially in some aspects of life (health, family relations, economy, etc.). Such an approach makes the "blessing" of objects a common practice in some churches.⁷⁵ The interesting point is that these actions are very similar, even in language, to what happen in pagan cults (Umbanda, for instance), normally blamed by Neopentecostal preachers as channels for the actions of demons.⁷⁶ It is common to hear in a worship of a Neopentecostal Church (especially in the IURD) the reference to evil entities that are also present in Afro-Brazilian cults (for instance, "Exu," "Pomba-gira," "Tranca-rua"). The difference is that in Afro-Brazilian cults those entities have an ambiguous morality, not being bad neither good in themselves, and can be used for the benefit of the worshiper. Those same entities are mentioned by Neopentecostal preachers as

⁷⁵ Religious programs on TV offer all kinds of objects that have been "blessed" for a protected use by the believers: pens, pillows, towels, water, soup, etc.

⁷⁶ Siepierski, "Pós-pentecostalismo e política no Brasil," 53–54.

demonic spirits, responsible for sickness, family problems and financial failures.

An important contribution has been offered by Paulo R. Romeiro⁷⁷, who wrote his doctoral dissertation, a book and several articles about the ICGG, especially from the perspective of pastoral concern. His main purpose is “to help those disappointed with Brazilian Neopentecostalism.”⁷⁸ He conducted several interviews with people who left Neopentecostal churches, and he came to the conclusion that for many people, after an initial period of fascination, with full trust in the propositions of the group, there comes a time of questioning that is directed especially against the way the church preaches, administers funds, and deals with ethical issues. At the end what results is a rupture with the church and disappointment, concludes Romeiro.⁷⁹

In another article, Romeiro analyses the discourse of the ICGG, considering it an example of triumphant speech. He summarizes his findings about such triumphant speech saying:

This church, with high visibility in the electronic media, has expanded substantially in the last decades with a large number of followers. As part of the Neopentecostal movement, this group projects its doctrine which proposes to ban sickness, poverty and every kind of suffering from human life in order to produce a new type of Christian: healthy and wealthy. If this doesn't come to pass, it means that the believer doesn't have enough faith, is under the power of Satan, or is living in sin.⁸⁰ Thus, the characteristic of the true Christian is to have physical health and financial prosperity. There are testimonies of people who affirm to have benefited from the triumphant message of the movement. On the other hand, the prosperity theology has also produced disappointments, especially when the expected miracles don't happen.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Besides his role as professor in a Presbyterian University, Paulo Romeiro is a pastor in a Pentecostal Church in São Paulo, with a theological stance close to that of the Assemblies of God.

⁷⁸ Paulo R. Romeiro, *Decepcionados com a Graça*, 14.

⁷⁹ Romeiro, *Decepcionados com a Graça*, 17–18.

⁸⁰ In his TV show “Show da fé” on October 15, 2014, Soares explained the passage of the Canaanite woman asking Jesus to heal her daughter. Referring to Jesus' word to the woman, “Great is your faith” (Matt. 15:28), and the consequent healing. Soares explained the need for the believer to have a great faith in order to be capable of achieving what God has promised (in terms of health and wealth success). Soares concretely showed what he meant by such a faith by raising his hand to the height of his head. Then he said that such was the kind of faith God demands on people in order to receive the blessing.

⁸¹ Romeiro, “Esperança e Decepções,” 123–24.

Romeiro gathered testimonies of people who made huge financial sacrifices, in the form of offerings to the church, and were disappointed for not achieving the blessings they wanted. He also treats the answers leaders give to people who ask why they lose the blessing after having received it. Those answers usually criticize people's lack of faith, or denounce doubts they possibly had after the blessings had been achieved.

One helpful contribution of Romeiro's work was his assessment of the religious mobility which characterizes Neopentecostalism. In traditional Protestantism and even in classical Pentecostalism it is usual that the believer would remain in the church to which they had belonged, even when negative events would happen in that context. Romeiro shows that Neopentecostal Churches have no list of members and, therefore, there is a certain distance between pastor and people. This fact makes leaving the church something much easier than in traditional Protestant denominations. Other issues also loosen the ties that often hold people to a denomination. For instance, there is no accountability in questions involving finances of the Church. On the other hand, financial difficulties of the Church demand creativity in raising funds, and the pastor is directly responsible for that. One of the consequences is that some strange expressions for Protestant and classical Pentecostalism begin to become familiar: "God's people mall," "Evangelical credit card," "Christian consumer," "market-place," "Store," "Show of faith," and many others. Romeiro completes his analysis:

A blessed believer today is the one who moves the market, always ready to consume, to buy, to acquire, to take possession, and to conquer. ... Then people have to go (be in transit) to the place and time indicated [for the blessing], to follow what the man of God says and to receive the promised miracle. And the more they go, the more they are disappointed. One action feeds the other. These pilgrims of religion are today the movement of people with no church, where belonging gave place to transiting.⁸²

In fact, in reference to the contact between leadership and the lay people, Romeiro

⁸² Romeiro, "Esperança e Decepções," 141.

exaggerates somewhat. He is probably correct referring to the highest leaders, especially R. R. Soares. However, in local communities there is more contact between pastor and people. There some sense of belonging can be also noted.⁸³

One of the most complete and helpful examinations of the ICGG (from the standpoint of Sociology, with critical implications for a theological assessment) was written by Karla Patriota, in her doctoral dissertation.⁸⁴ Patriota's research is based on a specific study of the ICGG and in theoretical studies dealing with the concept of the "spectacle society." Her fundamental thesis is that "this new kind of organization of Neopentecostal religious activity turns the theological discourse into carefully packaged merchandise which is offered through TV spectacles."⁸⁵ She maintains that such a discourse packed in the form of a spectacle loses its effect in daily life, when the spectacular element is lacking. Such disenchantment needs to be compensated by new enchantment, i.e., the continuity of the spectacle, which happens in the form of new religious products.

Using the concept of the "Society of Spectacle" developed by French writer Guy Debord,⁸⁶ Patriota observes that religious discourse appeals to the senses, especially vision, generating in the religious context desires for entertainment and anxiety in the religious consumer:

It appears to us that the concept of religious 'mission' is being left aside in order to achieve better results in terms of numbers ... [there is a] cult of the person, since the

⁸³ That could be witnessed during an interview (questionnaire) with members of a local congregation of the ICGG in the city of Novo Hamburgo. The sense of community and a close relationship with the local pastor were evident. The same is witnessed by a student of this writer. He is a member of that same congregation and, despite being critical about some of the teachings of the church, shows in his comments that there is a congregational life and relationships not less intense than in other Protestant denominations.

⁸⁴ Patriota, "O Show da Fé: A Religião na Sociedade do espetáculo," (PhD diss., National University of Pernambuco, 2008). Patriota is Anglican and graduated in Communications and in Theology. She had a master degree in Communications and doctorate in Sociology of Religion, with a post-doctorate in Cambridge. She is a full time professor in the "Universidade Federal de Pernambuco" (National University of Pernambuco).

⁸⁵ Patriota, "Show da Fé," 6.

⁸⁶ Guy Debord (1931–1994) wrote his book, *The Society of the Spectacle*, in 1967. That book was republished several times since then.

religious leaders that occupy time of *mass media* have their discourses legitimized by media, though their contents suffer a significant marketing suitability. The concept of the society of spectacle ... promoted and sustained the transformation of several churches, classified as Christian churches, into huge communication companies.⁸⁷

Patriota argues that in modernity the process of secularization works in favor of new religious movements. For her secularization can be understood as a flight from institutionalization, not a flight from the sacred field in human life. New religious movements represent a flight from traditional religiosity and a new definition of what it is to be a member of the church. Patriota shows that Pentecostalism, and in a special way Neopentecostalism learned very well how to deal with secularization in the religious environment. They know that rationality and independence coming from rational choices took the place that traditionally belonged to religious institutions. There was a time when these institutions were the cement that united cultural and social aspects of a people in a communitarian life. Autonomy is a value that no longer allows the religious institutions to have a monopoly on the thoughts and actions of society. Secularism and pluralism changed the way people understand the importance of a religious group. It does not mean a withdrawal from religious life, but voluntary choice took the place of authority as the reason to adhere to a particular denomination. Patriota claims that Neopentecostal denominations successfully participate in this process of religion in our society. The individual makes choices. He is a “religious consumer” who wants to choose freely what the best religious “product” is for him. Religion is a matter of private life, and the “consumer” wants to have his desires met also in this field of his life. Neopentecostal Denominations seem to have understood well how to deal with such a new time.⁸⁸

From this process of secularization, the strengthening of individual autonomy and

⁸⁷ Patriota, “Show da Fé,” 23.

⁸⁸ Patriota, “Show da Fé,” 75–82.

weakening of traditional religious power, that comes as a result, according to Patriota, arises a proliferation of religious options. As an inevitable consequence, she says, there is “the revival of a spectacular religiosity in every field of human activities.”⁸⁹ The ICGG knew very well how to use secularization and rationalism in religiosity to its favor. The way Soares presents his message, and the way the ICGG packages its content is well fitted to elements of entertainment and mass communication, as can be seen in the principal “product,” the “Show of Faith” TV program, broadcasted in popular TV channels in prime time.⁹⁰

Another important contribution to the study of the ICGG comes also from the standpoint of communication and sociology. That is the doctoral dissertation by Gerson L. Moraes, who wrote about the media strength of the ICGG.⁹¹ As in the study of Karla Patriota, Moraes also stresses the role of R. R. Soares as a skilled communicator and business man. He concentrates especially on Soares’ competence that has displayed itself in his acquisition of a television network, and his use of print media, including newspaper and magazine, as well as other media, including radio shows, internet, publisher house and as publisher of books, music and films.⁹²

Moraes underlines the different paths Edir Macedo (leader of IURD) and R. R. Soares took to acquire TV channels. Macedo invested a large amount of money to buy and to improve an already existing TV network (“Rede Record” – Record network). His main objective was and continues to be to have the leadership among the networks in Brazil. He already became, with his

⁸⁹ Patriota, “Show da Fé,” 83. In another doctoral work (that became a widely read book), Leonildo Campos analyzed the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (IURD) as a religious organization that uses market and spectacle techniques as some of its major strengths. See his book, *Templo, Teatro e Mercado*.

⁹⁰ Patriota, “Show da Fé,” 146.

⁹¹ Gerson L. Moraes, “A força midiática da Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus” (PhD diss., Pontifícia Universidade Católica, 2008).

⁹² Moraes, “A força midiática da Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus,” 12. Since the Brazilian constitution of 1988, it is prerogative of National Congress to give license to new TV and radio channels. Moraes shows how during that time some religious groups began to be more interested in politics, electing representatives and senators, and being involved in the committees that act in the concession of new channels (49).

TV channel, the major threat to “Rede Globo” (the largest and dominant TV network in Brazil). To do that, the “Rede Record” works as a regular TV channel, containing but not being limited to religious programs. Soares, in contrast, did not want to offer a TV with religious content as its main characteristic. Therefore, instead of buying a commercial Network, he worked through political means to open his own network (RIT = “Rede Internacional de Televisão” – International TV Network) in 2002. In 2007 Soares opened his cable Network (“Nossa TV” – Our TV), promising to offer a programming for Christian people.⁹³ The competence of Soares in business dealings and particularly his exploitation of the medium of television goes hand in glove with his engagement with people all around the country. One of the strategies of Soares is to gather people from several local congregations in one particular place from time to time to stage a huge show, sometimes in public places. Besides using local media to invite people to those shows, Soares demands that pastors of that region promote caravans in order to fill the place.⁹⁴

The general evaluation of the ICGG by the majority of scholars from the field of sociological studies is very critical (in a negative sense). There is also a very negative assessment made by theologians from Protestant and even classical Pentecostal churches regarding the leading Neopentecostal churches and their leaders. It is common to hear people questioning those leaders’ faith and morality. In this chapter, we proposed to present some major theological and practical emphases that are noticeable from public presentations, either in written materials as in the TV show. A theological assessment to the theology of the ICGG will be offered after we summarize in the next chapter some of the main aspects of New Testament Pneumatology, especially presented in the eschatological work of the Holy Spirit.

⁹³ Moraes, “A força midiática da Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus,” 16.

⁹⁴ Moraes, “A força midiática da Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus,” 63.

CHAPTER FOUR

ESCHATOLOGICAL PNEUMATOLOGY: THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT CONSIDERED ESCHATOLOGICALLY

The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Anticipation of the Coming of the Kingdom

The Nature of the Kingdom of God: An Overview of an Ongoing Debate

The disciples and the church throughout history have been taught by their Lord to pray to the Father, “Your kingdom come!” The New Testament gives sufficient elements to describe what Jesus understood by “kingdom of God” and its importance in Christian doctrine. However, since the nineteenth century an intense debate arose among European theologians regarding the proper way to treat the kingdom of God and Eschatology as a theological theme. For some influential theologians, the kingdom of God was considered to be central (“kernel”) to the Christian proclamation; for others the theme may be seen as a supplement (“husk”). It may also be seen that for some theologians the kingdom of God is exclusively found in the future, and in this sense eschatology (in its strict sense) receives a significant emphasis. Others see the New Testament presenting the kingdom as a present reality.

The much quoted comment of Ernst Troeltsch that “the office of eschatology is generally closed these days,” referring to the nineteenth century, finds a classical example in one of the representatives of liberal protestant theologians of that period, Albrecht Ritschl (1822–1889).¹ Considering the Christian faith in the light of the history of religions, Ritschl affirms that the topic of “the kingdom of God” is that which constitutes Christianity as the “perfect moral

¹ Ritschl exposes the theme of the kingdom of God in the third volume of his work, *The Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, originally published in 1874, reprint *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation: The Positive Development of the Doctrine* (Clifton: Reference, 1966).

religion” since this kingdom has a fundamental ethical content. ²

Ritschl may be considered “the first modern theologian to give the kingdom of God a constitutive place in the Christian scheme of reality.”³ However his concept of the kingdom relativizes the eschatological aspect that is hoped for, and stresses action and ethics as the present task of Christians. The kingdom has more to do with obedience to God than with a gift from God. Anthony Hoekema observes the influence of Ritschl’s approach in American theology of the beginning of twentieth century with the so-called “social gospel.”⁴

A similar treatment of the kingdom of God can be observed in “What is Christianity,” by Adolf Harnack (1851–1930).⁵ Dealing specifically with the concept of the kingdom of God, Harnack sees in Jesus two different positions, two poles, one that he took from the traditions of his time, following the Old Testament, which looks for the future character of the kingdom, with the judgment and God’s visible rule. Harnack argues that many people may think that such a view was the fundamental form of Jesus’ message, but he can’t agree with that. For him, the other pole, that the kingdom is “something inward, something which is already present and making its entrance at the moment” is Jesus’ own position.⁶

The turn of nineteenth to twentieth century witnessed the strong influence of two scholars

² Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, 10–11.

³ Christoph Schwoebel, “Last Things First? The Century of Eschatology in Retrospect” In: Fergusson, David and Marcel Sarot (eds.). *The Future as God’s Gift: Explorations in Christian Eschatology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 219.

⁴ Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 289.

⁵ Adolf Harnack, *What is Christianity?* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1978). This book was originally a series of public lectures, under the title “The Essence of Christianity,” originally addressed in the University of Berlin in 1899,1900. The book was edited in 1900. In the Introduction, Rudolf Bultmann says: “At the beginning of our century it exerted an extraordinary influence not only on the rising generations of theologians but also on the educated classes generally. . . . Harnack’s book is a theological-historical document of the greatest importance. Every theologian who would be clear about the present situation in theology and its origins should be familiar with it. It should, moreover, be a part of required theological training and education.” (vii, viii).

⁶ Harnack, *What is Christianity?* 52–54.

challenging the abovementioned positions. One of them was Ritschl's son-in-law, Johannes Weiss (1863–1914).⁷ In his understanding, the kingdom of God in Jesus' teaching as being originally eschatological-apocalyptic and he criticizes what he calls a “dogmatic religious-ethical application of this idea in more recent theology.”⁸ For Weiss, therefore, the eschatological element in Jesus' teaching was not the husk but the kernel.

Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), with his work, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (first published in 1906) became still more influential than Weiss. He is also responsible for favoring future eschatology in the theological discussion of his time. For Schweitzer, the whole life of Jesus, not only his teaching, was driven by an eschatological (=future) point of view. In Jesus' view the kingdom would come in his lifetime. Such interpretation became known as *consequent* or *consistent eschatology*. For Schweitzer, Jesus sent his disciples in a mission (see Matt. 10) to give them an opportunity to make known the proximity of the kingdom. But, so Schweitzer considers, Jesus was mistaken, thinking that the kingdom would come very soon. The fact that the disciples came back and the kingdom did not come has theological importance for Schweitzer, in the sense that it gave to Jesus' work a new direction, which was his way to the cross as an attempt to make the kingdom come.⁹

Such “consistent” forms of describing the kingdom and eschatology are not free from problems. Oscar Cullmann (1902–1999) shows that the subsequent use of the term “consistent” (especially by Schweitzer's pupils) applied to the interpretation of the whole development of New Testament theology did not express a view of consistent eschatology, “but, on the contrary,

⁷ Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, trans. Richard H. Hiers and David L. Holland (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971). This book was first published in German in 1892.

⁸ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 114.

⁹ Schweitzer, *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 328.

the progressive abandonment of eschatology, that is, a ‘consistent de-eschatologizing’.”¹⁰

Besides, as George Ladd points out, there is the difficulty created by Schweitzer’s view of Jesus’ mistake about the coming of the kingdom: “then we must not only admit that he was in error but must recognize that his entire message rested upon a delusion.”¹¹ The ultimate result for theology and church may be then not an eschatological expectation, but ethical results: “The sum of Jesus’ life and death according to consistent eschatology brings us to this conclusion: we can no longer hope as Jesus hoped—but we can continue to work in his spirit.”¹²

Already in the first half of the twentieth century the eschatological view exposed by Weiss and Schweitzer would be challenged. Charles H. Dodd (1884–1973) argues for a dynamic understanding of the concept of kingdom of God, i.e., that God is actually reigning in the present time.¹³ He concludes that Jesus proclaimed the full realization of the kingdom in his time.¹⁴ Discussing the parable of the talents, Dodd has the opportunity to assess texts that present an eschatological (future) fulfillment of the kingdom. According to his explanation, a late tradition was responsible for changing what Jesus’ original intention really was. It was the application of Jesus’ words to an actual situation that evoked, according to Dodd, the eschatological reference, but it was not Jesus’ point of view.¹⁵

Oscar Cullmann presents an attempt to understand in a positive way the (apparently) contradictory sayings of the New Testament related to the present and future aspects of the

¹⁰ Oscar Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 29.

¹¹ George Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 41.

¹² Gerhard Sauter, *What Dare We Hope? Reconsidering Eschatology* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 41.

¹³ Charles H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1961), 21.

¹⁴ Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 33–34.

¹⁵ Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 120.

kingdom of God, and of maintaining the tension between the concepts of time and eternity.

Cullmann himself considers “the ‘already and not yet’ tension” as “the most essential matter” of his book.¹⁶ He affirms that what is really new in the New Testament is “the *tension* between the decisive ‘already fulfilled’ and the ‘not yet completed’, between present and future. The whole theology of the New Testament, including Jesus’ preaching, is qualified by this tension.” Then he argues that the early church was really moved by that tension, not by the expectation of the end. Such an expectation was real but its foundation was the “already” manifested in the coming and work of Christ.¹⁷

Writing few months after the end of World War II, Cullmann uses D-Day and VE-Day as an illustration of the relation between past and future,

The decisive battle in a war may already have occurred in a relatively early stage of the war, and yet the war still continues. Although the decisive effect of that battle is perhaps not recognized by all, it nevertheless already means victory. But the war must still be carried on for an undefined time, until ‘Victory Day.’ Precisely this is the situation of which the New Testament is conscious, as a result of the recognition of the new division of time; the revelation consists precisely in the fact of the proclamation that *that event on the cross, together with the resurrection which followed, was the already concluded decisive battle.*¹⁸

For Cullmann the so-called “delay of the parousia” is not a real problem. The tension between ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ implies the existence of time between the present fulfillment in Christ and the future events, even if they are expected to come soon.¹⁹ However such a tension is in some way unbalanced, since “the *decisive turn of events* has already occurred in Christ, the mid-point, and that now the future expectation is founded in faith in the ‘already’, shows that the

¹⁶ Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* (London: SCM, 1962), xxvi.

¹⁷ Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 172.

¹⁸ Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 84.

¹⁹ Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 183.

‘already’ *outweighs* the ‘not yet’.’²⁰

Cullmann’s approach has considerable consequences for theology and faith. The maintenance of the New Testament tension between the present fulfillment in Christ and the future coming of the kingdom became an “exegetical conviction” that the scholars have not given up even today.²¹

Another important theologian who stresses the future aspect of the kingdom of God is Jürgen Moltmann. For him, eschatology may be understood as embracing “both the object hoped for and also the hope inspired by it” and that such hope “is not one element *of* Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day.”²² In this sense, eschatology should not be given a place at the end of Dogmatics, but as the beginning and basis of all theological reflection.

In Moltmann’s view eschatology is the ferment for a disquieting Christian faith and life in this world. The language of promise makes it a key that unlocks all of theology. One of the risks for Christianity is to get used to what the environment offers (as happened under the “Christian” Roman state). In such a situation, it forgets the mobilizing, critical and even revolutionary character that eschatology lends to the whole of theology.²³

Wolfhart Pannenberg considers surprising that “the theme of the kingdom of God has not played as dominant a role in Christian eschatology as one might expect.”²⁴ And that is one of the

²⁰ Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 183–84.

²¹ Claus Schwambach, “Escatologia como Categoria Sistemático-Teológica – Um Ensaio em Perspectiva Protestante,” *Vox Scripturae: Revista Teológica Brasileira* 14, no. 2 (October 2006): 142.

²² Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 16.

²³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 15.

²⁴ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:527.

emphases in his *Systematic Theology*, asserting the central position of eschatology in Christian doctrine, in the sense that “it determines the perspective of Christian doctrine as a whole. With the eschatological future God’s eternity comes into time and it is thus creatively present to all the temporal things that precede this future.”²⁵

It has been recognized that Pannenberg’s way of dealing with eschatology “is perhaps the most radical attempt to understand the whole of Christian faith and theology as eschatology.”²⁶ The relationship between time and eschatology has an important role in Pannenberg’s theology. He looks at history by reversing the traditional order (past–present–future). For him the future defines reality in the past and in the present. The reason behind that argument is Pannenberg’s view that God is to be understood as the power of future, who brings people to communion with him already in present time. That is what “makes eschatology the unifying perspective of the whole theological project.”²⁷ The presence of the Kingdom, as Jesus has proclaimed it, is a result of what God is preparing in the future.

After considering different approaches to Eschatology in the last two centuries, Schwoebel points out five lessons one should consider in terms of the risks that those studies run.²⁸ First, is what he calls “the *fallacy of eschatological isolation*,” a double risk actually: “giving eschatology priority to the whole theological enterprise or in isolating it unduly from its connection with other articles of Christian faith and *loci* of Christian doctrine.” Secondly, what he calls as “the *fallacy of one-dimensional eschatologies*,” happens when an author overemphasizes one aspect, “be it the existential dimension, the historical dimension, the

²⁵ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:531.

²⁶ Schwoebel, “Last Things First?” 229.

²⁷ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:229.

²⁸ Schwoebel, “Last Things First?” 237–41.

political dimension or the cosmic dimension,” considering individual and corporate aspects of eschatology as alternative conceptions. Thirdly, the “fallacy of misplaced continuities and discontinuities” may be verified when the eschatological (future) facts are either so discontinuous in relation to present experience that it’s almost impossible to speak about those facts; or when it is so continuous with our existence here and now that it seems “to be an extension of our present experience, an evolution from our present state, ultimately undistinguishable from the human project of perfection.” Fourthly, this lesson refers to the way different views on eschatology deal with the relation of the eschaton to time. Schwoebel calls it the “fallacy of premature temporalization of the eschaton.” He questions the human tendency of conceiving “of eschatological ultimacy by locating it at some point in our consciousness of time.” Understanding time as part of the creation, he suggests that “time, and with it the open future, is as problematical for expressing eschatological ultimacy as any dimension of created existence.” For him only God himself is “the starting point for grasping the significance of the *eschaton*,” not the created time. Lastly, Schwoebel suggests that we learn from the discussions of eschatology in the twentieth century to be aware of the danger of “the moralization of eschatology,” in other words, the relationship between eschatology and ethics. Schwoebel calls the attention to the fact that the kingdom of God is not a human project; neither will be brought by human action. Therefore, the particularity of Christian ethics is that it is “oriented towards the promise that the fulfillment of the ultimate goal is in the hands of the triune God.”

Claus Schwambach²⁹ points as to important deficiency in most of the studies on the importance of eschatology, namely the lack of a connection to the central issues in Scripture, or, in other words, the difficulty of doing justice to the whole of biblical teaching on eschatology.

²⁹ Claus Schwambach is a Brazilian Lutheran theologian and teaches Systematic theology at a Lutheran School of Theology in São Bento, Brazil.

He proposes that eschatology has to be understood in relation to the centrality of the concept of *promissio Dei*. The gospel itself comes through written and proclaimed word and through the sacraments. It is nothing more than the justification of the wicked, by God's grace through faith in Christ. Such an approach, affirms Schwambach, allows a relationship between present and future that doesn't need to depend on categories of "process, partial and provisory anticipation, prolepsis, fragments of eschatological salvation"³⁰ The concept of *promissio* allows us to see God's eschatological gift being given entirely today, but in a hidden way, still to be completely manifested, but already completely real.³¹

In the next section, we will turn to the New Testament to examine the significance of the presence of God's kingdom in Jesus' person and ministry so that we may later discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in eschatology seen as inaugurated in Christ.

The Kingdom of God Anticipated in Christ's Person and Mission: A Description of "Inaugurated Eschatology"

In the beginning of his ministry our Lord proclaimed, "the kingdom of heaven is near" (h;ggiken h` basilei,a tw/n ouvranw/n, Matt. 4:17). It could be asked how near it was. The verb here used in the Perfect aspect denotes a completed action, where the subject is so close that it can even be sensed and touched.³² Another way to say it is "the kingdom is at hand," i.e., it is

³⁰ According to Schwambach, such categories are employed by Moltmann, Pannenberg, Leonardo Boff, John Hick, and others.

³¹ Schwambach, "Escatologia Como Categoria Sistemático," 177–79. In a similar direction Sauter suggests as an alternative view to those of the main figures in the end of nineteenth and in the twentieth centuries: "the perception of God's *promise as a pledge by which God points us in the direction where we must set out.*" For Sauter that was the way the Reformers, Luther and Calvin especially, had the promise of the Gospel in the center of their theology. "Hope is what we receive through *justification*, i.e., through God's pronouncing judgment on who we are, on our doing and letting things go undone, and through God's acting which orients us to God. This is the way we must consider the relationship between justification and hope as well as the relationship between God's promise and our own future: this is the task of eschatology." (Sauter, *What Dare We Hope?* xiv)

³² Jeffrey Gibbs agrees that the verb *evggi,zw* usually means "approach, come near." However, by its use in the LXX and in Matthew's Gospel, it can be equivalent to "arrive." Gibbs then extensively demonstrates by Matthew's use of the verb that the point in Jesus' (and John the Baptist's, 3:2) proclamation, is that the kingdom is

already here. That is the same idea that Jesus affirmed to some people who came to ask him about the kingdom: “the kingdom of God is in your midst” (Luke 17:21).³³ An especially significant text is a word of Jesus in Matt. 12:28, “the kingdom of God has already come upon you” (εἰς ὑμᾶς ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ). Here the Lord uses the verb *ἐγένετο*, giving the idea of getting to some place. Two details of the text attract our attention. First, the verb appears in its Aorist aspect to indicate an event in the historical past. Second, there is an explicit connection with the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says he is working *ἐν πνεύματι τοῦ θεοῦ* (in the Spirit of God). Therefore, the presence of the kingdom is marked by the ministry of Jesus as it is guided by the Spirit.³⁴ The future reality of God’s reign is being anticipated by the presence and ministry of Jesus.

The anticipation of the kingdom is also witnessed by the language that the apostles employed speaking about the presence of God’s future in the life of the people of God. The expression “in these last days” (*ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ταύταις*) used by the author to the Hebrews (Heb. 1:2) is a reference to the ultimate manifestation of God through His Son. Read in context this expression does not simply mean that something happened in the near past, but that the past described as the “last days” is characterized as being ultimate. It is similar to what Peter says in his first Epistle, reminding his readers that Jesus was manifested “at the end (or, in the last) of the times” (*ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ταύταις*, 1 Pet. 1:20). The same apostle Peter could say

already here. That does not deny the future reference of the kingdom, which is also emphasized in the Synoptic Gospels, but it establishes a double presence – here, in Jesus’ first coming and ministry, and in the future, at the glorious second coming of the Messiah. (Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Jerusalem and Parousia: Jesus’ Eschatological Discourse in Matthew’s Gospel* [St. Louis: Concordia, 2000], 35–38).

³³ The Greek text says *ἐν ὑμῖν ἐγένετο*. Arthur Just has convincingly argued against the translation, “inside you.” Even being a grammatical possibility, as “among you” also is, that reading would introduce something completely strange to the preaching of Jesus. “In your midst” (or “among you”) accentuates the presence of the kingdom in Jesus person, and points to his presence among them as the incarnate rule of God. (Arthur Just, *Luke 9:51–24:53 Concordia Commentary* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1997], 662–63).

³⁴ We will consider this text in more detail in the next section, where we will examine the work of the Holy Spirit in Jesus life and ministry.

in the day of Pentecost that a fulfillment was happening of what the prophet Joel said it would happen “in the last days” (evn tai/j evsca,taij h`me,raij - Acts 2:17). And John, in his first Epistle, affirms to his readers: “Little children, it is the last hour” (Paidi,a(evsca,th w[ra evsti,n - 1 John 2:18).

All these apostolic expressions stress the ultimate quality of the time that is referred to. The coming of Christ, as the final and complete revelation of God and of His salvific project to humanity, is understood by the apostles as the anticipation of the end times.

A very significant text of the New Testament on the subject is the word of Paul in 1 Cor. 10:11, where the apostle refers to his readers and to himself as those to whom “the ends [goals] of the ages have come” (ta. te,lh tw/n aivw,wn kath,nthken).³⁵ With such language, Paul underlines the eschatological quality of the coming and the work of Christ. He and his Corinthian readers are living the special time when the Old Testament promises and the history of God’s people find their fulfillment.³⁶

George E. Ladd calls the attention to the fact that both the future and present reality of the kingdom of God is witnessed in Jesus’ proclamation and by the authors of the New Testament as well. For him the solution may be found in the dynamic character of God’s kingdom, which should be understood as “reign” (as the act of dynamically ruling over) rather than as “realm.”³⁷ The kingdom of God, which will be fully active in the future coming of Christ and in new creation, is already present and active in Jesus’ person and ministry. Ladd states: “In its dynamic

³⁵ Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians* Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000), 335, suggests the translation “goals” for te,lh. He argues that the point Paul is making is that in Christ’s death and resurrection God provided the consummation of the goals of all epochs. Therefore by his first coming and work, Jesus inaugurated the last days.

³⁶ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 459.

³⁷ For Ladd’s well-argued thesis, see his *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 122–48.

meaning, the Kingdom of God is God himself, not merely ruling in the universe but actively establishing his rule among men.”³⁸ The kingdom of God is never separated from God himself. By the incarnation of God’s Son, the kingdom came to be actively present among people on earth. That is what is understood as “inaugurated eschatology.”³⁹

James W. Voelz suggests that one should consider the theme of eschatology as key to understand Scripture christologically. In the specific relation between Old and New Testament Voelz states a very suggestive and challenging proposition:

We may say, then, that *what happened in the OT*, either ‘ordinarily’ or in the special historical ‘visitations’ of God, *happened because of the future*. That is to say, *what happened in Israel’s history was determined by the future*, by what would happen in the Age to Come/ o` me,llwn aivw,n. Basically, things will not be so at the second coming, and things did not happen to Christ, because they replicate Israel’s history and what happened to her people in OT times. On the contrary, *things happened in Israel’s history, OT people experienced what they experienced, because of what God would do in the age to come*—which age invaded history proleptically, and manifested its shape and form, in the Christ-event.⁴⁰

As Voelz shows, Christ in his person and saving work is the central eschatological event and the center of Scripture as well. Therefore, working from the point of view of biblical theology, he comes to the conclusion that eschatology is not only the study of last things, but the theological consideration of what is ultimate, in its centrality and importance for all that is

³⁸ Ladd, *Presence of the Future*, 145.

³⁹ It seems that the expression “inaugurated eschatology” was first used by orthodox Russian theologian G. Florovsky (see Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 17) and the expression is sometimes used to make a distinction to Charles Dodd’s “realized eschatology.” Joachim Jeremias suggests the expression “an eschatology that is in process of realization” (“sich realisierende Eschatologie”) to explain what the parables of the kingdom are expressing (Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972], 230). The advantage of calling it an “inaugurated” eschatology is that it gives full recognition of the presence of the kingdom in Christ and in the Church’s life, and at the same time preserves the future fulfillment in the second coming of Christ.

⁴⁰ James W. Voelz, *What does This Mean: Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Post-Modern World* 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1997), 259–60.

theological.⁴¹ The person, ministry and salvific work of Christ, therefore, by manifesting the gracious rule of God in time, can properly be qualified as eschatological.

In his volume on Eschatology of the “Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics,” John Stephenson makes a distinction between realized and inaugurated eschatology, considering what actually happened in Christ and what currently applies to the Church, saying that such distinction “corresponds to the contrast between the quality of God’s reign in the sacred humanity of Christ on the one hand and in the members of His mystical body on earth on the other.”⁴²

The presence and ministry of Christ embodies the kingdom of God on earth in an inaugurated way, as was seen above. To that conclusion, the New Testament adds the significant role played by the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ life and activity. Before we examine how the Gospels depict that presence and actions of the Spirit, we present in a summarized way the contribution of a contemporary Lutheran theologian with his emphasis on a Christology considered under the framework of Pneumatology.

L. A. Sánchez M.: A Contemporary Lutheran Approach of Spirit-Christology

In his doctoral dissertation⁴³ Sánchez has developed a Pneumatological Christology giving

⁴¹ See also Greg Beale, “The Eschatological Conception of New Testament Theology,” in *Eschatology in Bible and Theology: Evangelical Essays at the Dawn of a New Millennium*, ed. Kent E. Brower and Mark W. Elliott (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 11–52, where he tries to demonstrate that “*new creation* is a plausible and defensible center for New Testament theology” (11), since for him “all doctrine in the New Testament is essentially eschatological in nature” (13). Beale affirms: “the apostles understood eschatology not merely as futurology but as a mindset for understanding the present within the climaxing context of redemptive history. That is, the apostles understood that they were already living in the end-times and that they were to understand their present salvation in Christ to be already an end-time reality. *Every aspect of their salvation was to be conceived of as eschatological in nature.* To put in another way, every major doctrine of the Christian faith has an end-time tint.”

⁴² John R. Stephenson, *Eschatology Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics* (Fort Wayne: The Luther Academy, 1993), 28. Voelz makes a similar observation when he observes that what Jesus did in his earthly ministry fulfilled “*in principle*” everything the Old Testament announced about the future kingdom, but something is still to be expected to the future consummation; however, it can also be said that “Jesus fulfilled the eschatological hopes of the prophets *completely in his own person*” (Voelz, *What Does This Mean?* 251, 254).

⁴³ Leopoldo A. Sánchez M., *Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God’s Spirit: Jesus’ Life and Mission in the Spirit as a Ground for Understanding Christology, Trinity, and Proclamation* - PhD Dissertation (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 2003).

due attention to the baptism of Jesus as a fundamental event for understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in Jesus life and ministry. In his book on Pneumatology⁴⁴ he has argued that considering the Holy Spirit's action in creation and in Jesus' humanity, "the spirituality of the body of Christ, the church in the world, has a dynamic and personal dimension of bodily and communitarian character."⁴⁵ In the same way as the Holy Spirit has an active role in the identity of Jesus, in such a way that he never depreciates the human life of the Son of God, he participates in a positive way in the bodily life of the believers and of the church of Christ. Therefore, Sánchez, concludes, any spirituality that minimizes the importance of the corporeality of the body has no source in the Holy Spirit; quite the contrary, it would be an operation of the spirit of the Antichrist (1 John 4:2, 3, 6).⁴⁶

The Holy Spirit dwells in the Church, Christ's body, and that shapes the spirituality of the Church in a way that reading of the written Word of God has a threefold consequence. First, in a soteriological sense, the Spirit guides the Church to read (and listen to) Scripture in order to receive the Son as God's gift of salvation. Secondly, in an ethical sense, Scripture inspires the believers inhabited by the Spirit so that they see Jesus as the perfect model to serve and love the neighbor. And also in a Trinitarian sense, Sánchez explains, the Holy Spirit drives the Church to receive the Scripture message in a way that she can contemplate in adoration the Son as the perfect reflection of the Father's love.⁴⁷

Writing with a special view to a Hispanic and Latino context, Sánchez critically assesses three kinds of spirituality that deviate from the biblical and Christological Pneumatology. They

⁴⁴ Sánchez, *Pneumatología*.

⁴⁵ Sánchez, *Pneumatología*, 150.

⁴⁶ Sánchez, *Pneumatología*, 151.

⁴⁷ Sánchez, *Pneumatología*, 13–18.

are: a fatalistic spirituality, the spirit of new age, and the Spirit in history.

The fatalistic spirituality is easily recognizable in Latin American context and is characterized by a resignation to what are considered inevitable bad situations in life. The idea is that the created world commands a person's life and that is the way "God's will" is disclosed. Those who are oppressed should have a conformist attitude, without admitting that God can change the situation.⁴⁸ And those who are oppressors can find a justification for their attitude and their *status quo* without the worry of acting in behalf of those who suffer. In a sharp contrast to that fatalistic view, Christian Pneumatology affirms God's actions in history, guiding his creatures and, given the sinful nature of humanity, bringing restoration through His Spirit-guided Son.⁴⁹

By "spirit of new age" Sánchez refers to a gnostic-rooted ideology that understands "spirit" as the human side of a cosmic spirit, in a way that human beings are divine. In such a view, the written Word of God is not necessary, since a person can access spiritual world through direct illumination. Besides, material reality is considered inferior and incapable of an authentic spirituality. One of the consequences of this position is the incapacity to accept the body as participant in the future resurrection molded by the resurrection of Christ.⁵⁰ In contrast, Christian spirituality affirms the bodily dimension of life as a good thing and community life of the church as a way of the Spirit doing God's work in the world.⁵¹

The third kind of spirituality present in the Hispanic and Latino context, Sánchez explains,

⁴⁸ Interestingly, Neopentecostalism stands completely contrary to that vision, telling people they should "determine" good things for life, since they are winners.

⁴⁹ Sánchez, *Pneumatology*, 22–24.

⁵⁰ We will deal in the next section with the relevance of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection of Jesus and of the believers as well. That is a significant characteristic of Christian faith and a key point in the affirmation of an eschatological Pneumatology.

⁵¹ Sánchez, *Pneumatología*, 25–29.

is a secularized view of the Spirit's role, that can be seen, for instance, in the Liberation theology, very popular in the twentieth century in Latin America. The Spirit is seen not as the personal agent of God, but as a collective movement in history (in a view that is modeled by Hegel's *Geist*), arriving at a pantheistic view of God. Such a view brings consequently a disregard of Christ as the full manifestation of God. When people are part of an organized movement that aims at and fights for better conditions of life, this is considered as a movement driven by the Spirit. The same view is applied to other world events of liberation, as the fall of Berlin's wall or the end of South-African Apartheid. Lutheran theology sees such a view with suspicion, reminds Sánchez, since an identification of the Spirit's work apart from the revealed Word ignores the necessary distinction between providence and grace. Besides, such a view runs the risk to attribute to the Spirit working without the Word something that could be confused with the gospel of salvation in Christ.⁵²

Sánchez points out the weakness of such worldviews in that they do not identify the depth of sin in human life. Consequently, such visions also lack the necessary emphasis on God's forgiveness by Christ's work, as applied to the sinner by the Holy Spirit through the proclaimed gospel.⁵³ The work of the Spirit begins in this life in His fight against human flesh (understood not as the body, but as the entire man seen in his natural enmity against God and attempt to justify himself).⁵⁴ However, that work of sanctification will find its outcome in the resurrection of the body, the full transformation of human being by Christ's image. The same Spirit who is the Lord and Giver of life since creation (Gen. 1:2; 2:7), and who empowered the Savior by His presence in the beginning of a new creation, recreates in us Christ's divine image, which will be

⁵² Sánchez, *Pneumatología*, 30–35.

⁵³ Sánchez, *Pneumatología*, 39.

⁵⁴ That important emphasis will be dealt in more details later, when we consider Regin Prenter's description of Luther's theology of the Holy Spirit.

completed in the resurrection.⁵⁵

The role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinitarian economy of creation and redemption of the world is of special importance in Sánchez' approach. He poses the problem of classical theism, represented by Thomas Aquinas, where the unity of God is considered before discussing the divine Persons and their relation to creation. In such a way of dealing with the doctrine of God, there is a weakening of the dynamic presence of the Spirit of the Father in the Son's humanity and in the church.⁵⁶

A focal point of Sánchez' Pneumatology and the main object of his dissertation, expanded in a book,⁵⁷ is his discussion of the life and ministry of Jesus as the receiver, bearer and giver of the Spirit. The necessary Nicene emphasis on the immanent Trinity (to respond to Arianism) brought a decline of interest in the economic Trinity and, consequently, in the reflection on the presence of the Holy Spirit in and accompanying Jesus' humanity. In such context, a pneumatological Christology is particularly necessary, giving a more biblical approach to the doctrine of God. Jesus' life and ministry is one where the Spirit fully inhabits. The Holy Spirit is always present in every step of the Savior work of redemption of humanity. Such a view, Sánchez stresses, should not be seen as substitute for a Logos-Christology, but as a necessary complement in order to better witness the person and work of Jesus, presenting him in relation to humanity in the economy of salvation.⁵⁸

A Christology shaped by the role of the Holy Spirit focuses, according to Sánchez, three

⁵⁵ Sánchez, *Pneumatología*, 53–54. That is a significant important observation for the purpose of this study, emphasizing the Spirit's role in eschatology, also the future cosmic events announced by Scripture related to the second coming of Christ. Sánchez also points out that the second petition of the Lord's prayer ("Your kingdom come" – Luke 11:2) assumes the coming of the Spirit (Luke 11:13), as a variant reading from the eleventh century, but having roots in the fourth century, explicitly poses ("Your Spirit come upon us and purify us"). (61)

⁵⁶ Sánchez, *Pneumatología*, 68–69.

⁵⁷ Sánchez, *Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God's Spirit*.

⁵⁸ Sánchez, *Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God's Spirit*, 30.

special events in Jesus' life and ministry: his conception and birth, his anointing at the Jordan River, and his exaltation.⁵⁹ The baptism of Jesus Spirit receives special attention, not only as a witness to people who were present at the moment and to believers today, but it actually means something decisive to Jesus himself. Already in his book on Pneumatology, Sánchez called the attention to the fact that the baptism of Jesus was an important event for Him and not only as a witness of his identity to others:

[Pneumatological Christology] understands the event as constitutive to the incarnate Son himself and through him to the church. The pneumatological Christology knows very well that in the past heterodox people (for instance, Adoptionists, Gnostics, and Arians) have used the baptism to deny the preexistence, divinity, and incarnation of the Son. But even considering that does not deny the importance of the event to the Son in his humanity and history as receptor and bearer of the Spirit, in his role as giver of the Spirit to the church, and in his Trinitarian identity as the Son of the Father in the Spirit.⁶⁰

A Christology shaped by the presence and active role of the Spirit also witnesses the primary place of the Father. He is the one who sent Jesus to the world in the power of the Spirit, and he sends the Spirit after Jesus death and resurrection. That descending movement is followed by an ascendant one—the Spirit is the sanctifier of humanity, and in his mission he brings people back to the Father through the soteriological work of the Son.⁶¹ In order to grant the benefits of Jesus to his human creature, the Spirit delivers forgiveness of sins through the Word of God, written, proclaimed or in baptism and the Lord's Supper. Remembering Luther Pneumatology, Sánchez understands the means of grace as the instruments used by the Spirit, that no one has the right to despise. However, he is also cautious not to make them automatic instruments, and

⁵⁹ Sánchez, *Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God's Spirit*, 33. We will discuss the role of the Spirit in those events later in this chapter, dealing specifically with the coming, ministry and messianic work of Jesus.

⁶⁰ Sánchez, *Pneumatologia*, 106.

⁶¹ Sánchez, *Pneumatologia*, 123–24.

therefore preserves the Spirit lordship over the means.⁶²

Sánchez' description of Spirit-Christology provides a helpful framework to consider the person and work of Christ in a way that is congruent with biblical narrative and that emphasizes the economy of salvation as the external work of the Triune God. In the next section, we will succinctly describe the course of Jesus' life on earth from conception to resurrection, as seen through the lens of the operation of the Holy Spirit. In Christ the kingdom of God finds its inaugurated form, bringing to the present time what is expected to become a full reality in the end. Therefore, the description that follows will serve to connect the Holy Spirit to the eschatology of the New Testament in its proleptic manifestation.

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Christ's Coming, Ministry, and Messianic Work

The Holy Spirit and Jesus' Earthly Origin.

The Gospels of Matthew (1:18, 20) and Luke (1:35) attribute the earthly origin of Jesus in the virgin Mary to the action of the Holy Spirit at the same time that identifying the Only-begotten as God's (the Father's) Son.

Matthew uses twice the preposition normally denoting origin (evk) to describe the role of the Spirit in the earthly origin of Jesus. First, it is the evangelist who announces that Mary was pregnant evk tou/ pneu,matoj a`gi,ou (1:18). That is said after the evangelist begins to describe the "origin" (ge,nesij)⁶³ of Jesus. Already in the genealogy ("book of origin" – Bi,bloj gene,sewj) Matthew opened the way to the mysterious participation of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' origin. Several times the evangelist uses the formula "x begat (evge,nnhsen) y," where "x" has the role of father. When he introduces the begetting of Jesus, there is no human father, and for that reason

⁶² Sánchez, *Pneumatologia*, 135–42.

⁶³ Some variant readings have ge,nnhsij (birth).

Matthew states: “Joseph, husband of Mary, from whom (“her” - evx h-j) Jesus was begotten” (1:16). Matthew 1:18 names the Holy Spirit as the one who is the cause of Jesus’ being begotten. The second time Matthew employs the preposition denoting origin is to quote a word said by an angel to Joseph: “the one who was begotten in her is from (evk) the Holy Spirit” (1:20).

Luke also witnesses the role of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation, through the words of an angel to Mary: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you . . . and the holy one who will be born will be called Son of God” (Luke 1:35). The word of the angel recorded by Luke makes explicit what is already implicit in Matthew’s account: the significant role of the Holy Spirit does not allow calling him the Father of Jesus. However, it is significant that the Holy Spirit has a mediating role between the Father and Son, as will be also seen explicitly in other events of Jesus’ ministry, and that is implicit in his whole life and mission.⁶⁴ Sánchez stresses the Trinitarian aspect of the incarnation: “the Holy Spirit mediates the Father-Son relationship in the economy, for the holy child Emmanuel becomes the messianic Son of God for us by means of the creative, eschatological power in history of the Father’s Spirit.”⁶⁵

It has been pointed by scholars that the language used by the evangelists related to the activity of the Spirit in Jesus’ conception reminds the reader of the creation narrative in Genesis, where the Holy Spirit is said to be hovering over the original waters (Gen. 1:2).⁶⁶

The Holy Spirit in Jesus’ Baptism and Temptation.

The coming of Jesus to be baptized evoked a strong reaction by John, who tried to prevent

⁶⁴ Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1 Concordia Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 106. He quotes from the dissertation of Leopoldo Sánchez who pointed out that eschatological role of the Spirit in the history of salvation promoted by the Father through the Son.

⁶⁵ Sánchez, *Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God’s Spirit*, 35.

⁶⁶ For instance, Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 517, who makes the observation about the necessary distinction between the two actions of the Spirit, since in the conception of Jesus there is no indication about the manner of the Spirit’s action.

that baptism (Matt. 3:14).⁶⁷ John had announced him as the baptizer with the Spirit, not as the recipient of baptism.⁶⁸ Actually the reader will also be surprised by the fact of Jesus being part of the “row” of sinners who came to be baptized “as long as they were confessing their sins” (evxomologou,menoi ta,j a`marti,aj auvtw/n - Matt. 3:6). Not having sin, he put himself among the sinners—an indication of what his messianic mission would entail.

All the canonical Gospels testify the coming of the Holy Spirit in a special way—as a dove—upon Jesus after his baptism.⁶⁹ John adds a significant information in the words of God to John the Baptist: “the one upon whom you will see the Spirit descending *and remaining* (me,non) this is the baptizer in/with the Holy Spirit” (John 1:33).⁷⁰ That important observation by John may be also seen indirectly in a reference made by Luke, that after his baptism, Jesus came from the Jordan “full of the Holy Spirit” (vIhsou/j plh,rhj pneu,matoj a`gi,ou - Luke 4:1). Later, in his proclamation at Cornelius home, Peter referred to Jesus’ baptism as the beginning of the Lord’s ministry, when he was “anointed with the Holy Spirit and power” (e;crisen auvto.n o` geo,j pneu,mati a`gi,w| kai. duna,mei - Acts 10:38). All these underline the fact that the coming of the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ baptism was an event for him, Jesus, and not only a witness to John

⁶⁷ Matthew’s use of the Imperfect tense (diekw,luen) accentuates the insistence attempt by John. Besides, the use of the nominative forms of the personal pronoun by John also underlines the emphatic way he tried to avoid Jesus’ baptism.

⁶⁸ Bruner, *Matthew: The Christbook – Matthew 1–12* (Dallas: Word, 1987), 63. Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 51, raises the hypotheses that John’s attempt to impede Jesus could be explained by his conviction of the Spirit’s connection to Jesus in a special way: either that the one who would come to baptize with the Spirit and fire would not need a water baptism; or that for him, given the coming of the Messiah, the time of the new baptism (Spirit and fire) had already come.

⁶⁹ Among other explanations of the significance of the form as a dove for the coming of the Spirit, it seems that the best explanation is the one that sees a parallel with Old Testament events, specially the appearance of the Holy Spirit in creation (Gen. 1:1—the verb used reminds the movement of a bird upon its offspring) and at the end of the flood (Gen. 8:8–11). With those parallels the coming of the Spirit upon Jesus signals to a new beginning, a recreation that will be caused by the Messiah’s mission. (Bruner, *Matthew*, 90)

⁷⁰ Matthew (3:16), Luke (3:22) and John (1:33) say the Spirit came “upon him” (evp v auvto,n). Mark (1:10) says the Spirit came “to him,” or even “into him.”

the Baptist or to the readers of the Gospels.⁷¹

The coming of the Spirit at Jesus' baptism is significant for at least two key reasons. First, in the sense that Jesus receives the seal of the Father to the mission he is about to begin (as Peter also witnessed to Cornelius). It is true that the Gospels give reason to say that since his conception Jesus is identified as the Messiah. However, in his baptism, through his receiving the Holy Spirit, his messianic identity becomes "a concrete reality *for us*" with the beginning of the mission given by the Father.⁷² This fact gives to Jesus' baptism a character of public proclamation. That event discloses Jesus' mission to the peoples of the world as the work of the One who was sent by the Father to deliver eternal gifts to mankind.

Second, it is an eschatological event, with the Holy Spirit being poured out as Joel has prophesied (Joel 2:28–32), as a mark of the last days.⁷³ Leopoldo Sánchez shows how a Spirit Christology connects the Jordan event with the eschatological mission of Jesus (in his Messianic character):

Whereas the Son has the Spirit for himself already from conception, a Spirit Christology notes that it is only from the moment of his anointing with the Spirit at the Jordan that the Gospels link more directly the presence of the Spirit in the Son with his giving of the same to others in the new creation.⁷⁴

Considering what we have just pointed, it is proper to say that the baptism of Jesus was a Spirit-event, by which the Messiah begins his work. At the same time he is humbly accepting the will of the Father, being identified among the sinners (Matt. 3:5, 6, 13; see also 2 Cor. 5:21). He is also empowered with the Holy Spirit to his messianic mission. John had announced that the

⁷¹ Matthew (3:16) and Mark (1:10) still add the note that Jesus himself saw the Spirit coming upon (or, into) him.

⁷² Sánchez, *Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God's Spirit*, 40.

⁷³ J. K. Howard, J. K. "The Baptism of Jesus and Its Present Significance," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (July-September 1967): 136. Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1*, 182, calls the attention to the fact that the coming of the Holy Spirit "like a dove," as an allusion to Gen. 1:2, points to the inception of the eschatological creation.

⁷⁴ Sánchez, *Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God's Spirit*, 46.

one coming after him would baptize in/with the Holy Spirit. What the Gospels show is that before baptizing with the Spirit, the Messiah would be baptized with this same Holy Spirit. His future mission, which is officially beginning now, is properly understood taking account of the importance of the Holy Spirit as God's unction upon the Son.

It was "full of the Holy Spirit" (Luke 4:1) that Jesus was led to be tempted. The Synoptic Gospels explicitly announce the action of the Spirit taking Jesus to the desert.⁷⁵ The glorious announcement that he was the Son of God and his unction with the Holy Spirit did not prevent him from being tempted by the devil. Actually, the evangelists testify that the temptation was not an accident in the way of Jesus, but something in which God had an explicit participation, leading the Son, through the Holy Spirit, "in order to be tempted."⁷⁶ Each of the temptations may serve as a depiction of different kinds of challenges to Jesus. More importantly, Jesus' answers with Old Testament passages point to situations where Israel was tempted and felt.⁷⁷ The event shows Jesus treading the path that Israel was once called to go. However, the one who is now being tempted wins the challenge, presenting himself as the new Israel.⁷⁸ It is significant that Jesus uses the Word of Scripture to defeat Satan in his attacks. It is the sword of the Spirit, by which God's truth is manifested against the enemy's lies.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Mark (1:12) put it as an active work of the Spirit (to. pneu/ma auvto.n evkba,llei eivj th.n e;rhmon), while Matthew and Luke use passive form of verbs to say that Jesus "was led" (Aorist - Matt. 4:1 - avnh,cqh) or "was being led" (Imperfect tense - Luke 4:1 - h;geto).

⁷⁶ Matthew 4:1 uses the Infinitive of purpose - peirasqh/nai - to depict the action of the Spirit leading Jesus to the desert.

⁷⁷ Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1-11:1*, 187-88, calls the attention to a theological distinction in what happened to Jesus (who was led by the Spirit so that he would be tempted by Satan) and what Israel faced in the desert after the exodus, being tested in several situations.

⁷⁸ Just, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 172-73.

⁷⁹ The devil himself also quoted the Old Testament, but with a partial and out of context reference to Psalm 91.

Jesus' Ministry in the Spirit.

Luke introduces the ministry of Jesus saying that after the temptation he came “in the power of the Spirit” (evn th/| duna,mei tou/ pneu,matoj — 4:14). The evangelist directly connects the baptism in the Jordan with the beginning of Jesus’ teaching and proclaiming his messianic character (Luke 4:15,18ff). D. Bock points to the parallel between the Spirit acting in the beginning of the ministry of Jesus and his participation in the ministry of the early Church (Acts 2): “This point of continuity between Jesus’ ministry and the church’s is the first of many that Luke reports.”⁸⁰

Jesus announced the presence of the Holy Spirit in his messianic work as a fulfilment of prophecy (as witnessed by Matt. 12:1–21). The quotation from Isaiah serves to the purpose of showing, in a general way, that Jesus ministry is a ministry of the Spirit, the Spirit that Yahweh sends upon the Servant. The use of the fulfillment formula (this or that happened “in order to [an Old Testament promise] be fulfilled”) is an important contribution of Matthew to the identification between Jesus and the Servant announced by Isaiah. It is a device that Matthew employs to show the coming of the “time of eschatological fulfillment” in Jesus life and ministry.⁸¹ Besides, the Isaiah passage shows the kind of ministry Jesus was doing, a ministry of healing. More specifically, Isaiah is quoted as the basis for Jesus asking those he healed “not to make him known” (Mat. 12:15). And that, again, is theologically significant. The role of the Spirit is mentioned in a situation where Jesus, full of the Spirit but knowing about a plot against his life, preferred the secrecy. The Messiah came in humility to fulfill his mission, by the powerful Spirit of Yahweh, that hides his power and manifests himself in gentleness. The mention of the Spirit, therefore, serves to enhance the Old Testament announced messianic

⁸⁰ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 391.

⁸¹ Jack D. Kingsbury, *Matthew Proclamation Series* 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 22.

character of Jesus' mission.⁸² The situation that follows exemplifies the role of the Spirit in the Lord's actions. What is new is the specific reference that Jesus makes to the derivation of his actions from the Spirit's power.

After healing a blind and dumb man by casting a demon that was oppressing him, Jesus was accused by the Pharisees for acting in league with⁸³ "Beelzebul, the prince of demons" (Matt. 12:24). In response, Jesus made a statement that discloses a key element of his ministry: "But if in the Spirit of God I am casting out the demons, therefore the kingdom of God has arrived upon⁸⁴ you" (12:28). Jesus sets one of the main elements of his ministry—healing and casting demons—in the sphere of the Spirit.⁸⁵ Likewise, Peter associates the unction with the Spirit with the ministry of Jesus of doing good work and "healing all those who were being oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38). The important conclusion from this is that not only Jesus came to fight against evil forces, but the Holy Spirit has a significant role in that.⁸⁶

Jesus' action done "in the Spirit" shows the presence of God's rule in an "eschatological-conflict situation."⁸⁷ Healings are significant signs of the kingdom of God (his active ruling among his human creatures), for they not only provide spiritual direction to those that were

⁸² Guthrie, *Theology of the New Testament*, 520.

⁸³ Gibbs argues that the construction of preposition *evn* followed by dative should be understood as a "dative of respect" (also in vv. 27,28), indicating that the Pharisees understood a cooperation between Jesus and an evil power (possibly, in their perspective, stronger than him). (Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 632)

⁸⁴ Gibbs reminds the use of preposition *evpi*, with the accusative meaning "against," which would be a proper understanding in that context, since Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees (*Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 633).

⁸⁵ Instead of "in the Spirit of God," Luke has "in/by the finger of God" (Luke 11:20), in what can be seen as a reference to Exod. 8:19, where the Pharaoh's magicians recognize God is acting in the plagues. Gundry (*Matthew*, 235) argues that Matthew's reference to the Spirit is emphatic, since it comes before the *evgw*, of Jesus. Besides, the explicit mention of the Spirit denotes an allusion to Isa 42:1 and is a proper transition to the blasphemy against the Spirit (vv. 31, 32).

⁸⁶ Such role should be considered when we reflect on the work of the Holy Spirit in the present time. That seems to be an emphasis classical Pentecostalism would embrace, but that is almost absent in Neopentecostal discourse on spiritual warfare.

⁸⁷ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 37. That expression will depict very properly what is still happening when the kingdom of God, by the presence of the Holy Spirit in Word and sacrament, fights against Satan and his deceptions.

healed; these signs also anticipate the future full redemption of the entirety of humanity and the whole creation (Rom. 8:18–25). The ministry of Jesus displays the *creator* nature of the Spirit’s work. He makes the kingdom of God be dynamically present among men, he fights the devil and his attempts to seize what God has created (Luke 4:6).

Exorcisms also played a major role in the manifestation of God’s rule in the world through the ministry of the Messiah-King. They underline the spiritual conflict in which Jesus was being put, a conflict not only with human adversaries, but with the spiritual evil forces. The kingdom of evil had to be defeated as long as God’s kingdom was in action. Therefore, the exorcisms as a part of the Spirit-guided ministry of Jesus were manifestations of the Spirit demonstrating that a most powerful person was present (Matt. 12:27–29). When Jesus sent out the seventy disciples, they had the mandate of proclaiming the coming of the kingdom (Luke 10:9). However, what caused the strongest impression on them was the fact that the evil spirits were subjected by Jesus’ name (v. 17).⁸⁸ In his response, Jesus did not allow that such a fact would be overemphasized by them, and directed them to the joy of salvation (v. 20). It is significant that after that report, Luke tells that Jesus “was joyful in the Holy Spirit” (hvgallia,sato evn tw/| pneu,mati tw/| a`gi,w| - v. 21).⁸⁹

Jesus’ Death and Resurrection and the Holy Spirit

The whole life and ministry of the Lord can be characterized as a journey “in the Spirit.” His conception was “from the Holy Spirit,” who also anointed him in Baptism, even driving him to be tempted by the devil in the desert. His ministry of proclaiming the kingdom, casting out

⁸⁸ Just, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, 444, draws attention to a fact in the disciples’ mission that has significant implications for the Spirit-guided life of the Church: “In the very preaching of Jesus’ emissaries, the kingdom of God has already become a present reality and the kingdom of Satan is firmly defeated.”

⁸⁹ Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 519–20.

evil spirits and healing the sick followed his anointing in the Jordan, where the Spirit came upon him and, as John witnessed, “remained in him” (John 1:32, 33). He bore the Spirit in such a way that he would be able to baptize with the Spirit. Given the frequent and significant mention of the Spirit being present and active in the whole life of Jesus, it may be a surprise that the New Testament has so little to say about the Spirit’s role in Jesus’ decisive action on the cross.

However, as Leopoldo Sánchez affirms,

the central move from Jesus’ bearing to his dispensing of the Spirit is the cross. God the Father anointed the Son with the Spirit to be the obedient Son and suffering Servant. The way of the Spirit in, upon, and with Jesus is the way of the cross. At the Jordan, therefore, Jesus was anointed to die on our behalf and this open for us, through his sacrifice, the way of life in the new creation. Life in the Spirit leads to and flows from his cross.⁹⁰

What seems to be the only direct reference to the Holy Spirit being active in the death of Jesus is the declaration made by the author of Hebrews (9:14): “much more the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish will purify our conscience from dead works to the service to the living God.”⁹¹ F. F. Bruce suggests that the text of Hebrews is a reference to Isa. 42:1. Therefore, the text stresses the role of Jesus as the Suffering Servant, upon whom, when introduced for the first time, is said to have received the Spirit of the Lord upon himself. It is by the Holy Spirit, then, that “the Servant accomplishes every phase of his ministry, including the crowning phase in which he accepts death for the transgression of his people, filling the twofold role of priest and victim, as Christ does in this Epistle.”⁹²

The reference in Heb. 9:14 qualifies the Spirit as “eternal” (αἰώνιον) in a possible

⁹⁰ Sánchez, *Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God’s Spirit*, 66.

⁹¹ We fully agree with L. Sánchez that what happened in Jesus’ death, that the Lord “gave up his spirit” (John 19:30) is not a direct reference to the Holy Spirit, but to his death. However, Sánchez reminds, John’s typical use of symbolic language allows the reader to recall that Jesus had promised to give His Spirit after his glorification (for instance, John 7:37–39). In this sense, that passage could be “a case of intentional ambiguity,” and in such case, it is possible to conclude: “John has brilliantly brought together anthropological and Christological notions of *pneuma* under one theological vision. (Sánchez, *Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God’s Spirit*, 68).

⁹² F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 217.

connection with “redemption” (v. 12) and “inheritance” (v. 15), since both are also qualified as “eternal.” The adjective “eternal” would then be a reference to the eschatological dimension of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.⁹³

The Spirit is directly linked to the act of Christ offering himself (e`auto.n prosh,negken) in a holy sacrifice. It was radically different if compared to the sacrifices by other priests, who needed the blood of animals to cleanse their own sins before everything else. Therefore, “Christ was supernaturally empowered to be himself an unblemished offering; or conversely, it was the power of eternal Spirit which made Christ’s unique sacrifice eternal in its effect.”⁹⁴ Since Christ was himself the author of the offering, the reference is also to his priestly office. The Holy Spirit anointed him to be a priest in every aspect of his ministry, including his sacrificial death.⁹⁵

Martin Emmrich⁹⁶ has convincingly argued that the expression “by the Holy Spirit” in the present text is a specific reference to the gift of the Spirit by the Father to Jesus in his character as the definitive High-Priest. Working with a series of texts from the Old Testament and from Judaic sources, Emmrich supports his assertion that there is a “link between possession of the Holy Spirit and the office of the high priest.”⁹⁷ He concludes:

Dia. pneu,matoj aivwni,ou thus indicates the Holy spirit sustained the high priest (here: Christ entering eivj ta. a[gia , 9:12) in the execution of his most critical cultic appointment. The Spirit is called “*eternal* Spirit” to bring out the (extraordinary) eschatological significance of the Spirit’s assistance in Christ’s once-for-all priestly action evpi. suntelei,a| tw/n aivw,nwn (see 9:26). In fact, the agency of the Spirit in

⁹³ Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 324.

⁹⁴ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 457. In disagreement with Bruce, Ellingworth suggests a reference not to Isa. 42, but to the divine fire that was on the altar in the Old Testament, a fire by which the sacrifices were offered to God (see Lev. 9:24; 2 Chron. 7.1). The implication would be that the Holy Spirit assumed a role in Christ’s death analogous to the role of the fire in sacrifices, a fire whose ashes are mentioned in Heb. 9:13.

⁹⁵ O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 325.

⁹⁶ Martin Emmrich, “‘Amtscharisma’: Through the Eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14),” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 12, no. 1 (2002): 17–32.

⁹⁷ Emmrich, “Amtscharisma,” 26.

Christ's atoning approach becomes part of the "time of reconstruction" (9:10) mentioned earlier in the discourse.⁹⁸

From the above discussion, we may conclude that despite the limited New Testament reference of the participation of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' death, the text from Hebrews gives us a strong testimony of the theological significance of his role. When we now turn to the discussion of the Holy Spirit and the resurrection of the Lord, pieces of evidence are more frequent.

The resurrection of Jesus by the Father's operation is a common teaching in the New Testament and is a constant reminder in the apostolic preaching that the Father fully approved and accepted the messianic work of His Son that the Trinity had planned before the foundation of the world (for instance, Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30, 31; 13:33, 34; 17:31; 1 Pet. 1:21). It is possible to argue that in such a powerful act the Holy Spirit was directly involved. His presence and role in every step of the Lord's life and messianic ministry was already discussed. Besides, some texts present his action in a more or less explicit way (1 Pet. 3:18; Rom. 1:3, 4; 1 Tim. 3:16). Gerald Hawthorne argues with Luke's words in the beginning of the book of Acts, that Jesus was with his disciples after his resurrection and gave them commandments "by the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:2):

This is to say, that during the forty-day period after his resurrection and before he was taken up to heaven, Jesus continued to instruct his disciples, as he has done before, "by means of the Holy Spirit." Thus Jesus' entire time on earth, from his birth until his exaltation, which includes his resurrection, is bracketed by references to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit effectively at work in every significant event of his life.⁹⁹

Paul explicitly associates the Holy Spirit with the Lord's resurrection when he says that Jesus was designated as the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness in the resurrection

⁹⁸ Emmrich, "Amtscharisma," 32.

⁹⁹ Gerald F. Hawthorne, "Holy Spirit III: Acts, Hebrews, General Epistles, Revelation," in *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament: A One-volume Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 503.

(Rom. 1:4). Jesus has always been the eternal Son of God, although in weakness and humility since his conception until his death. His divine glory had been hidden, but now became manifest after the resurrection. Now he is the Son of God in a new and powerful sense. The newness of Jesus' Sonship is the fact that he no longer conceals His divine nature that during his earthly ministry was shown in some particular events. He is now publicly declared the glorious Son of God. For Paul the resurrection of Jesus by the power of the Spirit is the most powerful act of God and through that act, a new time has decisively arrived (Eph. 1:19–21).¹⁰⁰

Not only is the Spirit present and active in the resurrection of Jesus, but this event has significance to the resurrection of the believers in the last day. Paul connects both events in Rom. 8:10, 11. The apostle testifies the double reality in the life of believers: they are “mortal bodies” and at the same time they have the Spirit inhabiting in them. The resolution to the paradox comes in two prepositional expressions: “because of sin . . . because of righteousness,” which is a direct affirmation of the *simul iustus et peccator* reality in the believers. In other words, the bodies are characterized as mortal not because of their physical nature, but because of sin that inhabits the person. Then Paul continues his argument with a Trinitarian reference. The Father has resurrected the Son in the past, in whose action the Holy Spirit had a role (as announced by Paul in Rom. 1:4). In the present time, the Spirit inhabits the believers, even though they are still mortal bodies. Those two realities, past and present, bring Paul to the affirmation of the future resurrection. As the Spirit was active in the risen Lord, he will also bring full life to the believers in the future.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 48.

¹⁰¹ Michael P. Middendorf, *Romans 1–8 Concordia Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2013), 627–28.

The Spirit-guided Life of the Church: The Community of the End Times

The eschatology of the New Testament has an important focus in the inauguration of the kingdom of God before the end times through the person and saving ministry of Jesus Christ. As was discussed above, in that proleptic manifestation of the kingdom, the Holy Spirit was the divine active agent in every step of the Lord's mission. However, that same kingdom in Christ is present in the life of the body of the Lord, his Church.

The people of God in the New Testament is the community of believers living as the Spirit's temple, guided by the Spirit, inhabited by him and preserved by faith in Christ to eternal life. In this section we begin by presenting an overview of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of the people of God as presented in the Old and New Testaments. We used as a basis the narrative provided by Lorenz Wunderlich.¹⁰² After that, two significant studies that point to the work of the Spirit in Christ's church will be described. One of the authors¹⁰³ bases his study especially in the narrative of Acts of the Apostles, providing a biblical basis for a Christocentric view of the life of the Church as moved by the Spirit in its life in the world. Regin Prenter,¹⁰⁴ reflecting on Luther's theology of the Holy Spirit, deals more deeply with the Spirit's work in the believer, guiding him in Christ's faith even through weakness and sin, but with the powerful and effective way of the proclamation of the gospel, in word and sacrament.

The Community of End Times Living in the Spirit

The history of God's people in the world can be better understood only when the presence and actions of the Holy Spirit are recognized in every step of that journey. Already in the Old Testament times, the people of God, Israel, walked its way by the Spirit's guidance. He was a

¹⁰² Lorenz Wunderlich, *The Half-known God* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963).

¹⁰³ Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*.

¹⁰⁴ Regin Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, trans. John M. Jensen (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1953).

living presence in characters with a key role in the history of Israel. Joseph was characterized by Pharaoh as a man full of the Spirit (Gen. 41:38). After the liberation of Israel from Egypt, God provided a leadership in Moses and Joshua to guide His people, but the true Leader of Israel during the journey through the desert was the Holy Spirit (Isa. 63:14). During that time of difficulties, it was the Holy Spirit (God's "Good Spirit") who was the teacher of Israel (Neh. 9:20). When Moses had to choose seventy elders, the Holy Spirit bestowed the gift of prophecy on them in order to guide the people (Num. 27:18). When Israel was threatened in its existence either by stubbornness in their sin or by external enemies, the Holy Spirit "came upon" the judges in order to free and guide the people back to security in God's covenant (Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6). Israel's kings were also gifted with the Holy Spirit in order to act as God's anointed leaders (1 Sam. 10:10; 16:13; 2 Sam. 23:2).¹⁰⁵

The presence and actions of the Holy Spirit were also evident in Israel's religious life. The construction of the worship place, even in small details involved in that project, was possible through the Spirit's gifts (Exo. 28:3; 31:3; 35:30–35). After the Babylonian exile, it was the Holy Spirit, and not the people's strength, who provided success for the reconstruction of Jerusalem and its Temple (Zech. 4:6). In times of eminent threats of spiritual disaster for his people, God assisted them with his Spirit, either by raising the word of prophets (Ezek. 2:2; Micah 3:8) or by the promise of the coming Redeemer (Isa. 48:16, 17; 61:1–4).¹⁰⁶

When the age of fulfilment arrived, the Lord announced he would build his Church (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:25, 26). However, the existence and maintenance of Christ's "eschatological

¹⁰⁵ Wunderlich, *Half-known God*, 81–82.

¹⁰⁶ Wunderlich, *Half-known God*, 82–83.

community”¹⁰⁷ is also attributed to the Spirit (John 3:5; 1 Cor. 12:3, 13). One of the most impressive marks of the Spirit’s ministry in the Church and in individual believers is his insistence in promoting Christ’s work of salvation.¹⁰⁸ As the Lord himself had already promised, the Spirit would come to remind the disciples of what Jesus had spoken (John 14:26), being a testimony of him (15:26), and convincing the world of the divine righteousness that is in Christ (16:10).

The Holy Spirit creates the unity of the Church with the Lord, inhabiting in its members individually and as a body as well (1 Cor. 6:19; Rom. 8:9). In addition, the Holy Spirit grants gifts to the members of the body of Christ, so that they may be instruments of God carrying out his purpose of communion and work. Among those gifts, he also establishes offices and roles of leadership in the Church in order to guide his people with his saving gospel (1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4).¹⁰⁹

In his description of the missionary efforts of the church, Luke presents in vivid terms how the Spirit was actively present, commissioning missionaries, such as Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2), and guiding the church in the midst of theological discussions with direct implications for the announcement of the gospel to the gentiles (Acts 15:28). Sometimes the Spirit was also leading the missionaries in such a way that they could not concretize what they planned to do (Acts 16:6,7). When a reality came of local congregations electing their elders (Acts 14:23), Paul recognized that each of those workers was placed as a pastor of the church by the appointment of

¹⁰⁷ David Coffey, *“Did you Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?” Some Basic Questions for Pneumatology* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2005), 113.

¹⁰⁸ It is worthy of note how the Holy Spirit works to call the attention to Christ and not to himself, as Coffey (*Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?*, 114) points out: “how self-emptying the Holy Spirit is in the economy, for only indirectly is the experience of the Holy Spirit in the Church the experience of the Spirit himself. Directly, it is the experience of the Christ to whom he is oriented in his whole being. . . . It allows us to understand in what sense the Holy Spirit’s unique role in the world and in the church is to sanctify, for to sanctify is nothing other than to lead men and women to Christ and unite them with him.”

¹⁰⁹ Wunderlich, *Half-known God*, 83–86.

the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28).¹¹⁰

Wunderlich calls the attention to the presence and actions of the Holy Spirit not only in the Church as a whole but also in every Christian person.¹¹¹ Individual believers, members of the community of faith, are “letters of Christ written by the Spirit of the living God” (2 Cor. 3:3). They have been washed by the Holy Spirit so that they could receive a new birth (paliggenesi,a) and a renewed life, which is described as a new creation (avnakai,nwsij) that resulted in salvation (Tit. 3:5).¹¹² That act of God’s grace is equated to a resurrection to the new life in Christ (Eph. 2:5). Such renewal is a gift of the Holy Spirit, always connected to the work of Jesus (John 3:5, 6; 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:3–6). The new life is continually effected through the inhabitation of the Spirit (John 14:16, 17) by whose presence the believer becomes His “temple” (nao,j, 1 Cor. 3:16), being in communion with the Lord, the true eschatological temple of God (John 2:21; 4:23).¹¹³ Paul uses the fact of this indwelling in the life of the believers to exhort them to live to the glory

¹¹⁰ Wunderlich, *Half-known God*, 87.

¹¹¹ Wunderlich, *Half-known God*, 100–107.

¹¹² The connection of the Holy Spirit with new life in Christ was already announced by the Savior himself (John 3:6). Christ and the Spirit are inseparably united in the promotion of that new life: “this life is simultaneously life in Christ (Gal. 2:20) and life in the Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16). There is neither separation nor opposition here: the reality of life in Christ is the body of Christ, animated by the Holy Spirit dwelling in it. This makes understandable the convergence, approaching identification, of the life in Christ and the life in the Holy Spirit, as can be seen in the following comparisons from the apostolic epistles: We are ‘justified by Christ’ (Gal. 2:17) and ‘by the Spirit of our God’ (1 Cor. 6:11); we are ‘sealed’ (Eph. 1:13; 4:30) and ‘circumcised’ (Col. 2:11) in both; we have joy (Phil. 3:1; see Rom. 14:17), faith (Gal. 3:26; 1 Cor. 1:9), love (Rom. 8:39; Col. 1:8), and fellowship (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 13:14) in both. Likewise, sanctification is sometimes attributed to Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 5:26; Heb. 2:11; 10:29; 13:12) and sometimes to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2.” (Sergius Bulgakov, *The Comforter* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004], 298).

¹¹³ For a thoughtful exposition of the role of the Holy Spirit in the worship life of the Church, see: David Nelson, “Messianic Intermezzo: Eschatology, Spirit, and Worship in the Church,” In Baker, David W. ed. *Looking into the Future: Evangelical Studies in Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 315–24. Nelson uses Moltmann’s suggestion that worship is a “messianic intermezzo” [in musical language, a relatively brief musical piece situated between two major portions of a composition] to underline its eschatological character: “Worship may be viewed as messianic intermezzo in that it occurs within the inaugurated but not yet complete messianic age and because it serves as a kind of doxological interlude, performed by the church, between two grand acts of God, the first and second advents. As such, it looks back to the first coming of Messiah and it looks forward to the second coming, the glorious return of Christ, and the final consummation of the kingdom of God.” (318)

of God through their concrete way of life (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).¹¹⁴ They are now children of God through regeneration and renewal accomplished by baptismal birth (Gal. 3:26, 27). The Holy Spirit gives them true eschatological knowledge of God¹¹⁵, since the Spirit sent by the Father to their hearts is continually calling out “Father, Father” (abba o` path,r, Gal. 4:6). Moreover, it is through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that one is exhorted to keep what God has trusted him (2 Tim. 1:14), even living under injustice and suffering (1 Pet. 4:14).

F. D. Bruner: A Christocentric Approach to the Work of the Holy Spirit in the Church

Bruner’s initial concern was to study the Pentecostal movement from the standpoint of missiology. In order to do that, Bruner divided his book into two main sections. In the first part, he gives an account of Pentecostal history and the role of the Holy Spirit in the theology of that movement. The second section focus on the New Testament teaching about the work of the Spirit, concentrating in the book of Acts, and 1 Corinthians 12 to 14. The reason why Bruner chose those texts was the priority that Pentecostalism gives to them in order to present the doctrine on the Holy Spirit. His intention was to investigate if those texts were properly applied by Pentecostals. However, Bruner wanted to present the work of the Holy Spirit with a wider

¹¹⁴ Robert Preus recognizes as one of the emphases of the Lutheran Confessions in regard to the work of the Holy Spirit, besides working faith in Christ through the Gospel, is to enable us to live a holy life: ‘Without the Holy Spirit we cannot keep the law,’ the Apology says (IV, 135). But when we are justified and regenerated through faith in the Gospel ‘we receive the Holy Spirit’ (Ap IV, 126, 133, 135), who not only comforts us (FC SD, V, 11), governs and defends us from all error (Ap IV, 139), and makes the Gospel clear to us (Ap IV, 230), but also helps us to mortify our sin (Ap II, 45), resist it (Ap IV, 146), war against the law in our members (SA III, iii, 40), lead a pure and godly life, and persevere in the faith. Yes, the Spirit works not only faith in our hearts but love as well, the only love that will ever please God, love toward God and our fellowman (FC SD, III, 23). And the ‘good works’ produced by such love are the testimonies that the Spirit dwells in us (FC Ep, V, 15).” (*Getting into the Theology of Concord: A Study of the Book of Concord* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1977], 52, 53).

¹¹⁵ Reinhard Hutter, “The Church,” in *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church* ed. Buckley, James J and David S. Yeago (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 47, “The Spirit and the Spirit’s works are precisely the guarantee that the knowledge of God, which we suffer by being engaged by them, is a knowledge neither at our disposal nor of our making, but the beginning of a final ‘clothing’, a last ‘suffering’ that will include that knowledge of God of which the apostle Paul says: ‘Then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known’ (1 Cor. 13:12).”

scope. For that reason he dedicated one chapter to the discussion of relevant texts in the Gospel of John and Paul's epistles, by which examination he came closer to a systematic presentation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Although his work is not characterized as a typical book in Systematic theology, his arguments and conclusions provide a significant contribution to Pneumatology in general.

For our study the second part of Bruner's book is of special interest. In that section he deals with selected texts from the New Testament stating at the beginning that his goals are, on the one hand, to describe the doctrine and experience of the Holy Spirit and on the other hand to assess the Pentecostal teaching.¹¹⁶

Since the beginning of his analysis of selected texts of Acts, Bruner calls the attention to the connection between the Spirit's work with Jesus' person and work. Commenting on Acts 1:1, 2, he advises against making a distinctive work of the Holy Spirit as going beyond Jesus.¹¹⁷ Another significant aspect of the special coming of the Spirit in Acts is the fact that it is not a result of special preparation or conditions in the believers. He always comes as a gift, resulting from God's promise. As Bruner points out, "the Spirit in Acts is never achieved or 'obtained' (Acts 8:19, 20 *ktasthai!*), he is always a present, i.e., e is the Spirit *of God*."¹¹⁸ Bruner calls attention to the inclusiveness of the gift of the Spirit. The Spirit comes upon and is given to all believers gathered in a given situation. There is no account of a single believer that does not receive the Spirit when others in the same group had that experience. "The Holy Spirit comes as inclusively as he does unconditionally. Both belong to his character as gift."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 154.

¹¹⁷ Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 156.

¹¹⁸ Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 157–58.

¹¹⁹ Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 159.

In his evaluation of the Pentecostal movement, Bruner warns against some tendencies to consider the gift of the Holy Spirit (or, more specifically, the baptism of/in the Holy Spirit) apart from water baptism. The book of Acts teaches something different, Bruner points out. He considers Acts 2:37–39 a fundamental text by establishing a pattern:

Our text teaches us that since the occurrence of Pentecost Christian baptism becomes the locus of the Spirit's reception in response to the Spirit's pressure in preaching. . . . And after Pentecost this gift is offered, as here, with forgiveness, in the humble rite of baptism. Baptism becomes the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Peter in Acts 2:38 offers no other definition. He does not contrast baptism and the gift of the Spirit, he joins them. . . . it is one of the major purposes of Acts to show that baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit belong indissolubly together. This is the special lesson at Acts 8 and 19.¹²⁰

It is important to note that when the paradigm established in Acts 2:38 is broken, the result should be seen as an abnormality, not as a new rule. That is the reason why the events narrated in Acts 8; 10 and 19 produce surprise in the apostles. Bruner stresses that apostolic reaction calling the attention to the testimony given by Luke in Acts 8:16, "The Spirit had *not yet* fallen on any of them, but they had *only* been baptized":

Luke reports that the Samaritan believers had *only (monon)* been baptized, indicating that enough had not yet occurred, as indeed it had not. To be baptized and not to have received the Spirit was an abnormality, in fact, as the passage goes on to teach, an impossible contradiction in Christian realities.

The qualifications of Acts 8:16 indicating temporary suspension of the normal—the "only baptized" and the "not yet" given Spirit—are, we should note, singular in the Book of Acts and they *presuppose* the union of baptism and the Spirit. In no other place in the New Testament is Christian baptism given the qualifications of Acts 8:16. And promptly in Acts 8:17 we are informed that the singular disconnection was immediately bridged.¹²¹

The event at Cornelius house (Acts 10) is also an important situation, by reason of being an exception. There the Holy Spirit comes before water baptism. And Peter immediately commands that they should be baptized. Therefore, even when the Holy Spirit, in a very special situation,

¹²⁰ Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 169.

¹²¹ Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 177–78.

comes before or after water baptism, such baptism is not considered superfluous.¹²²

Acts 19 shows the encounter of Paul with some “disciples” in Ephesus. After knowing that they were not acquainted with the Holy Spirit, and that they had been baptized only in John’s baptism, Paul proclaimed Christ to them and baptized them. Immediately the Spirit came upon them, and they began to speak in tongues. That very unusual situation is sometimes taken as an example or proof of the distinction and separation between the baptism of the Holy Spirit and baptism with word and water. However, as the context of Acts of the Apostles shows, this event in Ephesus should be taken as an exception, not as a rule. of the subsequence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a rule. Bruner shows, again, that such an event, even as presenting a different situation that was expected (by what was said in Acts 2:38), teaches exactly that faith, baptism and Holy Spirit belong together. The very questions Paul asks them (“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you *believed?*”; “Into what then were you *baptized?*”) unites Spirit, faith and water baptism. Paul then proclaims Christ (not the Spirit!) to them and they are baptized and receive the Spirit.¹²³

Bruner gives a more systematic approach to the theme going beyond the book of Acts and discusses “the way of the Holy Spirit,” in order to show the contrast between the New Testament teaching and Pentecostal doctrine. Three main topics are then discussed: “the condition of the Spirit,” i.e., the work of Christ that releases the sinner from law; “the means of the Spirit,” where he shows the fundamental role of proclamation and baptism; and “the evidence of the Spirit,” which is faith in Christ, being expressed in assurance, expectation (hope) and love to the neighbor.

The condition of the Spirit, argues Bruner, is the work of Christ releasing humankind from

¹²² Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 193–94.

¹²³ Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 212–13.

law. When the New Testament raises the issue of the reception of the Holy Spirit by human beings, one single condition is established, and that is the work of Christ. Reflecting from Gal. 3:10–14, Bruner shows how the way of the law (people searching for the Spirit), sometimes presented by Pentecostalism as a “second experience,” stands in sharp contrast to the way of the gospel (the way of the Spirit to human creatures): “The nomistic direction for acquiring God’s gift is ‘upward’, from man to God; the evangelical direction is ‘downward’, from God to man.”¹²⁴

Romans 8:1-4 teaches the way of the Spirit in contrast to the way of the law, stating that the Spirit makes free from the law and fulfills everything the law demands. Therefore, those who look for the Spirit through fulfilling some conditions actually are walking in the opposite direction, even if those conditions are biblical imperatives. In this way, Bruner concludes, “the spiritualistic and the legalistic are not polar opposites but in fact correlatives.”¹²⁵

The means of the Spirit is no other than the message of faith, including baptism with water and word. Having established the necessary condition, the work of Christ, the Spirit comes through determined means. Paul discusses that in his letter to the Galatians (especially in 3:1–5), so that what the Spirit has as his “*means* is nothing else than the *message* of the condition of the Spirit, namely the message of Jesus Christ upon his cross for us.”¹²⁶

Bruner already pointed out in his examination of specific texts from Acts that water baptism, faith and the coming of the Holy Spirit are a unity. In this way, “faith was incarnational, that is, that it never remained a soul-affair but became historical in the action of baptism in

¹²⁴ Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 228.

¹²⁵ Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 229.

¹²⁶ Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 237.

water.”¹²⁷ In this sense, we should understand the “one baptism” confessed by Paul as the baptism in water, which is identified with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The words of Jesus to Nicodemus (John 3:5) also closely connect water and the Spirit. The same connection is also expressed by Paul in Titus 3:4–8, where salvation, baptism, the complete coming of the Spirit, renewal and being born again are a unity.¹²⁸

Bruner also discusses the “evidence of the Spirit,” namely, Christian faith. The ministry of the Holy Spirit, being based on the full soteriological work of Christ is evidenced in faith, hope and love. Considering Gal. 4:6, 7 and Rom. 8:15–17, Bruner points out the essential role of the Spirit as giving human beings faith to call God as their Father. “For Paul, the ability to cry ‘Father!’ was the work and therefore the evidence of the Spirit of the Son. The evidence of the Spirit is first of all faith in God the Father or — Christian prayer.”¹²⁹

The Spirit is a gift from God, Paul affirms, given to God’s children so that they may know what in His grace He has given them (1 Cor. 2:12). It is noteworthy that the Spirit does not call the attention to himself, but to God’s grace, which is revealed in Christ’s work.¹³⁰ In this sense, “the Holy Spirit is God’s way for the Christian to understand God’s work.”¹³¹ This is consistent with John’s test to recognize the work of the Spirit, i.e., the true incarnation of the Son of God (1 John 4:1–3). Therefore, the prayer-confession to God the Father and the witness of Jesus as true

¹²⁷ Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 256.

¹²⁸ Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 259.

¹²⁹ Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 268.

¹³⁰ Bruner, *The Holy Spirit: Shy Member of the Trinity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 14–15 cites John 14:26; 15:26; 16:8f, 13f to show how the work of the Holy Spirit is centered in promoting Christ and his work: “The work of the *Holy Spirit* is the honoring of Jesus Christ. The work of other spirits is the honoring of themselves or of other realities. We are not necessarily in the presence of the Holy Spirit when we are in the presence of a great deal of talk about the Holy Spirit. But wherever a church or a person centers thoughtfully (that is, biblically and evangelically) on honoring the person, teaching, and work of Jesus Christ, there, we may be quite sure, we are in the presence of the Holy Spirit. For the Spirit’s work is the thoughtful honoring of Christ. The Holy Spirit does not center on the Holy Spirit. That is the clear teaching of Jesus in John’s gospel and elsewhere.”

¹³¹ Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 271.

God and true man indirectly gives evidence of the presence of the Spirit, since the Spirit does not point to himself. Bruner highlights the fact that instead of giving consciousness of the gift of the Spirit, biblical evidence shows God giving “a consciousness of sonship in Jesus Christ, and one may know from this that he has the Spirit. Consciousness of Christ *is* the gift of the Spirit.”¹³²

The presence of the Holy Spirit is also evidenced in love to the neighbor. The higher goal of spiritual life is not a “selfish piety . . . accumulating of spirituality or spirit for oneself, but more mundanely, in giving oneself to the neighbor.”¹³³ In this way, true spirituality manifests itself in being taken to the neighbor. Considering the evidence that the New Testament gives of the presence of the Spirit in the believer’s life and comparing it with Pentecostalism’s usual approach, Bruner concludes:

These simple faith-evidences — baptism, the prayer “dear Father,” the confession “Lord Jesus,” the patience of Christian love — are not spectacular, but to the New Testament they are spiritual. There is a normalcy and simplicity in the New Testament evidences which one misses in the Pentecostal.¹³⁴

Bruner gives also attention to the teaching of Paul in the Corinthian correspondence. The apostle reflects on the actions of the Holy Spirit in the church and the challenges posed by “spiritualistic” attitudes among the Corinthians and of false apostles working there. He identifies in the frequent use of the preposition *υπερ* (beyond, above) an indication that there was the tendency among the Corinthians to go “beyond” the apostle and other Christians, tendency that was revealed for instance in the way the Corinthians considered spiritual gifts. First Corinthians 12:2 emphasizes the role of the Spirit as promoting Christ through the confession of the Church:

¹³² Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 272n 61. In *The Holy Spirit: Shy Member of the Trinity*, 14, Bruner states, “One of the most surprising discoveries in my own study of the doctrine and experience of the Spirit in the New Testament is what I can only call the shyness of the Spirit.”

¹³³ Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 275.

¹³⁴ Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 281.

Paul sees the characteristic, perhaps the classical work of the Holy Spirit in the intelligible and simple confession that Jesus is Lord. The man who confesses “Lord Jesus” has experienced the deep work of the Spirit. The Spirit does not exhibit himself supremely in sublimating the ego, in emptying it, removing it, overpowering it, or in ecstasy extinguishing or thrilling it, but in intelligently, intelligibly, christocentrically using it.¹³⁵

Paul’s teaching for the Corinthians about the ministry of the Spirit, and particularly about the spiritual gifts, denies that: (a) spiritual means more powerful according to human criteria; (b) spiritual gifts are located only in extraordinary events or that they are rewards for some particular human effort or virtue; (c) the gifts are being a benefit to the individual and not to the church; (d) the Spirit takes the place of Jesus as a deeper development in some sense. In a positive way, Bruner calls attention to Paul’s teaching that the Holy Spirit works in order to honor Christ and to serve the body of Christ with gifts.¹³⁶

Although not using specifically the expression “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” Paul testifies that all Corinthians have been baptized into one body “by one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). In other words, for Paul the baptism promoted by the Spirit is the one all believers participate, being introduced into the one body of Christ. In this way there are not two baptisms and two different groups, as if those baptized in the Spirit were a distinct group compared to those baptized “only” in water and Word.¹³⁷

Bruner summarizes Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 12–14, that the Spirit “is united to Christ so the varied *gifts* of the Spirit are committed to the upbuilding of the *body* of Christ. The triune God is the source, love is the way, and the upbuilding of the church is the goal of the spiritual graces.”¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 287.

¹³⁶ Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 290–91.

¹³⁷ Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 293.

¹³⁸ Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 302.

In his second epistle to the Corinthians, especially in chapters 10–13, Paul discusses the sphere of the Spirit and the weakness of the believers, who were allowing space for false teachers.

In Paul's vivid description of the activity of his spiritual warfare in II Corinthians 10:3–5 the preposition *huper* and its "high" synonyms play an important role . . . Paul in the present passage likens his enemies to high fortresses (*hupsoma*) whose thoughts, like ramparts, exalt them *above* the one true experience of God (*tes gnoseos tou theou*). Their every "high" notion must be torn down and brought *under* obedience to *Christ* (eis ten *hupakoen* tou Christou). All *huper* ("over") must become *hupo* ("under"), everything high must become low, and all exalted sense of spiritual power and fullness must become a deep sense of spiritual need. Christian spirituality is placing oneself under Christ; it is not going beyond him.¹³⁹

Summarizing Paul's teaching to the Corinthians related to the role of the Holy Spirit and spiritual life of the believers, Bruner stresses the thorough Christocentric approach of the apostle, who did not tolerate any teaching that would propose a different Jesus, or a different Spirit, or a different gospel.¹⁴⁰

Bruner's contribution to the discussion of eschatological pneumatology is basically in the field of inaugurated eschatology. His reading of Acts of the Apostles underline the strong and necessary connection between the Spirit and the completed work of Jesus in which the believer participates by water baptism. This is new life and new creation by the Spirit, where true hope has a key place in the believers' walk. Such hope directs the Christian to the future consummation of faith. The Spirit is the "guarantee," "down payment," and "first fruits" of the future deliverance. Spiritual hope is not utopia or a pious wish, but a gracious certainty given by the Spirit that the Father has given us in Christ (Rom. 5:5). Bruner insists that this hope is not for a special manifestation of the Spirit in the believer's life, since the Spirit has already been given by the Father. Actually, waiting "*through, by, or in the Spirit*" (*pneumatic*, Gal. 5:5), by faith, the

¹³⁹ Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 306.

¹⁴⁰ Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 318.

believer has the hope in the final inheritance of Christ.¹⁴¹

R. Prenter: Luther's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit; spiritus creator

Regin Prenter divides his presentation of Luther's testimony about the Holy Spirit in two major parts: before and in the controversy with the enthusiasts. One of his main claims is that Luther's doctrine of the Holy Spirit was not evoked by the controversy, but was already present in the so called "young Luther."

Should someone ask if the Holy Spirit has a key role in Luther's theology, Prenter would say that for the Reformer outside of the sphere of the Spirit there is no true Christ, but only a historic Christ or a mystical experience. Then there would be no means of grace, neither real sanctification. Besides, for Luther it is only by the presence of the Holy Spirit that it is possible to understand the distinction between law and gospel, between sacrament and sacrifice, between Christ as an idea and the real Christ, our Savior. It is the real presence of the Spirit that takes one from the lordship of the law and brings him to the gospel.¹⁴²

Luther could keep Augustinian language about the Spirit as infusion of love in a person's heart, Prenter explains, with a distinctive evangelical sense applied to that terminology. Luther gave a new content to love. It is not an infused love that would allow a person to keep the law not by fear but by loving God. For Luther, a true and spiritual love is actually to hate himself and his own life, in accord with God who hates sin and evil in his human creatures. Such *odium sui*, which is godly love, is a work of the Spirit, not of the person himself. It is important to note that in Luther that *odium sui* is not against some "lower" aspect of life, but is against flesh, understood not as a part of the person, but the whole person (even his virtues!) considered under

¹⁴¹ Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 273.

¹⁴² Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 199, 202.

the law. It is only by the presence of the Spirit that a person can accept God's judgment upon sin.¹⁴³

Luther distinguishes the concepts of *imitatio* and *conformitas*. In the *imitatio* scheme man looks to Christ as an example to be followed, and that understanding results in work-righteousness. For Luther, God himself operates in the individual, in such a way that as Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, a person is justified and regenerated, and lives in Christ and Christ in him, only by God's grace and the work of the Spirit.¹⁴⁴ Being conformed to Christ involves experience in inner conflict, which is the Spirit's work to show how the individual is naturally turned away from God. Luther understands the Spirit acting as *interpellator* and *consolator* in the midst of a person's inner conflict. The old man is crucified when the Spirit conforms the person to Christ and in that way new life can begin. That is completely different from the idea of *gratia infusa*, by which human beings would be able to love God in order to properly follow the law.¹⁴⁵ By his frequent use of Rom. 8:26, "The Spirit assists us in our weakness," Luther states that God is really present in the person's life, in the midst of groaning of the anxious soul, that feels seized by death and hell. It is only God, being actually present by his Spirit, and not some form of power (*gratia infusa*), that can help the sinner in conflict.¹⁴⁶ For Luther the Holy Spirit is not a form of transcendent power, but the true God present in our affliction and anguish. Through the Spirit Christ becomes a living experience in the human being.¹⁴⁷ Especially against the enthusiasts Luther pointed out that the experience of the Spirit happens in the person's inner conflict, affliction and poverty, in such a way that one should not

¹⁴³ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 3–7.

¹⁴⁴ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 11.

¹⁴⁵ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 14–17.

¹⁴⁶ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 19.

¹⁴⁷ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 197.

expect to find that experience when the church is rich in human power and piety.¹⁴⁸ With those observations, Prenter accentuates the sharp opposition between scholastic idealism and Luther's realism. The Spirit is really present with groaning in a way that a person cannot express, because he is paralyzed by the power of death and hell, under God's accusation. It is in such a condition that the Spirit shows his role as *consolator*.¹⁴⁹

As already mentioned above, one of Luther's emphases on the Holy Spirit is his role as mediator of Christ's real presence. Love that is infused in the human heart is not an energy or power in the soul, but is the real presence of Christ, in a relationship of faith. This is *conformitas*, not *imitatio*. Such presence should not be confused with a person's empirical piety. Christ in us is always an alien righteousness. Personal piety, considered as independent of Christ's righteousness, becomes part of the old man, under God's wrath. However, Prenter stresses, as *donum*, covered by Christ's righteousness, our piety becomes the work of the Spirit in the new man and under God's grace.¹⁵⁰

In what refers to sanctification, it is possible to speak about progress, but not in the sense of an increase of empirical pious performance. For that sake, Prenter says, progress in sanctification is not "an object of psychological observation, but an object of faith and hope. It is not evident to oneself and others, but it is hid with Christ in God."¹⁵¹ It actually means a constant finding refuge in Christ's righteousness. Luther's approach to this progress can be seen in three ways, as Prenter indicates: (1) it is a new beginning again and again—*semper a novo incipere*—since a saint is someone who is in his own understanding a sinner, in permanent need of the presence of Christ.

¹⁴⁸ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 201.

¹⁴⁹ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 24–25.

¹⁵⁰ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 66–67.

¹⁵¹ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 70.

(2) Using the illustration of a sick man, who trusts the word of his physician, who says that in the future there will be perfect health. What is stressed in this example is not a progressive improvement of empirical sanctification, but the certainty of Christ's promise of eternal life. Progress is then a constant turn to Christ's righteousness. (3) The image of a fight between spirit (understood as God's Holy Spirit inhabiting the believer) and flesh (the human being under the dominium of the law). Flesh (corresponding to *sensus*) always looks to the works, and spirit (corresponding to *fides*) has its existence through the Word, which is the reality of Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 10:6). Christ himself lives vicariously our life against flesh. In baptism, which is an eschatological act of God, we become part of God's progress toward his goal. Progress, in this sense, is the constant work of the Spirit calling us to live not in our piety, but in Christ as our alien righteousness. That is the only way flesh can be defeated.¹⁵²

Speaking about the Spirit and his work, Prenter calls into consideration the role of faith. Luther understands the relation between the Spirit and faith in two ways: by faith we receive the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit is the one who creates faith. Scholastic theology solved that apparent contradiction by turning to the concept of infused grace, which produced a supernatural substance, faith. Prenter shows how Luther did not follow the rational explanation that arose from an Aristotelian worldview but preserved the tension. For him faith is not a supernatural substance but the encounter with God through the presence of the living Christ.¹⁵³ On the one hand, that presence is only possible through the work of the Spirit creating a consciousness of sin "in our weakness" (Rom. 8); on the other hand, the Spirit becomes present in our life through

¹⁵² Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 74–80.

¹⁵³ Timothy Wengert, *Martin Luther's Catechisms: Forming the Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 62, describes Luther's view of faith with a vivid imagery: "the Holy Spirit calls through the Gospel (Word and Sacrament) and thereby puts an end to our works. Faith is not a work or even a 'response'; it is an event, what happens when we hear the lover's voice and fall in love."

faith that always moves away from himself to Christ, whose real presence mediates the gift of the Spirit. Therefore, says Prenter, “faith must always be considered from both directions if it is to be correctly understood. It must be seen both as our flight toward the reality of the Spirit and our life lived out of the reality of the Spirit.”¹⁵⁴

An important topic considered by Prenter is the means used by the Holy Spirit to do his work. He points out the tension in the relation between the Spirit and the Word. On the one hand, the Spirit is Lord over the Word; but, on the other hand, the (external) Word comes before the Spirit. Therefore, without the Spirit, the Word is only letter; but it is also true that without the Word, the Spirit does not come.¹⁵⁵ Such a tension, claims Prenter, can only be treated christologically, not rationally. Christ is the true Word of God, in such a way that unless Christ is truly present by the action of the Spirit, we have no Word of God. Luther emphasized an instrumental relation between Word and Spirit. All these can also be said about the sacraments, as means by which the Spirit operates, since the sacraments are never without the Word. The Spirit connects signal and promise, making Christ really present in baptism and Supper. For Luther, instead of “spiritualizing” the sacraments it is necessary to understand the Word “sacramentally.”¹⁵⁶ Prenter summarizes the importance of the Christological relation between Spirit, Word, and sacraments, saying:

The Spirit is the real divine sphere in which Christ comes out of the remoteness of history and becomes a living, present reality or, as Luther likes to state it: experience.. . . Within the sphere of the Spirit, the Word is Gospel and the sacrament is the eschatological sign of confirmation.¹⁵⁷

For Luther it is evident that the Holy Spirit is not simply a power, but a Person, whose

¹⁵⁴ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 88.

¹⁵⁵ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 101–4.

¹⁵⁶ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 152.

¹⁵⁷ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 197.

creative work in creation of the world and in regeneration of human beings characterizes Him as the *spiritus creator*. He acts in the person's inner conflict, raising him from death, in a new creation. In baptism, the old creature is destroyed in its enslaving role.¹⁵⁸ In his role as the *spiritus creator*, the Holy Spirit does his work of *consolatio*, *sanctificatio* and *illuminatio*. These are nothing else than a life-giving act of the Spirit, by which the person who are in himself won by death receives a new life. Therefore, sanctification is another expression for the creative work of the Spirit.¹⁵⁹ It is important to note that illumination is necessary for a person not because knowledge of God is beyond human understanding, but because human nature opposes to God's knowledge; therefore, says Prenter, "the enlightenment consists in this, that the *sensus*-experience and *ratio*-speculation are completely destroyed, smashed, removed, in order to make room for faith and the experience of faith."¹⁶⁰

For Luther the Spirit's role goes beyond the religious sphere. He preserves God's creation and makes a person alive through baptism, comforting the sinner in inner his conflict. We live also physically by the Spirit of God. In this way, the work of the Spirit should not be made dependent of a person's religious need, but is connected to God's eternal plan for his creation.¹⁶¹

Prenter demonstrates how in the controversy with the enthusiasts Luther did not change his doctrine on the Holy Spirit. Some nuances may be identified. For instance, the emphasis on Christ struggling against the powers of destruction becomes an alternative way of what before was expressed by the *conformitas* language.¹⁶² The older Luther continues to emphasize the work of the Spirit in man's inner conflict, now employing especially the language of law (in its second

¹⁵⁸ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 185.

¹⁵⁹ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 186.

¹⁶⁰ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 188.

¹⁶¹ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 193–94.

¹⁶² Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 209–12.

use—the spiritual use) and gospel.¹⁶³

The enthusiasts worked under the understanding of a metaphysical dualism of soul and body, visible and invisible. The relation between the Holy Spirit and external reality made a radical difference between Luther's approach and that of the enthusiasts. The external means precede the internal work of the Spirit and that does not mean a rational objectivity that excludes the freedom of the Spirit. For him, the Holy Spirit is Lord over the Word, which is not a magic word, but the instrument chosen by the Spirit to operate *ubi et quando vult*. That Word is received by a person through faith, which is also God's gift. Therefore, Luther cannot be accused of *ex opere operato*.¹⁶⁴

Luther considered the Roman sacramental system and the spiritualism of the enthusiasts as coming from the same essence. Against the enthusiasts, he insists on the external means because he sees in their internal spirituality an attempt to reach God without the humanity of Christ. Such an attempt means to access God through the law and works. On the other hand, when Luther insists on the sovereignty of the Spirit over the external means he avoids the idea that those means, and therefore Christ himself and the Spirit, become means in the hands of the religious individual. That would result in a different form of enthusiasm. Luther's fight against the scholastic concept of grace and spiritualistic concept of the enthusiasts is a fight against the same enemy, religion of the law.¹⁶⁵

At the end of his study, Prenter summarizes his findings about Luther before and after his confront with the enthusiasts:

Luther's ideas about the Spirit have not been changed through the polemics with the enthusiasts. It is the same total view of the young Luther that is here unfolded again.

¹⁶³ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 215–22.

¹⁶⁴ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 292.

¹⁶⁵ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 295–98.

Luther's polemic with the enthusiasts has not forced him into new positions; rather his position has forced him into the polemic against the enthusiasts. . . . Also in the struggle with the enthusiasts we have this peculiar dynamic in the tension between the reality and sovereignty of the Spirit, which we described by referring to the name, *spiritus creator*. The Spirit to Luther is the present Spirit, near as the Creator himself in the midst of our death and our lost condition.¹⁶⁶

The emphases Prenter points out in his approach to Luther's theology of the Spirit provide a theological framework that highlight an eschatological approach to Pneumatology. The Holy Spirit is God's agent promoting the presence of the future destiny in Christ through the means of grace that create faith and new life. Timothy Wengert calls the attention to Luther's view of the work of the Holy Spirit as continuing to the last day, since the work of creation and redemption are completed: "the Holy Spirit makes us holy . . . but as giving eternal life, which begins with forgiveness here and now (as he wrote in the Small Catechism on the Lord's Supper, 'Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation')." ¹⁶⁷ In other words, Luther's accent in the work of the Spirit creating faith in Christ and eternal life in the midst of weakness and sin is a significant contribution to Pneumatology being shaped by inaugurated eschatology.

The Holy Spirit and Future Eschatology

T. D. Beck: Holy Spirit and Eschatology in Paul and J. Moltmann¹⁶⁸

In his doctoral dissertation, later published as a book, Beck proposes to examine the connection between Pneumatology and Eschatology. In other words, he maintains that the role of the Holy Spirit is properly understood as eschatological. This work has special interest for our study, since one of the main points we try to demonstrate is the deep connection between the

¹⁶⁶ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 301.

¹⁶⁷ Wengert, *Martin Luther's Catechisms*, 44.

¹⁶⁸ T. David Beck, *The Holy Spirit and the Renewal of All Things: Pneumatology in Paul and Jürgen Moltmann* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2007). Beck at the time of writing the book was a pastor at King's Harbor Church, Redondo Beach, CA; today he is pastor of Sanctuary Covenant Church, in Sacramento. He earned his doctorate at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

Holy Spirit and Eschatology.

In order to do his intent, Beck begins by pointing two different and opposite views that he identifies in Protestant doctrine of the Holy Spirit. One of them, which he connects with the Reformers (Luther, Calvin) is what he calls “institutional pneumatology.” He chooses Karl Barth as an example of such view. The other position is what Beck names “experiential pneumatology,” exemplified by Wesley’s theology on the Holy Spirit. Beck begins by presenting limitations both in institutional and experiential pneumatologies, introducing what he considers to be a third and better option that comes “out of the original language of pneumatology: Christian eschatology.”¹⁶⁹ The second and third chapters are dedicated to the presentation of Pauline pneumatology and eschatology. Then in five chapters Beck sets forth Moltmann’s main theological teachings, his eschatology and doctrine of the Holy Spirit. In his ninth and final chapter, Beck presents his “Eschatological Pneumatology” working with the contributions of Paul and Moltmann.

Examining Barth’s pneumatology, Beck sees him as representing Protestant and Western theology of the Holy Spirit. Beck criticizes him for subordinating the Spirit to Christ, and in this way picturing the Spirit as little more than “a force through which Christ works or as the power of Christ.”¹⁷⁰

Beck considers Wesley as a representative of the experiential tendency in Protestant theology of the Holy Spirit. His criticism of Wesley is that he limits the work of the Holy Spirit to sanctification. He is particularly influential among holiness branches of Christianity and even

¹⁶⁹ Beck, *Holy Spirit and the Renewal*, 2.

¹⁷⁰ Beck, *Holy Spirit and the Renewal*, 7. One could question Beck’s assumption that Barth represents Protestant (even Lutheran) theology of the Holy Spirit, especially considering the importance given by Luther to the role of the Spirit as the source of life for God’s creation in time and eternity, in physical and spiritual sense. But it is possible to accept, for the purposes of his main thesis, that Protestant theology has given to Christ a prominent place in the history of salvation.

Pentecostalism.¹⁷¹ Beck commends Wesley and those who follow him for giving to the Holy Spirit a place of his own, not simply treating him as an extension of Christ. However, he points out three weaknesses in his pneumatology, and of those who follow him. First, the work of the Spirit in the individual believer is predominate in Wesley's teaching. Second, Wesley ties the work of the Spirit mainly to the present time, with little reference to history and cosmic eschatology. The third weakness, a tendency toward pneumatocentrism, applies more properly to Wesley's followers and particularly to Pentecostalism.¹⁷²

Beck maintains that both the institutional and the experiential orientations in pneumatology distance themselves from the New Testament witness about the role of the Spirit. He then presents his fundamental thesis, in contrast to those orientations:

For the New Testament witness to the Holy Spirit is not driven by matters of ecclesiology, Christology or religious experience. These are important themes, but they are secondary to the primary theme, which is eschatology . . . all reflection of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament takes place within an eschatological framework.¹⁷³

At the end of his study on Paul's theology of the Holy Spirit, Beck anticipates his main argument against "institutional" and "experiential" positions referring to the apostle's contribution:

The scope of Protestant institutional pneumatology tends to be limited to Christ's work in the church in the present age. In Protestant experiential pneumatology, the work of the Spirit is centered in the individual believer. Paul would lead us to place both of these emphases within a much greater context, thereby altering our perception of the Spirit's work in both the church and the individual.¹⁷⁴

Beck dedicates more than half of his book to Jürgen Moltmann and his theology. Moltmann's pneumatology presents significant ideas beyond some traditional approaches. One

¹⁷¹ Beck, *Holy Spirit and the Renewal*, 8.

¹⁷² Beck, *Holy Spirit and the Renewal*, 12.

¹⁷³ Beck, *Holy Spirit and the Renewal*, 14.

¹⁷⁴ Beck, *Holy Spirit and the Renewal*, 82.

of them is his insistence on the connection of the Holy Spirit with creation and Trinity—the Holy Spirit is the universal presence of God with his creation and he is not confined to the church.¹⁷⁵

The relationship of the Spirit to creation happens in three distinct but related phases: the original creation, ongoing creation, and the new creation.

The work of the Holy Spirit related to the individual has cosmic implications. For Beck, justification and rebirth of the individual should not be understood as individualistic, but as oriented toward the new creation. Personal sanctification is not the ultimate meaning of the individual rebirth, since what happens to the believer points to the rebirth of the whole creation.¹⁷⁶

The Holy Spirit was understood by Augustine as the principle of unity between the Father and the Son. Moltmann carries that idea further to expand the unifying character of the Spirit's work relating it to creation and God. Being present in every life, the Spirit promotes fellowship between human beings and among all creatures. Besides, he also brings creation into fellowship with God, and here is where Moltmann's eschatological framework makes this unifying role to be special. In the consummation of all things, God's unity will be fully recognized and all creatures will return to God, under his rule, which will mean perfect communion.¹⁷⁷

In his general argument, Beck tries to avoid both the institutional (Barth) and the experiential (Wesley) models. He also criticizes a contemporary tendency that fixes the eschatological attention on future events, losing sight of a larger biblical picture of the kingdom of God in its present form and in its connection with the doctrines of Trinity and creation.

¹⁷⁵ Beck, *Holy Spirit and the Renewal*, 120. Moltmann gives a high importance to the concept of *shekinah*, to express God's special presence (nor a reference to his omnipresence) by the Holy Spirit with his people and the whole creation. (156–59).

¹⁷⁶ Beck, *Holy Spirit and the Renewal*, 204–5.

¹⁷⁷ Beck, *Holy Spirit and the Renewal*, 223.

Beck is fully in agreement with Moltmann in his view of Pneumatology and presents some good contributions, mainly in terms of a cosmic perspective. However, a significant deficiency can be identified in Moltmann's approach, as in Beck's. For Thorsten Prill, Moltmann emphasizes too much the human side, the "natural" instead of the "supernatural," in other words, life in creation instead of life in Church.¹⁷⁸ Moltmann emphasizes the Spirit of creation rather than the Spirit of Pentecost. Therefore, the personal dimension of sin and false belief plays an insufficient role in his theology. Structures in society tend to be seen as the root of moral evils in human life. Consequently, one can also identify a problem in what refers to the church and her mission in the world. Prill concludes:

If political and social action groups, such as Greenpeace, are not only the result of the Spirit's work, but can find their way into the community of Christ through shared work with Christian congregations, as Moltmann argues, there is no need to call people to make a personal commitment to Christ. It is sufficient that they do 'Kingdom of God work'.¹⁷⁹

Beck can be also criticized for playing eschatology against Christology and Ecclesiology, for instance, as the primary framework to understand the role of the Holy Spirit. Beck also fails to recognize the necessary New Testament stress on the connection of the Holy Spirit with Christ's saving work..

After considering Beck's attempt to emphasize the eschatological role of the Holy Spirit, we now turn to some aspects witnessed by the New Testament. In the next two sections, we briefly deal with the language by which the apostle connects the Holy Spirit with the future reality that awaits God's creation, and especially the believers.

¹⁷⁸ Thorsten Prill, *German Protestantism and the Spirit of God* (Norderstedt: Grin Verlag, 2010), 23.

¹⁷⁹ Prill, *German Protestantism and the Spirit of God*, 24.

The Holy Spirit as “Seal,” “Guarantee,” and “First-fruits”: The Future Consummation Anticipated in the Life of the Church

One of the most significant aspects of Paul’s theology of the Holy Spirit is his testimony to both the Spirit’s presence and action in the believer’s present life and serving as the agent of the future age announcing to the believers that the fullness of the messianic time is still to come. In his Epistles, Paul maintains that tension, so to speak, about the Spirit—he guides life in God’s kingdom today, but at the same time directs the believer’s attention to the future glory with the redemption of the body in resurrection. That eschatological character of the Holy Spirit is manifested in hope and joy that he inspires in the believers (Gal. 5:22; Rom. 15:13). That hope grants to the believers the confidence that they will not be disappointed, since the guarantee of the Spirit will be confirmed in that day when they will participate in God’s glory through the renewal of their existence, when all creation will also be renewed (Rom. 5:2, 5; 8:23–25). Therefore, for Paul, “the Spirit is also the power of the future age present for believers in their struggle with the forces of this age that are at enmity with God—particularly the flesh and sin.”¹⁸⁰ Three significant metaphors are employed by the apostle in order to describe the future aspect of the work of the Spirit, already in action in the life of the church and in individual believers. They are: “first fruits,” “guarantee,” and “seal.”

The First-fruits of the Spirit

The eighth chapter of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans is perhaps the place where the apostle more intensively describes the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer. In a section dealing specifically with eschatology (vv. 18–25), speaking about the groaning of creation, that is

¹⁸⁰ Terence P. Paige, “Holy Spirit II: Paul,” in *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament: A One-volume Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 498–99.

eagerly waiting for the final redemption, the apostle characterizes Christian people as those who have the “first-fruits of the Spirit” (v. 23 - avparch. tou/ pneu,matoj).

Paul refers to the believers’ expectation as being directed toward the adoption as sons (ui`oqesi,a), a reality that is equated to the “redemption of our bodies” (avpolu,trwsij tou/ sw,matoj h`mw/n). Such redemption is understood by Paul as the resurrection of the body (as he insistently shows in the 15th chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians). Such an expectation is directly connected to the fact that they have the first-fruits of the Spirit. The participial phrase, th.n avparch.n tou/ pneu,matoj e;contej, has a causal sense: because we have the first-fruits of the Spirit. Those who are in Christ, being guided by the Holy Spirit (v. 14), look forward to what is in the future, and the reason for that expectation is the fact that the Holy Spirit is groaning with the believers (v. 26, `Wsau,twj de. kai. to. Pneu/ma).¹⁸¹

The agricultural metaphor employed by Paul points to a significant element in the worship of the people of God in the Old Testament. The first fruits were typically referring to the first part of the harvest being dedicated to God and incorporating the hope for a complete harvest as a blessing to the people of God. M. Middendorf calls the attention to the fact that in Paul’s use of the metaphor there is no offering from the believers to God, as part of their worship, but it is a gift that God grants to his people.¹⁸²

Peter Stuhlmacher argues, as do most of the commentators,¹⁸³ for an exegetical understanding of the genitive in the expression “first-fruits of the Spirit,” i.e. the fruits are the

¹⁸¹ Joel R. White, “Christ’s Resurrection is the Spirit’s Firstfruits (Romans 8,23),” in *Resurrection of the Dead: Biblical Traditions in Dialogue*, ed. Geert Van Oyen and Tom Shepherd (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2012), 296.

¹⁸² Middendorf, *Romans 1–8*, 675.

¹⁸³ For instance, Middendorf, *Romans 1–8*, 301, states, “The Spirit is to be identified as the divine gift that is the firstfruits.” (662) For a different understanding of the expression “first-fruits of the Spirit,” see: Joel R. White, “Christ’s Resurrection is the Spirit’s Firstfruits. White understands the expression. “as an intertextual reference to Paul’s own teaching in his first letter to the Corinthians, where he refers to the risen Christ as the avparch, tou/ kekoimhme,nwn (see 1 Co 15.20).”

Spirit himself, received by the believer in baptism and inhabiting in him. It is the presence of the Spirit that allows the believer to eagerly expect the full expression of the redemption that is already his. This evokes in him a sense of hope for the new gift that is still to come and that will be revealed in the resurrection of the body. As part of the Creator's work, the resurrection of the bodies will also involve the creation as a whole.¹⁸⁴ That also means that the believer has a solidarity with God's creation in its groaning for the future redemption.¹⁸⁵

It may seem at first glance that there is a contradiction when Paul says that the Spirit inhabits the believers (8:9, 11) and that at the same time there is in them (evn e`autoi/j) a groaning. Middendorf uses Paul's words in Rom. 6:12–23; 7:14–25; 8:9–13 to explain the paradox:

the baptized believer's release from slavery to sin, the dominion of death, and the lordship of the law has not ended conflict, but, rather, has inaugurated the struggle that is the Christian life. Similarly, "the Spirit does not free from tension, but actually creates or at least heightens that tension and brings it to more anguished expression" [Dunn, *Romans*, 474]. As a result, "we ourselves are also groaning within ourselves" similarly expresses the same "inward sense of frustration of individuals believers (as a whole)" which "is wholly of a piece with the cry of frustration in 7:24" [Dunn, *Romans*, 474] as well as that of creation itself.¹⁸⁶

The believers share the creation's eschatological orientation, groaning for the "redemption of the bodies" which is the resurrection (vv. 19–25). Paul testifies that the groaning for the future redemption brings together creation and believers. However, something is proper to those who

¹⁸⁴ Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Louisville: Westminster, 1994), 134–35.

¹⁸⁵ Edward Schweitzer's comments *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 109–10 in are worthy of note: "At the very point where [Paul] speaks with the strongest emphasis and with real enthusiasm about the work of the Spirit freeing people from every bondage and recreating them as children of God, he speaks of the old creation 'groaning', of its 'futility', of its inevitable 'destruction'. The new creation of man by the Spirit is not a flight of faith into heaven or an abandonment of this imperfect world. We are not supposed to become 'religious' in our thinking and no longer groan with the world's groaning or watch its futility and destruction. On the contrary, the new creation means beginning to see the world as it is, suffering with it and taking its suffering to heart. Furthermore, we now learn to see the same kind of imperfection and weakness in ourselves. We learn this lesson so well that we know we cannot pray unless the Spirit takes our stupid and wrong-headed prayers and translates them correctly for God (Rom. 8:22–27). The work of the Spirit is to make us aware of our solidarity with the world."

¹⁸⁶ Middendorf, *Romans 1–8*, 677.

are in Christ, since only they have the first-fruits of the Spirit. That fact connects them to the resurrection of the Lord himself (v. 11), that Paul designates elsewhere as the “first-fruit of those who sleep” (1 Cor. 15:20 – avparch. tw/n kekoimhme,nwn). It is the resurrection of Christ, as the beginning of general resurrection that opens the way to the believers’ resurrection, having both the Spirit as the common agent of the Father’s work of recreation. As Sánchez correctly observes, “the concern for preserving the Father’s primary agency should not exclude the idea that the Spirit actually mediates this action (i.e., raising the body) in the humanity of the Son and through his in ours.”¹⁸⁷

The Spirit acts as the mediator of the believer’s groaning to bring before the Father thoughts that their prayers cannot adequately express. It is only by his gracious mediation that such groaning for the eschatological fulfilment becomes worship before God (vv. 26, 27). The people of God can be sure that they will receive the future glory because that corresponds to the immutable purpose of the Father for his creatures (vv. 28–30).¹⁸⁸ The real presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives, as first fruits of the coming age, give them the assurance of the full harvest that is to come.

The Holy Spirit as Down Payment and Seal

One of the main emphasis of Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians is the gathering of Jews and gentiles into one single people of God through the incorporation to Christ by faith (2:11–16; 3:1–6). Already in the first chapter Paul makes a significant change in the use of personal pronouns, from the first person (1:3–12) to second person (1:13, 14), that will be used later in a specific reference to the gentile believers (for instance, 2:11; 3:1). That change of pronouns in

¹⁸⁷ Sánchez, *Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God’s Spirit*, 73.

¹⁸⁸ Joel R. White, “Christ’s Resurrection,” 291.

the first chapter gives Paul the opportunity to apply to the believing gentiles two important references to the role of the Holy Spirit, both of them with strong eschatological themes. The Ephesians, after hearing the word of the Gospel of salvation and believing in Christ, “were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise (evsfragi,sqhte tw/ pneu,mati th/j evpaggeli,aj tw/ a`gi,w|), who is the down payment (guarantee) of our inheritance (avrrabw.n th/j klhronomi,aj h`mw/n) for the redemption of the property.”

In New Testament language, to be sealed means to be the property of someone, and to be protected by the owner (see Rev. 7:1–8).¹⁸⁹ God is the one who is sealing his people as it has been promised. The dative tw/ pneu,mati tw/ a`gi,w| may be understood as its common usage, giving the idea of means—God has sealed his people by means of the action of the Holy Spirit; and it could be also interpreted as a dative of content — God gave His Spirit as the seal.¹⁹⁰

Thomas Winger refers to Acts 2:33 and Gal. 3:14 as New Testament passages that explicitly connect the Holy Spirit with the promise. Considering God’s promise related to the coming of the Messiah (Is. 42:1; 44:3; Ezek. 11:19; 36:25–27; 39:29; Joel 2:28, 29), Winger concludes: “In this context of Ephesians, considering the origin of the readers of the letter, Paul applies to the gentiles who had been incorporated into Christ by faith the promises given to the people of the Old Testament.”¹⁹¹

Acts 2:33 is particularly significant given the Trinitarian connection explicit in the text.

The exalted Christ received the “promise of the Holy Spirit” (evpaggeli,a tou/ pneu,matoj) from

¹⁸⁹ Mark Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 67, states that a seal “is a visible mark that signifies that a person or object is under the authority and protection of another. Among its other functions “sealing” may signify the confirmation or approval of a person or the completion of an action.”

¹⁹⁰ Clinton Arnold, *Ephesians Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 92. Arnold admits both interpretations, but favors the second: “This is the promised Spirit (attributive genitive) in the sense that he was promised to Israel (see Ezek 36:26–27; 37:14; Joel 2:28–30). The good news for Gentiles is that the Spirit is made available in Christ to any who hear and believe.”

¹⁹¹ Thomas M. Winger, *Ephesians Concordia Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2015), 207.

the Father and poured out the Spirit upon his followers. John the Baptist had already announced that Jesus would baptize with the Spirit (Mark 1:8) and Jesus linked that with the “promise of my Father” (Luke 24:49, “evpaggeli,a tou/ patro,j mou”); a possessive genitive: the promise that belongs to the Father and comes from him). Now Paul is proclaiming that the same promised Spirit has come upon the believers, including those from the gentiles. The eschatological content already announced by John the Baptist related to the sending of the Spirit by Jesus is implicit in Paul’s.

Winger associates the coming of the promised Spirit with baptism, following the principle already established by Peter in his words in Pentecost, that Holy Spirit, faith and Baptism in Jesus’ name belong together (Acts 2:38):

The aorist verb *evsfragi,sqhte*, “you were sealed,” refers to a specific action that followed upon the proclamation of the Gospel and people believing it: Holy Baptism. The agent of this sealing was God the Father (cf. Jn 6:27; 2 Cor 1:21–22; Eph 4:30); thus, “were sealed” is a divine passive.¹⁹²

The promised Spirit is the divine agent of the new era inaugurated by Christ’s resurrection. As such his gift to the believers is presented by Paul as a “down payment” or guarantee of the future inheritance (*avrrabw.n th/j klhronomi,aj*). As Behm explains, “the Spirit whom God has given them is for Christians the guarantee of their full future possession of salvation.”¹⁹³

Both figures—the seal and the down payment—are used together by Paul in another context, in 2 Cor. 1:22. Paul was reflecting on his ministry among the Corinthians and reminding them of the unction they received from God. Then he affirms the seal they received from the Father, who also gifted them with the “down payment of the Spirit” (*o` dou.j to.n avrrabw/na*

¹⁹² Winger, *Ephesians*, 206.

¹⁹³ Johannes Behm, *avrrabw,n*, In: Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 475. The term *avrrabw,n* “is a commercial term. It signifies a ‘pledge’, which is later returned; a ‘deposit’, which pays part of the total debt and gives a legal claim. . . . It always implies an act which engages to something bigger.”

tou/ pneu,matoj).¹⁹⁴ Commenting Paul's words in 2 Cor. 1:22, Seifrid highlights the eschatological character of the commercial metaphor employed by the apostle:

This "deposit" constitutes the present possession of that which is to come; *the gift of the Spirit is nothing other than the new creation as it is present within the fallen world*. At the same time, by speaking of the Spirit as a down payment, Paul expresses an eschatological reserve. Over against the excesses of the Corinthians, which are all too apparent in First Corinthians, *Paul binds the work and presence of the Spirit to the apostolic mission*. He thus introduces here the central theme of 2 Cor 3, the apostolic mission and message as the communication of the Spirit, who rewrites and remakes the human heart.¹⁹⁵

The three metaphors employed by Paul to describe the effective presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life—seal, down payment, and first fruits—serve well to his purpose to connect his action to the eschatological resolution of God to his creation. Significant connections can be recognized between the present and future status of the members of Christ's body, the Church, through those metaphors.¹⁹⁶ That establishes an interesting connection between the current presence of the Spirit in the members of the Body of Christ and the future nature of the individual resurrected bodies, as will be discussed in the next section.

The Holy Spirit and General Resurrection: The "Spiritual Body"

The resurrection of the body is a fundamental teaching of the New Testament and characteristic of Christian faith. It derives directly from the fact that Christ was resurrected from the dead, the first fruits of those who are sleeping (1 Cor. 15:20). This is the emphatic message of the apostle in his great theological testimony in 1 Corinthians 15. On 1 Cor. 15:35, Paul

¹⁹⁴ The same phrase is used also by Paul later in 2 Cor. 5:5 in a context where the apostle discusses the future reality of the believers. The gift of the Holy Spirit is God's pledge that guarantees and prepares the believers for the future gift of full life.

¹⁹⁵ Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 68 (emphasis added).

¹⁹⁶ It may be further considered the fact of two of them being nouns —"first fruits" and "down payment"— as images of the Holy Spirit, sharing some important aspects of the current action of the Spirit and His role in consummation. The image of "sealing," on the other hand, is always described by Paul as a verb (*sfragi,zw*), as an action by God.

begins to answer the question, “How are the dead people resurrected? In what kind of body do they come? (pw/j evgei,rontai oi` nekroi,* poi,w| de. sw,mati e;rcontai*). Then the apostle presents a series of contrasts between the body that dies and the one that is resurrected. There is a continuity between them (it is the same person, the same body). However, there is also discontinuity, emphasized by the contrasts presented by Paul. In one of those contrasts, Paul testifies: “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body” (v. 44, spei,retai sw/ma yuciko,n(evgei,retai sw/ma pneumatiko,n). The main question is: what is a “spiritual body”? In what sense the resurrected body is qualified by “S/spirit”?

Before we deal with more details on the “spiritual body,” it is important to underline the role of the Holy Spirit in general resurrection.¹⁹⁷ A key text to discuss that role is Rom. 8:11. The New Testament usually attributes to the Father the resurrection of Jesus and of the believers, and that is what Paul says to the Romans. However in this text the Holy Spirit is somehow linked with general resurrection. The text affirms that the Spirit is the agent in raising the people of Christ.¹⁹⁸ However, a textual variant changes his role to be the guarantee that we will be raised.¹⁹⁹ Morris suggests that both are true, even if in this particular text the agency role is probably the best reading.²⁰⁰

In his commentary to Paul’s letter to the Romans, A. Nygren calls the attention to the expression used by Paul in Rom. 1:4 where it is said that the resurrection of Jesus happened “according to the Spirit of holiness.” Instead of what could be expected, saying that divine

¹⁹⁷ Thomas, *Resurrection to New Life*, 283n 25, affirms “The Spirit’s involvement in the resurrection event was already recognized in the early church. See Tertulian, *De resurrectione carnis*, 30; Justin, *Apologia* 2, 87; Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 5.1.”

¹⁹⁸ “The one who raised Christ from the dead will give life also to your dead bodies *through* His Spirit that inhabits in you” (dia. tou/ evnoikou/ntoj avvtou/ pneu,matoj evn u`mi/n).

¹⁹⁹ “The one who raised Christ from the dead will give life also to your dead bodies *because of* His Spirit that inhabits in you” (dia. to.n evnoi,koun avvtou/ pneu,ma evn u`mi/n).

²⁰⁰ Morris, *Romans*, 310–11.

affiliation of Christ has been affirmed by “his resurrection from the dead,” the apostle literally says, “the resurrection of those who are dead” (evx avnasta,sewj nekrw/n). Such an expression would apply directly to the general resurrection at the end times, involving all dead people. Paul is referring specifically to the resurrection of Jesus. How could then he use such an expression in that context? Nygren explains:

The explanation lies in the fact that for him the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the dead are not two totally different things. In the final analysis they are one and same truth. *For Paul the resurrection of Christ is the beginning of the resurrection of the dead.* Through Christ the resurrection age has burst upon us. He who believes in the Son of God “has passed from death to life” (John 5:24).²⁰¹

For Paul, what happened to Christ, with the Father acting in power through His Spirit, will also cause the resurrection of all believers (Rom. 8:11), since Christ’s resurrection was the beginning of the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:20). On that occasion the Holy Spirit will again be instrumental. Moreover, the resurrected body will be characterized as “spiritual” and no longer “natural” (yuciko,n).

Unfortunately some translations have taken the adjective yuciko,n as “material” or “physical,”²⁰² a sense that threatens a proper understanding of what “spiritual” means (as if it could be “immaterial” or “nonphysical”).²⁰³ It can be demonstrated by Paul’s use of yuciko,n, specially in 1 Corinthians, that it stands for something related to the natural, or ordinary human body, as it is found in the present time, after the fall and before the general resurrection. Likewise, taking account of Paul’s use of “spiritual,” it does not refer to something intrinsic in the person, but is a direct reference to the Holy Spirit and his work in the life of those who are

²⁰¹ Nygren, *Romans*, 50.

²⁰² For instance, the English translations: NRSV and REB; and the Portuguese translation *Nova Tradução na Linguagem de Hoje*” (New Translation of Today’s Language).

²⁰³ Anthony Thiselton, *Life after death: A New Approach to the Last Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 122.

incorporated to Christ. Gregory J. Lockwood summarizes the contrast saying:

Paul . . . contrasts the ‘natural body’ that is sown with all its limitations to the supernatural (literally, ‘spiritual’) body with which we will be vested in the resurrection. The risen body will no longer be subject to the earthly limitations and mortality that result from the fall, nor to the tug-of-war with the sinful flesh, but will be wholly enlivened and pervaded by the Holy Spirit.²⁰⁴

It is significant that in his contrast between the “natural body” and the “spiritual body,” Paul immediately presents the risen Lord Jesus as the last Adam, the “life-giving Spirit” (v. 45 – pneu/ma zw|opoioi/n) as the basis for the “spiritual.” There should not be understood as an ontological identification of the persons of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, but “as his risen and ascended body is enlivened by the Spirit, so he will pour out the life-giving Spirit on the bodies of believers.”²⁰⁵ As the One who received, bears and gives the Spirit,²⁰⁶ Jesus in his glorified state gives eternal life by the Spirit through faith; likewise, the Holy Spirit will give to the resurrected body the full condition to live eternal life with no imperfection and weakness characteristic of the present state of life in the “natural” body.

This chapter had the aim to describe the role of the Holy Spirit in his relation to the biblical teaching of eschatology. Having as a background the theological discussions about the nature of the kingdom of God, we observed that in their teaching, the apostles and Christ himself dedicated special attention to the “ultimate” things. By “ultimate” we recognize not only the last events considered temporally, but also those things of definitive importance, specifically the present manifestation of God’s kingdom. In this sense, we observed the biblical emphasis describing the relation between the Holy Spirit and “inaugurated eschatology,” the manifestation of God’s kingdom in the life and ministry of Jesus and in the life of the Christian church.

²⁰⁴ Lockwood, *I Corinthians*, 589.

²⁰⁵ Lockwood, *I Corinthians*, 592.

²⁰⁶ Making use of Leopoldo Sánchez’ description of a Spirit-Christology.

The eschatological action of the Spirit manifests already in the present time, before the last events in history, first in his presence and action during the life and work of Jesus, in his messianic fulfillment of God's plan of salvation. Such presence of the Spirit was considered by Christ himself as a manifestation of the God's kingdom, working against evil forces and establishing the gracious rule of God on earth. The eschatological action of the Spirit reveals itself also in the life of the church. As the Spirit of Christ, the incarnate Word of God, the Holy Spirit has also a direct relation with the proclaimed word, in written, oral or sacramental form. As Lord of the word of God to people, the Holy Spirit brings the word, works through it and edifies faith and life, and fights against satanic work of incredulity. Promoting the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ and his work, the Spirit is actively present in the life of the Body of Christ, the Church in all times.

This chapter also underlined the role of the Holy Spirit as the agent of the end times, with a significant role in the final events, in a special manner in the resurrection of the faithful. That truth is present in the witness of the New Testament and also confessed by the Church in the third article of the Creed.

As it was already observed in former chapters of the dissertation, the active presence of the Third Person of Trinity in the life of the church is a significant theme in Pentecostal belief and teaching. To some extent, this is also true in Neopentecostal teaching. The next chapter will consider this topic, when we will analyze specifically the pneumatology of the ICGG. The examination of New Testament data allows us to observe that a fundamental element in the eschatological action of the Holy Spirit deserves due attention in Christian theology. That is the relation of the Spirit with the kingdom of God as dynamically present in Christ's person and in his work of redemption of humanity. Such an emphasis is particularly important when we will

consider neopentecostal pneumatology. In classical Pentecostal pneumatology, it is emphasized how the Spirit acts in the individual believer with gifts and empowerment. With the Christological focus of the Spirit's action, the New Testament provides a much broader view of the Spirit's ministry. Having in mind the Christological-Eschatological focus we will now assess Neopentecostal teaching on the Holy Spirit, as presented in the ICGG.

CHAPTER FIVE

PNEUMATOLOGY OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF GOD'S GRACE

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit has always had a prominent place in Pentecostal Denominations. As was presented in the last chapter, that doctrine has also a significant role in the teaching of the New Testament. In this chapter, we will investigate what the ICGG confesses about the person and role of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, we could not find a detailed doctrinal description similar to what is common in most of Protestant Denominations. Actually, this fact evoked the need to let the Church itself to speak, by the word of its leader and members, about the issue in places and contexts where they choose to do that. The temptation that a researcher must reject is to impose a structure of thinking that is familiar to him or her, but that does not reflect the way of thinking of the institution that is being studied. Therefore, we propose to read the witnesses given by the Church itself. Then we tried to identify main aspects that would reflect the way of thinking of the target of this research.

The sources used to understand the teaching of the ICGG were three: the “Faith Course,” provided by the ICGG in its homepage (which already served in Chapter three as a basis to understand other aspects of the doctrine of the Church); an official monthly magazine of the Church, the “*Jornal Show da Fé*”; and an interview with members of the Church in the form of a questionnaire.

The Faith Course

The “Faith Course” has twelve lessons in Portuguese and English, available through the homepage of the Church. It intends to provide a view of the Church’s central theological aspects. As was already shown in chapter three of this dissertation, the course does not aim to deal with doctrinal issues usually found in historic Protestant Denominations. The subjects covered mostly

deal with the ways a person can achieve a prosper life, by applying to himself what is his divinely given right.

One could imagine that a church identified, at least to certain extent, as “Pentecostal” would provide an extensive approach to the person and work of the Holy Spirit in its official “Faith Course.” However, there are few references on this subject and in none of them a more detailed account is provided.

A positive allusion to the Spirit, made more than once, connects him to God’s written word. Quoting texts from Scripture, the lessons affirm, “The Holy Spirit says,”¹ “this warning from the Holy Spirit,”² “The Holy Spirit declares,”³ and “The Holy Spirit calls our Christian life our confession” (quoting Heb. 3:1 as a word of the Holy Spirit).⁴ No specific doctrine of inspiration is presented, but the unequivocal witness of the Church is that Scripture is the Spirit’s vehicle to convey God’s truth to humankind. A similar approach will be seen when we will describe the witness given in the official magazine of the ICGG.

One of the most distinctive doctrines of classical Pentecostalism, the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, is part of the teaching of the ICGG (as will be seen, for instance, in the results of the questionnaire answered by members of the church). However, in four times that it is mentioned in the “Faith Course,” it is never completely in a positive way. It is never offered as an orientation for the believers. Either the references relativize its importance, or in one case it even carries with it a warning. Three times the baptism in the Holy Spirit is mentioned in questions at the end of the lesson prepared to review the content of the lesson. In Lesson 4, “The name of

¹ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=3

² www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=6

³ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=4

⁴ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=10

Jesus,” a question asks, “Who will be an overcomer?” One of the options is “He who is baptized in the Holy Spirit,” but the correct answer provided by the lesson is “He who uses the Name of Jesus.”⁵ Lesson 6, “Satan’s defeat,” invites the reader to answer the question, “Why does the devil still act in the lives of believers if he is powerless?” Three options are offered: “a. Because he is stubborn; b. Because believers allow him to do so (this is the correct answer); c. Because some believers aren’t baptized in the Holy Spirit.”⁶ Finally, Lesson 10, “Confession” presents a question that may remind the reader of one of the emphasis in classical Pentecostalism: “Why don’t believers live abundant life?” The three options offered are: “a. Because they haven’t been baptized in the Holy Spirit” (which could be thought as a good answer, coming from a Pentecostal point of view); “b. Because they don’t give up their negative way of handling problems; c. Because they don’t pray three times a day.” The lesson gives option (b) as the correct answer.⁷ Two truths are implicit from these references. First, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is recognized as part of Christian teaching and belief; and second, when the subject is battle against the devil or to have an abundant life it is not the baptism in the Spirit that provides a real change in life.

In one occasion, baptism in the Holy Spirit is mentioned positively as something that people seek, but the lesson (11 – “Vain Repetitions”) instead of saying how those people should do that, warns against mistaken ways of doing it:

Many people in Evangelical circles make use of vain repetitions. People who seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit in prayer meetings are often told to praise the Lord. In almost 100% of the times you will hear them praise the Lord in the following manner, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, glory, glory, glory, always in a crescendo. Of course it is a beautiful thing to praise the Lord saying glory and hallelujah, and we

⁵ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=4

⁶ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=6

⁷ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=10

must do this as often as possible. But our words must not be void of meaning, as is usually the case.⁸

Two times the Holy Spirit is referred to in contexts where a spiritual battle was the issue. In one instance, in the questions in the end of the lesson, it is asked why sometimes people fail to receive liberation of problems (usually associated to the action of demons). The correct answer pointed by the lesson is, “We do not understand how the things of the Spirit work.”⁹ The point made in that lesson is that the use of the word of God with confidence, believing the problem addressed will be really solved, allows the believer to be victorious over any evil that is oppressing him with deceases or other difficulties in life. That is the way the Spirit works, according to the Church’s teaching. The other example comes from Lesson 7 (“Resist”), where the text is quoted where the Spirit takes Jesus to the desert in order to be tempted. The Faith Course quotes that text in order to show that “Even before the coming of Jesus, when the devil acted as the prince of this world, he had to obtain permission before he attacked the people of God.”¹⁰

The sparse references to the Holy Spirit in the “Faith Course” provides a limited view about the ICGG Pneumatology. Next sources used in the research will try to deepen the understanding of the subject, through first, the reading of the official magazine of the ICGG and, second, through an interview with members of the Church.

Official Magazine “*Jornal Show da Fé*”

The magazine *Jornal Show da Fé* (Show of Faith) is a monthly publication of the ICGG distributed free. We examined the twelve editions of 2014, trying to identify most significant

⁸ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=11

⁹ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=2

¹⁰ www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=7

characteristics of the Church and specially its teaching on the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

General Characteristics of the Magazine

The *Jornal Show da Fé* is published in the form of a Newspaper, with twenty-four pages in each edition. Every number publicizes the visible results in the life of people of faith and adherence to the Church. In terms of biblical and doctrinal teaching, the reader finds brief messages from R. R. Soares and responses to questions sent by people from all over the country. However, most of the pages of the journal present direct witness of people healed from diseases and of the consequences of accidents, and the recovery from vices and influences of witchcraft and pagan cults.

The magazine is rich in pictures, most of them taken during worship (“reunions,” in the language used in the journal), after the Missionary had prayed for the healing of people and well-being of those injured by accidents. The pictures show people coming to the front, demonstrating their healing. Since most of the injuries healed are connected to problems in arms, legs and spine, those persons are invited by Soares to perform exercises that would demonstrate their complete restoration.

There is also a page dedicated to a more detailed account by a person or family, called “Soup opera in pictures.” A series of photos present a real situation with actors interpreting the story. Only in the last picture, the real person is shown. The story always begins by presenting the problem faced by a person or family, either in health issues or in relationship broken by vices or financial difficulties. Attempts to solve the problem are presented as completely ineffective, until the person gets in contact with the ICGG and exercises faith (determination, in the language employed most of the time by the witnesses). The story ends with the real person pictured as having achieved the solution for her problem.

The main goal of the *Jornal Show da Fé* is to advertise the results achieved by people who adhered to the teaching of the ICGG. This is evident by the content of each edition, with its emphasis on experience over doctrinal content. However, it is our contention that in such a case, where there is no explicit intention of exposing the Church's doctrine, but the results of being in agreement with her, theological principles are implicit and become accessible to the reader. We acknowledge that the absence of a full theological statement on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and other important doctrines of Christian faith brings some difficulties for the student of that Church. On the other hand, doctrinal references, even in an incomplete form, presented during the discussion of practical issues, are a good and relevant material to study. Doctrine is presented in natural terms, with no preoccupation of a systematic completeness. Therefore, the doctrinal statements are given naturally, exposing what is behind the practices of the Church.

In order to understand which theological principles underlie the experiential stance of the Journal and particularly the ICGG's teaching on the Holy Spirit, we assessed the editions of one full year (2014). We examined every instance where the person and the work of the Holy Spirit were mentioned in those twelve editions, in order to present the results in a more systematic way.

Teaching about the Holy Spirit

As it was pointed out above, the *Jornal Show da Fé* dedicates most of its space to expose real life changes in people who are connected to the Church. Doctrinal issues and biblical explanations only appear at the short editorial words of Soares (two or three sections in each edition) and in answers to questions received by the editorial body. Looking for references to the Holy Spirit we found thirty occasions in one year editions, mainly in expositions of Soares, but never with a detailed explanation on the Spirit's works.

Despite few references on the Holy Spirit and his work in the official journal of the ICGG,

an evidence of His importance for the Church may be seen in an announcement found in each edition where the special themes of daily Services are disclosed. For each day of the week, one special subject for blessing receives an emphasis. Sunday services have as a special theme, “Looking for the Holy Spirit.”¹¹ There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit is confessed by R. R. Soares and the ICGG as true God with the Father and Son, even though we could only find one reference to the Trinity (mentioning the three divine Persons) in the material examined.¹²

We will now present the results of the assessment of the references to the Holy Spirit in the twelve editions examined. Those references were distributed in three general subjects: the Holy Spirit and God’s revelation, His work against evil forces, and His presence and operation in Christian life.

The Holy Spirit and the Revelation of God and His Will

In a section named “A strong prayer in your favor,” Soares explains Paul’s words in Eph. 1:16–20. Before expositing the content of the passage, Soares affirms: “This prayer can be received by any person, because it was directed by the Holy Spirit and, because of this, it belongs to all those called to be part of Christ’s body.”¹³ What Soares meant by this brief reference can be witnessed in his messages written and orally announced: the conviction that Scripture is God’s Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit, with no failures and capable to illuminate the understanding of any person.

The Holy Spirit is also the One who opens human minds to understand the written and proclaimed Word of God. In the same message quoted above, Soares explains Eph. 1:18

¹¹ *Jornal Show da Fé* (September 2014), 15.

¹² That reference is done by a person who wrote to the Journal to express his gratitude “to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” for healing (*Jornal Show da Fé* [August 2014], 23).

¹³ Soares, “Uma Forte Oração em Seu Favor,” *Jornal Show da Fé* (February 2014), 20.

(“having the eyes of your heart enlightened”) saying: “no one will understand something in the Word of God if his heart will not be enlightened by the Lord.” And then he quotes, with no further explanation, John 3:34, “God gives the Spirit without measure.”¹⁴ What he seems to imply is that the gift of the Holy Spirit is the only way to allow a person to understand what the Lord really wants to communicate. In another edition, Soares is answering questions sent to the Journal. A person tells she was listening a preaching by her pastor and felt a voice speaking that message (based on Deut. 20) in her heart. She asked Soares to explain what was happening in that event. In his answer Soares affirmed: “The Lord God speaks by His Word. What happened was exactly this: you were studying Scripture when suddenly the Holy Spirit opened your understanding in order to apprehend what that message had for you.” And then he completed: “It is always in this way that the Lord speaks in our heart; therefore it is so important to be in tune with Him meditating in the Holy Bible.”¹⁵

The revelation of the Holy Spirit comes through the Word of Scripture. However, Soares calls the attention to his readers to give a close consideration of miracles that, according to him, are happening today. In his editorial of the May edition (“God Always Operates”), Soares affirms: “What the Most High has been doing in our days finds a parallel only during the days when Jesus was ministering here on earth. It is necessary to give attention to God’s works, because by just observing them, the Holy Spirit reveals us divine truth for our life.”¹⁶ That is not simply a bold statement. Soares often implies the divinely revelatory character of healings, improvement in finances and in relationship, as they are exposed in every edition of the Journal, and in the broadcast TV Shows as well. The success in life achieved by a person who decided to

14 Soares, “Uma Forte Oração em Seu Favor,” 20.

15 Soares, “Palavra Amiga,” *Jornal Show da Fé* (October 2014), 22.

16 Soares, “Deus Opera Sempre,” *Jornal Show da Fé* (May 2014), 2.

“determinate” a blessing is a lesson for other people. Everyone who reads the Journal is invited to learn God’s revelation through the miracles. We could find in several editions Soares insisting that since Jesus is the same today as he was in the past, it would be lack of faith to discredit the wonders that are happening in the Church today.

The Holy Spirit is Present and Active in the Fight against the Devil

The existence of evil forces and, particularly, the existence of an evil being, the devil, is a conviction and emphatic teaching of the ICGG, not only by pastors and official workers, but by the witness of members of the Church in general.¹⁷ The triad devil, flesh and world is present in almost every witness given by a person who was gifted with healing, or success in life, or victory against vices. However, the devil has a key role when disasters happen, or when apparently unsolved problems threaten the life of people. That actually reflects well what the preachers, Soares being an example, constantly teach.

The Holy Spirit has a role recognized in some specific contexts where the devil is mentioned, as a group of quotations from the journal will witness.

Witnesses of people who felt an improvement in life in connection to their faith and adherence to the Church usually include some reference to the situation lived formerly, understood as having been under the attack and influence of the devil. In one example, a member of the Church tells his experience of horrible dreams that disturbed his sleep for two years. He imputed that bad experience to spiritual evil. One night he felt a worse threat, with the sensation he was suffering a stroke. He tells: “That was an action of the Evil One to terminate my life. I started to run out of strength and with dizziness. I could not do anything to avoid that, but the

¹⁷ The influence of the devil is several times identified by the Neopentecostal leaders (Soares as well) with what happened in pagan cults, especially in Afro Brazilian religions (see Crislaine C. deAlmeida, “O Diabo na Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus (1980–2010),” *Ciências da Religião: História e Sociedade* 8, no. 1 [2000]: 4–19.)

Holy Spirit gave me words to fight against the evil and I was completely healthy again.”¹⁸ What words has the Holy Spirit given to him that allowed him to be actively and successfully in battle against the devil, the witness does not tell. However, he gives an idea continuing the account, saying: “The name of Jesus is powerful and it is above us all. The Word of God is our weapon of war, and His power makes the victory certain.”¹⁹ To use the name of Jesus is to learn how to exercise determination over evil forces that try to take what is ours.²⁰

The Spirit of God is also actively present in the life of the believers to empower them to identify when the devil tries to deceive them. In a section where Soares answers questions sent to the journal, a person asks if it is possible that a possessed person could use the name of Jesus and sing praises by irony. In his answer, Soares underscores the Spirit’s help to the believers lest they be deceived by such an action:

However effective the staging of the adversary, those who have the Spirit of the Lord in their heart will not be shaken (Psalm 62:6). If the person really belongs to God, he will know, by discernment of spirits, that it is a lie and he will reprehend the evil spirit with the authority of the name of Jesus and the devil will retreat immediately.²¹

One of the ways the devil uses to enslave people and take them from God’s will is alcoholism and other vices. The edition of February 2014 of the *Jornal Show da Fé* dedicates several pages to show how faith is significant in the person’s fight against drugs dependence. One ICGG pastor, Maiquel Marques, was giving instructions about how a person can be freed from vices: “It is necessary to have the desire of liberation in order to God begin a transformation in the person.” That is key in the teaching of the Church—a person has to take the

18 Amanda Pieranti, “O Diabo Agia na Madrugada,” *Jornal Show da Fé* (September 2014), B16.

19 Pieranti, “O Diabo Agia na Madrugada,” B16.

20 We read in the “Faith Course” of the ICGG: “Once we have learned that through the Name of Jesus we can ordain whatever we want, we will begin to live the abundant life that the Lord planned for us. We will then take possession of the position that God has said is already ours.” www.ongrace.com/cursofe/en/licoes.php?id=4

21 R. R. Soares, “Palavra Amiga,” *Jornal Show da Fé* (January 2014), 8.

initiative so that she can achieve what she needs. Pastor Marques continues:

Discerning the spiritual world, knowing what comes from God and what is from the devil, is the beginning of liberation. That only happens in a complete way through the Holy Spirit and when there is a new birth. Then there will be a change in the former addicted nature, and then we can say he is a new converted to Jesus, and is ready to resist to any attack from the devil.²²

The Holy Spirit gives effective help against sin, and he works in the life of the believer so that he or she may be faithful despite a sinful past. In a section of the journal called “Abrindo o coração” (Opening the heart), people are invited to share some conflict or personal drama or doubts in faith, telling their story to Soares. In the January edition, a former prostitute asks for advice, because she is fighting a daily battle against flesh. She is waiting that the Lord give her a husband, and she feels tempted to turn to her former life. In response, Soares addresses directly her question, giving an interesting orientation demonstrating pastoral care that is not always so evident in his manifestations. Responding to the specific temptation she feels, Soares says:

This fight against temptation is not because of your past, but because you want to live according to the will of the One who gave His life on the cross. Although few speak about that, this fight happens with everyone who takes the Lord seriously. . . . If, on the one hand, the fight is unremitting, on the other hand we count with the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26, 27).²³

Spiritual warfare is one of the characteristics of Neopentecostal theology, as was discussed in chapter three of this dissertation. That is explicitly affirmed in Soares’ teaching. The attacks of the devil are attempts to keep people from acquiring what are their rights derived from the complete work of Christ. When faith is strong and fully dedicated to the Lord, the evil threats lose their power, as several stories told in the *Jornal Show da Fé* declare. In consequence, a person is held responsible for maintaining her protected status. In a section called “Palavras de Fé” (Words of Faith), Soares shares short thoughts for Christian life. In the October edition of

22 Amanda Pieranti, “Fé Pode Livrar da Dependência,” *Jornal Show da Fé* (February 2014), 16.

23 R. R. Soares, “Abrindo o Coração” *Jornal Show da Fé* (January 2014), 23.

the journal, he affirms: “Our heart should only welcome the Spirit of God; however, when we sin, we make room for the devil.”²⁴ Unsolved problems are the result of Satan keeping the person enslaved, affirms Soares. In a message entitled, “Do not accept to be dominated by sin,” the Missionary was explaining how the devil imprisons a person with sin and avoids that he or she receive cure in his or her decease. For that reason, it is so necessary to receive forgiveness of sins, as happened to the paralytic man in the event told by the Gospels (Mark 2:1–12). Soares then refers to the role of the Holy Spirit in this fight against sin:

Before you sin, the Holy Spirit convinces you [about that] and you tremble and are embarrassed. However, despite that, you violate that protection and sin. At that moment, your life is in the hands of the devil. Therefore, there is no longer peace, communion with God and will to pray.²⁵

Considering this last example, it is possible to see how in the same occasion, Soares can on the one hand present a clear teaching on God’s grace and free forgiveness of sins, and on the other hand he leaves a person with the fear that every sin puts him or her under the dominium of Satan. The presence and active role of the Spirit of God in the life of the believer is a theme with some references in the editions of the journal *Show da Fé*, as we will discuss in the next section.

The role of the Holy Spirit in Christian Life

For R. R. Soares, an abundant life is not the result of human efforts, for it is a gift that is possible because of the victory of Christ on the cross. Conversely, a defeated life in terms of health and prosperity is the result of the separation from God, caused by forces of darkness (Satan and the demons). In an article entitled “The greatest loss and the greatest blessing,” the author tells how Soares insisted during a preaching that a new life is possible when a person puts his life in the Savior’s hands. The article brings an alert: “According to the Missionary, what

24 R. R. Soares, “Palavras de Fé,” *Jornal Show da Fé* (October 2014), 24.

25 R. R. Soares, “Não Aceite ser Dominado pelo Pecado,” *Jornal Show da Fé* (January 2014), 14.

should not happen is to confuse this new life with religiosity, because many people have religion, but since they don't feel the touch of the Holy Spirit, they live overloaded with rules and with no feeling of the Father's love." With such touch of the Spirit a person does not approach God "with a talk of a defeated one," that Soares identifies with a prayer in terms of "Lord, if it is your will." Being in the Spirit, a person can be "positive," says Soares, and achieve what she has as a right as God's redeemed child.²⁶

Galatians 5, with the reference to the fruit of the Spirit, is the most cited Bible passage in the editions of the *Show da Fé* where the Holy Spirit is mentioned. In different occasions, the text is quoted to answer questions about the fruit in the life of a believer. Soares maintains that it is the Holy Spirit that produces the fruit in the life of a person. However, what calls the attention is his insistence, every time the text is quoted, in referring to the responsibility of the believer. For instance, he says in one of his answers that a Christian "should not stand still, waiting that the Lord do the work in his heart. . . . There is a partnership between the power of the Holy Spirit and the believer, where this one has to be completely obedient to the Word."²⁷ In another edition, Soares teaches that a person should not be satisfied having only one of those "virtues." That is because, explains Soares, the Spirit produces all of them, provided that a person do what belongs to her: "They are the result of the Holy Spirit's action in the life of those who were born again (John 3:3-6), but it is fundamental to underline that they are not automatic, because it is necessary that the person walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh (Galatians 5:16, 17)."²⁸

It is possible to identify in the ICGG preaching a distinction between blessings related to the forgiveness of sins and communion with God and those blessings more directly related to

26 Marcos Couto, "O Maior Prejuízo e a Maior Bênção," *Jornal Show da Fé* (January 2014), 12.

27 R. R. Soares, "Palavra Amiga," *Jornal Show da Fé* (September 2014), 22.

28 R. R. Soares, "Palavra Amiga," *Jornal Show da Fé* (July 2014), 22.

day-to-day issues. However, one can also see that issues in finances, health and relationship in the life of Christians are treated in direct connection to faith. Christ's redemptive work made reconciliation of the sinner with God, and opened the way for the believer to have the right to determine blessings in his life as well. Likewise, the Holy Spirit has a significant role in Christian life, since he "does the work in people's hearts,"²⁹ and he operates through the word of God in the resolution of daily life. In a section dedicated to answer questions of people, a person asks Soares if she needs spiritual release. The reason why she asked that is the fact that in situations of stress she spends too much money with credit card. In his answer, Soares warns against the person putting her trust and joy in material goods. He also affirms that she is indeed in need of spiritual release. Then Soares guides her to read Ephesians 4:28b, and completes: "The Holy Spirit will certainly show you God's will related to your financial life."³⁰

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a fundamental theme for Classic Pentecostalism. In Neopentecostal churches the emphasis is not the same, even though in Soares' preaching (as can be seen in the TV daily show, *Show da Fé*) the subject is mentioned a few times. Throughout all 2014 editions of the *Jornal Show da Fé* there is only one brief reference, with the orientation given by Soares during a worship in the city of Curitiba: "Be in unity with God, go to church every Sunday, seek baptism with the Holy Spirit, attend special meetings and prayers, and so you will see how good is Jesus."³¹ Soares was explaining the necessary steps so that all persons who listen to the word of God could receive the blessings they deserve. Baptism in the Holy Spirit in this context is not associated, as in classical Pentecostalism, to speaking in tongues or to be empowered to announce the gospel. Rather, it is part of the process by which someone

29 R. R. Soares, "Palavra Amiga," *Jornal Show da Fé* (August 2014), 22.

30 Soares, "Palavra Amiga," 22.

31 Amanda Pieranti, "Alcançou o Milagre e não Precisou Operar o Tumor no Cérebro," *Jornal Show da Fé* (September 2014), B7.

establishes a strong union with God e receives the blessings made possible by Christ's sacrifice.

Even not using the language of "baptism in the Holy Spirit," the closest expression to the baptism in the Holy Spirit found elsewhere in the journal is associated to the performance of miracles in the church today. Soares affirms: "God enables us with the unction of the Holy Spirit in order to do the impossible."³² In this quotation the work of the Spirit comes closer to the empowerment associated to the baptism in the Holy Spirit as understood in classical Pentecostalism.

There is a larger number of references referring to noticeable results of the presence of the Holy Spirit in daily life. In a message for a huge multitude in a central avenue in São Paulo, Soares oriented people so that they would not be discouraged before difficulties. Actually, Soares emphasized, they could believe in the victory that Jesus provided for them. He completed, saying: "Never lose heart of Faith, because when you lose heart, the devil achieves victory over your life. The consolation we need to face the evil attacks, suffering, and slander comes only from the Holy Spirit."³³

The Holy Spirit is present and active in times of great disturbance, and brings peace that can be perceived by others. The city of Rio de Janeiro witnessed a tragedy with a building collapse in 1999 (Residential Palace II). Eight people were killed and many families were left without their possessions. One of the persons who survived the disaster was a woman, psychologist, member of the ICGG. She affirms that a pastor warned her some days before the event that something bad would happen to her. Then she says about her relief from the disaster: "I became part of the group of survivors of Palace II; we traveled to several places and many people came to faith in Jesus. People came to me as a psychologist, because they could see peace

32 R. R. Soares, "Milagres," *Jornal Show da Fé* (May 2014), B1.

33 R. R. Soares, "Nunca Desanime da Fé," *Jornal Show da Fé* (May 2014), B9.

in me. Even being of the victims, I explained to them that the Holy Spirit was in me.”³⁴

One of the topics often covered by the *Jornal Show da Fé* is the freedom people received from vices, after they came to faith or to a more dedicated Christian life. In the midst of several stories told, three of them mentioned the role of the Spirit in a person’s fight against alcoholism and drugs. In one of them, the witness about the Holy Spirit come in a story of a young man formerly addicted to marijuana and cocaine. The report in the journal tells of the youth’s mother, a member of the ICGG, praying for him for many years. She eventually could bring him to the church and, according to his account, during a youth retreat he began to feel released from vices. After some time, he felt tempted to drink alcoholic beverage again. Then he heard a message from his pastor that made the whole difference in his life: “The believer does not need to drink to be joyful. The joy that comes from the Holy Spirit is much bigger.”³⁵ A singer, formerly addicted to alcohol and prostitution, tells a similar situation. In a section named “Miracles through TV” she tells she was tempted to commit suicide. Then she turned her TV set on and saw the missionary Soares preaching about how God’s power frees any person from the devil’s claws. She then prayed and “accepted Jesus as Savior.” In her witness the Holy Spirit is presented as the one who gives a new meaning to life, even in times of temptation: “The enemy tried several times to keep me from going to church; however, when I heard the Word, my life was transformed. Every burden, emptiness and oppression were filled by the power of the Holy Spirit.”³⁶

A final example comes from a situation where, as several times in the accounts of members of the ICGG, an addiction is considered as a direct influence from the devil. In an article, “She

34 Amanda Pieranti, “Ela Sobreviveu a Desabamento de um Prédio,” *Jornal Show da Fé* (January 2014), 17.

35 Amanda Pieranti, “A Maconha foi a Porta de Entrada para um Mundo de Destruição,” *Jornal Show da Fé* (February 2014), 18.

36 Amanda Pieranti, “O Diabo Queria Tirar a Minha Vida,” *Jornal Show da Fé* (March 2014), 3.

won the battle against the devil,” a woman tells she was attending “witchcraft centers” (probably a reference to Afro Brazilian cults) and consequently she had financial difficulties and alcohol addiction. The resolution of her problem, she tells, came after she watched a preaching on television. After hearing John 8:32, she says that the process of her liberation began: “I felt the Holy Spirit speaking to my heart, saying that there was a solution for my life.” Taken by a friend to the ICGG, she tells her battle continued for some time, because the demons did not want to allow her to attend the church. After attending “meetings of liberation,” she said she was completely released from evil influences and she is a worker in the church today.³⁷

Results from an Interview with Members of the ICGG

The third instrument used to understand the ICGG teaching was a questionnaire that was responded by a group of members of the Church. The questions asked intended to provide a direct reference from people inside the Church about her teaching, mainly on the themes relevant to this dissertation.³⁸

Eighteen people responded the questionnaire, being ten women and eight men, including the pastor of the congregation and one Theology student. Ages varied from sixteen to sixty-seven years old. In terms of schooling, three people have fundamental level, eleven completed high School, and four people have College level. The range of time of membership in the ICGG among the people who responded the questionnaire goes from three to twenty years. All of them were gathered in the Church in the city of *Novo Hamburgo*, attending a course of Christian leadership provided by the Church, with emphasis on the doctrinal content of the ICGG

³⁷ Amanda Pieranti, “Ela Venceu a Guerra contra o Diabo,” *Jornal Show da Fé* (February 2014), 15.

³⁸ See the questionnaire in Appendix 3 at the end of this chapter.

teaching.³⁹

The questionnaire had four parts. First, it was asked that people would identify themselves with age, gender, school level and time of membership in the ICGG. They were no asked to identify themselves by name. The second part provided ten doctrinal statements, about which the people should manifest their position, agreeing or not with what each affirmation was suggesting. Besides signaling the option chosen, the persons could also freely manifest their ideas about each topic in a space provided for that. The third and fourth parts were questions where the interviewees could freely answer.

We will now succinctly describe some of the results, more specifically related to the topic of this dissertation. All survey responses are available at the end of this chapter (Appendix 4).

We begin by considering the questions with objective answers (and free comments). It is noteworthy that most of the group (six fully and eight partially) agreed that the ICGG is a Pentecostal Church. As was seen in chapter three of the dissertation, Soares identifies himself as Baptist in theology and Pentecostal in practice. This combines well with the answers given to the questions about the Holy Spirit and Eschatology. The majority of the responses claimed that the teaching on the Holy Spirit is frequent in the Church and that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is to be expected with the visible sign of speaking in tongues. Interestingly, two people made comments relativizing the presence of tongues. One of them even called the attention that some people may become frustrated when not presenting tongues.⁴⁰ When asked about the Spirit promoting faith in Christ, all responders agreed (fully or partially) that this is His most important

³⁹ Unfortunately, we had no access to the content of the course they were participating.

⁴⁰ In a conversation with a Theology student, member of the ICGG (November 24, 2015), he told that in his local community people were restless since their pastor argued they should seek the gift of speaking in tongues, as the evidence of their baptism in the Holy Spirit. The student had the opportunity to preach several sermons, where he stressed that more fundamental is faith in Christ and his redemptive work and that the gift of tongues is one among many gifts and should not be a reason for anxiety. He told that several reactions came by people saying they were greatly comforted by that message.

work. Besides, references were made to his work of convincing a person of sin and bringing consolation and strength.

The questions asked about the relation of the Holy Spirit's work and the means of grace exposed a division in the participants' opinion. Half of the people did not agree that the Spirit works only through the word, and some observed that other means are also used: a touch in the heart and mind (whatever that may mean), experiences and prayer. For a little more than half of the people baptism is not a means to create faith. In the free comments, a typical Pentecostal stance could be identified, in affirmations that baptism is only a symbol of a new life and should only be administered after faith is confessed. The majority of answers about the Lord's Supper (eleven out of the total of eighteen) are somehow surprising, considering the Pentecostal doctrine, since they agreed that it is a means to the Holy Spirit convey forgiveness of sins. However, in their free comments, some of the persons preferred to refer to the Spirit's work of convincing about sin and that forgiveness comes through repentance.

The three questions addressing eschatological themes revealed in the answers the premillennarian stance of the ICGG, following what classical Pentecostalism usually confesses. In the free comments, an observation was given that they are a Dispensational Church in terms of doctrine.

Examining the answers to the two discursive questions some remarks can now be made. The first question asked about conversion and the role of the Holy Spirit. Almost all answers mentioned the Spirit's action of convincing people of sin and guiding them to repentance. Only one answer explicitly connected the Spirit to conversion, understood as the same as faith in Christ. One person mentioned that the Spirit strengthen us in Christ, and other two answers related to some extent the work of the Spirit with Christ.

The final question gave the opportunity to people reflect on what changes they saw in their lives since they became members of the ICGG. Here a huge difference could be seen if compared to the witnesses found in the *Jornal Show da Fé*. As we saw above, the magazine presents witnesses mainly connected to healing or progress in finances. In the responses to the questionnaire, the large majority mentioned results in Christian life, with faith, peace, love for others, and correction of bad behavior. Only three persons mentioned freedom from vices. More surprisingly, in a significant contrast to what was seen in the official magazine, only one person mentioned, and only implicitly, the freedom from the devil (“Freedom from alcohol and spiritual oppression”).

General Remarks about the ICGG Teaching on the Holy Spirit

Three sources served as basis for this study: the “Faith Course,” the magazine *Jornal Show da Fé* and the interview with members of the ICGG. They provided some elements about the teaching of the church on the Holy Spirit. It is important to note, again, that no written material of the ICGG provides a full account of her doctrinal teaching. In this sense, the Church has a much distinctive way of presenting its belief, if we considered the pattern of how Christian Denominations usually present their doctrines. As was already seen, R. R. Soares identifies himself as an evangelical (= Protestant) preacher, specifically Pentecostal in term of theology, with the particularities of the third wave Pentecostalism. The sources studied gave us the opportunity to assess what is central for the preachers and members of the Church in their view of the role of the Holy Spirit.

As we saw, the “Course of Faith” offers few resources about the topic in study. The official magazine and the interview with members of the church provided more elements of what the ICGG confesses. Through the reading of one-year editions of the *Jornal Show da Fé* we

identified three main areas where the Spirit was mentioned. The Spirit speaks through the proclaimed and written Word of God, and he is responsible for bringing this word to us through the work of God's inspired writers. He is also directly involved in the believer's fight against the attacks from the devil. The Holy Spirit is also confessed as being active in the daily life of Christian people, giving joy, peace and help in times of temptation. It should be also mentioned that the accounts given about the Spirit's presence and action are usually directly or indirectly connected to healing, freedom from perceptible operations of the devil or liberation from vices and participation in pagan cults. As we could see, the answers given to the questionnaire diverge in some important aspects from what the magazine presents. The fact that we asked questions to people already connected to the Church and being in positions of leadership, attending a doctrinal course, provided responses that privileged the work of the Spirit convincing a person of sin and giving peace in Christ.

We could also observe that some significant aspects of the New Testament teaching about the Holy Spirit and his ministry did not receive a proper approach. For instance, no reference was found about how the Holy Spirit had a role in Christ's person and messianic ministry, which is a clear emphasis from the New Testament, especially in the Gospels, as we have shown in the fourth chapter of this dissertation.⁴¹ This conclusion may be also expanded to say that a Trinitarian view of the Spirit is not presented anywhere in the teaching of the Church.

Other missing area was a description of how the Spirit guides the church on earth,

⁴¹ An interesting connection between the Spirit and Christ, particularly his resurrection, can be seen sometimes in Soares' preaching during the TV program Show da Fé. More than once (for instance, in January 31, 2014). The missionary was explaining how the work of Christ, victorious against the devil, opens the doors for the believer to take possession of the blessing. In that preaching, Soares explained that Christ died in two distinct ways, spiritually and physically. The spiritual death of Christ, Soares taught, happened when the Father abandoned him on the cross. Physical death was a reality for Christ when he was in hell. Jesus suffered there and the devil thought he had won. But then, Soares explained, the Holy Spirit came (in hell) and gave new life to Christ, his resurrection, and that was his victory against the devil.

providing new life through faith in Christ, working through the sacramental life of the church and bestowing gifts that enhance the unity of God's people on earth. In other words, the Creedal connection between the person of the Holy Spirit and the Church's nature as *Una Sancta* is not apparent in the sources investigated.

A lack of a Christological, Trinitarian, and Ecclesiological approach to Pneumatology may be imputed to the emphasis given by the ICGG to the individual in his relationship with Christ, in the pursuit of victory over the problems in life.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit, one of the main emphasis in classical Pentecostalism, had no clear and explicit exposition, except one brief reference in the magazine. Even in the responses by the leaders of the church during the questionnaire, few of them made remarks on the subject. As we saw, in the "Course of Faith," references to that baptism are sparse and do not contribute for an understanding of what the Church really believes about it.

Finally, there was no reference to the eschatological role of the Holy Spirit. Such theme is not only important in the theology of the New Testament, but is also one of the main emphasis of Pentecostalism in its beginning and even today. The *Jornal Show da Fé* presented in the whole year only few references to Eschatology, with short references to the coming of Christ, rapture and great tribulation. In the interview with members of the Church, the themes of rapture and the millennium received almost unanimous answers, demonstrating the Premillennarian Dispensational view on the future coming of Christ. Two persons mentioned the Holy Spirit in their free comments on questions about eschatology, but referring only to His help in times of tribulation.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

In this study, we proposed to offer a description of doctrinal beliefs of the Neopentecostal movement, here represented by the ICGG, mainly in regard to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and of the last things. The dissertation tried to fill a gap in theological studies on Neopentecostalism. One of the first tasks to accomplish was to show the relation of this religious movement with classical Pentecostalism, examining its teaching of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. For some scholars, Neopentecostalism has been treated simply as a development of Pentecostalism. The typology of the waves, considering Neopentecostalism as the third wave, underscores that continuity. There are, however, studies that consider the Neopentecostal phenomenon as a complete separate religion, with almost no point of contact with classical Pentecostalism.

The dissertation provided elements that allow us to suggest a third alternative. There is some continuity between Neopentecostalism and the original movement, but also considerable distinctive aspects, including pneumatology and eschatology. An important point to understand is the fact that “Neopentecostalism” as a general term to describe a group of denominations may cause the wrong impression that they are a monolithic group. This study demonstrated that there actually are common characteristics, but also that the ICGG has peculiarities that in some ways bring it closer to classical Pentecostalism and Protestantism than other Neopentecostal denominations (comparing it, for example, with the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, the most famous Neopentecostal Brazilian Church, the seedbed from which the ICGG sprang).

In order to evaluate the theology of the ICGG, the dissertation discussed the work of the Spirit especially in relation to eschatology. This focus is not something new in theological

studies, but it received an emphasis that is not always highlighted in studies about the Holy Spirit. “Eschatological Pneumatology” is a framework that is used to show that the Holy Spirit has a key role in the ultimate events in history connected to the second coming of Christ and the resurrection. It also underscores the active presence of the Spirit in the events that anticipated in time what is expected to the end of all things, events that are usually considered under the topic of the inaugurated eschatology. In concrete terms, it encompasses the role of the Holy Spirit in the coming, life and messianic work of Jesus, as also in the sacramental life of the Church. In this sense, being eschatological, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit may be characterized as Christological, incarnational and soteriological.

In an indirect way, the dissertation tried to suggest elements that can help a better communication and dialogue between Lutherans and Neopentecostals. It is therefore an exercise in the practice of ecumenical theology. Despite the difficulties that such an undertaking implies, we suggest that in order to have a positive conversation it is necessary to begin by understanding their own way of confessing the Christian faith. In order to do that, it is necessary to employ a method that hears (reads) what they are saying about themselves. Since there is strong suspicion about Neopentecostalism on the part of representatives of historic Protestantism and even classical Pentecostalism, the dissertation tried to open the possibility of an approach that prioritizes such a positive listening of what “they” are actually saying and not only what others are saying about them. Such an approach does not necessarily produce a good evaluation of the movement that is under study, but it tries to be fair in relation to a different mode of Christianity, expressed in its own terms.

At this point at the end of the research, we will briefly present some aspects of the theology of the ICGG assessed by this writer, from the standpoint of what he understands to be a Biblical

and Lutheran way of confessing the work of the Holy Spirit and the life in the Church as moved by his ministry. The points considered below do not intend to be a full assessment of the theology and practice of the ICGG, but only underline what seems to be some of the most significant aspects of the spirituality exposed by leaders and members of the ICGG in comparison with Lutheran theology.

Distinct Religious Framework: Neopentecostal and Lutheran

One of the greatest challenges for those who study Neopentecostalism from the point of view of theology is to recognize that different religious systems—that of the object under study and the system of the researcher himself—are brought into contact. When one studies different ways of analyzing Christian doctrine, for example of a historical Protestant denomination, in comparison with Lutheran theology, despite the notorious doctrinal differences, one can identify some common basic structure for theological thinking. When we study a Neopentecostal denomination, however, we must recognize that not only there are several Christian doctrines understood differently, but also the organizational structure of what one considers the Christian faith is distinct.

In the introduction of a book about the history and theology of the Lutheran Confessions, the authors begin by discussing which elements characterize a religion, pointing out that different worldviews evoked by different Religions work from distinct structures of thought. Even among Christian Denominations, there are diverse modes of describing a reality that binds everything together, “placing humanity within the larger scheme of things — we call it ‘religion’.”¹ For many Christians such a mode of analyzing religions depends on a fixed doctrinal system, under

¹ Charles P. Arand, James A. Nestingen, and Robert Kolb, *The Lutheran Confessions: History and Theology of the Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 1.

which everything may be analyzed, understood and confessed. That, however, is not the case for every Christian Denomination. Arand, Nestingen and Kolb refer to some basic elements that Historians of Religion usually identify in every system. In this particular study, they use Ninian Smart's description (*Worldviews: Cross Cultural Explorations of Human Beliefs*), who pointed six elements that characterize any Religion: "(1) doctrine or teaching, (2) narrative, (3) ritual, (4) ethics, (5) community, and (6) the personal faith or sense of awe and reverence that binds the first five together."² The authors continue:

While every ideological system has some form of each, each religion combines them in different ways, choosing to orient the entire procedure for describing reality from specific starting points. All Christians practice their faith embracing all six elements, but different Christian traditions give different elements differing values and places in their entire practice of the faith. The central point for the orientation of life and for defining the nature and purpose of the church—the form that exercises organizing authority over the other elements—differs from group to group.³

Therefore, in this particular research, the challenge begins by trying to determinate the specific mode of confessing the Christian faith by the leaders and people of the ICGG. It is clear that the ICGG leadership regards a fixed doctrinal framework is with relative indifference and there is much more flexibility in addressing theological questions than is in more traditional theological systems, as in Lutheranism. This fact helps to explain how it is difficult to, first, examine doctrinal aspects that come from a very distinct way of thinking religion and faith, and, second, to establish a dialogue in an ecumenical approach.

The study of the ICGG revealed that Soares constructed his mode of understanding the Christian faith from a different point of view than historic Protestantism, including Lutheranism, for instance, and even distinct from the first and second waves of Pentecostalism. For Lutherans Scripture stands as the formal principle of theology, that defines what is a Christian doctrine

² Arand, Nestingen and Kolb, *The Lutheran Confessions: History and Theology*, 1.

³ Arand, Nestingen and Kolb, *The Lutheran Confessions: History and Theology*, 1.

(*norma normans*) and also serves as the judge of any teaching that assumes to be reflecting Christian faith. Lutherans also maintain that justification by faith in Christ (the gospel in its strict sense) is the material principle that describes what is the central characteristic of what it means to be a Christian. In addition, the Book of Concord, with the official confessions of the Lutheran Church, stands as a norm of doctrine (*norma normata*), because (*quia*) it is understood as the faithful expression of Scripture and a clear confession of Christian faith.⁴

For Soares, on the other hand, despite of his personal conviction (he presents himself as Baptist in terms of doctrine), it is not a *corpus doctrinae* that serves as his reference for teaching and proclaiming the word of God. As was seen in the “Course of Faith” of the ICGG, the Church’s confession is oriented mainly to the resolution of adversities related to daily life, specifically dealing with financial, familiar, and health problems. Instead of a humble faith that knows the place of “Your will be done,” Soares underlines Kenneth Hagin’s emphasis on “determination,” “positive confession,” and the “right” believers have to receive blessings from God. It is not that Soares has a low estimate of Scripture and of the gospel of salvation in Christ. Both are assumed by him and frequently referred to in his proclamation and teaching. However, it is not so evident that both of those principals serve as an explicit framework to develop a practical approach to Christian life and problems that need to be faced.

What is evident in the analysis of the confession of the ICGG is that a very distinct diagnosis takes place in what refers to what is wrong in the life of human beings. For the Lutheran confessions, following the teaching of Scripture, and having the doctrine of justification as fundamental to understand Christian faith, there is a radical enmity with God caused by sin, which causes the person to be spiritually blind and dead. In view of this important

⁴ It is known that even among Lutherans, there is no full agreement in the place given to Scripture and to the Lutheran Confessions. This writer is presenting here what is the theological stance of the Church body to which he belongs, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (*Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil - IELB*).

gap in the preaching of the ICGG, one can understand its emphasis on the resolution of this-worldly issues, more than in the restoration of the fellowship with God, that has been broken and shapes every aspect of human life.

The distinction described above needs to be taken on account when one examines the teaching of Soares and of the ICGG. Otherwise, there will always be an assessment that departs from a different framework than the Neopentecostal Church assumes.

A Trinitarian and Pneumatological Understanding of Christ's Work

An important topic in a comparison between Lutheran theology and Neopentecostal preaching is the place of Christ in witness and proclamation. In some sense, Neopentecostalism may be accused of "Christomonism." In fact, the work of Christ receives frequent references, although mostly to affirm a victory against the devil that allows the believer to be freed from sickness, financial failures and other evils in his life. Besides, Christ's person and ministry are depicted without specific connection to a Trinitarian framework. The same can be noted in reference to the work of the Holy Spirit. In a distinct way, New Testament theology considers the work of Christ in the perspective of his sending by the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the same way, the Spirit has a ministry that is better understood and confessed in a Trinitarian framework.

When one assesses the manner in which Neopentecostalism considers the work of Christ and of the Spirit, it is inevitable for Lutherans to consider these important themes under a Trinitarian framework. Therefore, it is important to describe how concretely and positively Lutherans understand and teach the Trinitarian role of the Holy Spirit.

As could be seen in the dissertation, a helpful contribution is given by Leopoldo Sánchez discussing the life and ministry of Jesus as the receiver, bearer and giver of the Spirit. He shows

how the necessary Nicene emphasis on the immanent Trinity (to respond to Arianism) brought a decline of interest in the economic Trinity and, consequently, in the reflection on the presence of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' humanity. In such a context, a Spirit Christology, characterized as a Christology "from below," is particularly necessary, giving a more biblical approach to the doctrine of God. Jesus' life and ministry is one that the Spirit fully inhabits. The Holy Spirit is always present in every step of the Savior's work of the redemption of humanity. Such a view, Sánchez stresses, should not be seen as substitute for a Logos-Christology (a Christology "from above"), but as a necessary complement in order to better witness the person and work of Jesus, presenting him in relation to humanity in the economy of salvation.⁵

A Christology shaped by the presence and active role of the Spirit also witnesses the primary place of the Father. He is the one who sent Jesus to the world in the power of the Spirit, and he sends the Spirit after Jesus' death and resurrection. That descending movement (from the Father) is followed by an ascendant one (to the Father). In Kilian McDonnell's words, "The Father sends the Son in the Spirit to touch and transform the world and church, leading them in the Spirit, through the Son/Christ to the Father."⁶ The Spirit is the sanctifier of humanity, and in his mission, he brings people back to the Father through the soteriological work of the Son.⁷ In order to grant the benefits of Jesus to men, the Spirit delivers forgiveness of sins through the written Word, and through the actual proclamation of the gospel, and in the sacramental forms of baptism and the Lord's Supper as well.

Regin Prenter stresses the key role of the Holy Spirit in Luther's Christology. For the Reformer outside of the sphere of the Spirit there is no true Christ, but only a historic Christ or a

⁵ Sánchez, *Pneumatologia*, 93–100.

⁶ Kilian McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God: The Holy Spirit as the Universal Touch and Goal* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003), 91.

⁷ Sánchez, *Pneumatologia*, 123–24.

mystic experience. In such a case, there would be no means of grace, neither real sanctification. Besides, for Luther it is only by the presence of the Holy Spirit that it is possible to understand the distinction between law and gospel, between sacrament and sacrifice, between Christ as an idea and the real Christ, our Savior. It is the real presence of the Spirit that takes one from the lordship of the law and brings him to the gospel.⁸

Neopentecostal Christology, especially considering what can be seen in the teaching of the ICGG, strongly depends on the theology of Kenneth Hagin, as was seen in a former chapter of this dissertation. Isaltino Coelho, a Baptist professor of Theology and lecturer on topics related to Neopentecostalism, has a severe criticism against the use of Christ's name by Neopentecostal preachers that follow Hagin's way of using the name of Christ. Coelho identifies in this kind of approach a use of the name of Jesus that comes close to considering it as an amulet, as if its simple use would automatically open doors for reception of blessings, understood as a right of the believer. The authority of Jesus' name gives the opportunity to the Christian to enjoy special signs in his life. For Coelho, the resulting impression is that Jesus is more a name, a symbol, a password than a real person that is to be identified as the second Person of Trinity.⁹

As was demonstrated by the reading of official material of the ICGG and the interviews with members of the church, there is no doubt about Jesus' divine nature, neither is the triune identity of God questioned. However, a Trinitarian framework in which the person and work of Christ is understood in the way how the New Testament witnesses is almost non-existent in Soares' teaching and in the members' witness. The reason for that gap does not seem to be a denial, but the fact that the ICGG mode of understanding Christian faith depends heavily on the

⁸ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 199, 202.

⁹ Isaltino Gomes Coelho Filho, "Neopentecostalismo" (Lecture, Faculdade Teológica Batista, Campinas, SP, April 12, 2004).

practical results in the life of the individual believer, and not in a right and full doctrinal confession, as in most historical denominations (as was pointed out in the first section of this chapter).

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Pentecostal teaching has stressed since the beginning the fundamental role of the Holy Spirit in Christian teaching and in the believer's life, with a very special place given to the baptism with the Holy Spirit, understood as a distinct act from water baptism. Even though in Neopentecostalism the baptism of the Holy Spirit has not achieved a primary importance if compared to its place in classical Pentecostalism, one can recognize that it is confessed in preaching and teaching of the ICGG. Moreover, in a similar way to the original wave of Pentecostalism, its role is one of empowerment of the believer in a distinct way than that given to him in conversion and in water baptism. However, distancing itself from classical Pentecostalism, this new empowerment is understood in Neopentecostal discourse as something that gives to the believer a special strength to win adversities of life and not so much to be a better witness of Christ, as proposed by the original forms of Pentecostalism.

As was seen in the examination of the Pneumatology of the ICGG, one of the sources used — the *Jornal Show da Fé* — refers to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit only once in twelve editions of the magazine. Even considering another reference found in the magazine, that one to the unction of the Holy Spirit, it calls the attention to the absence of the traditional Pentecostal connection with speaking in tongues or as an additional experience after conversion to empower a believer to be a witness of the gospel. It is considered more as a part of the narrative of a believer being empowered to face with victory adversities in daily life. However, the interview with members of the Church made it clear that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is distinct from

water baptism and is to be expected by the believer, provided that he fills some requirements (that are never discussed in the material studied in the research).

The subject of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not unknown to the New Testament. Actually, the writers recognize only one baptism, the one with water and Word, the one that brings death and resurrection with Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. And that is identified as the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In contrast to Pentecostal and Neopentecostal teaching, Lutheran theology emphasizes the objective value of baptism, where word and water are united according to Christ's institution, order and promise in a way that the Holy Spirit is given and provides new life by the forgiveness of sins. God works through the elements of his created order that he has selected to serve his saving purpose, the Word in human language and, in the case of baptism and the Lord's Supper, aided by the sacramental elements that illustrate and accompany Christ's words of promise.

The book of Acts of the Apostles has been an important source for Pentecostals to base their doctrine of a subsequent baptism of the Holy Spirit. However, F. Bruner has called the attention to the connection between the Spirit's work with Jesus' person and ministry. Commenting on Acts 1:1, 2, he advises against inventing a distinctive work of the Holy Spirit in which Jesus plays no significant role.¹⁰ Another significant aspect of the special coming of the Spirit in Acts is the fact that it is not a result of special preparation or conditions in the believers. He always comes as a gift, resulting of God's promise, and comes as a divine operation, with no merit or participation of the person.

In his evaluation of the Pentecostal movement, Bruner warns against certain of its tendencies of considering the gift of the Holy Spirit (or, more specifically, the baptism of/in the

¹⁰ Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 156.

Holy Spirit) apart from water baptism or following it. The book of Acts teaches something different, Bruner points out. He considers Acts 2:37–39 a fundamental text that establishes a pattern. It is important to note that when the paradigm established in Acts 2:38 is broken, that is an abnormality, not a new rule. That is the reason why the events narrated in Acts 8: 10, 19 are received with surprise by the apostles.

Although not using specifically the expression “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” Paul testifies in his first Epistle to the Corinthians that every member of the church has been baptized into one body “by one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). In other words, for Paul the baptism bestowed by the Spirit is the one in which all believers participate, being introduced into the one body of Christ. In this way there are not two baptisms and two different groups, as if one group was composed by people baptized in water and another group being persons baptized in the Spirit.¹¹

In his explanation of baptism, in the Large Catechism, Luther emphasizes the connection of water baptism and reception of the Holy Spirit, especially when he argues for the right of the church to baptize children (Large Catechism IV: 47–51). For Luther, the gift of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers who have been baptized when they were children is attested by their teaching and life. Besides, they are able to read Scripture with knowledge and to get to know Christ, “which is impossible without the Holy Spirit.” Luther then completes with a bold statement: “If God did not accept the baptism of infants, he would not have given any of them the Holy Spirit ... in short, all this time down to the present day there would have been no person on earth that could have been a Christian.”¹² In traditional Pentecostal teaching (supposedly followed by Soares with no exception, even if mentioned few times without the same emphasis than in 1st

¹¹ Arand, Nestingen and Kolb, *The Lutheran Confessions: History and Theology*, 293.

¹² Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 462.

wave Pentecostal denominations) the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not only distinct from water baptism, but has a different meaning and purpose (empowerment for mission, as a second or third experience, manifested by speaking in tongues). For Luther, water baptism, which is the Spirit baptism, has an objective meaning for daily sanctification, as comprehending what was formerly called the sacrament of penance. Luther states: “In baptism we are given the grace, Spirit, and strength to suppress the old creature so that the new may come forth and grow strong.”¹³ As was observed in the study of the sources of the ICGG, Soares and the members of the church can actually understand a new way of life in the Christian being promoted by the action of the Holy Spirit, but their confession lacks the connection with the external means of water baptism.

What was especially evident in the research with church members is that submitting to water baptism is equated to a public confession of faith, always subsequent to one's faith. It is only a conscious confirmation of the person that he or she is publicly embracing that faith. It seems that two elements may explain this position. On the one hand, it is important to remember that for the Neopentecostal churches, Roman Catholicism is considered with great suspicion. Understanding the sacraments as having objective value is too Catholic in the Pentecostal, and Neopentecostal view. On the other hand, there is the characteristic emphasis on personal decision as a response to biblical truth. Thus, the emphasis is placed on the way the person stands before the divine revelation, rather than on the need for the person, as merely passive, to be only the recipient of the divine gift delivered by God through the means instituted by Him using elements of his creation (Word, water, bread and wine).

¹³ Kolb and Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord*, 466.

Faith and Success

One of the most significant aspects in the Neopentecostal way of confessing Christian faith is the “positive confession.” It could be seen that specifically in the ICGG the positive confession is understood as basic to a correct affirmation of faith. According to the Neopentecostal thinking, when one is able to confidently affirm what he needs in terms of well-being, as if those needs were already been given, that would be true faith that glorifies God.

The New Testament’s view of faith stresses the external means of grace as power and source for a life in the Spirit. Faith is not an object in itself, but is always relational and instrumental, depending on the operation of the Holy Spirit through those means. Martin Luther understood the relation between the Spirit and faith in two ways: by faith we receive the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit is the one who creates faith. Scholastic theology solved that apparent contradiction recurring to the concept of infused grace, which produced a supernatural substance, faith. Regin Prenter shows how Luther did not follow the rational explanation but kept the tension. For him faith is not a supernatural substance but the trust arising from the encounter with God through the presence of the living Christ. On the one hand, that presence is only possible through the operation of the Spirit giving consciousness of sin “in our weakness” (Rom. 8); on the other hand, the Spirit becomes present in our life through faith that always moves away from himself to Christ, whose real presence mediates the gift of the Spirit. Therefore, says Prenter, “faith must always be considered from both directions if it is to be correctly understood. It must be seen both as our flight toward the reality of the Spirit and our life lived out of the reality of the Spirit.”¹⁴ Such is a significant contribution, i.e., that faith coexists with weakness, sin, and doubt. Its power is found outside the person, in Christ, in his merits, delivered to the

¹⁴ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 88.

sinner through faith by the external means of the Spirit.

Despite the fact that Luther was focusing his attention on a different target, namely scholastic Roman Catholic theology, his reasoning on faith and Christian life applies well to how Neopentecostalism considers the role of faith. It is relevant to consider how “determination” has a critical significance in the ICGG teaching as an attitude in relation to suffering in daily life. R. R. Soares’ constant use of expressions as “I demand,” “I’m not asking,” “I determine” during prayer, targeting the devils that are responsible for physical suffering, exposes a paradox for the believers. On the one hand every person, even those who already came to faith, are under powerful evil influences that can oppress them at any time. On the other hand, the “Missionary” (or other pastor) has the means to determine to those demons to leave, bringing relief to those believers who were suffering. One can see how Luther’s understanding of the theology of the cross offers a completely different way of considering how God in his grace conducts life in midst of weakness, poverty and sickness. In practical terms, for Soares, the believer is ultimately in charge of his destiny and God becomes obligated to fulfill what faith demands. For Luther, trust in God means letting God be God, even if external circumstances seem to deny his lordship and love. As Kolb and Arand put it, the theology of the cross “proposes that precisely through the contradiction of power-in-dying and wisdom-in-weakness, God is present to lead people out of imprisonment to their own power games and to substitutes for genuine understanding.”¹⁵

Leopoldo Sánchez, analyzing Latin American spirituality, denounces what he considers one of the main expressions of spirituality, named by him as “fatalistic spirituality.” Sánchez shows that such spirituality is easily recognizable in the Latin American context and characterizes itself as resignation to inevitable bad situations in life. The idea is that the created

¹⁵ Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, *The Genius of Luther’s Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 146.

world determines the course of one's life and that is the way "God's will" is disclosed.¹⁶ Neopentecostalism would not agree that God's will is behind the scene, but evil forces are powerfully operating. However, human beings are equally defenseless. God has the solution, through the victory achieved by Christ against the devil. However, it is necessary that the person break the dominion of evil by "determining" that the devil depart. The way in which victory against evil is received demands that the official representative of the Church act as God's channel to bring blessing where there was curse before. That is a reason why public prayer conducted by the Missionary or by a pastor has such an important place during worship services, TV show, and in the witnesses given in the magazine *Jornal Show da Fé*.

In a sharp contrast to the fatalistic view in Latin American popular belief, Christian Pneumatology affirms God's actions in history, guiding his creatures and, given the sinful nature of humanity, bringing restoration through His Spirit-guided Son.¹⁷ God restores a blessed relationship with man, even where some of the effects of original sin remain, as weakness, doubt, failure, poverty, sickness. Faith does not eliminate conflicts, but these are faced with the Spirit's work that concretely brings Christ and his merits to the sinner.

Regin Prenter points out that according to Luther, God himself operates in man in such a way that as Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, man is justified and regenerated, and lives in Christ and Christ in him, only by God's grace and the work of the Spirit.¹⁸ God's operation in a person's life does not exclude inner conflicts. For Luther those conflicts are the Spirit's work to show how a person is naturally away from God. Through that way, the old creature is crucified

¹⁶ Sánchez, *Pneumatologia*, 22.

¹⁷ Kolb and Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord*, 24.

¹⁸ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 11.

when the Spirit makes him or her to be conform to Christ and in this way new life can begin.¹⁹

It is significant that Luther frequently uses Romans 8:26 (“The Spirit assists us in our weakness ...”), a text that seems to have an important reference in the ICGG preaching as well.²⁰ From that text, Luther states that God is present in the person’s life, in the midst of groaning of the anxious soul that feels seized by death and hell. It is only God, being actually present by his Spirit, and not some form of power (*gratia infusa*), that can help the sinner in conflict.²¹ For Luther the Holy Spirit is not a form of transcendent power, but the true God present in our affliction and anguish. Through the Spirit Christ becomes a living experience in man.²² Especially against the enthusiasts, Luther pointed out that the experience of the Spirit happens in man’s inner conflict, affliction and poverty.²³

Such realism is also a good contribution to assess the way Neopentecostalism deals with conflicts that are present in the life of the believer. New Testament teaching advises against a sense of triumphalism in Christian life.²⁴ Since the believer’s life and faith are hidden in Christ,

¹⁹ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 14–17.

²⁰ The use of that text by the ICGG preachers calls the attention having in mind a witness heard from a student who was a member of the ICGG. According to him, Romans 8:26 is frequently quoted in the ICGG preaching, but with a different reading, with the plural “weaknesses.” These are taken as references to evils that disturb daily life even in Christian people, and which are the result of demonic forces. In such an application of the text the role of the Holy Spirit is to assist the believer to be freed from those weaknesses that come from outside of them and to hinder his right to receive blessings.

²¹ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 19.

²² Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 197.

²³ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 201.

²⁴ We use here the term “triumphalism” in the sense described by William Hordern, “The Theology of the Cross and the Holy Spirit,” in Frederick D. Bruner, *The Holy Spirit: The Shy Member of the Trinity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 66–67. According to Hordern, triumphalism is a term used “to describe the opposite of a theology of the cross. Triumphalism describes what seems to be the normal human approach to religion. The natural person turns to religion to receive victories and triumphs from the divine beings. Health, wealth, and good fortune are hence seen as evidence that one has gained the favor of the gods or goddesses. The divine is found in the outstanding, the out-of-the-ordinary, the ecstatic, and the impressive. Triumphalism leads a person to make extravagant claims about the victories brought by religious faith and practice. Luther used the term *theology of glory* because he said that the people who used this approach thought that they were already in heaven and forgot that they still were on earth. Triumphalism always forgets the limitations of being finite, sinful human beings.”

not in himself, his triumph is located in the forgiveness of sins and not in a personal victory over specific earthly ills, as that victory takes concrete form through a special manifestation of faith. Bruner calls the attention to the way Paul discussed the sphere of the Spirit and the weakness of the believers in 2 Corinthians. Paul's addressees were allowing space for false teachers. The apostle criticizes his adversaries for their thoughts that were exalting them beyond the true knowledge of God. Bruner points out that Paul is alerting his readers that "all exalted sense of spiritual power and fullness must become a deep sense of spiritual need. Christian spirituality is placing oneself under Christ; it is not going beyond him."²⁵

A triumphalist view of faith is not alien to prosperity theology. That raises the question about what "success" means in the life in the Spirit. In Neopentecostal preaching real faith means improvement in life. Christ's sacrifice, death and resurrection become the guarantee not only of reconciliation with God, but of victory against problems in finances, in family life, and in health issues (to mention those most present in the "Show of Faith" TV program of the ICGG).

From the standpoint of New Testament theology, such a sense of spiritual progress deviates preaching from the message of the cross, at least in practical terms. Even if the "target" of our analysis was specifically Neopentecostalism as represented by the ICGG, this reflection also points critically against a sense of success that sometimes may be tempting the Lutheran church as well.²⁶

In his exposition of Martin Luther's theology of the Holy Spirit, Regin Preter argues that it is possible to speak about progress in sanctification. However, it is not in the sense of an increase of the empirical piety. For that sake, Preter says, progress in sanctification is not "an

²⁵ Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 306.

²⁶ It was beyond the limits of this dissertation to examine in depth plans and projects that the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil has promoted during the last decades and that seem to expose a positive view towards the future numerical success of the Church and an implicit denial of former strategies.

object of psychological observation, but an object of faith and hope. It is not evident to oneself and others, but it is hid with Christ in God.”²⁷ It actually means a constant having refuge in Christ’s righteousness.

Kolb and Arand call the attention to the apparently contradictory statements Luther makes about sanctification in his explanation of the third article in the Large Catechism. On the one hand, he states sanctification as the complete work of the Holy Spirit by which he brings us to Christ to receive perfect sanctity. On the other hand, Luther also speaks about sanctification as having been initiated but that grows daily. The authors explain that apparent contradiction by referring to the two kinds of righteousness. The passive righteousness demands that the sinner be seen as a total person covered by Christ’s forgiveness and sanctity. The active righteousness offers a daily opportunity to serve the world where God had put the believer, even though the devil, world and flesh continue to attack. A growth in sanctification should not consider a person partially, as if a number of good works could balance sins that are committed. For Luther a person continues to be in need of forgiveness the whole life at the same time that he or she rejoices with the opportunities to serve the neighbor. Thus, as Kolb and Arand point out, Luther refuses to consider a person partially and sees the whole believer coming into the world, always dependent on God’s justification by faith and always becoming conformed to Christ for the benefit of others.²⁸

Effectiveness of Proclamation

Anyone who watches R. R. Soares preaching may become impressed by his confidence in that the word that he announces will have a practical result in the life of those who are listening.

²⁷ Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 70.

²⁸ Kolb and Arand, *The Genius of Luther’s Theology*, 123–28.

What God spoke to Abraham, Moses, Joshua, etc., is taken as a word for today, applied to rather distinct situations experienced by the Scriptural characters. That is not only the case when a healing is being announced. Actually, the usual way in which Soares proclaims and applies any word of Scripture conveys to his audience the sense that something will really happen. There is no mere possibility, but a real action that is supposed to happen.

That is a point that deserves a special reflection, having in mind the Lutheran way of speaking about the efficacy of the means of grace. It is evident that a sharp distinction should be made between the two approaches to the efficacy of the Word of God. In Neopentecostal proclamation, the preacher's announcement is most of the time targeting Satan's domination and influence on the people's life, by which he promotes sickness, family ruptures and professional failures. Against such evils, the Neopentecostal preacher announces immediate relief given the power that the Lord has against evil forces. It calls the attention to the fact that when forgiveness of sins is mentioned—and that does not happen frequently in Neopentecostal preaching - the impression is that it comes as a possibility or, rather, as a declaration of a past event with some historical significance. What is lacking is the objective announcement of absolution that operates a new reality in life and assures the sinner of his complete justification. What can be noted in Neopentecostal proclamation is an emphasis on the effects on life success related to health, finances, job, and family issues.

Lutheran theology emphasizes the power and effect of the Word, which is mainly a word of absolution and that by the power of the Holy Spirit promotes faith that receives the forgiveness and produces life in communion with God, even under cross, suffering and limitations. It is a strong conviction that proclamation should not be understood simply as a collection of truths about which the listener would apply his confidence so that it could have some effect. The

announcement of the gospel is action (what G. Forde refers to as the “doing of the Word”) because the Holy Spirit has in that word his instrument to promote life and salvation.

Regin Prenter has stressed the importance in Luther’s theology of the place and effectiveness of the means used by the Holy Spirit to do his work. He points out the tension in the relation between the Spirit and the Word. On the one hand, the Spirit is Lord over the Word; but, on the other hand, the (external) Word comes before the Spirit. Therefore, without the Spirit, the Word is only letter; but it is also true that without the Word, the Spirit does not come.²⁹ Such a tension, claims Prenter, can only be treated christologically, not rationally. Christ is the true Word of God, in such a way that unless Christ is truly present by the action of the Spirit, we have no Word of God. Moreover, without the Word of God in oral, written, and/or sacramental forms, the Spirit does not act and Christ does not become present. Therefore, the Spirit only works through the external Word and that is the way in which the Incarnate Word becomes a saving reality in life.³⁰ All these can be said also about the sacraments, as means by which the Spirit operates, since the sacraments are never without the Word. The Spirit is the one who connects sign and promise, making Christ present. For Luther it is not correct to “spiritualize” the sacraments (as if a person by his or her spirituality could make the sacrament efficient); actually he understands the Word “sacramentally” (i.e., it is a gift from God that actually works according to God’s will).³¹ In other words, what the Lord speaks in his Word announcing forgiveness, life and salvation is an effective gift, not only a proposition. Prenter summarizes the importance of the Christological relation between Spirit and Word and sacraments, saying:

²⁹ Prenter. *Spiritus Creator*, 101–4. In the Smalcald Articles, Luther boldly states that “God gives no one his Spirit or grace apart from the external Word which goes before.” (Kolb and Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord*, 322).

³⁰ Prenter. *Spiritus Creator*, 106.

³¹ Prenter. *Spiritus Creator*, 152.

As a present reality, the Spirit manifests itself in the humanity of Christ. The Spirit is the real divine sphere in which Christ comes out of the remoteness of history and becomes a living, present reality or, as Luther likes to state it: experience. Therefore, the means of the Spirit are Word and sacraments, which are the concrete forms among us of Christ's humanity. Within the sphere of the Spirit, the Word is Gospel and the sacrament is the eschatological sign of confirmation.³²

What is lacking in the pneumatology of the Neopentecostalism in Brazil, specifically in the ICGG, is this connection between second and third article. Eschatological pneumatology, as confessed in Lutheran theology, decidedly binds together the soteriological work of Christ with the work of the Holy Spirit, acting through the external gospel, i.e., the means of grace instituted by Christ himself. Lutheran pneumatology may contribute to the reflection in Neopentecostal circles (as in Lutheran circles as well) highlighting the significant role of the Spirit as the agent of new creation in Christ, through the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. Such an approach not only illuminates the significance of Christ to the life of a person, seen in eschatological perspective; it also gives to daily life the sense of meaning that is necessary to live before God with a forgiven heart and peaceful conscience, so that human efforts may be directed to the praise of the Triune God and service to the neighbor.³³

Present (Inaugurated) and Future Eschatology

Classical Pentecostalism today is almost entirely dispensational, following the model of John Darby, with the seven dispensations, the key role of Israel and the expectation of the pretribulation rapture. However, that was not the case in the beginning of Pentecostalism.

According to Althouse, early Pentecostalism worked under the assumption of three

³² Prenter. *Spiritus Creator*, 197.

³³ In a very critical examination of Prosperity theology, David T. Williams, "The Heresy of Prosperity Teaching: A Message to the Church in its Approach to Need," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 61 (December 1987): 33–44, calls attention to the fact that traditional Churches have not treated in depth with the problem of material needs. Such lack has opened doors for prosperity teachers to supply people with a message that announces Christ's work to redeem humankind from the curse of the law, including poverty, sickness and other problems that affect daily life, seen as part of the curse of the law.

dispensations, with a Trinitarian view, dividing the salvation history

Into the dispensation of the Father, which looked to the manifestation of the Son, the dispensation of the Son, which looked to the promise of the Father for the effusion of the Son and the dispensation of the Spirit, which looked for the return of the Son. The dispensation of the Spirit was now in full force. . . . It was able to connect pneumatology and eschatology by making Pentecost an eschatological event comparable to the coming of Christ.³⁴

The Baptist theologian and historian, Paulo Siepierski calls attention to a shift in the eschatological perspective of what he prefers to call Post-Pentecostalism:

The eschatological expectation of a future kingdom of God (Premillennialism), characteristic of the beginning of Pentecostalism, is modified into a realized eschatology. The kingdom of God is already present here and now, although not in a final form, to be enjoyed by the chosen ones. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the empowerment to overcome any hindrance to that enjoyment. Those hindrances are actions by Satan and his angels and, therefore, should be combatted and bound. Without the evil spirits to disturb them, the faithful people can live with health and prosperity.³⁵

The point made by Siepierski is in line with the fact that Neopentecostal theology and practice offers a positive proposition to improve substantially the world, i.e. human society, through a change in individual life. The negative view towards society, mass media, and involvement on politics, that characterized classical Pentecostalism, no longer applies to Neopentecostal worldview.³⁶ Nilson da Silva Jr. characterizes the Neopentecostal eschatology as one that “breaks with the apocalyptic Christian understanding of time and brings retribution or salvation to the present time of the faithful, instead of leaving that retribution only to heaven and

³⁴ Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, 25. Even glossolalia was considered as part of the eschatological time: “Seymour believed that speaking in tongues was not simply a prayer language or an existential/mystical experience of the Spirit, but the ability to speak other earthly languages to facilitate preaching the gospel to the entire world in preparation for Christ’s return.” (35)

³⁵ Siepierski, “Pós-pentecostalismo e política no Brasil,” 52.

³⁶ This is one of those instances where generalizations about Neopentecostalism prove to be inaccurate. The ICGG preaching combines at the same time an optimistic view of the future for those who have determination (a strong concept in that theology) and a critical position against society vices, in a very moralistic way.

life after death.”³⁷

In a comparative study of different religious contexts about present and future dimensions, Ana K. Pinezi provides a significant resource on the eschatology of Neopentecostalism, particularly that of the ICGG. Brazilian current reality has contributed, according to Pinezi, to a re-signification of the concept and scope of redemption, a process in which Neopentecostal churches have been successful. She refers to the social injustices, problems related to health and wealth, family issues, and growing violence that afflict people in their daily life. Those are some problems that Neopentecostalism confronted in a more direct way than traditional Protestant denominations.³⁸

Historic Protestants and Neopentecostals are living in the same social context, with similar challenges in daily life. However, they elaborate different views of present and future in the search of a religious frame of reference that could give them a feeling of hope in a difficult situation of life.

In her research, Pinezi concluded that for Presbyterians (representing traditional Protestants) the present time is a season of probation, of warfare against evil actions and expectation of God’s will, with such expectation being lived in prayers to God. An unhappy end of a particular situation does not mean that the believer is not victorious. Such a paradox is solved by a future vision of eternal life that will compensate all difficulties and tragedies of the present life, which tends to be harder. In other words, there is a pessimistic view in relation to the present time and a special hope in relation to the future when God will bring his eternal and

³⁷ Nilson da Silva Jr., “Igreja líquida: uma leitura da Igreja moderna através do Neopentecostalismo,” *Ciberteologia: Revista de Teologia & Cultura* 7, no. 34 (2011): 67.

³⁸ Ana Pinezi, “A dimensão de presente e futuro em contextos religiosos diferenciados: uma análise comparativa entre dois grupos evangélicos.” 24 Encontro anual da ANPOCS (Associação Nacional de Pós-graduação e pesquisa em Ciências Sociais). Outubro de 2000, 6, accessed January 25, 2010, http://portal.anpocs.org/portal/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=4848&Itemid=357

definitive resolution.³⁹

Neopentecostalism, on the other hand, offers liberation from present problems in a way that a person can enjoy health and prosperity not only in the future, but in the present time. What underlies that offer, in the case of ICGG, are the doctrines of a theology of prosperity and spiritual warfare, besides the concept of “taking possession of the blessing.”⁴⁰

One can perceive a significant difference between Lutheran theology and the ICGG witness in what refers to the final events associated to the final coming of Christ. Even considering that it is not a frequent teaching in R. R. Soares, the interview with members of the church, all of them enrolled in a course for leaders, discloses the position of the church. As in most of the Pentecostal denominations, the ICGG presents a dispensationalist premillenarian view, including the pretribulational rapture.

Such a confessional stance, associated with the themes of spiritual warfare and the necessity of the believer’s determination in order to face daily troubles, demonstrates how the ICGG considers the future of this world. On the one hand, there is a profound pessimism in what relates to the future of the society, in a view that seems to minimize God’s presence and operation in human history (as confessed in the First article).⁴¹ On the other hand, there is significant optimism regarding the possibilities of the believer to achieve personal success and satisfaction. In a personal level, such optimism is based on the victory Christ obtained against evil forces, which allows the individual believer to win what are considered daily oppressions by demons. There is also a promising future for the church and even society, provided the church

³⁹ Pinezi, “A dimensão de presente e futuro,” 14, 15. Pinezi seems to excessively generalize her assessment of Protestant stance, of what seems to be a much more complex position. Despite that observation, Pinezi’s remarks are valuable in general assessment of Neopentecostalism compared to traditional Protestant churches (even the Lutheran Church of Brazil).

⁴⁰ Pinezi, “A dimensão de presente e futuro,” 19.

⁴¹ This corresponds largely to what Sánchez, *Pneumatología*, 22, identifies as “fatalistic spirituality.”

could exercise a stronger influence, which can be seen by the advance in communications. It is common to see during the “Show of Faith” an advertisement of a new TV cable channel run by the church and that offers 24 hours of Christian programs.

Summarizing, it can be noted that neopentecostal theology looks to the future in a paradoxical way. On the one hand, there is an extremely negative view of the future of society. However, on the other hand, positive possibilities are also expected depending largely on the success that the church can achieve influencing society. Lutheran theology also affirms a paradox, but with significant differences. If it is true that one should not expect permanently better times in a society that would increase progress in all senses (as in the model of postmillenarian view), Lutheran theology also affirms that God is still the Creator and providence is not a blind fate, but God’s daily work maintaining His creatures. There is also a very positive way of reflecting on the future considering what God has already done and is still doing through the redemption achieved by Christ and His continuous presence in the Church by His Spirit.

Pentecostalism is characteristically Dispensational in its way to understand eschatology. Even if that is not a feature frequently mentioned in Neopentecostalism, it could be clearly noted through the interview we did with members of the ICGG. The almost anxiety-ridden expectation for the premillennial rapture tends to put the definitive coming of Christ in a role of secondary importance. Hope for a literal millennium has also implications for the way present life of the church is considered.

Lutheran theology has a positive contribution to that discussion. There are important consequences for the present and the future that come from the way Lutheran theology understands the “thousand years” of Revelation 20, as it is depicted in the New Testament as a

whole. By his death and resurrection Christ has inaugurated a new time, when forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God and daily consolation by the Spirit are realities that determine the believer's hopes even living under the cross and in conflict with Satan.

The real presence of Christ through the operation of the Holy Spirit secures the church as God's people in the end times, living under the cross. It is from this perspective that the work of the Holy Spirit is confessed. He who had a key role in the coming and ministry of Jesus, is the One who promotes new birth through baptism and feeds God's people with the sacrament and word of absolution. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the most significant sign of the end times and allows God's people to live in the present time under the blessings that are still to be fully revealed.

Therefore, the "already" of Christ's complete work is the assurance of a blessed life in the present. But it is also true that biblical future eschatology, as confessed by Lutheran theology, creates a powerful ferment that shapes the way present life is considered. In some sense, the present is determined by the future events to come. The kingdom that is still to be manifested in the *Parousia* is already here in the life of the church by the Holy Spirit operation in the means of grace, by which Christ is present with His people. Luther explains in a wonderful way how God's kingdom comes in two ways, and he understands that the Holy Spirit has a significant role in that. In his explanation of the second petition of the Lord's Prayer, Luther expresses what he understands of the coming of the kingdom:

Dear Father, we ask you first to give us your Word, so that the gospel may be properly preached throughout the world and then that it may also be received in faith and may work and dwell in us, so that your kingdom may pervade among us through the Word and the power of the Holy Spirit and the devil's kingdom may be destroyed so that he may have no right or power over us until finally his kingdom is utterly eradicated and sin, death, and hell wiped out, that we may live forever in perfect

righteousness and blessedness.⁴²

⁴² Kolb and Wingert, eds., *The Book of Concord*, 447. Explaining the third article of the Creed, Luther summarizes the work of the Holy Spirit, attributing to him a specific eschatological role, first in what we use to name as “inaugurated eschatology” and then with a future reference: “the office and the work of the Holy Spirit, to begin and daily increase holiness on earth through these two means, the Christian Church and the forgiveness of sins. Then, when we pass from this life, in the blink of an eye he will perfect our holiness and will eternally preserve us in it through the last two parts of this article [resurrection of the flesh and eternal life].” (439)

APPENDIX ONE

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF BRAZILIAN PENTECOSTALISM¹

1 st wave Classic Pentecostalism (1910–1950)	2 nd wave Neoclassic Pentecostalism (1950–1975)	3 rd wave Neopentecostalism (1975– . . .)
<p>Congregação Cristã no Brasil SP – 1910</p> <p>Assembléias de Deus Pará – 1911</p>	<p>Igreja do Evangelho Quadrangular SP – 1951</p> <p>O Brasil para Cristo SP – 1955</p> <p>Igreja do Nazareno SP – 1958</p> <p>Nova Vida RJ – 1960</p> <p>Igreja Pentecostal Deus é Amor SP – 1962</p> <p>Casa da Bênção MG – 1964</p>	<p>Comunidade Evangélica Goiás – 1976</p> <p>Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus RJ – 1977</p> <p>Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus RJ – 1980</p> <p>Cristo Vive RJ – 1986</p> <p>Renascer em Cristo SP – 1986</p> <p>Senhor Jesus Cristo RJ/SP – 1996</p>

Another movement that sometimes is grouped with the Pentecostals is the Charismatic Movement (1960–1975) that took place in already established Protestant Churches. Some of the most significant in Brazil are:

¹ Alexandre Brasil Fonseca, *Evangélicos e mídia no Brasil*, as quoted by Karla Patriota, *Show da Fé*, 108.

Restauração (RJ – 1961)

Convenção Batista Nacional (ES – 1965)

Congregacional Independente (ES – 1965)

Metodista Wesleyana (RJ – 1967)

Cristã Evangélica de Renovação (RJ – 1967)

Maranata (ES – 1970)

Sinais e Prodígios (RJ – 1972)

Maranata (AMEM – RJ – 1972)

Presbiteriana Renovada (PR – 1975)

It is not included in Fonseca's description above, but Charismatic movement also took place in the *Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil* (partner church of the LC-MS) in the decade of 1970s, resulting in the beginning of the *Igreja Luterana da Renovação* (Renewal Lutheran Church). In the beginning of the twenty-first century, the *Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil* (the largest Lutheran Church body in Brazil) faced a similar movement as well, which gave occasion to the foundation of the *Igreja do MOVER* (Church of the Evangelical Movement of Renewal).

APPENDIX TWO

SOME SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN R. R. SOARES' LIFE AND MINISTRY

December 6, 1947	Soares is born in Muniz Freire, ES
1954 (?)	Conversion in a Presbyterian Service in Muniz Freire
1958	In the city of Cachoeiro do Itapemirim, his first contact with a TV set and his promise to preach through that instrument
1964	Soares moves to Rio de Janeiro and stays four years not participating in any Church
1968	A member in the “Igreja Pentecostal Nova Vida” (New Life Pentecostal Church)
1968	After reading “Curai enfermos, expulsai demônios” (Heal the sick, expel the demons), by T. L. Olson, Soares feels compelled to serve in ministry and gives up the desire to be a medical doctor
1973	Soares’ wedding with Maria Magdalena Bezerra, sister of Edir Macedo (future leader of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God)
1974	Soares becomes a member in the Pentecostal Church “Casa da Bênção” (House of Blessing)
April 13, 1975	Consecration to the ministry by Cecílio Fernandes in the “Casa da Bênção”
1975 (?)	With Edir Macedo, Roberto Augusto Lopes and the brothers Samuel and Fidélis Coutinho Soares establishes the “Cruzada do Caminho eterno” (Eternal Path Cruzade)
July 9, 1977	Foundation of the IURD, with Edir Macedo and Roberto A. Lopes.
November 1977	Preaching in TV begins
June 1980	Foundation of the ICGG
1983	Foundation of “Graça editorial” (The Church’s Publishing House)
1984	Soares reads “O nome de Jesus” (The Name of Jesus), by Kenneth Hagin, and understands that he should not ask but demand healing
December 1997	A religious show in TV prime time
1999	Foundation of the <i>Rede Internacional de Televisão – RIT</i> (International Network of TV), broadcasting in Brazil and several other countries

January 2003	Beginning of broadcasting the TV show, the “Show da Fé”
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APPENDIX THREE

QUESTIONNAIRE WITH MEMBERS OF THE ICGG

Research for Doctoral Dissertation in Theology
Gerson L. Linden
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, EUA
Questionnaire applied on December 11, 2014
At the *International Church of God's Grace*
Novo Hamburgo, RS

I. Identification

- 1. Age: _____
- 2. Gender: M () F ()
- 3. Schooling: Fundamental () High School () Undergraduate ()
- 4. How many years as a member of the ICGG: _____

II. Please read every statement below and select one alternative. You may include free comments if you will:

1. The ICGG is a Pentecostal church.

I agree () I partly agree () I disagree () I do not know how to answer ()

2. The teaching on the Holy Spirit and his work is frequent in the messages and studies in the Church.

I agree () I partly agree () I disagree () I do not know how to answer ()

3. When the believer is baptized with the Holy Spirit he receives the gift of speaking in tongues.

I agree () I partly agree () I disagree () I do not know how to answer ()

4. The most important work of the Holy Spirit is to take people to faith in Jesus.

I agree () I partly agree () I disagree () I do not know how to answer ()

5. The Holy Spirit works only through the Word of God (and no other means).

I agree () I partly agree () I disagree () I do not know how to answer ()

6. In water baptism the Holy Spirit creates faith in the person.

I agree () I partly agree () I disagree () I do not know how to answer ()

7. In Holy Supper the Holy Spirit gives forgiveness of sins to the believer.

I agree () I partly agree () I disagree () I do not know how to answer ()

8. The rapture means that the Church will be taken by Christ to heaven before the time of the great tribulation.

I agree () I partly agree () I disagree () I do not know how to answer ()

9. This world will gradually improve (to have better conditions of life) before the time of Christ's coming, because the Holy Spirit is increasingly acting in people.

I agree () I partly agree () I disagree () I do not know how to answer ()

10. In the future there will be a time of thousand years (the millennium) of peace in earth.

I agree () I partly agree () I disagree () I do not know how to answer ()

III. What do you understand by experience of conversion and what is the role of the Holy Spirit in it?

IV. Would you like to highlight some change that happened in your life since you entered the Church?

APPENDIX FOUR

RESULTS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Research for Doctoral Dissertation in Theology

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Questionnaire applied on December 11, 2014

At the *International Church of God's Grace*

Novo Hamburgo, RS

1. The ICGG is a Pentecostal church.

I agree (6) I partially agree (8) I disagree (4) I do not know how to answer (-)

(F30H8)¹ I consider it Neopentecostal (P)²

(F35F11) Neopentecostal; Pentecostal (new). (P)

2. The teaching on the Holy Spirit and his work is frequent in the messages and studies in the Church.

I agree (15) I partially agree (2) I disagree (1) I do not know how to answer (-)

(M44H7) I believe that the pastor's message is driven by the Holy Spirit, and [the teaching on the HS] is frequent (A)

(F25U11) Actually it should be more studied. (D)

(F35F11) In every place, not only in the Church. (P)

(M34F16)³ Usually Sundays. (A)

3. When the believer is baptized with the Holy Spirit he receives the gift of speaking in tongues.

I agree (12) I partially agree (4) I disagree (2) I do not know how to answer (-)

(F30H8) Not always, but this is a gift that helps to identify those baptized with the Holy Spirit (P)

(F25U11) It's not a rule. A person may receive this gift or not. Some people, thinking like that become frustrated, since they believe they weren't baptized in the Holy Spirit, since they don't speak in tongues. (D)

4. The most important work of the Holy Spirit is to take people to faith in Jesus.

1 This number refers to the identification of the person who gave this answer. The letters and numbers of this code refer to: 1st letter – gender: M/F; 1st number – age; 2nd letter – Schooling: F- Fundamental, H – High School, U – Undergraduate; 2nd number – years of membership in the ICGG.

2 This letter corresponds to the answer given by the person (A = agree; D = disagree; P = partially agree).

3 This is the pastor of the Church.

I agree (13) I partially agree (5) I disagree (-) I do not know how to answer (-)
(F30H8) He also brings us to faith, but he especially gives us consolation, brings us to repentance and strengthen us (P)
(M44H7) And I believe he helps us to protect ourselves against some enemy actions (A)
(F35F11) To convince human being about sin; to testify the truth. (A)

5. The Holy Spirit works only through the Word of God (and no other means).
I agree (7) I partially agree (2) I disagree (8) I do not know how to answer (1)
(F29U6) He works through a touch in our heart, in our mind, etc. He is not limited. (D)
(M44H3) The Holy Spirit works in all parts. (D)
(F35F11) By the word and experiences through communion with Him (prayer). (P)

6. In water baptism the Holy Spirit creates faith in the person.
I agree (5) I partially agree (3) I disagree (10) I do not know how to answer (-)
(F30H8) Faith comes before baptism, and through faith we decide for baptism (P)
(M44H7) Faith comes by hearing, and hearing the word of God (P)
(F29U6) Actually baptism is the result of belief, through faith that came by hearing the Word of God. And the Holy Spirit is the one who convinces us about baptism. (D)
(F36H11) Baptism in the waters (down to the waters) is symbolic. True baptism (conversion) has to be shown in our attitudes. (D)
(F35F11) Faith comes by hearing the Word. (D)

7. In Holy Supper the Holy Spirit gives forgiveness of sins to the believer.
I agree (6) I partially agree (5) I disagree (7) I do not know how to answer (-)
(F30H8) Forgiveness is given us by God; since the Spirit is part of God, as Christ is, I believe the answer is yes (P)
(M44H7) Forgiveness comes through repentance (D)
(F29U6) Repeating my previous answer, the Holy Spirit convinces us about sin so that when we confess it we can be purified. (A)
(F36H11) He convinces about sin; Jesus is the one who forgives. (P)

8. The rapture means that the Church will be taken by Christ to heaven before the time of the great tribulation.
I agree (17) I partially agree (1) I disagree (-) I do not know how to answer (-)
(F25U11) There is no way to know that for sure if it will come before, during or after. It is not clear in the Bible. (P)
(F15H10) I believe so because we are a pre-tribulationist Church; we believe that we will not be here when the great tribulation comes. (A)

9. This world will gradually improve (to have better conditions of life) before the time of Christ's coming, because the Holy Spirit is increasingly acting in people.
I agree (3) I partially agree (2) I disagree (13) I do not know how to answer (-)
(F29U6) Actually everything that is written in the Bible will be fulfilled, including the tribulations (Matt. 24). However, the believers have the help of the Holy Spirit in order to win them [the tribulations]. (D)
(F25U11) I believe the days are getting more and more difficult. (D)

(F36H11) That is not what the word says; the last days will be hard. (D)

(F35F11) The Holy Spirit is our helper, but the world will not improve. (D)

10. In the future there will be a time of thousand years (the millennium) of peace in earth.

I agree (14) I partially agree (1) I disagree (1) I do not know how to answer (2)

(F36H11) With the second return of Jesus to earth and Satan being tied in. (A)

III. What do you understand by experience of conversion and what is the role of the Holy Spirit in it?

(F30H8) Conversion – carnal man becomes spiritual man; to have the spirit quickened, strengthened when before it was asleep, mortified by sin. The role of the Holy Spirit is to bring repentance and to comfort the church and to strengthen it.

(M44H7) I understand that it is to leave the world of sin and to live the word. The role of the Holy Spirit is to convince us.

(F29U6) To convert is to change the path, choosing to walk a new path, this one that is alive and unique, Jesus. The Holy Spirit convinces us about sin, justice and judgment, so that gifted now with knowledge of the kingdom of God we may live for Him.

(F25U11) I believe conversion is a change of course. One was going in a given direction but, after being convinced by the Holy Spirit the he was going in a direction of a wrong life, one takes the right way in God's will.

(F36H11) I understand that the Holy Spirit acts gradually to convince us of the mistake until we can understand God's plan for us.

(M44H3) The role of the Holy Spirit is to convince sinners of sin and to take them to Jesus Christ.

(F15H10) The Holy Spirit has the role of convincing.

(F35F11) To repent from sin; to accept Jesus as the only and sufficient Savior. The Holy Spirit is our helper. He testifies the truth inside us.

(M34F16) It's Him who convinces us of sin, righteousness and judgment.

(M33U7) I understand that conversion is to accept Jesus as the only and sufficient Savior; and the role of the Holy Spirit is to seal people with gifts and the promises of the Bible.

(M37H7) The role of the Holy Spirit is to convince people of wrong-doing. Conversion is to change trajectory.

(F67H10) The Holy Spirit convinces the person to come to the church, to listen the Word of God and he converts the person and [the person] to follow the gospel which is Jesus Christ our Savior.

(F28H7) The Holy Spirit comes to convince us that Christ really exists.

(M23F4) The Holy Spirit convinces the person to repentance. Conversion is that moment when the person feels the touch of the Spirit and repents of his sins.

(M20H5) The action of the Holy Spirit keeps us strengthened in Christ. He confirms to us the truth contained in God's Word. He comforts us. As God himself, the Holy Spirit has the role of adopting us.

(F32H3) To repent from our mistakes; the role that the Holy Spirit has is very important. It's Him who takes us to repent of sins.

(F48H20) A complete change of life and the Holy Spirit guides me in all sectors of my life and of a converted believer.

(M25U5)⁴ I understand [conversion] is that moment when the person clearly understands that God is speaking with her; the role of the Holy Spirit is to help the person in the comprehension about the Son of God and his work.

IV. Would you like to highlight some change that happened in your life since you entered the Church?

(F30H8) a change in personality with self-dominium, harmony at home and overcoming of daily difficulties.

(M44H7) A general change in all areas; to look people with the heart and no longer to look appearances. And I still have many things to change.

(F29U6) Actually everything changed. With Jesus and through His Word I felt loved, secure and supported. He fixed the “broken” areas of my life and gave me a new chance. I’m eternally grateful for His mercy.

(F25U11) there were certainly many changes; I became more patient, to give more value to the others, to forgive ... Jesus changed many things!

(F36H11) Yes. In my behavior, way of speaking, of living, etc.

(M44H3) Freedom from alcohol and spiritual oppression; especially peace in my heart and certainty of salvation.

(F15H10) a complete change; I used to be a very arrogant person and today I’m completely different.

(F35F11) My life changed as from water to wine. Sin was abundant in my life—adultery, prostitution, and today I’m a family mother, happy and faithful.

(M34F16) My life improved 100% in knowledge of God’s Word. Everything changed for better – health, family, prosperity.

(M33U7) I became a less anxious person, at ease with the future; I’ve got peace.

(M37H7) Freedom from vices; peace and communion with God.

(F67H10) God transformed me; I left all wrong practices of this world and follow (sic) Jesus forever.

(F28H7) I changed my way of thinking and acting; I’m no longer the same person, even my appearance changed. We faced fights in life, but that didn’t disturb our faith.

(M23F4) I believe [the answer] is peace, the peace Christ gives us. Besides, after my conversion I feel a great love for needy people: orphans, beggars, etc.

(M20H5) With the assistance of the Holy Spirit I corrected my defects and I won my fears. Only with the Word of truth, revealed to the heart, we can follow a life according to God’s life, eternal.

(F32H3) So many that there would be no space in this sheet. My way of dealing with people.

(F48H20) [Related to my entrance] in the church there was no significant change; but when I accepted Jesus, my life was transformed. Amen.

(M25U5) Yes. Joy of living; certainty that my faults were forgiven; I have a new goal in life.

⁴ This is the student of Theology.

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