The Christian Life as Life in the Spirit

Introduction

This work will give an account of the Christian life as life in the Spirit. This should be obvious enough from the New Testament witness and especially Paul’s description of the Christian life as the Spirit’s work of making people into the image of Jesus Christ. However, we should not take it for granted that we have and in fact live by such an account for two reasons. The first reason is that the kind of life Jesus lived is not taken seriously for what it means for a Christian to live a life in the Spirit, or even for just living their life as a Christian. The second reason is that the Spirit’s indwelling presence is not taken seriously as what led Jesus to live the kind of life he lived; which obviously fails to be the reason for his followers living the kind of life Jesus lived. Simply put, this account will show life in the Spirit as the basic way to describe a Christian’s life, as a disciple of Jesus, and which, by the Spirit making people disciples of Jesus, also produces a life that looks like Jesus’ life—a life lived in the Spirit.

The first reason recognizes how modern theology has distorted the nature of the Christian life by it not taking Jesus’ life seriously. As John Howard Yoder pointed out in *The Politics of Jesus*, modern theology has in various ways denied or ignored the thesis that the life of Christ speaks to the shape and direction also of the life of the Christian.¹ Yoder ac-

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¹ Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 4–8. Yoder originally gave six reasons for why Jesus is not seen as the norm for Christian ethics (adding five more in the second edition, cf. 15–18), the most notable for this account is his sixth one in which Jesus’ death is a “dogmatic” assertion. “Jesus came, after all, to give his life for the sins of humankind. The work of atonement or the gift of justification, whereby God enables sinners to be
companied his “post-Constantinian” critique of modern theology with a “post-Constantinian” account of the life of the Christian that follows Jesus, and he justified it on christological grounds. As Yoder would put it, his account worked out the practical implications of a “more radical” Chalcedonian Christology. What this working out consisted of was Jesus Christ’s life prescribing the shape and direction of the Christian life. The way Jesus lived obediently unto God prescribes how Christians are also to live unto God.

The second reason is a characteristic of much of Western theology, that is, a distorted view of the Spirit in which a Christian remains in control of their own life rather than the biblical view which shows the Spirit as the indwelling presence that led Jesus to live the kind of life he lived that led to the kind of death he died—intrinsically—and which produces in his followers the same kind of life Jesus lived that might just lead to the kind of death he died. This biblical view sees the Spirit as what “kills” one’s flesh so a person can be “raised” with Christ by the indwelling presence of the Spirit, making a Christ-centered life possible by the Spirit controlling one’s life by producing Jesus Christ’s life as one’s way of life. While this characteristic of Western theology and its impact upon the Christian life is much more difficult to recognize or explain, it will nevertheless be more apparent once a proper account of the indwelling presence of the Spirit is understood as central to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, a more complete description of this theological misunderstanding, its manifestations, and corrections must come later. What must come first is an account of the Spirit’s presence within the life of Jesus as the “constitutive ingredient” in how he lived the kind of life he did that led to the kind of death he died on a cross; not only that he lived in the Spirit but that he died in the Spirit. This account shows Jesus’ life as descriptive of a life lived fully in the Spirit as the Son of God the Father.

restored to his fellowship, is a forensic act, a gracious gift . . . How the death of Jesus works our justification is a divine miracle and mystery; how he died, or the kind of life which led to the kind of death he died, is therefore ethically immaterial” (7–8).

2. Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, 102. “If we were to carry on that other, traditionally doctrinal kind of debate, I would seek simply to demonstrate that the view of Jesus being proposed here is more radically Nicene and Chalcedonian than other views. I do not here advocate an unheard-of modern understanding of Jesus. I ask rather that the implications of what the church has always said about Jesus as Word of the Father, as true God and true Man, be taken more seriously, as relevant to our social problems, than ever before.”
As Jesus lived in the Spirit, his life not only *prescribes* his life as what it means to be a disciple, his life *describes* a life lived fully in the Spirit. His life in the Spirit is not simply a prescription (to take or not to take, in one’s own ability) as in Yoder’s account, but the actual description of what a life looks like that has the Spirit as the “constitutive ingredient” in their living as an adopted son of the Father. However, this account shows transformation by the Spirit, upon hearing the gospel, as the necessary condition for having and living in the Spirit, a transformation from being a son of “this age” in “this world” to being a son of God in his eternal kingdom to come. In this view, Jesus’ followers do not just have “sonship,” like an added quality or substance; they are adopted sons of the Father—by the *indwelling* Spirit of the Father that he gives through his only begotten Son Jesus Christ.

These two features of modern theology show that an account of the Christian life as life in the Spirit might still be an important task. Any tentativeness to such a pursuit is eliminated when we further consider that post-Constantinian accounts of the Christian life cannot actually yield a rich account of the Christian life as life in the Spirit precisely because its account of the person of Jesus Christ has no clear place for the Spirit’s indwelling presence in his own life. Still yet, the move to relate the life of Christ and the life of the Christian in any account of the Christian life is correct and should be followed. What is therefore desirable for this kind of project—one that accounts for the Christian life as life in the Spirit—is an account of Christ in terms of the Spirit, that is, a Spirit-Christology of a certain sort.

This sort of Spirit-Christology is one that not only shows Jesus’ life as what constitutes the Christian’s life, as Yoder’s account does, but shows, in a *descriptive* fashion, the kind of life Jesus lived as life lived in the Spirit—as an actual reality—in a way Yoder’s account cannot. In doing so, I will follow a path laid out by Leopoldo Sánchez in his published dissertation, *Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God’s Spirit*. Sánchez provides an account that establishes the life of Christ in the Spirit as *constitutive* for the proclamation of the gospel and for further reflection into the intra-divine life of the Trinity. Following Sánchez’s account, I will further develop an account of Jesus Christ as he lived obediently unto the Father in the Spirit, showing his life to be life as the Son of God. As believers in Jesus as Lord, his followers are made fellow participants in Jesus’ life as the Son, “caught

up” into the life of sonship as “other sons” of the Father by the same Spirit in which Jesus lived his life. This account follows a post-Constantinian account of the life of Jesus as what constitutes the Christian life, but, since the post-Constantinian accounts do not offer a clear place for the Spirit’s indwelling presence that constitutes such a life, this Spirit-Christology will explain how the Christian life is life in the Spirit. My thesis then is this: as Jesus lived the kind of life he lived as the Son of the Father in the Spirit, the Spirit also makes other sons of the Father in the image of Jesus Christ who then, as a result of this actual transformation by the Spirit, gladly follow him in the kind of life he lived—in the Spirit.

As for methodology, this Spirit-Christology will proceed upon the basis of Pauline theology that sees the Spirit as making other sons of the Father. Whereas this might be obvious to most readers, the necessary corollary to understand Paul’s dependence upon the work of the Spirit is the presupposition of the life Jesus lived in the Spirit and especially his death on a cross (Rom 6), which is never obvious to anyone (1 Cor 1:21; 2 Cor 4:4), that is, by identifying with a man who died on a cross one is actually given life. This way of making Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection constitutive for the Christian life was the lasting contribution of John Howard Yoder. Following Yoder, my plan is to also provide an account of Jesus’ life but one that sees the Spirit as the “constitutive ingredient” in Jesus living as the Son of God the Father. This account, in turn, will show how it is through the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ that God pours out his Spirit of life (and thus, Jesus’ kind of life) upon and through his church, making other sons of the Father who live like Jesus lived.

In order to accomplish this, I will first provide a certain reading of Jesus’ life as he lived in the Spirit that opens up space for a more faithful reading of Luke’s account in Acts of the Spirit’s work of making and shaping people into the people of God, in the image of Jesus Christ, beginning at Pentecost and continuing until the end of this age. Chapter 1 will detail the post-Constantinian accounts of John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas, which show the significance of Jesus’ life for the Christian life, but which are also limited by their neglect of the Spirit’s presence both in Jesus’ life and his followers to live such a life. Chapter 2 will navigate recent Spirit-Christologies and Pneumatologies that either do not take Jesus’ life seriously as the Son of God or deny that his life demands transformation from the spirits of this age and the flesh in order to live life in
the Spirit. This positioning within recent scholarship will yield a clearer place for seeing Jesus’ life as what it means to have the Spirit and to live in the Spirit. Chapter 3 will then give such an account of Jesus’ life in the Spirit as the Son of God that is constitutive for his followers’ lives as adopted sons of God. This account of Jesus’ life in the Spirit and his followers’ lives in the Spirit, as described in Acts, will then yield a more faithful and coherent reading of Pauline theology of the Christian’s life as life in the Spirit. Further implications of this more faithful reading of Scripture will provide a stronger critique of modern theology in chapter 4, along with some suggestions for theology’s proper use and its implications for the proclamation of the gospel. Chapter 5 will outline some preliminary implications of this Spirit-Christology for the shape and direction of the lives of individual members of Christ’s body. Chapter 6 will conclude this study with a summary of the question, the main points of the theological proposal, and some prospects for future theological reflection in related areas. To begin this journey, the first step in providing such an account of Spirit-Christology that takes Jesus’ life in the Spirit seriously for the Christians’ life in the Spirit must begin with John Howard Yoder’s retrieval of the significance of Jesus’ life for the Christian’s life and its parallel theological diagnosis.

John Howard Yoder’s Post-Constantinian Diagnosis: The Systematic Diminishing of Jesus’ Life

To understand the significance of Yoder’s larger contribution, one must first understand the significance of his post-Constantinianism in two related respects: in a diagnosis of Christian theology on the Christian life and in offering the kind of account that addresses this problem. As to the first, Yoder’s diagnosis of Christian theology was very simple: Christian accounts of the Christian life did not take Jesus’ own life into account. In *The Politics of Jesus*, the sixth reason he gives for this neglect of Jesus’ life for the Christian life is that Jesus’ death is seen only as the mechanism by which he gave his life as a ransom for sinners to provide forgiveness. This view of Jesus’ death remains abstract, allowing sin to also remain abstract (if it exists at all). Yoder explains how the irrelevancy this view has for Jesus’ life is the reason Jesus’ life is regarded as insignificant for understanding the Christian’s life.
Just as guilt is not a matter of having committed particular sinful acts, so justification is not a matter of proper behavior. How the death of Jesus works our justification is a divine miracle and mystery; how he died, or the kind of life which led to the kind of death he died, is therefore ethically immaterial.4

This relationship between the life Jesus lived and the kind of death He died is perhaps the single most instructive point to understanding Yoder’s correction to the wrong “content” of the Christian life; wrong “content” being something other than Jesus’ life. Not only does Yoder show the significance of Jesus’ life for the Christian, he shows Jesus’ life and death to be all-encompassing of the Christian’s life; political, economic, cultural, and social. Yoder’s significance is that, in his view, Jesus’ life created a completely new human existence.

For Yoder, Jesus’ coming into the world was the creation of a new human existence; the very re-creation of humanity. Caught in the web of fallen human existence are the structures of the world; the political, economic, and religious structures that God now uses against fallen humanity for his own purposes, even for good.5 God even used these structures for the purpose of killing his only Son, thereby showing the degree to which humans have “fallen” into violence. Could this view of Jesus’ death and his cross constitute the very essence of the Christian life? If one answers “yes,” this would be a new beginning for what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

In form and content, The Politics of Jesus is a model for an account of the Christian life. In form, by giving shape and purpose to life as a Christian, it is perhaps unexceptional, but in content, The Politics of Jesus is indeed exceptional. So exceptional, in fact, that Stanley Hauerwas says it will never be a classic due to a classic being “the category of dominant and dominating traditions.”6 Rather, it defies categorization into contemporary traditions by critiquing the usual approaches by re-establishing the life of Jesus as the only paradigm for Christian existence.7 In this sense, it is Hauerwas’s conviction that, in the future, Christians in America will look back and see The Politics of Jesus as a “new beginning” for theology.8

5. Ibid., 142.
7. Ibid., 131.
Yoder’s Solution: Confession in Jesus as Lord Lets Go of the World

One of the most critical theological presuppositions to understanding Yoder’s critique of modern theology’s diminishing of Jesus’ life for the Christian’s life is his dependence upon Barth’s “foundation” of belief to be the Trinity as opposed to a dependency upon natural theology as a foundation to Christian faith. Contrary to H. Richard Niebuhr, as Craig Carter points out, Yoder follows Karl Barth’s rejection of theology’s dependency upon natural theology as a foundation for understanding the Trinity because Barth “simply refuses to play by the rules by which Niebuhr assumes we have to play.” Yoder’s Politics of Jesus shows how Niebuhr’s liberal agenda no longer has any validity. Hauerwas explains this quite well.

Yoder needs to be read in the tradition of liberal Protestantism not only because he helps us recognize the strengths of that tradition, but also because he helps us see why that tradition has come to an end (which accounts for why he remains something of an outcast in mainstream Protestant theology). Yoder cannot be made to fit into the presuppositions we have learned from the Niebuhrs and their successors. Such theologians keep saying, “We have seen this Christ-against-culture type before.” In mainstream hands, such typologies become power plays to keep in their place those who might challenge the reigning explanatory categories.  

9. Carter, The Politics of the Cross, 125. Carter contrasts H. R. Niebuhr’s “distributive Trinitarianism” seen earlier to Barth’s christocentric Trinitarianism. “Barth’s doctrine of the Trinity is christocentric, meaning that his doctrine of God the Father is developed not out of natural theology, but out of the biblical witness as it is interpreted christocentrically. Barth rejects the entire natural-theology project, including the analogy of being, apologetics, and reason and history as sources, independent of revelation, of the knowledge of God. For this reason, the doctrine of the Trinity is . . . the presupposition of all dogmatic theology. For Barth, the Christian God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus; the God of the Bible, not Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover; the God of the philosophers. So we know the Christian God (as opposed to the God of the Deists, the Muslim God, and the God of idealistic metaphysics) through God’s own self-revelation in Jesus Christ. Any other God is simply an idol for Barth.”

Hauerwas says the reigning explanatory category of depoliticization (by both the right and left) of the gospel has “made Christianity a faithful servant of the status quo.”

By contrast, Yoder is calling the church to let go of its compromise with the world and return to living lives patterned after Jesus’ life, which condemns the status quo as the servant to an unbelieving world. Compromise with the “world” necessarily means forsaking one’s faithfulness to Jesus as Lord. On the other hand, declaring “Jesus is Lord” means forsaking one’s compromise with “this world.” Constantinianism is simply one’s refusal to let go of the world and its structured unbelief. A follower of Jesus is able to let go of the world’s unbelief and the structures that unbelief underwrites by their awareness of living within a whole new human existence made possible by Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.

**Jesus’ Life as a Whole New Human Existence**

Yoder based the demands of Jesus’ followers letting go of the world’s structured unbelief solely upon the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus’ life as a new human existence of peace not only shows God’s condemnation of human violence and the world’s cultures that are established and survive by human violence but the calling of a people to a new community of human existence based on peace. Jesus’ life cannot be made compatible to any form of human culture or religion since the very fabric of human existence is woven with threads of violence for its survival across time. Rather, Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection denounce all others as false pretenders, allegiance to which is idolatry. Yoder not only refused, like Barth before him, to conform Jesus’ life to the syncretism of a cultural religion that thrives by violence (and the artificial remedy for it seen in pluralism) he did so by retrieving and elevating Trinitarian theology to the pinnacle of what it means to know one’s place in God’s assembly of peace.

Trinitarian theology becomes the starting point for knowing one’s identity with God, something Yoder believed natural theology could nev-

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12. Carter, *The Politics of the Cross*, 125. “Niebuhr’s account of trinitarianism is inherently open to syncretism, to the blending of pagan and Christian notions into a culture religion. It was against trends perceived by Barth to hold the potential for this kind of deformation of the Christian faith, which Barth regarded as *more serious than anything faced by the church in many centuries*, that he uttered his famous ‘Nein!’” (emphasis added).
er do. Whereas Yoder received criticism for not being Trinitarian enough, it was unfounded. Yoder’s whole approach was even more Trinitarian, even though implicitly, than most other explicit attempts at Trinitarian theology due to his belief in the Trinity as the starting point and only foundation for all other Christian understanding. Carter refers to this method as “practical trinitarianism,” by which Christian assertions “depend for their coherence on the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity.” This Trinitarian basis undergirds all of Yoder’s critique against the status quo since Jesus’ very life is both the full expression of God’s divine nature, of God’s critique upon humanity, and the re-constitution (re-creation) of human life. As God’s re-creation of human life, Jesus’ life was the very condemnation of “this age” and the structures necessary to maintain its norms and status quo. Jesus inaugurated a “new age” of the Kingdom of God that broke in and declared “this age” fallen and awaiting God’s final judgment. Yoder explained this breaking in of God’s Kingdom by showing Jesus’ life as the very center of God’s life. For the follower of Jesus, there is no other social norm or social order for Christian life and ethics than Jesus himself. Therefore, “Yoder returns Jesus to the center of Christian ethics by freeing us from the political presuppositions sponsored by liberal social orders”—and conservative ones too.

Yoder’s Post-Constantinian Critique and Account of the Christian Life

Yoder’s Critique of Theology that Ignores or Denies Jesus’ Life

Yoder’s account that takes the life of Jesus seriously for the Christian’s own life has been his most significant contribution, which has done a great deal to help Christians return to faithfulness by making Jesus’ life and his cross visible in ways many have never seen even for the first time. Yoder did so by linking the faithfulness of Christians to the faithfulness that Jesus lived before his Father even unto death on a cross. Yoder’s The

13. Ibid., 126.

14. “Full expression” here means the only legitimate one, an idea I will bring up later in comparing others who use other terms to describe Jesus as the “best” or “most complete” as a way to include other manifestations as also legitimate expressions of God’s divine nature.

15. Hauerwas, A Better Hope, 133.

16. Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, 232. “The triumph of the right is assured not by the might that comes to the aid of the right, which is of course the justification of the use
Politics of Jesus made Jesus’ life and death visible again simply by showing the political, economic, and cultural significance his life had in its historical context. Jesus did not live a life just so he would be able to offer a sacrifice for sin, although it was that. Yoder shows us that Jesus lived a certain kind of life that ended up getting him killed. He sees the cross that Jesus died on as the punishment of a criminal charged not for political insurrection (since He committed no such thing) but for social nonconformity, which he did commit by offering the possibility of a radically new human existence.\footnote{Ibid., 36–39, 51–53, 95–96, 129.}

Yoder’s Link between Jesus’ Faithfulness and His Followers’ Faithfulness

It was Yoder who explained persuasively how Christian answers about what constituted life, for Christians, went wrong: Christianity forfeited its identity of faithfulness to its Lord Jesus Christ in favor of a “wider wisdom” compatible with nations and their cultures, which is more popular than carrying a cross and especially than dying on one. However, for Yoder, the faithfulness required for one to be a follower of Jesus means taking on Jesus’ cross as one’s own “way of life,” paradoxically as that seems. Jesus did not see the cross he was about to die on “as a ritually prescribed instrument of propitiation but as the political alternative to both insurrection and quietism.”\footnote{Ibid., 36.}

This view of Jesus and his cross shows Jesus to be the inaugurator of a new human existence he called the Kingdom of God.

Here at the cross is the man who loves his enemies, the man whose righteousness is greater than the Pharisees, who being rich became poor, who gives his robe to those who took his cloak, who prays for those who despitefully use him. The cross is not a detour or a hurdle on the way to the kingdom, nor is it even the way to the kingdom; it is the kingdom come.\footnote{Ibid., 51; emphasis added.}
Jesus’ kind of life led to the kind of death he died; death on “a cross identified as the punishment of a man who threatens society by creating a new kind of community leading a radically new kind of life.”

This new kind of life that Jesus brought into existence by dying on a cross is exemplified in Jesus’ followers by their own “crosses” which are patterned after his, but only in a certain way.

The believer’s cross is no longer any and every kind of suffering, sickness, or tension, the bearing of which is demanded. The believer’s cross must be like his Lord’s, the price of his social nonconformity. It is not, like sickness or catastrophe, an inexplicable, unpredictable suffering; it is the end of a path freely chosen after counting the cost . . . it is the social reality of representing in an unwilling world the Order to come.

The continuity between Yoder’s description of the believer’s cross and his description of Jesus’ cross can be clearly seen in the following.

The cross of Christ was not an inexplicable or chance event, which happened to strike him, like illness or accident. To accept the cross as his destiny, to move toward it and even to provoke it, when he could have well done otherwise, was Jesus’ constantly reiterated free choice. He warns his disciples lest their embarking on the same path be less conscious of its costs (Luke 14:25–33). The cross of Calvary was not a difficult family situation, not a frustration of visions of personal fulfillment, a crushing debt, or a nagging in-law; it was the political, legally-to-be-expected result of a moral clash with the powers ruling his society.

Yoder’s understanding of Jesus’ death on a cross and the requirement of others to follow him in order to be his disciples (Matt 16:24–28; Mark 8:34–38; Luke 9:23–27) is the basis upon which he makes his case against modern theology’s abandonment of Jesus’ cross in favor of a more “reasonable” or “effective” method that appeals to everyone, a method that uses natural theology as the foundation for faith and abandons the biblical view of faith as the lens, or “foundation,” through which one sees natural theology.

20. Ibid., 53.
21. Ibid., 96.
22. Ibid., 129.
Yoder’s return of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection to their proper place is accompanied by a critique of modern theology that appeals to a “wider wisdom” that depends on natural theology for its supporting foundation. Properly understood, Jesus’ life interprets, critiques, and supplies meaning to natural theology rather than natural theology serving as the filter through which to interpret and then diminish Jesus’ life and death. Yoder’s critique of the modern theological method that finds another “surer foundation” than the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ is one piece with his account of Jesus and his cross explained above. In place of Jesus’ cross and resurrection, modern theology has opted for a “wider wisdom” found in natural theology that appeals to human understanding of “nature, ‘reason,’ ‘creation,’ and ‘reality,’” which are all “self-evident” and “ascribed a priori a higher or deeper authority than the ‘particular’ Jewish or Christian sources of moral vision, whether these be the Bible in general, or Jesus in particular.”23 These other “self-evident” foundations than Jesus and his cross served the church’s unfaithfulness by supporting its Constantinian quest for control over history, to make history “come out right” for God and his church. Yoder calls this into question by suggesting Jesus’ cross was the relinquishing, a “letting go,” of any personal “responsibility” in favor of trusting his Father’s control of history. Yoder explains this position of “letting go of history” in relation to Jesus’ suffering.

We have observed this biblical “philosophy of history” first of all in the worship life of the late New Testament church, since it is here that we find the most desperate encounter of the church’s weakness (John was probably in exile, Paul in prison) with the power of the evil rulers of the present age. But this position is nothing more than a logical unfolding of the meaning of the work of Jesus Christ himself, whose choice of suffering servant-hood rather than violent lordship, of love to the point of death rather than righteousness backed by power, was itself the fundamental direction of his life. Jesus was so faithful to the enemy-love of God that it cost him all his effectiveness; he gave up every handle on history.24

23. Ibid., 19.
24. Ibid., 232–33; emphasis added.
In place of this early church’s understanding of Jesus’ cross and one’s relinquishing control over history that follows Jesus’ demands, much of the church since Constantine has opted out of this way of Jesus’ cross by appealing to a use of natural theology that eclipses and, thereby, suppresses this view of Jesus and his cross as the way of life for his followers. Recent post-Constantinians, such as Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas, have identified and exposed this connection between the church’s unfaithfulness and its use of natural theology. We will now examine their critiques of the church’s unfaithfulness by which theology appeals to natural theology as a foundation for faith in Jesus Christ.

**Yoder’s Critique of H. Richard Niebuhr’s Use of Natural Theology**

John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas have mounted a two-fold critique against this liberal Protestant minimization of Jesus’ life to the periphery of one’s Christian life found in the theological method of H. Richard Niebuhr and his brother Reinhold Niebuhr, respectively, both of whom elevated natural theology to a higher authority than Jesus’ life. First, John Yoder critiqued H. Richard Niebuhr’s 1951 *Christ and Culture* in a 1958 article unpublished until 1996. Yoder cites Niebuhr’s methodology that allows culture a monolithic autonomy separate from the lordship of Jesus Christ. He explains Niebuhr’s independent status given to culture that is contrary to the teachings of the New Testament.

The church of the New Testament confessed that Jesus was Lord over the “principalities and powers.” . . . The *autonomy* claimed by the powers of this world is not only independence of any higher will such as that of the Creator God, but also the claim to exercise dominion over men and women, who thereby become slaves of the law, of idols, or of other powers. The *unity* which these “powers” claim lies precisely in their pretention that independently of the will of the Creator God they are able to provide a person and to society a full, integrated, genuine existence. . . . Now what the New Testament affirms in claiming that Christ is Lord is precisely that these structures of creaturely unity and meaningfulness have no such autonomy, but have rather been brought into subjection under the feet of our Lord. They have in their rebellion against him no unity, since rebellion is not a principle of unity. What for H. R. Niebuhr is the definition of

“culture” in its essence is for the New Testament the definition of perdition and demonic self-glorification, from which the “powers” need to be, and can be, saved in order to be brought under the Lordship of God in Christ.  

Yoder reveals Niebuhr’s strategy of setting up five types of church stances toward culture as that which allows culture this monolithic autonomy. By using these five types, Niebuhr leads the reader along to eventually accept the fifth type, that of “transforming culture” as the best possible solution, showing this position to be the best by not listing any of its shortcomings but by using such words as “transform” and “convert” without any concrete or substantial clarity as to what either one would actually looks like if they happened. Yoder calls this methodology into question since it serves as its own “grid” that eliminates any alternative and especially by how it criticizes others in the past, such as Tertullian, for not being consistent by ascribing exclusively to one particular type. Yoder shows Niebuhr’s method indebted to Ernst Troeltsch by his categorization of history that uses “prior intellectual commitments and categories” to “determine what will be recognized as a ‘motif’” and then using that categorization motif as a way to show Jesus’ life “pointing away from” the particularity of culture. Yoder shows how this “pointing away” from culture was, for Niebuhr, based on Jesus being a “moralist” and “radical monotheist.”

[Jesus] does not condemn culture because it is particularly sinful, nor does he condemn aspects of culture because these portions of it are more sinful than others; in fact he does not condemn it at all. He simply “points away from” it towards something else incomparably more important.

This something “more important” reflects a dualism that splits the spiritual from the material, leaving the earthly and worldly an independent autonomy of existence, allowing “nature,” “reality,” and even “creation” an independent status apart from Jesus Christ’s lordship. As we will now see,

27. Ibid., 40–42.
28. Ibid., 43.
29. Ibid., 59. Jesus as a “radical monotheist” is the fifth reason Yoder gives in The Politics of Jesus (7) for why Jesus is not seen as the norm for Christian ethics.
the independent status of creation and nature apart from Jesus Christ is due to Niebuhr’s flawed view of the Trinity.

Ultimately, Yoder rightly suspects Niebuhr of making Christ into a “straw man” that points people away from the historical particularity of Jesus’ life; the result of a Trinitarianism that is “modalistic” or “distributive,” that is, seeing Father, Son, and Spirit as distinct and separate sources of revelation. In Niebuhr’s Trinitarianism, the Father’s creation of all things supports culture and necessarily uses other sources than Jesus Christ for moral judgment.31

It is his rhetorically most powerful way of arguing that the teachings and example of Christ need to be “corrected” or brought into balance by appeal to nature or to history ([Christ and Culture] 81f, 114) . . . Nature and history are therefore channels of revelation from God the Father. What they have to say about “culture” is of course largely affirmative, and thereby stands in tension . . . with the authority of “Christ.”32

Not only does the Father’s creation as an affirmation of culture serve as an alternative source of revelation apart from Christ, but Niebuhr’s view of the Spirit does as well. “Thus the term ‘Spirit’ can serve as a general code label for not further specified sources of valid moral insights, which can be complimentary to (or prima facie contradictory to) the revelation received in the teaching and example of Christ.”33 Yoder asks whether this sharp distinction between the Father, Son, and Spirit’s work, especially for differing sets of moral obligation for the Christian, can hold up under the scrutiny of Scripture. “Can we thus distinguish between the teaching and example of the Son and the will of the Father? Can we distinguish between creation, as the work of the Father on the one hand, and radical discipleship or redemption on the other, as the work of the Son?”34 Yoder shows how this cannot be the case and that, in the history of church doctrine, the concept of “Trinity” was later developed to combat this tendency exhibited by Niebuhr in order to safeguard against any modalistic tendency that would make unwarranted distinction between Father, Son, and Spirit.

31. Ibid., 62–63.
32. Ibid., 61.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
The entire point of the debate around the nature of the Trinity was the concern of the church to say just the opposite, namely that in the Incarnation and in the continuing life of the church under the Spirit there is but one God. The point of the doctrine of the Trinity is not to affirm distinctions or even complementary differentiations between Father, Son, and Spirit, but rather to safeguard the unity of these three ways in which we know of God. It was not to relativize Jesus or to cut the later church loose from his normativeness.\footnote{Ibid., 62.}

In \textit{The Politics of Jesus}, Yoder gives reasons why Jesus is not seen as the norm for Christian ethics, such as a later systematic theological filter that serves as an epistemological grid through which Jesus’ life must be translated. Yoder uses H. Richard Niebuhr’s “distributive epistemological understanding of the Trinity” as an example of this theological grid through which Jesus’ life is “filtered,” a position Niebuhr articulated in an article prior to \textit{Christ and Culture}.\footnote{Niebuhr, “The Doctrine of the Trinity,” 371–84.} Yoder explains how Niebuhr’s grid of “distributive Trinitarianism,” that allows for other sources of authority than Jesus Christ, diminishes the life Jesus lived for constituting Christian ethics.

One should not make Jesus too important for ethics . . . since God the Father would call for a different (perhaps more institutionally conservative) social ethic, based on an understanding of creation or providence whose content is derived otherwise than from Jesus, God the Spirit might guide us toward another, also different ethic, based on the further revelations received since Pentecost, during the history of the church.\footnote{Yoder, \textit{The Politics of Jesus}, 17n33. By the “guidance of the Spirit” H. R. Niebuhr did not mean the Spirit’s application of Jesus’ life into believers’ lives through the church. He meant the church’s “progress” by its adaptation into its present culture. Thereby, Niebuhr validated American Constantinianism by allowing the church to learn from the “lessons of history,” the adjustments made by the churches over the centuries to the intractable constancies of the fallen world, i.e., structures like ethnicity, the state, or the economy, which one can appeal to the guidance of the Holy Spirit to validate.”}

Niebuhr’s “distributive Trinitarianism” is instructive for understanding Yoder’s critique of its diminishing of Jesus’ life to the periphery of the Christian’s life. Niebuhr’s Trinitarianism did not allow Jesus’ life to be the sole expression of what it means for humans to know God...
and live in his new creation of human existence, since Jesus’ life did not “translate” very well into 20th century politics, economics, and culture. This “epistemological grid” softened Jesus’ life to merely a moral example in favor of a Trinitarianism more compatible with an American form of Constantinianism in which Christianity becomes pluralistic and eclectic to agree with those same qualities found in American culture. Niebuhr’s distributive Trinitarianism, which combines all three Unitarianisms of Father, Son, and Spirit, is an adaptation of the classical Christian doctrine to an increasing American emphasis on pluralism that accepts all voices as legitimate ways to know the truth. Niebuhr’s Trinitarianism accepts even heretical theologies into a “synthesized formula in which all the partial insights and convictions are combined.” In this method, the doctrine of the Trinity serves as “an ecumenical doctrine providing not for the exclusion of heretics but for their inclusion in the body on which they are actually dependent.”

For Niebuhr, the particularities of Jesus’ life, and especially his death, could not be made to fit into or to be made compatible with an American culture that was becoming increasing monolithic in its acceptance of pluralism and in its prescribing that acceptance as the equal right of everyone to achieve the “American Dream” following World War II. In such a time, the particularities of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection had to take a back seat to the more formidable cultural pressure of acceptance and unity. As a result, Jesus’ death became obscured and spiritualized in mainstream American Christianity as a way to hide the true significance of his life and death.

Niebuhr’s Trinitarianism, in Yoder’s view, “seems therefore rather to be a slogan, symbolizing in a superficial way our author’s urbane, pluralistic concern for a balance between Christ and other moral authorities.” These other moral authorities for Niebuhr exist because the “world,” in its autonomous and independent status, exists in and of itself. This is the power Niebuhr’s Christ and Culture exhibited upon its readers, who, largely responded by assuming “a ‘rational’ or ‘natural’ epistemology, according to which the moral content of ‘culture’ is simply given, already ‘out

38. Niebuhr, “The Doctrine of the Trinity,” 383. Niebuhr’s Trinitarianism was simply the combination of all three Unitarianisms, a pluralism by which “the three Unitarianisms are interdependent.”
39. Ibid., 384.
there, defined by the way things are.”41 Yoder rightly exposes this faulty epistemology: “The Gospel alternative we have gradually been watching unfold will rather deny that there is any such thing as an already given ‘nature’ of things, ‘out there’ or ‘as such,’ . . .”42 For Yoder, the Christian life is a call to be a disciple of Jesus as Lord, who, as Lord over the universe, has already subjected the rebellious “principalities and powers” under his lordship as they await their final judgment. The monolithic pretention of culture’s power to dominate has been broken by Jesus so that his disciples, rather than being responsible for culture’s ongoing “progress,” are freed from its domination in order to be witnesses of Jesus’ victory over all of it. In the end, Niebuhr’s call for “transforming culture” parallels his inability to call cultures fallen and standing in judgment, a vision that “correlates with a low estimate of the power of evil.”43

Stanley Hauerwas’s Critique of Reinhold Niebuhr’s Use of Natural Theology

Yoder’s critique of liberal Protestant theology’s filtering of Jesus’ life through the lens of natural theology is complemented by Stanley Hauerwas’s explanation of how powerful Reinhold Niebuhr (H. Richard’s brother) used natural theology as a “supporting foundation” for Christian faith. For Reinhold Niebuhr, Christ was the culmination of the “best” of what humanity lacked; a method that minimized Christ to merely the remedy for the inner longing “for more.” Hauerwas, following Yoder’s post-Constantinian critique, explains Reinhold Niebuhr’s methodology of correlation with this natural characteristic of human longing.

Yet exactly because he was such a vital Christian believer, Niebuhr felt free to provide an account of our knowledge of God that seems little more than a pale theism. In short, Niebuhr’s practice, his use of Christian speech, prevented him, as well as those influenced by him, from seeing that metaphysically his “god” was nothing other than a [William] Jamesian sense that “there must be more.” . . . As it turns out, the revelation that is required for us to know Niebuhr’s god is but a reflection of ourselves.44

41. Ibid., 88–89.
42. Ibid., 89.
43. Ibid.
44. Hauerwas, With the Grain of the Universe, 122.
In good liberal Protestant fashion, Reinhold Niebuhr sees Jesus’ death on a cross as the triumph of God’s love over his wrath, making salvation one of personal forgiveness of sin and the healing of a troubled conscience; all by which even the particularities of special revelation can be validated by human experience. This use of natural theology uses human experience and understanding as the basic foundation to make faith in Christ “reasonable,” even “desirable,” to an unbeliever. In providing an account of Christian ethics that works for anyone, it is understandable that Niebuhr made little room for the church in his ethics, seeing it as a “sociological necessity for Christianity to exist across time.” Without the necessity of Spirit transformation to make one a member of Christ’s body, Niebuhr’s Christianity is reduced to a moral perfecting of the world without any salvation from it.

As revealing as Yoder’s and Hauerwas’s critiques of the Niebuhr brothers’ failed use of natural theology and flawed use of Trinitarian theology are, a basic element to their critique of modern theology is their view that Constantinianism, at its most fundamental level, is simply the church’s unfaithfulness to Jesus as Lord. We now turn to this element of their critiques.

The Constantinian Confusion of Church and World: Unfaithfulness to Jesus as Lord

Yoder gave this systematic and intentional failure of the church to live as though Jesus is Lord the name “Constantinianism” and defined it as the unfortunate confusion between the church and the world; identified in five stages in Western church history. Others have explained it in less

45. Ibid., 125.
46. Ibid., 133.
47. Ibid., 137.
48. Ibid., 138. “Niebuhr’s god is not a god capable of offering salvation in any material sense. Changed self-understanding or attitude is no substitute for the existence of a church capable of offering an alternative to the world. Of course, Niebuhr did not seek to offer an alternative, which is why he could not help but become a theologian of a domesticated god capable of doing no more than providing comfort to the anxious conscience of bourgeoisie.”
49. Yoder, The Royal Priesthood, 195–97. The church’s current state of compromise with America’s Post-Christian culture is seen in the “transposition of the gospel into terms of nonreligious language [that] has been proposed as the price for bringing the message of the church to the new ‘world.’ . . . This preoccupation of the church to be allied even with post-religious secularism, as long as this is effective and popular, could
nuanced ways or have studied particular aspects of its development, but Yoder described it best in relationship to Jesus’ lordship and the church’s unfaithfulness to that lordship. At the present stage of Constantinianism, much of the church is even resistant to its own self-critique due to the depth of cultural compromise and unfaithfulness into which it has fallen. It has its own built-in self-defense mechanism of the human proclivity to power and domination that various forms of Constantinianism afford it. Most ironically, it is this proclivity to power and dominion which still holds captive the Western church in the clutches of Constantinianism. Those most afflicted with this proclivity to power are the very ones most adept at “grabbing” and “holding on” to the power structures that enable their own domination to continue, even if now those structures within America’s most Constantinian segments of the church are maintained by those most qualified to appease a following that is bent on the renunciation of all authority and their interdictory commands that demand faith to follow. This domination is held through the complete inversion of a hierarchical system where those in “authority” only hold onto it by appeasing the whims of those at the grass roots in order to maintain their own popularity and control over those whose only authority is their own “fictive selves,” Philip Rieff’s definition of the false prophets in Jeremiah who serve their own selves and “speak visions of their own minds.”

This parallels Yoder’s description of the future stage of Constantinianism (which is actually already here) in which the church will align itself with whatever is en vogue within the wider culture out of a desire to be “on the right side” of the “winning cause” of history, even if that cause has not yet appeared.

Convinced that the future belongs to some particular cause, that history is assured a move according to the insights of some particular system, it is possible already in the present to take sides with this cause so that we will not be discredited when the old

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51. Elshtain, _Sovereignty: God, State, and Self_. Elshtain elaborates a fascinating narrative of the chronological progression that has resulted in the Western monistic sovereignty of God, then the state, and now the self that finds its greatest expression in modern existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. See also Rieff, _The Feeling Intellect_.

52. Rieff, _Charisma_, 43.
order collapses and the new is victorious. Something of this seems to have taken place in North America with the predictions of how the church will be radically transformed in the age of urbanization . . . Such advance approval of an order that does not yet exist, tending to be linked with approval of any means to which people resort that hope to achieve it, we would call “neo-neo-neo-neo-Constantinianism.”

In its fullest extent, Constantinianism is the church’s denial that Jesus is Lord in favor of a quest for power through “elitism” or “dominionism” over the world’s structures (or structures of its own making) that is self-perpetuating. Yoder’s post-Constantinianism calls for the church to let go of this quest for power in order to declare Jesus as Lord, not as the goal of faith but as the very essence of faith. However, overcoming Western Constantinianism is a daunting task, one that requires critique of some firmly-held, yet “invisible,” theological assumptions. Ultimately, it is only the church’s awareness of its own essence and mission that will free it from its self-delusion that its mission to the world is advanced by worldly power, prestige, and popularity.

The Post-Constantinians’ Lack of an Explicit Account of the Spirit’s Necessity

While Yoder’s account represents a “new beginning” for the content of the Christian life, it is noticeably lacking in an explicit account of the Holy Spirit’s role in establishing and living out the Christian life. Yoder’s and Hauerwas’s post-Constantinian accounts have no prominent place for the Holy Spirit’s necessary presence to live out such a life. No doubt they believe in the Spirit’s necessary presence in forming people to the life of Jesus, they just fail to make such a presence explicit.

Yoder’s account does acknowledge the role of the Spirit, but how the Spirit works remains implicit and presupposed. His understanding of Spirit is based in large part on his historical studies of the various versions of sixteenth century “radical” reformation and their claims as to the purpose and role of the Spirit. Of the five types he identifies within the sixteenth century radical reformation, Yoder commends two that place

54. Yoder, “‘Spirit’ and the Varieties of Reformation Radicalism.”
the Spirit’s work in the believing community as a whole. Yoder places the Spirit’s work within the community of believers as distinguished from “other spirits, subjectivity, unaccountability, and the Spirit [sic] of this world.” By working within the community, the Spirit leads people to “simple obedience to biblical commands.” This rightly elevates the Spirit’s work in the church, but the Spirit’s role in shaping such a community and how one obeys with “simple obedience” is neglected. It is hard to believe that “simple obedience” to Yoder’s kind of Christian life is a simple thing, even if one’s life is constituted by a certain kind of community that shapes one’s life. Thus, his view of the Spirit’s role in the community is shaped by his ecclesiology; how one is transformed into a disciple in the community is subsumed within his ecclesiology. Yoder’s view of the Spirit neglects the need for personal transformation necessary to live out the kind of new human existence that Jesus lived in his own life.

In being greatly influenced by Yoder and applying his methodology to ethics, Stanley Hauerwas follows in the same path of obscuring the necessary transformation of the Spirit in making disciples who take Jesus’ life seriously as their own way of life. Hauerwas’s assessment identifies the loss of not only our ability to locate the church but, by implication, the Spirit’s work in the church. Hauerwas cites an article by Michael Hollerich in which he identifies Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s assessment of “locating the Church” at the end of Constantinianism. Hollerich, “Retrieving a Neglected Critique of Church,” 305. Quoting Bonhoeffer: “The question is whether, after the separation from papal and from secular authority in the church, an ecclesiastical authority can be established which is grounded solely in Scripture and confession. If no such authority is possible, then the last possibility of an Evangelical Church is dead; then there is only return to Rome or under the state church, or the path of individualization, of the ‘protest’ of Protestantism against false authorities.” See also Hauerwas, In Good Company, 21.

55. Ibid., 303–4. (1) Unity is in “the Spirit of Christ” by the congregation’s accountability to “Scripture as exposited by the Spirit in the assembled community” and (2) in the “power of obedience whereby the individual makes his own what is already known as God’s will.”
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., 304. See also Yoder, The Priestly Kingdom, 33–35.
58. Hollerich, “Retrieving a Neglected Critique of Church,” 305. Quoting Bonhoeffer: “The question is whether, after the separation from papal and from secular authority in the church, an ecclesiastical authority can be established which is grounded solely in Scripture and confession. If no such authority is possible, then the last possibility of an Evangelical Church is dead; then there is only return to Rome or under the state church, or the path of individualization, of the ‘protest’ of Protestantism against false authorities.” See also Hauerwas, In Good Company, 21.
59. Hauerwas, In Good Company, 21–22. “The problem is, quite simply, that we can talk all we want about the church as the body of Christ, but in fact such talk is more
locating the Spirit’s work in the church, he succumbs to his own critique of theology mainly talking about other theologians and their theologies rather than actually writing theology that explains the Spirit’s work. With all due fairness, Hauerwas views all human existence as theological and, above all, the activities of the church: so too, the Spirit’s work of making disciples of Jesus encompasses all of life.

Hauerwas also identifies this all-encompassing aspect to theology in the work of James Wm. McClendon. For McClendon, theology in this post-Constantinian era can no longer be only a specialization or “systematic theology” for the professional clergy trained in the seminary. That method served well in a past Constantinian era as a service to the state to keep theology in its place, obscured, private, and mute. Hauerwas shows how McClendon’s theology is problematic for Christian institutions still subservient to the state or especially to those who would challenge that subservience by making theology an all-encompassing reality for Christian identity.

James McClendon does come closer to articulating the role of the Spirit as the “constitutive ingredient” for the Christian life, in “which Christians experience the moral world itself . . . as the new world in formation, revised and under revision by the Spirit and the power of the risen Christ.” Later, in volume 2, McClendon suggests the Spirit’s inner working in Stephen’s martyrdom in Acts 7, “for the Spirit, intimate enabler, was within him, allowing Stephen to see the vision of Jesus in his place and die a faithful death.”

Like Yoder and Hauerwas, McClendon does well at explaining that the Christian life is a life lived in the Spirit and that it requires an inward work of the Spirit for inner transformation. He even criticizes H. Richard Niebuhr’s “rejection of the efficacy of the Holy Spirit to make Christians Christ-like, his downplay of the new birth as a real transformation of human life, and his neglect of the resurrection in favor of an exclusive

60. Hauerwas, Wilderness Wanderings, 176.
61. Ibid., 175–76.
63. McClendon, Doctrine, 291; emphasis original. Cf. ibid., 240.
emphasis on the cross.”64 In speaking of the end or goal of the Holy
Spirit’s mission in creation and humanity, McClendon uses marriage as
an example in which “sacrifice is altogether appropriate, every social or-
ganism must be for its members an ‘other’ and an ‘all’ that as Christians
know, can be supported only by sacrifice, by taking up a cross.”65 Here
the shape and direction of the Christian life is made explicit as the same
shape and direction of Jesus’ life; that of taking up a cross. But how is the
cross defined and how does one come to make Jesus’ life one’s life as a
Christian? McClendon acknowledges that “for this ideal unity to be real-
ized, it must enter and rule ‘the kingdom of matter and death’ by rising
within each individual human being.”66 In the end however, McClendon
also falls short by not fully explaining how this transformation by the
Spirit takes place in the Christian’s life. Even McClendon’s advancement
of the Spirit’s role still falls short of explaining how the kind of life Jesus
lived in the Spirit becomes the inward presence for the believer to live the
same kind of life. As much as he says at times that the Spirit’s work is an
inward work, his overall methodology conveys the same tendencies as
Yoder and Hauerwas; a deficiency in articulating how the Spirit becomes
the “energy” for one’s very existence as a Christian.

Are Yoder’s, Hauerwas’s, and McClendon’s lack of an explicit ac-
count of the Spirit’s role in conforming one’s life to the life of Christ
only a lack? Or, is there a more fundamental reason? I propose the post-
Constantinians lack an explicit role of the Spirit due to the Spirit not ade-
quately supplanting human “freedom of the will.” Yoder’s Politics of Jesus
begs the question, “How does one freely choose this kind of Jesus whose
very mission it was to condemn human freedom by allowing humans to
use their freedom to kill him?” Yoder’s account of the Spirit is too weak
to overcome human’s inability to pick up a cross and follow Jesus on his
road to a tragic end. Humans cannot and do not freely choose to pick up
a cross and submit to their own “public executions” or even to live a life
of social nonconformity that led Jesus to die the way he did. Yoder’s pre-
supposing of human freedom as sufficient enough to do God’s will is one

64. McClendon, Ethics, 320.
65. McClendon, Doctrine, 449. McClendon suggests Russian philosopher Vladimir
Sergeyevich Solovyov’s imperfect, but helpful, analogy of marriage between a man and
woman as an example of ultimate intimacy and ecstasy where one finds in the “other,”
the “all.”
66. Ibid; emphasis original.
reason for the Spirit’s neglect in his account of Christian identity. While the presence and power of the Holy Spirit frees one from bondage to sin, his presence certainly does not free one from God and his will. Rather, the Spirit’s presence ties one to God’s will: a freedom that frees one to obey God’s will and from bondage to doing one’s own “free will.” This dilemma puts the status of the question back into its most simplest and basic form: Did Jesus come to enhance human freedom or did he come to condemn human freedom as sin and replace it with his obedience to the Father in the presence and power of the Spirit? Or, asked a different way, is the human condition of sin only partial or are humans entirely sinful, including their will? How this basic question is answered determines not only how one does all subsequent theology but the entire essence and mission of the church and the shape and direction of the Christian life as life in the Spirit as a member of Christ’s body of the church.

Excursus: A “Test Case” of Non-violence for the Spirit’s Necessary Transformation

The relevance of this issue comes up when dealing with a crucial test case of the Christian life: non-violence, especially since it is the stance held by these post-Constantinians. That the Christian’s life should be non-violent is clear: you shall not murder, you are to love your enemies, turn the other cheek, love your neighbor as yourself, etc. How anyone can be non-violent is not so clear. Maybe more than any other, this test case shows clearly the distinction and reciprocal relationship between material content and motivational energy; that is, the content of “what to do” and the energy of “how is it possible to do it.” How does one “freely will” to not use one’s naturally violent will as the “energy” to be non-violent? This becomes especially evident by how violently even Christians reject the notion of non-violence as a constitutive element of the Christian life, defending their rights to violently defend themselves against their non-violent enemies. But what if Jesus’ non-violence was due to the Spirit’s presence?

A good example of this test case of non-violence is the Pentecostals of the early 20th century, who lived lives “fully in the Spirit” even better than they knew or were able to theologically explain. Their lack of an explicit theology to explain the otherworldly aspects of their lives (such as sharing material goods, racial unity, proclamation of the Scripture for transformation, pacifism, etc.) caused their lifestyles among Pentecostals
to largely lose out to the greater force of gaining the “American Dream” following World War II. They simply took these social and community elements of their lives for granted; thinking anyone who lived “fully in the Spirit” would live as they did. They lived lives that resembled post-Constatinianism before it was ever a theological construct and movement. Some historians, such as Grant Wacker, think these early elements lost out due to their minority status, but his theory bears the burden of proof since pacifism was an official stance of the major Pentecostal movements up until or after World War II and their other worldly lifestyles were the very marks of their Christian Pentecostal identities.\textsuperscript{67} Their lifestyles of contrast to, even condemnation of, worldly cultural norms proportionately lost out over time due to the greater pressure to conform to the larger American monolithic culture. In short, early Pentecostalism’s cultural critique caved in to the greater pressure of the American form of Constantinianism. In order to better explain this Constantinian compromise of Pentecostalism to the larger American culture, this work will propose a \textit{theological} account to affirm these early Pentecostals’ otherworldly lifestyles as what it means to live lives fully in the Spirit. The theological reasons for the early Pentecostals’ lifestyles and why they lost out to American Constantinianism is brought into clearer focus by the impressive nature of Yoder’s work. His work helps us make better sense of their lives. However, for both early Pentecostals and present-day post-Constantinians, the content is there but they both lack, possibly for different reasons, an explicit account of the Spirit’s work to live out such a culturally-contrasting content. The former lived lives fully in the Spirit without an explicit theology able to explain their lives as living in the Spirit while the latter have an explicit account of the Christian community as a contrast society without an explicit account of the Christian life as life in the Spirit. The reason for this separation in both accounts is the nature of the Spirit; seen as an “added extra” rather than as the very “constitutive ingredient” or the very principle of life itself for the Christian life.

The contribution this work intends to offer is an account of the Christian life as life in the Spirit that makes sense out of such transformed and radically otherworldly lives of the early twentieth-century Pentecostals and the recent post-Constantinians; both \textit{transformation} by the Spirit and the \textit{relinquishing} of one’s own will (even life itself) by the indwelling presence of the Spirit. Such an account is able to be seen only

\textsuperscript{67} Wacker, \textit{Heaven Below}.\textsuperscript{8}
when Jesus’ life is first seen as a life lived fully in the Spirit; from conception by the Spirit to surrendering his spirit for the will of the Father. As Jesus lived his life as the Son of God the Father in the presence of the Spirit, so too do Christians live their lives as adopted sons of God the Father in the Spirit with Jesus as their older brother.