

Preface

To say this work is the culmination of a long and circuitous journey would be a great understatement. What ended as a PhD dissertation at Concordia Seminary began at a sale barn in Norwood, MO, when in 1960 my parents sold all their cattle, and later their farm, in order for my dad to spend all the money attending Central Bible College in Springfield, MO, beginning later that fall, to prepare for Christian ministry. A year later I would be born and a year after that my parents would begin pastoring small Assemblies of God churches, first in Kansas and then in Missouri, for the next twenty-five years. Having spent all their money and adding me, their fourth child, along the way, my parents were faced with obstacles far greater than poverty, such as standing up to racial discrimination from church deacons in 1963 for welcoming a black woman and her daughter into the church, social stigma for reaching out to the mentally handicapped and poor when it was not “the right thing to do,” and for taking a stand against immorality within the church when it would have been much easier to “look the other way.” Such events, and many others too numerous to recount, shaped my life at an early age in such a way that later ministry and education left me with a “hunch” that things within the church were just not right, even though I did not have all the theological ideas to understand why.

Fast forward to my first year of studies at Concordia Seminary where I met the likes of John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas through the classes taught by my dissertation advisor Joel Okamoto. Finally, I found the kind of theology my parents had been living and teaching me all my life, with the added dimension of the Lutheran faith that actually requires God to do something about the human predicament called sin. This might sound strange coming from a Pentecostal, but my upbringing

was a throwback to an earlier time when Pentecostal preaching and living required the Holy Spirit to transform people into believers in order for them to understand what it means to be one of the saints of God. That is what made the testimony service so important, for it was mainly through the witness of God working Christ by the Spirit within a person that could explain the inexplicable. It was also a time when preaching was biblical, not the detailing of all the historical facts behind the text as a way of only explaining the text, but the preaching of the biblical story that places its hearers within God's story of his Son Jesus and requires repentance and faith *within* those who hear in order to believe it as one's own story.

Coming back full circle, it is my hope that, through the pages that follow, not only can Pentecostals be re-enlivened with the blessed hope in the resurrection that comes from the Spirit being "shed abroad in our hearts," but that Christians of all persuasions can appreciate the Holy Spirit's work in a greater dimension than what either a rational or an experiential description alone can provide. I must also sincerely thank Leopoldo Sánchez for not only helping guide my dissertation to its completion, but for providing the very theological framework upon which this work hopes to contribute in some way toward that greater dimension of the Spirit. May such a description of Jesus' life as lived in the Spirit contribute in some way to help others struggling to make sense out of their Christian faith when all other human explanations have failed, as they all must do at the foot of Jesus' cross and at the opening of his empty tomb.

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