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THE IMPLICATIONS OF “RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE” FOR CATHOLIC-PENTECOSTAL DIALOGUE: A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE

Ralph Del Colle

PRECIS

Pentecostals consider the experience of the Holy Spirit to be at the heart of their movement. In dialogue with Pentecostals, Catholics are challenged to probe the resources of Christian experience for the theological enterprise. After examining different paradigms for the understanding of “religious experience,” this essay traces the transition that has occurred in Catholic theology allowing for experience in neo-scholasticism and traditional forms of Catholic spirituality to be placed in a more constructive role in the theologies of Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar. The essay concludes by describing the opportunity that the turn to experience affords for Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue.

The introduction of the notion of experience into what it means to become a Christian and to mature as a Christian complicates the current Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue. There are philosophical issues to negotiate—for instance, what is experience?—as well as the need to determine the place of experience in constructive theology and the interpretation of dogma and doctrine. The relationship between experience and faith is really not as simple as it seems. On the contrary, implicitly if not explicitly, experience is a category that is part of our

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common discourse and, for many, the privileged locus of religious meaning and practice. The assumption (I think) is that some measure of religious experience is or should be a formative dimension in authentic Christian life. Certainly, the burden on Kilian McDonnell and George Montague's book intended to foster such dialogue, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries*,¹ was to underscore the normativity of Spirit-baptism in its experiential mode for all converting Christians and all the sacramentally initiated. Likewise, the testimony of the Pentecostal movement has been to witness to the experiential power of God as known and received in the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the charisms that attend that event and follow from it.

I propose to explore this experiential quality of Christian life informed in part by mutual convergence between the two traditions—despite their differences—on the coming of the Spirit and the Spirit's gifts in the life of the church and the Christian. In this light, I will address the following issues from the Catholic side: the notion of experience as a theological construct, experience in neo-scholastic Catholic theology of grace, experience in traditional Catholic spiritual theology, the turn to experience in contemporary Catholic theology of grace, and implications for Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue.

1. Experience as a Theological Construct

Donald Gelpi once referred to experience as a "weasel word," one that twists and wiggles in its many and variant meanings.² Yet, many theologies appeal to experience. For some, it is the major source and authority for the doing of theology. In our postmodern era, experience has also become the possession of various constituencies who interrupt mainstream discourse on experience with their hitherto-unheard voices, for example, various forms of liberation theology. Experience has become a Pandora's box for both theologian and philosopher. At the very least, in order to converse about experience, we need to exercise discipline with respect to the focus of our inquiry.

Using philosophical considerations, George Schner has identified four general rules to govern the notion: experience as construct, experience as intentional, experience as derivative, and experience as dialectical.³ Roughly speaking, an experience, which includes elements of conscious apprehension, active participation, and passive undergoing, is a constructive process correlated with intentionality and derivation. In other words, as one mediates to oneself an experience (the constructive element), one does so with an intention—it is an experience of something—derived from the social, cultural, and linguistic context that forms one's life world. The dialectical dimension of experience refers to the "dynamic, self-altering, self-displacing, or inventive"⁴ aspect of experience, in

¹Kilian McDonnell and George Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries*, 2nd rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994).

²Donald Gelpi, *The Turn to Experience in Contemporary Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1994), p. 2.

³George P. Schner, "The Appeal to Experience," *Theological Studies* 53 (March, 1992): 46–49.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 48.

other words, its transformative dimension. So, for example, if one claims to experience the baptism in the Holy Spirit, this will involve the agent’s construct of Spirit-baptism, dependent as it is on the recipient’s intention and its particular ecclesial derivation. This will not negate the dialectical or transformative dimension of the experience in the event. What is ruled out is the notion that the experience is an unmediated given for the recipient.

Theologically, this places Christian experience within an incarnational and kerygmatic framework. The former may be rendered according to the Thomist principle that God is known according to the spiritual operations of the human faculties—“the thing known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower.”⁵ The latter invokes the Pauline affirmation that faith comes by hearing the efficacious word of Christ (Rom. 10:17).

Theological appeals to experience also vary. Suspicious of the notion of religious experience, Schnier has preferred to evaluate theological appeals to experience.⁶ For our purposes, we may construe two basic constructions of religious experience in theological usage.⁷ Schnier identified them as follows: “specific sorts of human operation which are ‘religious’ or . . . specific foci of the intentionality that can be called ‘religious.’”⁸ In other words, there are specific religious experiences, or there is a religious dimension to all experience. The former is evident in the religious affections of Jonathan Edwards or John Wesley, the consolations and desolations of Ignatius Loyola, and the mystical raptures and dark nights of John of the Cross. The latter is exemplified in the *a priori* religious consciousness of Friedrich Schleiermacher (the feeling of absolute dependence) or the transcendental existential of Karl Rahner (the unthematic horizon within consciousness of absolute mystery). Both models can lend themselves to the interpretation of specific religious experiences. This is clearly evident in the case of Wesley’s heart’s being “strangely warmed” at Aldersgate Chapel and in the discernment of “the different movements produced in the soul” during the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*.⁹ It is also the case in the latter, more anthropological orientation of the human being as subject in Schleiermacher and Rahner. In Rahner’s terminology, the transcendental experience of God is not divorced from the *a posteriori* categorical encounter with the mystery

⁵Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia, q. 43, a. 3.

⁶Schnier has distinguished experience as transcendental, hermeneutic, constructive, confessional, and mystical. Suffice it to say that “transcendental” is the religious condition for all experience; “hermeneutic” is the interrogation of all religious experience that skeptically calls into question the universally normative, “constructive” emphasizes the symbolization of religious experience; “confessional” locates religious experience within the purview of a particular tradition and community; and “mystical” looks to the radical subjectivity of religious experience in its immediacy. Of course, these different appeals may overlap in theological usage. See Schnier, “Appeal to Experience,” pp. 52–58.

⁷It should be noted that Schnier is critically suspect of the notion of “religious experience” as well as of “common human experience” due to the “cultural imperatives and forms of functioning that human beings might be said to be struggling with” (*ibid.*, p. 51). To the extent that these historical and cultural dimensions are ignored in favor of some abstract universal, Schnier’s suspicion becomes operative.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁹*The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph*, tr. Louis J. Puhl (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1951), p. 141 (§313).

of the divine in the concrete reality of worldly life.¹⁰ Likewise for Schleiermacher, the feeling of absolute dependence was not separated from the elements of self-consciousness and the communal consciousness of specific religious traditions.

Both models of religious experience may be employed in this investigation, although the implications of that choice may vary. For example, in the matter of doctrine, the “religious dimension of all experience” model lends itself to a more constructive understanding of doctrine as witnessed in Schleiermacher’s famous axiom: “Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech.”¹¹ In his case, if there were not an immediate correlation between experience and doctrine, the latter would assume a secondary position in the doctrinal schema. This is best illustrated in the doctrine of the Trinity, which he understood as “not an immediate utterance concerning the Christian self-consciousness, but only a combination of several such utterances.”¹² Of course, for Rahner the doctrine of the Trinity was rather central for his theological enterprise, so it all depends on how one construes the relationship between experience and particular doctrines. As compared with Schleiermacher, Rahner gave greater weight to the established dogma, and, through his efforts to reconceive the metaphysics of grace as the self-communication of God in the Son and the Spirit, he was able to keep the Trinity within the existential horizon of Christian experience.¹³

Another methodological choice made with respect to the relationship between doctrine and experience, or theology and experience, depends on whether experience is construed as a source of doctrine or as expressive of doctrine. The interpretation of the so-called Wesleyan quadrilateral is a good example of this. How do scripture, tradition, experience, and reason function in the adjudication of theological claims? Is experience another (perhaps even equal) source of doctrine relative to scripture and tradition? Many contemporary theologies would answer in the affirmative. The recent statement from the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* seems to offer a corrective: “Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason.”¹⁴

¹⁰See Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), p. 52. Also, it is a misreading of Schleiermacher to disconnect the religious *a priori* from its mediation via specific religious traditions and communities. Hence, the import of Schleiermacher’s comment when he attempted to isolate the religious *a priori*: “All we have to do is, to the best of our ability, to describe this religious feeling of nature in general, apart from the specifically Christian content which is always attached to it” (H. R. Mackintosh, ed., *The Christian Faith* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1928, 1976], p. 140).

¹¹Mackintosh, *The Christian Faith*, p. 76 (§15).

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 738 (§170).

¹³Hence also the significance of his famous trinitarian axiom that requires the connection between the dogma and the experience of grace: “*The ‘economic’ Trinity is the ‘immanent’ Trinity and the ‘immanent’ Trinity is the ‘economic’ Trinity*” (Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* [New York: Crossroad, 1970, 1997], p. 22).

¹⁴The full context for the quotation follows, from the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* [in the United States], 2000, §104, under the heading “Theological Guidelines: Sources and Criteria”:

“As United Methodists, we have an obligation to bear a faithful Christian witness to Jesus

How religious experience is understood will influence the nature of the dialogue. My suspicion is that on the Pentecostal side it is the first model of religious experience, as specific sorts of human operation, that carries the most freight. Pentecostal theologian Steven Land developed this perspective, for example, in his use of the Edwardsian and Wesleyan notion of religious affections in his theological account of Pentecostal spirituality. He described such affections as “deep emotions” that are objective, relational, and dispositional in character.¹⁵ How a Catholic understanding of experience may interface with this remains to be seen.

One more consideration needs to be noted. There are accounts of experience (especially at the popular, commonsense level) that consider experience to be “all uncritical cognition.”¹⁶ Once reflection enters, experience ceases to be experience; it then moves to a second order of human engagement. I am not very enthusiastic about this rendering of experience. Why should experience exclude the intellectual dimension of human being? Would not a more integrated notion of experience that embraces the intellectual, affective, and volitional aspects of human apprehension and action be more convincing?

Christ, the living reality at the center of the Church's life and witness To fulfill this obligation, we reflect critically on our biblical and theological inheritance, striving to express faithfully the witness we make in our own time

“Two considerations are central to this endeavor the sources from which we derive our theological affirmations and the criteria by which we assess the adequacy of our understanding and witness

“Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason

“Scripture is primary, revealing the Word of God ‘so far as it is necessary for our salvation’ Therefore, our theological task, in both its critical and constructive aspects, focuses on disciplined study of the Bible

“To aid his study of the Bible and deepen his understanding of faith, Wesley drew on Christian tradition, in particular the Patristic writings, the ecumenical creeds, the teachings of the Reformers, and the literature of contemporary spirituality

“Thus, tradition provides both a source and a measure of authentic Christian witness, though its authority derives from its faithfulness to the biblical message

“The Christian witness, even when grounded in Scripture and mediated by tradition, is ineffectual unless understood and appropriated by the individual To become our witness, it must make sense in terms of our own reason and experience

“For Wesley, a cogent account of the Christian faith required the use of reason, both to understand Scripture and to relate the biblical message to wider fields of knowledge He looked for confirmations of the biblical witness in human experience, especially the experiences of regeneration and sanctification, but also in the ‘common sense’ knowledge of everyday experience

“The interaction of these sources and criteria in Wesley's own theology furnishes a guide for our continuing theological task as United Methodists In that task Scripture, as the constitutive witness to the wellsprings of our faith, occupies a place of primary authority among these theological sources

“In practice, theological reflection may also find its point of departure in tradition, experience, or rational analysis What matters most is that all four guidelines be brought to bear in faithful, serious, theological consideration Insights arising from serious study of the Scriptures and tradition enrich contemporary experience Imaginative and critical thought enables us to understand better the Bible and our common Christian history”

¹⁵Steven Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield, U.K. Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp 131–136

¹⁶Gelpi, *The Turn to Experience*, p 2

II. *The Place of Experience in Neo-Scholastic Catholic Theology of Grace*

In this and the following section I distinguish between neoscholastic Catholic theology and classical Catholic spirituality.¹⁷ The reason will soon be evident. Experience fares far better in the latter category than in the former. Since the subject matter is vast, I will confine myself to the theology of grace (with some pneumatology mixed in) and to scholastic and neoscholastic developments, because those are the ones that dominated the second millennium from the twelfth century and even more clearly from the thirteenth century of Catholic theology until Vatican II. Since Pentecostalism (as well as its Holiness predecessors) arose during the period of the modern Catholic Church, following Vatican I (1869–1870), it would be helpful to explore the theology behind a Catholic response to the Pentecostal emphasis on the experience of the Holy Spirit. As suggested, I am presuming the first model of religious experience on the Pentecostal side, one within the realm of the religious affections as a witness to the presence of the Spirit in the Christian life and in the Christian assembly.

For Catholic neoscholastic theology—that dominant form of theology among Catholics at the time of Pentecostal beginnings—the category of experience was not an operative one for the theology of grace and the doctrine of justification, although the delineation of the various species of grace was formidably explicated. At one level this may seem odd. Consider the different categories of grace that in effect detail the accompaniment of God's presence and aid in every stage of the Christian life. In traditional Catholic scholastic theology, grace is divided into two main categories: actual grace and sanctifying grace.¹⁸ The distinction is important, especially in regard to our evaluation of experience. When a Catholic is asked whether one is in a state of grace—the Catholic equivalent to the Pentecostal/Evangelical inquiry as to whether one is saved—the answer is pertinent to the latter category of grace. Is one in a state of sanctifying grace (which is always habitual)? The Catholic cannot answer in the affirmative with absolute certitude, for doctrinal reasons, as we shall see. Has one experienced an

¹⁷The relationship between faith and Christian experience can be considered from the perspectives of what the Fathers say about grace, the Holy Spirit, and mysticism. Of course, this did not employ the categories used by the scholastic theology that I am using and that to some extent help to frame Catholic doctrine on the matter, nor do I think that "experience" was an operative conception in their work. Nevertheless, the Fathers did present Christian doctrine with a certain spiritual intimacy, one might say, in their presentation of the saving mysteries of the faith, a truth that has long distinguished them from subsequent theologians, especially those of the "schools."

¹⁸Divisions abound according to the precise distinctions of the scholastics. They include uncreated grace (*gratia increata*) and created grace (*gratia creatia*), the grace of God the Creator (*gratia Dei Creatoris*) and the grace of Christ the Redeemer (*gratia Christi Redemptoris*), external grace (*gratia externa*) and internal grace (*gratia interna*), and the charismatic gifts of grace (*gratia gratis data*—graces freely given) and the grace of sanctification (*gratia gratum faciens*—grace making gracious), this latter category is divided into sanctifying or habitual grace (*gratia sanctificans* or *gratia habitualis*) and actual grace (*gratia actualis*), and operative grace (*gratia operans*) and cooperative grace (*gratia cooperans*). Actual grace entails further distinctions, which gave rise to the great controversies of grace (the disputes *de auxilium*) in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries waged largely by Dominicans (in support of the Banezian position) and Jesuits (the Molinists and Congruists). For a partial list of types of grace, see Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1952), pp. 220–222.

actual grace? The answer here may be more forthcoming, although it may not bear on the certainty of the answer to the prior question. All of this requires some explanation.

First, there is the matter of dogma. The *Decree on Justification* of the Council of Trent (Sixth Session, 1547) is explicit about two related matters that bear on this question of certainty. Chapter IX, titled “Against the Vain Confidence of Heretics,” states the following:

For as no pious person ought to doubt the mercy of God, the merit of Christ and the virtue and efficacy of the sacraments, so each one, when he considers himself and his own weakness and indisposition, may have fear and apprehension concerning his own grace, since no one can know with the certainty of faith, which cannot be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God.¹⁹

The second, from chapter XII, is similar: “No one . . . ought in regard to the sacred mystery of predestination . . . presume as to state with absolute certainty that he is among the number of the predestined.”²⁰ The latter may not elicit much opposition from Pentecostals with their Arminian tendencies, but the former stands in sharp contrast to both the Reformation assurance of faith and the Wesleyan and Pentecostal emphasis on the witness of the Spirit as the confirmation of faith. Wesley (and many Pentecostals) can certainly speak of “an assurance that I am *now* in a state of salvation”²¹ and describe the newborn Christian as one who “feels . . . [and] is inwardly sensible of, the graces which the Spirit of God works in his heart.”²² It seems that the decree of Trent would exclude the theological interpretation of such assurance based upon an experience believed to be the witness of the Spirit.

In order to proceed with accuracy, one needs to distinguish between the dogmatic decree and theologies that attempt to explicate it. It just so happens that the dominant trend in much neoscholastic theology, promoted as it was by the Jesuits, was Molinist in orientation.²³ This meant that the council’s decree was interpreted as excluding the experience of grace as counting toward any certainty that one was in the state of grace. More than that, it even discounted that there could be a psychological consciousness of grace. Grace was understood to be an ontological condition not accessible to natural human awareness. As for supernatural human awareness, that was an ontological condition appropriate to the beatific vision but not for the wayfarer’s state in this life.

The theological position described applies to sanctifying grace, that habitual

¹⁹*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, tr. H. J. Schroeder (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, 1978), p. 35.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 38.

²¹John Wesley, “To [His Brother] the Revd. Samuel Wesley, Jun.,” April 4, 1739, in Frank Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 25, *Letters I, 1721-1739* (Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon Press [Oxford University Press], 1980), p. 622; emphasis in original.

²²John Wesley, “The New Birth,” II, 4, in Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 2, *Sermons II, 34-70* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1985), p. 193.

²³Much of what follows is drawn from an excellent essay by Francis Clark, “Grace-Experience in the Roman Catholic Tradition,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 25 (October, 1974): 352-372.

grace by which a person is intrinsically transformed by the righteousness of Christ in justification. One cannot be certain that one is in a state of sanctifying grace, but the Molinists extended this to actual grace as well. Actual graces are those transient motions, prevenient (operative—solely God’s working) and subsequent (cooperative—eliciting and sustaining our volitional efforts), by which one is illuminated and strengthened by the supernatural modality of God’s presence and action. The end of actual grace is to establish one in the habitual mode of sanctifying grace. Trent’s decree does not exclude awareness of actual grace. However, Molinism tended toward an extrinsic account of actual grace, thus delimiting any certainty that one could even experience the inspiration and strength of the Holy Spirit. Instead of positing the working of actual grace as a created influx in the soul, and therefore intrinsic to the human subject, Molina’s theory understood actual grace as extrinsically investing the vital human acts of mind and will with a supernatural significance tending toward salvation and glory.²⁴

Although much more can be said on this issue—such as about the debate over sufficient and efficient grace—the point is that Catholic neoscholastic theology, for reasons of theological interpretation, did not provide much room for the experiential dimensions of grace. This was not the only voice in Catholic theology, and it became a minority voice in Catholic theology by the time of Vatican II. Nevertheless, it was influential for a period and does raise questions about the constructive value of experience for Catholic faith and theology. I will identify two issues I think pertinent to this dialogue.

First, the previously mentioned decree of the Council of Trent combined with the traditional division of grace into actual grace and sanctifying grace does raise the possibility of the following. A person may indeed experience the working of God in one’s heart and life and yet not be in a state of sanctifying grace. Even if one were not delimited by Molinist reservations about the grace experience to begin with, one could not be certain that an inspiration of the Spirit, a strengthening of the will, or an enlightenment of the mind was an indication that one was in a state of sanctifying grace, that is, a state of justification. It could, however, be affirmed in the realm of moral probability, not absolute certitude.²⁵

Second, if this is true with regard to actual graces, which are directly intended for the process of sanctification (read justification as well), then it is also true with regard to the charismatic graces and gifts (the *gratia gratis data*). Such graces and gifts, most clearly associated with Spirit baptism, also offer no indication of the certainty of sanctifying grace. Let me be more precise. Indications of sanctification there may be, but certainty or the assurance of sanctifying grace there is not. As one would expect, the evaluation of grace experience in this theological horizon would not be as high as it is in those traditions where grace experience functions as the assurance of the presence and working of the Holy Spirit and is indicative of the state of the believer’s relationship with God.

²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 361–364.

²⁵Thomas Aquinas acknowledges that one might know that he or she has grace by revelation, by certainty, or by conjecture from signs. The third is the normal possibility for most. These inner signs include delighting in God and despising worldly things (ST Ia IIae Q 112 a5).

As we shall now see, this does not necessarily inhibit the attention given to the spiritual life over the course of the history of the Catholic Church.

III. Experience in Traditional Catholic Spiritual Theology

If we were left with only these latter-day neoscholastic theological constructions, we could not be faulted for having rather dim prospects concerning the experiential dimensions of Catholic faith. Yet, there also exists a two-millennia-old tradition of spirituality and spiritual theology—inclusive of both mystical and ascetical theology—in which the desire for God and the experience of God are rather forthrightly presumed. This, of course, is too vast a field for this essay. I will simply highlight a theme that informs much traditional Catholic spirituality, namely, its anti-enthusiast bent.

It is fairly safe to say that the Church’s caution with respect to enthusiasm began early. Whether it was the pneumatic Monantists or the rigorist Donatists, the hierarchical Church attempted to hold them in check. Some would even point to Paul’s Corinthian correspondence as evidence for the need of such pastoral vigilance. Perhaps the most relevant example of enthusiasm for this dialogue would be the aforementioned case of Wesley and especially his experience of May 24, 1738, when his heart was strangely warmed in Aldersgate Chapel. Ronald Knox, whose classic work *Enthusiasm* is still a great resource, identifies the situation clearly: “But the question at issue is not so much whether he was in fact converted as whether he thought he was converted, and continued to think he had been converted.”²⁶

I do not propose to engage in the nuances of Wesley scholarship over Wesley’s own evaluation of this experience at the time and throughout his life but simply to state the enthusiast claim (as defined by Knox). Enthusiasm suggests that the religious affection experienced by Wesley is evidence of conversion. Hence, it may also lead to the judgment that, prior to Aldersgate, Wesley was not a regenerate Christian despite his baptism, ordination, cultivation of holy desires, and attendance to the means of grace. Perhaps those events in Wesley’s pre-Aldersgate life and ministry were evidence of prevenient grace but not justifying grace. Furthermore, the necessity for such experience of the religious affections as evidence of the witness of the Spirit—leaving open for now whether such religious affections are in fact the witness of the Spirit—becomes the defining issue between religious enthusiasm and the evaluation of experience in traditional Catholic spirituality.

As already stated, the parameters for Christian experience in Catholic spirituality are considerably more liberal than within the neoscholastic horizon reviewed previously. Nevertheless, the Catholic interpretative framework for experience would be considerably different from one informed by Reformation theology and culture, as Wesley’s certainly was.²⁷ Experience of actual graces or

²⁶Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1950; reprint, Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1983), p. 436.

²⁷Here I do not intend to deny the influence upon Wesley of medieval Catholic spirituality or that of the Eastern Fathers. Albert Outler expressed it thus: “The unique mixture of theological no-

the *charismata* indeed may be had, but they may not be interpreted as assurance relative to the quest for justification or regeneration—this latter having already taken place in sacramental baptism. It is the role and evaluation of such experiences in traditional spirituality that is of interest.

While there are many different schools of spirituality in the Catholic Church in which theological differences play no small part—for example, how one understands efficacious grace—it is helpful to build on a traditional distinction in order to get at the matter of experience. The spiritual life—and, hence, spiritual theology—unites both the ascetical and mystical. It would be simplistic and misleading to suggest that ascetical theology concerns human effort and mystical theology embraces God's work. Although different opinions exist on the proper sphere of each,²⁸ this unity in distinction identifies the interrelationship between the necessary growth in virtue (both acquired and infused) and the graces received in prayer and through the gifts of the Holy Spirit where God is experimentally known. Even prayer entails several gradations—vocal, meditative, affective, and contemplative—leading to deeper union with God. Also, the gifts of the Holy Spirit refer not to the *charismata* but to infused habits—the *sacrum septenarium* of wisdom, knowledge, understanding, counsel, piety, fortitude, fear of God—by which one is rendered docile to the supernatural inspirations and workings of the Holy Spirit. At all of these levels, but especially at the mystical, a wealth of Christian experience is present. A few examples will suffice.

First, I must emphasize that the entire journey of the Christian life, one that indeed tends toward Christian perfection, is supernatural in nature. Jordan Aumann has spoken of the “supernatural organism” of the Christian life in which the “subject is the soul; the formal principle of supernatural life is sanctifying grace; the faculties are the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and the operations are the acts of those virtues and gifts.”²⁹ Second, R. Garrigou-Lagrange emphasized the necessity of infused contemplation for a full life in the Spirit in which “the Holy Ghost must, like the master of the apprentice, directly intervene, take possession of our intellect and will, and communicate to them His manner of thinking and of loving.”³⁰

Third, the level of experience in the religious affections is not always identical to the actual mystical state. For Garrigou-Lagrange, “[n]either the consciousness of being in a state of grace nor a sense of delight” in the presence of

tions thus far accumulated was now to be smelted and forged into an integral and dynamic theology in which Eastern notions of *synthesis* (dynamic interaction between God's will and man's) were fused with classical Protestant *sole fide* and *sola Scriptura*, and with the Moravian stress upon “inner feeling” (Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1964], p. 14). I simply want to highlight that justification by faith was at issue for him at Aldersgate. To what was he listening when his heart was strangely warmed but Martin Luther's preface to Paul's epistle to the Romans?

²⁸Jordan Aumann prefers simply to speak of spiritual theology rather than the division between ascetical and mystical, precisely because of the lack of agreement on the nature of the distinctions. See his *Spiritual Theology* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1987), pp. 15–16.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 66.

³⁰R[éginald] Garrigou-Lagrange, *Christian Perfection and Contemplation according to St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John of the Cross*, tr. M. Timothea Doyle (St. Louis, MO, and London: B. Herder Books Co., 1937), p. 282.

God was necessary for infused contemplation.³¹ This does not rule out touches of God, consolations, or even extraordinary raptures and revelation, some of which may be more properly identified as *gratia gratis datae*. Aumann has been more willing to state that infused contemplation may give moral certitude that one is in a state of grace, but this is by no means absolute or infallible.³² The principle concern throughout is that growth in faith, hope, and love (the infused theological virtues) takes place amid consolations and desolations, dark nights and spiritual espousals. Religious affections there may be, but they are not the measure of the spiritual life. More accurately, mystical experiences are at a much deeper level than sheer affectivity.

We should recognize that such typical traditional explorations of the spiritual life focus on progressive stages of spiritual growth. Most follow the three-fold path of the purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways. Infused contemplation is usually operative in the third, more advanced, stage. Mental prayer, that is, discursive meditation, is appropriate to the purgative stage, while affective prayer is characteristic of the illuminative way where one moves from an intellectual focus to devout affections and acts of the will.³³ Therefore, the nuances of infused contemplation are more attendant at the advanced stages of the spiritual life than at its beginnings.

Overall, in traditional Catholic spirituality there is more openness to experience. Nevertheless, there is also a great deal of caution about the nature and quality of experience. One expects to get beyond the movement of the affections even though the language of the theology of grace often speaks of the motions of grace. Here again, however, its interpretive horizon is more ontological than psychological. All experience, even the miraculous, extraordinary, and charismatic, is considered to be inferior to the grace, infused virtues, and gifts that sanctify. The door is indeed open to experience but with an intentionality that subordinates it to the goal of Christian perfection, which is divine charity.

IV. The Turn to Experience in Contemporary Catholic Theology of Grace

That Catholic theology has retrieved experience as an operative and constructive category for interpreting the faith is now a given. Gelpi's perusal of this turn identifies a smattering of this now-dominant tendency in the work of Edward Schillebeeckx, liberation and process theologies, transcendental Thomism, and his own triadic construct of experience. One could add more. I propose to note the configuration of that turn in two of the Catholic theological giants of the twentieth century, Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Specifically, I will focus only on that portion of their work that represents a break with previous neoscholastic categories and its implications for Catholic faith and theology with respect to this dialogue. As we shall see, the evaluation of experience is

³¹Ibid., p. 263.

³²Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*, p. 334.

³³See Adolphe Tanquary, *The Spiritual Life: A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology*, 2d rev. ed. (Tournai Desclée, n.d.), p. 461. Tanquary follows this division of prayer correlated with the three ways

much more positive, but the caution remains even if configured differently.

The major shift from neoscholasticism in the theology of grace that informed the work of Rahner and many other Catholic theologians had to do with the relationship between created grace and uncreated grace. Uncreated grace is the indwelling of the divine persons in the just person, that is, the justified soul. The very presence of the Trinity in the souls of the just is indeed one of the fruits of grace. It is also a new presence that is given, beyond the universal presence of God in all things, by power, essence, and immensity. The question arises as to whether uncreated grace precedes or is a consequence of created grace. The traditional answer was the latter. One receives uncreated grace because one possesses created grace. This means that God's self-bestowal or self-communication is dependent upon the "entitative modification and determination of man [which] is created grace."³⁴ Because one is created anew in Christ, the Holy Spirit indwells one.

Rahner and others found this thesis problematic for both historical and systematic reasons. The testimony of scripture and the Greek Fathers seems to suggest quite the reverse, namely, "the created gifts of grace as a *consequence* of God's substantial communication to justified men."³⁵ Systematically, it did not distinguish the trinitarian persons in their relationship to the just person except for the elevated intentionality of the subject in knowledge and love. It also made the relationship between "the 'interior Trinity' and the Trinity of the economy of salvation" more decisive for the theology of grace, eventually leading to a renewal in both trinitarian theology and the theology of the Holy Spirit. With this systematic groundwork laid, the inclusion of experience as a constructive moment in theology was next on the agenda, and Rahner indeed followed through.

Although much of Rahner's work focused on the transcendental and therefore unthematic dimension of experience in the field of fundamental theology, I will concentrate on his development in the realm of spirituality and religious experience. In a series of essays now collected in Volume XVI of *Theological Investigations*,³⁶ Rahner unpacked the notion of the experience of the Spirit as the source of theology. Especially pertinent to this dialogue is his essay, "Religious Enthusiasm and the Experience of Grace," motivated in no small part by the advent of the charismatic renewal in the Catholic Church. After noting the school in neoscholastic theology that denied that "the Spirit enters the realm of human consciousness,"³⁷ Rahner argued for a new theory of grace (as just rehearsed), in which grace is "the sanctifying and justifying self-communication of the Spirit of God himself" that "divinises man and bestows upon him a share in the holi-

³⁴See Karl Rahner, "Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1, *God, Christ, Mary, and Grace*, tr. and intro. Cornelius Ernst (London: Darton, Longman & Todd; Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1961; 2nd ed., 1965 [orig.: *Schriften zur Theologie* I (Einsiedeln, Zurich, and Cologne: Benziger, 1954)]), p. 324. For an excellent account of the scholastic debate, see Robert W. Gleason, *The Indwelling Spirit* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1966).

³⁵Rahner, "Some Implications," p. 322; emphasis in original.

³⁶Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 16, *Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology*, tr. David Morland (London: Darton, Longman & Todd; New York: Crossroad, 1979 [orig.: 1st part of *Schriften zur Theologie*, XII [Einsiedeln: Benziger]).

³⁷Karl Rahner, "Religious Enthusiasm and the Experience of Grace," in *ibid.*, p. 36.

ness of God.”³⁸

The consequences of Rahner’s new construction of the theology of grace lead to a positive evaluation of the meaning of religious enthusiasm that he explicated according to the following rubric: “Religious enthusiasm is, as it were, mysticism in ordinary dress.”³⁹ Therefore, religious enthusiasm can be “a genuine experience of *divine* grace,” as long as one realizes that the psychological phenomena that attend such experiences and are “essential for their occurrence” ought not to be identified “in their brute reality as manifestations of the divine Spirit.”⁴⁰ In other words, discernment is required both at the ontological level of transcendence of the human subject relative to particular, categorical, historical experiences (a theme that is the stuff of Rahner’s philosophical and theological anthropology) and in the realm of spiritual discernment so characteristic of the history of spirituality as a whole and especially of his own Ignatian tradition.⁴¹ In regard to the former, Rahner developed his theorem of the “supernatural existential” as God’s universal and antecedent offer of self-communication as a gift by which human transcendental is supernaturally elevated, thus providing the possibility of experiencing “the God of absolute closeness and immediacy.”⁴² It also provides the basis for various experiences of religious enthusiasm, including those that are consequent upon a direct “Christian communication of justifying grace,”⁴³ the subject of our interest in this dialogue with Pentecostals.

The extraordinary nature of Rahner’s claim should not be underestimated—at the time and in the context that it was written. Two aspects of his proposal should be noted. First, the corollary employed is mysticism. In this respect enthusiasm is a form of mysticism. One might debate Rahner on this point. However, it is a logical hermeneutic to deploy from within the Catholic tradition. He still distinguished “genuine mysticism” from enthusiasm, but his turn to experience and “everyday mysticism” permits the embrace of enthusiasm far more liberally than the traditional Catholic spirituality rehearsed previously. Second, Rahner retained a criterion by which to validate and discriminate among the human and cultural elements that characterize religious enthusiasm and all forms of religious experience in order to “hold fast to what is good” (1 Thes. 5:21). This principle is the notion of “mediated immediacy,” developed elsewhere in

³⁸Ibid., p. 40.

³⁹Ibid., p. 43.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 44; emphasis in the original. The same distinction is made in the following quotation, which in no way diminishes the importance of the affirmation: “we can say: all expressions of religious enthusiasm, whenever they are to some degree genuine and in earnest, are spiritual events in which the grace filled transcendence of man comes plainly to the fore and in which the subject freely experiences God as both the ultimate goal of this transcendence and the very ground of the experience itself. We do not mean that these phenomena of religious enthusiasm consist *only* in such grace-filled experiences of transcendence and in nothing else besides. This is certainly not true of them as it might be asserted of genuine mysticism” (ibid., p. 45; emphasis in original).

⁴¹For the latter, one should read Rahner’s essays, “Modern Piety and the Experience of Retreats,” in Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 16, pp. 135–155; and “The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola,” in his *The Dynamic Element in the Church* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1964), pp. 84–170.

⁴²Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1978, 1995), pp. 128–129.

⁴³Rahner, “Religious Enthusiasm,” p. 41.

his work.⁴⁴ Simply put, this means that the presence of God is mediated to the subject through its own finite faculties and categorical (and therefore historical) horizon. God may be at work in a religious experience without ascribing the entirety of the experience to God.

In turning to Balthasar we gain another perspective on experience. He shared with Rahner the importance of the patristic and medieval witness to experience, especially in the doctrine of the spiritual senses.⁴⁵ Perhaps the clearest perspective that Balthasar offered is the following: "Christian experience can mean only the progressive growth of one's own existence into Christ's existence, on the basis of Christ's continuing action in taking shape in the believer: 'until Christ has taken shape in you' (Gal 4.19)."⁴⁶ Therefore, Christian experience cannot be divorced from "the form of revelation, initially 'seen' in faith" and to which the believer surrenders and entrusts oneself.⁴⁷ For Balthasar, this resulted in his own version of assurance that he described in the following terms. It is a confirmation of that form "within this existence of self-surrender as being true and correct, and this gives the believer a new form of Christian certitude which can be called 'Christian experience'."⁴⁸

For Balthasar, this opening to experience was fairly crucial for his theology, one that derived from its center in Jesus Christ, the form of Christian revelation, and the basis of his own project as an exercise in theological aesthetics. Embedded within the interiority of Christian consciousness, the experience is not psychological in nature but is a "dogmatic" experience" involving the witness the Spirit speaks to us⁴⁹ and results in an "attunement"⁵⁰ to God and "a new conaturality of the soul with divine things."⁵¹ With Rahner, Balthasar held to the mediated modality of Christian experience, both in terms of our "own intentional human acts" and of the divine initiative to communicate through the mediation of the creaturely even to the point of the incarnation.⁵² This, however, does not diminish the extent to which the human being endowed by the Holy Spirit experiences God. The Christian receives "the sensorium with which to

⁴⁴Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, pp. 83–84.

⁴⁵Both Rahner and Balthasar explored this doctrine. For Rahner, see "The 'Spiritual Senses' according to Origen" and "The Doctrine of the 'Spiritual Senses' in the Middle Ages," in Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 16, pp. 81–103 and 104–134, respectively. Balthasar explored the issues (cognizant of Rahner's work) in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1, *Seeing the Form*, tr. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, ed. Joseph Fessio and John Riches (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1982 [orig.: *Herrlichkeit: Eine theologische Ästhetik*, I: *Schau der Gestalt* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1961; 2nd ed., 1967)]), pp. 257–301, 365–425. The main difference between the two is that Balthasar did not see the object of the spiritual senses as the *Deus Nudus* (pp. 369–370). Apart from their contested interpretations of Origen, therein lies their different understanding of mysticism and Christian experience. The "form" of such (as we shall see) was much more integral to the object of the experience for Balthasar than for Rahner.

⁴⁶Balthasar, *Seeing the Form*, p. 224.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 231.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 251.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 251.

perceive God,” to have a “taste for God,” even to develop an “understanding for God’s own taste.”⁵³ Beyond activity and passivity, the presence and work of the Holy Spirit appears to the soul as a gift—hence, the sensibility of passivity—and as an impression that becomes “the ex-pression of the soul itself.”⁵⁴

Three major characteristics further informed Balthasar’s description of Christian experience. First, the Christian experience of God is very much an ecclesial experience. This is not just because it embraces “the sensory gestures of the liturgy, which includes both Sacrament and Word,”⁵⁵ but also because he employed an archetypal model of experience. By this he meant that Christian experience is derivative with respect to the first witnesses of the faith—a derived participation in the archetypal biblical experience.⁵⁶ Christian experience proceeds by the analogy of faith in the archetypal and is essentially an imitative experience of faith. This sense of derivation and imitation does not constrain the believer’s own “act of faith, but rather perfects it.”⁵⁷ Within the biblical and Christian Scriptures archetype, Balthasar identified four traditions: the Petrine (Word, Sacrament, and hierarchical), the Pauline (charismatic and visionary with respect to mission), the Johannine (contemplative love), and the Marian (spousal and ecclesial in which the bodily and visible is the occasion for the spiritual).⁵⁸ The diversity is complementary and intended to capture the catholic fullness of the experience of God.

Second, the archetypal characteristic of Christian experience caused Balthasar to seek an integration between mysticism and basic Christian experience. For example, Balthasar did not separate the charismata from the gifts of the Holy Spirit, with the latter oriented to the virtues, mysticism, and sanctification and the former understood as gifts for service and the edification of others. Rather, both are aspects of true ecclesial mysticism. They are not intended just for the individual (his critique of classical spirituality).⁵⁹

Third, the Christian experience of God is not the possession of the believer but a movement into the kenotic humiliation and self-renunciation of Christ. The experience of faith becomes the nonexperience of faith. Here, Balthasar drew on the classical tradition of the dark night, what he identified as the “‘experience of non-experience’, or an experience of the negative, privative mode of experience.”⁶⁰ Here, Rahner would also have agreed. Their consensus on the matter reveals that the lingering caution about experience that is still present even in their theological edifices depends upon a strong use of that category. Rahner can speak for himself:

But we know—when we let ourselves go in this experience of spirit, when

⁵³Ibid., p. 249.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 255.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 422.

⁵⁶Aidan Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad: A Guide through Balthasar’s Aesthetics* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), p. 33.

⁵⁷Balthasar, *Seeing the Form*, p. 308.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 350–365.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 407–411.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 413; emphasis in original.

the tangible and assignable, the relishable element disappears, when everything takes on the taste of death and destruction, or when everything disappears as if in an inexpressible, as it were white, colorless and intangible beatitude—then in actual fact it is not merely the spirit but the Holy Spirit who is at work in us. Then is the hour of his grace.⁶¹

V Implications for Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue

The evaluation of experience in Catholic faith and theology has undergone a significant shift since Vatican II. The theologians reviewed here give evidence of that change, as do the documents produced by the council. Allesandro Maggiolini has demonstrated that the inclusion of experience in *Dei verbum* (the dogmatic constitution on divine revelation) contrasts sharply with early-twentieth-century magisterial condemnations of modernism and its notion of immanent experience as the source of revelation.⁶²

Closer to home, the International Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue also acknowledged the importance of experience and even agreed on a definition in No. 12 of its second Final Report (1977–82):

By experience the dialogue understands the process or event by which one comes to a personal awareness of God. The experience of God's 'presence' or 'absence' can be a matter of *conscious awareness*. At the same time, and at a deeper level, there remains the constant abiding faith-conviction that God's loving presence is revealed in the person of his Son, through the Holy Spirit.⁶³

Most likely, it is not presumptuous to anticipate agreement by both sides on the relation between faith and experience expressed succinctly by McDonnell in his review of experience in Bernard of Clairvaux: "Faith and experience are not enemies. . . . Faith gives birth to experience; faith norms experience. But experience gives another dimension of actuality and firmness to faith. Experience is another way of knowing. What is given to experience is not taken away from faith, because experience exists only in faith."⁶⁴ Is it then the case that we have arrived at a convergence?

⁶¹Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol 3, *The Theology of the Spiritual Life*, tr Karl-H and Boniface Kruger (Baltimore, MD Helicon Press, London Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967 [orig *Schriften zur Theologie Zur Theologie des geistlichen Lebens* (Einsiedeln, Zurich, and Cologne Benziger Verlag, 1964)]), pp 88–89

⁶²Allesandro Maggiolini, "Magisterial Teaching on Experience in the Twentieth Century From the Modernist Crisis to the Second Vatican Council," *Communio International Catholic Review* 23 (Summer, 1996) 225–243. See especially no 8 of *Dei verbum*, where it speaks of the growth of tradition "It comes through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts (cf Lk 2 19 and 51) It comes from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience" (Austin Flannery, ed, *Vatican Council II Vol 1 The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, new rev ed [Northport, NY Costello Publishing Co, Dublin Dominican Publications, 1975, 1986, 1992, 1996], p 74)

⁶³Emphasis in original Published in *Pneuma* 12 (Fall, 1990) 99, also see "Final Report of the Dialogue (1977–1982)," in *Information Service* 55 (1984/II-III), pp 72–80

⁶⁴Kilian McDonnell, "Spirit and Experience in Bernard of Clairvaux," *Theological Studies* 58 (March, 1997) 16

I am sure that continued dialogue will provide an answer. It is worth noting that such dialogue has already taken place within the Catholic Church by virtue of its own warm reception of the charismatic renewal. The numerous statements by popes and bishops’ conferences on the renewal are evidence of this, not to mention the documents produced by the renewal itself.⁶⁵ Catholic charismatic theologians have also attempted to integrate the baptism in the Holy Spirit, theological reflection, and traditional spirituality.⁶⁶ A few comments will suffice.

As already stated, this essay is concerned with experience in Christian life overall from a Catholic perspective. As Pentecostals are concerned with what it means to become a Christian—per the frequent Pentecostal query as to whether all Catholics are Christian, namely, are experientially regenerate—attention also needs to be directed to Christian conversion and initiation. Only recently, with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), has large-scale focus been given to the beginning stage of Christian Catholic life. This as we know recalls the practice of the ancient church. Nevertheless, the pattern of experience reviewed previously would still matter even for Christian initiation. Taking this into consideration, it is safe to say that an overall view of experience in Catholic theology and spirituality would embrace the following points as significant:

1. Catholic experience will have different connotations than that of Pentecostals due to the distinctiveness of a Catholic theology of grace.
2. Even with the new and proper emphasis on the priority of uncreated grace as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, created grace will still figure importantly in the Catholic position—understood as the intrinsic transformation of the person’s actual humanity.
3. The witness of the Spirit and assurance will not depend on the prospect of the certainty of salvation or the state of grace.
4. The expectation of Christian experience, even for the neophyte, is a welcome emphasis for Catholic faith and sacramental practice.

⁶⁵The series of Malines documents are of particular interest. Produced by international teams of theologians and pastoral leaders involved with the renewal, they have addressed many important issues related to our discussion. One example will suffice. *Malines Document 1* from 1974 devotes a number of paragraphs to faith experience and experience of the Spirit. It is strongly supportive of such, but, like the theologians reviewed in this essay, it is careful to make important distinctions. E.g., it distinguishes between experiences of the Spirit and self-experience, although it is difficult to determine where one begins and the other ends. It even proposes something of a formula: “Self-experience and the experience of the Holy Spirit cannot be disassociated, but neither can they be confused” (IV-E-1). On the matter of experience and emotion, it clearly distinguishes religious experience as the act of God in a human person that is “not primarily concerned with emotion or emotional elevation” (II-G-7) (“Malines Document 1,” in Kilian McDonnell, ed., *Presence, Power, Praise: Documents on the Charismatic Renewal*, vol. 3, *International Documents* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1980], pp. 43 and 33, respectively). In both these respects, it basically follows the new turn to experience in Rahner and Balthasar as reviewed here. God’s grace is a matter of human experience in faith but must be properly qualified.

⁶⁶Two of the earliest and finest works still in this regard are Donald Gelpi, *Pentecostalism: A Theological Viewpoint* (New York: Paulist Press, 1971); and Edward D. O’Connor, *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria, 1971).

5. The tradition of mysticism and spirituality will still bear on Christian experience by calling the believer to sanctity and maturity in Christ.
6. All Christian experience has an ecclesial shape in which the fruits of experience are measured by one's vocation and mission in Christ.
7. The blossoming of Christian experience does not exclude the leading of the Spirit into companionship with Christ in his paschal mystery wherein faith might experience the nonexperience of God.
8. The *charismata* inform and energize Christian experience with a view to personal holiness, ecclesial communion, and apostolic service.

In my judgment, Pentecostals will find in this pattern of Christian experience much that is hospitable to their own spiritual sensibilities. As already mentioned, Land's account of Pentecostal spirituality underscored religious affections as being "objective, relational, and dispositional in character"—a second-order reflection on first-order Pentecostal experience. It is not too difficult to identify in this account some perennial Catholic concerns that inform both traditional and more contemporary understandings of grace and spirituality. Pentecostals will have to negotiate from their own (various at times) doctrinal matrix, as do Catholics—for example, the import of the witness of the Spirit *vis-à-vis* the certainty of salvation. Nevertheless, the processive nature of Christian experience is present in both traditions in which the *relation* to God effects a *dispositional*—call it *habitual*—posture on the part of the believer in an ongoing pilgrimage of Christian growth and maturation. Even this would not be without an *objective* aspect that each tradition has not been hesitant to name, for example, Pentecostal Spirit baptism (and entire sanctification for Wesleyan-Holiness Pentecostals) and Catholic sacramental graces. Sacramental and liturgical as well as mystical and charismatic dimensions of Christian experience require further exploration.

Other aspects of Christian experience will engender further dialogues between Catholics and Pentecostals. Although I have not focused on the example of experience in Christian initiation in the ancient church, it would not be inappropriate to close with the following quote from St. John Chrysostom from his fourth *Baptismal Instruction* as to what we might expect of the one baptized: "who, by their faith in Christ, had put off like an old cloak the burden of their sins, those who had been set free from their error and been illumined by the light of justification, had put on this new and shining cloak, this royal robe. This is why he said: *If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the former things have passed away; behold, they are all made new.*"⁶⁷

⁶⁷St. John Chrysostom, *St. John Chrysostom: Baptismal Instructions*, tr. and ann. Paul W. Harkins, Ancient Christian Writers 31 (Westminster, MD: Newman Press; London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1963), p. 71; emphasis in original, quoting 2 Cor.5:17.



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