

PENTECOST

Pentecost is traditionally one of the three major holy days (“feast days”) of the Christian Year – the other two being Christmas Day and Easter Sunday. Its title, “Pentecost”, simply means “fifty days”, as it occurs fifty days after Easter Sunday. Therefore, like Easter, it is also a “moveable feast”, not set, as is Christmas on a specific date. Another name for Pentecost is “Whitsunday” or “White Sunday” because it is traditionally a day for the baptizing of converts to Christianity who wear white robes. In reality, the color for Pentecost/Whitsunday is red, to symbolize fire and blood – the fiery descent of the Holy Spirit and the blood of martyrs.

The Christian feast of Pentecost is actually built upon the Jewish festival of the Feast of First Fruits (Deut. 16:9), which was also called “Pentecost” because the Feast of First Fruit comes fifty days after Passover! As the Christian Pentecost is one of the Church’s three most important festivals, so the Feast of First Fruits was one of ancient Israel’s three festivals.

The Feast of First Fruits (Deut. 16:9-12; Lev. 23:15-21) was to occur at the harvest of the spring wheat, seven weeks after its planting close to Passover. All were to gather at the Temple to make their offerings out of the abundance of their harvest and to thank God. After the offering was given at the Temple, the family was to gather for a celebratory meal.

But this meal was not for them alone. They were to invite to the meal “your male and female slaves, the Levites resident in your towns, the strangers, the orphans and the widows” with whom the family has a relationship in order to share your abundance with them. And why should each family share its abundance with the poor? “Remember that you were a slave in Egypt” (Dt. 16:12a); you were poor and powerless once yourself, so remember those who are now poor or powerless in your midst. Thus, the Feast of First Fruits was not only a religious holiday of thanksgiving, of celebration and of feasting; it was also a vehicle to reverse poverty and powerlessness in the community.

As the Jewish feast of First Fruits celebrated the liberation and empowerment of the nation’s poor, so the Christian feast of Pentecost is designed to celebrate the liberation and empowerment of God’s people through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost is popularly called the “Birthday of the Church” (even though the church was birthed at the resurrection of Jesus, and even though its origins lay in the congregation of ancient Israel). It is so called because on this day, the Holy Spirit fell upon the gathered followers of Jesus with “tongues of fire”, and the church was launched into its mission of bringing the good news of liberation and salvation through Jesus to the world (Acts 2:1-21).

Thus, Pentecost occupies a very strategic place in the Christian Year, for it stands between that half of the year that celebrates the coming of Jesus Christ and the second half of the year celebrating the creation and mission of the church. It concludes the church’s celebration of the advent, birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. And it introduces the observance of the “church militant”, as we rehearse and encourage ourselves from June through November of a church deeply engaged in the world, bringing good news in sign, deed and word of God’s work to transform the world into the world as God intended it to be!

Pentecost Sunday

Acts 2:1-21 or Ezek. 37:1-14; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b; John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15; Romans 8:22-27

Acts 2:1-21 is the account of the anointing of the Holy Spirit falling upon the followers of Jesus on the Day of Pentecost (Feast of the First Fruits), and thus signaling the birth of the church. The scripture lesson actually covers two portions of that story: the giving of the Spirit to the Christian community (2:1-13), and the introduction of Peter's sermon delivered to the Jews who observed this filling of the Holy Spirit (2:14-21; the entire speech runs through vs. 36).

“When the day of Pentecost had come, the believers were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability” (Acts 2:1-4).

This great event was both climax and inauguration. It was the climax of Jesus' work among the disciples as they, like him, were filled with the observable power of the Holy Spirit. It was inauguration, because it was the clear indication from God that the mantle had shifted from Jesus to his followers who would now become “little Christs” to the world. Thus Pentecost marked the birth of the apostolic mission of the church, bringing Jesus' kingdom of God (the shalom community) to the whole world.

It was particularly auspicious that this filling of the Spirit and consequent commissioning of the church occurred on the Feast of Pentecost. The word “Pentecost” literally means “fifty days” in Greek. Pentecost was the festival that followed fifty days after Israel's celebration of Passover – the birthday of Israel! It was the festival of “First Fruits” (Duet. 16:9-12; Lev. 23:15-21), in which Israel both celebrated the spring harvest (the “first fruits” of that year's crops) and remembered its origins as impoverished slaves in Egypt (Dt. 16:12) by sharing their abundance with the poor and powerless in an intentional reversal of the nation's fortune.

Now, in essence, a new “First Fruits” was being celebrated by a “new Israel”, as the Holy Spirit anointing of Jesus' followers declared that they were now called to carry Jesus' “kingdom of God” not just to Israel, but to all humanity. And that kingdom that they were to carry with them was one both of being chosen and blessed by God and of working to create a new world order where poverty would be eliminated and the powerless given power. These early disciples were the literal “First Fruits” of Jesus' redemptive and liberating work – and would now carry that fruit with them as they worked for the redemption and liberation of the world!

That new mission would be symbolized in the actions of that day, when the Spirit's anointing of the followers of Jesus would be followed by their proclamation of this liberating news in the languages of all the people gathered in Jerusalem (2:5-13), Peter's sermon that calls upon Israel to embrace Christ and His Kingdom (2:14-36), the enthusiastic response of the people as they embrace the gospel (2:37-41), the creation of a Christian community that is based on the equitable sharing of wealth so that poverty would be eliminated (2:42-47), Peter's healing of a

paralyzed man (3:1-11) and his proclamation of God's new shalom community through Jesus in the very citadel of the vested interest of the Jewish "principalities and powers" (3:12-26).

In order to understand the significance of Luke's inclusion of the Pentecost story in his "Acts of the Apostles", one must recognize that in the Gospel of Luke, the Holy Spirit is confined to the empowerment of Jesus' own ministry. The only exceptions are those who are integral to the inauguration of the salvation history to be wrought through Jesus in the stories surrounding his birth – Mary (1:35), Elizabeth (1:41), John the Baptist (1:15, 17), Zechariah (1:67) and Simeon (2:25-27). Otherwise, Luke is very careful to attribute the filling and empowering of the Holy Spirit as being given exclusively to Jesus.

But now, the transfer takes place. That Spirit who had empowered Jesus was now given to all the followers of Jesus who would now be empowered to continue Jesus' ministry of redemption and liberation upon the earth. And signs are given to make clear that transfer of power. Those signs are "a mighty wind", tongues of fire and speaking in the languages of all those from around the world gathered in Jerusalem. Each gift is significant.

The gift of "a mighty rushing wind" or "violent wind" was, to all Jews, a symbol of the Holy Spirit's presence (Ex. 3:2; 13:21; 24:17; 40:38; I Kings 19:11-13; Ezek. 37:9, 13). In fact, the Hebrew word for "Spirit" is "ruach" or "wind", while the Greek word "pneuma" means both "wind" and "spirit". The gift of "tongues of fire" was a symbol of God's cleansing and judging power (Matt. 3:11, 12). And speaking in all the languages of the people gathered in Jerusalem (those languages are named in vs. 9-11) was the clear indicator and manifestation of the Spirit's occupation of these disciples of Jesus. In fact, the people observing this phenomenon commented, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans (in other words, these are unlettered, unschooled people from the poorest and most ignorant area of our country)"? How is it that we hear each of us, in our own native language, about God's deeds of power" (2:7—8, 11b)? This was clearly a miracle that only God could perform.

Thus, the wind, the tongues of fire, and clear communication in all the languages of the people gathered in Jerusalem for the festival of Pentecost¹ are the three signs of the Spirit's indwelling and empowering of Jesus' followers. The Jews, of course, responded in two predictable ways to these manifestations of the Spirit. Some accepted the phenomenon as truly of God and embraced Jesus and His Kingdom (the shalom community) – and their acceptance into this new way of life that impacted their politics, economics and values is recorded in Acts 3. And other Jews rejected the evidence, with the excuse "These followers of Jesus are filled with new wine" (vs. 13).² Some believed. And others closed themselves to the message.

¹ Note that this incident is not a manifestation of *glossolalia*, or the speaking in tongues (speaking in a Spirit language). That gift of ecstatic utterance is recorded in the scriptures (e.g., I Cor. 12:10, 28, 30; 14:2, 4-6, 9) but it is not the gift given in this incident. The text is very clear that Jesus' followers were speaking in the primary languages of the people gathered from around the world in Jerusalem for the Feast of the First Fruits; the emphasis of the text is not on the gift of tongues, but on the imperative of carrying the gospel to the whole world.

² Peter's response to those who accused the Christians of being drunk is significant. He replied, "These are not drunk, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning" (2:16). That is not a statement of early morning sobriety ("it's too early to be drinking so thoroughly"). Rather, part of the liturgy of the Feast of the First Fruits (Pentecost) is that everyone was to fast in both food and drink from the last meal of the previous day until 10:00 in the morning of the next day; only at 10:00 could they take their first drink of wine. So these Christians, who obediently followed the

In the light of this criticism, Peter speaks to the crowd. He quotes from Joel 3:1-5, indicating that this prophet predicted that, in the latter days, there would be an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the people of God that would be manifested with wind, tongues of fire and truth-telling. *That* is what you Jews have observed – God coming to his people. So listen, take seriously what you are seeing, do not dismiss it – for it may be the very word of God to you! So hear that word, call upon the name of the Lord, and embrace Jesus and his coming shalom community (manifested in the life and actions of his church, right here and now – 2:42-47). For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (2:21).

Ezekiel 37:1-14 is the famed Prophecy of the Dry Bones. In this prophecy, Ezekiel comes upon a former battlefield littered with the dry bones of the combatants. God commands him to call the bones together. He does, and the bones join together and form dead human beings. God then commands Ezekiel to call the winds to come from the four corners of the world and enter into the army. He does, and they come alive – “they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude”.

It is the portion of Ezekiel 37 that has to do with the life-giving wind/breath that commends it to be used as the Old Testament reading for Pentecost Sunday. “Suddenly there was a noise, a rattling and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then God said to me, “Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath, ‘Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live’. I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude” (37:7b-10).

The nation of Israel has come together by the very intervention of God. But it does not live, and cannot be used by God for the purpose for which it was created until the *ruach* or breath of God blows upon it. Until the “wind from God” blew across the chaos of creation, could the earth move from being a “formless void and darkness” to becoming a life-bearing planet (Gen. 1:2). Likewise, in Ezekiel’s prophecy, Israel could not be used by God until the “breath from God” blew across it and filled it with living breath. Then, and only then, could “they live and stand on their feet, a vast multitude”. Likewise, not until the breath of God blew across God’s new Israel, the church, could “they live and stand on their feet” and thus be used by God for that purpose for which God had created it.

The primary lesson of this prophecy, however, is not about the breath. It is the application of Ezekiel’s vision to Israel. “Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people, and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; there you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act”, says the Lord” (37:12b-14).

Law, would not be so gross as to be drunk at 9:00 in the morning on a sacred feast day like Pentecost! There has to be another explanation for their capacity to speak in other languages, Peter is saying – and that explanation is their anointing by the Holy Spirit!

The lesson of the dry bones is that, because of God's love, God will restore the exiled, defeated Israel and will return them to their land as a free people. There, they will embrace the covenant with God, so that they will seek the shalom of their nation by "doing justice, loving each other tenderly, and walking humbly with their God" (Micah 6:8). Thus, this entire section, from the 36th through the 39th chapters of Ezekiel, give the Israelites living in Babylonian exile hope – for the prophet promises that God will restore Israel to their land, defend them from all external threats, will pour God's grace upon them and will thus enable them to become the nation as God intended them to be – a nation of justice, equity and in relationship with God.

Psalm 104:24-34, 35b. Psalm 104 is another of the grand psalms. Whenever I read it, I can hear an Anglican boys choir singing it with pure tones, for that is exactly what this psalm deserves!

This psalm is really a hymn to God as the creator and provider to the whole world. It teems with a love for life and for the whole created order – from the universe and the earth itself to wild animals, birds, the fish of the sea – even whales!

"O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it! These all look to you to give them their food in due season; when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created and you renew the face of the ground" (vv. 24-34).

This hymn to God and his creative providence for us all ends on a note of praise to him, and yet with an imprecation against those who refuse to recognize the creative and protective love of God. Thus, it ends on both a triumphant note and yet a disturbing note, creating a tension at its conclusion, a tension which is not resolved.

"I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. May my meditation be pleasing to him for I rejoice in the Lord. Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord" (vss. 33-35)!

John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15 is John's account of the giving of the Holy Spirit to the church. Unlike Luke, where it is a Pentecost experience, John combines the giving of the Holy Spirit with both the discovery of the empty tomb and Jesus' consequent resurrection (John 20:22). The Spirit cannot come upon Jesus' followers until Jesus' work has been completed (16:7b). But with his death and resurrection, it is completed and Jesus can then bestow the gift of the Spirit upon his followers. Jesus explains that this will happen in John 15:26-27.

"When the Paraclete comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning" (15:26-27).

The function of the Spirit, after Jesus is no longer present with his followers, is to “testify”. Jesus had earlier in the Gospel of John laid out a long line of “testifiers”. They included John the Baptist (1:7, 19, 32,34; 5:33), the Samaritan woman (4:40), Jesus himself (5:36; 8:14, 18; 10:25), the scriptures (5:39) and God (5:36). But now that Jesus is about to depart from the earth, it will be the responsibility of the Church – Jesus’ “beloved community” – to take on the work of “testifying”, empowered by the Holy Spirit. In a time of persecution, it is to speak up for Jesus before those who will detract from Jesus’ message, because to accept it would be to surrender their unilateral power over the people (e.g., Matt. 10:20; Mk. 13:11; Lk. 12:12).

The work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus states, is to be the “Paraclete”. That is a highly technical word, and one that profoundly states the essential work of the Holy Spirit. The word “Paraclete” literally means, in Greek, “one called to the side” of another.³ It is primarily a legal term. In the Roman courts, a person didn’t hire an attorney who would present the defense of his client. Rather, each person was expected to defend one’s self (in essence, being one’s own lawyer). But a defendant could secure counsel by contracting with a “Paraclete”. The Paraclete, who would be an expert in Roman law, would literally sit next to the defendant who was on trial and would advise him how to present his own case. He was one who had been “called to the side of” and coached the defendant in presenting his case.

The Holy Spirit is like that, Jesus was saying. He is a Christian’s and the church’s advocate, testifier, defender, helper – one who is called to come to the rescue of God’s people when God’s people are “testifying” to the work of God in society through Jesus. And that “testifying” is in word, deed, lifestyle, and in sign.

The one English word that can’t be used to translate “Paraclete” without creating a misconception of the Spirit’s work is the word “comforter”. The work of the Spirit is not to comfort us in our distress, but to strengthen us in our bearing witness to Christ in both our work for social justice and in proclaiming the faith. But the traditional translations of John 15:26-27 (e.g., King James Version, Amplified New Testament) translate “Paraclete” as “comforter”. If the word doesn’t mean to ease grief or trouble or to console, why, then, is it translated “comforter”?

The first English translation of the Bible that used the word “Comforter” for “Paraclete” was the Wycliffe translation (1395-1408).⁴ When the word “Paraclete” was translated into the English “comforter”, that word did not mean what it has come to mean today – to console or to ease grief. It meant to “enable a person to act bravely” – or, in other words, to “defend”, “advocate” or “testify”.⁵

³ William Barclay, *The Gospel of John, Vol. II, The Daily Study Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), pp. 166-167.

⁴ Barclay, *Ibid.*; F.L. Cross, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 167-168.

⁵ Another example of how a word, appropriately used in an English translation of the Bible from several centuries ago has undergone radical change in meaning over those centuries is the phrase in the traditional rendition of the Lord’s Prayer, “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”. The actual Greek word translated as “trespasses” is the word “opheilema” which means “indebtedness” or “what is owing”. It is an economic term, and can’t be translated in any other way than as a term for indebtedness. That is exactly what the

In John 16:4b-15, Jesus expands on the work of the Holy Spirit as “Paraclete”. To truly appreciate what he is stating here, however, one must begin with the first verse of chapter 16 and not with the fourth.

“I have said these things to you to keep you from stumbling. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God. And they will do this because they have not known the Father or me. But I have said these things to you so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you about them” (16:1-4a).

Jesus is here presenting to the Christian community the price they will have to pay for following him. That price is threefold. First, the political, economic and religious establishment (the “Judeans”) will persecute those who embrace the Jesus way of life.

Second, “they will put you out of the synagogues”. That is, they will expel you from the entire ordering of life they embrace and convince society to embrace – a way of life that brings wealth, power and control to those in power and obedience and voluntary subjugation on the part of everyone else (as we embrace their interpretation of life). You will be persecuted because you call the systems into question. You will be expelled because you refuse to embrace their interpretation of the world.

And, finally, they will “kill you” and in killing you, “think that by doing so they are offering worship to God”! They will seek to eliminate you and eliminate your witness that exposes the systems and their people for the dominating, power-hungry, greedy institutions and people that they are. And that killing will be done in God’s name! The act of eliminating you and the impact of your threatening witness will be done in the name of the highest good they embrace; it will be “making the world safe for democracy” or for God! They will kill and call it good! That is the price you will pay for being faithful to Christ and His Kingdom! Your reward will be persecution, expulsion and death!

It is in the light of this preamble that Jesus can then say, “I am going to him who sent me” (that is, what I am telling you will happen to you will happen to me first. The Judeans and all the greed and dominating power and need to control they stand for will persecute, expel and kill me). “Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you” (vss. 5a, 6b-7). Once Jesus has completed his work and is no longer with his people, then the Paraclete will take his place. Jesus’ people will not be abandoned. God will assign the Advocate to be with you, so that through him, God may sustain you in the struggle that is before you.

Jesus then defines quite clearly both how God will support Christ’s people in the struggle that is before them with the “principalities and powers” and what, exactly, that Paraclete will do. “When the Paraclete comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and

word “trespasses” meant when that was used 350 years ago to translate that Greek word. It meant “to aggressively take economic advantage of another” and was used exclusively for those who hunted without permission on the king’s land. Today, of course, “trespass” is simply a synonym for “sin” but is devoid of its economic implications.

judgment; about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no more; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned” (16:8-11).

Jesus envisions the world on trial before God with the Paraclete as the prosecuting attorney who “will prove the world wrong” (vs 8) in three ways:

1. “about sin” (vs. 9), sin being not immorality (that is, the naughty things we do) but “because they do not believe in Jesus” – that is, that the people and their political, economic and values-creating systems refuse to embrace Jesus as savior and Lord of the world – the one who brings a permeating shalom to this world through justice and equitable sharing of wealth and dynamic personal relationship with God;
2. “about righteousness” (vs. 10), “righteousness” being used in its legal sense of “vindication”. That is, it is in Jesus’ death that he is vindicated before God, his defeat is victory, and the “rightness” of God is revealed (in other words, “he is going to the Father and you will see him no more”); it will be that vindicating death that will release the systems and people from their need for domination, greed and control and will free them to embrace the new reality in God that can be theirs.
3. “about judgment” (vs. 11), because the ruler of this world (not Satan, but the systems)⁶ are exposed through the unjust death of Jesus as the unethical and dominating instruments they are. That, in turn, will lead to those systems and their rulers being condemned, if they do not choose to repent and embrace the vision of the shalom community.

Jesus promises the disciples that God isn’t through with them yet! They will face persecution, expulsion and death by the systems for what they have experienced, believed and proclaimed as Christians about Jesus. But God will use such persecution to come alongside them in the person of the Paraclete in order to equip and motivate them to engage and even confront the systems, and seek to convince those systems that God is, in reality, committed to the creation of the shalom community throughout the world, and will consequently lead his people to victory!

Romans 8:22-27 tells us, “We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

⁶ See the exegesis for John 12:20-33 on the 5th Sunday in Lent for the argument that in the Gospel of John, the term “the ruler of the world” is not Satan but the political, economic and religious systems of Israel and those who manage them.

Paul presents in this chapter (actually 8:19-39) a remarkably comprehensive picture of salvation. The Godhead, he states, is involved in redemption at cosmic, systemic and personal levels – and one does not comprehend the fullness of the redemptive work of Christ unless one embraces that salvation is meant by God for the entire created order (the universe and the earth), the “principalities and powers” of society (i.e., its systems and structures, and those who man those systems), and the individual. In 8:19-22, he particularly examines the cosmic scope of salvation, and in vss. 28-39 the personal and systemic dimensions of salvation, as well.

He uses the metaphor of childbirth to talk about the salvific process at work in each one of us and in all creation. “The whole creation has been groaning in labor pains”, he writes, “and not only the creation, but we ourselves” (vss. 22-23). We are an incomplete work, Paul declares. And so is creation itself, as well as human systems.

Salvation is a process, not a product, Paul teaches in this passage. Do not confuse conversion with salvation, the apostle suggests. Conversion may be a momentary decision when we determine to follow Christ and to work for his shalom kingdom. It may be for many an immediate decision. But the work of salvation in each of us is a lifetime work. The work of salvation to bring systems to the place that they truly embrace shalom with all of its implications may take a millennium. The work of salvation to transform the universe into God’s creation may take millions of years. And it does not come easily! It is like the work of childbirth, the pain of labor that must have its time and must continue until the birth of the new has come! The work of salvation goes on – a process of transformation that cannot be rushed, but also cannot be stopped! We were saved. We are being saved. We will be saved!

What Paul particularly stresses in this passage, however, is the unique role the Spirit has in this seemingly endless work of salvation. “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, but intercedes with sighs too deep for words” (vs. 26). Here is the work of the Paraclete – the Advocate. The Spirit is “called to the side” of a person, a system, a nation, a cosmos that is in trouble. He comes to advise us “how to present our own case”. He will not do the work we need to do for ourselves. He is a true believer in the Iron Rule: “Never do for others what they can do for themselves”.⁷ But the Spirit will come alongside us, advising us, encouraging us, advocating for us, testifying for us, defending us, helping us. And the Spirit will even pray for us “with groans (sighs) too deep for words”. The Spirit will be our “Paraclete” as we, the very systems we create, and even the cosmos itself will participate in the work of salvation that will transform the entire universe into all that God intended it to be – the kingdom of “shalom”!

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⁷ Saul Alinsky, on what he coined as the “Iron Rule” of any human or social effort that brings about the assumption of responsibility by people for their own and their institutions’ future. See Edward Chambers, *Roots for Radicals* (London: Continuum, 2003), pp. 77, 102.