The Way of God More Accurately:

A Case for the Necessity of the Manifesting Power of the Spirit in Lives of Leaders

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The great Canadian philosopher and theologian Charles Taylor's monumental work, *A Secular Age*, has oft been cited as both a powerful analysis of the arc of the Western Church and, at the same time, a diagnosis for what ails her currently: a loss of "enchantment." While this paper is not intended to be a detailed summation and analysis of Taylor's argument, a brief glance at what it is that Taylor is pointing out will be helpful in giving a starting location to this paper. We must know where we are starting from to plot a course to a new destination. After considering the implications of Taylor's argument and description of Western culture, I will shift the focus towards not only what I perceive as antagonistic ideas to the general Church world, but more specifically, those that plague C2C Churches specifically. In the rest of this paper, I will provide both a summary of the biblical description about the manifesting power of God in life of a leader and argue that for the necessity of pursuing and manifesting His power normatively.

One of the main arguments in *A Secular* Age sees Taylor argue that, due to the advancements of the Enlightenment and the success of the "Western culture" which it has produced at achieving its ends (namely, a life of much less suffering and representation for the individuals living in it), that the world has become a "disenchanted" place (Taylor, 2007). Taylor's "enchantment/disenchantment" paradigm is predicated on the notion that in general, people before the Renaissance/Reformation/Enlightenment, were primed to believe a more ancient idea about the world that they inhabited, namely that it was incomplete without acknowledgment of an unseen component that was inextricably linked to the seen (Taylor, 2007). After the shift that the previously mentioned period indicates, and the advancements that have been the result of said period, the world now has decided that the unseen portion of the world is the result of pure superstition, which was the result of a lack of inquiry/knowledge about the seen world. We now live in an era where we are more apt to believe that events that we would previously have attributed to unseen divine/angelic/demonic forces in the world are rooted in "quantum phenomenon" that we have yet to understand or "psychic elements" that we cannot yet root in a brain process than the hand of God/demonization. The "enchantment" that gave rise to the myths of Greece, the legends of faerie creatures in medieval Europe, or even the mystical elements of the three great Western monotheistic religions has now given way to "science" and the result is a culture stripped of any answer that hints at something that we cannot quantify. Thus, Taylor declares that we are living in a "secular," as opposed to "sacred," age.

As I said above, my goal here is not to put Taylor's work in the spotlight, but to use it to exemplify a point: the Church in the eyes of the Western culture, has been stripped of her divine power. This has led to varying outcomes that are too numerous to fully examine here, though not the least of which is the reliance on secular means (i.e. political and social) of power to stay relevant. Furthermore, the "secular age" in which we find ourselves is makes the beating heart of the Gospel (the miraculous life, death, and resurrection of Christ) and the sacred book in which the message is contained alien even to us who believe it. We end up with well-meaning people then devising systems that strip any teaching about the genuine manifestation of divine power in contemporary times.[1] Our normative lives are then left to "grope in the dark" as much as those poor people in Athens that Paul preached to so long ago, worshipping weekly an "unknown God" out of duty, fear, manipulation, tradition, etc.![2] The Church ends up living a daily secular existence while, once a week[3] preaching the message of a Person that is unseen, powerful, present, real, etc. This is not only hypocritical, which is an anathema to the message of the Scriptures as describing God's people, but also maddening in a way that breeds despair and hopelessness. We ask God when we pray "if it is your will" all the time, doing so outwardly in public deference to the notion of sovereignty but functionally doing so due to our inward disbelief because we are more comfortable in our disenchanted secular age. Many end up walking away condemned due to the conflicting mindsets at work within us, because we know full well that healings, gift impartations/manifestations, exorcisms, and even resurrections are exactly His will; His Word told us so! This mindset represents one end of the spectrum while the other is littered with the opposite: promises of God moving almost by "magic," in many cases over and against the description of what it means to bought by Him. This end, emphasizing the love that God has for us, informs the believer that God does not desire harm for us, desires us even at the expense of the obedience to His revealed Word, resulting in as mutated a form of Christianity as one that has become fully disenchanted.[4]

As a family of churches, C2C's specific expression has attempted to walk a sort of middle path, though with an emphasis on principled living over manifestation of power if needs be. Therefore, in well-meaning attempts to ensure that we are a people that are not offering wildly outrageous claims akin to "magic" about the power of God for the individual

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[1] An example here worth considering: the surge of a "Neo-Reformed" movement recently that build a rock solid, rational theological system but strips the Church of Her gifts and ends with Her bunkering down, hanging on for dear life until the Second Coming.

[2] See Paul's speech to the Athenians at the Areopagus in Acts 17.

[3] Or twice a week, if you have a mid-week meeting of some kind that is regularly attended

[4] Note that I know that I am painting with broad strokes here and that both ends of the spectrum that I have described here sound extreme. I am aware that there are well-intentioned, and genuine Christians reside in each of these camps. However, these do describe increasing trends in mainstream Western Christian expression.

believers in our congregations[5] and to make sure that people in our specific congregations are living out come version of "a daily, genuine, relational, manner of life,"[6] we have increasingly relied on principles, derived from the Scriptures, to guide us through the sacred task of leading God's people. This practice is a vital element to walking out the call that God has placed upon us, and I do not mean to discourage this from taking place with this present work. However, there is something incomplete about this, especially for those of us that read the Scriptures, become mesmerized by the descriptions of how God operated through His Church then, and desire to see that continue today. The unseen hand of the Lord working among us/through us [7]seems to be a necessary component of what it means to walk out the life that the Lord paid for at the Cross.

In brief, the subject of the Spirit manifesting His power in the life of one of His leaders is something that seems necessary, from both a descriptive and prescriptive angle. The bulk of the Old Testament is series of stories about those that God called to be leaders and the manifestations that He released through their lives. As the Lord is moving "THE PLAN" along, He decides to grace certain persons with a measure of Himself to do various feats that reveal Him/His "glory".[8] Some notable instances of this include Jospeh's prophecy/wisdom expression, Moses' encounter that led to miracles, the feats of the Judges, the defeat of Goliath by David, and the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, just to name a few. These instances of manifestation of otherworldly powers seemed designed not only to amaze those witnessing the event, but also to remind them that Yahweh was the "highest" of all the other divine contenders. These prophecies and miracles are regarded as proof positive that God will "not share His glory with another" and will go to great lengths to demonstrate that this will be the case. Yahweh is frequently seen as either the cause of some event that interrupts the pattern of nature that the other gods of other nations followed[9] or the source of some terrible natural or world-shaping event that is besetting His people.[10] For the people of God throughout the history of the Old Testament, Yahweh is a being that is not only present, but manifesting Himself in specific, miraculous ways that frequently tied to leaders.

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[5] Such as the "Word-Faith movement."

[6] Because we rightly are against hypocrisy in the house of God, as John instructed us in 1 John 1 regarding walking in the Light with each other

[7] Common phrases that could use a bit more theological substance to them such as the "power of God," the "anointing," and the "gifts of the Spirit" come to mind here.

[8] See Isa. 11/Hab. 2

[9] For example, each of the Ten Plagues of Egypt is connected to a specific element that the Egyptians, and likely the 400-year captive Hebrews, believed were controlled by a specific god.

[10] For example, the plague of locusts in Joel or the rise of Assyria and Babylon, as recounted by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other prophets of the period

It also seems that this manifesting of the Spirit through the lives of leaders in the Old Testament was a requirement to be a leader in ancient Israel. Yahweh does not send His leaders into situations empty-handed. Moses is fearful that no one will accept him as Yahweh's messenger and so, the Lord endues him with miraculous manifesting power to validate the message.[11] The Spirit of God moving with power through the various judges of Israel was irrefutable evidence that they were divinely sent. Saul was king only to the degree that God anointed him to be so with the measure of His Spirit; once that moved on to David, the doom of Saul's kingdom was sealed, as we can see in the Goliath story and its aftermath[12]. Elijah manifested the Spirit of God with the miraculous manifestations during his ministry and the proof that Elisha was truly worthy of being followed was the fact that those that saw him could see that he now carried the "spirit of Elijah."[13] These references should be sufficient for establishing the point that the Spirit of God, manifesting through people, was a key element of what made for leadership status in the Old Testament.

This theme resonates in the New Testament as well, which makes sense, since, as the writer of Hebrews informs us, that He is the same "yesterday, today, and forever." Jesus set the example when He came back from the desert "in the Spirit" and began to execute miracles to such a degree that the only explanation was that of Isaiah's description of "manifest Jubilee" from Isaiah 61.[14] He made sure that when His disciples went out to preach His Gospel of the Kingdom message, they were given His authority and anointing to authenticate it. If they were going to preach the message like He did, then it followed that they must have the "signs accompanying" as well.[15] Following His death/resurrection, He was clear that they could not operate in their call until they had been "endued" with the power of the Spirit, something that they had to wait fifty days to receive.[16]

Further, while the Spirit is "poured out on all flesh" at the day of Pentecost, thus restoring the desired relational conditions in the heart of God for His people, the record indicates that leaders in the early Church were those that were not only people of high character but also those that manifested the power of God in the Spirit. The seven deacons of the Church were chosen to serve in no small part due to the measure of the Spirit on their lives, which included the manifestation of the power of God, if the account of Stephen in chapter six is to be believed. The records of the works at Jerusalem, Antioch, and Ephesus, to name a few, were also attributed to elements of the power of the Spirit moving through the lives of people. Paul will write to the Corinthians that the eager pursuit of "spirituals" was to be

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[11] See Ex. 3 -4
[12] See 1 Sam. 9-17
[13] See 1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2
[14] See Matt. 3-4
[15] See Matt. 10
[16] See Mark 16 and Acts 1-2

encouraged among all, leading to the fair assumption that he intends that those that are leading in that Church should authentically be walking that way as well. The assumption can be made not only due to the fact that Paul is "anti-hypocrite" in the bulk of his writings, but more directly to the evidence of his example that he reminds the Corinthians about near the beginning of the same letter: namely that when he came to them, he did so not only in persuasive words of wisdom only, but in "demonstration of the Spirit and power."[17] He informs us that the reason for this manifestation of the Spirit ends up being similar to reasons why God manifested Himself in power in the Old Testament: so that faith could rest on the power of God rather than the wisdom of man/reason, a seemingly powerful and far-reaching "god" in his day…and, to echo Taylor, in ours as well.

With these descriptive and, in some cases, prescriptive Scriptures in mind from our survey, I would like to end by briefly examining two stories that occur in the record of Acts that I think further solidify the case that all leaders in God's house should be walking in both the fruit and power of the Spirit. These stories occur back-to-back and, in my view, give us undeniably clear perspective on the early Church's priorities regarding the manifestation of the Spirit. Both occur in the city of Ephesus and relate to people understanding the message of repentance but not the message of the promise that Peter declared was for both those "who were near and those that were far off."

The first story occurs at the end of chapter eighteen of Acts and concerns the transformation of a man named Apollos. Verses twenty-four through twenty-eight indicate that Paul had left his friends Precilla and Aquila in that city when he was on his way back to Antioch. While they were there, a Jewish Alexandrine named Apollos began to make a sensation in the synagogue with his dazzlingly eloquent and deeply accurate interpretation of the Old Testament regarding Jesus. However, it was also noted by Luke, that Apollos, even though "fervent in spirit," was also ignorant of the whole story, knowing only "the baptism of John." These leaders, seeing the grace of God on this man's life, took him aside and "explained the way of God more accurately" to him. He is then transformed, goes to Corinth with their blessing, and becomes an apostolic force in that region and beyond.[18]

The second story tells us of Paul finally coming to Ephesus, ready to bring the message of the Kingdom into the most powerful and influential city in not only the region, but arguable the eastern half of the Empire at the time and it is remarkably similar. As he is coming into the city, he encounters a group of twelve men that are "disciples." From Paul's subsequent conversation with them, we can extrapolate that they are also like Apollos had been: familiar with the gospel of repentance/baptism but lacking in the complete picture of the

[17] See 1 Cor. 2

[18] Or an evangelistic one, depending upon your interpretation of Apollos' gift

Gospel because they do not understand that there is something more than John's baptism regarding their walk with Jesus. Paul immediately lays his hands upon them, they are filled with the Spirit and begin to manifest their filling through tongues and prophecy. It is no far stretch of the imagination to think that these men became key components for his team that aided in all of Asia Minor hearing the Gospel, churches being planted in other cities, and the regional deities and powers being put on notice that they would no longer be able to work unhindered or unchallenged!

There are three vital elements to draw from these two stories that will motivate us towards serving others not only from a position of principle, but also one of power. The first is that it seems as though it is possible to "be saved" without walking in the manifesting power of God. While there is no space here to sort through the varying views regarding this idea and why many of those views might disagree with my assertion here, the record seems clear that walking in an incomplete and disenchanted manner is something that has occurred before in the lives of well-meaning and sincere believers. Both Apollos and the twelve unnamed Ephesian disciples clearly loved the Lord and had a relationship with Him, yet they were not walking in the Spirit, because they had no idea that such a thing was possible. Instead of vilifying them, Paul, Pricilla and Aquila took them aside and helped them to encounter/understand what they were lacking. The result was explosive: Apollos began to do something akin to what Paul was doing and the twelve Ephesians assisted in perhaps the most clear and astonishing display of power of God on record. Whether we are leaders in our own right or training/raising up leaders, we need to be aware of our need for the power of God manifesting in our lives in ways that are not just about a change of lifestyle/culture!

To further illustrate what I mean here, let's consider what being a "liar" entails, since Jesus was clear that there is nothing more demon-like than to be a liar.[19] The act of changing one's pattern of life from that of "lying" to that of "telling the truth" is just is not enough; there are other religions that teach one to do the same and produce results.[20] Rather, we must see the manifest power of God working through us so that we can look at those other "magician serpents" attempting to imitate the culture of the Kingdom as a deceptive lure and declare that what we have to offer is the genuine article. Similarly to Moses' serpent eating the serpents of the Egyptian magicians, the undeniable power of God, moving through leaders that are proclaiming repentance and transformation, will consume the imitators and leave the Lord to get His glory.

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[19] See John 8:44

[20] The teachings of the Mahavira, the Buddha, Confucious, and Lao all emphasize truth telling among Eastern religions while Western philosophers such as Pythagoras, Aristotle, and Zeno of Citium would do the same before Christianity burst onto the scene.

The second vital point here is that Paul, et.al. had a clear conviction that that the manifesting power of God was non-negotiable in the lives of these leaders. They did not allow their disenchanted Christian existence to continue when they discovered it. The life of God, manifesting in both fruit and gift/power, was for them the crux of the promise that God had made regarding His people. The authenticating event signifying adoption into the family of God is not the changed life of a disciple alone but one that is married to the experience/manifestation of the Spirit through His gifts/power. Paul will later testify to seeing it this way when he declares to the Romans in the eighth chapter that "anyone that does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him" and that if we fail to live a life that is being led by the Spirit, then we are not truly adopted; those in this state are still under the slavery to the flesh/world/Satan. Therefore, it does not seem a reach to hold that, from a New Testament viewpoint, we cannot even make it into the Kingdom by repenting alone or even by repenting and being baptized. Rather, we need to be baptized in the Spirit as well to be adopted so that we can walk with Him! If this is the case for sheep, how much more the shepherds?

The third and (final) element that I will draw out here is Kingdom culture, rooted in routine and consistency but devoid of the consistent manifesting power of God, is not enough when walking out a leadership call or nurturing the development of new leaders. This may seem like a bold statement which challenges the oft quoted notion that the "best example of the power of God is a changed life," which a story like that of Zaccheaus' supports. However, an examination of one detail of this text that is consistent in both stories should challenge this idea in us. The detail in the text here is that both Apollos and the twelve Ephesians were "disciples of the Way."

Before moving forward, I wish to make my position perfectly clear: any genuine expression of the Kingdom must have, as one of its non-negotiable foundation stones, the consistent life transformation that is inherent to any biblical understanding of discipleship. We have been born again to a new way of life and therefore, we must change our habits, associations, and, according to Augustine, our desires/love (Augustine, n.d.). This is clear from the Scriptures and any expression of the house of God that is not emphasizing this is frankly in error. I would venture that in many of the expressions of Western Church that we see making headlines for all the wrong reasons, the root cause of the problem is a removal of this vital element of the Kingdom message!

However, I also wish to emphasize this: we are not truly manifesting the Kingdom by our changed lives alone, since a variety of different religions and philosophies call for the same cultural shift. Producing a Kingdom culture requires something more than the gathering of like-minded people who are going to do good things together and live a different lifestyle

than what they had previously lived. Producing a Kingdom culture requires that the power of the One who is transforming us clash with the powers of the earth that would seek to usurp Him through cheap imitation!

The people that are featured in this account in Acts are living as disciples, even of Jesus' teachings, but are considered incomplete.[21] They have a "culture of Kingdom discipleship" but because they are not manifesting the life of the Spirit through being baptized into Him, they are not authentic members of the Body. Thus, Paul et.al. determines that it is their priority to baptize these people in the Spirit and see the manifestation of the gifts that He gave to all His followers.

This baptism/manifestation of the Spirit in the lives of people was so clearly impressed upon the apostolic doctrine that it carried over beyond the apostolic age. Irenaeus records witnessing a church that had the power of the Spirit manifesting regularly (Irenaeus, n.d.). Tertullian tells his readers that in his time, after one is baptized in water, those leaders baptizing immediately request that the Spirit come baptize them as well, so that they might be a complete and functioning member of the Body and take a significant amount of time in so doing (Tertullian, n.d.). Even John Chrysostom (Chrysostom, n.d.) and Augustine (Augustine, n.d.), after the dreaded conversion of Constantine and so-called "death of the gifts" in the Church, record that power manifestations are occurring with regularity as God demonstrates the power of His Kingdom over the kingdoms of this earth. Furthermore, it should be noted that all these manifestations are coming through the lives of leaders as they live their normal lives. Clearly Jesus desires that His leaders be principled disciples, but just as was the case when He walked the earth and sent them out, that they also manifest the power of God through the baptism in the Spirit. God's Kingdom does not just "out culture" the world it is coming into; it clashes with those kingdoms demonstrating the rule of the ascended Christ as He makes His enemies a footstool for His feet!

This paper is not intended to be the defining word about leadership and the manifestation of the Spirit with power; rather it is intended to get the reader thinking, hopefully to then provoke further study and discussion. However, I do feel confident to conclude that while we might not be able to change the disenchanted culture that has become definitive in the West or even expose all the charlatans and false prophets that have soured people on the reality of an enchanted world due to their lack of character as disciples, our C2C Churches can offer an authentic alterative, provided we prioritize this in a similar manner as we have with creating a Kingdom discipleship culture. Leaders are culture carriers/creators, so what they teach/preach/live matter a great deal. Since we have no choice but to preach an enchanted message, since the Gospel is inherently enchanted, then it is vital that we do

[21] Or illegitimate, depending upon your reading of Romans eight

what we can to live an enchanted life in concert with what the Gospel promises. While we cannot manifest power on command or create a formula that produces what we desire, we are left with doing what others of the cosmic household of faith have done throughout the centuries: ask, seek, and knock consistently and confidently. It is what Jesus taught his disciples to do and what we ask those in our congregations to do in perilous times. We can afford to do no less.

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