

FUNDAMENTALS OF THE FAITH

PNEUMATOLOGY

A. Introduction

1. Practical importance of Pneumatology

Pneumatology, the study of the Holy Spirit, is too often overlooked or avoided because of faulty teaching based on poor exegesis or personal *experience*. The importance of the Holy Spirit's role in the lives of Christians can not be overestimated. The Holy Spirit's work began before salvation with conviction of sin. His work at regeneration places believers in the body of Christ. His role in the lives of believers includes personally indwelling believers and empowering them for service. This work is authorized by our Lord Who promised Him to us in John 14:16-17,

And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.

Not only has our Lord gifted us by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, He stressed the import role of the Holy Spirit in our spiritual lives. Jesus declared in John 4:24 that God is spirit and one must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Our responsibility as Christians is to know the Word cognitively but also to be led by the Spirit personally. The great need in our day is a balanced understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. On our evangelical side, there is desperate need for revival that turns us to vibrant personal witness. On the Pentecostal side, there is desperate need to allow God's Word to validate experience, not for experience to validate itself.

Another reason why the study of Pneumatology is so important is the increasing amount of spiritual activity attributed to the Holy Spirit. Are the activities today of the Spirit or not? Are we on the outside looking in on things God has for us? Are we in proper biblical balance, worshiping God in spirit and in truth? A few examples follow that illustrate the spiritual activity in our day. As church leaders, and as Christians, we must be sensitive to what is happening and always be true to God's Word.

- *In January of 1994, a little church on the end of a runway at Pearson International Airport in Toronto came to the world's attention as a place where God chose to meet with His people. As a result of this divine visitation, the members of the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship were thrust into ministry to thousands of people worldwide...The Toronto Blessing is a transferable anointing. In its most visible form it overcomes worshipers with outbreaks of laughter, weeping, groaning, shaking, falling, and "drunkenness."¹*
- *At the Brownsville Assembly of God, site of a 21-month-long "Pensacola Outpouring" revival, the million-plus visits since 1995 have moved this Florida congregation to the cutting edge of evangelistic outreach...Some worshipers arrive as early as 4 a.m. to guarantee a seat for an evening service. Some do not leave until after 3 a.m., following hours of prayer and spiritual manifestations such as jerking, moaning, and weeping. Proceeded by two years of intensive community prayer, the revival continues four nights a week in Pensacola, a Gulf Coast city... 'This revival has been the most remarkable, life-*

¹"The Toronto Blessing, What's That?" Woodside Home Page,
www.skynet.com.uk/~woodside/blessing.html.

*changing thing in my life, ' says the excited but exhausted pastor, John Kilpatrick, 46...His approach has been submissive and accepting. As he said during a recent service, 'Holy Spirit, we don't know what you're doing, but please come.'*²

- *A movement of God is dramatically impacting a church in Grand Rapids, Michigan...on May 22, 1996, during a midweek service, people began to cry out spontaneously to God...The church began holding three and four hour services--with no complaints...The revival began at a low point in the life of the church...Since May, 1,700 people have accepted Christ as their savior and 2,000 have asked for prayer...A woman who worked as a dancer in a bar said 'it was like taking a shower on the inside.'*³

Such spiritual activities can be confusing, exciting, and frightening, all at the same time. We live in days which demand proper balance. Even the secular community is noticing enhanced spiritual activity. Winifred Gallagher of MSNBC declares that changes in religion are taking place *so profound that it's compared to that of the Enlightenment: the primacy of spirituality based on personal experience over religion founded on institutional doctrine.*⁴ We must be people committed to Scripture and led by the Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit has always been for our good if not always understood. May we be those worshipers God seeks, those who worship in spirit and in truth.

2. Historical development

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit developed through the study of Scripture and response to error. According to Charles Ryrie, *What we have come to know as the orthodox expression of the doctrine of the Spirit was witnessed to by the early church in the baptismal formula, in the Apostles' Creed, and in the castigating of error when it did appear.*⁵ Errors began as a response to the increasing formalism of the church and its worship. The rise of error concerning the doctrine of the Holy Spirit can be attributed partly to that concern today.

Montanism was the first movement to focus on the Holy Spirit. In 150 A.D., Montanus and two women, Prisca and Maximilla announced that they were prophets and that the Holy Spirit spoke directly through them. The church rejected Montanism based on the important belief that the Holy Spirit does not give new revelation apart from the Bible. The error of Montanism is cause for much confusion surrounding the work of the Holy Spirit today.

Sabellianism surfaced around 215 A.D. under the teaching of Sabellius. He taught the unity of God Who reveals Himself in three different forms. These forms were not persons but roles played by God. The diversity of the Trinity was diminished by not acknowledging the personalities of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Arianism attacked the Trinity by denying the divine nature of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Arius promoted his views from Alexandria around 325 A.D., *...he distinguished the one eternal God from the Son who was generated by the Father and who had a beginning. He also believed that the Holy Spirit was the first thing created by the Son, for all things were made by the Son.*⁶

²“Pensacola Outpouring Keeps Gushing,” *Christianity Today* (March 3,1997).

³*Religion News Today*, GOSHEN Online, www.goshen.net.

⁴Winifred Gallagher, “God is alive, in spirit.” MSNBC ‘96, www.msnbc.com.

⁵Charles C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1965.

⁶*Ibid.*

Pelagianism surfaced around 430 A.D. when Pelagius responded to Augustine's teachings on the role of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Pelagius practically denied original sin and stressed the ability of man to do good without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. This heresy resurfaced through the teachings of Arminius in the late 1500's. The process of salvation was centered on the ability of man rather than the work of the Holy Spirit.

The development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit primarily focused on His Person until the 20th century. At the beginning, Montanus usurped the role of the Bible in the Spirit's work of revelation. From that point, most discussion of the Holy Spirit concerned His relationship to the Father and the Son. Today, there is less debate concerning the doctrine of the person of the Holy Spirit. The primary focus is the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. Yet, the following quotes should remind us of the need to know and defend truth concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

- *Man, I feel revelation knowledge already coming on me here. Lift your hands. Something new is going to happen here today. I felt it just as I walked down here. Holy Spirit, take over in the name of Jesus... God the Father, ladies and gentlemen, is a person; and He is a triune being by Himself separate from the Son and the Holy Ghost. Say, what did you say? Hear it, hear it, hear it. See, God the Father is a person, God the Son is a person, God the Holy Ghost is a person. But each one of them is a triune being by Himself. If I can shock you- and maybe I should- there's nine of them. Huh, what did you say? Let me explain: God the Father, ladies and gentlemen, is a person with his own personal spirit, with his own personal soul, and his own personal spirit-body. You say, Huh, I never heard that. Well you think you're in this church to hear things you've heard for the last 50 years? You can't argue with the Word, can you? It's all in the Word.⁷*
- *...how can you glorify God in your body, when it doesn't function right? How can you glorify God? How can He get glory when your body doesn't even work?... What makes you think the Holy Spirit wants to live inside of a physical body where the limbs and the organs and the cells do not function right?... And what makes you think He wants to live in a temple where He can't see out of the eyes, and He can't walk with the feet, and He can't move with the hand?... The only eyes that He has that are in the earth realm are the eyes that are in the body. If He can't see out of them then God's gonna be limited...⁸*

3. Survey of a key doctrine - Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Few doctrines of Scripture have been more divisive than that concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit. A proper understanding of what it is and who it is for, is essential if Christians are to worship in spirit and in truth. The key misunderstanding of spirit baptism is temporal in nature. There are those who believe that spirit baptism is a "second work of grace." The question is frequently asked by Charismatic Christians, "Have you received the baptism of the Holy Spirit?" When that question is asked to a Christian, it is an inappropriate question. The following evaluation is justification for that statement.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is believed by some to be a special blessing which takes place after salvation. It is an experience which must be sought through earnest and persistent prayer. The following quote is a classic description of the Pentecostal view of Spirit baptism.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit refers to the descent and indwelling of God's Spirit. The initial experience of the Holy Spirit usually occurs during prayer. The sign and evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit is speaking of unintelligible tongues. Everyone who has received the Holy Spirit prays to God with a spiritual tongue without having to be taught how to do so. Oftentimes, in addition to speaking in tongues, there is also body movement, warmth, and indescribable inner joy. The Lord Jesus has already promised this

⁷Quote by Benny Hinn, noted by Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*, pp. 123-124.

⁸Quote by Frederick K. C. Price, noted by Hanegraaff, pp. 259-260.

*precious gift to anyone who believes and sincerely asks Him. Experience God personally by asking Him to forgive your sins and come into your heart. Receiving the Holy Spirit can be your most wonderful and joyful experience.*⁹

In contrast, Scripture teaches clearly that Spirit baptism is for all believers. The key passage is 1 Cor. 12:13, *For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.* Spirit baptism is the act by which God makes us members of the body of Christ. Paul was speaking to the Corinthians who were chastised for carnality. It is not an event for *more spiritual* Christians but a *past event*, an event which took place when a person trusted Christ.

Evangelical Christianity must not allow itself to believe there are two classes of Christians, the *haves* and the *have nots*. Every Christian is placed into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit. Every Christian has access to the spiritual power necessary to live pleasingly to God. Every Christian needs to live by the Spirit.

B. Current Issues in Pneumatology

1. Evidences of the Holy Spirit

How does the Holy Spirit work today? Does He work in the same way He did at the foundation of the Church? These questions are not simply academic issues but heart issues for many believers. The evidences of the Holy Spirit are debated between Christians, between churches, even between family members. The evidences in question are the “sign gifts,” tongues, prophecy, miracles, and healings. There are basically two camps, non-cessationism (continuity) and cessationism (discontinuity). Non-cessationists hold to continuity. They believe that the sign gifts of the first century are for today. Cessationists believe that the sign gifts were specifically for the first century church to authenticate the new message of the Gospel. Sign gifts ceased at the death of the last apostle.

There is much spiritual activity today. Toronto and Pensacola have already been mentioned. The perception of these events is impacted by one’s view of the proper place of sign gifts. My belief is that Scripture substantiates the cessationist view. Dan Wallace of Dallas Seminary proposes two theses with arguments to substantiate them.

•Thesis One: To the extent that we see discontinuity between the first century and the twentieth in terms of the sign gifts, to that extent we are cessationists.

*•Thesis Two: The more we see discontinuity, the more we affirm that the purpose of the sign gifts was authentication rather than a display of normative Christianity.*¹⁰

Several arguments point to the cessation of sign gifts. First, one must consider the argument from the close of the canon. Few would say that Scripture is still being written. Actually, the canon closed at the death of John. Much of Scripture is prophetic in nature. Therefore, one can not say that prophecy continues today as it did before the close of the canon.

Second, Wallace speaks of the argument from errant prophecy. Non-cessationists state that the quality of prophecy has changed. There is no longer apostolic prophecy but there is non-apostolic prophecy. The difference is that apostolic prophecy is always true but non-apostolic prophecy can contain error. Of course,

⁹“The Baptism of the Holy Spirit,” General Assembly of the True Jesus Church in the U.S.A. www.tjchurch.org/beliefs.

¹⁰Daniel B. Wallace, “Two Views on the ‘Sign Gifts:’ Continuity vs. Discontinuity.” www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/contin.htm.

such prophecy is not on the level of the authoritative Word of God. One would be hard pressed to push continuity based on acceptance of erroneous prophecy.

Third, one must consider the issue of faith-healers. Non-cessationists admit that the gift of healing does not exist today but that the gift of faith does exist. A person with the gift of faith may not always heal the person because that person may be lacking in faith. One may include the issue of miracles in this category. Those who favor continuity must admit that what takes place today in the name of healing and miracles is different than what accompanied the Gospel witness of the first century church.

Lastly, one may include consideration of the non-cessationists' proof-text, Mark 16:17-18. They would state that support for the continuation of sign gifts comes from that passage. One must be careful in using this text which was not included in the earliest manuscripts. If it is original, it is probably speaking of the authenticating signs which took place in Acts, not activities which would be normative throughout the church age.

The evidences of the Holy Spirit should not be based on sign gifts. The true workings of the Spirit are seen in Spirit-produced fruit according to Galatians 5:22-23, "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...*" These attributes are truly the "sign gifts" of our day.

2. Fullness of the Holy Spirit

The power of the Holy Spirit is for every believer. We are baptized into the body of Christ. We are called to evidence the fruit of the Spirit. Yet, what should Christians expect from the Holy Spirit? Is He to be catalogued theologically with little or no personal impact? Is He withholding spiritual power and joy because I have not asked for special blessings? "What is normative for Christians concerning the Holy Spirit?" is not only a good question but should be the pursuit of every believer.

I have been wrestling with John 7:37 - 38, *If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.* I believe rivers of living water is God's desire for normative Christianity. I came across an article by my former Greek professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, Dan Wallace, which encourages me to more fully pursue worship in spirit and in truth. Wallace gives insight into how easily we can categorize ourselves according to human structures.

I believe that in North America today, there are two brands of conservative Christianity, neither of which is wholly satisfactory. There is charismatic Christianity--the free spirited, right brain, experiential roller coaster. And then there is the evangelical rationalism--uptight, left brain, logical, talking head, argumentative. Neither of these is adequate. Don't get me wrong: I'm a fully committed cessationist. I believe that the sign gifts ceased in the first century. But I think that cessationists need to begin doing serious business with God. We need a deep-rooted repentance--both individually and communally.¹¹

Wallace proceeds to list several challenges which we each should consider in light of Scripture. The list will be given without discussion to encourage the reader to work through them.

- *Although the sign gifts died in the first century, the Holy Spirit did not.*
- *Although Charismatics have given a higher priority to experience than to relationship, rationalistic evangelicals have given a higher priority to knowledge than to relationship.*
- *This emphasis on knowledge over relationship has produced in us a bibliolatry.*
- *The net effect of such bibliolatry is a depersonalization of God.*

¹¹Dan Wallace, "The Uneasy Conscience of a Non-Charismatic Evangelical." www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/contin.htm.

- *Part of the motivation for this depersonalization of God is our increasing craving for control.*
- *God is still a God of healing and miracles.*
- *Evangelical rationalism can lead to spiritual defection.*
- *The power brokers of rational evangelicalism, since the turn of the century, have been white, obsessive-compulsive males.*
- *The Holy Spirit's guidance is still needed in discerning the will of God.*
- *In the midst of seeking out the power of the Spirit, we must not avoid the sufferings of Christ.*
- *Finally, a question: To what does the Spirit bear witness?¹²*

Normative Christianity may be different than what I have experienced. The fullness of the Spirit may require that I open myself up to God in a new way. Of course, the Spirit will never take us away from Scripture. He will always take us more fully into it. In studying John 7:37-38, I believe the passage reveals a 3-part prescription for spiritual vitality or fullness. First, Christians need to reflect on God's love. The nation of Israel placed signposts or markers, to commemorate God's faithful working in their lives. Christians need to constantly look back to God's signposts in their lives - the first signpost should be the Cross. Spiritual fullness is not something that may be granted by a capricious God. God's will is that we drink of His fullness.

Second, we need to recognized our need to love God. Jesus' basic plan for spiritual satisfaction is found in Matthew 22:37-39, love God fully and love your neighbor as yourself. Let's stop looking for the world to met our deepest needs when our hearts long for our true home. Living water flows from a heart in love with God.¹³

Third, respond to God's loving Gift, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is received by every believer at spiritual baptism.¹⁴ He indwells every believer and makes us temples of God.¹⁵ He calls every Christian to be filled.¹⁶

The fullness of the Spirit is normative Christianity. May we each experience it as we choose to pursue lives worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Fullness is a choice. The cost is obedience.

¹²Ibid.

¹³1 Corinthians 2:9.

¹⁴1 Corinthians 12:13.

¹⁵Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16.

¹⁶Ephesians 5:18.

C. Basic Outline of Pneumatology

1. His nature

a. Personal

- 1) Personal pronouns, John 14:26
- 2) Masculine pronoun, John 16:7, 8, 13, 14 (emphasizes that He is a person not a thing)
- 3) Personal characteristics
 - a) Intellect, 1 Cor. 2:11
 - b) Emotion, Rom. 8:27; 15:30
 - c) Will, 1 Cor. 12:11
- 4) Personal activities
 - a) Regeneration, John 3:5
 - b) Testimony, John 15:26
 - c) Instruction, John 14:26
 - d) Speech, Acts 13:2
 - e) Work, 1 Cor. 12:11
- 5) Personal responses
 - a) Called upon, Ezek. 37:9
 - b) Blasphemed, Mt. 12:31
 - c) Lied to, Acts 5:3
 - d) Tempted, Acts 5:9
 - e) Resisted, Acts 7:51
 - f) Grieved, Eph. 4:30
 - g) Insulted, Heb. 10:29
- 6) Distinct from His own power, Acts 10:38; Rom. 15:13; 1 Cor. 2:4

b. Divine

- 1) Attributes of deity
 - a) Eternality, Heb. 9:14
 - b) Omniscience, 1 Cor. 2:10
 - c) Omnipotence, Luke 1:35
 - d) Omnipresence, Ps. 139:7-10
- 2) Association with the Father and the Son
 - a) Baptismal formula, Mt. 28:19
 - b) Apostolic benediction, 2 Cor. 13:14
 - c) Administration of the church, 1 Cor. 12:4-6
- 3) Expressly called God, Acts 5:3f.; 2 Cor. 3:17f.
- 4) Works of deity (see below)

2. His work

- a. In creation, Gen. 1:2; 6:3; Psalm 104:29-30; John 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6
- b. In Scriptures, 2 Peter 1:21
- c. In Jesus Christ
 - 1) Conception, Luke 1:35
 - 2) Anointed at baptism, Mt. 3:16
 - 3) Empowered to perform miracles, Mt. 12:28
 - 4) Resurrection, Rom. 8:11
- d. In the world, John 16:8

- e. In believers
 - 1) At salvation
 - a) Regeneration, John 3:3-8; 6:63
 - b) Baptism, 1 Cor. 12:13
 - c) Indwelling, John 14:17; Rom. 8:9
 - d) Sealing, Eph. 1:13; 2 Cor. 1:22; Rom. 8:16
 - e) Spiritual gifts, 1 Cor. 12:4; Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11
 - 2) Ongoing ministry
 - a) Filling, Eph. 5:18
 - b) Guidance, Gal. 5:16, 25
 - c) Empowerment, Gal. 5:22f.
 - d) Illumination, 1 Cor. 2:13
 - e) Instruction, John 14:26; 1 John 2:20, 27
- f. In the church
 - 1) Formation, Eph. 5:23; 1 Cor. 12:13-27
 - 2) Unity, Eph. 4:44; Gal. 3:27-28
 - 3) Composition, 1 Cor. 12:11
 - 4) Direction, Acts 13:2; Acts. 20:28

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