

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE CLASSICAL PENTECOSTAL
DOCTRINE OF THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT
IN LIGHT OF THE PENTECOSTAL POSITION
ON THE SOURCES OF THEOLOGY**

by

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ABSTRACT

Classical Pentecostals believe that one receives Spirit-baptism as a second blessing post-conversion crisis event. Its purpose, they say, is to empower the believer for Christian life and service. Although this doctrine was not officially formulated until the early years of the twentieth century, Classical Pentecostals claim that it is based entirely on Scripture, and that it describes *the* normative experience of the New Testament Church. They further claim that this should be part of the normative experience and teaching of the Church today. This thesis examines the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit in light of the Pentecostal position on the sources of theology. As part of the Protestant tradition, Classical Pentecostals maintain that Scripture alone is the absolute authority for all Christian faith and practice. Yet their view of Spirit-baptism sets them apart from other Evangelicals and Fundamentalists. A survey of the historical roots of Pentecostalism, and an examination of the biblical texts used by Classical Pentecostals to support their view shows that the real source of this doctrine is a set of religious presuppositions adopted from the Holiness and Higher Life movements of the nineteenth century. Despite their claim to seek the "objective meaning" of the biblical text by using the grammatico-historical method of interpretation, Classical Pentecostals do not demonstrate a commitment to this method in the formation and defense of their doctrine of Spirit-baptism.

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INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century has witnessed the phenomenal growth of a missionary movement known as *Pentecostalism*, such as never before seen in the history of the Christian Church. What began among a handful of Bible School students in Topeka, Kansas in 1901 has grown to include more than 400 million members worldwide¹ in just over 95 years. This movement has had such an impact on the Church that it has become known as “the third force in Christendom.”² Church growth specialists are even saying that they expect Pentecostalism to become the largest Christian movement during the next century.³

Until 1960, the term “Pentecostal” referred almost exclusively to those denominations who could trace their origins—directly or indirectly—back to a series of revivalist meetings that were held in a converted stable and storage house on 312 Azusa Street in Los Angeles, California, between 1906 and 1908.⁴ However, during

¹ Walter J. Hollenweger, “From Azusa Street to the Toronto Phenomenon: Historical Roots of the Pentecostal Movement,” *Pentecostal Movements as an Ecumenical Challenge*, ed. Jürgen Moltmann and Karl-Josef Kuschei (London: SCM Press, 1996), 3.

² Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 163; Henry P. Van Dusen, “Third Force in Christendom,” *Life* (June 9, 1958): 113-124; Gordon F. Atter, *The Third Force*, 2d ed., rev. (Caledonia, Ontario: Acts Books, 1970), 1-9; L. Grant McClung, Jr. *Azusa Street and Beyond: Pentecostal Missions and Church Growth in the Twentieth Century* (South Plainfield, New Jersey: Bridge Publishing, 1986), 3.

³ *Ibid.*, 3, 10-11; see also Vinson Synan, ed., *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins* (Plainfield, New Jersey: Logos International, 1975), 1-4; Russell P. Spittler, “Implicit Values in Pentecostal Missions,” *Missiology* 16 (October 1988): 410.

⁴ For more on this see Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971).

the 1960s, some of the phenomena that had previously been associated only with denominational Pentecostalism began to become an “acceptable” part of the worship experience for some Christians within main-line churches.⁵ This new form of Pentecostalism became known as the “Charismatic movement.” Consequently, the word “Pentecostal” is no longer used to refer only to a particular group of denominations. Now it refers to Christians of any denomination whose worship experience includes some sort of “Pentecostal” phenomenon—such as speaking in tongues. Since the rise of the Charismatic movement, traditional Pentecostals are usually referred to as “Classical Pentecostals.” What distinguishes this latter group from the Charismatics, as well as from non-Pentecostals, is their belief that the “normative” Christian experience includes a second blessing post-conversion crisis event, called “the baptism in the Holy Spirit,” that is regularly accompanied by the initial physical sign of speaking in tongues.

The term *Classical Pentecostal* is used in the context of this study to refer to those who believe that Spirit-baptism is a second work of grace separate from and subsequent to conversion, and that the initial physical evidence of this experience is speaking in other tongues (ἑτέρας γλώσσας i.e. languages unknown to the speaker). Although many groups fall within this definition, *Classical Pentecostalism* will be represented here by the two largest Pentecostal organizations in North America: *The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada*, and *The Assemblies of God* in the United States.

Terms such as “holly rollers” or “holy jumpers” are occasionally used by non-

⁵ Anglicanism in 1960, and Roman Catholicism in 1967.

Pentecostals in a derogatory sense to express their dislike for Pentecostal doctrine and/or religious practices.⁶ Adherents of the Movement, however, prefer to use the term “Pentecostal *revival*” because they believe that their movement is the restoration of “New Testament Christianity” to the contemporary Church. For example, Pentecostal T. B. Barratt writes:

. . . much of what is taught are [*sic*] *fundamental* truths, accepted in all evangelical denominations. Yet *there is a difference*, as the Pentecostal revival seeks to return as much as possible to the *doctrine, faith and practice of original Christianity in all manners*. . . What really distinguishes us from the other ones in this way (i.e., baptism with the Holy Spirit) is our definite claim to be baptized in the Holy Ghost in the same way as the 120 on the day of Pentecost, a Spirit baptism accompanied by the speaking in tongues.⁷

Thus, while most non-Pentecostals identify Classical Pentecostal people by their sometimes excessive “charismatic spirituality,” Classical Pentecostals believe that what sets them apart from the rest of Christendom is their doctrine concerning the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

The phenomenal growth of the Pentecostal movement—numerically and cross-denominationally—is perceived by Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals alike as both a blessing and a challenge to the Christian Church. It is certainly a blessing in the sense that it has generated a renewed interest in, and a greater appreciation for, the charismatic and experiential dimensions of the Christian life. Yet at the same time, it has challenged some Christians to rethink their traditional views concerning the nature of the Holy Spirit’s ministry in the lives of God’s people.

⁶ Nils Bloch-Hoell, *The Pentecostal Movement: Its Origin, Development, and Distinctive Character* (New York: Humanities Press, 1964), 1.

⁷ *Urkristendommen gjenoplivet-pinsevekkelsen* (Oslo: n.p., 1934), 14 (emphasis his); trans. and quoted in Bloch-Hoell, *Pentecostal Movement*, 1-2.

The process of "rethinking" traditional views has often taken the form of a heated debate among Classical Pentecostals, Charismatics and non-Pentecostals over the proper definition or understanding of Spirit-baptism.⁸ Classical Pentecostals claim that their doctrine of Spirit-baptism, although not officially formulated until the early years of the twentieth century,⁹ describes *the* normative experience and teaching of the New Testament Church. They further claim that this doctrine should be a normative part of the experience and teaching of the Church today.¹⁰

As part of the Protestant Evangelical tradition, Classical Pentecostals maintain that Scripture is the absolute authority for all faith and practice.¹¹ Yet their doctrine of Spirit-baptism, which they claim is entirely based on Scripture, is clearly a departure from the traditional Evangelical understanding of the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer. So how, and why, do Classical Pentecostals arrive at such a different doctrinal stance than other Evangelicals, despite their common Protestant profession of *sola scriptura*?

This examination does not critique every argument forwarded by Classical Pentecostals in support of their view of Spirit-baptism, nor does it attempt to answer every question that may arise in the course of this study. Hopefully, such questions will encourage others to do further research in this area. Neither is it the purpose of this study to question the validity of various spiritual experiences which Classical

⁸ The terms "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" and "Spirit-baptism" are used interchangeably.

⁹ Assemblies of God, 1914; Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, 1919.

¹⁰ John R. Higgins, Michael L. Dusing and Frank D. Tallman, *An Introduction to Theology: A Classical Pentecostal Perspective* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1993), 157-158; John W. Wyckoff, *Systematic Theology*. rev. ed., ed. Stanley M. Horton (Springfield, Missouri: Logion Press, 1995), 427-433.

¹¹ Mark D. McLean, "Toward a Pentecostal Hermeneutic," *Pneuma* 6 (fall, 1984): 35; Gordon L. Anderson, "Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Part 1," *Paraclete* 28 (winter, 1994): 1-10; Roger Stronstad, "Pentecostal Experience and Hermeneutics," *Paraclete* 26 (winter, 1992): 14-30.

Pentecostals claim to have experienced. It is presupposed that one might possibly have a valid spiritual experience without fully understanding its nature or purpose. For example, while this study examines the Classical Pentecostal *interpretation* of the purpose of glossolalia in relation to Spirit-baptism (i.e., as a sign), it does not question the validity of the experience of glossolalia itself.

The purpose of this study is to examine the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit in light of the Pentecostal "official" position on proper sources of theology. Its aim is to discover the source for this doctrine, and to examine what this entails for Christians who believe that Scripture is the absolute authority for all faith and practice. Since the question of what constitutes proper sources of theology is a hermeneutical one, this study will go beyond simply investigating the theological conclusions of Classical Pentecostals to identify and evaluate the basis on which their doctrine was formulated.

This study does not examine or evaluate the exegetical and hermeneutical practices of all Pentecostals. Rather, it is limited to examining the exegetical and hermeneutical practice of Classical Pentecostals which is reflected in *one doctrinal statement*, that is, their view of Spirit-baptism. Because this doctrine is a *faith statement*, the "evidence" presented by Classical Pentecostals in support of their view will be evaluated according to their own "official" stance on what constitutes proper sources of theology.

Chapter One of this study offers a definition of the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This study presupposes that an accurate definition of this doctrine can be formulated based on statements made by

Pentecostals in published materials (Statements of Faith, books, articles, etc.). Special attention will be given to statements which claim an authoritative basis in defence of the Classical Pentecostal doctrine, such as the "Position Papers of the General Council of the Assemblies of God."¹²

Chapter Two traces the theological roots of Classical Pentecostalism in order to determine what historical factors, if any, may have contributed to the formation of their doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is assumed that doctrinal statements are defined within a larger theological framework. Therefore, to understand better the doctrine of Spirit-baptism it is necessary to examine it in light of the historical- theological context from which it emerged. This survey includes some key historical-theological developments of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries which seem to have had a major influence on Classical Pentecostal theology. This study presupposes that any factors which may have influenced and/or contributed to the development of the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism can be discovered by surveying the historical and religious roots of the movement. It is argued that this distinctively "Pentecostal" doctrine incorporates several theological themes that were part of the wider Evangelical tradition long before Pentecostalism could ever be identified as a distinctive movement.

Chapter Three outlines the Classical Pentecostal position on what constitutes proper sources of theology. This includes an examination of their doctrine of Scripture in order to determine their official stance concerning the role of Scripture in deciding matters of faith and practice. It also identifies the Classical Pentecostal

¹² (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1981).

view of the role of religious tradition and religious experience in defining one's theology. It is assumed that an accurate definition of the Classical Pentecostal stance on what constitutes proper sources of theology can be formulated based on statements made by them in published materials ("Statements of Faith," books, articles, etc.). The Classical Pentecostal view on proper sources of theology will be considered as part of the criteria for evaluating the internal consistency of their overall (systematic) theological stance.

Chapter four defines the Classical Pentecostal "official" position concerning proper exegetical and hermeneutical methodology for applying Scripture to the development of doctrinal statements. For the purpose of clarification, a distinction is made between exegetical methodology, hermeneutical methodology, and hermeneutical practice. The terms *exegetical methodology* and *hermeneutical methodology* both refer to those principles or rules of interpretation which are actually stated and/or taught by a person or organization. *Hermeneutical practice* refers to how a person or organization actually interprets the meaning of a biblical text and applies that meaning to the contemporary situation. Such a distinction is necessary because what one claims as proper methodology may or may not be evident in his or her actual practice. It is assumed that an accurate definition can be formulated based on statements made by them in published materials. The main concern in this chapter is not what Classical Pentecostals practice, but what they actually *state* as their position on this matter.

Chapter Five outlines the biblical basis which Classical Pentecostals claim as support for their doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It begins with a brief

restatement of the Classical Pentecostal interpretation and application of five passages in the book of Acts which are most commonly used by Classical Pentecostals to establish and/or defend their doctrinal view. This is followed by a re-examination of these Acts passages in light of their historical, theological and literary contexts.

Although this study is not limited to the grammatico-historical method of interpretation, special attention has been given to this method because it is the one endorsed by Classical Pentecostals in their “official” stance on proper exegetical and hermeneutical methodology (see Chapter 4). The *grammatico-historical method* refers to the method of exegesis that seeks to understand the meaning of a biblical text in light of its historical background, together with grammatical, syntactical and linguistic factors. The objective is to discover what the author of a text meant when he wrote to the original recipients. Once the “original meaning” is discovered, the text can then be interpreted and applied authoritatively to the contemporary situation. Consequently, by stating that they are committed to the grammatico-historical method, Classical Pentecostals must demonstrate that their doctrine of Spirit-baptism—which they say is based primarily on five Acts passages—reflects accurately what the author of the book of Acts intended to teach. The purpose of this investigation into the Classical Pentecostal interpretation and application of these passages is not to offer an alternative interpretation that addresses every question or objective that Pentecostals might have. Rather, it is to investigate the actual hermeneutical practice of Classical Pentecostals, and to alert the reader to some exegetical considerations that seriously challenge the Classical Pentecostal

view.

Chapter Six concludes this study by evaluating the Classical Pentecostal Doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit in light of their "official" position on proper exegetical and hermeneutical methodology, and on what constitutes proper sources of theology. The aim is to examine what the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism reveals about their level of commitment to the Protestant confession of *sola scriptura*.

Finally, some suggestions are made concerning the practical application of this study. It is hoped that by identifying the source of the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, non-Pentecostals will be better equipped to respond to the Classical Pentecostal claim that their doctrine of Spirit-baptism describes an experience that should be considered "normative" for all Christians. It is also hoped that this study will encourage Classical Pentecostals to re-examine their doctrine, and to allow for open discussion and debate on this important issue within their own ranks.

CHAPTER ONE

A DEFINITION OF THE CLASSICAL PENTECOSTAL DOCTRINE OF THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Article VI, paragraph 3 of the “Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths” in the Constitution and By-laws of the General Conference of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada¹ states:

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience in which the believer yields control of himself to the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11; Acts 1:5; Eph 5:18). Through this he comes to know Christ in a more intimate way (John 16:13-15), and receives power to witness and grow spiritually (2 Cor 3:18; Acts 1:8). Believers should earnestly seek the baptism in the Holy Spirit according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8). The initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance (2 Cor 3:18; Acts 1:8). This experience is distinct from, and subsequent to, the experience of the new birth (Acts 8:12-17; 10:44-46).

The distinctive² “Classical Pentecostal” doctrine of Spirit-baptism includes three elements: (1) It is an enduement of supernatural power for life and service; (2) It is an experience separate from and subsequent to conversion; and (3) The initial evidence of having received the baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in

¹ Although the exact wording may vary, the theological sentiments expressed in this statement are the same as those found in the “Statements of Faith” by most Classical Pentecostal groups (e.g., “Statement of Fundamental Truths” of the AOG, Article 7; “Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths” of the PAON, Article V, Paragraph 13).

² The term “distinctive” is used here to indicate its uniqueness in relation to other Non-Classical Pentecostal views. For example, although Gordon Fee holds credentials with the AOG, his view cannot be called “Classical Pentecostal” because he does not affirm their view of subsequence or the necessity of tongues as initial evidence. See Gordon Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in NT Hermeneutics* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1991); *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1994).

"other tongues" (glossolalia). In order to define this doctrine, each of these will be explained in light of statements made by Classical Pentecostals in published materials.

An Enduement of Supernatural Power for Life and Service

Classical Pentecostals understand their experience of Spirit-baptism as an enduement of supernatural power for life and service. J. R. Williams writes that Pentecostals ". . . urge that in addition—and for an entirely different reason than salvation—there is another action of the Holy Spirit that equips the believer for further service."³ This view is evident in the writings of the earliest pioneers of Pentecostalism. For example, those affiliated with the Azusa Street revival of 1906-1909 in Los Angeles⁴ called it a "gift of power upon the sanctified life. . ."⁵

Frank Bartleman, who wrote an eyewitness account of this revival states,

Cursed with unbelief we are struggling upward, only with the utmost difficulty, for the restoration of that glorious light and power, so bountifully bestowed on the church, but long since lost. . . . But here we are the restoration of the very experience of 'Pentecost,' with the 'latter rain,' a restoration of power, in greater glory, to finish the work begun.⁶

This view of Spirit-baptism as "power-for-service" should be understood in

³ J. Rodman Williams, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit," in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess, Gary B. McGee, and Patrick Alexander (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 46.

⁴ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 95-116.

⁵ *The Apostolic Faith* (September, 1906): 2. Quoted in Gordon D. Fee, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Its Purpose(s)," *Pneuma* 7:2 (fall 1985): 84.

⁶ Frank Bartleman, *How "Pentecost" Came to Los Angeles - How It Was in the Beginning* (Los Angeles, California: the author, 1925; reprint, *Azusa Street: The Roots of Modern-day Pentecost*. South Plainfield, New Jersey: Bridge Publishing, 1980), 89 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

light of the eschatological framework that informed the early Pentecostals' self-understanding. Their perception of the imminence of the Lord's return was primarily chronological in focus.⁷ They believed that they were *literally* living in the "last days." This view of imminence, along with the belief that their movement itself was a sign of the end times, produced a sense of urgency to preach the Gospel to the whole world before Christ's return. They believed that the purpose for which they were being empowered by God was ". . . the evangelization of the whole world preparatory to the Lord's return, and for all of the unfolding will and word of God."⁸

Although eschatology is not mentioned in the "Statement of Faith" in the September 1906 edition of *The Apostolic Faith*, and no Pentecostal has ever claimed eschatological expectation as an authoritative basis for belief, a historical survey of Classical Pentecostal writings suggests that there is a direct link between their eschatology and pneumatology. In the October 1906 edition of *The Apostolic Faith* Bartleman writes, "We are to drop out of the centuries of the church's failure, the long, dismal 'dark ages,' and telescoping time be now fully restored to pristine power, victory and glory. . . The fullness of time seems to have come for the church's complete restoration."⁹ Thus, the Pentecostal movement itself was interpreted as God's restoration of "New Testament

⁷ *The Apostolic Faith Pamphlet: The Latter Rain* no. 26. (n.d.).

⁸ W. F. Carothers, "The Apostolic Faith Movement," *Word and Work*. 29 (April 1907): 117. Quoted in Edith L. Blumhofer, ed., *Modern Christian Revivals* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 148.

⁹ *The Apostolic Faith* (October 1906), Reprinted in Bartleman, *Azusa Street*, 89-90.

Christianity” to the contemporary Church.¹⁰ McClung notes: “Pentecostal sermons, articles, and statements are replete with this persuasion that ‘God has raised us up.’ Pentecostals have seen themselves at the climax of two thousand years of Church history and feel a kinship to the early church. In them, they feel, God has restored apostolic Christianity.”¹¹ Consequently, the activities of the Holy Spirit recorded in the book of Acts (as interpreted by Classical Pentecostals) were understood as normative for the contemporary church, and Christians were expected to experience the same spiritual manifestations as those of the first century. This position is still maintained by Classical Pentecostals.¹²

Throughout the history of the movement, Pentecostals have believed and taught that the purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is primarily power for missionary endeavor and Christian service.¹³ They claim that this belief is based solely on Scripture, citing the two biblical passages where Luke records Jesus’ final instructions to his followers before his ascension: Luke 24:49 (“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high”)¹⁴ and Acts 1:8 (“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem,

¹⁰ L. Grant McClung, Jr., *Azusa Street and Beyond* (South Plainfield, New Jersey: Bridge Publishing, 1986): 52.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² See Gordon F. Atter, *The Third Force* (Caledonia, Ontario: Acts Books, 1970), 6-7; John W. Wyckoff, *Systematic Theology*, rev. ed., ed. Stanley M. Horton (Springfield, Missouri: Logion Press, 1995), 444-447.

¹³ See Myer Pearlman, *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1937), 309; J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), 179; Robert P. Menzies, “The Distinctive Character of Luke’s Pneumatology,” *Pneuma* 25 (fall 1991): 18.

¹⁴ All quotations are from the “New International Version” unless otherwise indicated.

and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth").¹⁵ Pentecostals, as do other evangelicals, believe that here Jesus was referring to the Day of Pentecost when the disciples would be baptized in the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:1-4). They understand this reception of "power from on high," not as conversion-initiation,¹⁶ but as a dimension of power that is *added* to the Christian life.¹⁷ Of course, this is a very common non-Pentecostal evangelical understanding of the text. What is distinctive about the Classical Pentecostal view is that they also believe that this event, along with the other instances of "Spirit-baptism" recorded in Acts (cf. Acts 8:4-19; 10:44-46; 11:15-17; and 19:1-7), describe the normative pattern whereby all Christians should be empowered for life and service.¹⁸

The logical conclusion to the above argument is that only those who have experienced Spirit-baptism according to the Classical Pentecostal definition are sufficiently empowered for life and service. Its practical implication is that "in Pentecostal churches, positions of [professional, pastoral] leadership are available only to those who can testify that they have been baptized in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues."¹⁹ "To ensure the perpetuity of Spirit-baptism as evidenced by tongues, the PAOC in 1938 at a

¹⁵ See Ralph Riggs, *The Spirit Himself* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1949), 80-82; L. Thomas Holdcroft, *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Interpretation* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1962), 108-110; John W. Wyckoff, *Systematic Theology*, 449-451.

¹⁶ See James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1970); Fredrick D. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970); Anthony A. Hoekema, *Holy Spirit-baptism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972).

¹⁷ Pearlman, *Knowing the Doctrines*, 309-313.

¹⁸ Holdcroft, *The Holy Spirit*, 107-112.

¹⁹ Mark D. McLean, *Systematic Theology*, rev. ed., ed. Stanley M. Horton (Springfield, Missouri: Logion Press, 1995), 388.

General conference in Calgary, passed a formal resolution that endorsed what was already being practiced namely, that no workers receive credentials who have not experienced their personal baptism evidenced by tongues."²⁰ Some modern Pentecostals, such as Gordon L. Anderson, recognize an inherent problem in this position. Anderson believes that it is problematic because it "...would mean that non-Pentecostals, that is, non-tongues speakers, have no power or gifts for ministry."²¹ He attempts to resolve this by offering a new model for understanding the baptism in the Holy Spirit in which he defines Spirit-baptism as the reception of "...*more* power for ministry, *more* gifts, *more* miracle working ability, and many other added dimensions of spiritual power..."²² Anderson argues that "non-Spirit baptized" Christians do possess *some* spiritual power for life and service, but only a limited amount in comparison to what is available to them through Spirit-baptism. Thus, the power that one receives when he or she is baptized in the Holy Spirit is one of quantity or degree, not quality.

Anderson's "clarified" definition of Spirit-baptism represents a view that is held by many contemporary Pentecostals.²³ However, this is a move away from the Classical view. A historical survey of their writings clearly shows that the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit defines "power for life and service" qualitatively. It is not *more* of the same, but rather, a whole new

²⁰ Randall Holm, "A Paradigmatic Analysis of Authority Within Pentecostalism," Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Laval, 1995, 146.

²¹ Gordon L. Anderson, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit, Initial Evidence, and a New Model," *Paraclete* (fall 1993): 6.

²² *Ibid.*, 5.

²³ Cf. David Lim, *Spiritual Gifts: A Fresh Look* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1991), 14; Melvin L. Hodges, *When The Spirit Comes* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1972), 25.

dimension of Christian experience commonly called "life in the Spirit."²⁴

An Experience Separate from and Subsequent to Conversion

A second element of the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit concerns what they believe regarding the relationship of this experience to conversion.²⁵ Pentecostals hold that Spirit-baptism is an experience that is *separate from and subsequent to conversion*. The issue of separability focuses on the nature of these experiences, while the issue of subsequence focuses on the timing. Because these two issues are interrelated, they must be examined together.

Classical Pentecostals sometimes explain their doctrine of Spirit-baptism by making a distinction between "baptism *by* the Spirit" and "baptism *in* the Spirit." They claim that these two "biblical" phrases refer to two distinct (spiritual) baptisms. The first occurs at conversion when the convert is placed into the body of Christ *by* the Holy Spirit. The second occurs when "...the surrendered believer is taken by Christ and placed into the all-pervading and saturating Holy Spirit; it is indeed, 'baptism in the Spirit.'²⁶ In order to "prove" the validity of their argument, Pentecostals refer to the different uses of the prepositions "by" and "in" (or "with") in Scripture. For example, they point out that in Acts 1:5, when Jesus was

²⁴ See Riggs, *The Spirit Himself*, 79-82; Holdcroft, *The Holy Spirit*, 107-110.

²⁵ The term "conversion" is used here to signify the point at which a person becomes a Christian and receives new life in Christ.

²⁶ Holdcroft, *The Holy Spirit*, 129.

discussing the believer's baptism in the Holy Spirit, he used the preposition "in."²⁷ But in 1 Cor 12:13, when Paul was discussing the believer's baptism into the body of Christ, he used the preposition "by." Of course, these references are to English translations only. In the Greek text the prepositions "by" and "in" (or "with") translate the same word ἐν (e.g., Acts 1:5 [ἐν = with] and 1 Cor 12:13 [ἐν = by]). Stanley M. Horton, one of the few Pentecostal writers to mention this fact, argues that ἐν should be translated "by" in 1 Cor 12:13 ". . . because the context justifies it."²⁸ However, he does not state what criteria he used for determining the context of this passage.²⁹

Classical Pentecostals believe that there are essentially three ways in which the Holy Spirit works in the life of a believer.³⁰ These are identified as the indwelling of the Spirit, the baptism in the Spirit, and the infilling of the Spirit. The issues of separability and subsequence are used to describe how Spirit-baptism relates to the *indwelling* and the *infilling* of the Spirit.

Classical Pentecostals affirm that every believer is somehow indwelled by the Holy Spirit. Ralph Riggs states their position well:

In all descriptions and the use of different terms to explain the

²⁷ ἐν is actually translated "with" (not "in") in Matt 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16 and John 1:33 in the text of the following English versions of the Bible: NIV, KJV, NKJV, NRSV, RSV, NEB, NASB, NLT, BBE, DBY, YLT, CEV.

²⁸ Melvin E. Dieter, Anthony A. Hoekema, Stanley M. Horton, et. al. *Five views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 129.

²⁹ Stanley M. Horton, *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1976), 86-88, 214-216. cf. William W. Menzies and Stanley M. Horton, *Bible doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, Missouri: Logion Press, 1993), 129.

³⁰ Some Pentecostal groups associated with the holiness movement in the United States view "entire sanctification" as a second crisis experience, and Spirit-baptism as a third crisis experience. However, this position is not held by most Classical Pentecostal groups (e.g., PAOC, PAON, AOG).

conversion of the believer, it is clearly stated that the Holy Spirit is the agent at conversion. He convicts men of sin; He sanctifies or sets them apart unto salvation; and they are born of the Spirit. He witnesses that they are children of God. They who are Christ's have the Spirit of Christ. The Holy Spirit baptizes them into the body of Christ, and the Holy Spirit resides in their hearts. Thus we see that all true born-again believers have the Holy Spirit.³¹

The statements made by Classical Pentecostals concerning the role of the Holy Spirit in the life and service of a "non-Spirit baptized" believer are ambiguous. Sometimes they simply say that a believer "receives" the Holy Spirit at conversion. However, they clearly do not believe that the indwelling of the Spirit provides the necessary power for life and service.³² In fact, in one of the "Position Papers of the General Council of the Assemblies of God," the relative "success" of "non-Spirit baptized" ministers is attributed to "natural aptitudes and different levels of ability." They state:

What about truly born-again people who have accomplished great things for the Lord but who do not speak with tongues? There can be no question that dedicated believers who do not speak with tongues are indwelt by the Spirit and have accomplished great things for God. In considering this question, however, every student of God's Word must determine whether he will base doctrine on God's Word or on experiences of even the most devout believers.

. . . It must also be noted that all people have different natural aptitudes and different levels of ability. . . . It is only God, however, who knows how much more these believers could accomplish if they accepted His full provision for the implementation of their God-given ministries.³³

In the Classical Pentecostal construct, the indwelling of the Spirit is only the first of three ways in which the Holy Spirit works in the believer's life.

³¹ Riggs, *The Spirit Himself*, 44. cf. Pearlman, *Knowing the Doctrines*, 306-307.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ "The Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit," *Position Papers of The General Council of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1981), 7.

Believers who are only indwelt by the Spirit do not have the necessary power for life and service. Therefore, they are exhorted to “. . . ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire...”³⁴

Classical Pentecostals affirm that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a “second blessing” whereby a believer receives power for life and service as he or she yields control of himself or herself to the Holy Spirit. Myer Pearlman calls Spirit-baptism “. . . another mode of operation, [the Spirit’s] energizing work.”³⁵

Holdcroft notes:

Pentecostals generally understand the word *baptism* to be derived from a root that connotes a complete overwhelming or an enveloping on all sides which is the result of being dipped or plunged into a suitable medium. . . . Thus, when the word *baptism* is associated with the believer’s experience in his relationship to the Holy Spirit, it conveys the idea of a saturation of the inner being of a human by the heavenly divine Being.³⁶

This graphic description of Spirit-baptism is common among Pentecostal writers. It is intended to illustrate their understanding of the effect that the Spirit has upon a believer as he or she enters into a whole new experience of “life in the Spirit.”³⁷ Spirit-baptism is believed to be so overwhelming that one’s experience of it is unmistakable. As one yields himself or herself to the Holy Spirit, he takes control of every part of one’s being.

³⁴ “Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths,” *The Constitution and by-laws of the General Council of the Assemblies of God*: Article 7.

³⁵ Pearlman, *Knowing the Doctrines*, 309.

³⁶ Holdcroft, *The Holy Spirit*, 107.

³⁷ This concept is based on a literalistic interpretation of the word “baptism.” Myer Pearlman claims that this term is “. . . used figuratively to describe immersion in the energizing power of the Divine Spirit” (*Knowing the Doctrines*, 310). However, when discussing Spirit-baptism, Pentecostals make no clear distinction between the figurative and literal use of this term.

Although Classical Pentecostals emphasize the baptism in the Holy Spirit, they maintain that this experience should be followed by many similar experiences, which they call the "infilling of the Spirit." Holdcroft states, "Though the baptism in the Spirit, which is an entrance into a new realm, may not be repeatable, the continuing filling of the Spirit is the believer's privilege throughout his earthly life."³⁸ Thus, the third way in which the Holy Spirit works in the lives of believers is to keep them filled with power for life and service.³⁹

But why do Spirit baptized believers need repeated *post*-Spirit-baptism "infillings?" The problem, according to Classical Pentecostals, is that "it is not possible for Christians to maintain the same spiritual level. There are mysterious risings and fallings of the spiritual and mental barometer due to the storms of life. The soul has periods of high and low pressures."⁴⁰ Since "life in the Spirit" means a total yielding of oneself to God, the benefits of Spirit-baptism may be diminished due to one's disobedience or neglect of spiritual matters (e.g., prayer). Frank M. Boyd states, "We should receive a constant infusion by abiding in the Lord and waiting on Him. From time to time, however, there may come special refillings, particularly if we have grown careless of our communion with the Lord, or if we face a situation which calls for uncommon spiritual strength."⁴¹ Therefore, one must continually seek "fresh infillings" of the Holy Spirit. Classical

³⁸ Holdcroft, *The Holy Spirit*, 137.

³⁹ John R. Hoggins, Michael L. Dusing and Frank D. Tallman, *An Introduction to Theology: A Classical Pentecostal Perspective* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 1993), 148.

⁴⁰ Frank M. Boyd, *Baptized in the Spirit* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1996), 54.

⁴¹ "Keeping Filled," *Paraclete* (spring 1988): 26.

Pentecostals interpret Paul's exhortations to be "filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18), to "Walk in the Spirit" (Gal 5:16), et cetera, as instructions for maintaining the Spirit-filled life.⁴² They believe that this may be accomplished by continually seeking new infillings or *re*-fillings of the Spirit.

The issues of separability and subsequence are essential aspects of the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism because they are used to define a two-blessing or two-step spirituality. First, one is indwelt by the Spirit at conversion. This experience provides all the benefits of the Christian life, except the necessary "power from on high" for ministry and evangelism. Second, and as a second work of grace, the believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit and enters into a new dimension of spirituality. "Spirit-baptism," says Holdcroft, "is the opening of the door to a whole new Christian experience, particularly in relating the believer to the living Christ."⁴³ "From the beginning of the twentieth century until the present, Pentecostals have believed that the full dynamic of the Spirit's empowerment comes *only* with the special, distinctive baptism in the Holy Spirit experience."⁴⁴ This whole new dimension of spirituality is maintained by many subsequent infillings or *re*-fillings of the Spirit.

The Initial Evidence of Having Received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

A third element of the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is what they believe concerning "initial evidence." Pentecostals affirm

⁴² Robert L. Brandt, *The Pentecostal Promise* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1972), 23; Holdcroft, *The Holy Spirit*, 86, 136-137.

⁴³ Holdcroft, *The Holy Spirit*, 108.

⁴⁴ John W. Wyckoff, *Systematic Theology*, 448.

that the initial physical evidence of Spirit-baptism is "speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance" (i.e., glossolalia). They deny even the possibility of a non-tongues speaking person having been baptized in the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵

The purpose of glossolalia as "initial evidence," say Classical Pentecostals, is to indicate to the believer (and to others) that he or she has entered into the new realm of "life in the Spirit." In other words, this is how Christians know that they have received the "second blessing" of spirituality. Ralph Riggs notes:

The Spirit-filled realm and life is so exceedingly important for the Christian that God has arranged it so that one can know very definitely whether or not he has entered into this experience. There is no mere "hope so" or need of being deceived in the matter, for God has given a physical and audible proof of one's having received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶

The reason Classical Pentecostals refer to glossolalia as the *initial* evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is that they believe it is the first of many "continuing evidences" of the Spirit-filled life.⁴⁷ They sometimes list such subsequent evidences as "boldness in witnessing", "holiness of life", "new interest in the Scriptures", "intensified consecration to God and dedication to His work," "a more active love for Christ, for his Word, and for the lost," "an ability to worship

⁴⁵ See Charles Parham, "A Critical Analysis of the Tongues Question," *The Apostolic Faith* (June 1925): 2-6; Holdcroft, *The Holy Spirit*, 120; John R. Higgins, Michael L. Dusing and Frank D. Tallman, *An Introduction to Theology: A Classical Pentecostal Perspective* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1993), 150; Stanley M. Horton, ed., *Systematic Theology*, 439-442.

⁴⁶ Riggs, *The Spirit Himself*, 84-85.

⁴⁷ Brandt, *The Pentecostal Promise*, 20.

God "in spirit and in truth," and "operating in the gifts of the Spirit."⁴⁸ However, the *sense* in which these are considered "continuing evidences" of Spirit-baptism is not clearly explained.

Classical Pentecostals insist that their doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is based entirely on Scripture. To support their view, they cite five passages in the book of Acts that they claim teach *the* normative pattern of Christian experience for every believer: (1) Acts 2:1-13 — *the day of Pentecost*; (2) Acts 8:14-19 — *the Samaritans*; (3) Acts 9:17, 18 — *the "baptism" of Saul of Tarsus*; (4) Acts 10:44-46 — *Cornelius' household*; and (5) Acts 19:1-7 — *the Ephesians*. Their interpretation and application of these passages will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.

⁴⁸ For other examples cf. Horton, *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit*, 261; Menzies and Horton, *Bible Doctrines*, 126; and Atter, *The Third Force*, 122.

CHAPTER TWO

THE THEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF THE CLASSICAL PENTECOSTAL DOCTRINE OF THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

To fully appreciate the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism, one must view it in light of the historical-theological context from which it emerged. Of course, in a paper of this size it is impossible to give a detailed account of every historical event, theological concept or sociological factor that may have influenced the formation of the Pentecostal movement.¹ Therefore, the material presented in this chapter should be understood as a *sample* of some key historical-theological developments of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries which had a major influence on Classical Pentecostal theology.

Although the Classical Pentecostal definition of Spirit-baptism is distinctively "Pentecostal," it incorporates several theological themes that were

¹ For more information on the history of the Pentecostal movement in the United States see Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1971); Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Francis Asbury Press, 1987); and M. E. Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1980). For a detailed review of the history of the PAOC, the following works should be consulted, Gordon Atter, *The Third Force* (Peterborough, Ontario: College Press, 1962); Gloria Kulbeck, *What God hath Wrought: History of the PAOC* (Toronto: The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, 1958); Zelma Argue, *Contending for the Faith* (Winnipeg: Messenger of God Publishing House, 1928); Ron Kydd, "Pentecostal Charismatics and the Canadian Denominations," *Eglise et Theologie* 13 (May 82): 211-231; Thomas Miller, "The Canadian Azusa: The Hebden Mission in Toronto," *Pneuma* 8 (spring 1986): 5-29; Thomas Miller, "The Significance of A.H. Argue for Pentecostal Historiography," *Pneuma* (fall 1986): 120-158. Brian Ross, "James Eustace Purdie: The Story of Pentecostal Theological Education," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Society* 17 (April 1975): 94-103; Thomas Miller, *Canadian Pentecostals: A History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada*, ed. William Griffin (Mississauga, Ontario: Full Gospel Publishing House, 1994).

part of the wider evangelical tradition of the nineteenth century. This chapter will trace the historical development of these themes, and show how they helped create a theological environment in which the formation of the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism was not only possible, but probable.

John Wesley: The "Second Blessing" Experience

The theological roots of modern Classical Pentecostalism extend all the way back to John Wesley and his doctrine of Christian Perfection.² Although most Pentecostals do not affirm Wesley's teaching concerning entire sanctification, they are, nevertheless, indebted to him because he provided the basis for a theological model that was later developed by others, and then used by early Pentecostals to define their doctrine of Spirit-baptism.

Wesley's contribution to Classical Pentecostal theology is the basic concept of a "second blessing" in terms of a crisis experience. Yet, Wesley's formula of a "second blessing" was quite different from that promoted by some of his followers. His concept of "Christian perfection," which he understood not as absolute sinless perfection but as perfect love for God and one's neighbour, was primarily "goal-oriented." In other words, he believed that this was something a Christian might experience after a long and gradual process of sanctification.³ Wesley maintained that one's life-long quest for holiness should be motivated by the *possibility* of attaining Christian perfection in this life, and that this completed

² The terms "Christian Perfection" and "entire sanctification" are used interchangeably.

³ For Wesley's own explanation of his view see John Wesley, *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, vol. 11 (London: William Nichols, 1865), 366-446.

the process of holiness that began at conversion.⁴ Of course, this is not something that a believer can attain through self effort. Rather, it is something granted by God as a gift, and is only attainable by *sola fides*.⁵

Wesley's followers, however, focused primarily on the "crisis" aspect of the experience, and tended to de-emphasize his teaching on the gradual work of sanctification.⁶ Eventually, his doctrine of Christian Perfection, as the consummation of a long and gradual process of sanctification, was reinterpreted as a crisis experience that yields instant results. According to Wesley's followers, this "second work of grace" is made available to every believer, and may be experienced by faith at any time after conversion.⁷ In effect, this eliminates the need for a process of sanctification. Thus, Wesley's understanding of entire sanctification, which stresses "the importance of spiritual disciplines," is replaced by a definition that focuses on ". . . the immediacy of God's action upon a decision of faith."⁸

Wesley's doctrine of Christian Perfection provided the *basic* concept that is at the heart of the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism: the idea of a separate work of grace subsequent to conversion. Bradley Noel has pointed out

⁴ See Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, 19; Melvin E. Dieter, Anthony A. Hoekema, Stanley M. Horton, et. al. *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 17; William R. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley* (New York: University Press of America, n.d.), 242.

⁵ Harald Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Francis Asbury Press, 1980), 133.

⁶ See Charles E. Jones, *Perfectionist Persuasion* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1974); John Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956).

⁷ Donald W. Dayton, "Theological Roots of Pentecostalism," *Pneuma* (spring 1980): 7-9; Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, 18-19.

⁸ Henry H. Knight III, "From Aldersgate to Azusa: Wesley and the Renewal of Pentecostal Spirituality," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 8 (1996): 83.

that “without the theological contribution of Wesley, the Pentecostal conception of subsequence would likely have never occurred.”⁹ This is probably true.

However, Wesley’s concept of a “second blessing” certainly would not have been “translated” into Pentecostal theology a century and a half later if it had not been reinterpreted by others who emphasized its “crisis” aspect.

John Fletcher

The first to begin reinterpreting Wesley’s doctrine of Christian Perfection was his co-worker and successor, John Fletcher. Fletcher made three important contributions to “second blessing” theology that helped form the theological framework in which the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism was formulated. First, he made a distinction between sanctified and ordinary Christians. He explains this difference between himself and Wesley in a letter to Mary Bosanquet, written in 1778:

You will find my views on this matter in Mr. Wesley’s sermons on Christian Perfection and on Scriptural Christianity, with this difference, that I would distinguish more exactly between the believers baptized with the Pentecostal power of the Holy Ghost, and the believer who, like the Apostles after our Lord’s ascension, is not yet filled with that power.¹⁰

Second, Fletcher began to cast Wesley’s doctrine of Christian Perfection in “Pentecostal language.” According to John Knight, Fletcher frequently referred

⁹ Bradley Truman Noel, “Gordon Fee’s Contribution to Contemporary Pentecostalism’s Theology of Baptism in the Holy Spirit,” Unpublished M.A. Thesis (1998), Acadia Divinity College, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 13.

¹⁰ Letter of John Fletcher to Mary Bosanquet, dated March, 7, 1778, reprinted in Luker Tyerman, *Wesley’s Designated Successor* (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1882), 411-412.

to the experience of Christian Perfection as "receiving the Holy Ghost."¹¹ Of course, Wesley objected to this terminology. In a letter to Joseph Benson, dated December 28, 1770, he writes, "If they like to call this 'receiving the Holy Ghost,' they may: only the phrase in that sense is not scriptural and not quite proper; for they all 'receive the Holy Ghost' when they were justified."¹²

Third, Fletcher divided salvation-history into three dispensations: (1) The age of the Father, in which God deals with the people of Israel under the Law; (2) The age of the Son, in which God provides salvation through the cross; and (3) The age of the Spirit, in which God works in "Holy Ghost power" in the church.¹³ Fletcher also suggested that each dispensation represented a stage of the Christian's experience, and that salvation-history should be reproduced in the life of every individual believer. In fact, he encouraged believers to ". . . enter the full dispensation of the Spirit . . ." until they live ". . . in the pentecostal glory of the church . . . baptized with the Holy Ghost [and be] . . . endued with power from on high."¹⁴ Thus, according to Fletcher, one enters the experience of "the age of the Spirit" by a second blessing called the "baptism of the Holy Ghost."¹⁵

This brief sketch of Fletcher's "reformation" of Wesley's doctrine of

¹¹ John Allan Knight, *The Holiness Pilgrimage* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1973), 68.

¹² Letter of John Wesley to Joseph Benson, dated December 28, 1770, reprinted in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, vol. 12 (London: William Nichols, 1865), 388-389.

¹³ John William Fletcher, *The Works of the Reverend John Fletcher*, vol. 2 (New York: Lane and Scott, 1851, reprint, Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishers, 1974), 523.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 356, 632-669.

¹⁵ For more on Fletcher's theological views cf. John Allan Knight, *The Holiness Pilgrimage* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1973): 68-71; John Allan Knight, "John Fletcher and the Early Methodist Tradition" Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1966.

Christian Perfection demonstrates just how susceptible it was to reinterpretation. It also shows that some of the key concepts and terminology used by Classical Pentecostals to define their doctrine of Spirit-baptism were being used by others long before Pentecostalism could ever be identified as a distinctive movement.

Although Fletcher's views did not gain wide support in early Methodism, they were influential in the development of Holiness theology in America in the nineteenth century.¹⁶

The Methodist/Holiness Movement in America

In 1784, John Wesley sent a delegation to Baltimore, Maryland to formally organize the Methodist Church in America. In their first conference, held in December of that year, Methodists stated that their purpose as a movement was "...to reform the continent and spread scriptural holiness over these lands."¹⁷ Consequently, the doctrine of Christian Perfection became a major theme in their preaching until about the mid-1790s.¹⁸

The early pioneers of American Methodism were faithful to Wesley's theology and therefore taught a doctrine of Christian Perfection that was consistent with his definition. However, the doctrine taught by Holiness preachers during the nineteenth century was much closer to Fletcher's version of it. This change in perspective transpired in the form of a "revival movement."

By 1800 the doctrine of Christian Perfection had become a neglected topic

¹⁶ See Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, 62.

¹⁷ Quoted in Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, 20.

¹⁸ J. F. Hurst, *The History of Methodism*, vol. 3 (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1902), 1252.

in Methodist preaching and practice.¹⁹ By the time it was reasserted in the 1820s and 1830s, nearly a generation had passed. For many Methodists, a renewed interest in personal holiness sparked an interest in the writings of John Wesley and his contemporaries (including John Fletcher). However, this new generation did not show the same kind of loyalty toward Wesley as did the early pioneers of American Methodism. They developed a new expression of "Christian Perfection" that was better suited to the nineteenth-century American context. In doing so, they incorporated many of Fletcher's ideas into their definition.

Phoebe Palmer

Perhaps the best example of this new expression of Wesley's doctrine of Christian Perfection is found in the teaching of Phoebe Palmer. In 1835, Sarah A. Lankford began holding "Tuesday Meetings for the Promotion of Holiness" in her parlor. By 1839, Palmer became the leader of this group, and began teaching a "shorter way" to holiness. According to Palmer, one could skip the *process* of sanctification altogether and be instantly sanctified through the "baptism of the Holy Ghost." She believed that one receives this second blessing by taking three simple steps: (1) One must totally consecrate himself or herself to God by "placing all on the altar;" (2) Once the conditions of consecration are met, one must exercise his or her faith by "taking God at his word," and claiming what he has promised; and (3) One must affirm his or her faith by giving public testimony to having received this experience, and by publicly praising God for keeping his

¹⁹ John Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), 188.

promise to sanctify wholly. Palmer believed that this last step (i.e., "positive confession") is vital because one's failure to testify is a sure sign of unbelief, and a lack of faith is a sure way of losing the blessing of entire sanctification.²⁰

Palmer also taught that this blessing, which is received by faith alone, needed no "sensible evidence."²¹ In other words, the believer should not look for an outward sign or an inward feeling for gaining assurance of having received the second blessing. The source of one's assurance, she asserted, is the promise of God written in Scripture. "Palmer saw Scripture as a set of law-like promises which bind both God and humanity, such that to believe they are true and to meet the conditions is to receive the promised blessing."²² Therefore, one receives the second blessing by simply claiming it by faith.

In the late 1850s, Palmer began using "pentecostal language" to explain her doctrine of Christian Perfection. In 1859, she published *The Promise of the Father*, in which she referred to holiness as "power from on high."²³ She also began using the phrase "baptism of the Holy Spirit," which she viewed as synonymous with entire sanctification.²⁴

It is difficult to determine just how much Palmer's theology was influenced by Fletcher. Yet, the striking similarities between their definitions of Christian Perfection, and their use of "pentecostal language" to explain it, suggest that she

²⁰ Phoebe Palmer, *The Way of Holiness*, in *The Devotional Writings of Phoebe Palmer* ed. Donald W. Dayton. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985), 37-38.

²¹ *Ibid.*; Charles Edward White, *The Beauty of Holiness* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Francis Asbury Press, 1986), 140.

²² Henry Knight III, "From Aldersgate to Azusa," 90.

²³ (Boston, Massachusetts: Henry V. Degen, 1859), 22.

²⁴ cf. Richard M. Riss, *A Survey of 20th-Century Revival Movements in North America* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1988), 18.

probably borrowed a great deal from him.

Palmer's "Tuesday Meetings for the Promotion of Holiness" quickly became a major attraction for many prominent holiness teachers, and soon her theology of a "shorter way" to holiness, along with its "pentecostal language," was being promoted throughout the evangelical world.²⁵ These meetings became the means of popularizing key concepts and terminology that were present in Methodism nearly a century earlier, and would become essential in Pentecostalism a half century later. Thomas C. Oden considers Phoebe Palmer to be ". . . the missing link between Methodist and Pentecostal spirituality."²⁶

An "Enduement With Power"

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, another wing of the holiness movement developed a distinct doctrine of the "second blessing" in which the main concern was not personal holiness, but rather, power for effective witnessing. From Wesley to Palmer most preachers of holiness had taught that the experience of Christian Perfection eradicated the sin nature.²⁷ While this concept was not entirely rejected by advocates of what became known as the "higher Christian life," it was subordinated to the theme of successful Christian ministry. The indwelling presence of the Spirit not only delivers one from

²⁵ Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 182. On Phoebe Palmer's ministry in the Maritimes see W. Ralph Richardson, "Methodist Revivalism and the Baptists of Eastern British North America in 1858," in *A Fragile Satbility: Definition and Redefinition of Maritime Baptist Identity*, ed. David T. Priestley (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1994), 21-34.

²⁶ Thomas C. Oden, ed., Introduction to *Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 16.

²⁷ John Leland Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), 99.

bondage, and sets one free to live the Christian life, but also empowers the believer for effective witnessing.

John Morgan

In 1845, John Morgan, professor at Oberlin College, published an article in the *Oberlin Quarterly Review* entitled "The Gift of the Holy Ghost."²⁸ Morgan defined the "second blessing," which he calls "the baptism in the Holy Ghost," as an experience subsequent to conversion that endues the Christian with power for effective witnessing. Although the Holy Spirit is with the believer prior to this event, through Spirit-baptism he or she comes to know God in a more intimate relationship.²⁹ Morgan based his doctrine of Spirit-baptism on various texts, but especially on the book of Acts. In fact, he says that Acts gives a ". . . glowing account of the effects of this effusion of the Holy Ghost, of the super-human wisdom, energy, boldness, and success with which the before timid and inefficient Apostles preached the Gospel."³⁰

Morgan believed that this "baptism in the Holy Spirit," which empowers the believer for effective Christian service, is meant for all believers. In fact, without the endowment with power from on high, one is not prepared to convert the nations to God, which is the task that God has given. Those who have experienced the second blessing know it, not because of some "external token or evidence," but because it is an internal blessing that ". . . meets the highest aspirations of the

²⁸ John Morgan, "The Gift of the Holy Ghost," *Oberlin Quarterly Review* vol. 1, no. 1 (August 1845), 90-116.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 94.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

pious soul."³¹

Morgan's contribution to the second blessing doctrine is that he subordinates the holiness theme to that of "empowering for witness." While not excluding other interpretations, he introduced the idea that the purpose of this experience is primarily to equip believers for service.

Asa Mahan

In the late 1860s, Asa Mahan, a Congregationalist, and president of Adrian College in Michigan, wrote a book entitled *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost*. Mahan was a strong advocate of Palmer's teaching and believed that his book would further promote her doctrine of entire sanctification by presenting it ". . . in a form old and yet new."³² He maintained that it was "old" in the sense that it was faithful to Palmer's doctrine, which he regarded as biblical. Yet, it was "new" because it made three significant contributions that he believed would help people to understand better its nature and significance. First, like Morgan, Mahan divided history into dispensations. The final dispensation, he asserted, began at Pentecost and will continue until the end of history. This means that all Christians are now living in the "age of the Spirit." Second, Mahan provided a new exegetical foundation for the second blessing experience. Although the doctrine of Christian Perfection (in its various forms) had been taught by holiness preachers for over a century, their references to the book of Acts were extremely

³¹ Ibid., 98.

³² Asa Mahan, *Autobiography, Intellectual, Moral and Spiritual* (London: T. Woolmer, 1882), 414.

rare.³³ However, in his “old and yet new form” Acts is presented as the primary basis for this doctrine. Third, in Mahan’s version of Christian Perfection the primary focus is on empowering for service. This third contribution to second blessing theology is based on his study of a series of texts in Acts — especially Acts 1:8 (“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; . . .”). In Mahan’s construct the idea of “power” becomes the major theme of the second blessing experience.³⁴ However, this power is defined as the effective witness when the sanctified life is lived out before a watching world.³⁵

Mahan’s book was published in 1870. By 1882 it had been “. . . extensively circulated in America, in Great Britain and in all missionary lands [and] . . . translated into the German and Dutch languages.”³⁶ Mahan’s presentation of the doctrine of “entire sanctification” in terms of a “Pentecostal experience” was adopted by many within the holiness movement. Some simply accepted it as a new way of understanding the second blessing experience. Others, however, “. . . retained the doctrine [of entire sanctification] in its classical form and added the ‘baptism of the Holy Ghost’ as a ‘third work of grace.’”³⁷

Mahan’s book also became very popular outside the holiness camp. However, non-holiness readers seemed to be interested in it for an entirely

³³ In her book *The Promise of the Father*, Palmer refers to Acts 2:17 (“...your sons and daughters shall prophesy”). However, her purpose for using this reference is not to provide a basis for her doctrine of Christian Perfection. Rather, it is used to support her argument concerning the right of women to preach. For more on this see Lucille Sider Dayton and Donald W. Dayton, “Your Daughters Shall Prophesy: Feminism in the Holiness Movement,” *Methodist History* 14 (January 1976): 67-92.

³⁴ Asa Mahan, *Autobiography*, 57-63. cf. Dayton, “Theological Roots of Pentecostalism,” 13; Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century*, 22-23, 52-55.

³⁵ Asa Mahan, *The Baptism of the Holy Spirit* (New York: W. C. Palmer, Jr., 1870), 10.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 414.

³⁷ Dayton, “Theological Roots of Pentecostalism,” 14.

different reason than those inside the movement. It was not Mahan's teaching on "entire sanctification" that interested them. Rather, it was his teaching on the "baptism of the Holy Ghost" as a "Pentecostal" experience. "In these new contexts where the holiness doctrine of 'entire sanctification' was either unknown or had been rejected, the doctrine was permitted to work out the logic of the texts in Acts and become understood primarily as an 'endowment of power.'"³⁸

Charles G. Finney

As one of the best known revivalists in the United States in the nineteenth century, Charles G. Finney probably did more to prepare the way for Pentecostalism than any other. In his doctrine of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit," Finney incorporates several key concepts developed by Palmer, Morgan and Mahan, modifies them slightly, and then teaches them as part of his Theology of Revival. First, Finney emphasized the crisis aspect of the second blessing experience. This, of course, is related to his understanding of conversion. As a convinced Arminian, Finney believed that salvation was for the "whosoever will." People disobey God, not because of a fallen sinful nature, but because they are unwilling to obey him. Finney asserted that every person has the inherent ability to turn to God and accept his offer of salvation. The Spirit's work is not to create the ability to choose salvation, nor to eradicate the sin nature, but rather to persuade the sinner to make the decision to be saved. Therefore, conversion is brought about by an act of the human will. It is a decision to live a life of

³⁸ Ibid.

obedience to God's moral law. Finney also believed that "the baptism of the Holy Spirit" is brought about by an act of the human will. It is a decision to accept God's provision of power for Christian service.³⁹

Second, Finney asserted that the purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit was *exclusively* an endowment of power for service. For most of his career, he had taught that the purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit was sanctification *and* power. Not only did this second blessing enable the believer to continually obey God's law, but it also empowered him or her to ". . . prevail with God in prayer and with people through preaching and witness."⁴⁰ However, in the 1870s he began to teach that sanctification is not a gift from God, but rather an act of consecration on the part of the believer.⁴¹ The baptism in the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, *is* a gift that is ". . . universally promised and proffered to Christians under this dispensation."⁴² "Charles Grandison Finney was the first one clearly to state the baptism in the Spirit was not an experience of sanctification at all, but was exclusively an endowment of power for service."⁴³ Thus, he abandoned the traditional understanding of the second blessing as "entire sanctification," and redefined it as "an endowment of power for service."

Third, Finney proposed that Spirit-baptism be made a mandatory

³⁹ J. L. Gresham, Jr., *Charles G. Finney's Doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1987), chapter 3; Cf. Henry H. Knight III, *From Aldersgate to Azusa*, 90-91.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴¹ Garth M. Rosell and Richard Dupuis, eds., *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney, The Complete Restored Text*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 407-408.

⁴² Finney, *The Promise of the Spirit*, 262; quoted in Roland Wessels, "The Spirit-baptism: Nineteenth Century Roots," *Pneuma* 14, no. 2. (fall 1992): 143.

⁴³ Roland Wessels, "The Spirit-baptism: Nineteenth Century Roots," *Pneuma* 14, no. 2. (fall 1992): 142.

qualification for involvement in any church-related office. He believed that this experience was so absolutely necessary for “a supernaturally effective ministry” that one could not expect success without it.⁴⁴

Dwight L. Moody

Dwight L. Moody, another well known revivalist of the nineteenth century, followed Finney’s interpretation of the second blessing experience. However, he believed that this gift, which he called “the baptism of the Holy Spirit for service,” should not be limited to those in church-related offices. Rather, it is the privilege of every believer. “The rank and file of the Church need this baptism of the Holy Spirit just as much as the preacher.”⁴⁵

Moody’s main contribution to this new expression of the second blessing doctrine as an endowment of power for service is that he made a distinction between the “indwelling” of the Spirit and “Spirit-baptism.” He maintained that the Spirit indwells every believer “in some sense and to some extent” at conversion, but that there is a second experience “. . . entirely distinct and separate from conversion and assurance.”⁴⁶ This second experience is another “receiving” of the Spirit as he comes to dwell within “in power.”

To explain his distinction between the “indwelling” and the “baptism” of the Spirit, Moody cites part of John 17:14 (“. . . for he dwelleth with you, and shall be

⁴⁴ Charles Grandison Finney, *Power From on High: Who May Expect the Endowment* (Boston, Massachusetts: Willard Tract Repository, 1872), 20-21.

⁴⁵ Dwight Lyman Moody, *Moody: His Words, Work, and Workers*, ed. W.H. Daniels (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1877), 398.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 396.

in you" [KJV]). However, he felt that this formula presented a problem because it seemed to suggest that one can be a Christian without the "indwelling" of the Spirit. Moody knew that this would not do justice to other passages in Scripture that clearly teach that all Christians have the Spirit (e.g., Romans 8:9). Therefore, he attempted to resolve this problem by "paraphrasing" John 17:14 to read, "he is in you and shall come upon you." He then goes on to explain how the preposition "in" means the "indwelling" of the Spirit, and the preposition "upon" means the "baptism" in the Spirit.⁴⁷

Reuben A. Torrey

Reuben A. Torrey followed Moody and Finney in their definitions of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as an enduement of power for service.⁴⁸ However, he also made several important contributions of his own that helped create a theological environment in which the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism was formulated.⁴⁹ First, Torrey insisted that the initial experience of receiving the enduement of power for service should be called "the baptism in the Holy Spirit," while subsequent but similar experiences should be called "being filled with the Spirit."⁵⁰ He believed that this distinction helps define the unique

⁴⁷ Dwight L. Moody, *Secret Power* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1881), 45–48.

⁴⁸ Torrey gives a detailed description of his doctrine of Spirit-baptism in three books, *The Baptism With the Holy Spirit* (New York: Revell, 1895), *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Revell, 1910), and *The Holy Spirit* (New York: Revell, 1927).

⁴⁹ In spite of the fact that Torrey, himself, became an outspoken critic of the Pentecostal movement for their view of "tongues" as the *initial evidence* of the Spirit-baptism, Classical Pentecostals continued to use his writings to legitimize their doctrine of "subsequence." For example, the PAOC reprinted some of Torrey's writings in their official publication, the *Pentecostal Testimony*. See R. A. Torrey, "The baptism With the Holy Spirit," *Pentecostal Testimony* (May 1, 1947), 17.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

nature of the initial experience as a second crisis event subsequent to conversion.

Second, Torrey attempted to answer a question that had been asked by many "second blessing" advocates for over 25 years. For example, "Hannah Whitall Smith observed . . . in the early 1870s an intense longing for a physical manifestation that would accompany the 'baptism' and give assurance of its reception."⁵¹ Torrey attempted to answer this question by suggesting that *the evidence* of having received Spirit-baptism is the manifestation of any one of the gifts of the Spirit.⁵² Morgan, Mahan, Finney and Moody all viewed Spirit-baptism as an experience that could be identified by a particular feeling. For Morgan and Mahan it was the sense of a deeper relationship with God. For Finney it was an over-flowing love, and for Moody it was an overwhelming sense of joy. However, for Torrey the evidence of Spirit-baptism was not "inner feelings," but rather, "outward" (i.e., physical) manifestations of power. "Therefore, one was pressed to look for [spiritual gifts] as the evidence that one had experienced the faith to receive 'the promise of the Father' (Acts 1:4)."⁵³

By the end of the nineteenth century, some were beginning to ask, "Might there not be one spiritual gift, perhaps a particular manifestation of the Spirit that serves as an *initial evidence* of Spirit-baptism?" This is precisely the question that Charles F. Parham and his students were asking when they began studying

⁵¹ Dayton, "Theological Roots of Pentecostalism," 19. cf. *The Posthumous Papers of Hannah Whitall Smith* ed. Ray Strachey as *Religious Fanaticism* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1928).

⁵² Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 10-13.

⁵³ Wessels, "The Spirit-baptism: Nineteenth Century Roots," 154.

the second chapter of Acts in December, 1900.⁵⁴ They believed that they had finally discovered the answer when they noticed a "pattern" of Spirit-baptism in the book of Acts. They observed that this experience is always followed by speaking in other tongues. Therefore, they concluded that the initial physical evidence of Spirit-baptism must be speaking in tongues.⁵⁵

As Richard Lovelace and others have pointed out, "by the end of the nineteenth century it was widely assumed that all mature Christians should duplicate Finney's experience of Spirit-baptism. It remained only for Charles Parham to add the teaching that tongues was the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the Classical Pentecostal movement was launched."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Sarah E. Parham, *The Life of Charles F. Parham, Founder of the Apostolic Faith Movement* (Joplin, Missouri: n.p., 1930), 51-53. cf. Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, 95-116.

⁵⁵ A reprint of Charles Parham's personal account of this incident appears in Gordon F. Atter, *The Third Force*, 24-26.

⁵⁶ Richard Lovelace, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the Evangelical Tradition," *Pneuma* 7, no. 3 (fall 1985): 119. cf. Dayton, "Theological Roots of Pentecostalism," 3-21.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CLASSICAL PENTECOSTAL POSITION ON SOURCES OF THEOLOGY

The Christian religion presupposes that God has somehow revealed himself to humankind. In fact, the very word *theology* “. . . has to do with truth that comes to us from God, and therefore it rests on revelation.”¹ Millard J. Erickson defines theology as “that discipline which strives to give a coherent statement of the doctrines of the Christian faith, based primarily upon the Scriptures, placed in the context of culture in general, worded in a contemporary idiom, and related to issues of life.”² Within Christianity, however, there exists a wide range of views on what constitutes legitimate sources of theology. Some view Scripture alone as the absolute source of authority in all matters of faith and practice. Others include Church tradition and/or religious experience. Still others include the “institutional word” (e.g., the Roman Catholic view of the infallibility of the Pope).³ Of course, whatever view one chooses will unavoidably shape his or her theology. The purpose of this chapter is to define the Classical Pentecostal position on what constitutes legitimate sources of theology. At this point the issue is not what Classical Pentecostals practice, but what they state as their

¹ Paul K. Jewett, *God, Creation & Revelation: A Neo-Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 5.

² *Christian Theology*, One Volume edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), 21.

³ See, for example, Austin Flannery, ed. *Vatican Council II The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Northport, New York: Constello Publishing Company, 1975), 370, which speak of “the Roman Pontiff and his infallible teaching office” in the document of the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church called *Lumen Gentium*.

"official" position on this matter.

The Role of Tradition

A survey of some of the historical-theological developments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (cf. Chapter 2) shows that many of the concepts present in the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism were being used by others long before the movement came into existence. How should this be interpreted? Some might explain the birth of Classical Pentecostalism as part of the *Traditionsgeschichte*⁴ of nineteenth and twentieth century American evangelicalism. This interpretation of the historical events would explain the doctrine of Spirit-baptism as a compilation of several theological concepts that were borrowed from earlier sources. As religious ideas were developed, interpreted, reinterpreted, adopted and adapted, a whole new doctrine evolved.

Others might interpret the historical-theological developments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as God's sovereign acts in history. In other words, as God worked through various individuals to make his will known, he gradually restored the "New Testament doctrine" of the baptism in the Holy Spirit to the contemporary church. This interpretation of the historical events would explain the formation of the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism as

⁴ Lit. "the history of the transmission of tradition." This word denotes both the process of transmission and that which is transmitted. See Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1976), 164-165. In this context, *Traditionsgeschichte* refers to the development and transmission of religious ideas such as the concept of a 'second blessing.'

the consummation of a process of "illumination."

Interestingly, early Classical Pentecostals rejected all such explanations. Although the theological roots of Classical Pentecostalism seem to the historian to be grounded in the nineteenth-century holiness and revivalist movements, early Pentecostals claimed that their movement had absolutely no ties to post-apostolic Church history. In fact, they were convinced that nothing spiritually significant had happened at all from the time of the early Church to the outpouring of the Spirit at the turn of the twentieth century.⁵ D. Wesley Myland, an early Pentecostal, explains their interpretation of history:

If it is remembered that the climate of Palestine consisted of two seasons, the wet and the dry, and that the wet season was made up of the early and the latter rain, it will help you to understand this Covenant and the present workings of God's Spirit. For just as the literal early and latter rain was poured out upon Palestine, so upon the church of the First Century was poured out the spiritual early rain, and upon us today is being poured out the spiritual latter rain.⁶

When discussing how Classical Pentecostals view the period between "the spiritual early rain and the spiritual latter rain," B. F. Lawrence explains:

The Pentecostal Movement has no such history; it leaps the intervening years crying, "Back to Pentecost." In the minds of these honest-hearted, thinking men and women, this work of God is immediately connected with the work of God in the New Testament days. Built by the same hand, upon the same foundation of apostles and prophets, after the same pattern, according to the same covenant, they too are a habitation of God through the Spirit. They do not recognise a doctrine or custom as authoritative unless it can be traced to that primal source of church instruction, the Lord and his apostles.⁷

⁵ Frank Bartleman, *How "Pentecost" Came to Los Angeles - How It Was in the Beginning* (Los Angeles, California: by the author, 1925; reprint, *Azusa Street: The Roots of Modern-day Pentecost*, South Plainfield, New Jersey: Bridge Publishing, 1980), 92 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

⁶ D. Wesley Myland, "The Latter Rain Covenant and Pentecostal Power," reprinted in *Three Early Pentecostal Tracts*, ed. Donald W. Dayton (New York: Garland Publishers, 1985), 1.

⁷ B. F. Lawrence, "The Apostolic Faith Restored," reprinted in *Three Early Pentecostal Tracts* ed. Donald W. Dayton (New York: Garland Publishers, 1985), 12.

Early Classical Pentecostals showed a contempt for traditional creeds, customs, doctrines, ecclesiastical organization, and denominationalism.⁷ Consequently, they saw no connection between their doctrine of Spirit-baptism and the historical-theological developments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Instead, they ". . . regarded themselves as a spiritual elite by insisting that they had recaptured more fully than others the dynamic, the message, or the form of the early church."⁸ "Followers of Charles Fox Parham . . . claimed that their movement had—for the first time since the second century—fully restored the apostolic faith."⁹ Because of this primitivistic¹⁰ view of history, early Classical Pentecostals insisted that all forms of "tradition" should be rejected as legitimate sources of religious authority. T. S. Payne writes, "If I should say no more than this—'lay aside all man-made teaching, or traditions, and take the whole truth of God,' I would have said enough. We reject the authority of tradition in sacred things and rely only on the written word of God."¹¹

Some modern Classical Pentecostals are now beginning to appreciate the theological developments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that ". . . laid

⁷ See Grant Wacker, "Playing for Keeps: The Primitivist Impulse in Early Pentecostalism," in *The American Quest for the Primitive Church*, ed. Richard T. Hughes (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 197-213. Wacker states the primary reason that outsiders found the early Classical Pentecostal movement offensive was their ". . . jut-jawed disdain for customs of denominational Christianity." *op. cit.*, 207.

⁸ Edith L. Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 14.

⁹ *Ibid.* For more on Parham and his followers see James R. Goff, *Fields White unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Fayetteville, Kansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1989).

¹⁰ *i.e.*, "The impulse to restore the primitive or original order of things as revealed in Scripture, free from the accretions of church history and tradition." *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, s.v. "primitivism."

¹¹ T. S. Payne, "Traditions and How to Get Rid of Them," quoted in Stanley M. Burgess and Gary McGee, eds., *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 381.

an important foundation for the Pentecostal movement."¹³ Yet, the movement itself, distinguished by its "initial evidence" doctrine, is still viewed as ". . . the great END-TIME REVIVAL PROPHESED IN THE WORD OF GOD".¹⁴ It is presented as *the unique* move of God which restored New Testament Christianity to the church.¹⁵

While Classical Pentecostals have changed their views somewhat on the significance of post-apostolic church history, they apparently have not changed their minds concerning the role of tradition in formulating theology. A survey conducted by Randall Holm in 1995, as part of his Ph.D. work at the University of Laval, shows that most Classical Pentecostals still reject tradition as a legitimate source of religious authority.¹⁶ "Ironically, however, despite a negative reaction to ecclesiastical catch-words such as word tradition [*sic*] and creeds, a significant percentage of pastors polled were ready to equate the authority of their doctrinal Statement of Essential and Fundamental Beliefs with Scriptures themselves."¹⁷

¹³ Gary B. McGee, *Systematic Theology*. rev. ed., ed. Stanley M. Horton (Springfield, Missouri: Logion Press, 1995), 14. See also Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971); John T. Nichol, *Pentecostalism* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1966).

¹⁴ Gordon F. Atter, *The Third Force* (Caledonia, Ontario: Acts Books, 1970), 22 (capitalization his).

¹⁵ See Carl Brumback, *A Sound From Heaven* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1961); Gloria G. Kulbeck, *What God Hath Wrought: A History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada* (Toronto: PAOC, 1958).

¹⁶ Randall Holm, "Project Exousia," in "A Paradigmatic Analysis of Authority Within Pentecostalism" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Laval, 1995), Annexe A. Holm made a series of statements and asked the respondents to answer: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, or strongly disagree. To the statement "Tradition is a legitimate source of religious authority," 53% answered strongly disagree; 26% answered disagree; 6% were undecided; 14% agreed; and 1% strongly agreed.

¹⁷ Holm, 47. To the statement, "The Statement of Essential and Fundamental Beliefs, as it is described by the PAOC, is synonymous with Scripture," 19% of those surveyed answered strongly disagree; 22% answered disagree; 5% were undecided; 28% agreed; and 25% strongly agreed.

The Role of Scripture

Classical Pentecostals claim that they are committed to Scripture as the absolute authority for all faith and practice. Article V, paragraph 1 of the "Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths" in the Constitution and By-laws of the General Conference of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada states:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God by which we understand the whole Bible to be inspired in the sense that holy men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit to write the very words of Scripture. Divine inspiration extends equally and fully to all parts of the original writings. The whole Bible in the original is, therefore, without error and, as such, is [*sic*] infallible, absolutely supreme and sufficient in authority in all matters of faith and practice.

The Bible does not simply contain the Word of God, but is, in reality, the complete revelation and very Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit. Christian believers today receive spiritual illumination to enable them to understand the Scriptures, but God does not give new revelations which are contrary or additional to inspired biblical truth.¹⁷

By comparing the above statement with those found in other Fundamentalist or Evangelical Statements of Faith, it would appear that Classical Pentecostals are part of the Protestant tradition that has affirmed *Sola Scriptura* since the time of the Reformation.¹⁸

Generally, Pentecostals state four main reasons for their belief in the absolute authority of Scripture. First, the Scriptures are inspired by God. That is,

¹⁷ cf. "Statement of Fundamental Truths," *Constitution and By-laws of the General Council of the Assemblies of God*.

¹⁸ See David W. Lotz, "Sola Scriptura: Luther on Biblical Authority," *Interpretation* 35 (1981): 259; J. Atkinson, *Martin Luther and the Birth of Protestantism* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1968), 73-81; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1.4. 1-3 and 4.23. 1; Karl Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995); Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 59-149; Norman Geisler, ed., *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980); Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), 199.

"holy men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit to write the very words of Scripture." Although there are various views concerning the nature of inspiration within the Pentecostal movement,¹⁹ all Classical Pentecostals agree that the Bible is the "very Word of God." They are so committed to this belief that "to downplay or deny the inspiration of Scriptures, in the eyes of Pentecostals, is tantamount to committing spiritual suicide."²⁰

Second, Classical Pentecostals affirm that the Bible, in its original form (i.e., in the autographs), is without error, infallible and absolutely supreme. Of course, this flows logically out of their belief concerning divine inspiration. Because the Bible is God-given, ". . . it does not fail; it does not err; but is entirely true in all it affirms."²¹ Michael Horban states well how Classical Pentecostals view the relationship between the authority, inspiration, inerrancy and the infallibility of the Scriptures:

There is no question in our minds about an authoritative Word of God—authoritative because infallible, infallible because inerrant, inerrant because inspired, and inspired because holy men moved upon by the Holy Spirit conveyed the very words of God for the hearts and minds of men.²²

Third, Classical Pentecostals claim that the Bible is the *complete* revelation of God. This is not to suggest that they deny the existence of other

¹⁹ For more on Classical Pentecostal views of inspiration see: John R. Higgins, *Systematic Theology* ed. Stanley M. Horton, 97-101; C. A. Ratz, *The Bible and Its Supreme Authority* (Peterborough, Ontario: College Press, 1961); Michael P. Horban, "Forever Settled: What Does the Bible Say About Itself?" *Pentecostal Testimony* 47 (February 1968): 6-7; Michael P. Horban, "Forever Settled: The Need to Maintain a High View of Inspiration," *Pentecostal Testimony* 47 (March 1968): 3, 28; Myer Pearlman, *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1937), 22-25.

²⁰ Holm, 20.

²¹ Higgins, Dusing and Tallman, *Introduction to Theology*, 43-44.

²² Horban, "Forever Settled: What Does the Bible Say About Itself?" 6-7.

forms of divine revelation. For example, they affirm the reality of general revelation through nature, history and humankind, and the validity of special revelation through personal “experiential” encounters with God.²³ Classical Pentecostals state that the Bible is *complete* in the sense that “God does not give new revelations which are contrary or additional to inspired biblical truth.”

Therefore, they adamantly reject any form of revelation that appears to contradict or add to what has already been revealed in the Bible.

Fourth, because the Bible is inspired, infallible, inerrant, and complete, Classical Pentecostals also believe it is “absolutely supreme and sufficient in authority in all matters of faith and practice.” Hence, their official stance is that Scripture is the *only* source of authority used to define their doctrine of Spirit-baptism. Other categories of revelation may be considered valid support for Christian belief and practice, but only as long as they are in harmony with the teaching of Scripture.²⁴

The Role of Experience

The *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* states that the identifying marks of Pentecostals and Charismatics are: “. . . exuberant worship; an emphasis on subjective religious experience and spiritual gifts; claims of supernatural miracles, signs and wonders—including a language of experiential spirituality, rather than of theology; and a mystical ‘life in the Spirit’ by which they

²³ This may include the “spoken Word” (i.e., preaching, prophecy, testimonies and acts of worship). See Higgins, *Systematic Theology*, 69-81; Higgins, Dusing and Tallman, *Introduction to Theology*, 33-37.

²⁴ Higgins, *Systematic Theology*, 81-84.

daily live out the will of God."²⁶ This then raises the question, "Since Classical Pentecostals claim that the Bible alone is the absolute authority for all faith and practice, then what role does experience play in the formation of theology?" The answer, say Pentecostals, is that it is "verificational."²⁷ In other words, life experience validates theology by helping the interpreter confirm his or her understanding of the *objective meaning* of the text. "The intended meaning of the original author is still considered to be primary, and the meanings gained through historical/grammatical study are seen as objective and universally authoritative."²⁸

Classical Pentecostals believe that a personal "experiential" encounter with the living God is an essential part of the Christian life. For them, true biblical Christianity is first and foremost a religion of the heart. The critics of the movement have often accused Pentecostals of neglecting the teaching of Scripture in favour of religious experience.²⁹ However, Walter J. Hollenweger alleges that those who make such accusations are "ignorant of the role which the Bible plays in the Pentecostal movement."³⁰ Pentecostals have been very careful to declare, at least in official statements, their belief in Scripture as the absolute authority for all faith and practice. For example, in a communiqué, sent to all

²⁶ Stanley and McGee, eds., *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 5.

²⁷ See Menzies, "The Methodology of Pentecostal Theology: An Essay on Hermeneutics," *Essays on Apostolic Themes* ed. Paul Elbert (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985), 189-198; Gordon L. Anderson, "Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Part I," *Paraclete* 28 (winter 1994): 1-11; "Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Part II," *Paraclete* 28 (spring 1994): 13-22; Roger Stronstad, "Pentecostal Experience and Hermeneutics," *Paraclete* 26 (winter 1992): 14-30; Mark D. McLean, "Toward a Pentecostal Hermeneutic," *Pneuma* (fall 1994): 35-56.

²⁸ Anderson, "Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Part II," *Paraclete* 28 vol. 2 (spring 1994): 22.

²⁹ See James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 1-7; Robert H. Culpepper, *Evaluating the Charismatic Movement* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1974), 161.

³⁰ Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, trans. R. A. Wilson (London: SCM Press, 1972), 321.

pastors within the Eastern Ontario and Quebec District of the PAOC, the District Superintendent reminded the constituents to “balance all that occurs with what the Scriptures declare. LET US NEVER FORGET THAT GOD’S WORD, NOT OUR EXPERIENCES IS THE ONLY CERTAIN AND RELIABLE GUIDE WE HAVE”.³¹

Thus, Classical Pentecostals claim to be a part of the Protestant tradition that affirms *Sola Scriptura*. Their “official” position is that Scripture alone constitutes a legitimate *authoritative* source of theology.

³¹ Stuart Hunter, “From the District Pastor,” (Kanata, Ontario, 1994), quoted in Holm, 32 (capitalization his).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CLASSICAL PENTECOSTAL POSITION ON PROPER EXEGETICAL AND HERMENEUTICAL METHODOLOGY

A survey of statements made by Classical Pentecostals in published materials indicates that, officially at least, there is little difference between their position on the role of Scripture in deciding matters of faith and practice and that of other conservative Evangelicals and Fundamentalists.¹ Yet the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism, which they claim is based solely on Scripture, sets them apart from the others theologically. Most Evangelicals and Fundamentalists have rejected this doctrine of Spirit-baptism because, they say, it is based on poor exegetical and hermeneutical practice.²

¹ Classical Pentecostals identify themselves as part of the Evangelical and Fundamentalist branches of the Church. See Gordon F. Atter, *The Third Force* (Peterborough, Ontario: College Press, 1962), 7; John Thomas Nichol, *Pentecostalism* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1966), 2-7. For discussions of the Evangelical and Fundamentalist views of Scripture see Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994); Norman Geisler, ed. *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980); James I. Packer, *God Has Spoken* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979); David F. Ford, *The Modern Theologians* (Cambridge: Blackwell Press, 1995).

² On anti-Pentecostal writings by Evangelicals and Fundamentalists see, William C. Irvine, *Heresies Exposed* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1917); B. P. Neely, *The Bible Versus the Tongues Theory* (Kansas City, Kansas: Beacon Hill Press, 1930); Louis S. Bauman, *The Modern Tongues Movement: Examined and Judged in the Light of the Scriptures and in the Light of its Fruits* (Long Beach, California: n.p., 1941); H. L. Stolee, *Speaking in Tongues* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Press, 1963); H. A. Ironside, *Holiness: The False and the True* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1955); John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, Illinois: Van Kampen Press, 1954); John MacArthur, *The Charismatics: A Doctrinal Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978); *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan

The most common argument against Pentecostals is that they base their doctrine on religious experience. They have been accused of "using" the Bible, not as a source of authority for faith and practice, but as a means of validating what they had already experienced before going to the text. Such criticisms are not just coming from outside the Pentecostal camp. For example, Gordon Fee, a credential holder with the Assemblies of God in the United States, has commented, "it is probably fair—and even important—to note that in general the Pentecostal experience has preceded their hermeneutics. In a sense, the Pentecostal tends to exegete his experience."³ However, Fee acknowledges the Pentecostal's belief in the authority of Scripture, and qualifies his former statement by adding, ". . . the Pentecostals did not look to the text for the *origination* of a theology, but for the biblical/theological *verification* of their experience."⁴

When examining the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism in light of their position on sources of theology, it becomes evident that at the root of the theological debate between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals is the matter of exegetical and hermeneutical methodology (and practice). French Arrington states that "the real issue in Pentecostalism has become hermeneutics, that is, the distinctive nature and function of Scripture and the roles of the Holy Spirit, the

Publishing House, 1991); Anthony A. Hoekema, *Holy Spirit Baptism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972).

³ *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 86.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 87 (emphasis his). For a similar statement by another Pentecostal see William Menzies, "The Methodology of Pentecostal Theology: An Essay on Hermeneutics," *Essays on Apostolic Themes: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Paul Elbert (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985), 13.

Christian community, grammatical-historical research, and personal experience in the interpretative process."⁵ The purpose of this chapter is to determine what Classical Pentecostals state as their "official" stance concerning proper exegetical and hermeneutical methodology. At this point the issue is not what Classical Pentecostals practice, but what they actually *state* as their position on this matter.

Classical Pentecostal Exegetical and Hermeneutical Methodology

To fully appreciate the Classical Pentecostal position on proper exegetical and hermeneutical methodology, it must be understood in light of its historical development. Classical Pentecostals have maintained a high view of Scripture throughout the history of their movement, yet they claim to have changed their methodology for interpreting and applying the Bible when formulating (and/or supporting) their doctrine.⁶

The following survey of the historical development of the Classical Pentecostal position on proper exegetical and hermeneutical methodology covers four time periods: (1) Pre-critical Formation and Canonization (1901-1925); (2) Pre-critical Apologetics (1926-1950); (3) Critical Articulation (1951-1975); and (4) Critical Re-examination (1976-Present). The suggested dates not only conveniently divide the history of the movement into four equal parts, but they

⁵ French L. Arrington, "Historical Perspectives on Pentecostal and Charismatic Hermeneutics," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess, Gary B. McGee, and Patrick Alexander (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 381.

⁶ See Bradley Truman Noel, "Gordon Fee's Contribution to Contemporary Pentecostalism's Theology of Baptism in the Holy Spirit," (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Acadia Divinity College, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 1998); Randall Holm, "A Paradigmatic Analysis of Authority Within Pentecostalism" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Laval, 1995).

define four distinct periods in which there is an observable difference in the Classical Pentecostal attitude toward hermeneutics. This difference is observed in statements made by them in published materials concerning what they believe is proper exegetical and hermeneutical methodology.

(1) Pre-critical Formation and Canonization (1901-1925)

Like many other conservative Christians at the turn of the twentieth century, early Classical Pentecostals approached Scripture from a "pre-critical" perspective. In other words, they viewed the Biblical text, not as an ancient document that had to be studied in light of its historical, literary and cultural context, but as a written "deposit of truth" through which God speaks directly (and literally) to the contemporary reader. When early Classical Pentecostals interpreted the Bible in this way, they did so ". . . in order to apply it directly to the immediate context."⁷ They saw no need to examine the Scriptures "scientifically" to discover what it had said to the original recipients. The important thing for them was not what it had *said* in the past, but what it is *saying* in the present. Randall Holm points out that early Pentecostals ". . . were less concerned about the historical, scientific accuracy of the biblical texts than they were worried that men and women would be sensitive enough to the Spirit to allow God to speak to them through the Scriptures."⁸

At the heart of this early Classical Pentecostal approach to the Bible was

⁷ G. Sheppard, "Pentecostals and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism," *Pneuma* 16, no. 2 (1984): 22.

⁸ Holm, 43.

their conviction that the supernatural manifestations recorded in Scripture should be fully realized in the present. Roger Stronstad suggests that it was Charles F. Parham⁹ who “. . . bequeathed to the Pentecostal movement its definitive hermeneutics, and consequently, its definitive theology and apologetics.”¹⁰ Parham believed and taught that Christian experiences in the 20th century “. . . should tally exactly with the Bible.”¹¹ That is, the experiences of the early Church recorded in Scripture (particularly in Acts), should be *re-experienced* in the contemporary Church.

When Parham and his students began to study the second chapter of Acts in December, 1900, they were attempting to discover “. . . what the biblical evidence was of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, so that they might have something concretely biblical to present before the world.”¹² When they read Acts chapter 2, they “discovered” that those who were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost spoke in tongues. After examining other similar passages in Acts, Parham and his students concluded that although other things occurred when the Spirit was poured out, the indisputable proof on each occasion was speaking in tongues as the Spirit gave utterance.¹³ According to Parham’s account, once this “discovery” was made, the group immediately set about in prayer, eager to prove whether it was true. During this prayer service, one of the students, Agnus

⁹ See J. R. Goff, “Charles Fox Parham,” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M Burgess and Gary McGee (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 660-661.

¹⁰ “Trends in Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Part One,” *Paraclete* 22, no. 3 (1988): 1.

¹¹ Mrs. Charles F. Parham, *The Life of Charles F. Parham: Founder of the Apostolic Movement* (Joplin, Missouri: Hunter Printing, 1930), 52.

¹² *Ibid.*, 56.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Ozman, was “. . . baptized with the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues.”¹⁴ “This event was significant, not because Agnus Ozman spoke in tongues, . . . [but] that for the first time the concept of being baptized (or filled) with the Holy Spirit was linked to [a specific] outward sign.”¹⁵ Ozman’s experience of speaking in tongues was interpreted by the group as the “biblical evidence” they were looking for. Charles F. Parham’s contribution to the doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit was that he laid the biblical/hermeneutical foundation for the Classical Pentecostal understanding of this event, that is, the connection between Spirit-baptism and speaking in tongues.

The pioneers of Classical Pentecostalism believed that through them God had finally restored the New Testament form of Christianity to the contemporary Church.¹⁶ This self-understanding was directly related to their understanding of the Bible. They understood Scripture to be essentially *descriptive* in function. For early Classical Pentecostals, “descriptive” meant that it described not only the experiences of Christians living in the first century, but their own experiences as well. Because of their views on eschatology (cf. chapter 1), the historical distance between themselves and the biblical text was often not recognized. “Biblical statements [were] understood at face value with no appreciation for the ancient context in which Scripture was first delivered.”¹⁷ Early Pentecostals felt that if they could find an experience *described* in Scripture (e.g., Acts 2), then it

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁵ Nichol, *Pentecostalism*, 28.

¹⁶ L. Grant McClung, *Azusa Street and Beyond* (South Plainfield, New Jersey: Bridge Publishing, 1986), 47-54. cf. Edith L. Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 14.

¹⁷ Archer, “Pentecostal Hermeneutics,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 8 (1996), 67.

must be "true" for them as well. Thus, biblical authority functioned mainly through a hermeneutic of historical precedent.¹⁸ In other words, if something happened in the early Church then it must also happen today, because the experiences recorded in the Bible are to be *re-experienced* in the contemporary Church.

Along with a "pre-critical" approach to the Bible, early Classical Pentecostals also demonstrated an attitude of anti-intellectualism and anti-traditionalism. For the most part, Pentecostal clergy were ". . . lay people who quit their jobs."¹⁹ Theological education was never a priority, and sometimes it was even viewed as a hindrance to "the moving of the Spirit" in one's ministry.²⁰ Early Classical Pentecostals openly denounced anything that appeared to usurp the sufficiency of Scripture, or the role of the Holy Spirit in the interpretative process (as they understood it). "Believers were required to rely on the Holy Spirit in seeking to unfold the mysteries of the Written Word. Without this continual influence of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostals believed that the Bible invariably degenerates into a source of ecclesiastical conceptions, forms and ceremonies."²¹

They therefore rejected, not only human reason with its "critical" exegetical and hermeneutical methods, but traditional creeds, customs, ecclesiastical

¹⁸ See Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*, 96-99, 107-111.

¹⁹ Russell P. Spittler, "Scripture and the Theological Enterprise: The View From the Big Canoe," in *The Use of the Bible in Theology*, ed. Robert K. Johnston (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 75.

²⁰ For more on what early Pentecostals thought of formal theological training see James R. Goff, *Fields White Unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Fayetteville, Kansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1989), 157-158; Charles F. Parham, "Back to Pentecost," *The Apostolic Faith*, 1, no. 2 (October 1906) reprinted in E. Myron Noble, ed. *Like as of Fire: Newspapers from the Azusa Street World Wide Revival*, (Washington, D.C.: Middle Atlantic Regional Press, 1985), 7.

²¹ Holm, 56.

organization, and denominationalism as well.²² Early Classical Pentecostals often criticized non-Pentecostals for being “. . . shut up in fixed systems of finality, both doctrinally and experimentally. They are bound and frightened to move out with God in His great, green pasture. . . The stream is moving beneath them, but they fear to let go the bank [i.e., dogmatic theology], separate from past attachments, and trust themselves to the current of God’s onward move in restoration of truth once lost.”²³ Christians within traditional (i.e., non-Pentecostal) denominations were generally viewed as part of the apostate Church.²⁴ Consequently, “early Pentecostals felt no rushing need to defend their practices because they began with the a priori conviction that God Himself was their vindication.”²⁵ Seeing themselves as the restoration of primitive Christianity, they saw no reason to seek acceptance from other “less spiritual” (or “non-spiritual”) groups.

During the early years, Classical Pentecostals boasted that “. . . they were not weighed down by centuries of ecclesiastical tradition. While the credit was always given to the Holy Spirit, biblical interpretation became a matter of the heart.”²⁶ The baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues, they claimed, was not a doctrine but an experience to be enjoyed as a

²² For more on this see Steven Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

²³ Frank Bartleman, *How “Pentecost” Came to Los Angeles - How It Was in the Beginning* (Los Angeles, California: the author, 1925; reprint, *Azusa Street: The Roots of Modern-day Pentecost*. South Plainfield, New Jersey: Bridge Publishing, 1980), 162 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

²⁴ See Grant Wacker, “Playing for Keeps: The Primitivist Impulse in Early Pentecostalism,” in *The American Quest for the Primitive Church*, ed. Richard T. Hughes (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 197-213; Blumhofer, 12-18; Goff, 21-67.

²⁵ Holm, 4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

gift of God's grace.²⁷ The very idea of canonizing this experience by making it into a doctrine would seem to them like a return to the "old forms" of the past.²⁸

However, the need to organize and develop some sort of uniform "Statement of Faith" became apparent to Classical Pentecostals when discord and division began to occur within the group over doctrinal issues. Originally, they believed that they had no need for such organization or "Statements of Faith" because they were being led by the Spirit himself. However, "despite all good intentions. . . it became apparent that their pristine reliance on the Spirit's ability to guide them intuitively into a true understanding of Scripture, without the help of any denominational loyalties or structured systematic theology, was more problematic than anticipated."²⁹ Pentecostals were soon coming out with a smorgasbord of contradictory "revelations" (i.e., interpretations of Scripture), all claiming to be Spirit-led and based entirely on the Bible.³⁰ The question was, "whose 'revelation' (or interpretation) was right?"

It was clear to early Pentecostals that, without some adequate means of deciding between conflicting interpretations of Scripture, the future of the movement was in jeopardy. Their greatest threat was not criticism from without,

²⁷ This sentiment is still maintained by many Classical Pentecostals. For example, during a personal conversation with a prominent Pentecostal Bible College teacher in September, 1998, I mentioned that I was having difficulty finding Classical Pentecostal works which dealt with the doctrine of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit on a scholarly level, to which he replied, "Of course not. It's not a theology, it's an experience."

²⁸ Bartleman, 160-166. When Bartleman wrote his book in 1925, the AOG, PAOC, and PAON were already established, and each had its own "Statement of Faith" which included their "doctrine" of Spirit-baptism.

²⁹ Holm, 56.

³⁰ The survival of the movement was threatened by two controversies, one over the nature of God, and the other over the definition of sanctification as a "finished work" or as a "second work" of grace. For more on this see Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Francis Asbury Press, 1987), 141-163.

but dissension and controversy from within. In an attempt to solve this problem, they met on numerous occasions between 1910 and 1920 and debated various theological issues. In the end, the Pentecostal movement split into three main factions: Unitarians, Trinitarians who believed in the "second blessing" view of sanctification (Spirit-baptism being a third blessing), and Trinitarians who believed in the "finished work" view of sanctification as taught by William H. Durham and the Keswick movement (Spirit-baptism being a second blessing).³¹ However, these groups did not form because they had each developed their own unique exegetical and hermeneutical methodology. Rather, they came together on the basis of "like precious faith." In other words, Pentecostal churches (and individuals) affiliated with the group that best reflected their own set of beliefs.

By 1925, at least 25 separate denominations had emerged, each with its own "Statement of Faith."³² The purpose of such "Statements," declared Classical Pentecostals, was to guide the church in the future by providing a definitive testimony of what they believed was the clear teaching of Scripture.³³ In essence, the "Statement of Faith" became a sort of "canon" for the group by which orthodoxy could be measured. With the development of these "Statements," the doctrine of Spirit-baptism was canonized and became *the* cardinal doctrine of Classical Pentecostal churches.

Typical of the early Classical Pentecostal attitude toward exegetical and

³¹ For more on Durham, the Keswick movement and the "Finished Work" doctrine, see William W. Menzies, "The Non-Wesleyan Origins of the Pentecostal Movement," in *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, ed. Vinson Synan (Plainfield, New Jersey: Logos International, 1975), 81-97.

³² Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 163.

³³ *Ibid.*, 157.

hermeneutical methodology is this comment by Stanley Frodsham, written in 1924:

Don't examine the writer, the medium, the channel, but seek yourselves [*sic*] to be examined by the Spirit who gave the message. The writers had to be tuned to the Spirit to receive the Spirit's message and readers of the Word today also have to be tuned, not by scholars, but by the Spirit. Many learned men left the Scriptures to their own destruction—does that mean ignorant men? No. They were unlearned as far as the things of the Spirit were concerned. Learned as far as the letter, ignorant as far as the Spirit.³⁴

The Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit was formulated and canonized in the pre-critical era of the movement. These early pioneers were not only committed to the authority of Scripture, but also to their belief that they were guided by the Holy Spirit to understand the true meaning of the Bible intuitively, without the help of a structured systematic theology. When the movement became plagued with controversy over conflicting interpretations of Scripture, they "solved" the problem by "canonizing" a set of corporate beliefs. This helped Classical Pentecostals define who they were theologically, as well as ensured doctrinal stability by providing a well defined "fence" that kept dissenters out.³⁵ For example, the AOG, PAOC and PAON included this warning in their "Statements of Faith:"

We consider it a serious disagreement with the Fundamentals for any minister among us to teach contrary to our Distinctive Testimony that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is regularly accompanied by the initial physical sign of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit of God gives the utterance, and we consider it inconsistent and unscriptural for any

³⁴ "The Smokescreen of Modern Criticism," *Pentecostal Evangel* (February 23, 1924): 4. Quoted in Holm, 43.

³⁵ For an example of this see the story of F. F. Bosworth, an AOG Pastor who openly questioned whether speaking in tongues was the *only* initial sign of Spirit-baptism. He demanded a discussion of the question at the Pastor's Conference of 1918, but the Conference voted against him. Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (London: SCM Press, 1972), 32-33.

minister to hold credentials with us who thus attacks as error our Distinctive Testimony.³⁶

By the mid-1920s, most doctrinal issues—especially the doctrine of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit—were forever settled as far as Classical Pentecostals were concerned. From now on, it was no longer possible to be a pastor of a Classical Pentecostal church and at the same time deny the Classical Pentecostal distinctive doctrine that speaking with tongues must accompany Spirit-baptism.³⁷

(2) Pre-critical Apologetics (1926-1950)

By the time the dust from doctrinal skirmishes had settled, Pentecostals were more than eager to get back to what they felt was their God-given mission, that is, to evangelize the world before the imminent return of Christ. The problems that had caused dissension and controversy within its ranks, and had threatened the very survival of the movement were finally resolved. Classical Pentecostals emerged from the heat of controversy with a "Statement of Faith" that would guide them into the future (doctrinally). Vinson Synan writes that the Pentecostal movement grew so rapidly during the next 25 years that ". . . by the middle of the twentieth century, some Protestant observers were referring to pentecostalism as the "Third Force in Christendom" rather than only being

³⁶ This paragraph is still included in the "Statement of Fundamental Truths" of the AOG, and the "Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths" of the PAON. It was dropped from the "Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths" of the PAOC in 1967. See "Statements of Fundamental and Essential Truths Approved by the PAOC," *Pentecostal Testimony* 26 (May 1947): 9.

³⁷ Hollenweger, 32.

another cluster of new denominations arising in the traditional manner of the past.³⁸

As their movement grew, Classical Pentecostals began to see themselves (and others) in a new light. While still maintaining that God was using them to restore the New Testament form of Christianity to the contemporary Church, they now began to identify themselves as part of historic Christianity. An example of this change of attitude is the following statement by a prominent Classical Pentecostal church leader of the time. Responding to the frequently asked question, "What is the doctrinal position of the Pentecostal Movement?" James Purdie states:

The answer can be given that the Movement believes the same basic doctrines as are contained in the teaching of historic Christianity as set forth in the three Ancient Creeds of the early Church known as the Apostle's, the Nicene, and the Athanasian; and also the Confessions of Faith drawn up at the time of the Reformation by the Reformed Churches of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These Creeds and confessions are not considered to teach anything above or beyond the Scriptures, but only set forth in systematic form the truths contained within the Holy Scriptures. Thus, the Pentecostal Movement is an orthodox, spiritual Church holding and teaching what the historic Evangelical Church has held and taught since Apostolic days.³⁹

For better or for worse, the phenomenal growth of their movement had a tremendous affect on the Classical Pentecostal's sense of self-identity. By the late 1920s, most no longer regarded themselves as the spiritual elite, as did, for example, the followers of Charles F. Parham. Now they saw themselves as standing in company with the historic churches, and they wanted to be

³⁸ *Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 163.

³⁹ James Eustace Purdie, *What We Believe* (Toronto, Ontario: Full Gospel Publishing House, n.d.), 2.

recognized as such.

As Classical Pentecostals sought recognition from the rest of Christendom, they had two objectives. First, they wanted to be taken seriously as a legitimate "orthodox" Christian movement within Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism.⁴⁰ To accomplish this, many Pentecostals felt they needed to prove to non-Pentecostals that their doctrines were essentially the same as those of other conservative Christians (with the exception of their doctrine of Spirit-Baptism). Second, Classical Pentecostals wanted to establish their "reason for being" by also distinguishing themselves theologically from other conservative groups. This second objective could only be met within the context of conservative Christianity by demonstrating that their distinctive doctrine of Spirit-baptism was based on Scripture.

Between 1926 and 1950 many Classical Pentecostal books and journal articles were written to defend the legitimacy of their doctrine of Spirit-baptism. However, it would be inappropriate to describe the Pentecostals of this era as ". . . rationalists working on the back of abstractions, mining the Scriptures for all the answers an adherent may seek."⁴¹ Although Pentecostals sought to align themselves with the Fundamentalists by affirming *The Fundamentals*,⁴² and by adopting a slightly revised version of Dispensationalism,⁴³ they did not subject

⁴⁰ For more on Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism see Walter E. Ellwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984), 379-382, 433-436.

⁴¹ Holm, 226.

⁴² For a definition of "The Fundamentals" see Ellwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 436.

⁴³ Classical Pentecostals revised the Fundamentalists' dispensational theological construct in order to allow for the operation of the spiritual gifts in the contemporary Church. For more on this see Gerald Sheppard, "Pentecostals and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism: The Anatomy of an Uneasy Relationship," *Pneuma* 6 no. 2 (Fall 1984), 9-25.

their doctrine of Spirit-baptism to a "critical" re-examination during this era. They were convinced that Scripture supported their view because, as far as they were concerned, their experience confirmed it. So as Classical Pentecostals wrote apologetically to defend their distinctive doctrine, they felt confident that when they cited a relevant biblical passage, its meaning was self-evident. Thus, there were rarely (if ever) any attempts made to demonstrate whether the Classical Pentecostal interpretation of a particular text could be supported by its historical or literary context.⁴⁴

An example of Classical Pentecostal exegetical and hermeneutical practice during the 1940s is Winston Nunes' "exegesis" of Mark 5:41, printed in the October, 1947 edition of *The Pentecostal Testimony*.⁴⁵ Nunes attempted to establish a biblical historical precedent for the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism by arguing that Jesus himself was baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. He begins his article by quoting from Acts 10:38. ". . . God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (KJV). Nunes then explains, "The power of Jesus laid not in the fact that he was the son of God but it originated in the anointing of the Holy Spirit." In response to the question "Did Jesus speak in tongues?" Nunes cited Mark 5:41,

⁴⁴ For example see Harold Horton, "The Baptism in the Holy Spirit," *Pentecostal Testimony* 22 no. 1 (January 1943): 6-8; Frank Ewart, *The Phenomenon of Pentecost* (Houston, Texas: Herald Publishing House, 1947); A. H. Argue, "Why We Believe in Speaking in Other Tongues," *Pentecostal Testimony* 26 no. 5 (May 1947): 7-9; Myer Pearlman, *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1937), 308-319; Ralph Riggs, *The Spirit Himself* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1949), 47-89.

⁴⁵ This is the "official" publication of the PAOC.

“And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise” (KJV). Explaining these words he writes:

Now Jesus talked long and He said many things to many people. To the woman who was bound by that spirit of infirmity He said, “Woman, you are set free.” But when He spoke to this dead little girl He spoke in a language that is given to us, the very words as He gave it and spake it. “Talitha cumi.” And they don’t translate it. All the other words of the Lord Jesus are translated for us from the language in which He spoke into the language we understand, into English. But these words were not translated. They are given to us as Jesus spoke them and the Spirit does not give us a translation of the words. He gives us an “interpretation” of the words.⁴⁶

This example gives at least three key insights into the Classical Pentecostal attitude toward exegetical and hermeneutical methodology and practice during this era (1926-1950). First, there is little concern for the historical or literary context of the passage(s). Does Nunes mean to suggest that “Talitha cumi” is not Aramaic, but some language unknown to Jesus and his followers? And who are the “they” doing the translating? Second, Classical Pentecostals are still preoccupied with establishing a biblical historical precedent on which to base their doctrine of Spirit-baptism. Nunes’ purpose, it seems, is to demonstrate that Spirit-baptism—as Classical Pentecostals understand it—is an experience *described* in Scripture. It is assumed that if it is described in Scripture, then it is an experience that all Christians should *re-experience* in their own lives. Nunes’ article shows that Charles Parham’s basic presupposition that Christian experiences in the 20th century “should tally exactly” with those described in the

⁴⁶ Winston Nunes, “Why Speak with Tongues?” *Pentecostal Testimony* 26 no. 10 (October 1947): 7.

Bible is still held by Classical Pentecostals nearly a half century later. Third, although Classical Pentecostals sought to identify with other conservative Christians, such as Fundamentalists and Evangelicals, by the late 1940s they were still not committed to a "critical" exegetical and hermeneutical methodology.

(3) Critical Articulation (1951-1975)

Pentecostal Timothy Cargal maintains that Pentecostals and Fundamentalists share a philosophical presupposition that only what is historically and objectively true is meaningful.⁴⁷ By canonizing their doctrine of Spirit-baptism, Classical Pentecostals felt confident that they had an historical and objective (biblical) truth to present to the entire Christian community. As they interacted (e.g., in theological discussions) with other conservative non-Pentecostal Christians, many Classical Pentecostals began to explore some of the critical exegetical and hermeneutical methods being used by their fellow Fundamentalists and Evangelicals. Being fully convinced that their distinctive doctrine was solidly based on Scripture, Classical Pentecostals saw no threat as they adopted some of these critical methods as their own.

By the early 1960s, much had changed for Classical Pentecostals. After struggling nearly 50 years for recognition and acceptance, they were finally gaining some respect from the rest of Christendom. For example, in 1960 Thomas Zimmerman, who was then General Superintendent of the AOG, was elected chairman of the National Association of Evangelicals.⁴⁸ That same year,

⁴⁷ Timothy Cargal, "Beyond a Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy," *Pneuma* 15 no. 2 (1993): 168.

⁴⁸ Vinson Synan, ed., *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, 5.

the Charismatic movement began to spread through the main-line churches.⁴⁹

Classical Pentecostals were now being taken seriously as a legitimate Protestant revival movement of the 20th century.

With this new respectability came a gradual shift in the Classical Pentecostal attitude toward exegetical and hermeneutical methodology. "The old apologetic paradigm, which had directed the activities and the ideology of groups such as the PAOC for over 25 years, was now becoming redundant."⁵⁰ In the early 1960s, Pentecostals followed the example of other Evangelicals, and adopted the grammatico-historical method as their hermeneutic of choice.⁵¹ Thus, Classical Pentecostals began discussing the importance of interpreting the biblical text in light of its historical, literary, cultural and theological contexts. Students in Pentecostal Bible Colleges were being taught the grammatico-historical method as a valid tool for evaluating one's interpretation of the biblical text. The primary purpose of this method is to determine the original meaning of the text within its original context before applying it to the contemporary situation.⁵² Classical Pentecostals claim that this method is still the exegetical/hermeneutical method of choice.⁵³ In recent years, as Classical Pentecostals become more educated in exegetical and hermeneutical methodology, other factors have been allowed to enter into the interpretative

⁴⁹ Ibid., 169-191. cf. Ewell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 205-209.

⁵⁰ Holm, 54.

⁵¹ Ibid., 56.

⁵² For example see Gordon F. Atter, *Interpreting the Scriptures* (Peterborough, Ontario: College Press, 1964). Atter used this as a textbook in some of his classes at Eastern Pentecostal Bible College during the 1960s and early 1970s.

⁵³ Arrington, "Hermeneutics," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 382-387.

process (e.g., genre analysis, narrative criticism, textual criticism,⁵⁴ the interpreter's presuppositions and experiences, etc.). Yet in order to avoid the danger of "subjectifying the [biblical] text at the expense of its objective historical particularity,"⁵⁵ Pentecostals continue to advocate the use of grammatico-historical exegesis as ". . . the method par excellence for guarding against the excesses of religious enthusiasm."⁵⁶

(4) Critical Re-examination (1976-Present)

Based on statements made in recent years by some leading Classical Pentecostals,⁵⁷ it seems that their adoption of the grammatico-historical method was made initially without considering the impact that this move might have on their doctrine of Spirit-baptism. In the mid-1970s, a new generation of well educated Pentecostals began using the grammatico-historical method to re-examine their distinctive doctrine of Spirit-baptism.⁵⁸ This step was not taken, however, because Classical Pentecostals were doubting the validity of their view of Spirit-baptism (at least not at first). On the contrary, they were quite confident that such a "critical" re-examination would not only reaffirm what they already

⁵⁴ For a description of these see Joel B. Green, ed., *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995); W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*, rev. ed. (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997).

⁵⁵ Roger Stronstad, "Pentecostalism, Experiential Presuppositions and Hermeneutics," Paper presented for the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies (November 8-10, 1990), 11.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

⁵⁷ For example see William W. Menzies, "Synoptic Theology: An Essay on Pentecostal Hermeneutics," *Paraclete* 13 no. 1 (winter 1979): 14-21; Stronstad, "Pentecostal Experience and Hermeneutics" *Paraclete* 26 no. 1 (winter 1992): 14-30; Mark D. McLean, "Toward a Pentecostal Hermeneutic," *Pneuma* (fall 1984): 35-56.

⁵⁸ For example, Gordon Fee.

believed, but would also convince some of their critics that they were committed to the "objective" meaning of Scripture. Their decision to re-examine the doctrine of Spirit-baptism was essentially a response to the many scholarly non-Pentecostal works published during the late 1960s and early 1970s, which threatened to undermine the essential legitimacy of their movement.⁵⁹ Thus, Classical Pentecostals attempted to demonstrate that their doctrine of Spirit-baptism is "biblical" by casting it in a propositional framework. However, fitting a doctrine that had been formulated (and canonized) in a "pre-critical" era into a framework that was built on "critical" exegetical and hermeneutical methodology would prove to be difficult. Most non-Pentecostals remained unconvinced by the arguments put forward by Classical Pentecostals. In a few cases, some individual Pentecostals were not convinced themselves, and consequently resigned their ministerial credentials with the movement.

In 1970, Classical Pentecostals established the Society for Pentecostal Studies (SPS). One of the main objectives of the SPS is the formation of a distinctive "Pentecostal hermeneutic." The reason one is needed, they argue, is that the interpreter's religious experience should have a greater role in the

⁵⁹ Among some of the more important non-Pentecostal publications at this time were: John Nichol, *Pentecostalism*; Robert Glenn Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Movement* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1967); Fredrick Dale Bruner, *The Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970); James Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Reexamination of the New Testament Teaching of the Gift of the Spirit in relation to Pentecostalism Today* (Naperville, Illinois: Alec R. Allenson, 1970); Walter Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*; William Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels* (New York: MacMillan, 1972); John Kildahl, *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

interpretative process than what the grammatico-historical method allows for.⁶⁰ How much of a role experience should have is still a matter of much debate among modern Pentecostal scholars.⁶¹ Members of the SPS are also re-addressing the role of illumination. Their discussions focus mainly on the question of whether Spirit-baptism gives the interpreter a greater understanding of the text. Does a Spirit-baptized Christian have a special means of understanding the Bible that a non-Spirit-baptized person does not have?⁶²

As of yet, Classical Pentecostals have not officially developed a hermeneutic which they call their own. For the most part, they still claim to be committed to the grammatico-historical method. Even some who are advocating the development of a uniquely "Pentecostal hermeneutic" say that the grammatico-historical method provides a necessary measure of objectivity, and should always be part of the interpretive process.⁶³

⁶⁰ For example, McLean, "Toward a Pentecostal Hermeneutic, 35-56; Roger Stronstad, "Pentecostal Experience and Hermeneutics, 14-30; Gordon Anderson, "Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Part 1," *Paraclete* 28 no. 1 (winter 1994); "Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Part 2," *Paraclete* 28 no. 2 (spring 1994); Kenneth J. Archer, "Pentecostal Hermeneutics," 64-81; French L. Arrington, "The Use of the Bible in Hermeneutics," *Pneuma* 16 no. 1 (winter 1994): 87-101.

⁶¹ See Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*.

⁶² Classical Pentecostals are divided on this issue. Roger Stronstad believes that "... the Charismatic experience, in particular, and spiritual experience, in general, gives the interpreter of relevant biblical texts an experiential presupposition which transcends the rational or cognitive presuppositions of scientific exegesis, and furthermore, results in an understanding, empathy and sensitivity to the text, and priorities in relation to the text which other interpreters do not and cannot have ("Pentecostalism, Experiential Presuppositions and Hermeneutics," 7).

However, Richard Israel says that the very notion of a "Pentecostal" hermeneutic can be problematic. He states, "Calls for a Pentecostal hermeneutic seem to me to be misguided. They would be motivated either by an ideology (as some Marxist and Feminist hermeneutics are) or an epistemology of the Spirit. A Pentecostal ideology is no hermeneutic at all; it is the obliteration of the horizon of the text by the interpreter" (Richard D. Israel, Daniel E. Albrecht, and Randal G. McNally, "Pentecostals and Hermeneutics: Texts, Rituals, and Communities," *Papers of the Society of Pentecostal Studies Annual Meeting* (Dallas, Texas: November 1990), A8-9.

⁶³ See Anderson, "Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Part 1," 2-4; Roger Stronstad, "Pentecostalism, Experiential Presuppositions and Hermeneutics," Paper Presented for the 20th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies (November 8-10, 1990): 11.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CLASSICAL PENTECOSTAL DOCTRINE OF SPIRIT- BAPTISM AND THE BIBLICAL TEXT

A survey of published materials from all sides of the Classical Pentecostal/non-Pentecostal debate during the last three decades reveals that the main issue has been whether or not there is a discernible "pattern" of Spirit-baptism in the book of Acts *which clearly teaches the "normative" Christian experience*. Classical Pentecostals attempt to defend their distinctive doctrine by arguing that Luke *consistently* portrays Spirit-baptism as a second work of grace that is regularly accompanied by the initial physical sign of speaking in tongues. Some non-Pentecostals, such as James Dunn,¹ refute the Classical Pentecostal position by arguing that Luke *consistently* portrays Spirit-baptism as "conversion-initiation." Other non-Pentecostals² contend that there is no consistent pattern of Spirit-baptism in Acts, and therefore, each passage ". . . must be interpreted in terms of the unique historical setting of the early church."³

¹ James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Reexamination of the New Testament Teaching of the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (Naperville, Illinois: Alec R. Allenson, 1970)

² For example Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts*, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplementary Series*, ed. J. C. Thomas, R. D. Moore, and S. J. Land, no. 9 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975); Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996).

³ Ferguson, 86.

As "biblical" support for their view, Classical Pentecostals cite five passages which they claim teach *the* normative pattern of Christian experience for every believer: (1) Acts 2:1-13 — *the day of Pentecost*; (2) Acts 8:4-25 — *the Samaritans*; (3) Acts 9:17,18 — *the "baptism" of Saul of Tarsus*; (4) Acts 10:44-46 — *Cornelius' household*; and (5) Acts 19:1-7 — *the Ephesian disciples*.

Of course, it is not possible in a paper of this size to offer a detailed exegetical treatment of the five Acts passages used by Classical Pentecostals to support their doctrine of Spirit-baptism. Therefore, the following discussion will consider only those details which have a direct bearing on the subject. The purpose of this chapter is to examine whether there is sufficient evidence to support the claim that the Bible clearly teaches that the normative Christian experience includes a second work of grace, called "the baptism in the Holy Spirit," that is regularly accompanied by the initial physical sign of speaking in tongues. The crucial question is, "Does Luke offer a *consistent pattern* of Spirit-baptism in Acts *in order to teach* that the experience (or experiences) described should be *re-experienced* in the life of every Christian?"

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section is a brief restatement of the Classical Pentecostal interpretation and application of the five Acts passages that are commonly used by Pentecostals to support their doctrine of Spirit-baptism. In section two, these passages are re-examined in light of their historical, theological and literary contexts. This takes into account the literary

structure of Acts as well as some major themes which run through Luke-Acts.⁴ Finally, section three is a comparative analysis of the five Acts passages. The aim here is to examine whether Luke's descriptions of the coming of the Spirit follow a consistent "pattern" that reflects the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism.

Section One: The Classical Pentecostal Interpretation

Acts 2:1-13 — The Day of Pentecost

Like many other Evangelicals, Classical Pentecostals interpret Acts 2 as the fulfillment of "the promise of the Father" that Jesus had spoken about before his ascension (cf. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5,8). The purpose of the Pentecost event, they say, was to empower the disciples for effective witness. What is different about the Classical Pentecostal interpretation is that they believe it describes a second work of grace, subsequent to conversion, that should be a part of every believer's experience. They believe that on the day of Pentecost "the 120 were filled with the Holy Spirit after having been together for a week or longer in prayer and Christian fellowship."⁵ Since no one can be a "Christian" without being indwelt by the Spirit (Romans 8), those who were present at Pentecost must have experienced a post-conversion second blessing crisis event.⁶

⁴ This presupposes that the Gospel of Luke and Acts were written by the same author. For more on this see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1985), 6-10.

⁵ L. Thomas Holdcroft, *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Interpretation* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1962), 110.

⁶ See John W. Wyckoff, *Systematic Theology*, rev. ed., ed. Stanley M. Horton (Springfield, Missouri: Logion Press, 1995), 429; Horton, *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit*, 139-140; Howard M. Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit: An*

Roger Stronstad argues that the key to understanding this passage (and the rest of Acts) is to realize that Luke's theology is primarily charismatic—not soteriological.⁷ In other words, Luke's primary focus is not on the Spirit's work in salvation or sanctification, but on the Spirit's work ". . . in relation to a third dimension of Christian life—service."⁸ This distinction between the soteriological work of the Spirit (conversion-initiation) and the "vocational"⁹ work of the Spirit (empowering for service) is given greater significance in Classical Pentecostal theology than in any other. Most Evangelicals recognize the Spirit's "vocational" work as somehow different than his work of salvation or sanctification. But this "difference" is usually explained in terms of the "kind of work" which the Holy Spirit performs in the *ongoing* Christian life.¹⁰ Classical Pentecostals however, understand the Spirit's "vocational" work as being so fundamentally different from his other works that it can only be experienced as one enters into a whole new realm of the Christian life through a post-conversion "second blessing" crisis event. The distinction between the soteriological and "vocational" works of the Spirit is nearly always explained in terms of *time*.¹¹ Pentecostals hold that this

Engaging Critique of James D. G. Dunn's Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), 16-19.

⁷ Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), 9-12.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹ This is a term used by Classical Pentecostals to refer to the work of the Holy Spirit as he "equips" believers to carry out the Christian mission in the world. See Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*, 23-24;

¹⁰ For example see Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, One Volume edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), 872-883.

¹¹ For examples of this see Higgins, Dusing and Tallman, 143-144; Ralph M. Riggs, *The Spirit Himself*, (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1949), 47-70; Holdcroft, 107-110; William W. Menzies and Stanley Horton, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, Missouri: Logion Press, 1993), 123-125; Stanley M. Horton, *Systematic Theology* (Springfield, Missouri: Logion Press, 1994), 427-433.

experience is not only *separate from*, but is also *subsequent to* conversion.

Acts Chapter 2 is foundational to the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism because the "post-conversion" experience of the disciples on the day of Pentecost is believed to be paradigmatic. In other words, Luke's description of the early disciples' experience of Spirit-baptism, which occurred *some time after* their conversion, sets the "pattern" for all Christian experiences.¹²

Luke describes three signs of the Spirit's coming on the day of Pentecost: the sound of a blowing violent wind, tongues of fire, and speaking in other tongues. Classical Pentecostals believe that the sign of the sound of a blowing violent wind signified God's presence, as well as the fact that he was ". . . about to manifest himself and His Spirit in a special way. That it was the sound of a wind with carrying power also spoke of the empowering Jesus promised in Acts 1:8, an empowering for service."¹³

A common Classical Pentecostal interpretation of the sign of the tongues of fire is that it ". . . signified God's acceptance of the Church Body as the temple of the Holy Spirit."¹⁴ Stanley M. Horton states, "The appearance of fire came over the whole group to indicate God's acceptance of the whole body as a temple. Then it broke up with the single tongue on the head of each to show God's acceptance of the body of each as a temple of the Spirit."¹⁵

Some Classical Pentecostals interpret Luke's description of the "tongues

¹² Higgins, Dusing and Tallman, 1151-158.

¹³ Stanley M. Horton, *The Book of Acts* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1981), 30.

¹⁴ Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 31.

¹⁵ *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit*, 141.

of fire” separating and coming to rest upon each of the disciples as a sign that “the baptism in the Spirit is an intensely individual, personal experience.”¹⁶ They maintain that this sign clearly shows that every Christian must experience his or her own personal “Pentecost.” Yet Luke does not explain the significance of the separation of the “tongues of fire” in his book, and Classical Pentecostals do not explain their rationale for this interpretation.

A third sign of the arrival of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was “speaking in other tongues.” However, Classical Pentecostals make a distinction between this sign and the two previously mentioned. They argue that only the sign of speaking in other tongues was “. . . part of the Pentecostal baptism.”¹⁷

Harold Holdcroft explains why:

Whereas tongues as a sign were repeated in later outpourings of the Spirit, the signs of the sound as of a wind and tongues like as of fire were not. The wind and fire were preludes to the continuing evidence of tongues. It was warranted that special events accompany the inauguration of a new era in the Church, but the long-range normative sign that was always repeated was tongues.¹⁸

Thus, Classical Pentecostals say that the reason speaking in tongues is the “normative” sign of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is that they believe it is the only sign that is “always repeated” in each of Luke’s accounts of Spirit-baptism. Consequently, they must demonstrate that there is a discernible “pattern” of Spirit-baptism in the book of Acts, and that this “pattern” *always* includes speaking in tongues.

¹⁶ Higgins, Dusing and Tallman, 147.

¹⁷ *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit*, 142.

¹⁸ Holdcroft, 111. For similar arguments see Horton, *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit*, 140-141; Horton, *The Book of Acts*, 30-31.

Acts 8:4-25 — The Samaritans

Classical Pentecostals claim that Acts 8:4-25 supports their distinctive doctrine because Luke's description of the reception of the Spirit at Samaria follows the same "pattern" as that laid out in Acts chapter 2. That is, the Samaritan "Christians" were baptized in the Holy Spirit subsequent to their conversion experience.¹⁹ According to Luke's account, the Samaritans "believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (8:12), and testified to their faith by being baptized in water. Yet they did not receive the Spirit until some time after their conversion, when Peter and John arrived from Jerusalem. Since a person cannot be a Christian without being indwelt by the Spirit, the "reception" of the Spirit described in this passage must have been a second work of grace. In the case of the Samaritans, ". . . the coming of the Holy Spirit is clearly removed in time, and thus differentiated, from their conversion."²⁰ Luke's description of this event, say Classical Pentecostals, clearly proves that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience which is separate from and subsequent to conversion.²¹

¹⁹ Classical Pentecostals argue that the word ἐπίστευσαν ("they believed") indicates that the Samaritans were "believers" (i.e., "Christians") before Peter and John arrived from Jerusalem. French Arrington lists three "facts" which he believes supports of this view: (1) The Samaritans' faith was acknowledged as valid by Philip and the Jerusalem church; (2) The Samaritans received Christian baptism; and (3) Philip's ministry produced great joy." See *The Acts of the Apostles* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 88.

²⁰ "The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit," A study Paper presented to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1971, 8. Quoted in Higgins, Dusing and Tallman, 154.

²¹ The amount of literature produced by Classical Pentecostals concerning the confirmation of their doctrine of Spirit-Baptism based in this passage is too much to list. Some examples are, Holdcroft, 111; Higgins, Dusing and Tallmann, 154-155; Horton, *Systematic Theology*, 440-442; Horton, *What The Bible says About The Holy Spirit*, 153-156; and Menzies and Horton, *Bible Doctrines*, 122.

Although speaking in tongues is not mentioned on this occasion, Classical Pentecostals maintain that “. . . they are certainly inferred”²² The reason is that “Simon’s action in offering money to buy the gift of laying on of hands is evidence that the effect of procedure [sic] was outwardly demonstrable.”²³ In other words, the fact that Simon “saw” something for which he offered money indicates that there was an outward visible and/or audible manifestation of the Spirit. Pentecostals hold that this outward manifestation must have been speaking in tongues, because this is what happened on the other occasions when the Spirit was poured out (cf. Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6).

Acts 9:1-19 — The “Baptism” of Saul of Tarsus

Classical Pentecostals usually cite Acts 9:1-19 as support for their doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. They maintain that there is such a clear distinction between the soteriological work and the “vocational” work of the Spirit in this passage that Luke’s intention must have been to teach that Spirit-baptism is an experience separate from and subsequent to conversion.²⁴

Classical Pentecostals believe that Saul’s conversion occurred the moment he met the Lord on the road to Damascus, and that he received the baptism in the Holy Spirit three days later, when Ananias prayed for him. This view is based primarily on their interpretation of two key words in Acts chapter 9;

²² Holdcroft, 111.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See Harold D. Hunter, *Spirit-Baptism: A Pentecostal Alternative* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1983), 85; Arrington, *Acts*, 99; Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*, 68-69; Menzies and Horton, *Bible Doctrines*, 137-138.

Saul's use of "κύριος" (Lord, lord, sir) in verse 5, and Ananias' use of ἀδελφός (brother) in verse 17.²⁵ Classical Pentecostals assert that when Saul addresses the one who met him on the road to Damascus as κύριος, it ". . . can only mean divine Lord."²⁶ Such a "confession of faith" (i.e., recognizing Jesus as his Lord) ". . . shows a complete change in Saul's attitude, which is the evidence of genuine repentance on his part."²⁷ It is thus argued that Saul was converted and became a Christian at that very moment.²⁸

As further support for their belief that Saul was converted on the Damascus road, Classical Pentecostals refer to Ananias' use of ἀδελφός to address Saul. They claim that this word, in the context of Acts chapter 9, can only mean that Ananias recognized Saul as ". . . a Christian who accepted Jesus as Lord and had been renewed by the Spirit."²⁹

Although speaking in tongues is not mentioned in Acts 9:1-19, Classical Pentecostals argue that Saul (i.e., Paul) must have spoken in tongues when he was baptized in the Holy Spirit, because he says in 1 Corinthians 14:18, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you."³⁰

Acts 10:44-46 — Cornelius' Household

Classical Pentecostals believe that Acts 10:44-46 also describes a

²⁵ For more on this see Ervin, 41-44; Horton, *Acts*, 114-120.

²⁶ Horton, *Acts*, 116.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 117.

²⁸ See Arrington, *Acts*, 96; Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation*, 41-44.

²⁹ Arrington, 99.

³⁰ See "The Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit," *Position Papers of The General Council of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1981), 3-4; Holdcroft, 111; Ervin, 41-49; Arrington, 100; Horton, 119-120.

“pattern” of Spirit-baptism which clearly teaches *the* normative Christian experience. Although conversion and Spirit-baptism seem to be mentioned together here, Pentecostals maintain that some time—perhaps only moments—must have elapsed between the two experiences. Traditionally, their argument for subsequence from this passage focused on the claim that Cornelius and his household were Christians prior to their encounter with Peter.³¹ However, in recent years, most have adopted the view that “. . . Cornelius and the others were not saved before hearing Peter preach but that a time lapse can be discerned in the course of events which followed the homily, namely, saving faith *and then* (later) reception of the Spirit.”³²

The most important feature of Acts 10:44-46 for Classical Pentecostals is the fact that those who were Spirit-baptized are said to have spoken in tongues. What makes this event significant in the eyes of Pentecostals is that speaking in tongues was understood by Peter and his companions (and the apostles at Jerusalem, cf. 11:15-18) as *the* sign that the Spirit had fallen on Cornelius and his household.³³ Furthermore, Peter identifies the incident at Caesarea with the experience of the disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 11:15).

Acts 19:1-7 — The Ephesian “Disciples”

There are three reasons why Classical Pentecostals cite Acts 19:1-7 as

³¹ For example see Myer Pearlman, *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1937), 317-318.

³² Hunter, 86 (emphasis his). An exception to this is French Arrington. See Arrington, *Acts*, 113-114.

³³ Robert W. Graves, “Use of *gar* in Acts 10:46,” *Paraclete* 22 (spring, 1988), 15-18.

support for their doctrine of Spirit-baptism. First, they believe that this incident which occurred “. . . nearly twenty-five years after the Jerusalem Pentecost,”³⁴ shows that Spirit-baptism (as they understand it) continued to be part of the normative experience and teaching of the early Church. The gospel had advanced well beyond the borders of Jerusalem. “The nations were different; the habitudes were different; the preachers were different; the circumstances were different; but the blessing was the same.”³⁵ Since this post-conversion “second blessing” experience was “normative” in the early Church, it should also be considered “normative” in the Church today.

Second, Classical Pentecostals believe that when Luke tells the story of the Ephesian disciples' reception of the Spirit, he follows a specific “pattern” in order to teach a two-stage Christian experience. They interpret Luke's use of the word “μαθητάς” (disciples) as referring to “Christians.” These disciples were definitely “Christians” prior to Paul's arrival in Ephesus, but they did not receive the Holy Spirit until *some time after* their conversion. They further assert that when Paul asked the Ephesian disciples, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when (or since) you believed? he was referring to an experience *subsequent* to their conversion.”³⁶

Third, the mention of speaking in tongues as *the* sign of the baptism in the

³⁴ Higgins, Dusing and Tallman, 152. cf. Holdcroft, 112, who suggests “approximately 23 years after the original Pentecost.”

³⁵ Charles W. Conn, *Pillars of Pentecost* (Cleveland, Tennessee: Pathway Press, 1956), 67.

³⁶ Higgins, Dusing and Tallman, 153; Horton, *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit*, 159-162.

Holy Spirit is interpreted as signifying that the Ephesian disciples had the same kind of experience as those on the day of Pentecost. Charles Conn states, "this recurrence of the glossolalia of Pentecost occurred in the Province of Asia, under the ministry of one who had not even been present on the Day of Pentecost, to persons who could not have anticipated the experience for the very reason that they had never heard of it."³⁷ Classical Pentecostals conclude that Luke's account of the Ephesian disciples' *re*-experience of the Pentecost event was intended to teach that "Pentecost" should be *re*-experienced in every Christian's life.

Section Two: Some Exegetical Considerations

Acts 2:1-13 — The Day of Pentecost

The debate between Classical Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals on the nature and purpose of the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost usually centers around the question: "Was this event primarily conversion-initiation (i.e., a crisis event whereby the disciples enter into the Christian life),³⁸ an empowering for service (i.e., a crisis event whereby those who were already Christians receive power for missionary witness),³⁹ or both? In attempting to answer such questions, it seems that some (including Classical Pentecostals) have not avoided the exegetical fallacy of interpreting Acts chapter 2 according to post-

³⁷ "Glossolalia and the Scriptures," *The Glossolalia Phenomenon*, ed. Wade H. Horton (Cleveland, Tennessee: Pathway Press, 1966), 29.

³⁸ Dunn, 38-54.

³⁹ Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke Acts*, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplementary Series*, ed. J. C. Thomas, R. D. Moore, and S. J. Land, no. 6 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

Pentecost soteriological concepts—which they impose on the text.⁴⁰ When arguing whether or not the disciples were “believers” prior to the day of Pentecost, that is, before they were filled with the Spirit, some have used the term “believer” as if it meant the same in this context as it does in Pauline theology, or even post-Reformation Protestant theology.⁴¹ Within the context of Luke-Acts, there seems to be no reason to doubt that the disciples who were gathered on the day of Pentecost were genuine believers, in the sense that they had put their faith in Christ (Luke 9:18-20). Yet, because of the unique historical situation, it would be erroneous to interpret the disciples’ Pentecost experience as if it were part of a two-stage “Christian” experience.

The outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was a unique event in salvation-history, and Luke presents it as such. Within the context of Luke-Acts, the disciples’ life and ministry spans a period of transition from the time of the old covenant relationship between God and Israel, to the time of the new covenant relationship between Christ and his Church. Consequently, “Luke does not portray Pentecost as the *beginning* of the New Age or Salvation for the disciples because this would conflict with his view that these were initiated decisively within

⁴⁰ For example see Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*. Stronstad argues that the coming of the Spirit in Acts 2 was neither for salvation nor sanctification, because the disciples were “saved” prior to this event (49-62). For a similar argument see John R. Higgins, Michael L. Dusing and Frank D. Tallman, *An Introduction to Theology: A Classical Pentecostal Perspective* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1993), 143-158. See also Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*. Dunn argues that the coming of the Spirit must have been for conversion-initiation, because

“... the one thing that makes a man a Christian is the gift of the Spirit” (93).

⁴¹ For examples see Dunn, 38-54; Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*, 49-55; Ervin, 15-23; Higgins, Dusing, Tallman, *Introduction to Theology*, 143-158; Stanley M. Horton, *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1976), 135-159.

Jesus' ministry."⁴² "By necessity [the disciples'] entry into the full measure of the Spirit's ministry took place in two distinct stages, reflecting a pattern of both continuity (the same Spirit) and discontinuity (only at Pentecost does he come in his capacity and ministry as the Spirit of the exalted Christ)."⁴³ Therefore, in order to suggest that the disciples' experience on the day of Pentecost is paradigmatic for a two-stage *Christian* experience, one must ignore the historical context in which the event occurred. Classical Pentecostals often criticize those who "read Acts through Pauline lenses."⁴⁴ They state how inappropriate it is to impose Pauline theology on Lukan writings. Yet this is precisely what they are doing when they interpret the disciples' pre-Pentecost experience as if it were a "Christian" experience.⁴⁵

Luke states that when the Holy Spirit filled the disciples on the day of Pentecost, they received power and became effective witnesses of the Gospel (Luke 24:47-49; Acts 1:4-5, 8; cf. Acts 2:4ff). In fact, Luke seems to indicate that this was the *primary* purpose of Spirit-baptism *on this particular occasion*. For example, he reports that the disciples were instructed by Jesus to wait in Jerusalem until they were ". . . clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49b). Thus, the Classical Pentecostal understanding of the Pentecost event, in terms of the charismatic empowering of the disciples for effective witness, seems to be well supported by the text. However, Acts chapter 2—when understood in light of

⁴² Turner, 353 (emphasis his).

⁴³ Ferguson, 80.

⁴⁴ For examples see Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*; Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation*; Hunter, *Spirit-Baptism*.

⁴⁵ Holdcroft, 110.

the unique historical setting of the event described—does not support the view that the “vocational” work of the Holy Spirit can only be experienced as one enters into a whole new realm of the Christian life through a post-conversion crisis event. While this passage “. . . does suggest that the charismatic work of the Spirit can be isolated as a specific work,”⁴⁶ it does not provide a “biblical” basis for the doctrine of subsequence. It describes the “vocational” work of the Spirit as different in terms of “kind of work”, but not *necessarily* in terms of a “second blessing.”

Most Classical Pentecostals would probably agree that if this was the only place that Spirit-baptism was mentioned in the New Testament, there would not be sufficient evidence to support their distinctive doctrine. Yet they claim that what makes Acts chapter 2 significant is that the experience described reflects a “pattern” which is repeated four more times in Acts. According to Classical Pentecostals, it is only when this passage is viewed alongside the other accounts of Spirit-baptism in Acts, that the “normative” pattern for Christian experience emerges.

Acts 8:4-25 — The Samaritans

Luke’s account of the Samaritan’s reception of the Spirit has long been the center of much debate between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals. Some non-Pentecostals appear somewhat perplexed by this passage because it seems to indicate that some time had elapsed between the Samaritans’ conversion and

⁴⁶ Harold D. Hunter, *Spirit-Baptism*, 82.

water-baptism, and their reception of the Spirit. For example, James Dunn, in his attempt to unravel what he calls "the riddle of Samaria," suggests that the Samaritan's confession of faith must have been deficient in some way. He acknowledges Luke's use of the word ἐπίστευσαν ("they believed"), but argues that in the context of Acts 8:4-25 it could only refer to "mere intellectual consent."⁴⁷ Dunn's assertion that the Samaritans' faith must have been deficient rests on two basic assumptions. He argues that, (1) the Samaritans were deluded by Simon, and therefore unable to grasp a clear understanding of the Gospel message,⁴⁸ and that (2) the Samaritans' eschatological expectations had caused them to misunderstand Philip's preaching, and this resulted in ". . . a response which was sincere and enthusiastic, but wrongly directed."⁴⁹

The weakness of Dunn's argument is that it is not supported by the biblical text. The fact that Simon had previously deluded the Samaritan people does not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that ἐπίστευσαν ("they believed") refers to "mere intellectual consent" in Acts 8:12. The word is used elsewhere in Acts almost exclusively to refer to "saving faith."⁵⁰

Furthermore, there is nothing in the text which suggests that Peter and John were sent to Samaria to straighten out some "Samaritan misunderstanding" of the Gospel. Luke says that Peter and John were sent *because* the Samaritans had ". . . received the word of God" (8:14).

⁴⁷ *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 65.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ For example see 4:4; 5:14; 9:42; 10:43; 11:17, 21; 13:12, 48; 14:1, 23; 15:5, 7; 16:31, 34; 17:12, 34 and 18:8, 27.

Acts chapter 8 seems to indicate that the Samaritans had genuine faith in Christ before Peter and John arrived on the scene. The Samaritans believed Philip's message, and were baptized in water as a testimony of their faith. Yet for some reason, these "believers" did not receive the Holy Spirit until the apostles from Jerusalem laid their hands on them. Does Luke report this event in order to teach that there is a post-conversion "second blessing" crisis experience available to every believer, or might there be some other explanation? How should this event be interpreted in light of its historical, theological, and literary contexts?

i. Howard Marshall⁵¹ and F. F. Bruce⁵² suggest that God withheld the gift of the Spirit until the apostles arrived from Jerusalem in order to help break down racial barriers between the Jews and Samaritans. Bruce states that "some special evidence may have been necessary to assure these Samaritans, so accustomed to being despised as outsiders by the people of Jerusalem, that they were fully incorporated into the new community of the people of God."⁵³ George Eldon Ladd suggests that "Peter and John as leaders of the Jewish church needed the experience that God was moving toward the Gentile world, for they clearly did not yet have this vision."⁵⁴ Both of these interpretations are plausible,

⁵¹ *Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Commentary Series, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 156-157.

⁵² *The Acts of the Apostles*, The New International Critical Commentary of the New Testament, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 182.

⁵³ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 182

⁵⁴ *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993),

especially when considered in light of Luke's emphasis on the universality of the Gospel.⁵⁵ From the Samaritans' perspective, this was the good news that God had accepted them into the fellowship of faith. From the Jewish apostles' perspective however, this meant that they would have to lay aside their racial and religious prejudices. As Luke later points out, this was not an easy step for them to take (See Acts 10:1-11:18).

There are at least four major theological themes in Luke-Acts which the interpreter should consider when examining Luke's descriptions of the coming of the Spirit: (1) *The Universality of the Gospel*. God has granted salvation to everyone who calls on the name of the Lord.⁵⁶ Thus, the good news of the Gospel is universal in scope. "The extent of salvation, which was seen [in the Gospel of Luke] to be open to all classes of people—Gentiles, 'sinners,' and the socially disenfranchised—now in Acts penetrates one geographical and cultural boundary after another;"⁵⁷ (2) *The Sovereignty and Providence of God*. God is the one who accomplishes his plan to bring humankind back into a right relationship with himself as he works in and through his people;⁵⁸ (3) *Promise and Fulfillment*. All of God's promises are fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.⁵⁹ Christ is

⁵⁵ For more on this see I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971); Joel B. Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁵⁶ For example see Luke 1:67-79; 2:11, 29-32; 3:4-6; 4:14-27; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 13:47-48; 16:30-31; 28:28.

⁵⁷ Walter L. Liefeld, *Interpreting the Book of Acts: Guides to New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1995), 92.

⁵⁸ For example see Luke 1:15,35,41,67; 2:17-18,25-27; 3:16,21-22; 4:1,14,18; 10:21; 12:12; Acts 1:2,5,8,16,33,38; 4:8,25; 6:3,5; 7:55; 8:29,39; 9:17,31; 10:45-47; 15:8;11:24; 13:2,4,9; 15:28; 16:6-7; 19:1-7; 20:22-23; 21:4,10-11; 28:25.

⁵⁹ For example see Luke 1:17, 55,67-79; 2:26-32; 3:4-6; 4:16-21,28; 24:25-26,44-49; Acts 2:16-21; 3:12-26; 15:16-18.

presented in Luke-Acts not just as the one who brings salvation, but as the one who *is* salvation. He fulfills the needs of all those who put their faith in him;⁶⁰ and (4) *Life in the Spirit*. "The Holy Spirit permeates the Christian life and ministry at every conceivable point."⁶¹ Roger Stronstad has convincingly argued that Luke's theology is essentially a "charismatic theology."⁶² Luke's presentation of the Christian life is undeniably a "life in the Spirit."

Another important consideration when interpreting Acts 8:4-25 is how the Samaritan event fits into God's programme for the spread of the Gospel, as it is outlined in Acts 1:8. In his final instructions to his disciples, Jesus states that they would be his witnesses ". . . in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." As Luke's account of the early church is read, it becomes evident that this verse outlines the basic literary structure of Acts.

There are three main sections in the book:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| (1) Witnesses at Jerusalem | 1:1-8:1a |
| (2) Witnesses in Judea and Samaria | 8:1b-11:18 ⁶³ |
| (3) Witnesses to the Ends of the Earth | 11:19-28-31 ⁶⁴ |

The Samaritan event marks the first major step in the advance of the

⁶⁰ In some cases, this includes religious expectations. For example, see the story of Simeon and Anna in Luke 2:25-38.

⁶¹ Liefeld, *Interpreting the Book of Acts*, 84. For more information on major themes in Luke-Acts see Liefeld, 79-98; Gerhard Krodel, *Acts* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1981), 2-8; Marshall, *Acts of the Apostles*, 23-34.

⁶² Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*.

⁶³ Note that Luke's shift from section one to section two is indicated by the words, ". . . and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria." The mention of these two geographical locations echo the words in 1:8.

⁶⁴ Note that 11:19 refers back to ". . . the persecution in connection with Stephen." This is directly followed by an account of proclaiming the Gospel to the Greeks (11:20-21). From this point on, the emphasis is clearly on the Gentile mission.

Gospel beyond Jerusalem. The delay between the Samaritans' confession of faith and their reception of the Spirit is probably best understood within the context of the literary structure of Acts—which is apparently designed to reflect God's programme of salvation-history. The reason that God withheld the gift of the Spirit until the apostles arrived from Jerusalem may never be fully understood by the modern reader. However, it is clear that the outpouring of the Spirit on this community of believers indicates that God's programme of salvation through Jesus Christ now includes the Samaritans, and that the advance of the Gospel has definitely moved to the second phase (cf. Acts 1:8).

It seems that those who deny the sincerity of the Samaritans' faith do so because they overlook the unique historical situation in which this event occurred.⁶⁵ This is also a weakness in the Classical Pentecostal interpretation. The Samaritans' reception of the Spirit is a milestone in God's programme for the advance of the Gospel. It is precisely for this reason that Acts 8:4-25 should be interpreted "programmatically," rather than paradigmatically. It should be understood as ". . . a specific and strategic development in the entire mission programme of Acts 1:8."⁶⁶ Classical Pentecostals believe that Luke's purpose in reporting the Samaritan event was to teach *the* "normative" pattern for Christian experience. However, in light of the historical (and literary) context, such an interpretation seems highly unlikely.

The Classical Pentecostal assertion that the sign of the Samaritan's

⁶⁵ For example Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 63-68.

⁶⁶ Ferguson, 83; Allison A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 139-142.

reception of the Spirit *must* have been tongues is presumptuous. While Simon's offer to buy the ability to confer the Spirit certainly suggests that there was some visible manifestation of the Spirit, Luke simply does not say what the sign was. Tongues may very well have occurred at Samaria, but further conjecture goes beyond the text into mere speculation.⁶⁷ Classical Pentecostals maintain that Luke's intention in Acts was to teach that speaking in tongues is the "initial evidence" of Spirit-baptism. However, the fact that Luke omits such an important detail here, in his first account of post-Pentecost Spirit-baptism, causes one to question seriously the Classical Pentecostal use of this passage as support for their doctrine of "initial evidence." Although Luke's silence on the matter does not rule out the possibility or even probability that tongues were spoken at Samaria, it fails to provide the kind of factual evidence for the doctrine of "initial evidence" that Classical Pentecostals claim.

Acts 9:17-18 — The "Baptism" of Saul of Tarsus

The critical issue here is whether this account describes a "pattern" of Spirit-baptism, similar to that described in Acts 2 and/or Acts 8. The problem however, is that Acts 9:17-18 simply does not describe Spirit-baptism at all. It only mentions the fact that Ananias was sent to Saul so that he ". . . may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (v 17).

Classical Pentecostals use this verse as support for their doctrine of Spirit-baptism because they believe it teaches that Spirit-baptism is a second blessing

⁶⁷ See Friedrich D. Bumer, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 179.

experience subsequent to conversion. However, their argument that Saul was converted (i.e., became a “Christian”) on the road to Damascus has some serious weaknesses. First, their assertion that Saul’s use of the word κύριος *can only mean* that he recognized Jesus as “the divine Lord,” and that Ananias’ use of ἀδελφός *can only mean* that he recognized Saul as “a Christian who accepted Jesus as Lord and had been renewed by the Spirit,” fails to take into account the range of possible meanings which these words may have (even within this context).⁶⁸ For example, κύριος in the vocative case can mean simply “sir” —a title of respect rather than a confession of faith.⁶⁹ Although this fact alone “. . . does not prove that this is the meaning intended in [S]aul’s salutation to the risen Christ in the Damascus-road encounter,”⁷⁰ it must at least be considered as a possibility. Besides, even if Saul meant “divine Lord,” it does not *necessarily* mean that he was fully converted on the road to Damascus.

Another plausible interpretation is to view Saul’s three-day experience as a single event. In other words, the Damascus-road encounter can be seen as part of a three-day process of “conversion,” that was not consummated until Saul/Paul received the gift of the Spirit. There are two important factors which seem to support this view. First, there is absolutely no reference in Paul’s writings to a post-conversion “second blessing” crisis event. While it is certainly inappropriate to read Lukan writings through Pauline lenses, it is not unreasonable to expect

⁶⁸ See D. A. Carson, “Brother,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 1, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 254-257; H. Bietenhard, “Lord,” *NIDNTT*, 2:508-519.

⁶⁹ See Dunn, 73.

⁷⁰ Ervin, 42.

Paul to make mention of such an event, especially if it had been part of his own experience. Roger Stronstad explains Paul's lack of reference to Spirit-baptism (as it is interpreted by Classical Pentecostals) by arguing that Paul focuses on the Spirit's work in salvation and sanctification, while Luke focuses on the Spirit's "vocational" work.⁷¹ However, one must not overlook the fact that Paul also devotes a considerable amount of ink to describing the Spirit's "vocational" work in the life of the believer.⁷²

Second, the manner in which Luke retells the story of Saul's/Paul's conversion/Spirit-baptism experience in Acts 22:10-16 and Acts 26:12-16 suggests that he (and Paul) views the three-day experience as a single event. "The one unified emphasis which confronts us in all three accounts, as well as Paul's allusions in his own letters, is of a radical, life-changing encounter between Saul of Tarsus and the risen Jesus."⁷³

Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 14:18 is sometimes cited by Classical Pentecostals as evidence that he must have spoken in tongues when he was Spirit-baptized. However, this passage only shows that Paul had the gift of tongues. Classical Pentecostals make a careful distinction between "the gift of tongues" mentioned in 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14, and Luke's references to what they believe is "tongues as initial evidence" in the book of Acts. They do this on account of Paul's rhetorical question in 1 Corinthians 12:30, "Do all speak in tongues?" In Greek, this question is worded in such a way as to expect a

⁷¹ *Charismatic Theology*, 9-12.

⁷² For example, Rom 12:6-8; 15:17-19; 1 Cor 2:4; 12:4-13,22-26; 14:1-33; 1 Thess 1:5-6.

⁷³ Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 134.

negative answer. Classical Pentecostals maintain their belief that all *should* speak in tongues as part of the normative Christian experience by arguing that Paul's reference is only to the "gift of tongues" in 1 Corinthians—not "tongues as initial evidence." However, they do not explain why this distinction is not considered when 1 Corinthians 14:18 is used as evidence that Paul *must have* spoken in tongues (i.e., as "initial evidence") when he was Spirit-baptized. In fact, there is no mention of speaking in tongues in relation to Paul's reception of the Spirit anywhere in the book of Acts.

Acts 10:44-46 — Cornelius' Household

The event described in Acts 10:44-46 is similar to that in 8:4-25, in that it too must be considered in light of God's programme for the advancement of the Gospel. Whereas the Samaritan reception of the Spirit marked the first major step beyond the borders of Jerusalem, the outpouring of the Spirit at Caesarea marks the second. There are at least two indicators which suggest that Luke intended this event to be understood programmatically, rather than paradigmatically. First, 10:44-46 is part of a larger unit (10:1-11:18) that is an important "transition passage" within the overall literary structure of the book of Acts. This larger unit is strategically located at the end of the second main section (8:1b-11:18). Luke reports that the Gospel had advanced from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria. The first major racial and religious barriers had been crossed, and God confirmed it by giving the gift of the Spirit to those outside the Jewish-Christian community. Both Jews and Samaritans were incorporated into

the fellowship of faith. It was now time to move to the third phase of God's programme for the advancement of the Gospel—the disciples would become witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Second, the emphasis that Luke places on the fact that Cornelius and his household were Gentiles also shows that this event was of decisive programmatic importance for Luke. The coming of the Spirit at Caesarea was described by Peter as the same kind of experience as those present on the day of Pentecost had experienced. Peter and his companions recognized, because of the sign of speaking in tongues, “. . . that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles” (Acts 10:45). Luke states in 11:18 that this incident was interpreted by the apostles as confirmation that “. . . God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.” The emphasis on Jewish-Gentile relations in Acts 10:1-11:18⁷⁴ suggests that this post-Pentecost outpouring of the Spirit should be understood by the reader as indicating that the second major racial and religious barrier had been crossed. Now the community of faith included not only Jews and Samaritans, but Gentiles as well. In Acts 11:19, Luke begins his third main section which focuses on the advance of the Gospel into Gentile territory.⁷⁵

The Classical Pentecostal view that speaking in tongues was a sign that

⁷⁴ Note for example, the account of Peter's vision (10:9-16), Peter's interpretation of the vision (10:28-29), and Peter's explanation of his actions to the circumcised believers who criticized him for entering "the house of uncircumcised men" (11:2-17). It seems that the main character in this story is not Cornelius, but Peter.

⁷⁵ Notice the reference to "the persecution in connection with Stephen." This persecution also marked the beginning of the advance of the gospel to Judea and Samaria (cf. 8:1b). For more on the structure of Acts and how it relates to the programmatic development of Acts see John Cochrane O'Neill, *The Theology of Acts in Its Historical Setting*, 2d ed. (London: SPCK, 1970).

indicated to the apostles that the Spirit had fallen on Cornelius' household, seems to be well supported by the text. However, there is nothing in the text which suggests that this event is paradigmatic for a two-stage Christian experience, or that this experience should be *re-experienced* in every believer's life.

Luke makes no clear distinction between conversion and the reception of the Spirit in Acts chapters 10 and 11. If his purpose was indeed to use a "pattern" *in order to teach* that the normative Christian experience includes a second work of grace that is regularly accompanied by the initial physical sign of speaking in tongues, why didn't he do so here? Classical Pentecostals argue that there is a definite "pattern" in Acts 10 by claiming that the idea of subsequence is "implied." Is this Luke's implication, or is it a Classical Pentecostal presupposition which they impose on the text? The purpose of this examination is to determine whether there is *sufficient evidence* to support the claim that there is a discernible "pattern" of Spirit-baptism in the book of Acts which clearly teaches the "normative" Christian experience. Since Luke does not make a clear distinction between conversion and the reception of the Spirit in this passage, it cannot be admitted as evidence for a "pattern" which describes a two-stage Christian experience.

The similarities between this and the Pentecost event (e.g., speaking in tongues) are probably best understood in light of God's programme for the advance of the Gospel. Of special importance is Jewish-Gentile relations as the apostles cross racial and religious barriers. It seems that it was necessary for Peter and the rest of the Jewish community to recognize the continuity of God's

work first among the Jews (and Samaritans), and then among the Gentiles. This, after all, is the point of Peter's (and Luke's) explanation in Acts 11:1-17.

Acts 19:1-7 — The Ephesian Disciples

The main point of contention in the Classical Pentecostal/non-Pentecostal debate surrounding this passage is the issue of how to interpret the word μαθηταί, usually translated “disciples.”⁷⁶ Some Classical Pentecostals, such as Robert Menzies, maintain that this term clearly means “Christians” in Acts 19:1.⁷⁷ Their argument is built primarily on the premise that Luke consistently uses μαθηταί in the book of Acts to refer to the disciples of Jesus Christ (i.e., “Christians” or “believers”).⁷⁸ This assumes that he did not (or could not) make even *one* exception. However, Luke demonstrates in his Gospel that he sometimes uses this word to refer to other groups of “disciples,” when the context demands it. For example in 5:33, he refers to “the disciples of John” and to “the disciples of the Pharisees” (cf. 11:1) In the retelling of Jesus’ “Sermon on the Plain” recorded in 6:40, μαθητής is used in a “generic sense” to refer to a “student” who is “not above his teacher.” μαθητής is also used by the other Gospel writers to refer to circles unrelated to Jesus, such as the disciples of John the Baptist (Matt 11:2-3; Mark 2:18; 6:29; John 1:35,37), the disciples of Moses (John 9:28), and the disciples of the Pharisees (Matt 22:16; Mark 2:18).⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Dietrich Müller, NIDNTT 1:483-490.

⁷⁷ Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke Acts* Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplementary Series, ed. J. C. Thomas, R. D. Moore and S. J. Land, no. 6 (Sheffield; Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 221-222. cf. Arrington, *Acts*, 191.

⁷⁸ Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation*, 55-59.

⁷⁹ Dietrich Müller, NIDNTT 1:487.

Although μαθητής usually refers to “Christian” disciples in the book of Acts, it would be unreasonable to rule out the possibility that Luke could have made an exception in 19:1.

The immediate context of Acts chapter 19 suggests that Luke’s use of μαθηταί in verse 1 refers not to “Christians,” but rather to “disciples” of John the Baptist. First, these Ephesian “disciples” had no knowledge of the most basic of Christian doctrines. For example, they had not even heard that the Holy Spirit (for whom John prepared the people cf. Luke 3:15-18) had arrived (19:2).

Second, once Paul learned from them that they had only received “John’s baptism,” he had them rebaptized in the name of Jesus. The fact that this is the only account of rebaptism in the New Testament suggests that the Ephesian “disciples” were a unique case.⁸⁰ No mention is made of any of the other “disciples” of John having to undergo rebaptism (including Apollos in 18:24-28).

Third, Luke seems to highlight the deficiencies in the Ephesian “disciples” faith by contrasting it with that of Apollos (cf. 18:24-28). Note the following.⁸¹

Apollos	“Ephesian Disciples”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thorough knowledge of the Scriptures - Instructed in the way of the Lord - Taught about Jesus accurately - Knew only the baptism of John - No mention of being rebaptized - Spoke “with fervor in the Spirit” (ζέως τῷ πνεύματι). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Had not even heard that the Spirit had arrived - Did not know basic Christian doctrine - Paul had to teach them about Jesus - Knew only the baptism of John - They were rebaptized - Spoke in tongues and prophesied when the Spirit came on them.

⁸⁰ Interestingly, Classical Pentecostal Harold Hunter views this only account of rebaptism in the New Testament as reason to believe that the Ephesian “disciples” could not have been true believers. See Hunter, *Spirit-Baptism*, 89.

⁸¹ Contra Robert Menzies, *Empowered*, 221-222, who sees the connection between Apollos and the Ephesian “disciples” as proof that the latter were Christians. However, this “connection” seems to point out more differences than similarities. Menzies does not adequately explain these differences.

Fourth, Luke clearly identifies these μαθηταί as “disciples” of John when he gives his account of their response to Paul’s question, “What baptism did you receive?” (19:3). “In answer to Paul’s second question, they explained that they had received John’s baptism, not Christian baptism. In a word, they were still living in the Old Testament which culminated with John the Baptist. They neither understood that the new age had been ushered in by Jesus, nor that those who believe in him and are baptized into him receive the distinctive blessing of the new age, the indwelling Spirit.”⁸²

The account of the Ephesian “disciples’” reception of the Spirit is best understood when considered in light of the wider context of Luke-Acts, in which Luke develops several major theological themes. As noted previously, the development of such themes in Acts is seen in the way in which Luke structures his book to reflect God’s programme of salvation-history (cf. Acts 1:8). Usually, the focus is on the *advance* of the Gospel in terms of the crossing of racial, religious and geographical borders (see Acts 2:1-13, Jews at Pentecost; Acts 8:4-25, Samaritans at Samaria; and Acts 10:44-46, God-fearing Gentiles at Caesarea). In Acts 19:1-7 however, the focus seems to be on the *sufficiency* of the Gospel.

Luke’s account of the Ephesian “disciples’” reception of the Spirit may certainly be viewed as another important step in God’s programme for the

⁸² John R. W. Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World: The Message of Acts* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 304.

advance of the Gospel.⁸³ Yet, a careful examination of Luke's two-volume work shows that he probably included this account for a different reason. Acts 19:1-7 is actually the last of 28 pericope in Luke-Acts which contain material concerning John the Baptist.⁸⁴

Material Concerning John the Baptist	Ref.
- John's birth is predicted to Zechariah, and Elizebeth conceives	Luke 1:5-25
- John's conception revealed to Mary	Luke 1:36
- Mary visits Elizabeth while pregnant with John	Luke 1:39-45
- John is born and Zechariah prophesies	Luke 1:57-79
- John grows up in the wilderness	Luke 1:80
- John preaches a baptism of repentance	Luke 3:1-6
- John preaches repentance and imminent judgment	Luke 3:7-9
- John replies to questioners about his identity	Luke 3:10-14
- John announces the one who is coming	Luke 3:15-18
- John is imprisoned by Herod	Luke 3:19-20
- John baptizes Jesus	Luke 3:21-22
- Jesus comments on John's practice of fasting	Luke 5:33-39
- John questions Jesus' identity	Luke 7:18-23
- Jesus testifies concerning John	Luke 7:24-28
- The people accepted John's baptism, but the Pharisees and Scribes did not	Luke 7:29-30
- Jesus describes responses to John and himself	Luke 7:31-35
- Public opinions concerning Jesus, and Herod's opinion in light of having imprisoned and executed John	Luke 9:7-9
- Public opinions concerning Jesus, and Peter's confession of him as	
Messiah (Τὸν Χριστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ)	Luke 9:18-21
- Jesus' disciples ask to be taught to pray as John taught his disciples	Luke 11:1
- Jesus relates John to the Law and Prophets and to the kingdom	Luke 16:16
- Jesus disputes over the authority of John's baptism	Luke 20:1-8
- Jesus explains that John's baptism was with/in water, but disciples will be baptized with/in the Holy Spirit	Acts 1:5
- The new apostle chosen was to have been with the other apostles from the time of John's baptism	Acts 1:21-22
- Peter explains that the gospel began after John's baptism	Acts 10:37
- Peter remembers Jesus' statement concerning John's baptism and disciples being baptized with the Holy Spirit	Acts 11:16
- Paul summarizes John's preaching. It was a baptism of repentance and an announcement of the coming one	Acts 13:24-25
- Apollos preaches Jesus, but knows only the baptism of John	Acts 18:25
- Paul meets some disciples in Ephesus who have only received John's baptism. On hearing about Jesus they receive Christian baptism	Acts 19:1-7

⁸³ For example, it mentions another religious people-group, "disciples of John." See Ferguson, 84-85; Marshall, *Acts*, 305-308.

⁸⁴ This chart is based on material found in Robert L. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-Historical Study* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 60-70. For more on Luke's portrait of John the Baptist see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Luke the Theologian* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989), 86-116.

This summary of Lukan material concerning John the Baptist illustrates how Luke's portrayal of John reflects a major theological theme in Luke-Acts, namely, *Promise and Fulfillment*. John had preached a baptism of repentance, and ". . . told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus" (Acts 19:4). Now "the coming one" has arrived and he is the fulfilment of God's promises to everyone who believes in him (including John's disciples). Acts 19:1-7 should be interpreted as part of Luke's portrait of John the Baptist which not only shows the sufficiency of the Gospel, but also the necessity for everyone to put their faith in *Jesus*. Luke records Peter's statement in Acts 4:12, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." God's salvation is in Jesus alone, and those who put their faith in him are invited to become part of the community of faith, that is, the Christian Church.

John is portrayed by Luke as representing a time of transition from the old covenant relationship between God and Israel, to the time of the new covenant relationship between Christ and his Church (e.g., Luke 16:16). The interpreter of Acts 19:1-7, therefore, must read this passage in light of its literary context, and in light of the unique historical situation in which the event occurred. "Like the first disciples at Pentecost, many of whom had also received John's baptism, these twelve men were thus in transit from the era of expectation to that of fulfillment."⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Ferguson, 84.

Section Three: A Comparative Analysis of the Five Acts Passages

The purpose of this section is to examine whether Luke's five descriptions of the coming of the Spirit follow a consistent "pattern" that reflects the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism. Of course, the existence of such a "pattern" would not *necessarily* mean that Luke intended to teach this as the normative Christian experience. However, if no consistent "pattern" can be demonstrated, it would cast serious doubt on the Classical Pentecostal interpretation of these texts.

The following chart demonstrates that Luke's five accounts of the coming of the Spirit does not follow a consistent "pattern." In fact, no two are exactly alike.

Note the differences:

- (1) The sign of tongues is mentioned in 2, 10 and 19, but not in 8 and 9. In Acts 2, three signs are mentioned. In Acts 19, two signs are mentioned. Praise (as a sign?) is mentioned 2 and 10, but not in 8, 9 or 19.
- (2) Prayer is mentioned in 2, 8 and 9, but not in 10 and 19.
- (3) Laying on of hands is mentioned in 8, 9 and 19, but not in 2 and 10.
- (4) Water-baptism is mentioned in 8, 9, 10 and 19, but not in 2. However, in Acts 10 water-baptism is administered after the reception of the Spirit.

Passage	Historical Situation	People Group	Sign(s)	Prayer	Laying on of hands	Water-baptism
Acts 2	Pentecost, Initial outpouring of the Spirit	Jewish disciples of Jesus	sound of wind, tongues of fire, tongues and praise	yes	no	no
Acts 8	Advancement of Gospel to the Samaritans	Samaritan "believers"	none mentioned	yes	yes	yes, before reception of the Spirit
Acts 9	Paul's Conversion	Saul/Paul	none mentioned	yes	yes	yes, after receiving sight
Acts 10	Advancement of Gospel to the Gentiles	God-fearing Gentiles	tongues and praise	no	no	yes, after reception of the Spirit
Acts 19	Fulfillment of John the Baptist's ministry	"Disciples" of John	tongues and prophecy	no	yes	yes, before reception of the Spirit

This chart, along with the exegetical considerations which should be taken into account when interpreting Acts 2:1-13, 8:4-25, 9:17-18, 10:44-46 and 19:1-7, shows that there is not sufficient evidence to support the Classical Pentecostal claim that there is a discernible "pattern" of Spirit-baptism in the book of Acts which clearly teaches the "normative" Christian experience. "The structure and theological flow of Acts itself indicates that these events are not to be thought of as paradigmatic but, each in its own context, as *sui generis*."⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CLASSICAL PENTECOSTAL DOCTRINE OF SPIRIT-BAPTISM: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

Classical Pentecostals claim that their movement is the restoration of “New Testament Christianity” to the contemporary Church. This claim is based on their conviction that they have rediscovered the true biblical teaching concerning *the normative pattern* for Christian experience—which they say is outlined in their doctrine of Spirit-baptism. Pentecostal Juan Sepúlveda has observed that “. . . what distinguishes Pentecostalism, not only from the traditional Christian confessions, but also from *evangelicals* and *charismatics*, is the view of Baptism in the Holy Spirit as an additional experience, coming after conversion or initiation into the Christian life, that is, as a ‘second blessing.’”¹ The purpose of this study has been to examine this “distinctive” Classical Pentecostal doctrine in light of the Pentecostal position on sources of theology. The aim has been to examine the source for this doctrine and what this entails for Christians who believe that Scripture is the absolute authority for all faith and practice.

An examination of what Classical Pentecostals state as their “official” position on what constitutes proper sources of theology indicates that they are part of the Protestant tradition that affirms *sola Scriptura*. Classical Pentecostals

¹ *Pentecostal Movements as an Ecumenical Challenge*, ed. Jürgen Moltmann and Karl-Josef Kuschel (London: SCM Press, 1996), 104.

say that there is no difference between them and other conservative Evangelicals and Fundamentalists in what they believe concerning the role of Scripture in deciding matters of faith and practice. They maintain that Scripture is the *only legitimate source* for Christian doctrine.

The Classical Pentecostal position on proper exegetical and hermeneutical methodology underwent several changes during the past century (see chapter 4). However, since the 1960s, Classical Pentecostals have claimed allegiance to the grammatico-historical method as *the proper method* for interpreting and applying Scripture when formulating (and/or supporting) doctrinal statements. The adoption of this method (i.e., from other conservative Evangelicals and Fundamentalists) is significant because it indicates that Pentecostals believe—at least in theory—that it is important to discover the “objective” meaning of Scripture before applying it to the contemporary situation.

Since the adoption of the grammatico-historical method, Classical Pentecostals have attempted to prove that their doctrine of Spirit-baptism is “biblical” by casting it in a propositional framework. The main thesis of their argument is that Luke presents a *consistent pattern* of Spirit-baptism in Acts *in order to teach* that the normative Christian experience includes a second work of grace, called “the baptism in the Holy Spirit,” that is regularly accompanied by the initial physical sign of speaking in tongues. In chapter 5, the Classical Pentecostal interpretation and application of five key Acts passages, which they use to support their doctrine of Spirit-baptism, was examined. However, a careful study of these five descriptions of the coming of the Spirit showed that the author

of Acts does not follow a consistent "pattern" which reflects the Classical Pentecostal doctrine. When the Acts passages were re-examined in light of their historical, theological and literary contexts, several issues were raised which cast serious doubt not only on the Classical Pentecostal interpretation and application of these texts, but also on the Pentecostal commitment to the grammatico-historical method. Although they use the "language" of propositional theology when defining and defending their distinctive doctrine, in practice Classical Pentecostals seem more committed to a "pragmatic hermeneutic."²

A comparative study of the various arguments presented by Classical Pentecostals in defence of their doctrine of Spirit-baptism clearly illustrates their "pragmatic" approach to Scripture. For example, Classical Pentecostals are sometimes criticized by non-Pentecostals for formulating their doctrine of Spirit-baptism on historical precedent. A common criticism is that Pentecostals have made the sign of speaking in tongues an essential part of their construct, even though it is only mentioned in three of the five Acts passages. Harold Horton offers a typical Classical Pentecostal response to this criticism when he writes:

We reply, there is no need in every record of a repeated experience that there should be a circumstantial and detailed photographic description of that experience. God gives us three detailed and well-authenticated reports of the baptism having been received with the supernatural evidence of tongues. He then expects us to have learned what to expect at subsequent baptisms and how they can be identified, authenticated and checked as complete.³

² Classical Pentecostal Randall Holm has convincingly argued that the philosophical basis on which Pentecostals decide proper hermeneutical practice is *pragmatism*. For more on this see "A Paradigmatic Analysis of Authority Within Pentecostalism" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Laval, 1995).

³ Harold Horton, "The Baptism in the Holy Spirit," *Pentecostal Testimony* (January 1, 1943): 7.

Such a response may satisfy Classical Pentecostals who are already convinced of their doctrine, but to those who are committed to propositional theology it raises more questions than it answers. How many times should an experience be recorded in Scripture before believers are expected to re-experience it in their own lives (e.g., the choosing of Church leaders by lot, foot-washing, snake handling, etc.)? In three of the five Acts passages which describe the coming of the Spirit, Spirit-baptism is preceded by the laying on of hands (Acts 8:17; 9:17 and 19:6). Does this mean, therefore, that all subsequent Spirit-baptisms must also be accompanied by the laying on of hands? Thomas Holdcroft answers this question by stating:

Since two of the five instances of Spirit baptism in Acts did not involve imposition [i.e., the laying on of hands], it is clear that the practice lacks exclusive approval as a rite to accompany the receiving of Spirit baptism. Imposition is seen by most Protestants as ceremonial and external rather than functionally operative.⁴

This apparent contradiction between Horton and Holdcroft illustrates the Classical Pentecostal “pragmatic” approach to interpretation. It seems that they are only committed to a hermeneutical principle—even the principle of historical precedent—as long as it suits their purpose.

When Classical Pentecostals discuss their doctrine of Spirit-baptism, the desired goal is to “prove” that their view is supported by Scripture. It is not surprising therefore, in light of the exegetical considerations discussed in chapter 5 of this study, that the grammatico-historical method is sometimes laid aside in favour of a “pre-critical” approach (i.e., “proof-texting”).

⁴ L. Thomas Holdcroft, *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Interpretation* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1962), 119.

To discover the real source of the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism, one must consider the historical-theological context from which it emerged. An examination of the historical roots of Classical Pentecostalism (chapter 2) revealed that their distinctive doctrine was formulated by incorporating several theological themes which were part of the Evangelical tradition of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. By the turn of the twentieth century, Wesley's basic concept of a "second blessing" had been: (1) re-interpreted as an "empowering-for-service" experience; (2) described in "Pentecostal" language; (3) taught as a post-conversion crisis event; (4) popularized by various Revivalist preachers; (5) promoted as something that all Christians should earnestly seek; and finally, (6) set in an evidential construct (i.e., initial evidence). From these theological themes Classical Pentecostals inherited a unique set of presuppositions that became the basis for their interpretation not only of Scripture, but of religious experience as well. Those who accuse Classical Pentecostals of basing their doctrine of Spirit-baptism on religious experience overlook the fact that their initial experience of glossolalia was preceded by their interpretation of the book of Acts. The issue for Classical Pentecostals is that they came to Scripture with a prior interpretation of an experience and its relationship to New Testament phenomena. In other words, Classical Pentecostals *began* with an interpretation of a religious experience that had been informed by a set of presuppositions inherited from the Evangelical tradition of the nineteenth century. They were convinced that any experience described in the book of Acts should be *re-experienced* in every Christian's life. "They saw the

dynamic, life-transforming quality of the apostolic experience in Acts 2 and asked God for something similar. When they did have a dynamic experience in the Holy Spirit, they said with Peter, 'This is That.'⁵ Classical Pentecostals assume that if their experience (e.g., of glossolalia) is real, then their interpretation of it must be correct. According to Randall Holm,

In the minds of Pentecostals, they had been entrusted a sacred yet fragile treasure which deserved protection at all costs. To accomplish this, Pentecostals began with an a priori experiential presupposition that married Spirit baptism with speaking in tongues and proceeded to find proofs based on this reality. Mathematically they concluded, if A (Spirit baptism = glossolalia) is true then B (The Bible) must support A.⁶

However, an examination of the biblical texts used by Classical Pentecostals to support their view of Spirit-baptism suggests otherwise. The author of this paper does not deny (or even question) that Pentecostals have had a genuine experience in the Holy Spirit. Yet this study does show that Classical Pentecostals have wrongly interpreted the nature and purpose of their experience (That is, according to their own "official" position on proper exegetical and hermeneutical methodology, and on what constitutes proper sources of theology).

What does this study entail for Christians who believe that Scripture is the absolute authority for all faith and practice? It shows that the real source of the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism is a unique set of presuppositions borrowed from the Evangelical religious tradition of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. This means that for those who affirm the Protestant confession of *sola*

⁵ Gordon Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 86.

⁶ Holm, 148.

Scriptura, it has *no authoritative basis*. Hopefully, this study will help non-Pentecostals to be equipped better to respond to the Classical Pentecostal claim that their doctrine describes an experience that should be considered “normative” for all Christians.

It is hoped that this study will also encourage Classical Pentecostals to re-examine their doctrine, and to allow for open discussion and debate on this important issue within their own ranks. Presently, Classical Pentecostals do not allow such discussions or debates. Since 1918, no Pentecostal credential holder has been allowed to discuss publicly any personal theological question, objection or difference of opinion concerning the Classical Pentecostal view of Spirit-baptism. Those who do so risk losing their ministerial credentials. This policy has become a major problem for some Pentecostal pastors and church leaders who have pursued higher theological education. It is particularly challenging for those who use the officially authorized hermeneutic (i.e., the grammatico-historical method) to test the Classical Pentecostal distinctive doctrine. As the Pentecostal movement enters its second century, it faces a critical theological juncture. Will Classical Pentecostals move forward and revise their traditional doctrine if the hermeneutic requires it? Or, will they see the danger to their doctrine and define a distinctive “Pentecostal hermeneutic” which supports their view but separates them from the mainstream of Evangelical hermeneutics?

Personal Reflection

This thesis was written from an “insider’s” point of view. The author was

an ordained minister with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland from 1993 to 1997, and with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada from 1998 to 1999. He resigned his credentials in January, 1999 because his research led him to conclude that he can no longer support the Classical Pentecostal view. Any effort on his part to encourage an open forum on this issue (as a credential holder) would have resulted in disciplinary action from the General Conference of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. Classical Pentecostal credential holders who openly admit that they can no longer support the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit are required to leave the movement. This study is significant because it examines a doctrine that is so important to Classical Pentecostals that they are willing to "remove" from ministry within their fellowship any who disagree with it.⁷ However, in light of this study, it is difficult to see how such a move can be in the best interest of Classical Pentecostals who believe that Scripture is the absolute authority for all Christian faith and practice. Classical Pentecostals need to take the advice of David Slauenwhite, Maritimes District Superintendent of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, who has recently argued that Pentecostals must strive toward greater theological development. He warns that,

Waving our Bibles in the air while whipping up a storm of excitement will not produce a spirituality that can survive the realities of life. Hermeneutical hollowness with exegetical excess will set the stage for the eventual embracing of heresy. Ministries with strong revivalistic emphases coupled with weak doctrinal knowledge, with heavy experiential services matched by light biblical teaching. . . create a climate of chaos and confusion.

⁷ See The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, "General Constitution, By-laws and Essential Resolutions," By-law #10, Section 7.

If only we would bring sound teachers in as quickly as we do sensational miracle workers. If only we chased after expository preaching as much as we do exciting prophecies. If we loved knowledge as much as we lust after miracles, we might not be quite so prone to fall for the deceptions of the hour.

Without an informed theology, we shall not have a knowledge of the truth. Without the truth, we shall not be able to know falsehood. When we cannot recognize that, we shall be deceived and ultimately destroyed. Jesus did not say that power would set you free, rather, "you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free."⁸

However if such advice is to be taken, Classical Pentecostals must be given the freedom to re-examine, and if necessary, redefine their "Pentecostal" theology without the threat of disciplinary action.

⁸ "The Essential Need of Theology," *Resource* 12 (November-December, 1997): 6-7.

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