

# **THESIS PROPOSAL**

by  
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## **Title**

"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."

## **THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING**

### **The Statement of the Problem**

What is the source for the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and what does their claim that this doctrine describes an experience which should be normative in the church today entail for Christians who believe that scripture is the absolute authority for all faith and practice?

### **The Subproblems**

The first subproblem is to accurately define the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The second subproblem is to define the Classical Pentecostal position on what constitutes proper sources of theology (e.g., tradition, experience, reason, scripture, etc.).

The third subproblem is to determine what extra-biblical factors, if any, may have influenced or contributed to the development of the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit (eg. historical, cultural, social, traditional or experiential).

The fourth subproblem is to accurately define the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of Scripture in order to determine their official stance concerning the role of Scripture in deciding matters of faith and practice.

The fifth subproblem is to determine what biblical basis, if any, do Classical Pentecostals claim as support for their doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The sixth subproblem is to determine what Classical Pentecostals state as their official stance concerning proper exegetical and hermeneutical methodology for applying Scripture to the development of doctrine.

The seventh subproblem is to determine whether the Classical Pentecostal official stance on proper exegetical and hermeneutical methodology is actually reflected in their hermeneutical practice, in order to demonstrate their actual use of scripture in deciding matters of faith and practice.

The eighth subproblem is to determine what scripture teaches concerning the baptism in the Holy Spirit by using the grammatico-historical/theological method.

The ninth subproblem is to determine what similarities and/or differences exist between the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the teaching of scripture as it is interpreted according to the grammatico-historical/theological method.

The tenth subproblem is to determine what this research reveals about the Classical Pentecostal claim that this doctrine describes an experience which should be normative in the church today, and what this entails for Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals who believe that scripture is the absolute authority for all faith and practice.

## **Hypotheses**

The first hypothesis is that an accurate definition of the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit can be formulated based on statements made by them in published materials (statements of faith, books, articles, etc.).

The second hypothesis is that extra-biblical factors which may have influenced or contributed to the development of the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit can be discovered by surveying the historical development of the movement. This will include a study of the religious roots of Classical Pentecostalism.

The third hypothesis is that an accurate definition of the Classical Pentecostal view of Scripture can be formulated based on statements made by them in published materials (statements of faith, books, articles, etc.).

The fourth hypothesis is that any biblical basis which Classical Pentecostals claim as support for their doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit can be identified by examining their use of scripture in their doctrinal statements and apologetical arguments defending their view found in published materials (statements of faith, books, articles, etc.).

The fifth hypothesis is that an accurate definition of the official stance of Classical Pentecostals concerning proper exegetical and hermeneutical methodology can be formulated based on statements made in published materials, and statements made by Classical Pentecostal Bible College and Seminary professors in a questionnaire and/or interview concerning the curriculum they use to train professional ministers.

The sixth hypothesis is that the actual hermeneutical practice of Classical Pentecostals can be discovered through a critical analysis of their doctrinal statements and apologetical arguments defending their doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit found in published materials (statements of faith, books, articles, etc.).

The seventh hypothesis is that a systematic theological statement of what Scripture teaches concerning the baptism in the Holy Spirit can be formulated based on an exegesis of all relevant biblical passages using the grammatico-historical/theological method.

The eighth hypothesis is that the similarities and/or differences between the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the teaching of Scripture as it is interpreted according to the grammatico-historical/theological method can be identified by a comparative analysis of the two.

The ninth hypothesis is that this research will determine the basis for the claim made by Classical Pentecostals that their doctrine describes an experience which should be normative in the church today, and will provide the necessary criteria which Christians who believe that

scripture is the absolute authority for all faith and practice can use to decide their response to this claim.

### **The Delimitations**

This study will be limited to evaluating one doctrinal statement of Classical Pentecostals: the doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

This study will not determine or evaluate the hermeneutical practice of all Pentecostals. Rather, it is limited to determining and evaluating the hermeneutical practice that is reflected in one doctrinal statement: the Classical Pentecostal view on the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

For the purpose of this study, "Classical Pentecostalism" will be represented by the three largest Pentecostal organizations in North America: "The Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland," "The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada," and "The Assemblies of God" in the United States.

The historical survey of the development of Classical Pentecostalism will cover the years from 1738 (John Wesley's Aldersgate experience) to 1914 (the first "official statement" of the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit by the Assemblies of God in the United States). This survey will only be concerned with historical events and theological thought which may have influenced the development of the doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Other doctrines will not be considered unless it can be demonstrated that they are directly related to this one.

### **The Definition of Terms**

**Classical Pentecostal** The term *Classical Pentecostal* refers to a person or organization which believes that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a second work of grace subsequent to conversion, and that the initial physical evidence of this experience is speaking in other tongues (ie. languages unknown to the speaker).

**Exegetical Methodology** Exegesis is the task of finding out what a text originally meant within its original context. In this study, *exegetical methodology* refers to those principles or rules of exegesis which are actually stated and/or taught by a person or organization.

**Hermeneutical Methodology** Hermeneutics is the task of interpreting the meaning of a biblical text and how that meaning applies to a contemporary situation. In this study, *hermeneutical methodology* refers to those principles or rules of interpretation which are actually stated and/or taught by a person or organization.

**Hermeneutical Practice** *Hermeneutical practice* is how a person or organization actually interprets the meaning of a biblical text and applies that meaning to a contemporary situation. Hermeneutical practice may or may not be consistent with exegetical and hermeneutical methodology.

**Grammatico-historical Method** The term *grammatico-historical method* refers to the method of exegesis which seeks to understand the meaning of a biblical text in light of its historical background together with grammatical, syntactical and linguistic factors.

**Theological Method** The term *theological method* refers to the method of interpretation which seeks to understand a biblical text in light of the overall theological context of the entire canon of Scripture. Thus, each biblical document is viewed as a contribution to the record of divine revelation and human response to that revelation.

**Grammatico-historical/Theological Method** The term *grammatico-historical/theological method* refers to a method of hermeneutics which combines the grammatico-historical and theological methods.

## **Assumptions**

This study assumes that the Bible is the inspired written word of God and is therefore authoritative for all Christian doctrine and practice. However, when God revealed himself and his will to humankind, he did so through human authors at a specific time and place in history.

Consequently, the Bible must be studied and interpreted in light of the fact that it is a divine message that was, and is, transmitted through human means.

The interpretation of each biblical document, therefore, must take the immediate literary context and the wider situation in which it appeared into account. This calls for an understanding of the biblical languages, literary genres, historical background, and the life setting of the author(s). Hence, this study assumes that the exegetical method which best addresses these concerns is the grammatico-historical method.

This study presupposes that there is an overall theological unity in the canon of scripture which provides the theological context within which each biblical document is to be viewed. Therefore, the modern exegete must go beyond studying the Bible based on the grammatico-historical method alone. He must also use the theological method. Scripture is not simply a collection of ancient documents which can be studied scientifically. Rather, the Bible is a "living book" and as God's self-revelation, speaks to people of every age.

This study presupposes that tradition, reason and experience all have an important role to play in formulating one's theological understanding. Nevertheless, these human factors are fallible, and are subject to the divine teaching of Scripture. Tradition, reason, and experience are considered valid support for Christian belief and practice, as long as they are in harmony with each other, and they do not contradict the teaching of Scripture. Therefore, this study does not assert that the grammatico-historical/theological method of interpretation is the only means of knowing truth. Rather, it is a valid tool for evaluating extra-biblical theological statements in order to determine whether or not these statements are consistent with the teaching of Scripture.

### **The Importance of the Study**

The Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit was first formulated at the turn of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, Classical Pentecostals claim that their view of Spirit baptism is based on Scripture, and that this doctrine was a normative part of the 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. However, the biblical texts which are cited by Classical Pentecostals to support their view have been interpreted differently by non-Pentecostals. The practical value of this study is to help Classical Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals identify the source of this doctrine, and to understand why they disagree on this important point.

## **THE REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Historical**

Because a person's understanding of Scripture is largely determined by the set of presuppositions which he or she unavoidably brings to the text, a careful evaluation of any doctrinal statement should examine the historical context in which it was developed. Three books which have proved most helpful in understanding the historical context within which the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit was developed are: (1) *The Third Force* by Gordon F. Atter; (2) *Azusa Street: The Roots of Modern-day Pentecost* by Frank Bartleman; and (3) *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* by Vinson Synan.

Gordon Atter, who writes from a Canadian perspective, gives an account of the origin and development of the Pentecostal movement, as well as the history of the doctrinal developments in Pentecostal circles. In chapter 11 he deals specifically with the doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Frank Bartleman's book is an eye witness account of the Azusa Street revival from 1906 to 1908 by one of the early leaders of Classical Pentecostalism. Most Classical Pentecostals point to the Azusa Street revival as the origin of their movement, and are indebted to Charles Fox Parham and William J. Seymour for the teaching that the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is always speaking with other tongues. Although Bartleman's book does not deal with the theological developments of Classical Pentecostalism, it is important for this study because it gives the researcher a first hand account of the historical context within which their doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit was originally taught.

Vinson Synan's book is an account of the historical development of the holiness-Pentecostal movement in the United States, of which Classical Pentecostalism is a part. Synan examines the literature, as well as the social relations and attitudes of these groups.

### **Theological**

L. Thomas Holdcroft is one of the leading contemporary theologians within Classical Pentecostalism in Canada. His book, *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Interpretation*, is an apologetic designed to clearly present the Classical Pentecostal understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in the church today. In chapter 8 the Baptism in the Holy Spirit as a distinctive doctrine of Pentecostalism is examined in relation to the scriptural teaching concerning the indwelling and infilling of the Spirit. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit as distinct from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in every believer is examined in light of Acts 2:1-13; 8:14-19; 9:17-18; 10:44-46; and 19:1-7. Based on his exegesis, Holdcroft concludes that the baptism in the Holy Spirit as the endowment of power for service should be normative for every believer today, just as it was in the early church.

## **THE DATA AND THE TREATMENT OF THE DATA**

### **The Data**

The data for this research are of two kinds: primary data and secondary data. The Primary Data consists of English and Greek editions of the New Testament, published materials written by Classical Pentecostals, statements made by Classical Pentecostals in a questionnaire.

The Secondary Data consists of publications written by non-Pentecostals concerning the historical development of Classical Pentecostalism, doctrinal statements by theologians who may have influenced Classical Pentecostalism (e.g. John Wesley), published works by individuals who affirm the same distinctive doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and commentaries on biblical passages related to the subject of Spirit-baptism written by Classical Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals.

### **The Criteria for the Admissibility of the Data**

Only those Bible College and Seminary professors who hold credentials with one of the three Pentecostal organizations mentioned above, and who also teach in Bible Colleges or Seminaries which are affiliated with one of these organizations, will be consulted about what they believe and teach concerning proper exegetical and hermeneutical methodology.

Only publications which are written by Classical Pentecostals will be considered as accurate representations of the Classical Pentecostal view. Authors outside the P.A.O.C., P.A.O.N and the A.O.G. who affirm the same distinctive doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit will be considered as important secondary sources. For example, Donald Gee and Harold Horton are often quoted by Classical Pentecostals as authoritative representatives of their view.

### **The location of the Data**

Most primary and secondary data is located at the libraries of Providence College and Theological Seminary, The University of Manitoba, and Eastern Pentecostal Bible College. The names and addresses of Bible College and Seminary professors who will be surveyed will be obtained from the head offices of P.A.O.N., P.A.O.C. and A.O.G..

### **The Research Methodology**

This research will begin by collecting the data. This will include: (1) building a bibliography of primary and secondary sources using book reviews, ATLA index, bibliographies in books, dissertations, etc.; and (3) designing and using a questionnaire.

Once the data is collected, each subproblem will be addressed in the order they are given above by reading and analyzing the primary and secondary data. Scripture will be interpreted using the grammatico-historical/theological method. Secondary sources (commentaries, word studies, etc.) will be consulted in order to confirm the accuracy of my interpretation.

Finally, conclusions will be drawn from the research and the practical implications of those conclusions will be presented.

### **The Qualifications of the Researcher**

The researcher has been a full time student of theology for six years. He received a Bachelor of Theology degree from Eastern Pentecostal Bible College in 1994, and is presently working on a Master of Arts (theological studies) degree at Providence Theological Seminary. This has given him a good understanding of Biblical Theology, Historical Theology and Systematic Theology, as well as a good working knowledge of biblical Hebrew and biblical Greek. The researcher has also taken several courses on exegetical and hermeneutical methodology from both Classical Pentecostal and a non-Pentecostal perspectives.

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\*\*\*\*\* Dispensationalists debate the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit on at least three fronts. First, they have generally been non-Pentecostal and have dismissed as unbiblical the teaching that Spirit baptism produces speaking in tongues.<sup>1</sup> Second, they have debated other non-Pentecostal fundamentalists and evangelicals who believe that Spirit baptism was a second experience after conversion which greatly enhanced power for Christian service. Concerning D. L. Moody, R. A. Torrey wrote: "See, for example, John Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen, 1954) 180-88. The Pentecostal movement within Protestant Christianity places special emphasis on gifts of the Holy Spirit, as shown in the Biblical account of the Day of Pentecost. Pentecostalism is similar to the Charismatic Movement, but developed earlier and separated from the mainstream church. Charismatic Christians, at least in the early days of the movement, tended to remain in their respective denominations. Thus, by the time of the Pentecostal outbreak in America in 1901, there had been at least a century of movements emphasizing a second blessing called the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" with various interpretations concerning the content and results of the experience. In America, such Keswick teachers as A.B. Simpson and A.J. Gordon also added to the movement at large an emphasis on divine healing "as in the atonement" and the premillennial rapture of the church. 19th Century Holiness Movement. Since Pentecostalism began primarily among American holiness people, it would be difficult to understand It also outlines the Pentecostal doctrine of a subsequent baptism of the Holy Spirit that follows the conversion event. A Brief History of The Pentecostal Movement. General Overview There is no unanimity within Pentecostalism as to the exact origin of the movement. The classical position holds that "Most histories date the beginning of the movement to January 1, 1901, when Agnes Ozman spoke in tongues in the Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, operated by former Methodist preacher Charles F Parham" {Burgess 1995: 220}. 6. Pentecostalism began as a distinct movement in 1901 at the Bethel College in Topeka.