

Streams in the Desert: Sources on the Spirit for Pentecostal Preachers

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Several decades ago, a great drought lay upon the land. Thirsty people looked every place for water, but it could not be found. Today, however, water is flowing and readily available as books, articles, and journals pay more attention to the Holy Spirit and related subjects. The level of Evangelical scholarship has moved up, and the effect of the charismatic renewal more than lingers. Pentecostal and charismatic scholars have ascended into the rain clouds of the academy to release much-needed water to the earth below.

For the Pentecostal preacher, abundant secondary sources exist. Through these sources, persistent and concerned students can access references to primary material about the Spirit. These sources also feature prominent hermeneutical methods that demonstrate how scholars deal with the biblical text in its ancient environment. Consequently preachers can observe and learn techniques not used by evangelicals, let alone Pentecostals, some three or four decades ago. They can become aware of what others are thinking, writing, and discussing in colleges, universities, and seminaries. To a great degree, this shows the growth and sophistication of charismatic and Pentecostal traditions. Many of the authors whose work is referred to in this review belong to these traditions and stand tall among biblical scholars.

Some Background

In 1970, with the advent of the Society for Pentecostal Studies (an association of scholars primarily in the classical Pentecostal tradition), the controversy over a few issues intensified. This is normal when scholars address questions that arise from exegesis. For instance, Gordon Fee raised the debate over the classical Pentecostal doctrine of initial evidence. Are tongues normative in Spirit baptism? Because the main argument by Pentecostals focused on the Book of Acts, the debate centered on genre and hermeneutics. Does history (i.e., the Book of Acts) teach theology or simply record it as a historical fact? In other words, is Acts prescriptive (i.e., containing an “oughtness”)? Or is it merely descriptive (i.e., recording facts that normally happen)?¹ As a teenager, Fee noted the hollow experiences speakers seemed to generate in church and camp gatherings. They emphasized speaking in tongues so much that many of Fee’s peers, in his thinking, just manifested something like gibberish. Wanting the experience to be genuine, Fee sought to correct this kind of occurrence. Another issue was latent within this one: Was Spirit baptism part of the conversion process or separate from it? In 1970, Frederick Dale Brunner published a book on the Holy Spirit that was geared particularly toward refuting the Pentecostal distinctive.² It became popular among Evangelicals because it was, at the time, an exegetical

response that seemed to destroy the Pentecostal argument. I ran into it while in graduate school where it had gained some status. In the preface, Brunner admits his “dilemma.” He was a systematician torn by his missionary vocation and forced to do exegesis. Consequently, Brunner’s exegetical foundations were extremely weak.

About the same time the Society for Pentecostal Studies began, Dunn came out with his *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today*, causing much consternation among Pentecostals.³ Later, he followed up on some implications of experience that arose in this book.⁴ James D.G. Dunn advocated that the baptism in the Spirit is the event in which the sinner becomes a believer and receives the Spirit. He brought into vogue the term “conversion/initiation.” At the same time, Dunn believed the Christian ought to have more power with which to witness. A few years later, Howard M. Ervin, who taught at Oral Roberts University, responded to Dunn in *Conversion-initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Critique of James D.G. Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit*.⁵ Ervin argued for the classical Pentecostal position that the baptism of the Spirit was an experience distinct from salvation and necessary for witness and other charismatic activity. This brought into clear relief that the difference among various theologies was over the order of the Spirit’s experience in salvation. Dunn, and others, argued for the Spirit’s full reception at conversion. Pentecostals argued for the baptism in the Spirit subsequent to and separate from salvation. Still others (holiness traditions) identify the order in three “works”: conversion, sanctification, and Spirit baptism.

The Emergence of Journals

On the pastoral level, the journal *Paraclete* emerged in 1967 to provide a forum for Pentecostal, especially Assemblies of God, discussion.⁶ *Paraclete* went out of existence, and its mission was continued partially in *Enrichment* magazine. *Pneuma*, the voice of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, though handling mostly historical articles, also provided a broader input on Pentecostal issues.⁷ In October 1992, *Journal for Pentecostal Theology* emerged to provide a more scholarly exegetical and theological forum for charismatics and Pentecostals. Sheffield Academic Press of Sheffield, England, which publishes this journal, also publishes its *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series*. The first in this series was Steve Land’s *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*, edited by John Christopher Thomas, Rick D. Moore, and Steven J. Land (1993). All these supplements are of interest, but John Ruthven’s *On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Postbiblical Miracles #3* (1993) is worthy of special note.

Internet Resources

One can search the Internet for particular journals but usually they do not offer the full text. A good beginning point is the pastorally oriented journal, *Interpretation* (www.interpretation.org). Indices for Pentecostal and Charismatic journals, including the *Pneuma*, the *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association*, the *Journal for Pentecostal Theology*, and back issues of *Paraclete* can be accessed at: <http://www.sps-usa.org/indices/pneuma.html>. A free, but limited site for searching for articles on Pentecostal and charismatic issues is <http://www.findarticles.com>. Some journals, such as the *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, allow the user to copy the entire article, while

others do not. For a more thoroughgoing search vehicle, EBSCOhost is available for a yearly subscription fee.⁸ It offers a bountiful supply of articles on an array of subjects in a variety of journals or periodicals by title, author, or subject. Articles from such journals provide rich material for developing sermons, Bible studies, and topical theological studies.

Publishing Venture

While I was teaching in a Bible college during the 1970s, a bright student passed through my hermeneutics class. Stephen Hendrickson, a music major, took hermeneutics because of his broad and focused interest in biblical studies. To pay his college costs, he began Christian Book Distributors out of the family garage in Lynn, Massachusetts, where his father pastored the local Assembly of God. By the time Stephen graduated from college, CBD was well on its way. From that early hermeneutics class, he saw the need and caught the vision to help alleviate the drought of Pentecostal materials. Together, we started Hendrickson Publishers in Peabody, Massachusetts.

One of the first proposals to come in was from Roger Stronstad.⁹ Following a recommendation by Bill Menzies, Roger Stronstad submitted his M.A. thesis from Regent College in Canada. We asked him to revise it for publication, and his book has blessed thousands of searching Pentecostals ever since. Stronstad, in contrast to Fee, argued that Acts as historical narrative is prescriptive (i.e., normative). Fee and Stronstad carried on the debate for some time in various articles and books.¹⁰

The present status of hermeneutics and the evolution of the debate make this issue a historical one. Other hermeneutical methods are being used, and new questions are being asked. Dunn abandoned the discussion long

ago, coming out with only one recent article. Gordon Fee has moved on as well.

From the start, Hendrickson Publishers' goal was to give Pentecostal and charismatic writers a quality voice. Here are some of the titles that demonstrate the accomplishment of this goal. In the area of spiritual gifts are Ronald A.N. Kydd's *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church: An Exploration Into the Gifts of the Spirit During the First Three Centuries of the Christian Church* (1984); and Siegfried Schatzmann's *A Pauline Theology of Charismata* (1987).¹¹ Stanley M. Burgess authored three volumes on the Spirit in the history of the Church: *The Spirit and the Church: Antiquity* (1984); *The Holy Spirit: Eastern Christian Traditions* (1989); and *The Holy Spirit: Medieval Roman Catholic and Reformation Traditions* (1997).¹¹ Two *Festschriften* on Spirit issues, honoring two esteemed Pentecostal/Charismatic scholars, were published: Paul Elbert, ed., *Faces of Renewal: Studies in Honor of Stanley M. Horton* (1988) and Paul Elbert, ed., *Essays on Apostolic Themes: Studies in Honor of Howard M. Ervin* (1985). Howard Ervin produced another title: *Spirit Baptism: A Biblical Investigation* (1987), which is still valuable. Ronald A. N. Kydd wrote *Healing Through the Centuries: Models for Understanding* (1998).¹²

Other publishers saw the potential and began to produce books of interest to Pentecostals and charismatics. For example, Zondervan published *Life in the Spirit: New Testament Commentary*¹³ and the *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*.¹⁴ Baker Book House published the *3 Crucial Questions Series*. Two of them, geared toward a lay/pastoral level audience, are outstanding: Craig S. Keener, *3 Crucial Questions about the Holy Spirit* and Clinton Arnold's *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*.¹⁵

Books of Special Importance—Signs and Wonders

This section includes books to assist pastors and others who look for biblical, theological guidance in the area of signs and wonders, including how to deal with evil powers. Most of these are monographs. Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* gives detailed answers about the work of Satan and shows how Jesus conquered him.¹⁷ In "The Devil, Disease, and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in the New Testament Thought," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 13* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), John Christopher Thomas provides a biblical overview of Satan's work with special reference to sickness and healing. This is must reading for all Pentecostals. One should also consult Clinton Arnold's work on pagan religion and magic in Asia Minor: *Ephesians: Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of Its Historical Setting* (first published by Cambridge in 1989; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, paperback edition 1992, 1997); *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996); and *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992). From an Assemblies of God perspective and written in a non-technical style, see Gary B. McGee and Benny C. Aker, *Signs and Wonders in Ministry Today* (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1996). For a response to the cessationist's position and defense of the gifts of the Spirit from a non-Assemblies of God view see *The Kingdom and the Power*.¹⁶ Important also for this area is Graham H. Twelftree's, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical*

Jesus (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers (reprint of J.C.B. Mohr), 1993).

Books of Importance—The Spirit

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, three authors working on Ph.D.s and publishing in England elevated biblical-theological studies on the Spirit in Luke-Acts to a higher level. Robert Menzies, Max Turner, and Jim Shelton¹⁹ agreed that Luke stresses the Spirit's empowerment for prophetic witness in Luke-Acts but they disagreed at one point. Menzies, along with Stronstad, argued for the doctrine of initial evidence via Luke's view of Spirit baptism. Though agreeing with Menzies about the preponderance of inspired speech in Luke-Acts, Turner carried on in Dunn's tradition but differed from him in some respects. Turner believes that in Luke-Acts the Spirit is also involved in conversion-initiation. Shelton appropriately noted that Luke does not intend Spirit baptism to speak about conversion-initiation, **but neither does he believe Luke intends that the believer always should speak in tongues when first filled with the Spirit as in the initial evidence doctrine of the Classical Pentecostal.**

All three authors employ redaction/composition criticism to point out Luke's theological interests, a point Stronstad had made in different ways. The weakness of Dunn, Turner, and Menzies is methodological, in that they focus more on traditions behind the biblical text to understand the biblical text than on the text itself. Dunn does not do as well as Menzies or Turner in searching out Jewish texts on the Spirit, leaning toward form critical analysis that tends toward fragmenting the text. Dunn, Menzies, Turner, and Shelton all fall short by failing to employ narrative and social science techniques. Stronstad has always urged interpreters of Luke-Acts to recognize and embrace the narrative genre

of Luke-Acts and believes that narrative teaches theology. Shelton does pay closer attention to the text of Luke-Acts than does either Menzies or Turner.

The debate between Menzies and Turner (who are good friends) focuses on whether the Spirit is seen as doing anything other than inspiring believers to prophesy. Both argue from Jewish precedents but reach different conclusions. Menzies believes Luke teaches that the exclusive role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts is inspiration/prophesy. Turner believes that, in addition to causing people to prophesy, the Spirit does other things in Luke-Acts.

Another scholar, Blaine Charette, worked in the Gospel of Matthew under the well-known English scholar, Graham Stanton. He was encouraged to write a theology of the Spirit, and it was published in the late 1990s. The value of Charette's little monograph is his methodology. He focuses firmly on the text of Matthew's Gospel.¹⁷

Craig Keener's *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts: Divine Purity and Power* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997) finished Hendrickson's plan to cover "The Spirit in the Bible" series with Fee (Pauline) and Wilf Hildebrandt (OT).¹⁸ Keener's work, expanded from his dissertation, focused on two issues he found current in Jewish literature as well as in the New Testament: purity and power (especially as manifested in prophecy). Though limited in the number of biblical texts engaged, this work provides a plethora of ancient texts—both Jewish and Greco-Roman—to help the reader understand the historical, literary, and social background of the Spirit in the Gospels and Acts. It was written later than most of the works of Stronstad, Menzies, Shelton, and Turner. Though some of their later discussion happened after Keener's work came out,

they did not engage it. Consequently, these volumes should be read together.

Other valuable books are available in this area of interest also (mentioned above briefly). The standard for years to come is Gordon D. Fee's *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994).¹⁹ This book provides an excellent model for doing biblical theology. Part one, in which Fee exegetes the text, comprises the largest section. Part two, the synthesis, gathers the data into a biblical theology. Fee handles biblical-theological issues well and one does well to emulate his methodology. Arising from this work is his highly significant *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1996). In it, Fee again visits the issues and summarizes them succinctly for a general reader.

Of value also are Craig S. Keener's *Gift and Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001) and Anthony D. Palma's *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 2001). Ben Witherington III's *Jesus the Seer: The Progress of Prophecy* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1999) traces prophecy through the Bible and connects it with Jesus. This book contains many insights for the Pentecostal. Though technical, Max Turner's *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1996) is a must for those who are interested in exploring spiritual gifts from a biblical perspective.

Conclusion

I have only scratched the surface here. Many more sources await the thirsty traveler. These references and lists are only representative and point toward a much fuller pool of water. They lead down the

path to where streams flow. Most of these sources should not be read straight through, but used as commentaries. When working on a verse or topic, one should go to the contents page/index, list the page numbers that contain pertinent information, and go directly to those pages.

By drinking water from the Bible, as helped by these wonderful sources, pastors can raise their ministry to a new level with an added spiritual influence. Welcome to the journey.

¹Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1982). See also, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit: The Issue of Separability and Subsequence," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 7:2 (Fall, 1985): 87-99. *How to Read* is in the third edition (November 2003). The latest removed and rewrote Chapter six ("Acts—the Problem of Historical Precedent") and is now quite different. It is still useful with a helpful section on Bible translation.

²Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970). This is typical of the Reformed cessationist perspective.

³James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (London: S.C.M. Press Ltd., 1970).

⁴*Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998; originally London: SCM Press Ltd., 1975).

⁵*Conversion-initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Critique of James D.G. Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1984).

⁶*Paraclete* was published between 1967 and 1995.

⁷"The Society for Pentecostal Studies, founded in 1970, was first envisioned by William Menzies of the Assemblies of God, Vinson Synan of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, and Horace Ward of the Church of God. Formed with the intent "to serve the church world by providing an authoritative interpretation of the Pentecostal Movement," the Society directed its energies toward bringing scholarship on the Pentecostal tradition to the fore. <http://www.sps-usa.org/about/history.html> (Accessed 1/28/04).

⁸In a search engine, input these letters and they will lead to a page with that website information. Just click on the letters then and that will take you to the website for further information.

⁹*The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1984). Howard Erving's book just mentioned was among them.

¹⁰ Much of the debate carried on in private conversations but the following illustrate the authors' ongoing concerns. Roger Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture and Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 1995); Gordon D. Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 1991).

¹¹ Interestingly, one of the better reviews of this out-of-print book is by Louis Richard Batzler in *The Journal of Religion and Psychological Research* 14:4 (October 1991) 230-31. It can be accessed at <http://web4.epnet.com>.

¹²These have been retitled and are now out of print.

¹³More titles will be mentioned in a later section of this article.

¹⁴Formerly *Full Life Bible Commentary to the New Testament*, edited by French L. Arrington and Roger Stronstad (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).

¹⁵Revised and expanded edition, edited by Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

¹⁶(Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996 and 1997).

¹⁹Robert Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts*, revised (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); and Jim Shelton, *Mighty in Word and Deed: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 1991).

²⁰In his introduction to *Restoring Presence: The Spirit in Matthew's Gospel* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), Charette notes this fact.

²¹The following data shows how much Keener has drawn from other primary texts: of 282 pages, 218 pages are devoted to the body; 25 to "Select Bibliography of Sources Cited"; 9 to "Index of Modern Authors"; and 28 pages to "Index of Ancient Sources." Each chapter has copious endnotes usually numbering in the hundreds. Wilf Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995).

²² See a review article and Fee's response: Eduard Schweizer, "A Very Helpful Challenge: Gordon Fee's *Empowering Presence*," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 8 (April 1996): 7-21 and Gordon D. Fee, "God's *Empowering Presence*: A Response to Eduard Schweizer," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 8 (April 1996): 2-30.