

Part 3: HOLINESS

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The Evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit Among Nazarenes: The Controversy with the Pentecostal Doctrine

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Introduction

The choice of our theme: “The Evidence of Baptism of the Holy Spirit Among Nazarenes: The Controversy with the Pentecostal Doctrine” is not a hazardous undertaking. It responds definitively to multiple theological questions that certain people ask themselves regarding specific cardinal doctrines in the Church of the Nazarene, an ecclesial community that has spread throughout Africa since the beginning of the 20th century.

Our objective is not to engage in a debate between Nazarenes and Pentecostals, but to shed light on the subject regarding the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This question about the evidence of the Holy Spirit finds opposition among some groups within Christendom. We propose to elucidate this theological controversy by the example of Nazarenes and the Pentecostals. The Church of the Nazarene, like other evangelical churches, affirms that the biblical evidence regarding the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the sanctification that is revealed by the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life, while the Pentecostal doctrine stipulates that this baptism is made evident by a visible sign, such as speaking in tongues. Our cordial task is to find a response to the following question: What is the real evidence for the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

The essence of our investigation consists of the verification of our working hypothesis that we can formulate briefly in the following manner: “The purification of the heart by Jesus Christ made known by the fruit of the Spirit should be the real evidence or visible sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.”

Conceptual Approaches to the Evidence of the Baptism of the Holy

Spirit

This section focuses upon the theological approach to the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. However, a partial conclusion will include the theological complications that we formulate in this section. Our work consists of tackling the controversial question of the baptism of the Holy Spirit assisted by the Scriptures that constitute the essential foundation of all Christian theology. H Orton Wiley, Dean of Nazarene theologians, said, “The Holy Scripture is recognized by all schools as being the true source of Christian theology.”³⁵ However, the other sources like tradition (experience of communities), reason (the rule of logic), or experience (personal religious experience) can have limited validity.³⁶ Those who found their doctrine upon experience, for example, run into many dangers as emphasized by R S Taylor in these words: “The ‘God’ of human experience could well not be God of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”.³⁷

In the Church of the Nazarene

The Church of the Nazarene believes that all believers should be entirely sanctified after regeneration. However, it is important to note that this experience of entire sanctification may be indicated by many terms representing its different facets, such as: Christian perfection, perfect love, purity of heart, fullness of the blessing, Christian holiness, and baptism of the Holy Spirit.³⁸ Thus, we will study the crucial question of its evidence. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is defined by J Paul in the following manner: “‘the cleansing with the Spirit from on high.’ This expression implies purity, power, and consolation.”³⁹ But from his side, William M Greathouse says that “to be baptised by the Holy Spirit is having a purified heart, to be renewed with power, be fixed in the image of Christ.” In the Articles of Faith in speaking of entire sanctification, the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene says that the acquisition of this divine work is presented in this way: “Entire sanctification is accomplished by the baptism of the Holy Spirit and embraced in the single experience of purification from sin, the constant presence and intimacy of the Holy Spirit,

³⁵ Knight, J A. *Ce que la Bible dit a propos du parler en langues*, Kansas City, MPN, 1988, p. 11.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 12.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 27.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 13.

fortifying the believers for life and service.”⁴⁰

In its official declaration of 15 October 1976, the Board of General Superintendents stated: “We affirm that the biblical evidence of entire sanctification or of the fullness of the Holy Spirit, is the purification from original sin, as affirmed in Acts 15:8-9. And this purification is made known by the fruit of the Spirit in a holy life (Galatians 5:22-24). Affirming that one special physical evidence or to claim that a prayer language is an evidence of baptism of the Holy Spirit is contrary to the biblical and historic position.”⁴¹

In his study, John A Knight presents an interesting reflection in speaking of the apostle John’s writings in the First Epistle of John. He summarizes it this way:

- We love because we love the brothers (3:14).
- We know because we keep the ‘commandments’ (2:3).
- We know because we have the “assurance”. We feel at ease and without fear at the day of judgment (4:16-19).
- “We know... by the Spirit that He has given to us” (3:24).
- We know that we are born of God because we “practice justice, our ethic, and our life is like that of Christ” (2:29).⁴²

In this analysis John A Knight says that John gave as evidence for proving his right relation with God, the power of love, obedience to the commandments of Christ, virtuous living and the like, and the *Manual* declares that “in the holy obedience of love made perfect.”⁴³

But what then is the position of the Church of the Nazarene on the speaking of tongues? As all other gifts, it is for the edification of the Church (1 Corinthians 12:7) and not for making proud the persons to whom God gives the gift. Dr W Marais designates it as the gift for preaching cross-culturally; it was given to certain persons for communication and must be exercised to bring God’s love to others.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Cf. EGLISE DU NAZAREEN, Op. cit, p. 27.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 283.

⁴² Cf. Knight, J A. Op-cit. p. 17.

⁴³ Ibid., pp.17- 18.

⁴⁴ Cf. Marais W. Les 14 éléments essentiels pour l’Evangélisation de la famille étendue, Florida, R.L.O., 1997, pp.26 - 27.

In conclusion the Nazarenes believe that the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the purification of the heart that is made known by the fruit of the Spirit in the life of the believer and covers a person with power for service. This position is in every way contrary to the Pentecostal conception that we are going to analyse meticulously in the following section.

In the Pentecostal Movement

The Pentecostals have a viewpoint about evidences for baptism by the Holy Spirit that is completely contrary to that of the Church of the Nazarene. For the Pentecostals the gift of tongues is the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This means that without having the experience of “glossolalia” or ecstatic utterances, one cannot pretend to have received the Holy Spirit in His fullness. Even if certain Pentecostals say that the gift of tongues is only one of the evidences, they still put most of the emphasis upon the gift of tongues.⁴⁵

The baptism of the Holy Spirit among Pentecostals is not a sacramental baptism, but an emotional one. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is an intense feeling and mystical contact with God. The sentiment manifests itself through “the speaking of tongues”, of which the Pentecostal Church is a witness.⁴⁶ A Corten defined speaking in tongues in these terms: “Speaking in tongues is a prayer that does not follow any pre-established form: not in how one makes one’s requests (either aloud or in deep silence), not in reciting prescribed formulas, not in being inspired by these formulas to improvise on the Psalms, and not even as a form of worship.” Speaking in tongues means to pray without using a language or the mental functions associated with language.⁴⁷

This Pentecostal practice was taken to many sections of the world and through the vast range of Christian confessions, such as in the Catholic Church, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational, Lutheran, Methodist, etc. This followed a reform already happening in denominations that had been worshipping in a manner that was frigid, rationalistic, and highly liturgical.

⁴⁵ Cf. Pache, R. *La personne et l’oeuvre du Saint-esprit*, Lausanne, Emmaüs, 1940, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Cf. Corten, A. *le Pentecôtisme au Brésil: Emotion pauvre et romantisme théologique*, Paris, Karthala, pp. 46-47.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 62.

⁴⁸ These denominations often created an emptiness among many faithful members. To fill up this void that had been created, the Pentecostals promoted spontaneity, a sense of liberty, emotional intensity, and personal participation.⁴⁹

There is a sense of liberty and personal participation in some notions of Pentecostalism that is properly advisable to all Christian churches. For God needs each and every believer to feel free in serving Him. He has above all a need for the participation of each member for the edification of His Church. J A Knight said, "These ultra traditionalist churches, that were becoming rather lethargic, had found a 'cure' in the warmth and vitality of this 'experience' that concentrates upon this particular act of worship."⁵⁰

The Pentecostals in their conception of the experience say that each believer must necessarily speak in tongues, for according to them it is the one sign that accompanies believers according to Mark 16:17, a text that is found in the final words of Mark 16:9-20 having been inserted to correct the abrupt ending that is found in Mark 16:8.⁵¹ Furthermore, in this text we have many signs cited: they will cast out demons, they will handle serpents, if they drink a deadly poison they will not become sick and they will heal the sick with the laying on of hands. So the question is, why insist on a single sign when there are so many of them? Most Pentecostals say it is because speaking in tongues is the sign that appeared on the Day of Pentecost. For the Pentecostals speaking in tongues or glossolalia is not only the first sign for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but also a gift of the Spirit granted to certain believers. Speaking in tongues as an initial sign of the Holy Spirit is continual unless it is viewed also as a gift granted by the Spirit.⁵²

Like Nazarenes the Pentecostals base their conception about the evidence for the baptism of the Holy Spirit on certain texts of the New Testament. We will study these passages in the following section. Their doctrinal foundation, however, is the result of a wrong interpretation of the passages. So, now we will deal with the biblical foundation for the evidence of the

⁴⁸ Cf. Knight, J A. Op. cit., p. 4.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Cf. Bassin, l'Evangile de Marc, Vaux- sur- Seine, Edifac, 1994, p.301.

⁵² KUYE Ndongwa Mulemera, Op. cit., p. 385.

baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The Biblical Foundation of the Evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

We have seen that the Nazarenes and the Pentecostals base their arguments on the Bible. Furthermore, by promising His disciples the baptism in the Spirit, Jesus knew well to prepare visible signs to show how this work occurs in the life of the believer.

What are these signs or what evidence is there for the baptism of the Holy Spirit? The only way to arrive at an answer to this question is to make an exegetical study of the New Testament texts that mention the experience. These references are found in Acts 2:1-4, 10:44-47, 19:1-7, and 1 Corinthians 14:1ff.

Speaking in Tongues in Acts

This book from the New Testament is the key text to a clear comprehension of the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is the first time that the experience took place in the history of the Church. The event that happened on the Day of Pentecost was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel but also the promise of Jesus to His apostles as we read in Luke 24:49 and in Acts 1:8. In fact, the key verse in the entire book is Acts 1:8.

Acts chapter 2 refers only to living and spoken tongues. The word “dialecto” found in chapter 2 verses 6 and 8 signifies “language”, and does not refer to speaking in an ecstatic language. This is the same meaning that should be given to the word in Acts 2:9, 10 and 1 Corinthians 12-14. Furthermore, in Acts 2, the Bible declares that the disciples were speaking in the languages of all those present for the Pentecost celebration. It was truly a miracle to see nearly fifteen nationalities represented that day who heard the disciples speaking simultaneously in the listeners’ maternal languages.

The word “dialect” signifies conversation, discourse, or language. In Acts, it is not a matter of a mysterious or unknown language. The dialect or tongue is not a celestial language, but only the various languages as they were spoken by the disciples and heard by each nationality present that day

in Jerusalem.⁵³ The questions posed by the listeners prove this: “Are they not Galileans? Why are they speaking in other languages?” C Carter said that the reason for this experience was to convince the crowd in their proper languages about the truth contained in the message.⁵⁴ At the same time the evangelical message was understood by many people of different nationalities and languages. The ones who now claim the gift of speaking in tongues must conform to the context that we have in the book of Acts.

In reading the book of Acts, we find that there are some passages that speak of this experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit without mentioning the act of speaking in tongues. Some examples are: Acts 4:31 “and they were announcing the word of God with assurance,” and Acts 8:17, here there is another manifestation of the reception of the Holy Spirit.

Speaking in Tongues in 1 Corinthians

First of all let us speak about the city of Corinth. This cosmopolitan city was the intellectual centre where all spiritual groups were respected. It was equally a religious centre where oriental cults exercised an indisputable seduction. In this context, we find the church in Corinth lacking spiritual maturity.

The church was agitated and full of internal divisions. Corrupted by spiritual immorality, the church lacked stability.⁵⁵ In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul combats pagan practices that had been introduced into the life of the church. For example the practices used in the cult of Dionysus, full of savage and uncontrollable rites, were brought into church worship and resulted in emotional excess.⁵⁶ So Paul’s goal was to make a distinction between the inspiration of the Spirit and savage pagan emotionalism.

Paul is trying to fight the deviation that is occurring among the Corinthians in connection with the central theme of spiritual gifts and their usage by the Church. This position Paul had first of all presented in chapter 12 and continued to the conclusion of chapter 14.⁵⁷ The Corinthian congregation

⁵³ Cf. Goodell, G. *Heavenly Tongues Or Earthly Languages? What The Bible Says About Speaking In Tongues*, Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press, 1989, p. 17.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 24.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p. 25.

⁵⁷ Cf. Walwood, J F. (Dir.), *Commentaire biblique du chercheur*, Ed. Béthel, 1988, p.457.

is not a church to imitate or to take as an example. J MacArthur in his book entitled *The Charismatic*, cited by G Goodell, says that Paul is worried as he fears that pagan practices slipped into the church, in contrast C Carter from his perspective suggests that there is a possibility that diabolic worship has been found in the church by the instigation of pagans. In each event Paul does not want the power of pagan practice to make eruptions in Christian worship.⁵⁸

In chapter 14, Paul's concern is not so much offering instruction in how to view the gift of tongues, but he wants to show the superiority of the gift of prophecy in relation to the gift of tongues. Prophecy here is not primarily about the prediction of the future, but proclamation of the will of God, meaning a challenge that reaches the conscience of other people.⁵⁹ Speaking in tongues is not assigned to all members of the church. As found in 1 Corinthians 12:30: "Does everyone speak in tongues?" So the gift of tongues is not a sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, for it is not necessary that everyone must speak in tongues.

According to Paul the gifts are for the edification of the church and for the perfection of the saints in view of ministry (Ephesians 4:12). According to the overall background of religions regarding the speaking in tongues, the experience is to be defined as speaking in ecstatic languages as Sibylles, or diviners. Others see it also as an ecstatic speaking like one of the Pythians.⁶⁰

At the conclusion of the objective exegetical analyses of the scriptural passages that speak to the theological question of the evidence of the Holy Spirit in correlation with the speaking in tongues (Acts 2:1-4; 10:44-47; 19:1-7), we can certify without much dispute that these Scripture passages do not constitute "speaking in tongues" as a concrete expression of the evidence of the Holy Spirit.

General Conclusion

At the conclusion of our work, we have made an attempt to describe briefly the major articulation of this controversial theological question regarding

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 26.

⁵⁹ Cf. Senft, C. la première Epître de saint Paul aux corinthiens, Neuchâtel, Delachaux et NEST

⁶⁰ Cf. Walwood, J F. (Dir.)

the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Actually, this paper focused only upon the Pentecostal doctrine and the Nazarene theological conception of this evidence.

Our original task was to give an outline of the doctrinal presuppositions, and their major articulations on the subject. Also, we gave attention to presenting the conceptual approaches to the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is there actually for consolidating the unity of all believers. The gifts that we have received in spite of their doctrinal divergences make certain that a single community cannot pretend to hold the monopoly on the truth. The gifts are for the edification of the Body of Christ.

The spiritual baptism preached by the Pentecostals must make sure that Christians have purification of the heart which must automatically produce the fruit of the Spirit and not an emotional manifestation that can destroy the Church's brotherly and honourable communion in Christ.