

An excerpt from *Renewal Theology*, part 2, chapter 8, "The Coming of the Holy Spirit," on the Outpouring of the Spirit (both main text and footnotes are included).

### III. DESCRIPTION

We arrive at a consideration of the actual coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit promised by the Father and sent by the Son now comes into our time and history. God gives His Holy Spirit to human beings in various places and situations. It will be our procedure to observe the several terms<sup>28</sup> used to describe these occurrences and thus to reflect on the significance of the Spirit's coming.

#### A. Outpouring

Peter described the coming of the Holy Spirit to the waiting disciples on the Day of Pentecost as the *outpouring* of the Holy Spirit: "He [Jesus] has poured out<sup>29</sup> this..." (Acts 2:33. Peter was referring to the mighty coming of the Holy Spirit that he and other disciples of Jesus had experienced a short time before.

Peter had earlier used the concept of "outpouring" when he quoted from the prophecy of Joel: "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit'" (2:16-18). "All flesh" meant both male and female, both young and old, both masters and servants. No longer would God's Spirit come only to a few (such as rulers, priests, and prophets),<sup>30</sup> but He would be poured out even on the lowliest of servants.

It is quite possible that those who had awaited the coming of the Holy Spirit—"in all about a hundred and twenty" (Acts 1:15)—included this wide range of persons mentioned in Joel's prophecy. The initial group gathered in the Upper Room contained the eleven apostles, several unnamed women,<sup>31</sup> Mary the mother of Jesus, and Jesus' brothers (v. 14)—hence already a varied group of people. With the number of believers increasing to some one hundred and twenty the range would surely be even wider. It is not difficult to visualize the prophecy of Joel being thus fulfilled when the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Some of these terms have appeared in previous quotations, but I have called no particular attention to them. We will now consider them in some detail.

<sup>29</sup> Or "poured forth" (NASB), "shed forth" (KJV). The Greek word is *execheen* (from *ekecheo*), and has the basic meaning of outpouring.

<sup>30</sup> Recall my earlier discussion in chapter 7, I., under "Special Tasks and Functions."

<sup>31</sup> Luke, the author of Acts, in his Gospel account of the resurrection of Jesus had spoken of "Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women" (Luke 24:10) as those who, first informed by the angels about Jesus' rising from the dead, then reported the Resurrection to the apostles. Probably they were all in the room also awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>32</sup> From the reading of Acts 1 alone one could possibly believe that the coming of the Holy Spirit was to the eleven apostles only. According to verse 1, "they were all together in one place." Verse 14, which later refers to "Peter, standing with the eleven," might suggest that the Pentecostal outpouring was only upon the apostles. However, Acts 1 so definitely points to the one hundred and twenty that there can be little doubt that the larger group was included. As I. H. Marshall says, "The whole group of 120 people is

However, the "all flesh" on the Day of Pentecost, despite the diversity, was represented by Jews only. This, to be sure, was no small thing, for Israel had never before known such a visitation of the Spirit. Other Old Testament prophets had also spoken of a day when the Spirit would be poured out specifically on Israel. Isaiah declared, "Thus says the LORD. . . . Fear not, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen. . . . I will pour my Spirit upon you descendants, and my blessing on your offspring" (Isa. 44:2-3). Ezekiel similarly spoke for the Lord: "I will not hide my face any more from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, says the LORD God" (Ezek. 39:29). The Spirit of God would some day be poured out on Jacob's house, the house of Israel.

On another occasion after Pentecost the Spirit was said to have been poured out, this time on Gentiles. This occurred when Peter preached the gospel to the Roman centurion Cornelius and his household in Caesarea. Luke writes, "All the circumcised [i.e., Jewish] believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out<sup>33</sup> upon the Gentiles also" (Acts 10:45 NASB). The astonishment of the Jewish believers who came with Peter is quite noticeable. They themselves had doubtless experienced the Spirit's outpouring, but for all its extraordinary range—not limited to any sex, age, or class—the Jewish believers were scarcely prepared for this extension to the Gentile world. The "all flesh" prophesied by Joel actually, and amazingly, also came to include Gentile flesh!

From the reading of these two accounts concerning the Jewish disciples in Jerusalem and the Gentiles in Caesarea, it is apparent that the outpouring of the Spirit occurred on both occasions.<sup>34</sup> There is no suggestion that the coming of the Spirit in Jerusalem was a once-for-all matter, or that somehow what happened in Caesarea was secondary or subordinate. The word "outpouring" is used in connection with both occasions, and the word "also" points to the equivalence of the two outpourings. Furthermore, some additional words of Peter underscore this point; for shortly after the Holy Spirit had been poured out, Peter asked rhetorically: "Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" (Acts 10:47). "*Just as we have*," Peter said; in other words, there was no real difference.<sup>35</sup> When Peter later described his Gentile mission, he emphasized how "God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us. . . ." (Acts 11:17). "*The same gift*": the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Caesarea was identical in essence with that in Jerusalem.

The other accounts in Acts of the coming of the Holy Spirit do not include the word "outpouring." However, another Scripture passage in the Epistles may be noted. Paul declares in Titus 3:5-6 that Christ "saved us. . . by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out<sup>36</sup> upon us richly through Jesus Christ

---

doubtless meant, and not just the. . . apostles" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, TNTC, 68). Ernst Haenchen similarly writes, "At the dawning of the day of Pentecost, the Christians, i.e., the one hundred and twenty persons of 1:15, were all gathered together" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 167).

<sup>33</sup> The Greek word is *ekkechutai* (likewise from *ekcheo*).

<sup>34</sup> This serves to demonstrate, as earlier noted, that the coming of the Holy Spirit is a continuing event.

<sup>35</sup> There were additional sound and light effects (see Acts 2:2-3) preceding the first outpouring of the Spirit in Jerusalem; however, the reception of the Spirit was identical (including speaking in tongues; see the next chapter).

<sup>36</sup> The Greek word for "poured out," *execheen*, in Titus 3 is a form of the same word *ekcheo* found in Acts 2 and 10.

our Savior, that being justified by his grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (NASB). If Paul is here speaking of the same outpouring of the Spirit as is found in Acts,<sup>37</sup> it is apparent that this outpouring extended beyond Acts into the life of the early church.<sup>38</sup>

In this connection it is interesting to observe that reference was made in two early noncanonical writings to outpourings of the Holy Spirit. In his first letter (ca. A.D. 96) to the church in Corinth, Clement of Rome wrote, "A profound and abundant peace was given to you all, and ye had an insatiable desire for doing good, while a full outpouring of the Holy Spirit was upon you all."<sup>39</sup> The Epistle of Barnabas (not later than A.D. 130) begins: "All hail, ye sons and daughters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . I rejoice exceedingly and above measure in your happy and honoured spirits, because ye have with such effect [or "so greatly"<sup>40</sup>] received the engrafted spiritual gift. . . . I truly perceive in you the Spirit poured forth from the rich Lord of love."<sup>41</sup> A *full outpouring of the Holy Spirit* (Clement) and *the Spirit poured forth from the rich Lord of love* (Barnabas): both statements clearly attest to an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit in at least certain areas of the early church. The word "abundant" is surely to be connected with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When God gives, He does not hold back. According to the Gospel of John, "it is not by measure that he gives the Spirit" 3:34).<sup>42</sup> The gift of the Holy Spirit is one of plenitude and boundlessness.

Finally, it is important to emphasize several things. First, there had been no outpouring of the Spirit prior to Pentecost.<sup>43</sup> We have observed certain Old Testament

---

<sup>37</sup> Charles L. Holman writes that "the language and context of spirit reception in these two verses point back quite distinctly to the pentecostal outpourings described by Luke in Acts, and especially to the initial outpourings on the day of Pentecost" ("Titus 3:5-6: A Window on Worldwide Pentecost," in *Probing Pentecostalism*, 55). I agree with this statement. The problem, as Holman also sees it, is "whether such an outpouring was considered integral to one's salvation experience." "However," Holman adds, "Titus 3:6 is quite parenthetical in the train of thought in 3:5-7 and is thus somewhat dissociated from a *necessary* connection with the 'salvation' of verse 5, which does include a work of the Spirit" (67, italics his). If that is the case, I would add—in line with a hermeneutic that gives primary importance to the narration in Acts—that the outpouring of the Spirit, while surely presupposed, is *not* integral to the salvation experience.

<sup>38</sup> Another passage that associates the Holy Spirit and outpouring is Romans 5:5 (earlier quoted) where Paul writes, "The love of God has been poured out [*ekkechutai*] within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (NASB). Paul is speaking here of a *result* of the Spirit's being given, namely, God's love "poured out." Still the same Greek word is used for "poured out," and in the larger context of Romans 5:1-5 it may refer to an ensuing experience of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>39</sup> *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, 2:2, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:5. The Greek phrase for "full outpouring of the Holy Spirit" is *pleres pneumatou hagiou ekchusis*. *Ekchusis* is likewise from the root *ekcheo*.

<sup>40</sup> The Greek word is *outos*.

<sup>41</sup> *The Epistle of Barnabas*, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:137. The Greek word for "poured forth" is *ekkechumenon*.

<sup>42</sup> It is unclear in this text whether the one giving is the Father or the Son. In either case, it is a divine giving. Incidentally, KJV adds "unto him" (in italics, signifying that the words are not in the Greek). But this, I believe, misses the important note that to *whomever* God gives His Spirit, it is without measure. (See also chap. 7, note 35.)

<sup>43</sup> There were occasional endowments of the Spirit under the old covenant, but none could rightly be called an *outpouring* of the Spirit. Keil and Delitzsch, commenting on Joel's prophecy, say it well: "Even if the way was opened and prepared for by the prophetic endowment of particular members of the old covenant, these sporadic communications of the spirit of God in the Old Testament times cannot be

prophecies that pointed to a future outpouring, particularly the prophecy of Joel that Peter declared to be fulfilled at Pentecost: "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel."

Second, since the Holy Spirit came from the exalted Lord Jesus (recall Acts 2:33), crucified and risen from the dead, it could not have happened at any time prior to His exaltation. It was only *after* Christ had completed the work of redemption that the Holy spirit was poured out.

Third, accordingly, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was an event in which Christ was the essential channel. The promise was from the Father, and in that sense He was the initiator. But the Spirit came only *through* Jesus.<sup>44</sup> Even as Christ was the mediator in redemption, so was He the channel in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was not a once-for-all event. The Incarnation, to be sure, happened only once, but Christ thereafter from the Father's right hand poured forth the Spirit at least in both Jerusalem and Caesarea. The coming of the Spirit, accordingly, was a repeated event.<sup>45</sup> He came again and again.

Fifth, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit stands as a continuing promise for all future generations. To all who will come to repentance and faith in Christ<sup>46</sup>—all whom the Lord effectually calls—the promise is given: "You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

It is the conviction of those in the contemporary Pentecostal/charismatic renewal that this renewal is an outpouring of God's Holy Spirit.<sup>47</sup> Since the beginning of the twentieth century there have been three major Pentecostal/charismatic movements: (1) the classical Pentecostal (beginning in 1901) now represented by a number of Pentecostal denominations, (2) the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic (beginning about mid-century) within the traditional Protestant churches, and (3) the Catholic charismatic (beginning in 1967) within the Roman Catholic Church. These three movements, according to Vinson Synan, Pentecostal historian, are three streams that basically constitute one outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Synan writes, "There is only one outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the latter days, although the streams flow through channels known as 'classical Pentecostalism,' Protestant 'neo-Pentecostalism,' and the 'Catholic charismatic renewal.' In the end it adds up to one great historical phenomenon

---

regarded as the first steps in the *outpourings* of the Spirit of God" (*Commentary on the Old Testament, Minor Prophets*, 10:216-17).

<sup>44</sup> Recall my earlier discussion of this.

<sup>45</sup> This needs continual emphasis because of the erroneous teaching that the Holy Spirit was *given* to the church at Pentecost. As a case in point, the Roman Catholic Church officially views the original Pentecostal event as a permanent gift of the Holy Spirit wherein the Holy Spirit became "the soul" of the church.

<sup>46</sup> Eduard Schweizer writes that, according to Luke, "the outpouring of the Spirit can be repeated wherever men come to faith" (TDNT, 6:411). Hence, I would add, this applies to people of any time and place.

<sup>47</sup> I have been careful to say "*an* outpouring of God's Holy Spirit." Hence what follows about the Pentecostal/charismatic renewal by no means is intended to rule out other outpourings—or claims to such outpourings—since New Testament times. I will, however, be dealing basically with the Pentecostal/charismatic renewal in what follows. *Renewal Theology* is particularly related to this renewal.

which has had a profound effect on Christianity around the world.<sup>48</sup> That there are three streams but essentially one latter-day outpouring is the general testimony of the worldwide Pentecostal/charismatic renewal.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> *In the Latter Days: The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Twentieth Century* (1964), ix.

<sup>49</sup> Synan, on the size of the renewal, quotes from David Barrett's *World Christian Encyclopedia* (1980) thus: "All persons professing or claiming to be Pentecostal-charismatic [number] over 100,000,000 world-wide" (Ibid, p. 18). It is interesting that Barrett himself, at the North American Conference "The Holy Spirit and World Evangelization" held in 1987, declared that "the worldwide charismatic movement has tripled in the past 10 years to total 277 million adherents worldwide" ("The Holy Spirit and World Evangelization," *Christianity Today* [Sept. 4, 1987], 45).

(In a recent update, Synan makes reference to the renewal worldwide as containing some 523 million participants [see his book *The Century of the Holy Spirit* (2001), page 450].)