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EVIDENTIAL GLOSSOLALIA AND THE DOCTRINE OF SUBSEQUENCE

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If there is one teaching that appears to have the least support in the larger spiritual tradition, it would be the doctrine of glossolalia as the initial evidence of Spirit-baptism. Although more recent studies like McDonnell and Montague's have given the Pentecostal-Charismatic experience a wider historical grounding, glossolalia particularly in the way that Pentecostals have understood it, remains highly problematic. It is one thing to show that there was some historical evidence of occurrences of prophetic gifts including tongues,¹ but quite another to show from history that it had the same significance that modern Pentecostals have given to it. No wonder theologically it is becoming something of an embarrassment, even while classical Pentecostals continue to maintain its special place of importance. Increasingly, even ordinary lay people are questioning if it is really that important. When we have no strong theological underpinning for a practice, it will eventually fall into disuse. Signs of its practical abandonment are already apparent in Pentecostal churches.²

The doctrine of "initial evidence" as it stands is difficult to defend as long as we try to do it on the basis of historical or biblical evidence. But I would like to argue in this essay that it can be coherently understood if we could establish the logical relationship between glossolalia and Spirit-baptism. These two terms have a theological

¹ George Montague and Kilian McDonnell, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991), p. 323.

² Margaret Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), p. 40.

coherence which can be established if the doctrine of Spirit-baptism is understood in terms of revelation and personal intimacy. When Spirit-baptism is understood in such a manner two consequences follow. First, Spirit-baptism can then be located within the larger Christian spiritual tradition, and within this context we can make better sense of glossolalia as initial evidence. Second, we can also make sense of the Pentecostal claim that their experience is “distinct from and subsequent to” conversion. While the doctrine of subsequence as it currently stands is not wholly satisfactory, yet without it, some of the distinctive realities in Spirit-baptism could potentially be lost as can be seen in the Evangelical concept of conversion.

I. GLOSSOLALIA AND SPIRIT-BAPTISM

Part of the difficulty in making sense of glossolalia as initial evidence lies in the fact that the reality, the baptism in the Spirit, of which glossolalia is believed to be the initial evidence, is itself in need of clarification and expansion. In other words, as long as baptism in the Spirit is narrowly defined as the enduement of power, it is difficult to see how glossolalia could be *theologically* related to it as its initial evidence. The early Pentecostal argument is based strictly on a straightforward reading of Acts where in many instances tongues accompany the phenomenon of being “filled with the Spirit.” But modern biblical scholarship has shown us that building a doctrine is not a simple case of following a biblical precedent. A Pentecostal scholar like Fee concedes as much.³ Others like Menzies, however, have sought to derive a distinctive charismatic theology from the Lukan narratives, but even these efforts fall short of establishing a *theologically coherent* relationship between glossolalia and Spirit-baptism.⁴ That is to say, even

³ Gordon D. Fee, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit: The Issue of Separability and Subsequence,” *Pneuma* 7:2 (Fall 1985), 87-99.

⁴ Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994). See my critique of Menzies in “The Language Game of Glossolalia, or Making Sense of the Initial Evidence,” in *Pentecostalism in Context: Essays in Honor of William W. Menzies*, eds. W. Ma and R. P. Menzies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 80-95 (82-83). See also Max Turner’s assessment in “Tongues: An Experience for All

if it could be shown that Luke does in fact associate tongues with baptism in the Spirit, the question of whether tongues can be regarded as normative for Spirit-baptism will always remain an open one as far as the Lukan narrative is concerned. At most, one could conclude with Larry Hurtado that as far as biblical evidence goes, tongues are “normal” but not the “norm.”⁵

A number of Pentecostal scholars have sought to establish a theologically coherent relationship between Spirit-baptism and glossolalia. According to Murray Dempster, Spirit-baptism is the in-breaking of the eschatological kingdom by which history is remade, and this remaking of history is symbolized by glossolalia, the “remaking of language.”⁶ More recently, Macchia moved the initial-evidence debate a step further by viewing tongues as a sacramental sign of Spirit-baptism. To call tongues a “sacrament” implies an “integral connection” between the sign and the thing signified.⁷ In other words, if we examine the nature of tongues and the nature of Spirit-baptism, we should be able to see some kind of deep coherence between the two. Macchia’s explanation is well summed up in these words:

Whether tongues were viewed as xenolalia or some form of transcendent glossolalia, their importance was the same. Here was a “baptism” in the Spirit that allowed a weak human vessel to function as a veritable oracle of God. Though this is true of all prophetic speech, tongues as a cryptic language revealed the unfathomable depth and ultimate eschatological fulfillment of all prophetic speech, pointing to both the limits and the meaning of the language of faith. Without this “glossolalic” understanding of Spirit baptism, there may not have been enough of a distinction between the Pentecostal and the

in the Pauline Churches?” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1:2 (July 1998), pp. 231-53.

⁵ Larry W. Hurtado, “Normal, But Not a Norm: ‘Initial Evidence’ and the New Testament,” in *Initial Evidence: Historical and Biblical Perspectives on the Pentecostal Doctrine of Spirit Baptism*, ed. Gary B. McGee (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), pp 189-201.

⁶ Cited by Frank D. Macchia, “Sighs Too Deep for Words: Towards a Theology of Glossolalia,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1 (1992), pp. 47-73 (54).

⁷ Frank D. Macchia, “Groans Too Deep for Words: Towards a Theology of Tongues as Initial Evidence,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1:2 (1998), pp. 149-73, esp. 156.

Holiness understanding of the experience of the Spirit to warrant the founding of a separate movement.⁸

What Macchia has presented here is essentially a description of how Pentecostals themselves have come to what they believe about the nature of tongues in relation to Spirit-baptism. Macchia seeks to accurately describe how tongues as a sacramental sign functions within the Pentecostal faith community, using the “cultural-linguistic” theory of doctrine developed by George Lindbeck.⁹ The “strangeness” of tongues corresponds to the “strangeness” of the Pentecostal experience. There is a certain “fittingness” between the sign and the thing signified. Within the Pentecostal “cultural-linguistic” community this was thought adequate. Among themselves, they were able to make sense of the fact that glossolalia “fits” their experience of Spirit-baptism. But the challenge comes from outside: Is it right, then, to call tongues “*the* initial physical evidence”?

The issue, therefore, must be pressed further. Given the theological significance of tongues for the Pentecostal community, can that explanation be justified before the larger Christian community?¹⁰ I have suggested elsewhere that it is justifiable to regard glossolalia as initial evidence when the experience to which it refers is characterised by receptivity.¹¹ The Pentecostal experience of Spirit-baptism entails a paradigm shift of such proportion that one spontaneously responds in tongues, much in the same way as we are accustomed to associating tears with sadness. This aspect of the Pentecostal experience is in fact very similar to the “passive” phases of contemplative prayer in the Christian mystical tradition. In Teresa of Avila prayer progresses from the active (ascetical) phase to the passive phase, from “acquired” contemplation to “infused” contemplation. The passive phase begins at

⁸ Macchia, “Groans Too Deep,” p. 167.

⁹ Cited by Macchia, “Groans Too Deep,” p. 168.

¹⁰ This is a valid point that Tan May Ling makes in her response to Macchia’s essay, “A Response to Frank Macchia’s ‘Groans Too Deep for Words: Towards a Theology of Tongues as Initial Evidence’,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1:2 (1998), pp. 175-83 (182).

¹¹ Simon Chan, “The Language Game of Glossolalia,” pp. 87-95.

the fourth “mansion” which Teresa calls the prayer of quiet.¹² Here is the beginning of “supernatural experiences” given by God apart from any effort on our part.¹³ The preceding three “mansions” of prayer engage the soul actively, whereas from the fourth level, the soul becomes increasingly receptive. Along with progression from active to passive prayer, the soul also experiences progression of joy. In the ascetical phases where discursive prayer and meditation are the main forms of prayer, the soul experiences “consolations.” Consolations are the effects of ascetical prayers, although Teresa is quick to add that even here “God does have a hand in them.”¹⁴ But in the fourth mansion the soul receives “spiritual delight” from God. This spiritual delight does not come from our actively seeking it, although the ascetical phases of prayer prepared the way for it. Teresa uses the picture of two troughs to illustrate the difference between the active and passive phases of prayer. In the active phase, the trough receives its water “through many aqueducts and the use of much ingenuity,” that is to say, through spiritual exercises such as meditation. But in the second phase, water is poured directly from God overflowing the trough and filling the soul with “spiritual delight.”

[God] produces this delight with the greatest peace and quiet and sweetness in the very interior part of ourselves...; this water overflows through all the dwelling places and faculties until reaching the body. That is why I said that it begins in God and ends in ourselves. For...the whole exterior man enjoys this spiritual delight and sweetness.¹⁵

Teresa’s characterization of spiritual delight as a gift passively received reminds us of the way some early Pentecostals understood Spirit-baptism. Spirit-baptism was the occasion when the “yielded human vessel is controlled entirely by the divine Spirit—hence unlimited and unrestrained” and “when by the Spirit Himself, using their yielded, enraptured faculties, they [the believers in Acts 2] began to

¹² Teresa of Avila, “The Interior Castle,” in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rogriguez (Washington, D.C.: ICS, 1980), II, p. 323.

¹³ Teresa of Avila, “The Interior Castle,” p. 316.

¹⁴ Teresa of Avila, “The Interior Castle,” pp. 317-18.

¹⁵ Teresa of Avila, “The Interior Castle,” p. 324.

magnify God...in divers languages.”¹⁶ I am not suggesting that every case of evidential tongues coincides exactly with Teresa’s “fourth mansion” or beyond. It is likely that in most cases tongues represent the lower levels of passive prayer, or the transition from active to passive prayer. It would seem that the level of intimacy that tongues represent depends very much on the maturity of the glossolalic. The transition from ascetical prayer to the prayer of quiet is achieved by “prayer of recollection”¹⁷ which Rowan Williams has vividly described as

the state in which the inner gaze of the soul is becoming more and more steadily fixed on God’s self-giving, and that steady regard finds expression in simple patterns of words; as this deepens and simplifies, God’s activity engages us with greater completeness, and our deepest ‘mental’ activities are reduced to silence....¹⁸

The main difference between the Pentecostal and the mystic is that the former’s receptivity is signaled by glossolalia while the latter’s is signaled by silence. Glossolalia and silence are functionally equivalent, as Richard Baer has pointed out.¹⁹ Both symbolize a response from the depth of the human spirit to the reality of God felt as an immediate presence. Such a response reveals the limits of human rationality and the need to transcend it. They may be regarded as sub-dialects within the same language game. Or, if we use Lindbeck’s categories, we may say that each is operating according to its own cultural-linguistic “grammar.”²⁰ Within the Catholic tradition, silence is the regulative

¹⁶ Cited by Gary B. McGee, “Popular Expositions of Initial Evidence,” in *Initial Evidence*, pp. 119-30 (128).

¹⁷ Teresa of Avila, “The Interior Castle,” pp. 327-34.

¹⁸ Rowan Williams, *Teresa of Avila* (Harrisburg, PA: Moorehouse, 1991), pp. 125-26.

¹⁹ Richard A. Baer, Jr. “Quaker Silence, Catholic Liturgy, and Pentecostal Glossolalia—Some Functional Similarities,” in *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism*, ed. Russell P. Spittler (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), pp. 150-64 (152-54).

²⁰ The need to understand glossolalia within its own cultural-linguistic context is shown in a recent article by Joel Shuman, “Toward a Cultural-linguistic Account of the Pentecostal Doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit,” *Pneuma* (Fall 1997), pp. 207-23.

grammar for *evidencing* this focused presence of God, while in the Pentecostal community it is glossolalia. Each community develops its own distinguishing mark of recognition. Glossolalia, as Kilian McDonnell has pointed out, is a “commitment act” signalling a person’s initiation into the Pentecostal community.²¹ This does not mean that glossolalia is merely a socio-cultural marker. It is first a theological marker whose truth can be tested against certain spiritual experiences which Pentecostals share with other segments of the Christian community. Thus by locating glossolalia within the larger context of the mystical tradition, it is justifiable to say that tongues are the initial evidence of Spirit-baptism.²² This is as far as Pentecostal apologetics could go. To look for a more “objective” defence of glossolalia (as some of our Evangelical counterparts think we should) implies that there is a larger context beyond Christianity against which the latter must be judged. I do not think this is what our non-Pentecostal brethren intend. Glossolalia as initial evidence is very much an issue within the household of faith.

II. THE PENTECOSTAL REALITY

But the necessary connection between glossolalia and Spirit-baptism can only be made if the meaning of Spirit-baptism is enlarged beyond the enduement of power. Previous efforts in developing an apologetic for the initial evidence doctrine have not been successful precisely because Spirit-baptism had been too narrowly defined in terms of the Lukan narratives. Empowerment, as Hocken has pointed out, has to do with the

²¹ Kilian McDonnell, “The Function of Tongues in Pentecostalism,” *One in Christ* 19:4 (1983), pp. 332-54 (337).

²² It should be noted in this connection that Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic theory of doctrine has been criticized for its inability to justify truth-claims. The criticism is valid in so far as Lindbeck’s theory is all-embracing, comprehending the entire Christian faith as a cultural-linguistic system. But what we are concerned here is with the justification of glossolalia in the Pentecostal community, which could be understood as a sub-cultural-linguistic system within the larger Christian community. The justification of glossolalia as initial evidence is possible by showing that it fits the grammar of the larger community.

purpose or result rather than the meaning of Spirit-baptism.²³ The Assemblies of God Statement of Fundamental Truth has rightly stated what Spirit-baptism is *for*, but not what it *is*. What it is is stated in terms of a denial: that it is *not* the new birth, but distinct from and subsequent to it. Theologically, baptism in the Holy Spirit can be understood in relation to conversion-initiation or the initiatory sacraments of water baptism and confirmation.

The biblical witness to this doctrine is quite broad and varied, as modern biblical scholarship has made clear. Matthew, for instance, sees baptism in the Spirit not as Jesus' giving the Spirit to his disciples (as in Luke and John) but as participation "in Jesus' own inaugural empowerment by the Holy Spirit" at his baptism.

The church has the Spirit...because, remaining with the church, Jesus baptizes with the Spirit through sharing his own baptism with the disciples of all ages. Jesus does not *give* the Spirit to the church but rather *receives* it *for* the church.²⁴

Thus, for Matthew, believers are empowered through the abiding presence of Jesus who himself was baptized by the Spirit at his Jordan baptism. For Mark, baptism in the Spirit is both empowerment by the Spirit as well as anointing to be a servant and the sacrifice for sin. Mark describes Jesus' passion as a "baptism" (Mark 10:38-39).²⁵ Here again, the ethical dimension of the work of the Spirit is clearly in focus. Luke's pneumatology, on the other hand, needs a little more elaboration. A number of motifs appear to be quite widely accepted in current Lukan scholarship.²⁶ First, Luke seems to focus mainly on the charismatic work of the Spirit, particularly the *gift of prophecy*, a concept rooted in the Old Testament and inter-testamental literature. Luke's gospel links the work of the Spirit mostly to certain forms of inspired speech (especially Luke chs. 1 and 2). Secondly, Luke in Acts views the work of Spirit largely in terms of empowering for witness or mission (1:8; 2:33-36,

²³ Peter Hocken, "The Meaning and Purpose of 'Baptism in the Spirit,'" *Pneuma* 7:2 (Fall 1985), pp. 125-33 (125).

²⁴ McDonnell and Montague, *Christian Initiation*, p. 21.

²⁵ McDonnell and Montague, *Christian Initiation*, pp. 10-11.

²⁶ For an overview, see Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996, 1998), pp. 36-41.

etc.). Third, Luke “shows relatively little interest in the Spirit as the power of the spiritual, ethical and religious renewal of the individual.”²⁷ Yet, as Turner has argued, against Schweizer and Menzies,²⁸ the distinctive Lukan emphasis does not preclude the soteriological and ethical elements.²⁹

The Johannine writings, by contrast, appear to stand on the opposite end of the spectrum in relation to Luke. The focus is on Jesus as the giver of the Spirit after his death and resurrection (John 20:22-23). The Spirit in turn reveals the significance of Jesus’ death and resurrection. The eschatological gift of the Spirit is fulfilled in the Easter event (14:26; 15:26; 16:7). The charismatic gifts are not directly focused upon, although they are clearly implied (14:12).³⁰ For John, unlike Luke, the “Spirit of prophecy” is “the power to *reveal* God, especially in the word of Jesus’ teaching and preaching.” John’s focus is clearly on the revelatory role of the Spirit.³¹

It is in Paul’s pneumatology that the soteriological and charismatic motifs achieve the highest integration. The soteriological motif can be seen in a number of ways. One is in terms of the strong Christocentric focus of Paul’s pneumatology. The Spirit is called the “Spirit of Christ,” and this is to be understood in two ways: first, as the Spirit indwelling the believers who creates the character of Christ in them (Eph 3:16, 17;

²⁷ Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 39.

²⁸ Robert P. Menzies, *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology with Special Reference to Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) and *Empowered to Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts*. Eduard Schweizer, “*pneuma* and *pneumatikos*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), VI, pp. 404-15.

²⁹ Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 14-18, 33-35, 42-56. Both Schweizer and Menzies think that Luke understands the gift of the Spirit as a *donum superadditum* or “second blessing” given exclusively for empowerment for service and not for salvation. Such a view allows Menzies, a Pentecostal, to develop a doctrine of subsequence as a distinctively Lukan doctrine. Turner, however, has questioned this too narrow a view: “[T]he same gifts of the Spirit that fuel the mission (charismatic revelation, wisdom, prophecy, preaching and doxology) also nurture, shape and purify the community, making it a messianic community of ‘peace’ conforming to the hopes for Israel’s restoration” (p. 55).

³⁰ Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 56-62.

³¹ Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 57-89.

Gal 2:20; Rom 8:9,10), and secondly as the “executive power” of Christ who relates to Christ in the same way as the Spirit is called the “Spirit of Yahweh” in the Old Testament.³² Further, the Spirit is also the “Spirit of the new covenant.” In Paul’s contrast between the old covenant and new in 2 Cor 3, it is clear that the decisive and differentiating element is the Spirit. “The essence of the promised new covenant was that God would put his Spirit in men and women and thereby create in them a new heart and a new obedience.” Thus, receiving the Spirit is the same as being regenerated by the Spirit (Gal 3:3-5, 14).³³ This new life is not thought of primarily as an individual reality but the result of being incorporated into Christ. In Christ, a new community or new creation is born (2 Cor 5:17). This new creation is also an eschatological community in that the Spirit who indwells the community is only a “downpayment” (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14).³⁴ The charismatic dimension is closely linked to the soteriological: Paul sees in the ministry of the new covenant, the Spirit’s role of removing the veil of ignorance, and the Spirit does this “precisely by enabling the kind of wisdom or revelation that yields authentic understanding of the kerygma.”³⁵ Also, as the “executive power” of Christ, the Spirit could be said to activate the gifts of Christ in the church (1 Cor 12:7-11).

All these pneumatological motifs must be taken into consideration if we hope to develop an adequate theology of Spirit-baptism from the whole of Scripture. Above all, the comprehensive integration of Pauline pneumatology makes it imperative that the soteriological dimension, which Paul develops most fully, be made a central issue to any discussion of Spirit-baptism. A Lukan theology of the Spirit, if we follow Schweizer and Menzies, does not provide an adequate basis for a Pentecostal theology. As Turner rightly notes, “The fact is...that Paul’s conception of the gift of the Spirit is simply *broader* than Luke’s, *while nevertheless containing everything that Luke implies*.”³⁶ This means, among other things, that any doctrine about Spirit-baptism ultimately must deal with one’s relationship to the God who reveals himself in

³² Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 122-23, 134.

³³ Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 117.

³⁴ Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 119-21.

³⁵ Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 118-19.

³⁶ Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 154. Author’s emphasis.

Jesus Christ through the illumination of the Spirit. Power is only the result of that revelational encounter with the triune God. Fee sums it up well when he says that for Paul, the Spirit is “God’s empowering presence.”³⁷ One cannot properly speak of the actualization of Spirit-baptism without introducing personal categories into the discussion, and it is in the context of personal encounter and intimacy that tongues function most naturally and preeminently as evidence.

II. PENTECOSTAL UNIQUENESS AND THE DOCTRINE OF SUBSEQUENCE

As noted above, the Pentecostal community could make sense of the doctrine of initial evidence because the reality signified by glossolalia is believed to be distinct experience. Only a unique sign was thought to be adequate to signify a unique reality. We must now examine this claim of uniqueness: In what sense can Spirit-baptism be considered “distinct from and subsequent to” conversion, while remaining theologically one with conversion-initiation? The theological interpretation of Spirit-baptism as conversion-initiation may be called non-sacramental and has been vigorously argued by James Dunn and followed by most Evangelicals.³⁸ A rare exception is Clark Pinnock, a Baptist, who follows the sacramental interpretation.³⁹ Those in the sacramental tradition (mostly Catholics and Orthodox) link Spirit-baptism to water baptism and confirmation. The Jesuit Francis A. Sullivan, however, adopts a non-sacramental interpretation.⁴⁰ But whether sacramentalist or non-sacramentalist, it is commonly believed that there is a Pentecostal dimension in conversion-initiation and/or water baptism. Turner, who links Spirit-baptism to conversion, thinks that there is a greater “degree” of intensity in the Pentecostal dimension of life, although he would dispute the Pentecostal claim to a different “kind” of experience. The

³⁷ Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), p. 8.

³⁸ James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM, 1984).

³⁹ *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), pp. 123-25.

⁴⁰ *Charisms and Charismatic Renewal: A Biblical and Theological Study* (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1982), pp. 69-70.

thrust of Turner's argument is that what the Pentecostals claim as unique is part of a reality that Evangelicals also possess.⁴¹ The way for Evangelicals to become "charismatics" is only a matter of "redirect[ing] their emphases and expectations."⁴² Turner's understanding reflects a tendency of Evangelicals to narrow the gap between Evangelicals and Pentecostals. This is partly due to the fact that Evangelicals already see conversion as an experiential reality, but a reality which needs further intensification without making it distinct from Spirit-baptism.⁴³ Turner's position, while theologically attractive, entails serious difficulty from the standpoint of spirituality, as we shall see later.

The sacramentalists, on the other hand, see Spirit-baptism as the "actualization" of a reality within a unified initiation ritual which includes water baptism and confirmation.⁴⁴ The two rites are distinct because they reveal or convey two distinct experiential realities in conversion-initiation. It is for this reason that perhaps a sacramental view of Spirit-baptism may be more useful in clarifying the nature of the Pentecostal reality. Classical Pentecostals, lacking a sacramental theology, have nonetheless sought to preserve their distinct experience by their doctrine of subsequence.

But what is it about this reality which makes Pentecostal-charismatics different from other Christians? We have noted previously that "revelation" rather than power is probably a more basic category for understanding the nature of baptism in the Spirit. There are different ways of looking at this revelation. David A. Dorman describes it as "a personal disclosure of God particularly as to His immediacy" resulting in "a qualitatively different life lived in the light...of that striking sense of the nearness of God."⁴⁵ Similarly, Macchia sees the Spirit's work of revelation as a "theophany" which highlights its irruptive and invasive

⁴¹ Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, esp. pp. 350, 356.

⁴² Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 357.

⁴³ Max Turner, "Tongues: An Experience for all in the Pauline Churches?" *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1:2 (1998), pp. 231-53 (251).

⁴⁴ McDonnell and Montague, *Christian Initiation*, pp. 89, 97.

⁴⁵ David A. Dorman, "The Purpose of Empowerment in the Christian Life," *Pneuma* 7:2 (Fall 1985), pp. 147-65 (147-48).

nature.⁴⁶ The revelation resulted in a new relationship with God through the Spirit. There is a deep awareness of the nearness of God and a holy familiarity. Along with it, the extraordinary charisms are activated. Extraordinary charisms, from one perspective, could be regarded as a sign of highly focused personal activity. They are the “surprising works of God,” which in traditional dogmatics are distinguished from God’s works of providence. Here, again, is why it is necessary, from the standpoint of spirituality, to understand the *experience* of Spirit-baptism as a distinct reality within the conversion-initiation complex, rather than simply as a more intense form of conversion experience: It is for the same reason that we clarify the difference between the works of miracles and the works of providence. Miracles belong to the very nature of what it means to be a person. Of all creatures, only personal beings are capable of springing surprises because only they are truly free. Macchia sums it up well when he says, “The element of spontaneity and wonder in such theophanic encounters with God have always been the heart-throb of Pentecostal spirituality and attraction to tongues.”⁴⁷ Yet, these surprises that interrupt the ordinary flow of life, making us deeply aware that life consists of more than just calculated predictability, are themselves part of the fabric of life. In this way the Pentecostal reality is both discontinuous as well as continuous with ordinary Christian living.

We will appreciate this Pentecostal claim that their experience is unique and distinct if we recognize that the *logic* of the Pentecostal reality is the same as the logic of play.⁴⁸ The very nature of play is that it requires the demarcation of specific times for play. There is a beginning and end of play, and within the period called play-time, the players step out of the ordinary world into a different world.⁴⁹ They are involved in what would be described in literary circles as “the willing suspension of unbelief.” For many Christians, entering the Pentecostal world is like

⁴⁶ Machia, “Signs Too Deep for Words,” pp. 55-60 esp. 57. Theophany as a theological term refers to a more focused form of divine revelation and is therefore a more appropriate description of the Pentecostal reality than the broader term revelation.

⁴⁷ Machia, “Sights Too Deep,” p. 55.

⁴⁸ See Jean-Jacques Suurmond, *Word and Spirit at Play: Towards a Charismatic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

⁴⁹ The classic study of the character of play is Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon, 1955).

entering the world of play. The transition is just as definite as to be described as a major paradigm shift. To regard the Pentecostal reality as the intensification of a pre-existing reality, as many Evangelicals insist, simply does not ring true to Pentecostal experience.

Pentecostals try to capture the uniqueness of their experience with the doctrine of subsequence. This two-stage theory, whether in its Wesleyan or Pentecostal form has usually been criticized for fostering spiritual elitism. To the extent that the doctrine pictures Spirit-baptism as a kind of *superadditum* to being saved, the criticism is justified. But it is misplaced if the theological oneness of conversion-initiation and Spirit-baptism leads to the conclusion that the Christian life is a matter of getting saved and then getting more and more “Christ-like” without any clearly defined stages in spiritual development. By stages in spiritual development I do not mean that we can draw the line where one crosses from stage one into stage two. These are conceptual stages within the larger unified life in Christ, similar to, for example, Teresa of Avila’s seven “mansions” of the “interior castle” of prayer. Evangelicals tend to see the Christian life as one big, indistinct blob. One is expected to grow, but what the expected pattern of development is seems always hazy. A common pattern, if it could be called a pattern, goes something like this: first, conversion, followed by three months of follow-up and discipling where one is taught the basic techniques of “quiet time” and witnessing. Then one is expected to serve the Lord faithfully to the end of one’s life. It is no wonder that Evangelicals have not produced a spiritual theology that understands Christian progress in terms of some structure of growth. Incidentally, in the world of psychology there is a lot going on in the area of “developmental psychology.”⁵⁰ What many Evangelicals have done is to baptize one of these theories and use it for structuring their own spiritual life. The result has often been quite disastrous. Christian life is turned into a weak version of pop psychology. There are those who think that a two-stage theory of the Christian life is unbiblical, but are quite ready to embrace the idea that spiritual maturity means having a healthy self-image, or a life patterned

⁵⁰ E.g., Erik Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle: Selected Papers* (New York: International Universities Press, 1959); *The Life Cycle Completed* (New York: Norton, 1982); Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Psychology of Moral Development: The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984); James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981).

according to the vision of Abraham Maslow, Erick Erikson or Lawrence Kohlberg!

The importance of the doctrine of subsequence is that, properly understood, it provides the basis for sound spiritual development. It preserves vital aspects of the Christian life by giving them a distinct focus. This is what the Wesleyan multi-stage theory of the Christian life accomplishes, and is what the Pentecostals inherited. But its roots are much deeper. Within the mystical tradition of the church it is variously named and developed: the four degrees of love of St. Bernard, the seven mansions of Teresa of Avila. But mostly it is called the Three Ways: purgation, illumination and union.

Without some such doctrine of subsequence or distinctness, Evangelicals wishing to preserve some of the desirable elements of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement, despite their best intentions, will not succeed in doing so in the long term. Turner, for example, thinks that one can maintain the essential features of the Pentecostal reality without a “second blessing” theology.⁵¹ Turner is right, but only in the sense that conversion-initiation must be seen as a unified reality. But from the standpoint of spirituality it entails tremendous difficulty. Turner would like to see some kind of deepening, some “degree” of development in conversion-initiation without specifying any “kind” of change.⁵² But when Spirit-baptism is collapsed into conversion-initiation without specifying the distinct realities that it contains, spiritual development tends to be seen as one big blob. The problem that this poses is that in time the distinctive experience of Spirit-baptism will be lost. We see this happening earlier when the Reformed Pentecostals collapsed sanctification into the conversion complex. In time, sanctification lost its distinctive character and focus. A position that grounds Spirit-baptism experientially in conversion will eventually lose its distinctive qualities unless conversion itself is interpreted in such a way as to highlight those realities contained in the concept of Spirit-baptism. This has been done, for the most part, in the sacramental traditions where Christian initiation is seen in two distinct acts: baptism and confirmation.⁵³ Low church Evangelicals, lacking such a tradition,

⁵¹ Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 167.

⁵² Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 350, 356-57.

⁵³ Ives Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (New York: Seabury, 1983), I, p. 106 points out that confirmation theologically signifies that the Holy Spirit is distinct

are left without adequate conceptual tools to clarify the nature of spiritual progress. Turner's position, and most other Evangelicals', I fear, will not have the capacity for long-term traditioning of the Pentecostal dimension of life. As the history of Protestantism shows, the vitality of conversion could easily be reduced to a benign concept. Many Puritans in the seventeenth century developed a concept called "the seal of the Spirit" as a distinct experience from conversion, but over time its distinctiveness was lost as it was absorbed into the popular Evangelical concept of crisis conversion.⁵⁴

Some kind of doctrine specifying the experiential distinctiveness of Spirit-baptism is needed for the long-term survival of Pentecostal-charismatic reality. Here, we can learn something from the sacramentalists. They have incorporated the Pentecostal distinctiveness into their sacraments of baptism and confirmation. Evangelicals are quite understandably suspicious of a theology that ties the grace of God too closely to the sacraments.⁵⁵ But properly understood, a sacramental view of Spirit-baptism has the advantage of preserving the distinctiveness of the Pentecostal experience (which the two-stage theory tries to do) and at the same time grounding the experience in the doctrine of conversion-initiation.

from the word: We are baptized into Christ, confirmed by the Spirit. It also "points to the fact that Jesus received two anointings of the Spirit, the first constituting his human and divine holy being and the second constituting, or at least declaring, his quality of Messiah or minister of salvation." The apostles too were first constituted by their call which took place at their baptism; then they were sent (*apostello*) as witnesses and founders of the church at Pentecost. Confirmation clarifies the Pentecostal concept of the "second (or third) work of grace" while interpreting this subsequent "constitution" by the Spirit within the unified theological reality of Christian initiation.

⁵⁴ For a discussion of the Reformed sealer see Henry Lederle, *Treasures Old and New* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), pp. 5-9. A twentieth century attempt at reviving this concept can be seen in Martin Llyod-Jones, *Joy Unspeakable: Baptism with the Holy Spirit* (Eastbourne, E. Sussex: Kingsway, 1984).

⁵⁵ Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 163, for example, is rather dismissive towards the sacramental interpretation, and quotes with approval Lederle's view that to see Spirit baptism as the "actualization" of grace already given in the sacrament of baptism does not quite do justice to the powerful experiential reality of Spirit baptism. It is of interest to note that the Catholic Francis Sullivan, *Charisms and Charismatic Renewal*, pp. 69-70 voices the same reservation.

Pentecostals, having no sacrament of confirmation, nevertheless seek to preserve the experience of Spirit-baptism in their doctrine of subsequence. But if the doctrine of subsequence is to have any theological coherence it has to be interpreted within the complex of conversion-initiation. This has proved to be difficult without a sacramental theology. One way open to classical Pentecostals is to locate Spirit-baptism in the sacrament of holy communion. It is a distinct event, but at the same time it is part of a unified initiation ritual which includes baptism and confirmation.⁵⁶ Further, it is a continuous event and therefore capable of symbolizing the concept of repeatable “in-fillings.” There is an important part of the communion ritual called the *epiclesis* when the Holy Spirit is invoked in connection with the consecration of the bread and wine. Thomas Cranmer’s *Book of Common Prayer* of 1549 has it in this form: “With thy Holy Spirit and Word vouchsafe to bless and sanctify these thy gifts and creatures of bread and wine.” One could, of course, argue over what exactly the Holy Spirit does in relation to the bread and wine. Whether he “transubstantiates” or “consubstantiates” or illumines the believers to perceive the spiritual presence of Christ as Calvin believed—these are debatable issues. What this rite highlights is the truth that the on-going life of faith is dependent upon and sustained by the regular in-filling of the Holy Spirit. Just as the *epiclesis* is a specific prayer for a specific event, prayer for Spirit-infusion is also for a specific event to happen. These are occasions when the believers are given fresh infusions of the Spirit to make them grow more and more into the one charismatic Body of Christ.

⁵⁶ McDonnell and Montague, *Christian Initiation*, p. 143 note that this was the way Christian initiation was understood by many of the early church fathers including Tertullian and Hilary of Poitiers.