

Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee
Statement for Affirmation to the 96th International Assembly

THE PRESENCE AND MANIFESTATIONS
OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

(for Affirmation, Not for Decision)

During the last three decades, the Holy Spirit has been poured out to such an extent that many believe we are continuing to live in the time of the fulfillment of Acts 2:15–18, when God said, “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.” Spirit-filled believers make up the largest and fastest-growing segment of Christianity in the world. The academic world is interested; governments are interested; books are being written; and studies are being done about this worldwide movement.

At the same time, Christianity in the Western world seems to be slowed or drifting from Spirit-filled influence. During the last decade, there has been external influence by misconceptions portrayed in the media as well as internal influence from Christian leaders to distract, suppress, and, in some cases, outright oppose any visible ministry or manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Some have advocated that the spiritual gifts or corporate ministries of the Holy Spirit do not have place in public worship today.

This persuasion has resulted in not only the rapid decline of spiritual manifestations in the church, but it has also subsequently discouraged believers from actively seeking the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is this urgent matter that recently led the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches of North America to entertain a discussion with the Pentecostal Society of Scholars as to how bishops and pastors can best respond to this imminent challenge. The conclusion among scholars and ecclesiastical leaders gathered in March 2009, was that Spirit-filled ministries must rise up with new inspiration to live and minister in the fullness of Pentecost, thereby demonstrating a more vibrant and effective approach to ministry than those who would water down the activity of the Spirit, seeking approval from seekers and more liberal elements in Christianity today. The Church of God of Prophecy wants to go on record as believing and practicing THE PRESENCE AND MANIFESTATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

While there has always been a need among our leadership and pastors to maintain biblical order and decent behavior in the House of the Lord, such zeal for structure and fear of false manifestations of the Holy Spirit should never be practiced in a manner to “quench the Spirit” or “despise prophecies” (1 Thessalonians 5:19, 20). Subsequently, this should encourage us to embrace “spiritual discernment” that enables church leaders to both enhance and encourage the genuine moving of the Holy Spirit that edifies and comforts believers. Scriptures are abundant throughout the New Testament in that such ministries are a fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to send to us “another comforter” (John 14:16, 17). Furthermore, the Bible undeniably declares, “. . . Be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). A careful examination of the Greek verb translated “be filled” shows that it is a present tense, revealing that this blessing is one that we can experience now. The fact that the verb is used in the imperative mood does not leave the obedient disciple an option. Since the verb is also in the passive voice, it is not something we gain by human effort or achievement, but is done for him or her as they submit to God (Acts 2:38, 39).

Adding to this personal renewal in Jesus Christ, we must ask ourselves, “What happens when Holy Spirit-filled believers go to church?” Paul clearly answers this question when he writes to the Corinthian church. He expressly details the various gifts of the Holy Spirit that are given “. . . for the profit of all,” namely word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, gift of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, divers kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:4–11). These phenomena need not only to occur in the congregation but should go beyond. As Paul unfolds the blessing of these manifestations, he also gives anointed instructions about abuses and how to handle such anomalies (14:6–33). But nowhere in the text does the apostle command or insinuate that these

manifestations of the Holy Spirit should ever be rooted out from the experience of corporate worship by the believers. Instead, the apostle, when speaking even to a church rife with abuses, still encourages and gives imperative commands that these ministries are essential to edifying and empowering the church (1 Corinthians 12:28; 14:1–5, 39).

Throughout the Acts of the Apostles, speaking in tongues in the public arena was not seen as a detractor, but as a source of interest to unbelievers and as an enjoyment, even ministry, to believers. We see in multiple references both the attraction that speaking in tongues offered to those in the community and the encouragement for a bolder witness that it gave to the disciples (Acts 2:1–8; 4:31–33; 10:44–48; 19:1–6). In a world that has become increasingly attracted to the cults, the media, and techno gadgets, the Holy Spirit’s presence is one key ingredient in our churches that can attract and fill the needs of people hungry for something beyond their daily life of drudgery. In fact, this actuates the blessing and need of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23) to strengthen the believer in their normal life experience.

In the Church of God of Prophecy, our roots lie in the Holiness-Pentecostal historical tradition that was anchored to biblical truth. If there is no evidence in our church services today to give witness to this outward manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we will simply appear as imposters. On the other hand, when the Spirit is active among us, His anointing is obvious to unbelievers and will work powerfully in their hearts and lives. We encourage this ministry body to pray, entertain, and welcome genuine miracles, healings, speaking in tongues, and other manifestations such as described in 1 Corinthians 12. These must no longer be the rare exception or never practiced; rather, we commend to our pastors and leadership that these gifts, the very moving of the Holy Spirit, will draw men and women to come and see what is happening within your community of believers. We encourage our ministers and our people to freely use their anointed gifts to minister to others (1 Peter 4:10, 11).

In this age, there is a spiritual thirst among people to experience God, and the Church of God of Prophecy must be prepared to offer them the Spirit that can quench this desire. Let the Church be Spirit-filled and ready to offer deliverance, inspired truth, and real-life victory. We are truly thankful that there are areas in the world where the flames of the Spirit are burning brightly, and we commend such fervency with an admonition to continue to allow the Holy Spirit to spread. Indeed, we must now commit ourselves once again to be churches filled with the spiritual outpourings that can refresh and change people’s lives.

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