

Can a Charismatic Theology Be Biblical?

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Introduction and Statement of the Problem

In many Evangelical minds, the expressions, ‘biblical theology’ and ‘charismatic theology’ are not intimately associated. Following categories from the Reformation and the early Enlightenment, conservative Evangelicals distinguish sharply between a ‘Word’ or, a doctrine/scripture-based theology, and an ‘experience’ based collection of tenets which grounds the charismatic movement. Recently, charismatic theology¹ has moved far beyond attempts to append a second-blessing, tongues-speaking stage to the traditional Protestant *ordo salutis*, e.g., vocation, regeneration, justification, sanctification and glorification.

This paper does not attempt to argue directly for the legitimacy of the charismatic movement or its experience, but rather to note that we Evangelicals who commit ourselves to an inerrant scripture as *the* foundation for faith and practice must face the theological implications of the *biblical emphases* within key doctrines with respect to their charismatic content. In this paper we sample only a few of these doctrines: the Holy Spirit, the kingdom of God, soteriology and faith.

Any study of Christian theology demands that at some time the theologian ask a basic question: ‘in terms of ultimate religious authority for Evangelicals, what is the relative status of scripture and tradition?’ Behind this question lies a prior question, how did our theological systems attain their present geography of emphasis?

To distill an enormous answer into a sentence or two, we would postulate that historically conditioned polemical and apologetical questions, based on problematic philosophical assumptions, were asked of the biblical text. The answers, in large measure, were drastically shaped as they appropriated the presenting assumptions. The result was the creeds and the further evolution of traditional theology: a series of answers to questions the scriptures rarely emphasized or even directly addressed. From their original position as manuals for coping with specific philosophical/theological challenges, the creeds evolved into the central agenda and structure of Christian belief. Indeed, they became the very outline of systematic theology. The process, of course, did not stop there; theologians continually posed questions from their own historically-conditioned experiences and concerns, which were then answered via the intellectual and conceptual tools of their times.

This leads us to ask, ‘If tradition and scripture portray substantially different emphases within certain doctrines, then which portrayal should we declare as normative for theology?’ I would suggest that today we stand at a crossroads, a forced choice, between the profile of emphases based on more objective results of biblical text analysis, as against the profile of emphases deriving from a long evolution of theological tradition. Distasteful as it is to us Evangelicals, we must confess that the emphases within our theologies are probably more shaped by ecclesiastical traditions than by courageous, systematic analyses of scripture.

Hence, this paper asks not, ‘what does the scripture *say*’ about these doctrines (a conflict does not lie significantly at this point), but rather, ‘what does it *emphasize*?’ The thesis of the paper, then, is that when objective measures for determining emphasis, e.g., content analysis, are applied to the New Testament text, the orientation that emerges in these key doctrines is profoundly and emphatically charismatic.

The Approach of this Paper

This paper seeks to test the viability of both a theological *method* and as a radical (in its original sense of going back to the root), Evangelical *reframing* of traditional doctrines. This paper represents the first stages of an attempt to re-vision a charismatic Evangelical theology, hence, on an indispensable principle of religious authority, i.e., *sola scriptura*.² Because we take this religious authority seriously, and

therefore seek to screen out our own biases and traditions, we rely on some principles of content analysis, a method extensively employed and proven in social sciences and literature for objectifying the content and emphases of communication. This study appears only as an outline of largely unfinished research.

To prosecute its thesis, this paper first provides background by briefly describing content analysis in contrast to traditional Evangelical hermeneutics. This is followed by a description of emphasis patterns within selected doctrines, as laid out by: 1) traditional Evangelicalism, 2) contemporary biblical theology, and 3) some procedures of content analysis. The paper concludes with a summary and implications of these contrasts for contemporary Evangelical theology and praxis. After a brief discussion of traditional hermeneutics as it bears on it, this study examines profiles of emphases within the doctrines of the Holy Spirit, the kingdom of God, soteriology, and faith.

The purpose of this paper is not simply an exercise in polemics, but an attempt to restore, on biblical criteria, some key theological emphases of a holy, authoritative, inspired and inerrant scripture, and thereby to express a truly normative, biblically-grounded theology for all believers in Christ Jesus.

Content Analysis: A Hermeneutical Method for Determining Literary Emphasis

Content analysis is a commonly, if semi-consciously and crudely, applied method of determining, *inter alia*, emphasis. For example, if a young man's fiancée moves to a new town and then writes him a five-page letter in which four pages describe the handsome boy next door, while only one page discusses the former young man, then his reaction to the letter (unless love is truly blind) will involve content analysis: 'Four pages about this new guy, and only one about me?' We need not require a trained linguist to draw ominous conclusions from this letter.³

More formally, content analysis may be defined (more broadly than we will apply it in this paper) as 'a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables.'⁴ This procedure is becoming widespread in the examination of a vast body of material, *e.g.*, in determining the biases, or allotment of emphases within TV programs, newspaper editorials and news, foreign official 'news' bulletins, propaganda, transcripts of trials, psychotherapy sessions, dreams, literary works.⁵ In other words, content analysis, among other goals, attempts to measure precisely what is being communicated *from the sender's point of view*.

'Systematic, objective and quantitative' approaches to determining emphasis in theology has not characterized the discipline up to now. Indeed, we need only a passing familiarity with a variety of other academic disciplines over the last century or so to appreciate the gripping power of tradition to retain familiar categories rather than to allow a 'paradigm revolution' in our thinking based on new data, *i.e.*, recognizing that new *wine* requires new *wineskins*. Certainly theology, including hermeneutics, is not exempt from this phenomenon, often being shaped far more by *inherited* patterns of emphasis than the emphases in the text of scripture.⁶

A precedent-setting example of this latter phenomenon is Martin Luther, who saw the charismatic emphases of the Gospels and Acts (and largely ignored them in other parts) and responded by gerrymandering the NT to conform to the emphases of his theology and to deny NT authority to his opponents. Specifically, it was *within the context of anti-charismatic polemics*, against both the Papacy and the Radical Reformation, that Luther developed his concept of a 'canon within the canon,' *i.e.*, that the doctrines and emphases of one group of books was subordinated to another group. In his 'Preface to the New Testament' of 1522, Martin Luther distinguishes the 'true and noblest books,' *i.e.*, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, 1 Peter and then the rest of Paul's letters and the first epistle and Gospel of John, from others in the New Testament. His *sole criterion* for selecting 'the heart and core of all the books' is that 'these do *not* describe many works and miracles of Christ, but rather masterfully show how faith in Christ overcomes sin, death, and hell and gives life, righteousness, and blessedness.' The discerning Christian prefers the Gospel of John over the Synoptics *simply because* it contains the fewest miracles.⁷

Luther, as so many of his Reformation followers, then, is trying to *avoid* the implications of content analysis. Sixty percent of the NT is reduced to a kind of historical prologue to his centrally important Protestant *ordo salutis*. Since the ‘mighty works’ recorded merely served as (road) ‘signs,’ that is, having no intrinsic value in themselves, but ‘pointing’ to an ultimate, verbal truth, there was no sense dwelling upon them. Even in their original context, in this view, divine acts of power were aids to faith only for the weak minded and superficial, but have now been replaced by the preaching of the ‘Word.’⁸

From this hermeneutical perspective, which has carried through to our time, it is little wonder then, that the highly charismatic emphases of the Gospels and Acts (not to mention those of the epistles) have been until recently, so minimized. The argument these days is altered slightly, framed often as the problem of applying ‘historical precedent’ to praxis.⁹ In the Protestant hermeneutic, most of the New Testament has lost its charismatic flavor; even within the epistles, charismatic expressions have been neutralized, turned into metaphors for Protestant ‘salvation,’ that is, demythologized, to correspond to the religious experience and comfort zone of Protestant scholastic interpreters.

Some Evangelicals still retain this hermeneutic, though with a more sophisticated rationale: ‘since narrative genre cannot be perceived as truly ‘didactic,’ then it follows that the narratives (the Gospels and Acts) must be interpreted via the epistles (primarily Pauline),’ even though mainstream hermeneutics has long ago abandoned this approach. This has the effect of screening out the element of charismatic power from contemporary theological *parenesis*.¹⁰ It may be further expressed, ‘Since the epistles state in *didactic* form, and therefore clearly, the normative core of Christian doctrine, *i.e.*, justification by faith, and since they scarcely mention the miraculous activity so prevalent in the NT *narratives*, then we have no assurance that historical precedence or accounts of miracles have binding force on the reader.’

Luther’s canon, and resulting hermeneutic, then, set the agenda for modern Evangelicals: oddly, while one may not dare change the content of the NT, one may, nevertheless, declare most of it off limits as a theological resource simply because it emphasizes the ‘wrong’ issues (divine power) in the ‘wrong’ way (via narrative). For a long time, however, interpreters have understood that the writers of NT narratives are also legitimate theologians properly taking their place beside the writers of epistles, and as such, have a contribution to make to the systematics of today. Hence, we see the value of content analysis as (we hope) a more ‘systematic, objective, and quantitative’ approach to examine the basis of our faith. It is no accident that the modern roots of content analysis as an academic discipline sprang from the need to set aside intense emotional responses and to understand objectively the intentions of the Nazis from their communications, particularly their offensive propaganda.¹¹

What we would hope ultimately is to map out the emphases of, say, the whole NT. The difficulty, of course, would be to determine categories that faithfully reflect the intent of the text, and then to demonstrate the emphases transparently. Ideally, however, the effect of this exercise would be to allow the NT to speak to us with its own agenda, rather than being mined for supporting quotations for pre-arranged categories and interests. Certainly the mere emphases within a document do not tell us all we need to know. But at least the outline of its *own interests* would become clearer to us, so that *within its own framework* further understanding could be arranged and expanded.

This, in turn, raises the question, how *do* we determine emphasis in a document? Contemporary content analysis methods for establishing emphasis may be applied to scripture via the following procedures, that is, by determining: a) the percentage of a document's space devoted to a subject;¹² b) the frequency with which a subject is discussed or mentioned;¹³ c) repetition;¹⁴ d) statements that appear to summarize larger amounts of material;¹⁵ e) statements of personal or group goals, *e.g.*, what is prayed for, hoped for, or, expression of objectives in terms of spiritual development (*e.g.*, Phil 3:8-11), commands, *etc.*; f) summaries of a person's ministry, *e.g.*, Acts 10:38; Rom 15:18-19, *etc.*; g) statements of the general Christian mission or commission (Mk 3:13-14; 28:19-20; Lk 9 // Mt 10; Acts 1:8), *etc.*, indicating the central *raison d'être* of the NT; h) whether or not the text actually *says* a subject is important (*e.g.*, Mk 12:28, the first commandment).

It is possible that these various devices could produce contradictory results, but at least the conflict would be fought out on biblical grounds rather than on external agendas.¹⁶ For example, such connections appear below, *e.g.*, when the term ‘Spirit’ [of God] is mentioned, where the contexts describe anything about the term at all, almost always describe charismatic activity or power. Or, when the term, ‘kingdom’ [of God/Heaven/ Christ] appears to describe its *activity*, then, in each case, charismatic phenomena are mentioned or strongly implied. These kind of connections both serve to describe not only *what* the text says about these doctrines but what it *emphasizes* about them. These simple hermeneutical devices are not new, but in biblical studies it has not been used consistently enough by Evangelicals,¹⁷ which, if applied, would allow, to the extent possible, the biblical text, rather than traditions, to dictate a hierarchy of emphases and values. Herewith we offer a few examples of this approach within the framework of the doctrines listed above.

Emphases within Selected Evangelical Doctrines

vs.

Those of the New Testament

This section examines four traditional doctrines of Evangelicalism which have evolved far away from their normative, biblical and charismatic emphases: a) the Holy Spirit; b) the kingdom of God; c) soteriology; and, d) faith. Each section begins with a traditional Evangelical statement of emphases within the doctrine, followed by some results of biblical theology which indicates a greater charismatic emphasis in the NT, which in turn is followed by a refinement or contribution from content analysis which further enhances the charismatic role in each doctrine.

A) The Holy Spirit Wolfhart Pannenberg rightly complained that not only *traditional theology*, but generally, ‘contemporary theology lacks a doctrine of the Spirit that corresponds to the biblical concept of the Spirit.’¹⁸ The doctrine of the Holy Spirit historically has been shaped by controversies only tangentially related to it, *e.g.*, issues of personhood, essence, being, the Trinity, procession, ethics, the old liberal ‘*geist*’ (community feeling and religious excitement), *etc.* In traditional Protestantism the function of the Spirit is essentially to work within the *ordo salutis*. Hence, their classic texts on the Spirit dealt not only with the credal formulas, but also exhaustively with the Holy Spirit and vocation, in regeneration, in justification, in sanctification, *etc.*, with perhaps a page or two devoted to the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, which, since they had ceased, retained only academic significance.¹⁹

By contrast, *biblical theology* has produced a fairly uniform profile of the Spirit which departs drastically from the traditional theological formulations in that the Spirit is associated primarily, if not exclusively, with acts of divine power, particularly in revelation, utterance, skills, and miracles. Certainly, statistical studies of the major terms for God’s Spirit (*ruach/pneuma*) support the broad picture of the last century of biblical theology.²⁰

Content Analysis further refines these recent insights. In the Old Testament, statistically, of the 128 or so references to the Spirit (*ruach*) of God, the overwhelming percentage of contexts describe the Spirit’s revelatory or miraculous activity, *i.e.*, in prophetic revelation (76 cases), in the creation or sustenance of life (17), in charismatic empowerment for leadership (17), in bestowals of divine power for healing, miracles, special skills, *etc.* (15). The remaining cases of *ruach* appear as a metonymy for God.

The NT shows similar percentages. Of the 279 cases or so of the divine Spirit in the NT (*pneuma*), the category of ‘prophecy’ dominates (revelation 65 cases, revelation as OT scripture 10, inspired utterances 72, Spirit guided prayer 16, miracles 35 cases = 198 cases). Also, spiritual ‘life’ 33, dominant attitudes (faith, love, joy, peace, freedom, fellowship) 36, and the Spirit of God acted upon 11 times. Thirteen more cases do not have absolutely clear contextual indicators describing the Spirit, though most of them could easily be construed as being highly charismatic, *e.g.*, at Jesus’ baptism (his empowering), the great commission, the Spirit as a ‘guarantee’ (fulfillment of Num 11; Isa 59:21f.), *etc.*

So, normatively—if Scripture is our norm—to talk about the Holy Spirit is essentially to talk broadly of the Spirit of prophecy, and all the panoply of divine empowerment. To claim, then, an experience of the Holy Spirit is to claim some sort of divine revelatory or miraculous phenomenon. This includes, but certainly moves beyond, the revelatory experiences of vocation, regeneration and sanctification. To be ‘filled’ with the Spirit probably represents a charismatic episode in which one is strongly and palpably expressing the Spirit. Hence, one ought not, on biblical grounds, assume that experiences of regeneration, sanctification, or scriptural illumination represent anything like the terminal works of the Spirit in this life. The biblical description of the Spirit necessarily involves a broad range of spiritual gifts and power whose relative value is determined by the occasion of ministry need. Closely related to the biblical picture of the Spirit as powerfully active, so also is the Kingdom of God.

B) The Kingdom of God The doctrine of the kingdom of God provides an Evangelical/charismatic theology with its most under-cultivated ground. But in *traditional theology* this doctrine is drastically distorted from the NT pattern in that it has been identified primarily with the church: either the visible organization, as in Roman Catholicism, or the invisible church of the Reformation.²¹ Both believed that the Kingdom expressed a kind of divine realm which was to be totally realized at the end of this age, usually through the victorious and complete extension of the church over all the earth, or essentially suspended until the coming of Christ.

By contrast, *biblical theology’s* recent portrayal of the kingdom of God is much more complex and charismatic:²² that the dissemination of the Gospel of the kingdom of God was central to Jesus’ mission; that the terms, ‘kingdom of God/ Heaven/Christ’ are referentially identical; that the primary idea of kingdom is the act of ruling, rather than a territory ruled: a *reign* rather than a *realm*; that the kingdom of God is not, as with old liberalism, a man-made social organization, or even an inner religious experience, but a divine gift of God’s power; that the nature of the kingdom was spiritual, not political; that the central action of the kingdom consists of undoing and restoring the destructive works of demonic power, whether spiritual, ethical, or physical; and that while the kingdom of God was eschatological in nature, it is not simply future, but is already partially manifested in the ministry of Jesus and those who followed him.²³

A charismatic theology is greatly strengthened from recent studies in biblical theology with respect to the Kingdom of God. Jesus’ central mission in the New Testament is seen to inaugurate the kingdom ‘in power’ and ‘in word and deed’ (Lk. 4:23-27; 24:19).²⁴ His signs and wonders are not mere ‘signs,’ in the English sense of extrinsic value, merely *pointing* to the truth of the ‘gospel’ or its bearer.²⁵ Rather, miracles *are* the gospel, manifesting the essential core activity of his mission: to displace the physical and spiritual ruin of the demonic kingdom by the wholeness/ *shalom* of the kingdom of God.²⁶ In fact, the roles are reversed in most NT cases: preaching articulates the miracles and draws out their implications for the onlookers.²⁷

Such ‘miraculous’ charismata as prophecies, exorcisms and healings, continue not only through Jesus’ earthly ministry, but he bestows them upon his followers all during his exaltation.²⁸

Content analysis would indicate via *programmatic statements* that not only was Jesus’ mission of the Kingdom centrally charismatic (summarized in Lk 4:18-21,43; Acts 2:22; 10:38) but the fact that he specifically *repeats* the emphases of his own mission in the commissions to his disciples (Mt. 10; Lk 9 and 10²⁹ and Mt. 28:19-20, cf. 24:14, ‘until the end of the age.’) This same charismatic emphasis grounds the whole Book of Acts where the Church’s commission (1:5-8) is to present the kingdom in the power of signs and wonders and the preaching of the word. The repeated *summary statements* of Paul’s mission (Acts 15:12; Rom. 15:18-20; 1 Cor. 2:4; 2 Cor. 12:12; 1 Th. 1:5), show the continuation of this normative pattern of presenting and living out the gospel of the exalted Christ in ‘word and deed.’³⁰ Here the implications of believers’ inaugurated, but not yet fully realized, ‘vice-regency’ with the exalted, gift-bestowing Christ could profitably be explored.³¹

Crucial to the discussion of charismatic theology is the NT emphasis on discipleship as imitation. Based in part on the rabbinic model, the *life and actions* of a teacher, not simply his words, as in our culture, were to be replicated precisely in the lives of the students.³² Hence, failure to ‘do the *works*’ that

Jesus does is a failure to fulfill the Christian mission of his Father. This implicitly pedagogical pattern emphasizing the miraculous ministry of Jesus becomes explicit in the many commands *repeated* throughout the NT to employ it³³ via repentance, faith and prayer.³⁴ This leads us to note that in no other area are the implications of biblical theology and content analysis to traditional Evangelicals more explosive than in soteriology, which seems to go to the question of ‘another gospel.’

C. Soteriology As implied above, in *traditional Protestant theology* Luther's soteriology is essentially limited to ‘faith in Christ [that] overcomes sin, death, and hell and gives life, righteousness, and blessedness.’ The Calvinist tradition varies only in details. Later Evangelicalism similarly sees the core of its mission the theme of the cross as it expresses the substitutionary atonement, forgiveness of sin and subsequent sanctified (moral) living, all focused on attaining heaven.³⁵ Certainly no one would wish to minimize these themes.

Recent studies, in *biblical theology*, however, have confirmed the impulse of classical Pentecostalism toward a ‘full gospel’ soteriology, including a normative place for physical salvation (healing, deliverance from demonization, *etc.*) in human existence.³⁶ However, instead of implicitly placing physical healing in the traditional *ordo salutis* as a subset of sanctification, the trend is toward understanding the physical power of God as an essential part of NT soteriology, *i.e.*, as the ‘down-payment/firstfruits/taste . . . of the Spirit/powers of the age to come.’

Content analysis here again, can make a contribution. The Protestant hermeneutic which marginalizes the Gospels and Acts from theological input at least partly lies in the fact that the term, *soteria*, in the Synoptics almost exclusively and immediately refers to healing or physical rescue rather than to the traditional theological understanding of ‘salvation’ from sin and hell. We cannot, of course, hang the whole doctrine of soteriology on one word, but the Gospels and Acts also portray a highly charismatic mission of Jesus and his followers—a trait that ill fits the more narrowly-framed, traditional gospel.³⁷

When we ask, ‘when confronting the world soteriologically, what did Jesus and the early church actually *do*?’ a huge, and ignored, part of it was manifesting the charismatic power of the Spirit. Certainly, the *amount of space* devoted to healings, exorcisms, revivifications, *etc.*, in the public mission of Jesus is remarkable: Matthew 44%, Mark 65%, Luke 29%, John 30%, with Acts devoting 27.2% of its *total* space. Accounts of miracles performed only among or by the disciples were not included, *e.g.*, nature miracles, resurrection stories, *etc.*

This type of charismatic activity does *not* essentially change *within the Christian communities after the churches were established*. What was at first *presented* as the gospel of God’s power, *continued* as the gospel of God’s power (*e.g.*, 1 Cor 1:4-7), as some would have denied (1 Cor 2:4-5; 4:19-20; Gal 3:5; 2 Tim 3:5). The experience both of the presentation of the gospel in power and the living out of the gospel in power in Christian communities depended not on accreditation of apostles or their teaching but upon faith (Rom 12:6; Gal 3:3; Jas 5:15).

D. Faith served in *traditional Protestant theology* as one of the three key ‘*solas*’ and was primarily defined over against ‘works’—the referents of both terms competing as the means of ‘salvation.’³⁸ Reformation scholastics developed the dichotomy of ‘saving faith’ (for every Christian) and ‘miraculous faith’ (limited to the apostolic era as proof of doctrine).³⁹ Where traditional texts discuss ‘faith,’ it is almost exclusively associated with Protestant ‘salvation.’ This is not the emphasis of the NT.

Biblical Theology tends to ignore these two artificial categories, designed to alienate ‘normal’ faith for ‘salvation,’ from ‘extinct’ faith for ‘extraordinary’ gifts of the Spirit,⁴⁰ though the doctrine of faith is so central to Reformation theology, even biblical theologians assume somewhat more traditional categories and emphases. Biblical theology, however, is more willing to recognize the connections of faith and the mighty works of Jesus and others: that while faith has Jesus or God as its object, the immediate result may be healing or deliverance, not simply limited to ‘salvation’ as traditionally defined. One way of framing the idea of faith is that it represents a revelation and a divinely-empowered response. Thus faith is a central gift of God to mankind, the perceptual link (the *hupostasis* and *elengkos*—the proof or experience of the future fulfillment) between God’s graces and their appropriation. Hence, ‘gifts of

faith' (1 Cor 12:9) could represent the basic revelatory assurance of receiving all the gifts variously listed throughout the NT.

Content analysis shows that a substantial proportion—about one-half—of Jesus' teaching to his disciples dealt with the areas of faith, most often in the context of miracle stories. A preliminary analysis of the *pistis* family of words ('faith/believe') in the NT, shows that, where the context is explicit as to the 'intended result' of faith, 93 of 230, or, over 40% of the passages, refer to healings and other acts of power.⁴¹ Moreover, in the Gospel of Mark, for example, major miracle stories, which occupy a large amount of the text, point the reader explicitly to an unusual, tradition-breaking, aggressive faith in the quest for wholeness (2:1-12; 5:1-20, 21-43; 6:30-56; 7:21-37; 8:14-29; 10:46-52). This highly charismatic NT emphasis on the intended result of faith is scarcely mentioned in traditional systematic texts, where faith is almost exclusively tied to some aspect of the *ordo salutis*. As with the other major doctrines of the NT, above, the doctrine of 'faith' strongly connects to a broad and normative charismatic experience.

Summary and Conclusions

One expression of the abandonment of old liberalism after WW I was the emergence of the biblical theology movement, which strove to allow the biblical text a voice in naming its own message and the categories for arranging it. Despite its noble intent, and often radically fresh insights into the scriptures, the movement retained many traditional biases. Indeed, even today, the more traditionally conservative the author, the more closely the categories in biblical theology conform to those of traditional systematics. Hence, more transparent and objective appraisals of scripture and its message cry out for recognition. Such tools lie today within our grasp, particularly with the advent of powerful and inexpensive computer programs which help us sort out correlations and quickly assess large amounts of text.

If so, we should anticipate a fresh understanding of the depth and power of God's holy, ultimately authoritative and inerrant words of scripture, that we, unlike the conservative scholars of Jesus' time, may know both the scriptures and the power of God.

Abstract

Biblical theology has demonstrated a sharp divergence in emphases between the New Testament and traditional systematic theology in the areas of hermeneutics, the Holy Spirit, the kingdom of God, soteriology, and faith, among others. Within traditional systematic theology, these doctrines evolved toward a common characteristic: the denial or evasion of their inherent charismatic significance. By contrast, the more objective discipline of biblical theology shows the New Testament emphases within these doctrines to be dominantly charismatic. Scientific interpretive procedures comprising content analysis, widely used in communication research, shows objectively, and even more strongly, the dominant charismatic emphasis within these NT doctrines. The consequence of this approach is that an emphatically charismatic theology is also, centrally, a biblical theology, normatively binding on all who claim scripture as their primary principle of religious authority.

¹ 'Charismatic' here, refers to a position affirming the continuation to the present day of spiritual gifts traditionally described as 'extra-ordinary' or 'miraculous,' e.g., prophecy, tongues, healings and revelation. Virtually no 'charismatic' Christian maintains that any of these create new Christian doctrine. More polemical theological works: G. Greig and K. Springer (eds.), *The Kingdom and the Power* (Ventura: Gospel Light, 1994); my own *On the Cessation of the Charismata* (Sheffield: Sheffield Univ. Pr., 1993); J. Deere's *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*

(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993) and his *Surprised by the Voice of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996); W. Grudem (ed.), *Are Miracles for Today? Four Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996). More comprehensive works: W. Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); J. R. Williams, *Renewal Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988-93); Recent biblical studies: G. Fee's *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1993); R. P. Menzies, *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Univ. Pr., 1993); J. Shelton, *Mighty in Word and Deed: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1992). Two main academic journals express this movement: *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* and *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*.

²Granted, when Luther coined this phrase, he did not intend to reject the first major expressions of post-biblical theological development, the creeds. Having been reared in Medieval Church doctrine, however, it may never have fully occurred to him that a conflict between their focus and that of the NT could exist.

³A common tool for determining emphases involves measuring column inches of newspaper stories. Recently, **TIME** has displayed charts of computer searches of the frequency of distinctive words in print media, e.g., 'same-sex marriage,' 'Netanyahu,' 'religious right,' or 'Balkan war' to prove interest and focus.

⁴R. Wimmer and J. Dominick, *Mass Media Research: An Introduction* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1994), 165-66. B. Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research* (New York: Hafner, 1979), 18. For specifically biblical studies, see J. A. Baird, 'Content Analysis, Computers and the Scientific Method in Biblical Studies,' *JBL* 95/2 (1976), 255-76, repr. in *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 4 (Summer 1977), 112-40.

⁵For example, the First Search OCLC WorldCat Catalog, a computerized search of holdings of some 13,000 cooperating libraries world-wide, showed 5,343 items, not including periodical articles, treating or using content analysis.

⁶On a personal note: when I was in seminary, a conservative Lutheran church history professor, in showing the superiority of preaching to miracle-working, insisted that the Book of Acts devoted 'way more' material to the 'sermons' than to the miracles. He was using a hermeneutic of emphasis to make his point, which, incidentally, was incorrect: miracle stories, 27.2% vs. the speeches, 22.5%.

⁷*The Works of Martin Luther* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-), v.35, 361. See the discussion in P. Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, E.t., R. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 83.

⁸E.g., in *Works of Martin Luther*, 13a, 942-43.

⁹Though, this does not seem to be a problem for the NT writers (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11; Gal. 4; 2 Tim 3:16, ‘*All scripture . . . is useful*’). The problem of deriving normative theology from narrative may be mitigated if we understand the concept of *mimesis* in the NT as well as studies on the rabbi/disciple relationship (*didaskalos/ mathetes*) in which the disciple was not only to learn the verbal and intellectual content of his master, but to physically replicate his actions as well. A significant part of this *mimesis* conceptual field is expressed in the commissioning accounts of Jesus to his disciples and of Paul to his own followers (e.g., 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; 1 Thes. 1:6; Tim. 2:2; cf. Heb. 13:7). D. Williams, ‘Following Christ’s Example: A Biblical View of Discipleship,’ *The Kingdom and the Power*, 175-96.

¹⁰A theory that has undergone serious challenge by Fee’s recent book, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, above. The tradition of distorting the NT emphasis on the miraculous is illustrated in the conservative D. Guthrie’s 1,056 page *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), which provides not a single reference to in the subject index to miracles. A study by a librarian of the most often used reference works in a major Evangelical seminary library, that of 87,125 pages reviewed, only 288 pages, or 0.33% were devoted to healings, miracles, signs or wonders. *Power Healing* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 9.

¹¹F. Day, ‘Content Analysis in Mass Communication,’ in R. Nafsziger and M. Wilkerson, *Journalism Research* (New York: Greenwood, 1968), 87.

¹²E.g., the percentage of the exodus story (or, Pentateuch) devoted to the events at Sinai.

¹³To be quite banal, the fact that ‘God’ (*i.e.*, the various names) is mentioned many times certainly indicates an emphasis. But less obviously, what about ‘son,’ or, the fourth most frequent noun in the OT, ‘land’ ?

¹⁴Note how Ruth is repeatedly called, ‘the Moabitess,’ or ‘Michal, daughter of Saul’ long after they both are introduced. Or the famous, ‘in our image and in our likeness’ (Gen. 1:26) and the chiasmic: ‘created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him’ (1:27). So, P. J. Stone, *An Introduction to the General Inquirer: A Computer System for the Study of Spoken or Written Material* (New York: The Similmatics Corp., 1966), 11.

¹⁵When the NT writers condense his ministry into a sentence or two they show Jesus in opposition to the reign of the devil which appeared as demonic possession, sickness, the disruption of nature, or sin: it was ‘for this purpose that Jesus appeared, to destroy the works of the Devil’ (1 Jn 3:8; Acts 10:38). Summary statements about Jesus’ mission abound throughout the text of the Gospels with references to healing and exorcisms: Mk. 1:34//Mt. 8:16//Lk. 4:40-41; Mk. 3:10//Mt. 4:15//Lk. 6:19; Lk. 4:15; Lk. 7:21; Lk. 13:33; Lk. 9:11//Mt. 14:14; Mt. 15:30-31; Mt. 19:2; Mt. 21:14.

¹⁶See, e.g., K. Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (London: Sage Publications, 1980), 13-20.

¹⁷Eta Linnemann, for example, has used a form of content analysis to undermine some of the basic tenets of higher criticism of the Gospels. *Is There a Synoptic Problem?* E.t., R. Yarborough (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 182-83.

¹⁸*Jesus, God and Man*, ET from the 5th ed. by L. Wilkins and D. Priebe (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 171. K. McDonnell, ‘The Determinative Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,’ *Theology Today* 39 (1982), 142-44. J. Dunn notes the distance between biblical and traditional formulations of Pneumatology in the article in *The Encyclopedia Britannica* (1964, vol. II) ‘which confines its treatment to three subjects—Divinity, Procession and Personality of the Holy Spirit—and seems to assume that no more need be said.’ ‘Rediscovering the Spirit,’ *ExT* 84/1 (October 1972), 7.

¹⁹E.g., those by J. Owen, *Pneumatologia* (London: J. Darby, 1674). Th. Goodwin, *The Work of the Holy Ghost in Our Salvation* (London: John Darby, 1681). A. Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1900).

²⁰This conclusion derives from an examination of each context of the terms, *ruach* and *pneuma* in reference to the Spirit of God. By the same method, a number of scholars have reached essentially the same conclusions, e.g., C. A. Briggs, ‘The Use of *ruach* in the Old Testament,’ *JBL* 19 (1900), 132-45; W. R. Shoemaker, ‘The Use of *ruach* in the Old Testament and of *pneuma* in the New Testament,’ *JBL* 23 (1904), 13-65; E. D. Burton, *Galatians ICC*, 486-92; E. Schweitzer, et al., ‘*pneuma, kt*,’ *TDNT*, 6:332-455; D. Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings: Studies in the Semantics of Soteriological Terms*, SNTS (Cambridge: The University Press, 1968), 202-93. These statistical analyses ground the results of a number of similar studies, beginning as far back as Hermann Gunkel’s

pioneering work (1909), recently translated, *The Effects of the Holy Spirit* (Fortress, 1990); E. Schweitzer, *et al.*, ‘*pneuma, ktl*,’ *TDNT* 6:332-454; J. Dunn, *NIDNTTh* 3:689-707; M.M.B. Turner, ‘Holy Spirit,’ *Dict. Jesus & Gospels*, among many others.

²¹Typical of the classical Evangelical position is Ch. Hodge's *Systematic Theology* (New York: Scribners, 1871) II, 596-609. Hodge stresses that Christ as ‘King’ in his exalted state rules over all his people ‘by his power in their protection and direction . . . by his Word and Spirit,’ but only ‘providentially.’ Hodge makes no mention of Christ's bestowal of spiritual gifts or ministries during the exaltation. The Church, not charismatic or other divine activity specifically, is the visible expression of the kingdom in this age (p. 604).

²²J. G. D. Dunn demonstrates an almost synonymous relationship between the NT concepts of Holy Spirit and Kingdom of God. ‘Spirit and Kingdom,’ *ExpT* 87 (1971), 36-40.

²³*E.g.*, the survey of current scholarship in A. Buzzard, ‘The Kingdom of God in the 20th Century Discussion and in the Light of Scripture,’ *EQ* 64:4 (1992), 99-115; G. R. Beasley-Murray, ‘The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus,’ *JETS* 35/1 (March 1992), 19-30, esp. R. A. Harrisville, ‘In Search of the Meaning of ‘The Reign of God,’’’ *Interp* 47/2 (1993), 141-51 who uses, but moves beyond ‘numerical and syntactical analysis’ by ‘probing for its content.’ The points above represent the views of these men within certain variations and minor omissions. Similarly, I. H. Marshall, ‘The Hope of the New Age: The Kingdom of God in the New Testament,’ *Themelios* 11 (1985), 5-15; H. M. Evans, ‘Current Exegesis on the Kingdom of God,’ *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 14 (1987), 67-77.

²⁴See also, D. Williams, *Signs, Wonders and the Kingdom of God* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1989), also B. D. Chilton, *God in Strength: Jesus' Announcement of the Kingdom*. SNTU, B.1 (Linz, 1979); J. Kallas, *The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles* (Greenwich, CT: Seabury Press, 1961), 10-12. See especially, J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Scribners, 1971), 96-97, sec 11, i: ‘The *basileia* as the Central Theme of the Public Proclamation of Jesus.’

²⁵R. Brown, *Jerome Biblical Com.*, 787. H. vander Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), 280-86. H. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, 3rd ed. (Kampen: Bos, 1918), 361. R. Schnackenburg, *God's Rule and*

Kingdom, 121: 'Miracle might be called the kingdom of God in action.' P. Emile Langevin, 'La Signification du Miracle dans le Message du Nouveau Testament,' *ScE* 27 (May-September 1975), 161-86.

²⁶B. B. Warfield insisted in *Counterfeit Miracles* (New York: Scribners, 1918), 177-78, that Jesus' healings were an 'object lesson' of his 'substitutionary work,' which made 'no promise that this relief [from sickness] is to be realized. . . in this earthly life.' Disease is an expression of natural law and as such may not be 'suspended in our case.' Recent scholarship shows scripture takes the opposite view, e.g., Kallas, *The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles* (London: SPCK, 1961), chaps. 5 and 6: 'The Demonic-Cosmic Motif in the New Testament' and 'The Miracles Explained by This Motif,' 58-102 and A. Richardson, *The Miracle Stories of the Gospels* (London: SCM, 1958), Chap. 3: 'The Miracles and the Proclamation of the Kingdom of God,' 38-58; B. Bron describes the mission of Jesus in terms of its '*Kampfcharakter*' against the slavery of anxiety, sickness and death which was encountering 'the inbreaking of the time of salvation and the eschatological new creation.' *Das Wunder: Das theologische Wunderverstandnis im Horizont des neuzeitlichen Natur- und Geschichtsbegriffs*, zweite Auflage (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 236-37. 'Jesus interprets his exorcisms as the beginning of the end of Satan's reign.' R. H. Fuller, *Interpreting the Miracles* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 40. W. Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 17: 'Exorcisms and healings are the two principal approaches used to translate the kingdom program into action. In both cases Jesus intrudes upon enemy territory, challenges and subdues the forces of evil which are in the way of the fulfillment of the kingdom of God.' So also, H. C. Kee, 'The Terminology of Mark's Exorcism Stories,' *NTS* 14 (January 1968), 232-46 and W. Foerster, '*daimon*,' *TDNT* 2:19 and W. Schrage, '*Heil und Heilung im Neuen Testament*,' *EvTh* 43/3 (1986), 197-214, who argues that the New Testament vocabulary of salvation and healing should not be subjected to a false dualism: that healing is a dimension of the eschatological salvation of the reign of God.

²⁷'Without miracle the gospel is not gospel but merely word, or rather, words.' 'Miracles assume a quite central role in Paul's preaching miracles occur *wherever* [italics his] he preaches the gospel proclamation is inconceivable apart from deeds of power.' J. Jervell, 'The Signs of an Apostle: Paul's Miracles,' in his *The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 95, 91. G. Friedrich, *TDNT* 2, 720, has also noted that for Paul, '*euangelizesthai*' is not just speaking and preaching; it is

proclamation with full authority and power. Signs and wonders accompany the evangelical message. They belong together.’

²⁸Acts 2:33,36; 3:6,16,21; 4:7-13. G. E. Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 268; D. E. H. Whitely, *The Theology of St. Paul*, 124-25; and G. W. H. Lampe, *God as Spirit*, 69. L. O'Reilly, *Word and Sign in the Acts of the Apostles: A Study in Lucan Theology*. (Rome: Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1987). Also, J. Marcus, ‘Entering into the Kingly Power of God,’ *JBL* 107/4 (December 1988), 663-75, esp. 674. The Gospel of John cannot be excluded from this seamless connection of the Spirit's activity in Jesus' earthly ministry and that of the Church (Jn. 7:39; 16:7,17). The ‘greater works’ of those who believe in him can be performed only *because* Jesus goes to his Father (Jn. 14:12, cf. Acts 2:33, 36b, 38-39).

²⁹See Wm. Kurz, *Following Jesus: A Disciple's Guide to Luke-Acts* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1984), ‘Chapter Four: Sharing Jesus' Power for Service,’ 57-67. Kurz implies in the introduction, 5, that these early commissions in Luke 9 and 10 were intended by Luke to apply beyond the early disciples mentioned there to Luke's readers generally. So also, Williams, *Signs, Wonders and the Kingdom of God*, 125; C. Kraft, *Christianity with Power* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1989), 136.

³⁰The miraculous nature of the term ‘deed’ in the above expression is confirmed in contemporary rabbinic materials according to G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 78-82. Echoes of these summaries of how Paul ‘preached’ the gospel appear also in other writers, *e.g.*, in Acts 26:17-18 and Heb. 2:4, though in this latter case, as in Gal. 3:5 and 1 Cor. 1:5-8, the ‘confirmation’ of the gospel was God working via a distribution of spiritual gifts in members of the various congregations. F. F. Bruce, ‘The Spirit in the Letter to the Galatians,’ *Essays on Apostolic Themes* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985), 37-38.

³¹D. G. McCartney, ‘Ecce Homo: The Coming of the Kingdom and the Restoration of Human Viceregency,’ *WesJTh* 56/1 (1994), 1-21. The exaltation/Spirit theme deserves much greater study from a charismatic point of view. Indeed, a whole section of this paper could have profitably been devoted to an analysis of the so-called ‘Spirit Christology,’ in which *Jesus-as-prototype* derives his power and ministry, not from his status as God, as traditional theology would have it, but from the anointing of the Spirit--coming *fully* on him, but in the same sense as, and on a continuum with his followers, who receive the Spirit as a ‘guarantee,’ as ‘firstfruits,’ or as a ‘taste of the

powers of the age to come.’ Jesus’ own empowering by the Spirit extends in time into his exaltation, and into the experience of those replicating his life--his disciples.

³²N. Drazin, *A History of Jewish Education from 515 BCE to 220 CE* (New York: Arno, 1979), 12, citing *yBer.* I, 8, 3d; III, 5, 6d; *bBer.* 24a-b (cf. 38b, 62a); *Shab.* 12b and 41a.

³³The New Testament specifically commands its readers to ‘seek,’ ‘desire earnestly,’ ‘rekindle’ and ‘employ’ certain ‘miraculous’ charismata (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1, 4, 5, and 39; 2 Tim. 1:6; 1 Pt. 4:10) and implies that their appearance can be suppressed by simple neglect (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 14:39; 1 Th. 5:19-20; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6).

³⁴J. Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Post-Biblical Miracles* (Sheffield: Univ. Sheffield Pr., 1993), 121, n. 2.

³⁵Typically, among Evangelicals, the Gospel consists of: ‘(1) a historical proclamation of the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus, set forth as the fulfillment of prophecy and involving man’s responsibility; (2) a theological evaluation of the person of Jesus as both Lord and Christ; (3) a summons to repent and receive the forgiveness of sins.’ R.H. Mounce, ‘Gospel,’ *EDTh*, 474. Also, R.V. Peirard, ‘Evangelicalism,’ *EDTh*, 379. In the Evangelical ‘Gospel’ there is virtually no mention anywhere of the biblical presentation of the Gospel in the power of signs and wonders or that this same gospel is continued in the church communities. F. Barton, ‘Substitutionary Atonement and Resurrection Theology,’ *Resurrection* 93/3 (1990), 8-10.

³⁶P. Borgen, ‘Miracles of Healing in the New Testament,’ *Studia Theologica* 35, no. 2 (1981), 91-106. M. Harper, *The Healings of Jesus*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1986). K. Seybold and U. B. Müller, *Sickness and Healing*, ET, D. W. Stott from the 1978 German edition (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981). J. Wilkinson, *Health and Healing: Studies in New Testament Principles and Practice* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1980). D. T. Williams, ‘Salvation and Healing: Towards a Unified Theology,’ *Theologia Evangelica* 23 (June 1990), 15-26.

³⁷Against this background, even the traditional verse regarding salvation in Romans 1:16 as being ‘the power (*dunamis*) of God unto salvation’ assumes a more charismatic flavor. Of the 98 NT contexts of divine *dunamis*, 65 refer to what the Protestant tradition would designate as ‘extraordinary’ or ‘miraculous’ charismata. Thirty-three of the cases refer to the power of God without clear indication in the immediate context as to the exact way in which the God's power is working. The word, *dunamis* and its cognates, when used of God's power, retains its primary

and essential meanings, *i.e.*, super-human and charismatic, especially in contexts relating to spiritual gifts (*cf.* J. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 209-10).

³⁸See the summaries in James M. Lee, ed., *Handbook of Faith* (Birmingham, Ala: Religious Ed. Pr., 1990), esp. M. Hellwig, 'A History of the Concept of Faith,' 3-23; A. McKelway, 'The Systematic Theology of Faith: A Protestant Perspective,' 164-202.

³⁹J. Calvin, *Commentary on I Corinthians*, 262. 'Chrysostom makes a slightly different distinction, calling it the 'faith relating to miracles' (*signorum*), and not to Christian teaching (*dogmatorum*).' C. Hodge develops Calvin's 'saving/miraculous' faith distinction in his *Commentary on I Corinthians* (1857; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1959), 246-47: 'It cannot mean saving faith, which is common to all. It is generally supposed to mean the faith of miracles to which our Lord refers, Mt. 17:19,20, and also the apostle in the following chapter, 'Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains,' 13:2.' Hodge here assumes that 'the gift meant is a higher measure of the ordinary grace of faith.' Also, A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (New York: Robert Carter and Bros., 1861), 358-59.

⁴⁰*ABD* II, 753, 755. O. Michel, 'Faith,' *NIDNTT* II, 599-600. L. Morris, however, a classic non-charismatic conservative, maintains the traditional distinction even as late as 1993 in 'Faith,' *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 288.

⁴¹'In the Synoptic tradition [faith] is used almost exclusively in relation to miracles.' R. T. France, 'Faith,' *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 223. This association is by no means limited to the gospels. W. Bodine, 'Power Ministry in the Epistles: A Reply to the Evangelical Cessationist Position,' *The Kingdom and the Power*, 197-206. G. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 323-24, 608-10 and *passim* on the 'charismatic' function of faith in the epistles.

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