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Submission date: 27-Aug-2025 03:47PM (UTC+0800)

Submission ID: 2723680600

File name: 136-545-1-RV.docx (49.4K)

Word count: 4285

Character count: 22802

Pneumatology (The Role of the Holy Spirit) in the Synoptic Gospels: Its Relevance for the Church's Mission Today

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Abstract:

This research seeks to examine the function of the Holy Spirit in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and its implications for the contemporary mission of the church. In the Synoptic Gospels, the Holy Spirit is shown as a divine being present from the birth of Jesus, through His baptism and ministry, to the commissioning of the disciples. The Holy Spirit is perceived not just as heavenly power but also as a Helper and Teacher who supports the church in proclaiming the Gospel and fulfilling its prophetic mission among contemporary problems like pluralism and secularism. This study employs a qualitative methodology incorporating biblical and systematic theological analysis. This study asserts that an accurate comprehension of the Holy Spirit's role is vital for enhancing spirituality, guiding ministry, and ensuring the sustainability of the church's mission in the modern age. Consequently, the examination of pneumatology through the lens of the Synoptic Gospels offers a robust and relevant basis for contemporary church life and mission.

Keywords: Pneumatology, Holy Spirit, Synoptic Gospels, Church Mission

Abstract:

This study aims to explore the role of the Holy Spirit in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and its implications and relevance for the mission of the church today. In the Synoptic Gospels, the Holy Spirit appears as a divine person who is active from the birth of Jesus, His baptism, His ministry, to the sending of the disciples. The Holy Spirit is not only understood as a divine power, but also as a Helper and Teacher who accompanies the church in preaching the Gospel and carrying out prophetic vocations in the midst of modern challenges such as pluralism and secularism. The method used in this research is a qualitative approach with biblical and systematic theological analysis. This research confirms that a correct understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit is essential to strengthen the spirituality, direction of service, and sustainability of the church's mission in the contemporary era. Thus, the study of pneumatology in the perspective of the Synoptic Gospels provides a solid and applicable foundation for the life and ministry of the church today.

Keywords: Pneumatology, Holy Spirit, Synoptic Gospels, Church Mission

INTRODUCTION

A key component in comprehending the Christian faith is pneumatology, a field of theology that examines the nature and activities of the Holy Spirit. Since the major charismatic congregations emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, experiences with spiritual gifts have been a major source of contention, particularly outside the purview of traditional Pentecostalism.¹ Additionally, one of the main topics in Christian theological studies that has led to a variety of interpretations among theologians, congregations, and other Christian communities is **the gifts of the Holy Spirit**. According to Paul (1 Corinthians 12:4–11), these gifts are provided for the common good, originate from the same Spirit, and are meant to strengthen **the church**, which **is the body of Christ**. The Holy Spirit not only supports but also aids individuals who have accepted Christianity in His activity. Christians or people who trust in Christ might also find power in the Holy Spirit.²

A proper comprehension of the gifts and function of the Holy Spirit is essential in today's world, characterized by pluralism, secularism, and various societal challenges. The church is summoned to be prophetic and transformative within society, beyond just survival. The desire to distinguish, even stress, and prioritize some of the Spirit's gifts—especially the spectacular ones—makes this a unique challenge for the church today. The idea that God's gifts to humans, including the Holy Spirit, are finite is much more radical. **The nine gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10** serve as **the foundation** for this viewpoint. This perspective holds that believers can only acquire these **gifts of the Spirit** once they undergo **the baptism of the Spirit**, which is shown by the gift of speaking in tongues.³

Therefore, this study intends to explore how the four Gospels view the gifts of the Holy Spirit and their theological and practical implications for the mission of the church today. It will also provide a deeper understanding of this doctrine, which will be viewed from the perspective of the Synoptic Gospels, which can be found as a benchmark. The church's mission to use **the power of the Holy Spirit to be the light and salt of the world** can be further strengthened with a comprehensive and contextual understanding.

¹ Anggi Maringan Hasiholan and Daniel Sihotang, 'Luke's Pneumatology: The Work of the Holy Spirit and Its Implications for Believers in the Postmodern Era', *HUPERETES: Journal of Theology and Christian Education*, 3.1 (2022), pp. 81–91, doi:10.46817/huperetes.v3i1.87.

² Tri Tunggal and others, 'Theological Understanding of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:4–11: A Biblical Perspective and Its Application', no. 1 (2025), pp. 4–11.

³ Robert Calvin Wagey, 'A Theological Review of the Neo-Pentecostal View of Spectacular Gifts', 1.1 (2020), pp. 44–86.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilized a qualitative methodology, namely a descriptive research method, to process and evaluate data for the purpose of drawing inferences. Qualitative research is a method employed to explore and understand meanings derived from social or human contexts.⁴ Asking questions, according to protocols, gathering specific data from participants, inductively analyzing data from specific topics to broader themes, and interpreting the data's significance are all crucial steps in the qualitative research process.

Through a systematic theological examination and biblical analysis, the author will make inferences that have relevance for modern church ministry and mission. This method allows the author to fully comprehend the theological significance of the Holy Spirit's gift and apply it to modern church activity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

²⁵ Synoptic Gospels

The three New Testament Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—are referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because of the parallels, similarities, and contrasts in their language, substance, and narrative structure.⁵ Although the Synoptic Gospels were composed with varying target audiences and goals (kerygma), they all affirm that Jesus is God who took on human form in order to rescue humanity.⁶ Scholars who have studied the New Testament critically have come up with a theory called the "Two-Source Hypothesis," which explains why the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are similar. According to this idea, "Mark" is the oldest Gospel and was the main source that Matthew and Luke used to write their own Gospels. In addition to Mark, nevertheless, there are parallels between Matthew and Luke's teachings—particularly those of Jesus—and Mark's teachings.

⁴ Kosma Manurung, 'Examining the Use of Qualitative Methods in Theological Colleges', *FILADELFA: Journal of Theology and Christian Education*, 3.1 (2022), pp. 285–300, doi:10.55772/filadelfia.v3i1.48.

⁵ Yira Dianti, 'Synoptic Gospel Textbook', *Angewandte Chemie International Edition*, 6(11), 951–952., 2017, pp. 1–60 <http://repo.iain-tulungagung.ac.id/5510/5/BAB_2.pdf>.

⁶ M Mis, M Th Ni, and Nyoman Fransiska, 'Rehabilitation and Uniqueness of the Synoptic Gospels', *Jurnal Penggerak*, 6.1 (2021), pp. 133–70, doi:10.62042/jtp.v6i1.83.

The presence of "another written source that has now been lost," which became known as Q, short for Quelle (German for "source"), was suspected by scholars as a result. It is thought that the Q source includes a compilation of Jesus' teachings, including parables and the Sermon on the Mount, which were previously documented and used in tandem by Matthew and Luke. Some academics contend that in addition to Q, Matthew and Luke each possessed extra sources that were unique to their respective Gospels, specifically M for Matthew and L for Luke. This idea is still one of the most important possibilities for comprehending the connections between the Synoptic Gospels, despite the fact that it has not been established beyond a reasonable doubt.

Definition of the Holy Spirit

Literally meaning "comforter," the Greek name for the Holy Spirit is παρακλητος (parakletos). This word means "assistant," and it can also indicate "defender." It is compared to someone who assists others in court, such as an intermediary helper, intercessor, or personal witness.⁷ The Holy Spirit constitutes the third person of the Trinity, which comprises God the Father, God the Son (Christ), and the Holy Spirit, as per theological theology.⁸ In order to be completely convinced that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit were not created by any human being or church because all three are eternal and without beginning, believers cling to the teaching of the Holy Trinity, which holds that God is one with three persons and that these three persons are equal in essence.⁹ There is a fundamental interdependence between discussions regarding the roles of each Person in the Trinity. Consequently, the Holy Spirit likewise has a significant and distinct part in the narrative of salvation and behaves in a genuine manner.¹⁰ Despite maintaining their collective unity as God, each of the Triune God's Persons fulfills a significant role in accordance with their individual personalities.

Jesus gave the apostles the task of baptizing people in the New Testament, saying, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and

⁷ Yonatan Alex Arifianto, 'The Socio-Theological Meaning of Serving According to Romans 12:7', *Jurnal Ilmiah Religiosity Entity Humanity (JIREH)*, 2.2 (2020), pp. 184–97, doi:10.37364/jireh.v2i2.43.

⁸ Tirza Manaroinsong et al., "Analysis of the Role of the Holy Spirit in the Existence, Ministry, and Growth of the Church," *Asian Journal of Philosophy and Religion*, 1.1 (2022), pp. 15–28, doi:10.55927/ajpr.v1i1.432.

⁹ Rudy Budiarmaja et al., "Christian Belief in the Concept of the Trinity as the Truth of God's Word," *Journal of Theology and Christian Education*, 1.2 (2022), pp. 45–50, doi:10.56854/pak.v1i2.97.

¹⁰ Edy Syahputra Sihombing, 'The Role of the Holy Spirit as a Personal God in the Church', *Melintas*, 35.1 (2020), pp. 40–56, doi:10.26593/mel.v35i1.4033.40-56.

of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). This is a clear example of how the Trinity is understood in Scripture. However, the Old Testament Creation Story already makes the theology of the Trinity in relation to the family clear.

Together with the Word and the Holy Spirit, God the Father completed His creative work when He created the world, the heavens, and everything in them. This picture also depicts "Family." According to the Book of Genesis, "God created the world and the sky in the beginning. The deep waters were dark, the earth was empty and formless, and the Spirit of God hovered over the water's surface (Genesis 1:1-2).

²⁶ **The Role of the Holy Spirit**

The Spirit of God is described as "the companion of the Word and the revealer of His energy." The Spirit is an essential power that perpetually exists in His own distinct sustenance. It comes from the Father and resides in the Word, revealing the Word of God, in which the Spirit is the companion and gives the Word life. For this reason, the Spirit cannot be compared to the breath that comes from our mouths. The Holy Spirit becomes the companion of the Word and revelation because he is God and a divine Person.¹¹ According to the New Testament, the Spirit and truth are revealed, pointing to His teaching on truth and acting as agents of revelation.¹² Additionally, the world was convicted of sin, righteousness, and judgment by the arrival of the Holy Spirit. "With regard to sin, because they do not believe in Me," Jesus Himself clarified. About righteousness, since I'm heading to the Father. Regarding judgment, the world's ruler has already been judged (John 16:8-11).¹³

Jesus also dispatched the Holy Spirit to serve as an aide for Christians. In every circumstance, he endorses, elevates, and alleviates. (John 14:16-17) The Holy Spirit is the Helper, the Teacher, and the Guide into all truth regarding salvation in Jesus Christ, according to the Bible. The Holy Spirit actively leads Christians into all truth rather than just existing in their hearts in a silent manner. In order to correctly understand God's Word and live in accordance with His desire, he enlightens the intellect and heart (John 16:13). To put it another way, the Holy Spirit is the heavenly teacher who aids Christians in comprehending the

¹¹ Steven Tubagus and Oey Natanael Winanto, 'The Holy Spirit in the Bible: Reflections on the Role of the Holy Spirit in the World', *Journal of Religious and Socio-Cultural*, 3.1 (2022), pp. 1-17
<<https://jurnal.widyaagape.ac.id/index.php/jrsc/article/view/63>>.

¹² Yonas PAP, 'Journal of Practical Theology', *Practical Theology*, 2.1 (2021), pp. 56-66.

¹³ Daniel Sutoyo, 'The Role of the Holy Spirit in Preaching the Gospel', *Journal of Theology and Ministry*, Vol. 1 (2011), pp. 4-5.

teachings of Christ and separating fact from fiction in their spiritual lives. Furthermore, it is not a coincidence that the Holy Spirit uses and bestows talents on believers as the church in ministry; rather, it is a part of God's divine purpose to be the voice and extension of God's hands for the salvation of humanity.¹⁴

Additionally, the Holy Spirit helps us comprehend how and for what we should pray. Therefore, unless the Holy Spirit instructs us how to pray, we shouldn't open our mouths too quickly. Calvin stated that unless the spirit guides us in the proper pattern for prayer, "we cannot even open our mouths before God without danger."¹⁵ Therefore, praying correctly is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The role of the Holy Spirit according to the Synoptic Gospels

In the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew and Luke), the narrative of Jesus' birth functions as the prelude to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, where the birth of Jesus was facilitated by the Holy Spirit rather than via matrimony (γεννηθὲν ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου, Matt. 1:18-20). Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament (OT), which deals with the arrival of the Savior, the Messiah anointed by the Holy Spirit, as predicted in the books of Isaiah and Hosea and realized in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. This is indicated by the story of Jesus' birth through the work of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶

A living and potent shoot will emerge from the lineage of Jesse, flourishing from its roots and yielding fruit. The Spirit of the Lord shall abide upon him, imparting insight, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, and profound reverence for God. He will derive pleasure from reverence for the Lord and will not render judgments based on appearances, but will operate with genuine equity. The Spirit of the Lord God enables and commissions him to proclaim good news to the afflicted, to heal the brokenhearted, to herald release to the captives, and to declare the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance. He arrives to comfort the bereaved, to convert ashes into beauty, sorrow into joy, and a spirit of fragility into exaltation. Individuals who undergo transformation will be designated as the trees of righteousness and

¹⁴ Marciano Antaricksawan Waani and Ester Riyanti Supriadi, 'Theological Confirmation of the Role of the Holy Spirit in Church Ministry', *CHARISTHEO: Journal of Theology and Christian Religious Education*, 1.1 (2021), pp. 37–53, doi:10.54592/jct.v1i1.4.

¹⁵ Christian Sulistio, '3. Christian Sulistio The Role of the Holy Spirit in Prayer According to John Calvin', *Veritas*, 2.SAAT (2001), pp. 177–84.

¹⁶ Moses Wibowo, 'The Holy Spirit in New Testament Theology I: The Holy Spirit, God's Second Missionary Agent in the Synoptic Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles', *Phronesis: Journal of Theology and Mission*, 1.1 (2018), pp. 2621–84.

the plants of the Lord, manifesting His glory. In its infancy, Israel was cherished by the Lord, who summoned His son from Egypt.¹⁷

Jacob fathered Joseph, who subsequently wed Mary and fathered Jesus, referred to as the Christ (Matthew 1:16). Following His baptism, Jesus immediately rose ¹⁶from the water, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended upon Him ²¹in the guise of a dove. A celestial voice said, "This is My cherished Son, in whom I find great satisfaction" (Matthew 3:16-17).¹⁸ The Spirit of the Lord descended upon Jesus, for He was anointed ¹⁵to announce the gospel to the impoverished, declare freedom to the imprisoned, restore sight to the visually impaired, liberate the downtrodden, and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18-19).¹⁹ Consequently, ⁵the Holy Spirit, as the second agent of God's mission, facilitates the manifestation of Jesus as the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament. This illustrates God's mission to effect regeneration or transformation through the Holy Spirit, the second agent involved in the arrival of the second Adam, Jesus.

⁷In the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the Holy Spirit significantly influences the entirety of Jesus' life and ministry, as well as the preparation of God's people. The Holy Spirit in the Synoptic Gospels is depicted as a guide in proclaiming the Gospel and bestowing strength (Matthew 10:19-20). The Holy Spirit will empower Gospel preachers to articulate wisely in the face of persecution or adversity. ³In the absence of the Holy Spirit's power, no individual can effectively proclaim the Gospel. ⁹In the absence of the Holy Spirit's illumination, individuals would remain oblivious to their sinful condition and their necessity for Christ. ⁹In the absence of the Holy Spirit's influence, no individual can proclaim Jesus as Lord and Savior.²⁰

In Matthew 1:18, 20, Jesus was conceived by Mary through the Holy Spirit, signifying that the process of salvation began with the direct engagement of the Holy Spirit. This underscores the divine origin and sanctity of Jesus from the outset.

The Holy Spirit is considered a divine being of God and plays a significant part in birth, ministry, revelation, evangelism, and sanctification. He is not solely a force or emblem, but an

¹⁷ Synoptic Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, 'The Role of the Holy Spirit as God's Missionary Agent in the Gospels', 5.2 (2024), pp. 70–80.

¹⁸ Online Bible

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Paulus Kunto Baskoro and Suhadi Suhadi, 'An Effective Approach to Gospel Proclamation According to the Gospel of Matthew and Its Application for Believers Today', *Journal of Living Gospel Theology*, 4.2 (2022), pp. 433–49, doi:10.38189/jtbh.v4i2.191.

individual who communicates, directs, empowers, and is deserving of veneration alongside ³the Father and the Son. This confirms that the Holy Spirit accompanies and empowers the Messiah. This illustrates ⁵the function of the Holy Spirit in affirming and fortifying Jesus' salvific mission.

In Mark 13:11, the Holy Spirit imparts wisdom and inspiration for the comprehension of the Word, while also providing the fortitude to proclaim it and announce God's power. The Holy Spirit assists believers in comprehending God's purpose and goal within His Word. The Holy Spirit assists believers in implementing the Word that has been comprehended and accepted. By means of the Holy Spirit, endowed with the authority to declare the veracity of His Word, and upon the universal reception ⁵of His Word, the Holy Spirit operates within the hearts of individuals to rouse them. That is the strength that God reveals through the Holy Spirit.²¹

In ²Luke 4:18, the expression "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me" is rendered in the Greek text as *pneuma kurios ep' eme*. Upon examination, the prefix "ep'" from the term "epi" (when succeeded by the accusative case) signifies "upon..." or "in" (.). In the KJV, it is rendered as "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me."²² The proclamation that the Spirit of the Lord rests upon Jesus did not emerge spontaneously. This statement refers to the events following ¹¹Jesus' baptism: "And the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove upon Him." A voice resounded from heaven: 'You are My beloved Son; in You I derive immense pleasure.' Luke 3:22. The function of the Holy Spirit in this context parallels that which transpired with Mary; specifically, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and enveloped Him. This also demonstrates that Jesus was subject to the authority of God.

The Holy Spirit's position is unequivocal: it assists in Jesus' mission, guiding Him explicitly, so accompanying Him in every gospel proclamation and playing a significant role therein

⁴The Role of the Holy Spirit for the Church Today

The Holy Spirit underpins the Church's existence, ministry, and development over generations. In the absence of His function, the Church would undoubtedly encounter

²¹ Iwan Setiawan and others, 'The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Perspective of Paul's Writings', *Skenoo: Journal of Theology and Christian Education*, 4.1 (2024), pp. 37–50, doi:10.55649/skenoo.v4i1.92.

²² Krueger Kristanto Tumiwa, 'Understanding the Role of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of Luke Through the Lens of Pierre Felix Bourdieu's Thought', *Tumou Tou*, VI (2019), pp. 90–102, doi:10.51667/tt.v6i2.146.

challenges and struggle to endure, as the preservation of the Church's life cannot be accomplished through the finite capabilities of humanity. The presence and activity of the Holy Spirit are central to the life and ministry of the church, as seen in the life of Jesus Christ, who was begotten by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18), anointed during His baptism (Matthew 3:16-17), and guided throughout His ministry (Luke 4:1-21).

The Holy Spirit is essential for the church as the Body of Christ, as the church is initiated, sustained, functions, and develops through His influence. Consequently, it is imperative that the church engages with and depends on the Holy Spirit as its authentic Leader and Helper for its existence and progress in any ministry. The church currently has significant obstacles in a pluralistic, secular society replete with diverse beliefs that dismiss divine authority. In this context, the significance of the Holy Spirit is amplified, as He can be regarded as the forerunner of the Christian movement, representing the community of individuals who have faith in Christ and strive to realize their divine purpose. Prior to congregating and engaging in fellowship as the church or the Body of Christ, trust in Christ is essential.²³

The Synoptic Gospels' perspective on the Holy Spirit's role in the church's development is essential for comprehending the Christian church. The Bible asserts that the Holy Spirit is one of the persons of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and plays a vital role in directing, empowering, and propelling the church towards robust and significant spiritual development (Lewis 2012, 87).²⁴ There are several reasons why the role of the Holy Spirit is still very much needed by the Church's Mission Today because;

1. The Holy Spirit Grants Power and Courage in Mission

Similar to how the disciples were empowered to bear witness throughout persecution (Matt. 10:19-20; Mark 13:11), the church is likewise fortified by the Holy Spirit to declare the Gospel with authority and divine insight. The Church is not summoned to operate through human might, but through the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8). This is crucial to ensure that the proclamation of the Gospel transcends mere words and embodies transformative power.

²³ Tirza Manarinsong and others, 'Analysis of the Role of the Holy Spirit in the Existence, Ministry, and Growth of the Church', *Asian Journal of Philosophy and Religion*, 1.1 (2022), pp. 15–28, doi:10.55927/ajpr.v1i1.432.

²⁴ Sinar et al., "The Biblical Perspective on the Role of the Holy Spirit in the Ministry and Growth of the Contemporary Christian Church," *HUMANITIS: Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Business*, 1.2 (2023), pp. 185–98.

2. ⁸ **The Holy Spirit Builds, Sanctifies, and Guides the Church**

In the Synoptic Gospels, the Holy Spirit is depicted not only in extraordinary instances but also as a Person who provides guidance and assistance (Luke 4:1; John 16:13). Similarly, the church today requires the direction of the Holy Spirit in decision-making, cultivating a sanctified church life, and shaping the character of Christ within believers. The Holy Spirit illuminates hearts and minds, enabling the accurate comprehension and practical application of the Word of God.

3. ² **The Holy Spirit Gives Gifts for Ministry**

The Holy Spirit bestows diverse gifts (1 Cor. 12:4-11) to edify the church of Christ. In contemporary society, the church should avoid becoming ensnared in the veneration of extraordinary gifts, instead prioritizing the intended purpose of each gift: for ministry, the cohesion of the body of Christ, and the testimony of the Gospel. This significance aids the church in preventing the misuse of talents and in establishing a robust and efficient ecclesiology.

Consequently, the function of the Holy Spirit within the contemporary church extends beyond individual spirituality to encompass all facets of ecclesiastical life: theology, mission, ministry, witness, and the cultivation of a vibrant community. The phenomenon of the Holy Spirit's action, which conveys God's power, is not exclusively for Christians during the apostolic era. It is thus the prerogative of contemporary believers/the church.²⁵

CONCLUSION

A study of the Synoptic Gospels reveals ⁶ that the Holy Spirit is integral to God's salvific action, encompassing the birth of Jesus, His ministry, and the disciples' proclamation of the Gospel. The Holy Spirit operates not only as divine force but also as an active divine Person who guides, empowers, instructs, convicts, and accompanies Christians in the complexities of their lives and ministry. In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the Holy Spirit is shown as the entity who empowers Jesus in His salvific mission, leads Gospel preachers throughout persecution, and serves as an aid in comprehending and embodying ⁸ the truth of God's Word.

The theological and practical ramifications ² of the Holy Spirit's role in the church's mission today are substantial. Amidst a world beset by assaults to religion, secularism, and moral relativism, the church is compelled to rely wholly on the power of the Holy Spirit to

²⁵ C. Peter Wagner, 'Church Growth and the Role of the Holy Spirit', 1996, p. 133.

serve as light and salt in society. The Holy Spirit is both the bestower of gifts and the origin of strength, wisdom, and bravery in fulfilling Christ's mission. A comprehensive and contextual grasp of pneumatology is essential not just doctrinally but also significantly pertinent for fortifying the identity and viability of the church's ministry in a dynamic global environment.

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