

## **Are We Pneumatomachians?**

Written by K B Napier

Thursday, 12 February 2015 09:28

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A bishop of Constantinople, Macedonius, taught that the Holy Spirit was subordinate to the Son of God. He did not believe the Spirit was co-equal with the Father. Thus, Macedonius and his followers were deemed to be haters of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatomachians: machomai = to speak evil against, pneuma = spirit) – or, Pneumatomachi. They were condemned in 374 AD, by one of the early popes, Damasus, and the Council of Constantinople in 381.

I, and many who call themselves 'Reformed' (with whom I have a connection), are generally charged with this same heresy. I have come under particular attack because of my stand against charismaticism. So, are we (myself, my ministry, and those Reformed Christians who also oppose charismatic error) really Pneumatomachians? It is worth answering, because to hate the Holy Spirit by speaking against Him, would be a gross heresy, demanding ultimate church disciplinary measures. It is also the sin that will not be forgiven.

### **What We Accept and Do Not Accept**

The claim of critics, that we hate the Holy Spirit and reject His works, is absurd. These people have not read our literature, and they do not listen properly to others who are of like mind with us. Because they are so keen to oppose us in the matter, and yet they cannot be bothered to read what we say in our other articles, let this short paper explain our position concerning the Holy Spirit and what He does.

### **The Holy Spirit**

We believe the Holy Spirit is co-equal with the Father and the Son and was not created, but is eternal, as are the Father and the Son. He was sent by the Son, Jesus Christ, to be with Believers, when Christ ascended to the heavens to be with the Father. Yet, the Holy Spirit has always been, and was active in the world before that time. We are in agreement with the major Reformed statements.

We believe the Holy Spirit is a person, and thus refer to 'Him' and not 'it' as charismatics do. In referring to Him as 'it' they reveal their true belief, that the Holy Spirit is an occult force and not a personality. This idea of a 'force' is found time and again in charismatic statements even if, at times, they do use personal references such as 'He'.

### **His Work**

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We believe in all the definitions of the Holy Spirit found in scripture and in all the works ascribed to Him in scripture. We believe He is active today in the world, as He MUST be. He is the person Who makes the spirit of an unbeliever alive. He then prompts the unbeliever to seek God and to be receptive to His Gospel in Jesus Christ. He is active in bringing the elect person to repentance and salvation. He is within every Believer from the moment they are saved in their lifetime. He prompts every Believer to do and be what is good and holy and acts upon the conscience and spirit during their lifetime. It is He Who enlightens the Believer with insight and it is He Who personalises God's word to each and every Believer, as and when determined by God, and in the exact measure foreordained by God in eternity.

The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to every Believer. These gifts begin with the creation of their new spirits to life, and continues with the gift of repentance and then salvation, followed by love (charity). Thus, the Holy Spirit gives gifts (all connected to, and expressive of, eternal life) even before He gives gifts usually associated with Him, such as healing, and so on. The gifts associated with eternal life are essential, as they are the foundation on which all other gifts are built.

We believe all the gifts described in scripture are present today and in every age, but that men unwisely ignore or reject them, or prefer false gifts to the true gifts. We do not accept the Reformed idea that the gifts ceased, because if they had ceased, then salvation would not be possible, as salvation itself is spoken of by God as being a spiritual gift. So is love, which is the greatest of earthly gifts. We also reject the amended Reformed position that says only some of the gifts are present today, because those who hold to that view cannot say who chooses which gifts are extant, and why others are rejected.

Whilst we accept the continuing presence of the spiritual gifts, we only accept them as they are described in scripture. We reject fully all claims made by charismatics that their 'gifts' are from God, and we reject their claims that the Holy Spirit ('it') leads them. We reject their claims because what they say and do is external to scripture and generally opposes God's word. The effects of those things they claim to be from God are not scriptural, and are not therefore the fruit or gifts given by the Holy Spirit. Thus, we believe the spiritual gifts claimed by charismatics and other apostates are all of Satan, not of God, and that this is evidenced in many ways, all described in other writings produced by us.

We believe that observable gifts of the Holy Spirit are rare today either because (a) Christians do not believe in gifts today, or they do not accept they have such gifts and so do not recognise or use them, or (b) God chooses not to display them at this time, for reasons known only to Him. However, we believe that when God prompts a godly person to enact a gift, then that person will

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feel the overwhelming burden to do so, and cannot resist its action. But, if a Christian habitually rejects or denies the existence of gifts, he does so through bad teaching or because of personal sin, and so will not enact a gift when it is pressed upon him. This is to his detriment and shame, and becomes a stumblingblock in his life.

Concerning tongues, we do not believe it is a primary sign or proof of salvation, or that it is widely available, for reasons of modern communications. We do not accept the definition of tongues given by charismatics, believing their definition to be erroneous, heretical, misleading, and dangerous, taking the unwary into the occult and into further doctrinal impurity. Similarly, we reject each and every definition given by charismatics, even where such definitions may be very close to our own (these being from scripture). The reason is that charismaticism is a heresy and is not scriptural, and so its teachings are rejected as a matter of course, preferring total rejection to partial acceptance of sinful beliefs, because such acceptance of even a part can lead-on to acceptance of further teachings of a dubious or heretical nature.

### Final Word

I hope this clears up the criticism that we reject the Holy Spirit! As always, we tell readers that if something we teach is not scriptural and this is proved from scripture, then we will immediately, unreservedly, and publicly, change what we have said. But, we will not accept the heresies and criticisms of those who are Arminian or who are in any other way erroneous in their beliefs.

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