

ABSTRACT

Reassessing the Claim of Speaking In Tongues as the Initial Evidence
of The Baptism of The Holy Spirit: A Critical Study of Article Nine of the
Declaration of Faith of the Church of God Tennessee

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This thesis examines the claim of the ninth article of the *Declaration of Faith* of the Church of God Tennessee to which the New Testament Church of God in Jamaica is associated.

It deems the onset of tongue speaking as the first sign that a believer is baptised in the Spirit and that the portent is an indication of spiritual empowerment that qualifies the believer to serve in the church—also known as “power for service”. Further, it is the belief that this constitutes a filling of the believer with the Holy Spirit and is a second work of grace, validated in the scriptures primarily in Acts, notably in chapters 2; 8; 10; and 19. The belief is not just specific to the denomination but is the seminal doctrine and particular distinctive of Pentecostalism.

The study focuses on the issue of the “initial evidence” as the primary theological problem, how it relates to an understanding of “baptism in the Spirit”, the metaphorical expression introduced by John the Baptist and Jesus to describe the new *modus operandi* by which persons are brought to faith and are initiated into the community of God.

The study explored the historical and theological foundation of the doctrine and challenged its warrant that baptism in the Holy Spirit is validated by tongue speaking. It postulates and attempts to prove that the claim of article nine is not valid theologically, and is the outcome of a flawed hermeneutical methodology.

Keywords: Robert Edwards; Baptism in the Spirit; initial evidence