David Pawson has now published three books bearing on pneumatology. As they are written at a semi-popular level, they have not received much scholarly attention. It would be a mistake, however, to think they have not been influential. As his position is a distinctive and widely read one, it deserves theological scrutiny and response. And as the latest work focuses most sharply his agreement and disagreement with others’ positions, it is to this that I will give most attention.

At the outset, Pawson explains the rationale for his work. He fears that after a century of prominence given to the issue in Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, “baptism in the Holy Spirit” is again falling...
out of the picture'.\textsuperscript{2} Moreover, he feels very strongly that it must not be allowed to do so. But Pawson is no traditional Pentecostal; nor is his position typical of the Charismatic Renewal movement—he is a keen critic of traditional Evangelicals, of Pentecostals and of Charismatics alike. If anything, he is closest to so-called ‘oneness Pentecostalism’, though he has little if any formal contact with that movement (and would disagree with their modalist doctrine of God).

David writes with great clarity and his position raises questions of fundamental significance for the ongoing debate about the essential character of reception of the Spirit. The essence of his position can be stated in six affirmations: (1) ‘baptism in Holy Spirit’ was a motif of central importance to the New Testament church; (2) it is co-referential with all expressions for Spirit-reception (‘fall upon’, ‘give/receive’, etc.); (3) the New Testament knows of only one reception of the Spirit by believers, not two; (4) the Spirit was normally given at ‘conversion-initiation’ in response to repentance, faith and water-baptism; (5) the moment of Spirit reception was always both experiential and evidential (usually in tongues); (6) the one gift of the Spirit is necessary both for the ‘experience’ of salvation and for charismatic gifts/empowerings of diverse kinds. And Pawson does not shrink from the inevitable conclusion (7): ‘If the reception/baptism/filling of the Spirit is both an integral element in Christian initiation and a discernible experience, then many professing Christians, in some churches most, have not “received” the Spirit.’\textsuperscript{3}

I shall elucidate each of these affirmations a little more fully before offering a focused response to them. But I would like to clarify at the outset that I make this response not as a rationalistic academic, but as someone fully involved in the Charismatic community, and one with an ongoing experience of tongues and other ‘gifts of the Spirit’.

1. Pawson’s Affirmations

a. ‘Baptism in Holy Spirit’ Was a Motif of Central Importance to the New Testament Church

For Pawson, John the Baptist gave this promise a theological prominence (Mk 1.8 and pars.) that Jesus clearly reaffirmed (Acts 1.5; cf. 11.16), as did Paul (1 Cor. 12.13a), even if the post-apostolic church is

\textsuperscript{2} Jesus, p. xix.

\textsuperscript{3} Fourth Wave, p. 96 (his italics); cf. Birth, esp. chapter 35; Jesus, passim.