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DOCTORAL THESIS ABSTRACT

**A Systematic Analysis of the Concept of Walking in
the Spirit in the Context of the Biography and
Pneumatology of Gordon Fee**

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INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the Topic

The topic of this dissertation is “Walking in the Spirit” in the thought of Gordon Fee, understood as a Trinitarian, biblical, and applicable concept, with ethical, pneumatological, and ecclesiological implications. In a context marked by theological fragmentation, spiritual relativism, and the divide between doctrine and practice, this theme offers a vision deeply rooted in Scripture and adaptable to the real needs of the Church. Although the concept of “walking in the Spirit” is frequently used in Pentecostal discourse, it is often vaguely defined or overly spiritualized.¹ This work aims to demonstrate that such walking is a profoundly biblical reality, applicable to the believer’s life, especially as revealed in the Pauline epistles, and it provides a framework for mature spiritual formation. This perspective justifies an in-depth exploration of the subject from both biblical and practical standpoints. To grasp the importance of this approach, it is necessary to examine the current context of the Church.

In recent decades, the field of Christian theology has increasingly been challenged to reconsider the relationship between professed faith and lived experience—between the proclamation of doctrinal truths and their application in personal, communal, and social life. In a context marked by moral relativism, spiritual individualism, and a crisis of ecclesial authority, the theme of walking in the Spirit takes on special significance.² It is not merely a poetic expression, or a spiritual formula frequently encountered in Pentecostal language, but a profound call to a Christian life characterized by holiness, discernment, and active obedience to the will of God.³

Walking in the Spirit involves more than simply affirming doctrinal belonging or participating in charismatic experiences. It invites a profound transformation and a living, continuous relationship with the Holy Spirit—a relationship that is manifested through the fruit of the Spirit, visible ethics, and active engagement in both community and society.⁴ At a time

¹ Răzvan Mihăilă, *Spiritualitatea biblică și viața de sfințenie în contextul contemporan* Oradea: Editura Betania, 2020, pp. 41-44.

² Doru Costache, *Viața în Hristos. Elemente de spiritualitate ortodoxă*, Iași: Editura Doxologia, 2017, pp. 65-69.

³ Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996, pp. 5–6.

⁴ Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011, p. 23. And Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997, p. 205.

when spiritual life is often perceived in terms of individual experience or religious spectacle, returning to a biblical vision of walking in the Spirit becomes essential for the Church's credibility and authenticity.⁵

Pentecostal traditions in particular, which emphasize the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, are at a pivotal moment. On one hand, they offer a vibrant context for experiencing the divine presence; on the other hand, they sometimes risk neglecting the formative dimension of spirituality—namely, the maturity that involves character development, spiritual discipline, and the balance between gifts and fruit.⁶ Within this tension arises the need for a coherent and profound theology of walking in the Spirit—one that provides an integrative response both doctrinally and existentially.⁷

The concept of “walking in the Spirit” has its roots in deep scriptural expressions, especially in the Pauline epistles, where it is associated with ethical transformation and spiritual maturation of the believer.⁸ The Apostle Paul writes in Galatians 5:16: “So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh,” and in verse 25 adds: “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” These verses express a profound reality. Christian existence is marked by constant guidance and continual orientation toward God, mediated by the active work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's inner life.⁹

Walking in the Spirit is not an isolated event but a dynamic process involving continuous movement between conversion, sanctification, and service.¹⁰ It represents an existential dimension in which the believer not only receives the Holy Spirit but cooperates with Him in a journey of ethical transformation and conformity to the image of Christ (Romans 8:4, 14;

⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994, pp. 388-395.

⁶ Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, Nutley, N.J: The Craig Press, 1977, pp. 160-161.

⁷ Gordon D. Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000, pp. 14–16.

⁸ Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, p. 34.

⁹ Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, pp. 89-90. Brook, B. *Christian Ethics in a Technological Age*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010, pp. 1-30.

¹⁰ Emil Bartoș, *Teologie și spiritualitate. O abordare din perspectiva evanghelică*, Oradea: Cartea Creștină, 2003, p. 152.

Ephesians 5:2; Colossians 2:6).¹¹ Thus, spiritual life is not autonomous but dependent on and shaped by this living and personal presence.¹²

Throughout Church history, the interpretation of walking in the Spirit has oscillated between mystical, moral, and doctrinal emphases. The Church Fathers spoke of life in the Spirit as participation in the divine life, often described as an unceasing spiritual ascent and progressive nearness to God.¹³ The monastic tradition—especially in the writings of John Cassian—understood walking in the Spirit as a continuous spiritual discipline, involving inner vigilance, fasting, obedience, and discernment.¹⁴ In Western mysticism, walking in the Spirit is portrayed as an inner communion born from the reciprocal love between God and the soul, as exemplified in the writings of John of the Cross.¹⁵

During the Reformation, the focus shifted toward justification and regeneration, while contemporary evangelical and Pentecostal traditions have linked walking in the Spirit with the baptism in the Holy Spirit and charismatic manifestations. However, few theological traditions have succeeded in coherently integrating all the biblical dimensions of this reality: soteriological, ethical, ecclesiological, and eschatological.¹⁶ The fragmentation of these dimensions has led either to the over-spiritualization of the concept or to its reduction to mere moral discipline. In this fragmented theological landscape, Gordon Fee's contribution becomes particularly relevant, as he proposes a biblical, vibrant, and balanced rediscovery of walking in the Spirit—as an expression of a life lived in active communion with God, within the Church, and for the world.¹⁷ This theological relevance is not confined to the realm of abstract ideas but becomes all the more evident when analyzed in the current context of the Church.

Justification

In contemporary society, the Church faces a series of complex challenges, both external and internal. While secularization and ethical relativism question traditional Christian values,

¹¹ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, pp. 475–480.

¹² Gordon D. Fee, *Galatians*, Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2007, p. 88.

¹³ Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson, New York: Paulist Press, 1978, pp. 115–116.

¹⁴ Ioan Casian, *Convorbiri duhovnicești*, vol. 1, trad. Pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă, 1992, pp. 156–159.

¹⁵ Ioan al Crucii, *Cântarea spirituală*, trad. Pr. Vasile Sav, ed. a 2-a, București: Herald, 2012, pp. 39–42.

¹⁶ Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, pp. 17–19.

¹⁷ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, p. 27.

within believing communities there is often an imbalance between the charismatic dimension and spiritual maturity.¹⁸ Amidst a sincere desire to experience God's presence, many expressions of modern spirituality remain anchored in an emotionally driven or performance-oriented approach, to the detriment of a life marked by consistent discipleship, ethical transformation, and responsible service.¹⁹

Particularly within the Pentecostal context, there is at times a noticeable separation between the experience of the Holy Spirit and the formation of a character shaped by the fruit of the Spirit. Spiritual gifts—essential for the edification of the Church—are often absolutized, while spiritual discipline, discernment, self-control, and moral responsibility are treated as secondary concerns.²⁰ This polarization has led, in some communities, to a culture of "gifts without fruit," in which visible manifestations are favored over deep, transformative living.²¹

The pressing need of today's Church is for an applied pneumatology—a theology of the Spirit that is not confined to abstract doctrine or isolated charismatic experiences but extends to the entirety of the believer's life.²² Such a pneumatology should offer a coherent framework for holiness, community relationships, social engagement, vocational discernment, and Christian witness in the world.²³ This vision integrates the personal, communal, and eschatological dimensions of walking in the Spirit—not merely as an ideal, but as a concrete, livable, and relevant model.²⁴

In this tense context, where the Church risks being caught between ethical formalism and charismatic enthusiasm, it is essential to reconfigure the theological discourse.²⁵ Walking in the Spirit must be revalued not as symbolic language or spiritual slogan, but as a central paradigm of Christian life. Only then can the Church's witness regain credibility and

¹⁸ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 6th ed., Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017, pp. 98–100.

¹⁹ Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*, pp. 14–15.

²⁰ Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, pp. 100–103.

²¹ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, pp. 893–895.

²² Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005, pp. 80–83.

²³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000, p. 8.

²⁴ Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, pp. 117–119.

²⁵ Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*, p. 22.

transformative power in society. It is precisely this urgent need for integration between doctrine and lived experience that calls for a rediscovery and reinterpretation of the concept of walking in the Spirit—something Gordon Fee proposes with remarkable biblical clarity, theological depth, and pastoral relevance.²⁶

Faced with these theological and pastoral challenges, the need becomes evident for voices that can offer a profoundly biblical, balanced, and contextualized vision of the work of the Holy Spirit.²⁷ Contemporary theology requires reference points that reject the separation between doctrine and practice, between the power of the Spirit and His fruit, between experience and ethics. One of the most influential and respected voices in this regard is Gordon Fee—a Pentecostal theologian with a major impact on New Testament scholarship and applied pneumatology.²⁸ His contributions have provided a solid foundation for mature theological reflection on what it truly means to “walk in the Spirit” and how this reality can transform both the individual and the community.²⁹

We will now explore the biographical and intellectual landmarks that define Gordon Fee’s theology, analyzing his major theological works and his impact on the global and regional Pentecostal Church and theological thought. This step is essential in understanding the theological foundations on which the thematic analysis of “walking in the Spirit” in this dissertation will be built.

Gordon Donald Fee (1934–2022) is regarded as one of the most influential Pentecostal theologians of the 20th and early 21st centuries. Renowned for his exegetical rigor, passion for Scripture, and deep commitment to the life of the Church, Fee succeeded in shaping a unique theological vision.³⁰ He presents the Holy Spirit not merely as a doctrinal concept but as a living, experienced, and transformative reality.³¹ Born into a Pentecostal family in Ashland, Oregon,

²⁶ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, p. 891

²⁷ Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*, p. 25.

²⁸ Frank D. Macchia, “The Theological Contribution of Gordon Fee,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15, no. 2 (2007): 143–147.

²⁹ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, pp. 885–886.

³⁰ De Rick Wadholm Jr, *A Reflection on the Influence of Gordon Fee*, The Pneuma Review Journal of Ministry Resources and Theology for Pentecostal and Charismatic Ministries & Leaders, December 16, 2022.

³¹ Macchia, “The Theological Contribution of Gordon Fee,” 145.

Fee was raised within the Assemblies of God tradition—a movement deeply shaped by direct spiritual experience and a strong confidence in the work of the Spirit.³²

His theological education began at Seattle Pacific University and culminated in a PhD from the University of Southern California, where he produced a landmark dissertation in New Testament textual criticism. Fee distinguished himself not only as an exegete but also as a mentor to generations of students, teaching at prestigious institutions such as Wheaton College, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and Regent College.³³ This dual identity—as academic scholar and active church servant—allowed him to craft a theology that was both profound and accessible, able to reach academic circles and pastoral realities alike.³⁴

As an author, Fee was prolific. His most significant works include: *God's Empowering Presence*—a monumental synthesis on the Holy Spirit in the Pauline epistles; *Paul, the Spirit and the People of God*; *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*; *Gospel and Spirit*; along with acclaimed commentaries on 1 Corinthians, Philippians, and 1 & 2 Thessalonians.³⁵ Fee demonstrated a remarkable ability to integrate careful exegetical reading with the practical implications of Christian living. For him, the study of Scripture was not merely a philological exercise, but an act of spiritual listening—an openness to what the Spirit wishes to communicate to the Church today.³⁶

Although Pentecostal by formation, Fee was not confined by denominational boundaries. He transcended the traditional limits of his movement and influenced scholars across a wide range of denominations. By emphasizing the role of the Spirit in every aspect of Christian life—from justification and sanctification, to spiritual gifts, ethical maturation, and

³² Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, pp. xi–xii.

³³ Michael J. Feazell, *How Should We Read the Bible? Interviews with Gordon Fee*, Grace Communion International, 2016, accessed April 1, 2025, <https://www.gci.org/articles/how-should-we-read-the-bible-gordon-fee/>

³⁴ Michael J. Feazell, *How Should We Read the Bible? Interviews with Gordon Fee*, Grace Communion International, 2016, p. 144.

³⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994. Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996. Gordon D. Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000. Gordon D. Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991.

³⁶ Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*, p. 11.

community life—Fee reconfigured evangelical pneumatology, offering a balanced alternative to both spiritualistic excesses and rigid formalism.³⁷

In this context, Gordon Fee develops a profound comparison between the Church, the temple, and the believer. He asserts that the Church is the temple of God—the temple of the eschatological age that has now arrived. The Apostle Paul consistently uses the term “Christian” or “Church” to describe the temple of God, the true sanctuary of the divine presence. Fee emphasizes that the Church or believers, as the Body of Christ, have become the dwelling place of God—an extension of Christ Himself as the new eschatological temple.³⁸ Since Christ is the central point in Pauline theology, union with Christ is a critical element of the Christian life. This new relationship between the believer and God, mediated through Christ, is a transformative experience. The presence of the Holy Spirit becomes the crucial aspect of this relationship and of the conversion of God’s people.³⁹

This work draws directly from that theological and spiritual legacy. In the following chapters, we will closely examine how Gordon Fee understands walking in the Spirit⁴⁰—what biblical foundations he identifies, what ethical and ecclesiological nuances he proposes, and how his thought can contribute to the maturation of Pentecostal theology, particularly in the Romanian context.

Gordon Fee’s theological impact far exceeds the denominational boundaries of the Pentecostal movement. Through exegetical clarity, doctrinal balance, and a deep passion for authentic Christian living, Fee has become a reference point not only for New Testament scholars but also for pastors, theological educators, and spiritual leaders across various traditions.⁴¹ One of his most notable achievements is how he reconfigured the Pauline view of the Holy Spirit, rescuing it from a strictly doctrinal category and restoring it to the center of Christian life—as an active force for regeneration, discernment, and sanctification.⁴²

Fee demonstrated that, for Paul, the Holy Spirit is not a marginal or optional subject, but a vital reality present from the beginning to the end of the Christian life. In his major work *God’s*

³⁷ Macchia, “The Theological Contribution of Gordon Fee,” 147.

³⁸ Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, pp. 36-89. And C. Marvin Pate, *The End of the Age has Come: The Theology of Paul*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1995, p. 150.

³⁹ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, p.854.

⁴⁰ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, p. 801.

⁴¹ Fee, *Galatians*, pp. 200-246

⁴² Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, 2nd ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012, pp. vii–viii.

Empowering Presence, he synthesized over 900 pages of exegetical analysis around one essential argument: that the Spirit is not a secondary theological category, but the framework in which the entirety of Christian existence unfolds. This vision has led to a reevaluation of pneumatology within evangelical circles, challenging both academic theology and ecclesial practice.⁴³

Academically, Fee is considered one of the most competent New Testament textual critics. He contributed to major editions of the Bible, such as the *New International Version (NIV)*, and authored commentaries used in both theological universities and conservative or charismatic seminaries.⁴⁴ His hermeneutical approach was shaped by a profound spiritual authenticity: for Fee, interpreting the text could not be separated from the work of the Spirit who inspired it.⁴⁵ This conviction earned him respect both in secular academic settings and in confessional theological circles.

At the same time, his influence on the Church is particularly evident in the way he corrected the imbalances found in some charismatic streams. In a time when the focus on spiritual gifts threatened to overshadow moral maturity and ecclesial responsibility, Fee reaffirmed the necessity for gifts to always be accompanied by the fruit of the Spirit.⁴⁶ For him, an authentic theology of the Spirit cannot ignore character formation, vocational discernment, and responsible service within the community.⁴⁷ In this sense, he played a prophetic role in redirecting the Pentecostal movement toward a balance between experience and ethics.

Many churches, influenced either directly or indirectly by Gordon Fee, have begun to reevaluate the Pauline epistles not merely as sources of pneumatological doctrines, but as practical guides for communal life. Paul's exhortations to walk by the Spirit, to be led by the Spirit, to sow to the Spirit, and to bear the fruit of the Spirit have been reinterpreted through the lens of a mature spirituality deeply rooted in the believer's real-life experience.⁴⁸

⁴³ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, pp. 6-8.

⁴⁴ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, pp. 6-8.

⁴⁵ Gordon D. Fee, "On the Inerrancy Debate: An Exegetical Perspective," in *Inerrancy and Common Sense*, eds. Roger R. Nicole and J. Ramsey Michaels, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980, 153–173. Vezi și Fee ca membru al comitetului NIV Translation Center.

⁴⁶ Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*, pp. 8-11.

⁴⁷ Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, pp. 109-112.

⁴⁸ Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, pp. 101-104.

In the Romanian context, where Pentecostal theological literature is still in the process of consolidation, Fee's work offers a valuable opportunity for depth and balance. This dissertation aims precisely at that purpose: to bring into the Romanian theological space one of the most coherent and theologically robust pneumatological frameworks in contemporary theology. Through a detailed analysis of Gordon Fee's contribution, this research seeks to provide the Romanian Church with a biblically and theologically grounded framework for rediscovering walking in the Spirit as a genuine Christian lifestyle.⁴⁹

Although Gordon Fee's theology is internationally recognized and respected, in the Romanian theological landscape it remains relatively underexplored in a systematic manner. Only two of his works have been translated into Romanian to date—one introductory and popular in nature, the other more theologically substantial.⁵⁰

His ideas have so far received only fragmented attention in Romanian theology. While occasional references appear in biblical theology books and pneumatology courses, there is no doctoral thesis dedicated specifically to Fee's vision of walking in the Spirit and its spiritual, ethical, and communal implications. This gap represents not only a void in the Romanian theological bibliography but also a valuable opportunity for contextualized and applicable research.⁵¹

The Pentecostal movement in Romania has experienced significant growth in recent decades, becoming one of the most dynamic evangelical denominations. However, Romanian theological literature remains in a developmental stage in terms of structure and academic rigor. While there are notable reflections on fundamental doctrines, pneumatology—especially in its applied dimension—is often addressed in a fragmented way or using primarily devotional language. In this context, the contribution of a theologian like Gordon Fee becomes crucial.

Through the rigor of his exegesis and his emphasis on walking in the Spirit as a continuous, not merely occasional, reality, Fee offers a theological model that can inspire

⁴⁹ Doru Costache, *Viața în Hristos. Elemente de spiritualitate ortodoxă*, Iași: Editura Doxologia, 2017, pp. 65–69.

⁵⁰ Gordon D. Fee, *Pavel, Duhul și Poporul Lui Dumnezeu*, Oradea: Casa Cărții, 2020. Fee, Gordon D., și Douglas Stuart. *Cum să citim Biblia pentru ceea ce este ea cu adevărat*. Traducere de Marius Cruceru. Oradea: Editura Cartea Creștină, 2001. Fee, Gordon D. *Exegeza Noului Testament: O abordare practică*, Traducere de Emanuel Coțac. Oradea: Editura Cartea Creștină, 2002.

⁵¹ Ioan Brie și Ciprian Terinte, *Manualul catehetic al Cultului Creștin Pentecostal – Biserica lui Dumnezeu Apostolică din România*, București: Stephanus, 2015, pp. 19–21.

generations of Romanian pastors, professors, and scholars. Another factor that underscores the importance of this work is the urgent need to balance the spiritual discourse in Romanian Pentecostal communities. A tendency toward overemphasis on charismatic manifestations is often observed, accompanied by a lack of focus on ethical formation and spiritual maturity.⁵² In many contexts, spiritual gifts are mistaken for spirituality itself, and experience becomes a substitute for discipleship. In this sense, rediscovering Fee's understanding of the unity between gifts and fruit—of the believer's cooperation with the Spirit in the process of moral transformation—can bring much-needed and beneficial clarity to the life of the Church.⁵³

This dissertation does not merely aim to present Gordon Fee's ideas, but to contextualize and correlate them with the real needs and realities of Romanian Pentecostal communities. It offers a theologically solid proposal for a spirituality that is balanced, biblically grounded, and open to maturity.⁵⁴ At the same time, by virtue of its doctoral nature, this work contributes to the academic development of systematic pneumatology in the Romanian language—a field in need of fresh, analytical, and committed voices.

In conclusion, Gordon Fee's theology should not be seen merely as an external contribution, but as a valuable resource that can be adapted and integrated into the Romanian context. This work embraces that mission and proposes a bridge between international theological reflection and the real needs of the local Church. In a time when the Church needs not only manifestations of the Spirit but also discernment, depth, and balance, reviving the discourse around walking in the Spirit becomes a timely and essential endeavor.⁵⁵

Despite the remarkable progress of Pentecostal theology in recent decades, the theme of “walking in the Spirit” often remains insufficiently clarified—both doctrinally and practically. Although this phrase frequently appears in preaching, devotional literature, and ecclesial discourse, it is often treated superficially, either as a vague spiritual metaphor or as a synonym for a life “led by emotion” or “filled with charismatic manifestations.” Consequently, although the concept of walking in the Spirit holds a central place in the religious vocabulary of the

⁵² Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, p. 471.

⁵³ Brie și Terinte, *Manualul catehetic al Cultului Creștin Pentecostal*, p. 11

⁵⁴. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, pp. 112-115.

⁵⁵ Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, pp. 15–18

Pentecostal movement, its deeper biblical, ethical, and communal significance is rarely explored in a systematic and coherent way.⁵⁶

This lack of theological definition has, in some cases, generated imbalances in spiritual practice. One can observe a tendency to associate walking in the Spirit almost exclusively with intense charismatic experiences, to the detriment of essential dimensions such as character formation, spiritual maturity, discernment, and ethical responsibility.⁵⁷ In communities where Christian living is measured more by the frequency of visible manifestations than by the fruit of the Spirit, walking in the Spirit is reduced to an emotional event rather than a continuous process of inner transformation.⁵⁸

Paradoxically, although the Pentecostal Church claims a deeply pneumatological identity, it currently faces a crisis in applied pneumatology. Instead of offering a coherent theology that links the baptism with the Holy Spirit to ethical formation, community service, and social engagement, the discourse remains polarized: on one side, an emphasis on charismata; on the other, silence or minimization of moral formation. This polarization weakens the Church's witness to society, reducing the presence of the Spirit to the spectacular, rather than recognizing it in maturity, obedience, and love.⁵⁹

In Romanian theological literature, this tension is only partially addressed. While there are significant works in the field of pneumatology, they generally focus on doctrinal aspects such as the baptism with the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, or the work of the Spirit in Church history. The concept of walking in the Spirit—as an existential reality and as a framework for continuous spiritual life—is rarely examined in depth. Furthermore, the contributions of major international authors—such as Gordon Fee—are underrepresented in Romanian academic works.

Fee draws attention to this theological gap and proposes an integrative approach: walking in the Spirit is not an optional path for believers but the very essence of Christian life. In his view, the Holy Spirit is not only the One who empowers for mission but also the One who regenerates, guides, convicts, forms, and transforms. Through his writings, Fee shows that the

⁵⁶ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, pp. 887–889.

⁵⁷ Corneliu Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul's Theology: Narrative Readings in Romans*, London: T&T Clark, 2010, pp. 135–138.

⁵⁸ Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*, pp. 22–24.

⁵⁹ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, pp. 850–855.

Apostle Paul connects walking in the Spirit to the believer's entire life: to union with Christ, to belonging to the community of believers, to ethical behavior, and to eschatological hope.⁶⁰

This research begins, therefore, from a major theological concern: the absence of a coherent pneumatology that defines walking in the Spirit as a central and livable dimension of Christian existence. Without such clarification, there is a real risk of perpetuating the separation between spiritual experience and moral transformation—between personal spiritual life and engagement in the life of the Church. This disconnect is visible not only in theory but also in the practical realities of many local churches—where the power of the Spirit is proclaimed, but His fruit is sometimes ignored.

Therefore, the central research question of this study can be formulated as follows: How does Gordon Fee understand “walking in the Spirit” within the Pauline epistles, and to what extent can his vision offer an integrative, biblical, and contextual model for the spiritual life of the believer and the contemporary Church?

This guiding question will shape the entire theological approach of the dissertation and will allow for a rigorous exploration of the pneumatological, ethical, and ecclesiological implications of walking in the Spirit.

Based on this theological inquiry and hypothesis, the research proposes the following specific objectives.

Detailed Objectives

The primary aim of this dissertation is to academically analyze and systematize the concept of *walking in the Spirit* in the theological thought of Gordon Fee, with a focus on the pneumatological, ethical, and ecclesiological implications of this reality.⁶¹ Through a careful reading of Fee's major works and an exegetical engagement with relevant Pauline texts, the research seeks to offer a coherent and applicable framework for understanding the Christian life led by the Holy Spirit—not merely as a doctrinal formula, but as a lived, integrative, and transformative experience.⁶²

⁶⁰ Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, pp. 101–105.

⁶¹ Gordon D. Fee, *Galatians: A Pentecostal Commentary*, Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2007, p. 228.

⁶² Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, pp. 830–834.

In Fee's perspective, walking in the Spirit is not a metaphorical expression, but a concrete and livable reality, which expresses the ongoing dynamic between the believer and the personal presence of the Spirit in their life. This dynamic involves not only the believer's openness to be led, but also their commitment to the process of sanctification, discernment, and service within the body of Christ.⁶³ It is precisely this balance between divine initiative and human responsibility that this study aims to investigate and highlight.

Thus, the general goal of the research is to demonstrate that Gordon Fee's theological thought offers an integrative and relevant model for rediscovering *walking in the Spirit* as a paradigm for mature Christian living. This model is grounded in the Pauline interpretation of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit and has the potential to correct some of the common imbalances in contemporary Pentecostal spirituality, where the emphasis often falls on charismatic manifestations to the detriment of moral and communal maturity.⁶⁴

In addition to this general purpose, the research pursues a set of specific objectives, designed to support the analytical and practical aims of the study:

a) To identify and define the concept of walking in the Spirit in the writings of Gordon Fee, in correlation with its Pauline foundations as found in Galatians, Romans, Ephesians, and other relevant epistles.

b) To analyze the relationship between the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit in Fee's theology, emphasizing that authentic spiritual life is manifested through ethical maturity and responsible service.

c) To explore the Trinitarian and eschatological dimensions of Fee's pneumatology, highlighting how walking in the Spirit is rooted in the dynamics of salvation through Christ and the anticipation of the Kingdom.

d) To assess the relevance of Fee's theology for the Romanian Pentecostal context, with an emphasis on balancing spiritual discourse, fostering spiritual formation, and encouraging maturity in local church ministry.

e) To develop a coherent theological framework inspired by Fee, aimed at supporting leaders, teachers, and believers in living authentically in the Spirit.

⁶³ Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, pp. 102-106.

⁶⁴ Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*, pp. 21-22

These objectives are formulated in a way that enables both academic investigation and practical relevance. The dissertation is intended not only for a specialized audience in biblical or systematic theology, but also for those actively involved in pastoral ministry, theological education, and the communal life of the Church. Through its style and substance, the research seeks to become a tool for theological reflection and spiritual formation for all those who recognize the central importance of the Holy Spirit's work in the Christian life.

Ultimately, this dissertation does not merely aim to describe what walking in the Spirit means, but to contribute to a rebalancing of the spiritual discourse: moving from a fragmented or overly charismatic theology toward a Trinitarian, biblical, and applied theology—one that can offer direction and stability in character formation and in the Church's mission in today's world.

Research Hypothesis and Objectives

The research hypothesis underpinning this study is based on the conviction that, in Gordon Fee's vision, *walking in the Spirit* is not merely a mystical reality or charismatic expression, but a central theological paradigm that unifies spiritual life, ethical transformation, and communal belonging.⁶⁵ For Fee, walking in the Spirit represents a continuous living in the active presence of the Holy Spirit—a life that involves conscious participation, moral discernment, spiritual maturity, and openness to God's work in and through the Church.⁶⁶

This hypothesis is rooted in Paul's interpretation of the Holy Spirit, in which walking in the Spirit emerges as an expression of life *in Christ* and of belonging to the community of the redeemed. Fee consistently emphasizes in his writings that for the Apostle Paul, the Spirit is not an impersonal force, but a divine Person—active, present, and transformative—who accompanies and shapes the believer's life in all its dimensions: personal, ethical, liturgical, and communal.⁶⁷

Based on this hypothesis, the research undertakes a systematic investigation of the concept of *walking in the Spirit* in Gordon Fee's work, exploring how the idea is exegetically developed, theologically articulated, and applied in the contemporary context. Central to the

⁶⁵ Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, pp. 18–21.

⁶⁶ Claudia Matei, „Pluralismul educațional și predarea valorilor într-o societate multiculturală,” în *Journal for Freedom of Conscience* (2024), 130–145.

⁶⁷ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, pp. 837–841

analysis is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the believer's ethical transformation, as well as how this relationship is integrated into communal life and ecclesial service.⁶⁸

To validate the proposed hypothesis and to trace its theological and ecclesial implications, the research is structured around a series of fundamental guiding questions, among which the most relevant are:

1. How does Gordon Fee define walking in the Spirit within Pauline theology? What are the key texts analyzed by Fee in this context (e.g., Galatians 5, Romans 8, Ephesians 4–5)?
2. What is the central aim of Paul's pneumatology, and what ethical implications arise from it, according to Fee's interpretation? How is the Spirit connected to moral transformation, the fruit of the Spirit, and character formation?
3. What role does the fruit of the Spirit play in the believer's life compared to spiritual gifts? To what extent does Fee propose a balance between charismatic experience and ethical living?
4. How does Fee understand the believer's cooperation with the Holy Spirit in the process of sanctification and spiritual maturity? What is the role of human will? What does it mean to "sow to the Spirit" (Galatians 6)?
5. How is walking in the Spirit reflected in ecclesial and communal dimensions? How does the Spirit's work influence relationships within the Church, ministry, and mission?
6. What is the relevance of this vision of walking in the Spirit for the contemporary Pentecostal context—particularly the Romanian context? What corrections does it bring? What proposals for maturity or balance does it offer?

These questions enable a thorough investigation of the theme from both exegetical and systematic perspectives. At the same time, they facilitate an evaluation of Gordon Fee's theological contribution to the renewal of pneumatological discourse and the rebalancing of contemporary spirituality—toward a life lived with authenticity, discernment, and holiness under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

⁶⁸ Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, pp. 105–108.

Delimitations of the Research

The methodology of this research reflects the specific nature of a systematic and exegetical theological study, anchored in the analysis of biblical texts—particularly Pauline epistles—as well as in their interpretation through the lens of a relevant contemporary author: Gordon Fee.⁶⁹ The work belongs to the category of analytical-reflective theological research and is oriented toward a deep understanding of a key concept—*walking in the Spirit*—as it is articulated in the New Testament and reinterpreted within a systematic theological framework by Fee.

The methodological approach was constructed on several levels. First, the research involved an exegetical analysis of relevant biblical texts, with a particular focus on Paul's epistles—especially Galatians 5:16–25, Romans 8, Ephesians 4–5, and 1 Corinthians 12–14.⁷⁰ These texts form the revelatory basis for understanding the concept of walking in the Spirit. The exegetical approach sought to grasp the historical context, original language, and authorial intent of the biblical texts, always in relation to the theological vision that Gordon Fee brings to these passages.

Second, the research employed an applied systematic theological analysis of Gordon Fee's major works. The most relevant for this topic include *God's Empowering Presence, Paul, the Spirit and the People of God, Listening to the Spirit in the Text, Gospel and Spirit*, and his biblical commentaries on the Pauline epistles (especially 1 Corinthians). These sources were analyzed in terms of how the author integrates the pneumatological dimension with ethical life and community experience.

The hermeneutical method adopted is situated within a Trinitarian and narrative framework, as is characteristic of modern theological reflection influenced by biblical rereading from the perspective of salvation history. Thus, the reading of the texts was not conducted in isolation but within the dynamic of God's salvific plan revealed in Christ, enacted through the Spirit, and directed toward the life of the ecclesial community. This approach is faithful to the interpretive style promoted by Gordon Fee, who rejects the fragmentation of Scripture and insists on its canonical and pneumatological unity.

⁶⁹ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, pp. 829-835.

⁷⁰ Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, pp. 26-30.

This research, therefore, integrates the biblical (exegetical) dimension with the systematic (coherent theological construction) and contextual-applicative dimension, reflecting the spiritual and ecclesial needs of the contemporary Pentecostal Church.⁷¹ The objective was not merely to present Fee's ideas but to correlate them with the concrete realities and challenges faced by the Church—especially in the Romanian context—offering a practical framework for theological reflection and spiritual ministry.⁷²

Research Methodology

The selection of Gordon Fee as the central author of this research is not accidental but results from multiple theological and methodological considerations. Fee is one of the few Pentecostal theologians who authentically combines rigorous exegetical scholarship with a deep sensitivity toward the life of the Church and the spiritual realities of believers.⁷³ Unlike other systematic theologians who analyze the work of the Spirit in more abstract terms, Fee begins with the biblical text and develops his entire pneumatological framework from the concrete experience of the early Christian community, as captured in the Pauline epistles.⁷⁴

This research does not pursue a comparative approach between Fee and other theologians (such as Moltmann, Menzies, or Volf), but rather a thematic analysis focused exclusively on the understanding of *walking in the Spirit* as developed in his body of work. The chosen method is therefore both thematic and monographic, involving an internal investigation of the ideas, contexts, and implications developed by Fee. This choice ensures clarity, depth, and coherence, allowing for a focused and detailed exploration of an essential concept, without diversions or forced generalizations.

The sources used in this study are of two types:

- Primary sources, consisting of Gordon Fee's own writings (monographs, biblical commentaries, and scholarly articles);
- Secondary sources, comprising systematic theology and exegetical works that analyze or complement Fee's ideas, along with relevant studies in pneumatology and Christian

⁷¹ Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*, pp. 19-22.

⁷² Uniunea Penticostală – Biserica lui Dumnezeu Apostolică din România, *Monografia Cultului Creștin Penticostal*, București: Editura Uniunii Penticostale, 2006, pp. 127-130.

⁷³ Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*, pp. 10-13.

⁷⁴ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, pp. 831-833.

ethics.

A chronological overview of the key works by Gordon Fee used in this study is provided in Appendix 1.ⁱ

Likewise, the biblical text remains the ultimate foundation of all reflection. For this reason, the exegetical analysis of Pauline texts was conducted not only through Fee's theological lens but also by comparing it with the original meaning of the passages—so that the reader may assess the coherence and fidelity of the proposed interpretations.⁷⁵

The methodology applied in this study avoids a strictly dogmatic or confessional approach, instead embracing a biblical-narrative model that respects the unity of the canon and the dynamic work of the Spirit throughout salvation history. The study follows a pneumatological narrative thread that begins with the regenerating work of the Spirit, continues through ethical renewal, and culminates in community service and ecclesial mission.⁷⁶

As for methodological limitations, the research did not include an empirical component (e.g., surveys, pastoral observations, or interviews), remaining within a theological and interpretative framework. This was a conscious decision, reflecting the nature of the study—an endeavor of theological and biblical clarification, aimed at doctrinal deepening and spiritual formation. At the same time, this choice preserves methodological consistency and remains faithful to the interpretive approach adopted by Fee himself. Nevertheless, this decision opens the way for **future research** that could include empirical components, such as interviews with spiritual leaders or the analysis of pastoral discourse, in order to assess the direct applicability of Fee's theology in the contemporary Romanian context.

In conclusion, the methodology of this research fits within the paradigm of applied biblical theology, centered on the sacred text and structured around a relevant and profound theological figure. It combines academic rigor with spiritual sensitivity and offers a dynamic theological reflection capable of serving both the academic environment and the Church—the place where walking in the Spirit finds its fullest expression.

Based on this methodological and theoretical framework, it is important to emphasize the personal contribution that this dissertation brings to the field. The structure of the present work is logical and progressive, following a thematic order designed to guide the reader from

⁷⁵ Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*, pp. 9-12.

⁷⁶ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, pp. 842-845.

the biographical and theological foundations of Gordon Fee, to the development of his pneumatology, and finally to the application of the concept of *walking in the Spirit* in the context of personal, ecclesial, and social life. The structure of the thesis reflects the intention to capture both the academic depth and the pastoral applicability of the subject.

Structure of the Thesis

This dissertation is structured into three major parts, each comprising three chapters. These sections follow a coherent theological progression, beginning with the biographical and theological contextualization of the author under study, moving toward the doctrinal foundation of Pauline pneumatology, and culminating in the application of the concept of *walking in the Spirit* to personal, communal, and social life. This thematic architecture is faithful to Gordon Fee's vision, which never separates theology from life, doctrine from experience, or biblical research from the life of the Spirit.

Part I – Biographical and Theological Foundations of Gordon Fee

This section provides the hermeneutical framework necessary for understanding Gordon Fee's theological thought. It seeks to portray the profile of a theologian shaped at the intersection of authentic charismatic experience and rigorous academic exegesis—between the fire of spiritual life and the discipline of scholarly inquiry.

- Chapter 1 presents Fee's spiritual and academic biography, highlighting how the Pentecostal tradition he came from—marked by the living presence of the Holy Spirit—was integrated into a mature and biblically anchored theological vision. His ability to remain faithful to the Spirit's dynamic while constructing a rigorous exegetical and methodological framework is emphasized.
- Chapter 2 addresses his theological positioning—particularly his deep commitment to the authority of Scripture, his Trinitarian perspective on salvation, and his consistent emphasis on the practical internalization of revealed truth. Fee is a theologian who refuses artificial separations between doctrine and life.
- Chapter 3 analyzes Fee's intellectual legacy and lasting influence in Pentecostal and evangelical theology. It explores his main exegetical contributions, especially on the Pauline corpus, and how they influenced the rediscovery of a biblical model for life in the Spirit.

This first part serves as an integrative introduction to Gordon Fee's theological vision, providing the necessary premises for a thematic, biblical, and contextualized approach to his pneumatology.

Part II – The Economy of the Holy Spirit in Gordon Fee's Thought

This section forms the doctrinal and exegetical core of the thesis and presents a systematic analysis of Fee's pneumatology, with emphasis on the role of the Spirit in the believer's life, in the community, and in ethics. The study highlights how Fee constructs a living pneumatology—biblically grounded, deeply Trinitarian, and essentially applicable to community life.

- Chapter 1 analyzes the Person of the Holy Spirit as an active and personal divine reality in the believer's life. Fee rejects an impersonal or purely functional conceptualization of the Spirit, insisting on His living, Trinitarian, and relational participation in the believer's experience.
- Chapter 2 explores the work of the Spirit—from regeneration and sanctification to inspiration, guidance, discernment, and equipping for ministry. It shows how Fee integrates the Spirit's work within the broader economy of salvation and into the ethical maturation of the faith community.
- Chapter 3 addresses the relationship between the fruit and the gifts of the Spirit—a central theme in Fee's theology. He emphasizes that love—considered the supreme fruit of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22)—provides the essential ethical criterion for the authentic expression of spiritual gifts. In this context, Fee proposes a framework of balance and discernment: gifts cannot be isolated from the believer's character, and their validation is measured by the effectiveness of the fruit.

This part offers the most substantial and complex theological contribution of the thesis, anchoring the concept of *walking in the Spirit* in the revealed reality of Scripture and the transformative dynamic of ecclesial life. Fee provides a coherent and profound alternative to a spectacle-driven spirituality, reaffirming the centrality of character formation and love as authentic expressions of the Spirit's presence.

Part III – Walking in the Spirit: Personal, Ecclesial, and Social Applications

The final part of the thesis has a distinctly practical and pastoral character. It proposes a coherent transposition of the concept of *walking in the Spirit* into a livable, balanced, and contextualized model. In Fee's view, life in the Spirit is not an advanced option of Christian spirituality, but an essential condition for ethical maturity, spiritual discernment, and active participation in the life of the community. This part explores how Fee's pneumatology can concretely transform both individual life and the structure and witness of the believing community.

- Chapter 1 addresses the personal dimension of walking in the Spirit, in terms of inner transformation, character formation, and growth in active obedience to God. Fee proposes an existential understanding of spiritual life—not only initial conversion but daily living in fellowship with the Spirit, marked by continual fruit-bearing and moral discernment.
- Chapter 2 develops the ecclesial dimension, analyzing how believers are called to serve within the Body of Christ through spiritual gifts, as well as through ethical responsibility and community collaboration. Fee emphasizes that gifts cannot be separated from the fruit, and that the healthy functioning of charisms depends on character maturity. He reaffirms that the gift list in 1 Corinthians is representative, not exhaustive, allowing for responsible openness to the Spirit's work in various contexts. This vision offers Pentecostal communities a clear direction toward balance: gifts practiced in love, discernment, and mutual edification.
- Chapter 3 focuses on the social and public dimension of walking in the Spirit. Fee pleads for a Church actively engaged in the world—in justice, mission, and witness—yet rooted in a spirituality that produces character, not merely manifestations. Walking in the Spirit is thus seen as a call to responsible community life, social involvement, and prophetic presence in culture

This section highlights Fee's perichoretic model, in which the Person, the work, the fruit, and the gifts of the Spirit intertwine in a living communion between God and the believer, and between individual and community. It outlines a vision of spiritual life in which the Church

becomes the place where the Spirit forms, guides, and sends—not in isolation, but in unity, discernment, and maturity. Fee thus offers a balanced response to the spiritual polarizations of our time: a Trinitarian, relational pneumatology, deeply rooted in real life.

This final part crowns the research with practical relevance, offering a model of balanced, livable, and relevant spiritual life for contemporary believers and Church leaders. Overall, the structure of the thesis reflects a movement from context → foundation → application. Each part connects logically to the next, and the whole is designed to provide the reader not only with knowledge but also with real tools for reflection, formation, and service.

This dissertation is part of a necessary and timely theological endeavor. It contributes to broader reflection on the role of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life and in the Church's mission—particularly in a context where Christian spirituality is often polarized between doctrinal formalism and charismatic enthusiasm.

The research offers a valuable contribution to theological balance by coherently integrating pneumatological, ethical, and communal dimensions. This integration is made possible through Gordon Fee's theological approach, which transcends unilateral frameworks and proposes a Trinitarian, biblical, and applicable model for life in the Spirit.

Significance of the Thesis

The value of this thesis lies primarily in clarifying the concept of *walking in the Spirit*—a frequently used expression, yet one that has been scarcely defined systematically in Romanian theological literature. This dissertation offers a unique contribution in that regard: through biblical grounding of the topic, rigorous theological analysis of Fee's work, and contextualized conclusions in a format that is both accessible and applicable for spiritual leaders and faith communities.

Such clarification is essential for a mature understanding of spiritual life. It contributes to the development of a coherent Christian ethic, firmly rooted in the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, this introduction outlines the conceptual, theological, and methodological framework that supports the research and justifies the relevance of a theology of *walking in the Spirit* in the contemporary ecclesial landscape.

ⁱ Key Works by Gordon Fee Used in the Research

Year	Title	Central Theme
1994	<i>God's Empowering Presence</i>	The theology of the Holy Spirit in the Pauline epistles
1996	<i>Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God</i>	The Body of Christ and walking in the Spirit
2001	<i>Gospel and Spirit</i>	The Gospel and practical Christian spirituality
2007	<i>Listening to the Spirit in the Text</i>	Biblical hermeneutics and the Holy Spirit
2007	<i>Pauline Christology</i>	Pauline Christology and its pneumatological implications
2010	<i>Galatians (Pentecostal Commentary Series)</i>	Pneumatological exegesis of Galatians 5 – Walking in the Spirit
2011	<i>The First Epistle to the Corinthians (NICNT)</i>	Detailed exegesis of 1 Corinthians