

LUKE'S PRESENTATION OF THE SPIRIT IN ACTS*

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I

Like the other evangelists Luke tells how John, who came baptizing with water; claimed to be the forerunner of one stronger than himself, who would administer a baptism with the Holy Spirit. This is described as a baptism with wind and fire, as when the wind blows the chaff away from the threshing floor, leaving only the wheat behind, and the fire consumes the chaff when it has been swept together.

Nothing more is said about this baptism with the Spirit in Luke's first volume. The subject is taken up again at the beginning of his second volume, when the risen Lord repeats John's promise and assures his disciples that they will soon experience its fulfillment: "Before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5).

Yet the first volume is by no means silent about the Holy Spirit himself. John the forerunner was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth, if not even earlier (Luke 1:15, 41-44). Indeed, the whole nativity narrative is dominated by the Spirit: John's parents are filled with the Spirit of prophecy (Luke 1:41; 67), and it is the Holy Spirit (the power of the Most High) that enables Mary to become the mother of the Messiah (Luke 1:35). John's endowment with the Spirit equipped him for his prophetic ministry, but he had no power to pass this endowment on to others. The Coming One who was to baptize with the Spirit was shown to be Jesus, on whom at his baptism in Jordan the Spirit

* F. F. Bruce died days after correcting the galley proofs of this article, which reflects one of the last, if not the last, works of his long and prodigious career. We shall miss him.

descended and remained: this was the occasion when "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38). The outpouring of the Spirit was coincident with his baptism in water, but distinct from it.

Jesus returned from Jordan "full of the Holy Spirit," and by that Spirit he was led for 40 days in the wilderness of temptation (Luke 4:1). Then he returned to Galilee "in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14). In his keynote announcement in the Nazareth synagogue, he applied to himself the words of Isa 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18). It has been argued indeed that in Mark (followed by Matthew), Jesus' ministry represents his promised baptizing of others with the Spirit;¹ however that may be, it is not true of Luke's record (or of John's). Luke certainly intends us to understand that the whole course of Jesus' earthly ministry is the outworking of that anointing of which he spoke in the synagogue of Nazareth, but he makes it clear that Jesus' outpouring of the Spirit on others had to await his departure from his disciples after he rose from the dead.

After the inaugural preaching at Nazareth, the presence and activity of the Spirit are seldom mentioned explicitly in Luke's narrative of Jesus' ministry, but they are implied throughout. Some of the places where Luke's narrative makes reference to the Spirit are paralleled in Matthew or Mark: Jesus' warning about blasphemy against the Spirit (Luke 12:10) is paralleled, for example, by both the other Synoptists (Matt 12:32; Mark 3:29). Luke may illustrate this particular blasphemy later in the episodes of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) and of Simon Magus (Acts 8:18-24).

Again, in Luke 12:12, when Jesus tells his disciples not to plan their defense in advance when they are brought to trial for their faith, because "the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say," the Matthean counterpart says, "It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matt 10:19). (However, the parallel in Mark 13:11, "It is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit," is altered in Luke 21:15 to a form in which Jesus replaces the Spirit: "I will give you a mouth and wisdom.")

There is one place in such parallel passages where Matthew's version of a saying has a mention of the Spirit which is absent from Luke's: in Matt 12:28 Jesus says, "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons. . .," whereas Luke 11:20 reads "by the finger of God." But more often it is Luke who mentions the Spirit where Matthew does not: in Luke 10:21, Jesus "rejoiced in the Holy Spirit" when he thanked

¹ J. E. Yates, *The Spirit and the Kingdom* (London: SPCK, 1963).

God for revealing to babes things that were concealed from the wise and understanding, whereas the Spirit does not appear in the Matthean parallel. Luke's specific introduction of the Spirit here may be related to the prophetic quality of the utterance that follows Jesus' words of thanksgiving. Again, in Luke 11:13, in a "how much more" argument from the natural benevolence of earthly fathers to the heavenly Father's generosity to his children, it is emphasized that he will give "the Holy Spirit" to those who ask him, whereas in Matt 7:11 he will give them "good things." Possibly Luke understands the future tense "will give" of the post-Pentecostal situation.

Here too may be mentioned the scantily attested but striking variant for "thy kingdom come" in Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer: "Let thy Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us" (Luke 11:2).² This has been thought to be a Marcionite spiritualization of the original wording; even so, it reflects insight into the fact (to which Acts and the Pauline epistles bear witness) that much of the teaching about the kingdom of God in the Gospels is fulfilled after Pentecost by the ministry of the Spirit.

II

In the interval between his resurrection and the day when a cloud finally "took him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9), Jesus taught his disciples more about the kingdom of God than he had previously done, telling them at the same time to stay in Jerusalem until they received the promised baptism with the Holy Spirit. It was probably something he said during those days that prompted their question: "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). The question has commonly been regarded as the last expression of their this-worldly and nationalist hopes. But Jesus treated it seriously. No timetable of coming events would be disclosed to them; instead, they would be given something much better—power of a different kind than that required for the building up of a political kingdom.

The disciples' question, indeed, echoes the kind of language that Gabriel, in the annunciation narrative of Luke 1:32-33, had used about the Son of Mary: "The Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ...and of his kingdom there will be no end." This promise repeats those made by OT prophets regarding the perpetual kingship of David's house. But the manner in which these promises were to be fulfilled is repeatedly made clear in Acts. Peter, on the day

² See B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London/New York: United Bible Societies, 1971) 154-56.

of Pentecost, affirms that the oath sworn by God to David, "that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne" (Ps 132:11), was fulfilled in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, the Son of David (Acts 2:29-36). Similarly Paul, in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch, announces that the promises to David were fulfilled when, from David's posterity, God "brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus." It was by raising Jesus from the dead that God fulfilled his undertaking to his people in Isa 55:3, "I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David" (Acts 13:23, 34). And James, at the Council of Jerusalem, sees the prophecy of Amos 9:11-12, that David's fallen tent would be set up again and his dominion over Gentile nations restored, brought to pass by the widespread proclamation of the gospel, through which more Gentiles than David ever controlled were now yielding glad submission to the Son of David (Acts 15:15-17).

It was, then, along these lines that the disciples' question about the restoration of the kingdom was to be answered. In this restoration they were to play a full part, and they would be empowered to do so when the Holy Spirit came upon them. Then, said the risen Lord, "you shall be my witnesses. . . to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The coming of the Spirit, then, was essential for effective witness bearing. In this, as in some other respects, there is a remarkably close relation between the narrative of Acts and the Paraclete promises in the upper-room discourses of the Gospel of John.³ When the Paraclete comes, said Jesus' to his disciples on the night of his betrayal, "He will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:26-27). "We are witnesses to these things," said those same disciples to the Sanhedrin when testifying to the exaltation of the crucified Jesus, "and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him" (Acts 5:32).

Luke's second volume is the record of the apostles' witness, and at the same time it is the record of the Spirit's witness. So completely is Acts pervaded by the presence and power of the Spirit that it has been called (with Chrysostom⁴ in the 4th century and A. Ehrhardt⁵ in our own day) "The Gospel of the Holy Spirit"; or (with J. A. Bengel⁶

³ See w. F. Lofthouse, "The Holy Spirit in the Acts and the Fourth Gospel," *Exp Tim* 52 (1940-41) 334-36.

⁴ Chrysostom, *Homilies on Acts*, I. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (14 vols., ed. by P. Schaff; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956) 11.7.

⁵ A. Ehrhardt, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969) 129.

⁶ J. A. Bengel, *Gnomon Nom Testamenti* (3rd ed.; Tubingen: n.p., 1742; repr. London: Williams and Norgate, 1862) 389.

in the 18th century and A. T. Pierson⁷ in the 20th) "The Acts of the Holy Spirit."

III

The promise that the disciples would be baptized with the Holy Spirit a few days after Jesus so assured them was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost—seven weeks after his resurrection. The promise is called "the promise of the Father" in Acts 1:4 because God the Father is the primary giver of the Spirit; it is called "the promise of the Holy Spirit" in Acts 2:33 because the Spirit is the substance of the promise; he is, as another NT writer says, "the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph 1:13).

Luke's Pentecostal narrative recalls earlier biblical motifs. The "mighty wind" and "tongues as of fire" which accompanied the descent of the Spirit (Acts 2:2-3) are reminiscent of the wind and fire which, in John the Baptist's preaching, were to be the instruments of the Coming One's purifying ministry (Luke 3:16-17).

Pentecost originally marked the presentation to God of the first-fruits of the wheat harvest (Exod 23:16; 34:22), but by the beginning of the Christian era it had come to be observed also as the anniversary of the giving of the law from Sinai. On that occasion, according to one rabbinical tradition, the voice of God "went into seventy tongues, so that every nation heard the law in its own language"; so now visitors "from every nation under heaven" heard the celebration of God's mighty works from the apostles' lips "each. . . in his own native language" (Acts 2:5-11). It is possible, moreover, that a reversal of the confusion of tongues at Babel is implied (Gen 11:6-9); now all those who were present, despite their diversity of language, understood the message.

By the end of that day the reception of the Spirit was not an experience confined to the apostles and their companions; many more enjoyed the heavenly gift. For Peter's closing exhortation was: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Repentance and baptism were the twin conditions--the one inward, the other outward--for receiving the gift. Many did so repent and receive baptism, to the number of about three thousand. Luke does not say that they "were all baptized in one Spirit into one body," for that is Pauline language (1 Cor 12:13); but these

⁷ A. T. Pierson, *The Acts of the Holy Spirit* (2nd ed.; London: Morgan and Scott, 1913).

words sum up very well what took place. Their baptism in the name of Jesus and their reception of the Spirit made them members of a new community. This was no solitary experience; its communal character was manifested in a number of ways, not least in their practicing community of goods. The inward change in each which made such spontaneous generosity possible was described later by Peter when he told how God "cleansed their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9).

From the risen Lord's words, "John baptized with water, but. . . you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5), it might have been expected that baptism in water would henceforth become obsolete, being superseded by baptism in the Spirit. In fact this did not happen; believers in Jesus continued to be baptized in water, but their water baptism now proclaimed them to be his people, and was accompanied (not replaced) by the baptism in the Spirit.⁸ The precise relation between their water baptism and baptism in the Spirit remains to be considered when the further evidence of Acts has been surveyed; and even then some relevant questions will remain unanswered.

IV

When the outpouring of the Spirit on the apostles was marked by their speaking "in other tongues" (Acts 2:4), Peter explained to the crowd of Jerusalemites and visitors who were attracted by this phenomenon that what they saw and heard was the fulfillment of God's promise: "In the last days. . . I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28). True, "all flesh" did not receive the Spirit on that day, but those who did receive him then were the firstfruits of a great harvest of others. In Joel's wording the outpouring of the Spirit is to take place in the indefinite "hereafter," but the quotation in Acts 2:17 replaces "hereafter" by the more definite "in the last days." The coming of the Spirit, that is to say, is the token that the "last days"--the days for "establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old" (Acts 3:21)--have been inaugurated by the ministry, death, and exaltation of Jesus. Jesus' resurrection and enthronement at God's right hand have fulfilled specific OT prophecies, Peter affirmed (Ps 16:8-11; 110:1; 132:11). He and his fellow apostles speak as witnesses to Jesus' resurrection, and to their testimony the Spirit adds his own.

⁸ "The reception of the Spirit is involved in the very notion of baptism if the rite represents Christ's baptismal anointing at the Jordan (and if it does not it is hard to account for the adoption of baptism in the Church)," says G. W. H. Lampe, "The Holy Spirit in the Writings of St. Luke," *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R.H. Lightfoot* (ed. by D. E. Nineham; Oxford: Blackwell, 1955) 199.

This eschatological note is not so prominent in Luke's writings as it is in some of the other NT documents, but the whole record of Acts presupposes that the "last days" stretch from the exaltation of Jesus to his coming as judge (Acts 10:42; 17:31), and the presence and activity of the Spirit provide unmistakable testimony to the fact that the last days are here.

V

The record of Acts also illustrates in a variety of ways the role of the Spirit as the animating principle of the community's life. Jesus, as we have seen, told his disciples at an earlier stage in his ministry not to be concerned about the form of words they should use when called to account in a court of law: the Holy Spirit would tell them what to say. They realized the truth of this assurance on the first occasion when they were challenged by the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem. The healing of a congenitally lame man in the temple precincts attracted a large crowd, and Peter improved the occasion by announcing the fulfillment of ancient prophecy in God's raising up Jesus, and called on his hearers to repent and have their sins blotted out. The congestion in the outer court of the temple was such that the temple police intervened, and Peter and John (apparently with the man they had cured) were locked up overnight. In the morning they were brought before the chief priests and their colleagues and asked by what authority they had acted as they did. Peter then, "filled with the Holy Spirit," replied that the cripple had been healed by the power of the crucified and risen Jesus, and went on to charge the judges with being the "builders" of Ps 118:22 who had rejected the "stone" which God had nevertheless exalted to be "head of the corner." He concluded his "defense" by affirming that the name of Jesus was the only "name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:8-12).

The power of the Spirit in the believing community is underscored in quite another way by the incident of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). The temptation to acquire credit for being more generous than one really is has not gone out of fashion. Community of goods was practiced in the Qumran sect, and the member found guilty of deception in the matter of property was excluded from the common meal for a year and deprived of one quarter of his daily ration of food. But in the case of Ananias and Sapphira the offense was treated much more seriously. So closely was the community identified with the Spirit that a lie told to the community was a lie told to the Spirit. They had not realized the enormity of the action; when it was brought home to them

that they were guilty of such a serious offense against the Holy Spirit, they were so appalled that first the one and then the other fell down dead.

When the time came that the apostles could no longer take care of the daily distribution from the common fund to needy members of the community, seven men were appointed to take charge of this business. The qualifications laid down for them were that they should be "of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (Acts 6:3). One of them, Stephen, is specially singled out as "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit." He showed these qualities not only as an almoner, but even more so as an advocate for the new Way; when he was challenged in the Hellenistic synagogue which he attended in Jerusalem, his opponents "could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke." When they therefore accused him of blasphemy before the Sanhedrin, and his defense filled his judges with such rage that his condemnation and execution must inevitably follow, Luke describes how "he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven. . . and said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God'" (Acts 6:5, 11; 7:55-56).

Another member of the seven, Philip, experienced the Spirit's direction in his evangelistic ministry; when, for example, he had preached the gospel to the Ethiopian traveler and baptized him, the Spirit of the Lord caught him away "and the eunuch saw him no more" (Acts 8:39). It is difficult in this particular narrative to distinguish between the Spirit's agency and that of the "angel of the Lord" who commanded Philip to go to the place where he would meet the Ethiopian.

A further instance of the community's awareness of the Spirit's centrality in its life comes to expression in the letter sent to the Christians in Syria and Cilicia by the apostolic council of Jerusalem. The council's decision was introduced to them with the words, "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us"; that is, "The Holy Spirit has decided, and so have we" (Acts 15:28). The spontaneity and matter-of-factness of this declaration are impressive. The apostles and elders do not stay to justify their claim that the decision was primarily the Holy Spirit's and only secondarily theirs; it was a matter of experience to them that this was so, and they expected that the Gentile churches to which the letter was sent would find it equally obvious.

VI

Those who believed the apostolic message in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost evidently received the Spirit as soon as they were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. It was otherwise with those who

believed some time later in response to Philip's preaching in Samaria: "They were baptized, both men and women," Simon Magus among them, but they did not there and then receive the Spirit (Acts 8:12-13, 16). At this stage the leaders of the mother church maintained a fair degree of supervision over the extension of the faith beyond the frontiers of Judaea; and on hearing the news of Philip's evangelism in Samaria, they sent Peter and John to see what was going on. Peter and John, it appears, were well pleased with what they found, but they discovered that one thing was missing. The Samaritan converts had not received the Spirit, so the apostles prayed that this deficiency might be made good. "Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:14-17).

Luke does not say why there was an interval on this occasion between the converts' believing in Jesus and their receiving the Spirit; he leaves the reason to be inferred. One popular explanation has been that the interval corresponds to the interval between baptism and confirmation in the historic Christian churches; this, however, is bound up with a theology of the Spirit which cannot be substantiated from the NT.⁹ Many Bible students find themselves faced with a problem here through failure to distinguish between Luke's terminology and Paul's on this subject. For Paul, it has been observed, "'To receive the Spirit' is to begin to experience the Spirit as . . . mediating the presence of Christ and as the Spirit recreating in us Christ's nature and filial relationship to God," whereas for Luke it means to receive him as the organ of (usually charismatically expressed) communication and revelation between the disciples and the Father or the risen Lord. As a result the senses of 'receive the Spirit' in the respective communities [Pauline and Lukan] are complementary, and indeed overlap significantly, at a deep level, but they are not simply the same.¹⁰

In the context of Acts 8: 14-17, the most natural explanation of the interval is that when at last the Spirit fell on the Samaritan believers, they received the assurance--not from a freelance evangelist like Philip but from the authoritative leaders of the church--that they were no longer outcasts but were incorporated as full members of the people of God of the new age. The imposition of the apostles' hands was a token

⁹ This view has been effectively answered by G. w. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* (London: Longmans, 1951) 70-72 et passim.

¹⁰ P. Cotterell and M. Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (London: SPCK, 1989) 166-67; see also M. M. B. Turner, "The Spirit of Christ and Christology," *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to D. Guthrie* (ed. by H. H. Rowdon; Leicester/Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1982) 168-90.

of this new fellowship. With the outpouring of the Spirit on the Samaritans, a new nucleus of the believing community was established, and the gospel could now radiate out in power from this new center.

It is plain that the Samaritans' reception of the Spirit was attended by the same audible signs as had marked his reception by the believers at Pentecost; only such external manifestations would have impressed Simon Magus. It was not the sanctifying influence of the Spirit in the believer's life that he craved the power to reproduce.

Another advance into new territory followed shortly afterwards, when Peter accepted the invitation to visit the Roman centurion Cornelius at Caesarea. This time he did not act as a duly commissioned representative of the Twelve; rather, being temporarily resident in Joppa on the Mediterranean coast, he received the centurion's invitation, and--under the unmistakable guidance of the Spirit--went to visit him in Caesarea, prudently taking six Jewish believers along as witnesses. On his arrival he explained to his host that he had never entered a Gentile house before or taken food at a Gentile table, and that he would not have done so now had God not taught him not to look on anyone as "common or unclean." Then, at Cornelius' bidding, he related the gospel story from John the Baptist's ministry to Jesus' death and resurrection, and concluded with the affirmation that through this Jesus, crucified and risen, forgiveness of sins was available to every believer, and that he was moreover the appointed judge of living and dead (Acts 10:34-43).

Peter had barely finished speaking when the Holy Spirit fell on his hearers, as suddenly as on Peter himself and his colleagues at Pentecost, the experience being attended by the same outward signs as then. Both Peter and the six men whom he had taken along with him were astounded at what they saw and heard. Had this not happened--had Cornelius and his friends simply asked, like the Jerusalem audience on the earlier occasion, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)--Peter might not have been sure how to frame his answer. But here they were, "speaking in tongues and extolling God"; God had clearly shown his good pleasure in the matter by sending his Spirit on them, confronting Peter with a *fait accompli*. Peter had no option but to acquiesce in this act of God; "These people," he said to his companions, "have received the Holy Spirit just as we have; can anyone forbid water for their baptism?" So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:44-48).

Here, then, we have a further sequence: the believers in Jerusalem had received the Spirit immediately on being baptized; the believers in Samaria, although "baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus," did not receive the Spirit until apostles laid hands on them; the Gentiles at

Caesarea, believing as they listened to the message, received the Spirit there and then, and Peter's ordering them to be baptized in water was his recognition of the divine initiative. Nothing is said in the Cornelius story about the imposition of apostolic hands, either on the spot or subsequently.

Peter's visit to the house of Cornelius had not been approved in advance by the other Jerusalem leaders, and when they heard of it they called him to account. But the account he gave them was so convincing that their criticisms were silenced, and they glorified God who had extended his grace even to Gentiles (Acts 11:18).

The implications of this divine initiative are manifest everywhere in the subsequent narrative of Acts, with its record of successful Gentile evangelization. It may be that Philip's preaching the gospel to an Ethiopian antedated Peter's preaching at Caesarea, but Philip's action could not commit the church as Peter's did, especially when Peter's action was ratified by his fellow apostles. Henceforth Gentile evangelization was approved and promoted (even if there was some disagreement about the terms on which Gentiles might be admitted to membership of the community). No wonder that the inauguration of this new phase of the expansion of the gospel was marked by the spontaneous outpouring of the Spirit, as spontaneous as his initial outpouring on the Day of Pentecost.

The next significant outpouring did not have the same epoch-making character as that in the house of Cornelius. The incident of the twelve Ephesian disciples (Acts 19:1-7) presents several problems, but it displays a pattern of Christian initiation different from those considered already.

Those disciples, whom Paul met shortly after he took up residence in Ephesus, are frequently supposed to have been disciples of John the Baptist; but to think of them in these terms is probably a mistake. When Luke uses the word "disciple" without qualification, as he does when introducing these men, he means disciples of Jesus. And that they were indeed disciples of Jesus is implied in Paul's first question to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" By "when you believed," Paul plainly means "when you believed in Jesus"; he would not have expected them to have received the Holy Spirit otherwise. The clause "when you believed" is literally "having believed," an instance of the coincident aorist participle, which occurs in a similar context in Eph 1:13, "Having believed in him [in Christ], you were sealed with the Holy Spirit." Paul himself had been filled with the Holy Spirit at Damascus when he recovered his sight and was baptized (Acts 9:17-18).

The idea that the twelve men were disciples of John has been reinforced by the inference sometimes drawn from the Fourth Gospel,

that disciples of John, who were disposed to exalt their teacher's status at Jesus' expense, survived in proconsular Asia until the end of the 1st century. Whatever be the validity of this inference, it is not directly relevant to the interpretation of Acts 19:1-7.

Those disciples at Ephesus had to confess, in reply to Paul's question, that they knew nothing of the Holy Spirit, and when he asked them about their baptism, he learned that they had received "John's baptism," not Christian baptism. John's baptism was a baptism for the forgiveness of sins, and so was Christian baptism according to Acts 2:38; but there was at least this difference between the two: Christian baptism was administered in the name of Jesus, while John's baptism evidently made no reference to him. Christian baptism involved the confession of Jesus as Lord, and this set it apart from all other ablutions. Paul went on to explain that John's baptism had a forward-looking significance, as John himself indicated when he pointed on to the Coming One, and it met its fulfillment in Jesus. When they heard what

Paul had to say, they made good the defect in their religious experience thus far by receiving baptism "into the name of the Lord Jesus"--the same form of words as is used of the baptism of the Samaritan converts in Acts 8:16. But whereas an interval separated the Samaritans' baptism from their receipt of the Spirit, no such interval was necessary for the Ephesian disciples: as soon as they were baptized "into the name of the Lord Jesus," Paul laid his hands on them, and they received the Spirit with the gifts of glossolalia and prophecy.

The situation of these Ephesian disciples has been compared with that of Apollos, whom Luke introduces in the preceding paragraph: the only baptism he knew was John's. Apollos nevertheless was acquainted with the story of Jesus, which (thanks to his mastery of OT Scripture) he presented eloquently and persuasively. But it is not said that Apollos lacked the gift of the Spirit; indeed, if the phrase "fervent in spirit," used of him in Acts 18:2-5, has the same force as it has in Rom 12:11, it implies that he was full of the Holy Spirit, "bubbling over," in fact.¹¹ Nor is there any suggestion that Apollos was rebaptized. To speak more positively on this point would be to argue from silence, but if the Ephesian disciples had been converted under Apollos' early preaching (as some have thought), one would have expected them to know more than they did. One who knew the story of Jesus so accurately as Apollos did would have known that Jesus, according to John the Baptist himself, was the one who would baptize people with the Holy Spirit; this the Ephesian disciples did not know. As it is, theirs is the only instance of rebaptism recorded in the NT.

¹¹ See Lampe, "The Holy Spirit in the Writings of St. Luke," 198; E. Kasemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM Press, 1964) 143.

G. Lampe has argued that the experience of those Ephesian disciples marked out the beginning of Paul's residence in Ephesus as "another decisive moment in the missionary history."¹² Ephesus was to be a new center for the Gentile mission, and these disciples probably constituted the nucleus of the church there. By this extraordinary procedure they were integrated into the missionary program.

According to Acts, then, the reception of the Spirit might take place (1) immediately after the exercise of faith in Christ and submission to baptism in his name, (2) with the imposition of apostolic hands, a considerable time after the exercise of faith and submission to baptism, (3) while hearers listened in faith to the preaching of the gospel, before baptism and (apparently) without the imposition of hands, or (4) after baptism in the name of Jesus and the imposition of apostolic hands, in the experience of some who had in a certain measure become disciples of Jesus already.

Various elements in the process of Christian initiation are mentioned: faith in Jesus, baptism in his name, imposition of hands, and receiving of the Holy Spirit. Quite evidently, however, no one sequence of these elements is presented as normative rather than any other. One of them, the imposition of hands, is not always included. The onus of proof rests on those who maintain that it must always have taken place, even when it is not mentioned. Those who maintain this generally regard the imposition of hands in the apostolic age as the precedent for the order of confirmation, in which the Spirit is imparted to believers with the laying on of hands of one who stands in the apostolic succession. But this view requires too much reading into the biblical text; moreover, it is difficult to square it with the experience of Paul himself, who received the Spirit when the hands of Ananias, not an apostle, were laid on him (Acts 9:17). (Ananias was certainly the risen Lord's authorized messenger to Paul, but he was not an apostle in Luke's use of the term).

VII

If God's bestowal of his Holy Spirit is his response to the exercise of genuine faith, then the withholding of faith--especially on the part of those who have heard his voice--is construed as resistance to the Holy Spirit, and there can be no deadlier sin than this. Those who in earlier days would not pay heed to the prophets resisted the Spirit who spoke through them, and the consequences for them were disastrous; so those in apostolic days who refused to acknowledge Jesus as the one whom God uniquely anointed with the Spirit are consummating the sin

¹² Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, 76.

of their spiritual ancestors, and therefore there can be no hope of repentance or restoration for them. This is the point of Stephen's charge: "You always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do you" (Acts 7:51). The same point is made by Paul in his application of Hab 1:5 to the synagogue congregation in Pisidian Antioch: "Behold, you scoffers, and wonder, and perish; for I do a deed in your days, a deed you will never believe, if one declares it to you" (Acts 13:41). He makes it again at the end of Acts when he applies to the leaders of the Roman Jews the warning of Isa 6:9-10 about unhearing ears and unseeing eyes: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: 'Go to this people. . .'" (Acts 28:25-28). What the Spirit said through the ancient prophets he continues to say today.

The Spirit who spoke through those OT prophets continues to speak in the church through prophets of the new age, as well as through its recognized leaders (as in the apostolic letter of Acts 15:23-29, cited above). Through the prophet Agabus, for example, he foretells the great famine of Claudius' day, enabling the church of Antioch to take timely steps to provide for their fellow believers in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30). It was probably through one of the prophets in the church of Antioch that he gave directions for the release of Barnabas and Saul for the special service for which he had selected them (Acts 13:1-2). He directs the course of Paul and his companions, as he had previously done for Philip (Acts 8:29) and Peter (Acts 10:19-20), indicating which routes they must avoid and which they must follow (Acts 16:6-10). It is difficult to decide if there is a distinction between "the Holy Spirit" in Acts 16:6 and "the Spirit of Jesus" in v 7; the latter expression perhaps implies a word of prophecy uttered explicitly in the name of Jesus. In any case, the interaction of the Spirit's guidance and farsighted missionary planning in the record of Acts is an interesting study.

VIII

The Holy Spirit in Acts, then, is the divine agent and witness of the new age. He imparts life and power. To receive him the prime prerequisite is faith in Jesus (which involves repentance from everything inconsistent with such faith). Faith in Jesus was visibly attested by baptism in/into his name. All who believed in him and were baptized in his name received the Spirit--usually at once, sometimes after a considerable interval, and on one occasion even before baptism. What is important is not the sequence of these components in Christian initiation but their presence. The receiving of the Spirit was customarily manifested in external signs; the chronological variations between one

Lukan account and another may be due, in part at least, to Luke's thinking rather of the outward signs than of the inward grace. (It may be remarked here, although it does not arise directly from the exegesis of Acts, that the fruit of the Spirit, as described in Gal. 5:22-23, provides surer evidence of his presence than do the gifts of the Spirit: the gifts may be imitated, but not the fruit). The receiving of the Spirit seals the incorporation of believers into the divinely created community of the new age, and baptism in water is the visible token of that incorporation.

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