

Luke's Understanding of Baptism in the Holy Spirit An Evangelical Perspective¹

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In particular response to the theses of R.P. Menzies, this article investigates the role of baptism in the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts. After having established common ground between Pentecostal and Evangelical scholarship in the field, it is argued that for the author of Luke-Acts baptism in the Holy Spirit is an eschatological, corporate and barrier-breaking event, in which (not unlike what is found in the Qumran writings) present and future aspects are held in tension. Luke's portrayal of the work of the Spirit resists rigid categorization and, from a canonical perspective, helps to counterbalance an exclusive stress on Pauline teaching on the work of the Spirit.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to engage in a critical and constructive dialogue between Evangelicals and Pentecostals on some matters of common interest. As a former Pentecostal (and now a somewhat distant sympathizer), pupil of James Dunn (whose interest and expertise in the field is undisputed), and biblical scholar with a special interest in Luke-Acts, the challenge that this kind of dialogue brings to me hardly needs comment. I appreciate, at any rate, the metaphor of dialogue. Dialogue I understand as an open conversation in which opinions are freely exchanged, leading to a better understanding of the drives and concerns of the conversation partners involved and aiming at a certain common understanding, if not consensus. This is only possible, of course, if there is a mutual willingness to give up one's own opinions for better ones. The omens are good, I believe, on both sides of the table, and the book by the Menzies now under discussion at this symposium is a challenging and sympathetic icebreaker.²

As the current debate is an internal talk from a shared 'faith perspective', we need to be aware of the fact that the issues involved are far more complex than that. As Evangelicals and Pentecostals we have an inborn tendency to interpret spiritual phenomena, charismatic manifestations, spiritual gifts and so forth almost automatically in terms of explicitly theological and Christian categories: when a Pentecostal Christian starts to utter unintelligible sounds, it is readily believed that the Holy Spirit inspires him or her (but when my agnostic neighbour or a psychiatric patient do so, things are immediately rationalized by different categories). If someone speaks under prophetic inspiration (whatever we may mean by that), it is very often believed without further ado that he speaks on behalf of God, i.e. the *Christian* God. But from a history-of-religions perspective and in the light of the phenomenology of religion, sociology and psychology, all such phenomena have their counterpart in other religions of antiquity and in contemporary movements outside the Christian realm.³ To avoid the pitfall of socio-pragmatic hermeneutics, that is, reading the Bible to find confirmation of what one already believes (Thiselton 1992), our 'insider perspective' needs the litmus test of an 'outsider perspective'. This requires a more fundamental debate on the nature of religious experience, the mode of revelation, the influence of worldviews, and so forth. In our contemporary situation of secularism, globalization and interreligious dialogue I think these epistemological and hermeneutic questions are far more urgent than the exegetical issues now under debate, and here Evangelicals and Pentecostals have a common task and probably a common contribution to make.⁴ However, for the present purpose my objective is more modest, as I will focus on some of the exegetical and biblical-theological questions involved. But the issues I mentioned are constantly lurking in the background.

COMMON GROUND

To clear the field for a real debate, it may be helpful to spell out first what we have in common, that is, what we have gained from the past thirty or thirty-five years or so (taking understandably James Dunn's influential study on *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* from 1970 as a starting-point).⁵ This helps us to put the whole matter in perspective and to outline future areas of research and debate.⁶

First of all, there is common ground in the recognition that Luke is 'historian and theologian', to use the famous phrase of Howard Marshall. (Marshall 1998; Menzies 2000:40–42) To date, we

would have to add that Luke is not only historian and theologian, but also an outstanding storyteller, and that for this reason narrative analysis and literary criticism are indispensable tools for theological exegesis, especially in the case of the book of Acts. These terms, it may be necessary to emphasize, do not describe two or three separate identities or activities (or disguises, so to speak), but they are evidence of one single concern. I believe, in fact, that it is more accurate to say that Luke presses home a theological or whatever message *through* some sort of history writing than to say that he is doing history *and* theology. Of course Luke is not at all a theologian in the strict sense of the word (not even Paul is) nor is he a creative thinker of the stature of Paul or John, but he does have an opinion on certain matters of faith and he certainly wishes to convince his readers of some of his insights about God, Jesus, the Spirit, salvation, Christian life, the Christian community, and so forth. In that respect, the historical character of Luke-Acts is subservient to its theological or ideological concern. Luke did not write church history for its own sake (nor one that accords with our modern conception of history writing, for that matter), but for the sake of communicating his beliefs and convictions. He writes, as biblical scholars of earlier generations used to say, *Tendenzliteratur*. Hence, to understand the work of the Spirit, the book of Acts should not be put on a theological sidetrack nor be treated as a stepchild to other New Testament writings, as many Evangelicals tended to do in the past,⁷ and it seems to me that this is to date an opinion shared by the majority of Evangelical and Pentecostal scholars.

Secondly, we fully agree with the methodological principle that Luke-Acts must not be read from the angle of Paul's theology or through a Pauline lens: Paul is not the norm for Luke. (Dunn 1970:39–40; Menzies 2000:49–50) Doing biblical theology in a methodologically sound way means to respect the individual authors' viewpoints at all costs.⁸ Luke is a thinker and writer in his own right, fully entitled to have his own views, even if they are different from or contrary to Paul's. Luke's view of the Spirit should not be forced into a Pauline mould. For instance, if Luke employs the metaphor of 'being filled with the Spirit' or speaks of 'being baptised in the Spirit', it should not be taken for granted that sense and referent of these terms are identical to Paul's terminology. In terms of semantics this would be a school example of an illegitimate identity transfer.⁹

Third, if I am not mistaken, the classic dispensationalist position, which assigns the work of the Spirit exclusively to the early apostolic period (also known as cessationism), is rapidly on the retreat. Few evangelical scholars would nowadays advocate a traditional dispensationalist or cessationist position.¹⁰

Fourth, there is a broad consensus on the role of first-century Judaism as providing a more plausible context of understanding than Hellenistic religiosity, hence that the Spirit in Luke-Acts is primarily understood as the 'Spirit of prophecy', although there is still some debate on the influence of pre-Lucan Christianity on Luke's view of the Spirit.¹¹

Fifth, as far as I am concerned, we need not even have a debate on the power-for-mission character of (the) Spirit baptism in Luke-Acts (different from the conversion-initiation thesis),¹² although in this respect I probably do not represent a majority view among Evangelicals. I think that Roger Stronstad's interpretation of the work of the Spirit in Luke-Acts is basically sound and does justice to Luke's particular view of the Spirit: in the Lucan writings the working of the Spirit results in mission, effective proclamation, it is empowerment for service; soteriological concerns hardly come to the surface.¹³ Different from Stronstad and Menzies, I think it is safer to further qualify this by the adverb 'predominantly' rather than 'exclusively' or 'consistently': in Acts, the work of the Spirit is *predominantly* focused on power for mission.¹⁴

AREAS FOR FURTHER DEBATE

It occurs to me that the ground we have in common is much larger nowadays than it was twenty or thirty years ago. In this respect biblical scholars on both sides of the Pentecostal–Evangelical divide have given up rigid positions and have come considerably closer to one another.¹⁵

Of course we should not walk into the trap of what is no more than a metaphor. The metaphor of coming closer to one another tends to suggest that the truth may be somewhere in the middle, if we could visualize the contours of the debate on a straight line. Perhaps, however, the truth is not in the middle, but somewhere beyond the line, on a side-track, so to speak, and should both parties be prepared to change their course into a new direction, gaining a new perspective on Spirit baptism, without being too much concerned about identity matters and dogmatic defences of classic positions. I think we readily agree that our identity should not lie in our respective traditions or theologies, but in our common commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It seems to me that the conversion-initiation thesis of James Dunn (as an exponent of the classical Evangelical position) and the traditional Pentecostal doctrine of a second blessing

subsequent to the coming to faith, are both at risk to interpret the Lucan texts from a perspective somewhat alien to Luke, or at least from a perspective that does not reflect his primary concern.

THE SYSTEMATIZATION FALLACY

Before making some more substantial comments on Luke's view of the baptism in the Spirit, I think an important warning is necessary against what I would call the 'systematization fallacy'. The drive to systematize what cannot and perhaps should not be systematized, is a serious obstacle in the current debate. Systematization is the indispensable work of scholars, yet the risk that method overrules and distorts content is a serious one, especially when we are dealing with the Spirit, who, in the highly ambivalent words of the Fourth Evangelist, 'blows where he wills' (Jn 3.8) (probably both Paul and Luke would agree on that!). Was it really Luke's intention to teach something on matters of subsequence, *ordo salutis*, levels of sanctification, and so forth, or did he simply wish to show the diversity and the dynamics of the working of the Spirit in the early Christian community?¹⁶ Is not the fact that Luke describes the effects of salvation in history in so many different constellations (think e.g. of the varying sequence of conversion, baptism, reception of the Spirit etc. in Acts), indicative of the fact that he does not want to 'systematize' salvation of the individual and Christian life at large in a fixed scheme of salvation? I suspect that the drive at systematization is simply one of the fruits of Enlightenment rationalism. As soon as method reaches its boundary, the exegete should be at the alert and not succumb too quickly to the temptation of filling in the gaps. A bit of Gadamerian resistance against method would not be bad.

But let us now turn to matters of content. In what follows I wish to discuss baptism in the Spirit as an eschatological event, as a corporate event, and as a future and present experience. I will point to a possible parallel from Qumran, mention some implications of Pentecost as a barrier-breaking event, and draw implications from Luke and Paul in a canonical perspective. I round off with some concluding remarks.

BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT AS AN ESCHATOLOGICAL EVENT

In line with the Old Testament prophecies about the outpouring of the Spirit of God, promised to the nation of Israel 'in the last days' or in the near or distant future (Joel 2:28–32; Ezek. 36–37; Isa. 32:15; 44:3–5), Luke speaks of salvation and the work of the Spirit in eschatological terms.¹⁷

In the Lucan proclamation of John the Baptist, to begin with, a 'baptism with Spirit and fire' is announced that will be experienced by the penitent and the wicked alike, somewhere in the near future:

John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptise you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire' (Lk. 3:16–17 NRSV).

It is one event which is in view with a dual effect, blessing and judgement.¹⁸ In the pre-Lucan strand of tradition, the reference is clearly to what is traditionally called the Day of Judgement or what we would nowadays call the eschaton. The saying is a clear testimony to the fervent imminent expectation at the time (*Naherwartung*). In Mark, at any rate, there is not a single reference to a fulfilment at Pentecost, while the context of Q (Luke's other source) is clearly that of (imminent?) eschatological judgement.¹⁹ It is difficult, on the other hand, to read Luke-Acts without relating the fiery Spirit baptism announced by John to the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, but then the crucial question is *how* the relation between the two baptisms is defined. Did Luke consider the fiery baptism with the Spirit announced by John to be *fulfilled* at Pentecost? Or did he consider Pentecost a partial fulfilment or *anticipation* of the ultimate eschatological baptism-with-spirit-and-fire on all the people, believers and unbelievers alike, as a climactic event, the full realisation of which Luke still expected to occur in the future?

In the light of texts in Acts that affirm a consummation in the future (Luke does not seem to deny the traditional expectation of the parousia and the Day of Judgement) (Zwiep 1997:175–185), it is difficult to deny that the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost is not the definitive and final fulfilment of eschatological promises and expectations, but an *anticipation* (admittedly a dramatic and spectacular one) of traditional eschatological promises.²⁰ The signs traditionally expected to occur at the end of history are already experienced in the early community; in that sense we can speak of the Christian community as an eschatological community. But surely the Day of the Lord

(including Judgement Day and the anticipated baptism-with-fire) had not yet arrived, at least not in the usual sense of the word. Eduard Schweizer therefore rightly concludes that Pentecost 'ushers in a new age, but not *the* new age'.²¹

Although Luke does not sharply differentiate between a baptism-with-the-spirit already experienced in the Christian community and a baptism-with-fire to be accomplished at the Day of Judgement, it is clear that he puts all the emphasis on the present and positive aspects of the baptism in view. (Cf. Zwiep 1997:169–171) The fiery aspects, so to speak, are already visible now and then (think, e.g., of the stories of divine judgement in the book of Acts), but from an overall perspective the proclamation of the good news dominates. This is where the proclamation of Jesus and the early church sharply differ from that of John the Baptist and where Luke's particular theology on Spirit baptism as empowerment for service comes in: all the emphasis is on the empowering presence of the Spirit.²² But even the positive aspects are visible only now and then. It is not yet heaven on earth. All is seen *sub specie finis*.

What are the implications of the eschatological understanding of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and of its anticipatory working? Of old, Evangelicals have accused Pentecostals of triumphalism and 'arrival theology', that is, an undue emphasis on the present work of the Spirit at the expense of its future consummation and as a consequence leading to a denial of the dark side of life.²³ If Pentecost can be seen as an event of 'eschatological anticipation' rather than of eschatological fulfilment *per se*, we may have a fruitful point of departure to establish common ground: the work of the Spirit in the context of Jesus and the Church (up to the present!) is both real (as Pentecostals claim) and anticipatory or preliminary (as Evangelicals claim). This creates room for what Jürgen Moltmann calls an eschatology of the coming of God in which both present and future are held in a fruitful and dynamic tension. (See Moltmann 1995)

BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT AS A CORPORATE EVENT

In Acts, the Spirit plays a decisive role in the formation of the Christian community. It cannot be doubted that, for Luke, the Spirit is the *identity-marker of the New People of God*.²⁴ That in some way Christian life is marked by the Spirit, is a *non dubitandum* for Luke. Few would disagree. Here, however, we should be alert at the danger of making more of things than we can deduce from the

available sources. I have the impression that both Pentecostals and Evangelicals are first and foremost concerned to figure out the work of the Spirit *in the individual believer*. 'When does a person coming to faith receive the Holy Spirit?', seems to be the central question in the debate. 'Does he or she receive the Spirit at conversion or at a subsequent stage?' These, of course, are fully justified and relevant questions with significant repercussions in the wider context of pastoral theology and spiritual life. But were these modern questions of any concern to Luke when he wrote his two-volume book on Jesus and the history of the early Church?

I do not think so. Although it cannot be denied that for Luke salvation includes salvation of the individual, the dominant way of describing the effects of the coming of Jesus and the Spirit is first and foremost in collective or corporate terms. (Cf. also Bovon 2006:280, under a) The birth of the Messiah is good news to the whole people (Lk. 2:10). John the Baptist's message is directed to the people of Israel as a whole (3:6, 16). In Jesus' teaching it is the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God that dominates. Pentecost is first and foremost a group experience—it is the believing community that receives the Spirit—as is the case with the subsequent outpourings of the Pentecostal Spirit upon the assembled believers in a house in Jerusalem, upon the Samaritans, the household of Cornelius, the disciples at Ephesus.²⁵

The Menzies certainly seem to recognize this corporate dimension to a certain degree, when they concede, for instance, that '(t)here are no pre-Christian references to a messianic bestowal of the Spirit that purifies and transforms *the individual*',²⁶ and: 'John the Baptist described the Spirit's work not as cleansing repentant individuals, but rather as a blast of the 'breath' of God *that would sift the nation*'.²⁷ And even: 'Luke sees the prophecy [of John the Baptist], at least with reference to the sifting work of the Spirit, fulfilled in the Spirit-inspired mission of the church. The essential point is that Luke presents the Spirit here not as the source of cleansing for the individual, but rather as the animating force behind the witness of the church'. (Menzies 2000:94) The critical question is, what are the implications of the corporate dimension of Spirit baptism? It comes somewhat as a surprise, when the Menzies argue time and again that the event in view, the baptism with the Holy Spirit, is to be experienced (at least potentially) *by every individual believer*. 'Luke's Pentecost account provides what is needed, a promise of missiological power *for every believer*'. (Menzies 2000:101; italics mine) The gift of the Spirit, they argue, is 'available to—and indeed, *should be experienced by—everyone*'.²⁸ That is, they consider baptism in the Spirit as an event that must be applied to every individual Christian, it has to be *individualized* or *particularized*. When I read

Luke-Acts, I cannot avoid the impression that this is far from obvious. Of course, individuals receive the Spirit, and individuals are called to repentance and are promised all kinds of blessings, but I fail to see convincing proof for the systematic individualization of Spirit baptism in Luke-Acts. Of course, in Paul and the Johannine writings there is clearer evidence that the Spirit is believed to dwell in each individual believer. Think, for instance, of 1 Corinthians 12:11, where it is said that the Spirit allots spiritual gifts 'to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses' (NRSV) (although, admittedly, in Paul much hinges on the interpretation of the formula 'in Christ', which seems to be a corporate rather than a individualistic metaphor). And in the Johannine writings texts such as Jn 3:5 and 7:38–39 (cf. 1 Jn 2:27) are as clear evidence as one can get that the gift of the Spirit is available to every individual (Johannine!) believer.²⁹ But the evidence of the Lucan writings seems to point to a different direction. Being the theologian of salvation history (Conzelmann 1993), Luke is focused on periods, more or less distinct epochs, historical eras, groups of people, communities, etc. The Menzies, again, seem to acknowledge this, inasmuch as they conclude:

It is one thing to assert that the Spirit influences, in an indirect manner (i.e., through the prophetic gift), the ethical life of the Christian community; it is quite another to assert that the Spirit transforms in a direct way the ethical life of each *individual* within the community. This latter notion, although clearly articulated by Paul (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:11), is not a dimension of Luke's pneumatology. (Menzies 2000:89; their italics)

This is a correct observation, I think, but this is precisely the Achilles' heel of the Pentecostal thesis. On what grounds is Spirit baptism—as presented in the Lucan writings—an event to be experienced by each individual member of the community anew?³⁰ *Is it possible to defend the Pentecostal thesis as it stands without recourse to Paul?*

An analogy from Pauline literature may help to illustrate what is the issue here. In Romans 9–11 Paul makes a fervent plea for the trustworthiness of God and his promises of old. That God is faithful to the covenant is evident from the preservation in the present age of 'a holy remnant', and, as Paul explicitly asserts, will be manifest in full when 'all Israel' will be saved (Rom. 9:26). Now, almost all commentators hasten to add that surely Paul does not mean to say that every individual Jew will be rescued—his concern is with ethnic Israel as a nation (people), not with individuals. Hence, the conversion of 'all Israel' is a collective and eschatological event, without necessarily implying the salvation of each individual Jew.³¹ It seems to me that this offers a close analogy to Luke's way of speaking about baptism in the Spirit as both an eschatological and a corporate event.

Luke is concerned to spell out the implications of the work of the Spirit for the new or renewed community of God. He does not seem to make a dogmatic statement about each individual believer throughout the ages, and neither should we.³²

Perhaps a deeper theological, philosophical or pastoral predisposition is at work among both Evangelicals and Pentecostals, viz. (hyper-)individualism. Evangelicals and Pentecostals have traditionally put a great emphasis on the individual character of faith and the need of personal commitment. The message of the gospel is a message for me, for me personally. It demands an individual response and a personal commitment, and we can hardly conceive it otherwise. This existential drive, needless to say, helps to explain to a large degree the success story of both Evangelicals and Pentecostals in the twentieth century (as much as it did in the first-century). But at the beginning of the twenty-first century we begin to realize the constraints and negative aspects of individualism. Hence, a growing number of Evangelicals (and Pentecostals, I presume) become aware of the corporate dimensions of faith and salvation.³³ Traditionally averse to classical covenant theology, they now begin to recognize the valuable aspects of biblical thinking in terms of community and covenant.³⁴ All this must have repercussions on our understanding of the work of the Spirit.

If I may here put in a strongly theological consideration: is it, as far as the evidence of Luke-Acts is concerned, legitimate to speak of the Spirit as a *possession* of individual believers? The gift of the Spirit is *intrinsic* to the community, so to speak, hence every believer participates in the life of the Spirit. But that does not make Spirit baptism an event to be infinitely repeated in each individual believer throughout the ages.

BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT AS PRESENT AND FUTURE

While Spirit baptism in Luke's theology is both eschatological and corporative, Luke describes its effects in strongly experiential terms, as a present and tangible experience. In comparison to at least some utterances of Paul, whose focus is first and foremost on the indwelling of the Spirit in the believer or in the believing community, Luke's writings have a more external, not to say spectacular focus on the visible and experiential effects of Spirit baptism.³⁵ As redaction criticism has taught us long ago, this, indeed, reflects a typically Lucan concern, evidenced in a number of editorial

touches. Different from Mark, Matthew and Q, for instance, Luke explicitly says that the Holy Spirit came down on Jesus 'in bodily form' (Lk. 3:22).³⁶ In the book of Acts, he describes the outpouring of the Spirit in dramatic terms, highlighting acoustic, visual and seismic effects (Acts 2:1–4; 4:31, etc.). Regardless of whether this Lucan tendency is inspired by the wish to demonstrate the reality of Christian experience or to oppose a Gnostic tendency, it is evident that Luke wants to make a statement on the objectivity of the work of the Spirit, which extends not to the spiritual realm and to the future only but to man's physical nature in the present. (See Schweizer 1968:406–407) Luke seems to give full space for the *experience* of faith.

A PARALLEL FROM QUMRAN?

Thus far, the Dead Sea Scrolls have hardly played a role in debates on Spirit baptism.³⁷ But we seem to meet here a similar way of understanding of the work of the Spirit as in the early Christian community. Given the close historical and geographical proximity of the Essenes to the early Christian community in Jerusalem and to Luke-Acts in particular (See Riesner 1998; Sterling 2000a:5–7; idem 2000b:497–498), this does not surprise. As in the New Testament, in the Dead Sea Scrolls the divine Spirit is believed to be at work in both past and future. He is at work in creation, but also at the end of history: in the end-time a full outpouring of the Spirit is expected.³⁸ This, of course, is the traditional Jewish understanding based on the Hebrew Bible. But there are also texts which suggest that the Spirit is already at work in individuals of special stature, such as the Teacher of Righteousness and the Messiah(s),³⁹ and texts that attest belief that the Spirit has already been given to the community of elect as a whole. When initiates enter the Community, the Spirit is granted to them, that is, they come under the dominion of the divine Spirit. (Kuhn 1966:130–136) Émile Puech summarizes the Qumran view of the divine Spirit as follows:

Si Jo[e]l 3:1–2 annonçait pour les temps futurs l'effusion de l'Esprit divin sur toute chair, le qumrano-essénien semble déjà participer à sa manière de cette effusion de l'esprit saint qui, une fois purifié par l'esprit saint et l'eau, lui donne de mener une vie de perfection à l'enseigne de Maîtres (Maître de Justice, Prophètes et consacrés), tout en attendant dans le futur l'effusion définitive. (Puech 1999:290)

This 'already-not yet' tension looks very much like what we find in the New Testament.⁴⁰ Both Qumran and the early Christians were informed by a belief that 'the end of days' was at hand and

that they were living in an eschatological time.⁴¹ Of course, more research is needed to substantiate this point, but I suspect that this is a line of research that would yield promising fruits for our understanding of Luke's view on baptism in the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the analogy between the Dead Sea Scrolls and Luke-Acts is stronger than we would expect at first sight.⁴²

If the Pentecost baptism in the Spirit in Acts 2 is an anticipation of the end-time baptism with spirit and fire, the same can be said about the other outpourings of the Spirit in Acts, regardless of whether they are seen as *repetitions* or as *extensions* of the Pentecost experience. (Ladd 1993:383) They are indeed paradigmatic, but not as models of individual expectation, but as a foretaste of more comprehensive things to come ... Here Luke and Paul come close to one another (Rom. 8:23; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; cf. Eph. 1:13-14).

PENTECOST AS A BARRIER-BREAKING EVENT

That the Joel prophecy taken up in the second chapter of Acts has programmatic significance, cannot be seriously questioned. It is, however, a matter of debate whether the specific interpretation Pentecostals use to give to it, is justified. It is usually suggested that Acts 2 provides a pattern for each individual believer to get access to the charismatic gifts of the Spirit. Hence a different category of believers is created, Spirit-baptised believers or charismatically endowed believers, distinct from believers who are not Spirit-baptised or charismatically endowed. In my view, Luke's universalizing tendency sharply contrasts with the Pentecostal wall of division that separates Spirit-baptised believers from ordinary believers. The essence of Acts 2 seems to me to be rather the contrary: in Acts 2:17–18 the classic walls of division are explicitly broken down: sons *and* daughters are said to prophesy (a prophecy unfortunately only partially fulfilled in many of our Evangelical and Pentecostal communities), young men *and* old men shall dream dreams, and upon slaves, both men *and* women, the Spirit will be poured out. (See Zwiep 2005:35) A two-stage initiation into a fuller Christian experience is simply not in view. On the contrary, the emphasis is on the unifying aspects and the comprehensiveness of the event. In a recent article in *Pneuma*, Mark Lee put much emphasis on the work of the Spirit as an identity-marker and rightly concluded:

When we contend that some disciples are baptised in the Spirit and some are not, we use language that, by definition, places individuals in different communities. It is one thing to

acknowledge differences between disciples of Christ based on levels of maturity, commitment, and spiritual empowerment; it is another to use language that places them in different communities. The general tone of the New Testament resists this type of categorization within the body of Christ; we should resist it as well. (Lee 2004:97)

It is perhaps the irony of history, that it were above all Pentecostals who managed to cross the demarcation lines of ethnicity, class, and gender. Perhaps a reassuring thought that theological reflection and praxis sometimes choose to go different ways.

LUKE AND PAUL IN CANONICAL PERSPECTIVE

Given the different understandings of the work of the Spirit in Luke and Paul, it may be of interest to ask what the effect is of the fact that at a certain point of time both viewpoints were put side-by-side in one and the same book. Historically, of course, it is clear that Paul has won the battle, not least because he had a fuller doctrine of the Spirit than Luke. The primary motif for or at least the dominant effect of adopting the book of Acts into the canon was that it provided a convenient historical substructure for the letters of Paul. For example, Brevard Childs, after having made all due allowances, says that 'the canon has retained the Pauline letters ... within the framework of Acts *which provides hermeneutical guidelines for their interpretation*'. (Childs 1984:240; italics mine) A slightly different accent is given by James Dunn, who thinks that Paul's theology *should* work as a corrective to Luke's enthusiastic and over-charismatic theology (Dunn 1990:174–202.), but the underlying principle is the same: Paul is the centre, Luke belongs to the periphery and plays the role of a servant. This, I think, is a bridge (or several bridges) too far.

I admit that what I am now saying is very hypothetical, but advancing hypotheses (and if need be, revising or even withdrawing them) is part of the academic game. What would happen if we would look at Luke and Paul from an entirely different angle? This point of view, as far as I know, has not been subjected to serious criticism (perhaps material for a thesis?), but I find the idea fascinating nevertheless. Let me explain.

The canonization of Acts has taken a long journey.⁴³ Only in the late second or early third century, the book was accepted, that is, in a period in which the Pauline writings were already a firm part of what we now call the New Testament. The acceptance of Acts is usually explained in

terms of the framework it provides for understanding the ministry and letters of Paul. However, the Church Fathers who composed the canon may have done so with more subtlety than we now tend to think. After all, in the Greek manuscript tradition the position of Acts varies significantly, which at least suggests that Acts was not seen by everyone as providing the framework for Paul but was supposed to have a function of its own.⁴⁴

Paul and especially post-Pauline circles tended to focus on the internal work of the Spirit, the work of the Spirit in the moral renovation of human life. Christian life is life 'in the Spirit', life 'in Christ' and so forth. The risk, of course, would be that Christian life became esoteric, focused on the soul at the expense of reality (Gnosticism, docetism), and we know that subsequent history has taken this unhappy road too often. Luke's two-volume work would be a nice counterbalance in favour of a more comprehensive and realistic understanding of faith. This, once more, is pure speculation, but one can readily see the dynamics behind this kind of reasoning. It is suggestive, at any rate, that Acts is often placed with the Epistle of James, the other competitor of Paul stressing the more visible aspects of Christian life.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In sum, Luke's view of the Spirit differs from Paul's theology in some significant respects. Luke-Acts poorly fits the conversion-initiation thesis nor can it be squeezed into the highly individualized application some Pentecostals make of it. Luke's theology of the Spirit is a needed reminder that salvation and all that it comprises is a community-oriented experience that anticipates the future and is focused on the mission of the Church in proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God. In a culture such as ours, where experience, including religious experience, ranks high, Luke's charismatic theology may be a fruitful avenue into authentic Christian living, probably even more so than in previous generations.

ENDNOTES

¹ This paper was presented at a symposium on the Lucan perspective on the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, organized

by the Chair of Theology of the Charismatic Movement and the Chair of Pentecostalism at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, held on 16 February 2006, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Azusa Street Revival, in particular response to R.P. Menzies.

- ² Menzies, Menzies 2000. Dutch trans. 2005. The Dutch subtitle ('the theology of the Pentecostal movement') is somewhat infelicitous. A very deplorable translation error (if not an outright Freudian slip?) is found on p. 157, where the correct translation should be: 'dat de uitoefening van deze gave [= tongues] ons *niet* naar het hart van de christelijke spiritualiteit voert' ('that the exercise of this gift does not take us to the center of Christian spirituality', p. 142). See also Menzies 1991.
- ³ See the relevant articles in: Wulff 1997; Beit-Hallahmi, Argyle 1997; Spilka, *et al.* 2003. Also Benner 1988.
- ⁴ Especially with regard to the role of religious experience, see Hurtado 2000, summarized in *idem* 2003:64–70, and the literature cited there.
- ⁵ Dunn 1970. See also *idem* 1975; *idem* 1976:692–707. In the same year Dunn published his *Baptism*, another Evangelical scholar, F.D. Bruner, published *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 1970. In retrospect, his book has been much less influential than Dunn's. See for a recent assessment of Dunn's work from a Pentecostal perspective: F.D. Macchia 2002:1–6.
- ⁶ For reviews of scholarship on Lucan pneumatology, see Bovon 2006:213–251, 492–495; Menzies 1991:17–49. Further literature will be found in Mills 1985; Jones 1995.
- ⁷ E.g., the authors instanced by Menzies 2000:37–38 (B. Ramm, J. Stott, G.D. Fee).
- ⁸ Cf. I.H. Marshall's section on 'How Do We Do New Testament Theology?' in 2004:17–48, for a typical Evangelical approach to New Testament theology. Marshall would probably wish to qualify the words 'at all costs'.
- ⁹ Barr 1961:217–219. *Pace* Jackson 1989, the differences between Luke and Paul seem to go beyond the level of mere perspective.
- ¹⁰ Contra Elbert 2004:181–215. The highly apologetic tone of his article is not very conducive to a fruitful debate.
- ¹¹ On the Spirit of Prophecy in Judaism, see Menzies 1991:52–112; Levison 1997:244–254. On its role in Luke-Acts, see, e.g., Turner 1991:124–152; *idem* 1992:66; *idem* 1996; Perry 2005.
- ¹² For the sake of convenience I use the terms '(the) baptism in/with/of the (Holy) Spirit', 'Spirit baptism' etc. in this article indiscriminately.
- ¹³ Stronstad 1984; *idem* 1999. Also Ervin 1984; Menzies 1991:205–279. Their conclusions have been anticipated *inter alios* by Schweizer 1968:412: 'The Spirit [in Luke-Acts] gives the believer a special gift which makes him capable of certain additional expressions of his faith which are essential to, and alone make possible, the ongoing and as yet incomplete history of mission (...) according to Luke the Spirit gives only the power which enables the believer to discharge a special task, to express his faith in concrete action'.

- ¹⁴ Cf. e.g. Acts 11:17, where Peter refers to the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit in the unmistakable context of a reference to salvation ('the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ'). In some cases the specific aim of Spirit Baptism is simply not mentioned (e.g. in Acts 19). In such cases the missionary focus is implied at most. But see Menzies 2000:51 ('exclusively'), p. 70 ('exclusively'), p. 72 ('exclusively'), p. 89 ('exclusively'), p. 133 ('consistently'). A more cautious approach is taken by Wesleyan theologian Dunning 1988:418–424, who interprets the work of the Spirit in Luke-Acts in terms of both moral renewal (sanctification) and endowment for prophecy.
- ¹⁵ Illustrative of the Evangelical openness towards the Pentecostal and charismatic renewal are e.g. Mallone, *et al.* 1984, and the writings of C.H. Pinnock and S.J. Grenz.
- ¹⁶ Cf. Schweizer 1968:414: '(...) precisely in Acts the freedom of the Spirit is strongly emphasized'. Schweizer makes his statement in the context of the role of baptism. Cf. in similar vein: Witherington 1998:154–155.
- ¹⁷ Cf. Berger 1984:194: 'Alles, was die christliche Gemeinde in besonderem Maße auszeichnet, wird unter die Vorzeichen des Endes eingereiht und daher strikt eschatologisch gedeutet. So wird die gängige Meinung widerlegt, Lk sei ein Vertreter der Enteschatologisierung'.
- ¹⁸ So e.g. Dunn 1970:8–22; idem 1972:84–86; idem 2003:364–369 (and n.144); Nolland 1989:152–153. What the precise metaphor of the Spirit-baptiser's activity entails is immaterial to our purpose. See Webb 1991:103–111.
- ¹⁹ Q 3:7-9, 16-17. References to Q material are from Robinson, Hoffmann, Kloppenborg (1999). With regard to eschatology in Q, Tuckett 1996:163, concludes that 'large parts of Q are dominated by ideas of a futurist eschatology' and that 'the Q editor impresses the importance of the future eschatological events which will probably come sooner rather than later'. So also the recent doctoral dissertation by Gregg 2006.
- ²⁰ I realize that 'anticipation' is a slippery term, but as yet I fail to see an alternative. The language of anticipation is also employed by Horn 1992:268. Here, incidentally, we touch upon an issue that is a matter of debate especially in German theology, but less relevant to the present discussion. Is Pentecost a *replacement* (Ersatz) for the parousia, or is it—as I have tried to argue elsewhere—an *anticipation* of the End? See the brief survey in: Zwiep 1997, and the relevant sections in Zwiep 2004.
- ²¹ Cf. Schweizer 1968:411 (his italics). See also idem 1986:215–219 ('Endgültiges Kommen und Endgeschichte').
- ²² This seems to be different again from the Johannine Paraclete sayings, where there is a neat balance between blessing and judgment.
- ²³ See Menzies 2000:171–177 for a needed corrective. See also Mittelstadt 2004.
- ²⁴ See esp. Lee 2004:81–98: 'Just as Torah served as an identity marker for Jews, the Spirit would become the main identity marker for the new covenant community' (p. 88). Cf. Jervell 1996:45: in Acts, the Spirit is 'the distinguishing mark of the people of God'; idem 1998:97–99; Wall 1999:219.
- ²⁵ Also: the whole point of the reconstitution of the twelve apostles in Acts 1:15–26 is their functioning as a group, as representatives of new or renewed Israel. The individuality of the members of the group is less important, with Matthias as the most obvious example: he is chosen to be the twelfth member and subsequently nothing is heard of him anymore.

- ²⁶ Menzies 2000:94; their italics. Also Menzies 1991:140: '... we search in vain for a reference to a messianic bestowal of the Spirit which purifies and morally transforms the individual'.
- ²⁷ Menzies 2000:94; italics mine. This is what Peter Schäfer 1984:176 calls the 'national-heilsgeschichtliche Konzept'.
- ²⁸ Menzies 2000:114; italics mine. Also: 'Everyone is included in the promise' (of the Joel prophecy) (p. 155, italics mine).
- ²⁹ See Stefan 2005:273–296, who concludes that 'the Johannine community was a community in which the prophetic gift of the Spirit was available to each believer' (p. 293).
- ³⁰ Witherington 1998:132 arrives at the same conclusion: 'Luke's focus in this passage [= Acts 2:1–13] is on one event that happened to the early followers of Jesus as a corporate gathering, but then affected many others because of their witness. Luke is not trying to give us a detailed description or chronology of individual Christian experience. It is quite clear that in crucial ways this event is unique. It is the beginning of the creation of God's eschatological people, properly speaking. It is the empowering of them to do their job—witness to Christ'.
- ³¹ A point which hardly needs substantiation, but see Fitzmyer 1993:623; Witherington 2004:275.
- ³² At first sight, Lk. 11:13 (the prayer for the coming of the Spirit) and Acts 2:38–39 seem to be exceptions. But Lk. 11:13 is clearly a community prayer (note the plural *tois aitousin*), and Acts 2:38–39 is naturally read in a corporate setting: Peter said to them, 'Repent ['which, in the plural, is presumably addressed to the whole house of Israel (v. 35)', Barrett 1998:153] and be baptized every one of you ('which is specifically directed to the individual members of the crowd', *ibid.* pp. 153–154) in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you (plural) will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him'. Cf. Jervell 1998:150 (on Acts 2:38): 'Das Ergebnis der Taufe ist die Vergebung der Sünden und die Gabe des heiligen Geistes. Der Geist ist keine Sondergabe an einzelne, sondern wird jedem Gemeindeglied gegeben, gehört so zur Gemeinde und wird bei der Taufe gegeben. Das ist überall in der Apg so ...'.
- ³³ See now Thomas 2005:7–8, who mentions the notion of community as one of the defining characteristics of twenty-first century Pentecostal theology.
- ³⁴ Grenz 2000:314–315 and *passim*. In biblical scholarship this tendency is not least inspired by the so-called New Perspective of E.P. Sanders and J.D.G. Dunn. See also the work of N.T. Wright.
- ³⁵ Or, to use the words of Barrett 1998, 2:lxxxiv, Luke is focused on 'the shallower and showier aspects of Christian life'.
- ³⁶ This tendency is broader than pneumatology only. At the resurrection appearances Luke emphasizes the bodily nature of the risen Lord's body (Lk. 24:39–43; Acts 1:3).
- ³⁷ Menzies 1991:77–90 is a notable exception.
- ³⁸ 1QS 4:18–25. Texts and translations have been drawn from García Martínez, Tigchelaar 2000:78–79 (henceforth abbreviated as *DSS.SE*).
- ³⁹ In the *Thanksgiving Hymns*, for example, it says: 'I give you [thanks] for the spirits [plural!] which you placed in me' (1QH^a IV, 17; *DSS.SE* 1:148–149); 'And I, your servant, have known thanks to the spirit you have placed in me' (1QH^a V, 24–25; *DSS.SE* 1:150–151).

- ⁴⁰ Cf. the classic treatment by Cullmann 1962; idem 1967, followed *inter alios* by Ladd 1980; idem 1993, and Ridderbos 1985.
- ⁴¹ See especially Kuhn 1966; Penner 2002. On Qumran eschatology, see further Collins 2000:256–261, and the literature cited there.
- ⁴² On this topic, see further Deasly 1986; Sekki 1989; Puech 1999. It somewhat surprises to see that there is no article on the doctrine of the two spirits / divine Spirit in the *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*.
- ⁴³ On the canonization of Acts, see Barrett 1998, 2:lxiii–lxxii.
- ⁴⁴ For the Greek manuscript tradition, see the data in: Swanson 1998:509–513.

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