

The Holy Spirit and the Church according to the New Testament

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Edited by

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The Work of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts: A Western Perspective

Daniel Marguerat

Let me begin *in medias res*. A very odd story is recorded in chapter 19 of the book of Acts: the “Johannites of Ephesus”. This story has long puzzled scholars. The text states that the apostle Paul returning to Ephesus comes across “some disciples” (19:1). So Paul asks, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?” They answer, “We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit!” Paul continues, “To what then were you baptized?” And they say, “The baptism of John!” Paul then declares, “John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” After hearing Paul, the disciples are baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus and when Paul has laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit comes upon them; they speak in tongues and prophesy (19:2–6).¹

What a strange story! Scholars have asked: Where do these people come from? Where do these “disciples” come from, who know nothing of the Holy Spirit and only know the baptism of John? This question has greatly occupied scholars since Ferdinand Christian Baur in the mid-nineteenth century. But it is not only theologians of the *Western perspective* who have wondered about them. To our knowledge, St. John Chrysostom is the first to have declared that these people were disciples of John the Baptist.² It was inconceivable to him that Christians should only know the baptism of John and have no knowledge of the Spirit. This viewpoint has also been supported by many scholars. Today, however, the tide has turned. Most experts on the book of Acts agree, and in my opinion correctly, that the group called the “Johannites of Ephesus” is a Christian group.³ Two clues lead to this outcome. *First*, they

¹ Biblical quotations follow the NRSV.

² *Homilia in Acta Apostolorum* 40.536d.

³ A. LOISY, *Les Actes des Apôtres* (Paris, 1920), 711; E. KÄSEMANN, “Die Johannsjünger in Ephesus,” in KÄSEMANN, *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen I* (Göttingen, 1964), 162 (“ein unausgereiftes Christentum”); F. AVEMARIE, *Die Tauferezählungen der Apostelgeschichte* (WUNT 139; Tübingen, 2002), 438–439 (a Christianity without knowledge of the Spirit); K. BACKHAUS, *Die “Jüngerkreise” des Täufers Johannes* (Paderborn, 1991), 207–212 (adherents of the pre-Easter Jesus). State of research: W. THIES-

are called “disciples” (μαθηταί) by the narrator, but the term μαθητής in Acts refers without exception to followers of Jesus.⁴ *Second* clue: Paul asks them if they received the Holy Spirit when they “became believers” (πιστεύσαντες, 19:2); their act of faith is considered as a past event (the verb πιστεύω is in the aorist), which Paul does not question, and besides, Paul does not convert them. The question only becomes trickier: How can Christians stand apart from baptism in Jesus and the Holy Spirit?

I will not resolve here the question of the origin of this group, which Luke estimates at a dozen men (19:7). I only note that Luke gives us here very valuable historical information: in the middle of the first century C.E., there were groups linked with faith in Jesus who performed a baptism of water the way John the Baptist did – a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3) – but without reference to the Holy Spirit. “As for me, I baptize you with water”, says the Baptist in the Gospel, “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Luke 3:16). Jesus was to explicitly ratify what we may call the disqualification of Johannine baptism prior to Pentecost: “John baptised with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days.” (Acts 1:5) Paul in Acts is fully in line with this perspective: John baptized with a baptism of repentance, but he adds that the Baptist told the people to “believe in the one who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus” (19:4).⁵ The preparatory value of the Baptist’s baptism is heightened; John himself was pointing to faith in Jesus. The group is then baptized, and when Paul lays hands on them, they receive the Holy Spirit, which is visibly evident through glossolalia and prophecy: “they spoke in tongues and prophesied” (19:6).

Why did I choose to start with this strange story, which represents the only case of re-baptism in the New Testament? I choose it because it illustrates perfectly the understanding of the Holy Spirit in Acts. It tells us three things:

- a) The Christian condition is irrevocably linked to the action of the Spirit, beginning with the founding event, which is Pentecost (Acts 2);
- b) The Holy Spirit works over and within the believers (this action in Ephesus is materialized through glossolalia and prophecy);
- c) The gift of the Spirit is related to baptism.

These three themes will form the three parts of my presentation on Lukan pneumatology. I will discuss the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost (1), then its

SEN, *Christen in Ephesus. Die historische und theologische Situation in vorpaulinischer und paulinischer Zeit und zur Zeit der Apostelgeschichte und der Pastoralbriefe* (TANZ 12; Tübingen, 1995), 61–70; S. SHAU, *Theology as History, History as Theology: Paul in Ephesus in Acts 19* (BZNW 133; Berlin, 2005), 107–110.

⁴ Acts 6:1, 2, 7; 9:1, 10, 19, 25, 26, 38; 11:26, 29; 13:52; 14:20, 22, 28; 15:10; etc.

⁵ See my *Paul in Acts and Paul in His Letters* (WUNT 310; Tübingen, 2013), 22–47.

modes of operation among believers (2), and finally the link between baptism and the Holy Spirit (3).⁶

1. The Spirit of Pentecost

Announced by the Risen One at the end of the Gospel (Luke 24:49) and confirmed at the beginning of Acts (Acts 1:5.8), the coming of the Spirit occurs at Pentecost. From the Lukan perspective, Pentecost is the founding event of the Church. It is indeed from Pentecost onwards that the twelve disciples become apostles, that is to say, acting witnesses of the Risen One in the world according to his promise:

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (1:8)

Let us note at the outset that the Church is born of the coming of the Holy Spirit. This coming is a constituent part of the birth of the Church, so much so that for Luke, a Church devoid of the Spirit is unthinkable. This is the

⁶ Selected bibliography on the pneumatology of Luke-Acts: H. VON BAER, *Der Heilige Geist in den Lukasschriften* (BWANT III.3; Stuttgart, 1926); G. BETORI, "Le spirito e l'annuncio della parola negli Atti degli Apostoli," *RivBib* 35 (1987), 399–441; F. BOVON, *Luc le théologien* (3d ed.; Le Monde de la Bible 5; Genève, 2006), 207–251; F. F. BRUCE, "The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles," *Interpretation* 27 (1973), 166–183; M.-A. CHEVALIER, "Luc et l'Esprit saint," *RSR* 56 (1982), 1–16; J. D. G. DUNN, *The Christ and the Spirit* (vol. 2; Edinburgh, 1998), 207–242; J. A. FITZMYER, "The Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts," in *The Unity of Luke-Acts* (ed. J. Verheyden; BEThL 142; Leuven, 1999), 165–183; A. GEORGE, "L'Esprit Saint dans l'oeuvre de Luc," *RB* 85 (1978), 500–542; H. GIESEN, "Der Heilige Geist als Ursprung und treibende Kraft des christlichen Lebens," in GIESEN, *Glaube und Handeln* 2 (Frankfurt, 1983); G. HAYA-PRATS, *L'Esprit, force de l'Eglise* (LeDiv 81; Paris, 1975); J. H. E. HULL, *The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles* (Lutterworth, 1967); J. HUR, *A Dynamic Reading of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* (JSNTSup 211; Sheffield, 2001); O. MAINVILLE, *L'Esprit dans l'oeuvre de Luc* (Montréal, 1991); D. MARGUERAT, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the "Acts of the Apostles"* (SNTSMS 121; Cambridge, 2002), 109–128; R. P. MENZIES, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (JPTS 6; Sheffield, 1994); W. H. SHEPHERD, *The Narrative Function of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* (SBLDS 147; Atlanta, 1994); J. B. SHELTON, *Mighty in Word and Deed: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Peabody, 1991); M. B. TURNER, "Jesus and the Spirit in Lucan Perspective," *TynB* 32 (1981), 3–42; TURNER, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (JPTS 9; Sheffield, 1996); A. WUCHERPFENNIG, "Acta Spiritus Sancti. Die Bedeutung der vier Sendungen des Geistes für die Apostelgeschichte," *ThPh* 88 (2013), 194–210; A. W. ZWIEP, *Christ, the Spirit and the Community of God: Essays on the Acts of the Apostles* (WUNT II.293; Tübingen, 2010), 100–119.

reason why Paul, in Ephesus, was to reduce that aberration – that is, a Johanne belief – to a Christian condition without Spirit.⁷

1.1 Jesus and the Spirit

The Spirit then comes at Pentecost. But what was the situation before Pentecost? In the infancy narrative, Luke speaks of the Holy Spirit that John the Baptist is filled with (Luke 1:15), like his mother Elizabeth (1:41) and his father Zechariah (1:67). We perceive here the OT concept of the Breath that animates inspired men and women. But a curious thing happens. From his birth onward, Jesus alone is the beneficiary of the Spirit. We can say this even more pointedly: from birth, Jesus exclusively monopolizes the Spirit. It is credited to no other. Why this focus on Jesus? The answer lies in the angelic revelation to Mary: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.” (Luke 1:35) Whichever way one interprets this verse – and these ways are different among us – one thing is clear: the child to be born is the work and the will of God through his Spirit.⁸

This intervention of the Spirit, which explains the unique status of the Son, is to be achieved in Jesus through both therapeutic power (his miracles) and the therapeutic effect of his word (his teaching). His inaugural sermon in Nazareth clearly states that in the words of Isaiah 61:1–2:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, to return sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18–19)

“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”, said Jesus to the surprised and scandalized listeners of the synagogue in Nazareth. From then till the end of the Gospel, the Spirit is related to Jesus only. In other words: *Jesus is the only charismatic of the Gospel before Easter, but he is that as the Son, that is to say, as no one else was to be.*

1.2 The Post-Easter Coming of the Spirit to Believers

Therefore, Luke confines to Pentecost the coming of the Holy Spirit to believers. He makes it very clear through the words of the apostle Peter in his Pentecost speech:

Exalted at the right hand of God, [Christ] has thus received the promised Holy Spirit from the Father and he has poured out this, which you see and hear. (2:33)

Nevertheless, this formulation is curious. Did Jesus not already possess the Spirit? Yes, but it is with the Spirit destined for believers that Christ is now

⁷ Some parts of the following exposé go back to my book, *The First Christian Historian*, 109–128 (n. 6).

⁸ See M. B. TURNER, “Jesus and the Spirit in Lucan Perspective” (n. 6).

endowed. In this conception of the Spirit, both attributed to Jesus and destined for believers, Luke marries two Jewish scriptural traditions without confusion. One endows the Messiah with the Spirit (Isa 11:2; 42:1; 61:1), while the other attributes the Spirit to the regenerated people of God (Num 11:29; Ezek 39:29; Joel 3:1). In fact, in the same declaration, Luke articulates three affirmations:

- 1) the Spirit only appears after the Resurrection;
- 2) it emanates from the Father and
- 3) it is transmitted by the Son.⁹

A pretty pre-Trinitarian formula indeed. Dating the coming of the Spirit after the Resurrection, is not original to Luke. He expresses a conviction shared by the whole of early Christianity: the pouring out of the Spirit was a post-Easter reality; it is not the work of the earthly Jesus but of the risen Christ (John 15:26; 16:7; 20:22; Gal 4:6; 2 Cor 3:17; cf. Matt 28:19–20). Historically, Jesus himself seems to have spoken little of the Spirit whom he did not give to his disciples. This historical fact is confirmed by the hesitation of the first Christians to project their charismatic experience into the Gospels. As a result, for Luke, as for the first Christians, Jesus is the sole bearer of the Spirit before Easter and as the Risen One is the mediator of the Spirit to the believers.

1.3 Spirit of Pentecost

But what happens at Pentecost? In Acts 2, Luke attributes to the *pneuma* a precise function: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (1:8). The Spirit is a power; he enables the disciples to be witnesses of Jesus from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Once again, what is of interest in this programmatic verse is that it locates the origin of the venture of Christianity in the founding gift of the Spirit. Moreover, *the gift of the Spirit is the power to “be Church” in witnessing to Jesus*. The entire unfolding of the mission in Acts confirms this function of the Spirit as the enabling power to witness.

Luke has edited the Pentecost narrative (2:1–13) in a way that evokes the great theophanies of the Hebrew Bible, but especially the gift of the Law at Sinai (Exod 19:8, 16–19 LXX). The Spirit is both visible and audible: the sound of the storm, the flames of fire that come down on each of the Twelve, the noise that arises from the many languages’ being spoken! In my opinion, Luke has rewritten a traditional narrative that was centered on speaking in tongues and has transformed it into an event of universal communication: the strange formula “to speak in other languages” (λαλεῖν ἑτέραις γλώσσαις,

⁹ O. MAINVILLE sees in Acts 2:33 the key verse of Luke’s pneumatology (*L’Esprit dans l’oeuvre de Luc*, p. 49–316) (n. 6).

2:4b) could be a rereading of an original expression known to the first Christians: “to speak in tongues” (λαλεῖν γλώσσαις, Acts 10:46; 19:6; 1 Cor 12:30; 13:1; 14:2.39). From this perspective, Luke turned glossolalia into xenolalia.¹⁰ Anyway, in its present state, the text describes this miracle: the Twelve lose their Galilean particularism and become the core of the universal Church (2:6–11). The crowd gathered in Jerusalem, composed of Jews from the entire Roman Empire coming on pilgrimage to the feast, can understand in their own language what the apostles say. The miracle is that this core of the Church, consisting of the twelve disciples of Jesus, makes the great acts of God understandable to the Jewish crowd in Jerusalem, which symbolically represents a microcosm, a kaleidoscope of nations, the entire *oikumene*.

In his speech, Peter interprets the event using the quotation from Joel 3:1–5, which promises the coming of the Spirit upon the entire population.

So in the last days, says God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams; yes, on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days I will pour out my Spirit and they shall prophesy. (2:17–18)

These last words “and they shall prophesy” were added by Luke to the Greek text of Joel. (I will come back to this below). I emphasize the fact that the gift of the Spirit, announced for the end of time by the prophet and now realized, is granted to all classes of people, sons and daughters, young and old, male and female slaves. This text was not chosen at random by Luke; he certifies that the Holy Spirit, reserved in the Jewish tradition for the few greatly inspired (prophets in the first instance), now reaches everyone.¹¹ We can talk of Pentecost as a *democratization of the Spirit in the heart of the Christian community*.

To sum up: the Church, created by the Spirit through this birth, has four distinctive features: a) it is a missionary community, not by vocation but by definition; b) everyone in the community receives the Spirit in order to testify, a sign of the eschatological times; c) the witness of the Church has a uni-

¹⁰ E. LOHSE, “Die Bedeutung des Pfingstberichtes im Rahmen des lukanischen Geschichtswerkes,” *EvTh* 13 (1953), 422–436; repr. in LOHSE, *Die Einheit des Neuen Testaments* (Göttingen, 1973), 178–192, esp. 190. C. Wolf asserts to the contrary that the pre-Lukan tradition already presents λαλεῖν ἑτέραις γλώσσαις with the meaning of speaking in foreign tongues (“λαλεῖν γλώσσαις in the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Paul, Luke and the Graeco-Roman World: Essays in Honour of A. J. M. Wedderburn* (eds. A. Christophersen, C. Claussen, J. Frey, and B. Longenecker; JSNTSup 217; Sheffield, 2002), 189–199.

¹¹ G. Gilbert has shown the influence here of the universalism of Roman propaganda; the Lukan response is that universality can only be realized by the Spirit: “The List of Nations in Acts 2: Roman Propaganda and the Lukan Response,” *JBL* 121 (2002), 497–529.

versal scope; d) the Church cannot understand herself without her roots anchored in Israel.

1.4 Pentecost: the Reminders

But Pentecost is not the only Pentecostal event in the narrative of Acts. Surprisingly, a Pentecost-like event is repeated twice: at the meeting of the apostle Peter in the house of Cornelius (10:44–48) and the Johannites of Ephesus baptized by Paul (19:6). Such recurrence, typical of the Lukan vision of history, shows how God drives his community in order to enlarge the Pentecostal nucleus to worldwide dimensions.¹² The Spirit drives the community of believers in spite of itself to reach beyond the boundaries of Israel, to go beyond the limits of the Law, to exceed the boundaries of Asia and to arrive in Rome, the world's center. On the occasion of these expansions, a reminder of the first Pentecost echoes – here clearly, there vaguely.¹³

Let me show this. First, Samaria is won over, evangelized by Philip (Acts 8) and the Samaritans “receive the Holy Spirit” from the hands of Peter and John (8:17). But the decisive opening to the Gentiles occurs in the encounter of Peter and Cornelius, an event superbly narrated by Luke (Acts 10:1–48), which should be called the conversion of Peter rather than of Cornelius.¹⁴ Facing two assaults from God, through an ecstatic experience and then a message of the Spirit (10:9–16, 19–20), Peter has to come to grips with the unbelievable: the Holy Spirit falls on the house of Cornelius, for the first time incorporating Gentiles into the community but at the same time destroying the centuries-old barrier that separated the Gentiles from the people of God. Faith in Christ no longer proceeds by way of the Torah. Peter tells the story in a beautiful exercise of a theological reading of reality:

As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God? (11:15–17)

The key argument of Peter is: to baptize amounts to endorsing God's action, which drove the event and placed Gentiles and Jews on an equal footing. The unexpected arrival of the Spirit, which swept down on the house of Cornelius, has the effect of status equalization between Israel and the nations. Most importantly, this theological reading of the event acknowledges God's initia-

¹² E. RICHARD, “Pentecost as a Recurrent Theme in Luke-Acts,” in *New Views on Luke and Acts* (ed. E. Richard; Collegeville, 1990), 133–149.

¹³ M. GOURGUES, “Esprit des prolongements et Esprit des prolongements dans les Actes: Note sur la 'Pentecôte des Samaritains' (Act., VIII, 5–25),” *RB* 93 (1986), 376–385.

¹⁴ There is no change in Cornelius's life but in Peter's theological conviction (10:28).

tive that goes beyond the Church and with which the Church must comply. *The Holy Spirit is recognized as the medium through which God precedes his own and leads history.*

Following this second Pentecost we have come to call the “Pentecost of the Gentiles”, the Spirit continues to direct the progress of the Church. The selection of Barnabas and Paul for the first missionary journey to the Gentiles is ordered by the Spirit (13:2). Paul and Silas’s leaving Asia is motivated by the Spirit who blocks all other paths, forcing them to go towards Europe (16:6–10). A pouring out of glossolalia of the Pentecost type takes place in Ephesus, as we saw before (19:6). Then the apostle to the Gentiles, who understands that he is “bound in the Spirit” (20:22), sets off for Jerusalem, where the long route to martyrdom that will lead him to Rome begins. In each of these pivotal episodes, where salvation history moves to a higher level, it is the Spirit that draws the believing community ahead in order that the plan of God may be accomplished.

I conclude this first point. It has allowed us to see that the story of Pentecost is the Lukan version of a common belief among early Christians: the post-Easter coming of the Spirit given by the Risen Lord to his disciples. The recurrence of the unexpected coming of the Holy Spirit embodies the acts of God in history, who precedes and leads his people to spread the Word in the world. This ongoing initiative of God through the Spirit explains why Oecumenius, a Father of the seventh century, has nicknamed the second book of Luke *Acta Spiritus sancti*. Or to say it with a recent commentator: the Holy Spirit is “a character” in the Lukan narrative.¹⁵ There are 106 mentions of πνεῦμα in the Gospel and in Acts, which amounts to 28% of the New Testament occurrences of the term. Of the three great theologians of the Holy Spirit in the NT – namely, Paul, Luke, and John – *Luke is the only one who narrates the work of the Spirit*. He is alone in developing a narrative pneumatology, which contrary to Paul and John does not explain, does not argue, but shows the Spirit at work. In this regard, I would say that he develops a *pragmatics of the Spirit*, which leaves the reader here or there in the dark.

2. The Activity of the Spirit

My second point is to ask the question: How does the action of the Spirit become a reality? How does the Spirit work in the hearts of believers?

The first thing to mention has already emerged in our reading of the first Pentecost. The Spirit makes the apostles speak; he enables them to communicate understandable words about God and his wonders (2:4.11). If the gift of tongues can be described as an ecstatic gift, it does in no way consist in dis-

¹⁵ W. H. SHEPHERD, *The Narrative Function* (n. 6).

possessing the individual and acting in his place. On the contrary, the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit makes the apostles into agents of communication, actors in spreading the Word. The Spirit makes the apostles witnessing subjects. It does not act without raising the strength and intelligence of the testimony in the believers.¹⁶

2.1 A Witnessing Spirit

An original dimension of Luke's pneumatology, when compared to that of Paul and John, thus emerges: *the Holy Spirit is the power of witnessing given to the believer*. Is the Spirit at the origin of faith, as Paul clearly affirms (1 Cor 12:3.9)? Luke never says so, and it remains an obscure point with him.¹⁷ Maybe he respects human freedom too much to give the impression that God would alienate the individual by instilling faith in him. Regardless, in Luke-Acts, the Spirit comes after faith to give the individual the power to testify.¹⁸ A statement from Peter to the crowd at Pentecost plays a programmatic role in this regard: "Repent, let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you shall receive the gift the Holy Spirit." (2:38)¹⁹ Carefully note the sequence: conversion / baptism for the forgiveness of sins / gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit comes last like a grace granted to the believer after his/her integration into the community through baptism.

For the author of Acts, since Pentecost, the Spirit gives the believer the power to speak clearly. That is why, in Acts 2, the traditional formula λαλεῖν γλώσσαις has been reinterpreted as λαλεῖν ἑτέροις γλώσσαις (2:4b). In both echoes of the first Pentecost that we observe in the book, the same emphasis is noticeable. In the house of Cornelius where the "Pentecost of the Gentiles" takes place, it is said that listeners "heard them speaking in tongues and celebrating the greatness of God" (λαλοῦντων γλώσσαις καὶ μεγαλυνόντων τὸν θεόν, 10:46). Here, the καί has a consecutive value:

¹⁶ J.-N. ALETTI, "Esprit et témoignage dans le livre des Actes," in *Raconter, interpréter, annoncer: Parcours de Nouveau Testament: Mélanges offerts à Daniel Marguerat pour son 60^e anniversaire* (ed. E. Steffek and Y. Bourquin; Le Monde de la Bible 47; Genève, 2003), 225–238.

¹⁷ One possible exception: Acts 15:9 speaks of God's motive of "cleansing their hearts by faith" (oral communication of D. P. Moessner).

¹⁸ A. W. Zwiép is right in observing that the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost is a "corporate event" (*Christ, the Spirit and the Community of God*, 110–114 [n. 6]). But he does not take into account that the activity of the Spirit is more and more individualized as the narrative goes on (10:19; 11:12, 28; 13:4, 9; 15:28; 20:22–23; 20:28; 21:4, 11). See my statistics in *The First Christian Historian*, 110–113 (n. 6).

¹⁹ K. ALAND, "Zur Vorgeschichte der christlichen Taufe," in *Neues Testament und Geschichte: Festschrift O. Cullman* (ed. H. Baltensweiler and B. Reicke; Tübingen, 1972), 1–14.

they speak in tongues *and consequently* celebrate the greatness of God. Luke is keen to point out that this ecstatic speaking consists in praising God and that it is decipherable as such. The same intent can be spotted during the baptism of the Ephesian Johannites by Paul: “they spoke in tongues and prophesied” (ἐλάλουν τε γλώσσαις καὶ ἐπροφήτευσον, 19:6). Speaking in tongues is reinterpreted here as a prophecy; one needs to remember that the same author had annotated the quotation in Joel 3:2 in 2:18 by adding “and they shall prophesy” (καὶ προφητεύσουσιν). If the Spirit empowers the testimony, it is similar to prophecy. Luke here walks on the safe ground of the Hebrew Bible, which strongly identifies the divine Breath with the spirit of prophecy. It is as human beings inhabited by the Spirit that Peter (4:8), Stephen (6:5, 7:55), Agabus (11:28), Paul (13:9; 19:21), the Jerusalem community (4:31; 15:28), and Apollos (18:25) contribute to the spreading of the word of God.

2.2 *A Spirit of Communion*

What has been less noted in research, which has focused primarily on the prophetic dimension of Lukan pneumatology, is its ethical dimension. I would like to show this in conjunction with the three summaries that punctuate the early chapters of Acts. The first is the best known one:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (2:42–47)

This summary operates in the narrative of Acts as the programmatic demonstration of unity in the faith community, a communion (κοινωνία) as much spiritual as it is material, realized both in prayer and in the division of property. Luke delivers here the ethical programme of the Church.²⁰ What is the relationship with the Spirit? At first glance, the text does not present any. But to stop there is to commit the methodological error – frequent in exegesis – of failing to examine the text rigorously in its literary context.

Where is this first summary placed? In a way, it concludes the long Pentecostal sequence that includes the account of the event, Peter's speech, and the reaction of the people. Verse 42 goes on without any transition, whereas the beginning of chapter 3 marks a break (change of time and location). Luke

²⁰ On this text, see my commentary: *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)* (CNT 5a; Genève, 2007), 99–110.

actually conceives the Pentecostal sequence from 2:1 to 2:46 as a whole, culminating with the summary. This literary composition requires interpretation in terms of its overall theological effects, and in my opinion, the following conclusion is necessary: the outpouring of the Spirit reaches its climax in the unification of the believing community. Even if we refuse to see in the Spirit the new Torah's regulating Christian existence and Pentecost's functioning as a new Sinai revelation, it remains true that *the irruption of the breath of God, creating the Church, finds its ethical realization in the unity of believers*. Edgar Haulotte has spoken well of "life in communion, the ultimate phase of Pentecost".²¹

The result is even clearer with regard to the second summary (4:32–35). It expands more realistically the practice of property division in the community. After giving a positive model of sharing in the person of Joseph, called Barnabas (4:36–37), there is the famous (and terrible) example of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1–11). Seeing they sold a piece of property for the benefit of the community and, without saying so, retained a part of the sum, Ananias and Sapphira are unmasked by Peter and struck down at his feet. The sentence of death that eliminates them is carefully justified: "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land?" (5:3) I propose the following reading for this text: the crime of the couple is not in withholding finances, but in offending against the principle of sharing everything in common (4:32). Ananias and Sapphira have not sinned against morality; their offence is not just a lie, or even the desire to retain part of the proceeds (Peter recognizes this in 5:4). They resisted the action of the Spirit in hiding not a part of their wealth but a part of themselves. They have sinned against the Spirit in his work of creating unity among the believers. Acts 5, then, is the picture of original sin in the Church, which introduces the Christian community to the realm of the equivocal. The reader learns of how the Church, in its infancy, was directed by the Spirit while being exposed as well to Satan and how God has protected it (in a terrible way) from the attacks of evil.²²

Let us conclude this second point. When working in the heart of believers, the Holy Spirit empowers witnessing, whereby the baptized share in spreading the Word around the world. But it also leads to a community life, whereby it participates in the building up of unity in the Church. In this sense, the Spirit works for the emergence of a truly human brotherhood. If we connect this relational dimension to the "Pentecost of the Gentiles" (Acts 10), where

²¹ E. HAULOTTE, "La vie en communion, phase ultime de la Pentecôte," *CBFV 19* (Paris, 1981), 69–75.

²² See D. MARGUERAT, *The First Christian Historian*, 155–178 (n. 6). Recently, A. LE DONNE, "The Improper Temple Offering of Ananias and Sapphira," *NTS 59* (2013), 346–364.

the irruption of the Spirit sanctions the destruction of the ancient barrier between clean and unclean, between Jews and non-Jews (10:28.34–35), we can speak of the Spirit as *a participant in the creation of an open “social identity”*.²³ To recognize the admission of Gentiles into the covenant of salvation and to integrate them by baptism is to be oriented towards an allocentric stance, open to others.

These considerations ought to provide a deterrent to the endless discussion on the absence of the “sanctifying Spirit” in the pneumatology of Luke.²⁴ While it is true that Luke does not focus on the future of believers in the new life, his insistence on naming the *κοινωνία* in the number of the *notae ecclesiae* (2:42) signals, to those who wish to hear, that this theologian is not indifferent to the path the Spirit opens in the heart of the converted.

3. Spirit and Baptism

The above-mentioned instructions of Peter to the Jerusalem crowd at the first Pentecost allow me to set the problem. I recall the text: “Repent, let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you shall receive the gift the Holy Spirit.” (2:38) The formulation is as clear as the three-stage structure: conversion / baptism / reception of the Spirit. In the clause *καὶ λήψετε τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος*, the *καὶ* has a consecutive value: let everyone be baptized for the forgiveness of sins and *as a consequence* “you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”. Note that baptism in Acts is never called a “gift” (*δωρεά*). The author of the gift is none other than God, obviously. Systematizing a bit, I suggest that in this process, conversion is the human part while the gift of the Spirit is the divine part; between the two, baptism is a ritual act where God’s action and human action are combined. (This is why Christian dogmatics has given it the name *sacramentum*.) Thus, the instructions in 2:38 provide a well balanced approach on the part of both human beings and God in the process of integrating individuals into the community of salvation.

The problem does not arise from this verse but from the fact that the story does not completely confirm the rule that it implements. Namely, on three occasions, the sequence of 2:38 is broken. In 8:14–17, while the Samaritans were baptized by Philip the Hellenist, Peter and John come down from Jerusalem that they may receive the Holy Spirit. Another exception is found in 10:44–48 (the “Pentecost of the Gentiles”), where Cornelius and his relatives receive the Spirit though they have not been baptized. And finally, the episode of the Ephesian Johannites (19:1–7), where a baptism in the name of

²³ A. WUCHERPFENNIG, “Acta Spiritus Sancti” (n. 6).

²⁴ See F. BOVON, *Luc le théologien*, 207–251 (n. 6).

Jesus Christ grants the Spirit to Christians already baptized, but through John's baptism, which is a baptism of water. How does Luke manage the relationship between baptism and Spirit? Should we think of water baptism as distinct from the gift of the Spirit? Or should we think that the rule stated by Peter in Jerusalem is an ideal that is not confirmed in ecclesial practice?

3.1 *The Pentecost of the Gentiles*

We begin with the Pentecost of the Gentiles. What was said before on the significance of the coming of the Spirit enables us to understand this odd pneumatic irruption in the house of Cornelius. *The coming of the Spirit articulates the divine ratification of an event.* In this case, the outpouring of the Spirit at Cornelius's bears out the validity of Peter's speech that "God is impartial (προσωπολήπτῆς) and that in every nation, anyone who fears him and practices justice is acceptable to Him" (10:35).²⁵ The coming of the Spirit at Cornelius's ratifies this theological conviction: Cornelius and his family, non-Jews, are welcomed into the covenant of salvation from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore, concludes Peter, bolstered by the strength of the evidence: "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" (10:47) Baptism, as integration into the community of salvation, can only serve as a confirmation of a welcome God has already and visibly granted.

Reversing the sequence in 2:38 (first the baptism and then the Holy Spirit) is now understandable: Peter lags behind God's time. God has already hoisted the flag of reception for those whom Peter regarded as outsiders to salvation. God has moved history forward, and the Church (in the person of Peter) will yield to this divine swiftness. After reflection, the Cornelius episode does not invalidate the rule of 2:38; it represents the exception, for God in this case moved faster than his own people. In other words, Peter, by performing the baptism, restores the normality which God's initiative had shaken up.

3.2 *In Samaria*

The Samaritan episode is more difficult. Why, after evangelizing Samaria, is Philip's baptism inadequate because it lacks the Spirit? Why is it that Peter and John have to come down from Jerusalem to lay hands and cause the Spirit to come? Was Philip a deficient Evangelist? His portrait in Acts (8:5–8, 12–13) does not allow such an interpretation. Theses have grown in numbers trying to explain this apostolic visit to Samaria. It was argued that the faith of the Samaritans was defective and depriving them of the Spirit, but there is no

²⁵ To express this revelation, Luke chooses a word derived from the old formula of the Septuagint: λαμβάνειν πρόσωπον, literally: *take (or receive) the face* (Deut 10:17; Job 34:19; Sir 35:13).

hint of it in the text.²⁶ Institutional centralism of the proto-catholic type, involving control by Jerusalem over peripheral areas, has been suspected.²⁷ The supposition of ministerial hierarchy between the apostles and Philip the evangelist has also been advanced.²⁸ These assumptions entirely miss the point of Luke's thought, which is not interested in institutional issues; such assumptions are, in addition, based on anachronisms. Actually, what has been said of Acts 10 also applies to this situation. Where are we in the Acts scenario? Samaria is the first region evangelized outside Jerusalem. These people, whom Judeans consider to be religiously deviant, half-Jewish and half-pagan according to Flavius Josephus, are halfway between Jerusalem and the nations.²⁹ However, the evangelization of Samaria is presented in Acts as a consequence of the persecution that occurred in Jerusalem (8:1b–4). Believers fled, among them Philip the Hellenist (8:5). That his mission was successful, in spite of Simon Magus's competition, is a sign that God was with him (8:5–8). But Luke is more careful than any other theologian of the New Testament to draw links of continuity in the expansion of the Word; this link needs to be legitimized. It can only be done by God, but through the mother church in Jerusalem. The Spirit, as God's signature, seals the communion between the original Jerusalem community and new converts. So, the link baptism/Spirit is restored afterwards.

It should be noted that the two apostles, Peter and John, do not act as power holders. The author of Acts carefully specifies that they pray “for the Samaritans that they might receive the Holy Spirit”, and they imposed their hands, and then the Spirit came upon them (8:15, 17). Prayer and the laying on of hands is a double indicator that the apostles, for the sake of believers in Samaria, plead for a gift that is not theirs but which depends on God. The imposition of hands is a rite that the Church has taken up from Judaism. It is done during baptisms (Acts 8:17; 19:6), when sending someone on a mission (13:3), at induction into a ministry (6:6), or with prayers of healing (5:12; 9:12, 17; 28:8). The gesture is not restricted to the apostles but can be administered by a believer (9:12, 17) or the entire community (6:6; 13:3). It implies awareness, on the part of the Church, of being the channel of the grace received from God. In Luke, the Spirit keeps his inviolable freedom. From this, we understand why, strictly speaking, *the gift of the Spirit is not conferred through baptism, but by laying on of hands*. If it is related to water baptism,

²⁶ J. D. G. DUNN, “They Believed Philip Preaching (Acts 8:12),” in DUNN, *The Christ and the Spirit 2*, (Edinburgh, 1998), 220.

²⁷ E. KÄSEMANN, *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen I* (Göttingen, 1960), 131, 165–167.

²⁸ W. DIETRICH, *Das Petrusbild der lukanischen Schriften* (BWANT 94; Stuttgart, 1972), 249–251.

²⁹ *Ant.* 9.291.

its status is different because it comes from God's freedom. What we learn from the episode of Samaria is that *water baptism and the coming of the Spirit are coordinated with each other, but they can be differentiated in time.*

3.3 At Ephesus

The last episode is the one with which I began my presentation: the rebaptism of the Ephesian Johannites (19:1–7). Here, Paul overcomes a deficit in the baptism of John, which includes the essence of conversion and forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3), but is lacking the Spirit. That is why they receive the baptism, says the author, “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (19:5). The turn of phrase “in the name of” (here εἰς τὸ ὄνομα, but sometimes also ἐν or ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι) is common in the writings of Luke.³⁰ It is the heir of the Hebraic theology (namely, Deuteronomy’s) of the divine name. In this concept, the name is representative of the person. The divine Name releases a sphere of power *in* and *through* which the Lord acts. To be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ is to enter the sphere of power where we belong to the Lord and where we are associated with his life. The gift of the Spirit seals that relation of membership and nearness.

The story of the Johannites is interesting because it has preserved the memory of a form of Christianity long gone.³¹ The astonishment of some researchers, who refuse to admit the Christian identity of Johannites (“how can you be a Christian and ignore the Spirit?”) reflects, in my view, a distorted understanding of Christian origins. Imagining Christendom originally united but gradually diversified by the ravages of time and history – this image is pure fantasy. We now know that Christianity was pluralistic from the beginning and that this diversity is the result of her ability to adapt to different cultures. In fact, Acts reflects a situation where the understanding of baptism varies considerably. A baptismal-rite conversion is encountered in Ephesus without a link to the Spirit (19:2–3), and in Samaria, a baptismal rite occurs in the name of Jesus without the outpouring of the Spirit (8:14–17). Luke tries to show how these differences have been reduced by the adoption of the dual rite “water baptism/gift of the Spirit”. But we must realize, by becoming aware of these deviations from the norm of 2:38, that Luke fights for the recognition of the link baptism/Spirit as it relates, in all likelihood, to the rite of the Christianity to which it belongs. However, his narrative keeps track of other practices in other streams of Christianity. Did these other practices survive in his time, that is to say in the 80s, when Luke wrote his work, or do they only point to memories of the past? I would not be surprised if the

³⁰ Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5.

³¹ W. THIESSEN, *Christen in Ephesus*, 75–86 (n. 6); S. SHAU, *Theology as History, History as Theology*, 144–161 (n. 6); W. PAROSCHI, “Acts 19:1–7 Reconsidered in Light of Paul’s Theology of Baptism,” *AUSS* 47 (2009), 73–100.

Lukan norm, which was to become the standard for the great Church's combining the legacy of Peter and Paul in the second century, was not universally recognized in Luke's time and that the unresolved situation explains the author's insistence on this point.³² This should be demonstrated through a historical investigation.

3.4 *In the Wilderness*

Before concluding, I refer lastly to the story of the Ethiopian eunuch's baptism in the desert (8:26–40). This is a baptism of water – and this is absolutely certain because the eunuch stopped his chariot near water, asking “What prevents me from receiving baptism?” (8:36)! This is a water baptism, but without the Spirit. Moreover, it lacks any reference to a conversion. Curiously, it is not the lack of any mention of the Holy Spirit that bothered the scribes in the manuscript tradition, but the absence of confession. That is why the Western text (it, vg, sy^h, mae, Irenaeus, and Cyprian) added v. 37: “Philip said to him, ‘If you believe with all your heart, it's in order.’ He replied: ‘I believe that the Son of God is Jesus Christ.’”³³ We have here a signal that very soon, the gift of the baptismal Spirit would become much less important than the creed's orthodoxy.

Let us return to our text. I believe Luke has kept to the minimum here. Quite accurately, he has only retained the features that mattered for the story's aim. The eunuch is portrayed as a pagan who comes to Jerusalem to worship, although his religious status and position as eunuch denied him access to the Temple (8:27). He comes to worship God but is banned from the Temple. The meeting with Philip and the Christological reading of the song of the Servant of Isaiah (Isa 53:7–8) convince him that access to God is open through Him who takes human suffering upon himself – the suffering that echoes the exclusion he is subjected to. His request for baptism fits very precisely in this scenario: Am I included in this covenant of salvation? Philip will respond positively. As for the rite of baptism, the purifying water only is then important. That the eunuch “continues on his way with joy” (8:39) is the seal of salvation received and integrated. So, on this occasion, if Luke does

³² J. C. O'Neill tries to solve this problem with the help of source criticism: 19:1–7 would be the result of the conflation of two texts: “The Connection between Baptism and the Gift of the Spirit in Acts,” *JSNT* 63 (1996), 87–103. This kind of literary solution has shown its weaknesses in the past.

³³ M.-E. BOISMARD, *Le texte occidental des Actes des apôtres (EtB 40; Paris, 2000)*, 157.

not discuss the entire liturgical practice of baptism, it is because the story of the eunuch is a “missionary story with a distinctive profile”.³⁴

4. Conclusion

May I take a risk in my conclusion? The risk is to ask: What are the strengths and what are the weaknesses of Luke, as a theologian, in formulating his narrative presentation of the Spirit’s work? How should we evaluate his theological performance?

First of all, no New Testament author expresses as strongly as Luke the founding role of the Spirit who builds the Church as a missionary community and endows it with unity. Luke does not see the Spirit as the source of faith but sees him taking hold of believers, in response to their prayer, in order to integrate them into the witness to Christ.

No other New Testament author so boldly involves the Spirit in history, going so far as to interpret the setbacks of the missionaries as the movement of the breath of God (16:6–7; 20:22). Luke draws back neither from the diversity nor from the material nature of the Spirit’s interventions.

Nevertheless, we perceive the limits of Luke’s reflection on the subject. These limits are dictated, at least in part, by the constraints of a narrative. By telling the work of the Spirit, rather than talking about him, he offers his readers a pragmatics of the Spirit. The risk of distortion by systematization is high when we are dealing with a narrative theology.³⁵

In vain, one waits for an elucidation with regard to the discerning of spirits, such as both Paul (1 Cor 14) and John (1 John 4:1–6) offer. The Lukan fixation on the Spirit as Spirit of prophecy flows directly from the Old Testament, in a way that might be described as naive. We find no equal to the grand Pauline theme of the Spirit’s participation in the regeneration of the believer. Luke is less interested in the sanctification of the person than in the sanctification of the world. The individual is of interest to him in the sense that s/he participates in the great universal mission.

Regarding the miracles, Luke is so determined to link them back to Christology that their connection to pneumatology remains obscure. For Luke

³⁴ J. SCHRÖTER, “Die Taufe in der Apostelgeschichte,” in *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism. Waschungen, Initiation und Taufe* (eds. D. Hellholm, T. Vegge, O. Norderval, C. Hellholm; BZNW 176/1; Berlin, 2011), 557–586, quotation 576.

³⁵ “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.” (A. W. ZWIEP, *Christ, the Spirit and the Community of God*, 106 [n. 6]).

keeps repeating that the miracles are performed “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (3:6, 16; 4:10, 30; 16:18; 19:13); they are to be seen as the work of the Risen One and the sign of his presence among his own. Have we to conclude that this Christological intransigence makes for a deficiency in Luke’s pneumatology?³⁶ It is also possible to reason that Luke is silent on what was for him, as for the first Christians, self-evident: the miracle-worker’s power comes from God through the Spirit. This could be documented with the quotation of Isaiah 61:1–2 in Jesus’s inaugural sermon in Nazareth, where “the Spirit of God is upon me” is concretized by the liberation of captives, the healing of the blind, and the deliverance of the oppressed (Luke 4:18; cf. Acts 10:38).

In summary, *the reader is not invited to reflect on the Spirit but to live from him and to discern his path throughout history*. For the command of the Resurrected One to his disciples to be his witnesses in all the earth (1:8) is not yet accomplished for Luke. Acts ends like an open book: Rome, where the narrative concludes, is not “the end of the earth”. We notice here that Luke’s eschatology is not a matter of calendars, but of geography.³⁷ As readers, we are involved in this movement and engaged to take part in the mission all over the world.

³⁶ E. SCHWEIZER, “πνεῦμα,” *TDNT* 6: 404–415.

³⁷ M. A. CHEVALLIER, “Luc et l’Esprit saint,” *RevSR* 56 (1982), 1–16, esp. 7.