

The Sovereignty Of The Holy Spirit In The Mission Of The Early Church: Luke's Perspective [Popularized Version]

The opening lines of the Book of Acts make it clear that the Holy Spirit is going to play a central role in the gospel mission, the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. Even Jesus, following his resurrection, commands his apostles "through [by] the Holy Spirit" (1:2); the Spirit is at once seen as authoritative. After three years of personal training by the Messiah himself, the apostles are still not ready to begin witnessing. Rather, they are to "sit" (Luke 24:49) and "wait" (Acts 1:4) until "the promise of the Father...the Holy Spirit" comes upon them, clothing them with "power" (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). This promise involves what John the Baptist proclaimed, "you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:4-5).

That the apostles were anxious to begin with is implied by their question, "Lord, at this time are you restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (1:6).¹ However, Jesus makes it clear that the Father has set the boundaries "by his own authority," and the Holy Spirit must first come (1:7-8). Then Jesus leaves his apostles, alone and waiting.

From Luke's perspective, what was the role of the Holy Spirit in the unfolding drama of the gospel mission in the early church? In what sense(s) did the Holy Spirit fulfill the promises of God?

I. The Holy Spirit in Luke's Gospel Account

A study of the Holy Spirit in Acts must begin with an examination of how the author sees it functioning in his first volume (Acts 1:1). In Luke's gospel account, the Holy Spirit is overtly active in three contexts: (1) the birth narrative, chaps. 1-2, (2) the ministry of John the Baptist, chap. 3, and (3) the preparation and early ministry of Jesus, chaps. 3-4. Interestingly, after these accounts, Luke records no *direct references* to the Spirit's activity, save for a passing reference to Jesus rejoicing "in the Holy Spirit" (10:21). Once Jesus "set his face to go to Jerusalem" (9:51), the Spirit fades from the drama, and is referred to again only in the teachings of Jesus (11:13; 12:10, 12).

In anticipation of kingdom restoration, the Spirit moves in the first four chapters of Luke; however, fulfillment is not realized in the earthly ministry of the Messiah, but in the ministry of the church. Thus, the Spirit is only initially involved in Luke, but understood to be present in the person of the Christ. In Acts, the person of the Christ is absent, but the Spirit is everywhere carrying out the Messianic mission. Restoration of the kingdom and the presence of the Spirit are corresponding ideas; when the Spirit comes, the kingdom comes.

There is a sense in which Luke sees history divided into three periods: the period of the Law and the prophets, the period of the Messiah in person (Luke 16:16), and the period of the Holy Spirit (Acts). During the first period the Spirit is active, yet its presence is anticipated on a greater scale (Joel 2:28 - 29). During the Messiah's earthly ministry, the Spirit is active in his person, otherwise absent, yet also anticipated in a greater sense (Luke 3:16; 11:13). The age of the Spirit is inaugurated when the enthroned Messiah pours it forth on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16 - 18, 33 - 36), and it is made available to be received by all believers (Acts 2:38). That which was

¹This may be all that is implied. Yet, many propose that the apostles still anticipated a political, earthly rule of the Messiah. This is difficult to maintain after Jesus taught them "the things concerning the kingdom of God" in the light of his resurrection (1:3). Neither should the apostles' question be pushed to set up an apologetic for Luke to relieve his readers "of the painful disappointment brought on by the non-fulfillment of the imminent expectation" of the end of the world [E. Haenchen]. The so-called "delay of Parousia" theory, connecting the coming of the Spirit with the end of the world, is often read back into Luke straining this and other texts.

anticipated for centuries, became a reality on Pentecost. The book of Luke is the ministry of Jesus *as* the Messiah; Acts is the ministry of the Spirit *for* the Messiah. The Spirit continues the ministry Jesus *began* (Acts 1:1).

(1) *The Birth Narrative (Luke 1-2)*

The presence of the Spirit in the birth narrative is to effect and announce the arrival of Israel's Messiah in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. When the Spirit *comes upon* (or *fills*)² an individual, that person is enabled to proclaim God's message with power. The message is the restoration of God's kingdom to his people Israel in the person of Jesus, and the power is the Holy Spirit. The promise and restoration of the kingdom is unrealized apart from the promise and presence of the Holy Spirit. For Luke, this militates against a political understanding of the kingdom; it is a spiritual kingdom living out the ideals of the Messiah.

The angel announcing the birth of John the Baptist declares, "he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb"; the sense is, while in his mother's womb and *thereafter* (Luke 1:15 *cf.* 1:41, 44).³ The abiding presence of the Spirit from birth is (directly) attributed to John alone.⁴ This may have been necessitated by his unique mission as the forerunner of the Messiah, proclaiming, in power, the coming kingdom of God (Luke 1:15-17, 76-80; 3:1-20; 7:24ff).⁵ Even so, no miracles are attributed to him (John 10:41),⁶ which only serves to emphasize the boldness with which he must have preached.

²There appears to be no essential difference in effect between the Spirit "coming" or "falling upon" (ἔρχομαι or πίπτω ἐπί) people, or people being "filled" (πίμπλημι or πλήρης) with the Spirit. Πίμπλημι is a favorite word of Luke (22 of 24 NT uses), with scant background in the LXX concerning the Spirit of God. God filled (ἐμπίμπλημι) the temple craftsman Bezalel with a "divine spirit" (Exod 31:3; 35:31), and the prophet Micah would be filled (ἐμπίμπλημι) with strength "in the spirit of the Lord" in contrast to Israel's false prophets (Mic 3:8). Significantly, Bezalel's filling was associated with wisdom and Micah's with power. On the other hand, the concept of the Spirit coming/falling upon people is common in the OT (Num 11:29; Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam 10:6, 10; 11:6; 19:20; 2 Chr 20:14; Ezek 3:22-24; 11:5; et. al.). Of special note is the temporal nature of the experience (sometimes repeated with the same individual), and the effect realized: proclamation of God's word with power. A similar idea is realized by the use of the term "clothed" (Judg 6:34; 1 Chr 12:18; 2 Chr 24:20 *cf.* Luke 24:49). That Luke sees no real distinction between these terms is supported by his indiscriminate use of them with other nouns; viz., fear (Luke 5:26 with Luke 1:12, 65; Acts 5:5, 11; 19:17), wonder (Acts 3:10 with Luke 4:36), and amazement (Acts 3:10 with Acts 10:10). However, it is certainly not the consensus of commentators that Luke does not make a distinction, as will be brought out as this paper progresses.

³The OT the phrase can mean either "from birth on" (Isa 48:8; Ps 22:10) or "while still in the womb" (Judg 13:3 - 5; 16:17; Isa 44:2). The latter idea obviously does not exclude the former, as the Judges passages clearly indicate.

⁴*cf.* John 1:33. However, the nature of Jesus' birth demands the presence of the Spirit in him from the conception itself. Thus, in so much as the Spirit "fathered" Jesus (Matt 1:18), he is born "holy" and is called "son of God" (Luke 1:35).

⁵Luke 16:16 *cf.* Matt 3:2. Luke does not put the phrase "kingdom of God" on the lips of John the Baptist.

⁶The attribution of Jesus' miracles to the "resurrected" John the Baptist not imply that John was believed to have done miracles before his death. The miraculous ability, in this case, would be attributed to the resurrected state more so than to the man *per se*.

The Messiah's conception is by direct intervention of the Holy Spirit who "will come upon" Mary (1:35). This action is viewed, in parallel, as the power of the Most High "overshadowing" (*cf.* Luke 9:34) her. In Exod 40:35 the cloud of God "overshadowed" the tabernacle of witness, and the tabernacle was "filled" with the glory of the Lord. For this reason, Moses could not enter the tabernacle; neither could any man enter Mary (Matt 1:18–25). The Spirit does not simply *reveal* the Messiah, the Spirit *conceives* the Messiah. From the beginning, the role of the Spirit is critical to the Messianic mission.

Both parents of John the Baptist were "filled" with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41, 67), and "proclaimed" (vv. 42, 67) the arrival of the Messiah and his kingdom (1:68–75). Simeon had the Spirit "upon" him, which revealed (*cf.* Acts 10:22; Matt 2:12, 22) to him, that he would live to see "the Christ of the Lord" (Luke 2:25–26). At Jesus' presentation in the temple, Simeon (providentially present through Holy Spirit) defines the Messiah's mission as "a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel" (2:32 *cf.* Isa 49:6).⁷ This is Luke's first mention of the Gentile mission ("to all the nations," 24:47), which likewise closes this volume. However, his primary concern in this volume is *Israel*; the second volume provides the essential fulfillment of Simeon's words (Acts 1:8; 13:14; 26:23).⁸

(2) The Ministry of John the Baptist (Luke 3)

The ministry of John the Baptist was a product of the Holy Spirit, which had "filled" him from his mother's womb (see above). John proclaimed, by the power of the Spirit, the coming of the Messiah, and identified him by that same Spirit (Luke 3:22 *cf.* John 1:33). Central to John's proclamation was the promise, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (3:16).⁹ To whom is this promise addressed? Moreover, what is the purpose of this baptism? The "you" are (at least) the same ones being baptized in water by John (16a). In Luke, John's audience consists of "the crowds" from "all the neighborhood of the Jordan" (3:3, 7, 10 *cf.* "people" in 3:15, 18, 21), which included, at least, "tax-collectors (3:12) and "soldiers" (3:14); Jesus himself was in this crowd (3:21). "All the people were baptized" only means "all the people (who) were baptized."¹⁰

Matthew has the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism *after* the crowds are baptized, and has John directing the words of judgment at them alone (*i.e.*, Pharisees and Sadducees). There is no mention of any of them being baptized (Matt 3:7–10). Luke appears to have John addressing the judgment to the crowds in general (Luke 3:7–9), and later specifically states that the Pharisees and lawyers were *not* baptized by John (7:29–30). Thus, "I baptize *you* with water" seems to apply to the crowds (exclusive of the Pharisees and Sadducees). However, does this limit baptism "in the Holy Spirit and fire" to that one group? Even though the Pharisees and Sadducees are potentially included, they are effectively excluded by their rejection of God's plan and John's baptism. Nevertheless, John's contrast does not rest in *who* is baptized, but in the subjects (John and Jesus) and the "elements" (water and Holy Spirit/fire). Therefore, "you" is only narrative specific, but universal in application ("*whoever* I

⁷In each of these cases, what the participant said was *revealed* by the Holy Spirit. Revelation is a primary special effect realized when the Spirit comes upon or fills individuals. There is no sense, however, of the Spirit being with the recipients as an abiding presence. In this sense, both John the Baptist and Jesus appear unique. The age of the Spirit, however, promises more.

⁸Thus, it is interesting that Gentiles are here mentioned first (before Israel), which is contrary to the NT paradigm.

⁹Mark 1:8 and Matt 3:11 omit "and fire," except in a few witnesses.

¹⁰Matthew has those who were baptized as "Jerusalem and all Judea and all the neighborhood of the Jordan" (3:5–6). Mark has "all the Judean country and all the Jerusalemites" (1:5).

baptize ..."); "you" could well be omitted with no essential change in meaning to the text (cf. John 1:26–34). In other words, should some who were baptized by John later reject God's plan, they would not be baptized in the Holy Spirit. And conversely, should some who refused John's baptism later accept God's gospel, they would be included among those baptized in the Holy Spirit.

In light of the preceding, how should Jesus' action—"he will baptize"—be understood? What part does the "fire" play? There have been a number of suggestions.¹¹ If the Holy Spirit is understood positively (as a blessing upon the repentant), should fire also be understood positively (e. g., as *purifying* the recipient, Mal 3:2–3)? Perhaps it could be taken negatively, as a fire of *trial* (Luke 12:49–53; Ps 66:12). The difficulty with either of these interpretations is that "fire" is most commonly a metaphor for *judgment* upon the ungodly, and not for *purification* of or *trial* upon the righteous. However, if fire is taken as a metaphor for judgment, two groups must be in view, those who accept the Messiah and those who do not. The question as to whether this would necessitate two baptisms—a baptism in fire for the ungodly, and a baptism in the Holy Spirit for the righteous—has no real significance, especially if the baptism is understood as a single corporate action (in this sense fire could also be understood as a purification of the corporate whole).¹² Certainly, judgment is inherent to John's discourse (Luke 3:7–9, 17 cf. Matt 3:7–10, 12). The "fire" of v. 16 is unmistakably couched in its most common metaphorical theme (especially for Luke cf. 9:54; 12:49; 17:29; Acts 2:19). John's audience would have little difficulty in understanding Jesus' future action as one of both blessing and judgment: "who warned you to flee from the coming wrath...already the axe is laid at the root of the trees...is being cast into the fire...he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." The omission of the term "fire" at two critical points in Acts (1:5; 11:16) reflects only the blessing aspect of the Messianic baptism because judgment was not an issue in those contexts, concerned only with the righteous. Yet, apocalyptic expectation of first century Judaism clearly involved both blessing (for the righteous) and judgment (for the unrepentant) in the coming Messianic age of restoration (1 Enoch 102; 2 Apoc. Bar. 26 – 30 cf. Joel 2:28 – 32; Acts 2:16 – 21, see comments there).

Another question is whether or not Jesus' action is to be understood as a *one time event* or an *on going process*; i.e., he performs a one time historical (corporate) baptism that has results for all future generations (or is even limited to one historical context), or he continues to baptize in the Holy Spirit and fire throughout the generations. The answer to this question may be critical to one's understanding of the Holy Spirit dynamic in the church *after* the first century. In this context, the issue cannot be settled. Luke's second volume may provide more insight.

Even more importantly, what is the role of Jesus' baptism in the unfolding drama of the kingdom restoration and expansion to the nations? John's baptism had a

¹¹(1) The "tongues as of fire" (Acts 2:3 cf. 1 Enoch 71:6) is a tempting direction to turn, but offers little help. Whatever the symbolism there, such a "fulfillment" would hardly address the context in which John uttered the promise, and suggests nothing for the significance of the contrast between the baptisms of John and Jesus. The "tongues as of fire" may simply recall fires at other divine visitations (Exod 3:2; 13:21–22; 19:18; Ezek 1:4–14; etc.). (2) Jesus' baptism had a dual character upon *one* group of people (viz., the repentant) for "purification and refinement." (3) "Holy Spirit and fire" is taken as a hendiadys, *Holy Spirit of fire, fiery Holy Spirit*. One thing occurs, purifying judgment (Isa 4:3 – 4). This is similar to the preceding (2), but rather the emphasis is on the *single* character of the action by the Spirit. (4) "Fire" is a fixed symbol of divine judgment upon the unrepentant.

¹²Essentially this interpretation incorporates the key elements of blessing, purification, and judgment. Much is made out of nothing when fine distinctions are sought for the symbol "fire."

personal purpose, preparing individual Jews for the coming Messiah. Jesus' baptism would have a universal purpose of gathering wheat (repentant) and burning up chaff (unrepentant).¹³ The continuation of the Messianic mission was beyond the scope of a few individuals; it would require the combined efforts of many people. The Holy Spirit would make this a reality as it empowered the people of God in the age of the Messiah.

Preparation for the coming Messiah and identification of Jesus of Nazareth as that Messiah (John 1:19–34) was the substance of John's ministry. When Jesus is so identified, his ministry begins, and John's begins to fade (Luke 3:21–23).

(3) *The Preparation and Early Ministry of Jesus (Luke 3–4)*

The role of the Holy Spirit (by direct reference) in the ministry of Jesus is limited to his anointing (3:22; 4:18 *cf.* Acts 10:38), a few critical activities (4:1, 14; 10:21), and two promises (with one warning) he makes concerning the Spirit (11:13; 12:10, 12). Significantly, following his promise of the Spirit's guidance to his disciples when faced with antagonism before the Jewish hierarchy, there is no direct mention of the Holy Spirit in Luke. Even in the key promise to his disciples before his ascension (24:49), the Spirit is only alluded to. The reader has the sense that once Jesus "set his face to go to Jerusalem" (9:51), the Spirit is somehow restrained—relegated to promise only—until the Jewish opposition reaches its climax at Jerusalem. Even in the resurrection narrative there is no mention of the Spirit; the earthly ministry of Jesus effectively continues until his ascension. In sum, before the earthly ministry of Jesus, there is a flurry of Holy Spirit activity; following his ascension (in *Acts*), that flurry is intensified. However, during his ministry a sense of expectation is cultivated for the reader, which is more than realized in Luke's second volume.¹⁴

At Jesus' baptism, "the Holy Spirit came down *upon*¹⁵ him in bodily form as a dove" (3:22). The meaning of the "dove" is obscure, but clearly, Jesus receives divine approval as God's beloved son.¹⁶ Jesus begins his ministry (3:23) in Galilee (4:14), and in his hometown of Nazareth identifies himself as the Messiah (4:16–21). The placing of this incident so early by Luke signals the importance he places upon it.¹⁷ However,

¹³There is no break between Luke 3:16 and 17. The subject in v. 17 is still Jesus; the main verb ("he will baptize") is further defined by the two infinitives ("to clean out") and ("to gather"). The purpose of the baptism is "to clean out" and "to gather." That which remains after the cleaning (purification) is gathered (blessing), the rest is burned up (judgment).

¹⁴This same pattern is present in the other gospel accounts. However, Matthew refers to Jesus casting out demons "by (in, with) the spirit of God" (12:28 *cf.* Luke 11:20, "by the finger of God"). Mark's *only* reference to contemporary activity of the Spirit is at Jesus' baptism (1:10); the same is true of John's gospel (1:32–33). Apart from the enigmatic sayings in John 3:5–8, 34; 20:22, John specifically understands the Holy Spirit as a future promise (7:38–39; 14:16–17, 25–26; 15:26–27; 16:12–14), and consequently creates an even greater expectation in the reader.

¹⁵Mark (1:10) has "εἰς him"; if εἰς is understood as "to (or toward) him," there is little difference. Yet if it is understood as "*into* him," Mark includes a dimension possibly expressed in Luke–Acts by "filled." John emphasizes that the Spirit came down "and *remained* upon him," and explicates that he (the Baptist) was to identify the Messiah by that sign—the one with the Spirit "remaining upon him" (1:32–33).

¹⁶The similar declaration is made at another key point in Jesus' ministry (9:35), just prior to his setting his face to go to Jerusalem (9:51); the stronger witnesses omitting "beloved," but see Mark 9:7; Matt 17:5.

¹⁷This is not Jesus' first visit to Nazareth *cf.* Matt 4:12–13; 13:53–58 and Mark 1:14; 6:1–6). Much of what happens between visits is recorded later in Luke. Luke is defining the Messiah's mission according to the Isaiah passage, which both Matthew and

what Luke summarizes in 4:14–15, and only alludes to by the phrase "in the power of the spirit", Matthew and Mark illustrate specifically *before* they place Jesus in this Nazareth context; viz., the preaching of the gospel and the miracles of which Isaiah prophesied, and Jesus said was fulfilled before his audience (4:18–22).

The Messianic mission is defined by Isaiah (61:1–2). Jesus' quote substantially conforms to the LXX (which is close to the MT), yet he omits the phrase "to heal the broken in heart," conflates part of Isa 58:6 ("to set free those who are oppressed"), and changes Isaiah's "to call" to "to proclaim" in the final phrase. Jesus leaves off Isaiah's ominous phrase, "and the day of vengeance" (*cf.* Isa 34:8; 59:18; 63:4; 66:6), which is not the focus of Jesus' earthly ministry (*cf.* John 12:47, see number 4 below). With four aorist infinitives, Jesus defines the purpose of his anointing (*cf.* Acts 4:27; 10:38), "the spirit of the Lord upon me" (*cf.* 3:22).

(1) "to preach good news to the poor," with "poor" understood literally. The kingdom of God belongs to the poor (6:20, note the conspicuous absence of "in spirit" as in Matt 5:3). Jesus says that preaching to the poor is a characteristic of the Messiah's kingdom (7:22; 14:13). Poor Lazarus finds comfort in the bosom of Abraham (16:20, 22). Zaccheus' benevolence is an example of righteousness (19:8), and the poor widow's generosity, a model of commitment (21:3). Thus, for Luke, meeting the needs of the poor is an essential characteristic of a disciple (18:22). Although the word "poor" does not occur in Acts, Luke's theme of meeting the needs of the saints is central to life in the Messianic community (Acts 2:43–47; 4:32–37; 6:1–6; 11:27–30; *etc.*).

(2) "to proclaim release to the captives and recovering sight to the blind." Who are the "captives"? The word is found only here in this form. Luke uses a cognate verb in reference to those taken captive at Jerusalem's fall in AD70 (21:24), which is reminiscent of the Babylonian captivity referred to in Isaiah 61. Indeed, this idea ("prisoner of war") is the basic use of the root word in Greek literature. However, to suggest this is Jesus' meaning, seems to elevate the idea to a greater significance than is warranted in the Messianic program.¹⁸

Taken as a simple parallelism, the captivity might result from the blindness, or better, the blindness from the captivity. In fact, the MT has "opening of the prison to those who are bound," where the LXX has "recovering of sight to the blind." Although this does not help define what the captivity is, it does demonstrate a strong connection between the two phrases. If "recovering of sight to the blind" is taken literally (Luke 18:35–43), the former phrase may also be understood miraculously, releasing those held captive by evil spirits (Luke 13:10–17 *cf.* Ign. Eph. 17). It is noteworthy that in reference to the response of the crowd when Jesus applied this Isa 61 passage to himself, Jesus refers to what he had done in Capernaum and the miracles of Elijah (4:32ff). Matthew and Mark place Jesus in Capernaum (Matt 4:13; Mark 1:21) *before* the Nazareth encounter (Matt 13:53ff; Mark 6:1ff). Mark has Jesus casting out demons in the synagogue (1:21–28). Luke places this same incident immediately *after* the Nazareth encounter (4:31–37). According to both accounts, because of the demon

Mark omit. The chronological disagreement of the evangelists is beyond the scope of this paper.

¹⁸Perhaps this a Messianic function in the same way, visiting prisoners is one of the duties of discipleship (Mt. 25:36ff; Hb. 10:34; 13:3). The practice of freeing prisoners is exemplified in Acts 5:19; 12:7; 16:26, but never by the Messiah or his disciples. "Visiting" prisoners is hardly the same as "freeing" them. Oakman relates this to the Jubilee tradition "wherein the covenant community is kept healthy by periodic redistribution of the land, redemption of slaves, and abolition of indebtedness." Others see a connection with health (and Jesus' healing) as a means for restoration of status within society. Land control issues of rural antiquity may also be alluded to by the quote. However, Oakman shows the difficulties with this understanding, which conflicts with other teachings from Luke against earthly material prosperity.

incident, Jesus' fame spread everywhere (Mark 1:28, Luke 4:37). Presumably, Jesus' audience was well aware of his encounter with evil spirits in Capernaum. Luke follows this victory over evil spirits with Jesus "rebuking" (a word commonly used in connection with casting out demons *cf.* vv.35, 41; 9:42) the fever in Peter's mother-in-law, and demons in many other people (4:38-41).

The reader is also aware of what immediately *precedes* the Nazareth encounter, Jesus' face to face encounter with Satan himself (4:1-13). Significantly, Jesus meets the adversary "full of the Holy Spirit" (4:1), and returns victoriously to begin his ministry in Galilee "in the power of the Spirit" (4:14). Again, in Luke 7:18-23, the Messiah's mission is defined in terms of casting out evil spirits and healing the blind (among other illnesses), and Isa 61 is put on the lips of Jesus as being fulfilled in his person. For Luke, the battle is between spiritual powers in the ministry of Christ (full of the Holy Spirit) (10:17-20; 11:14-28), and likewise in the ministry of the church (Acts 8:7; 19:11-17). Thus, the casting out of demons is a strong theme in the synoptics (especially Luke), and is integral to the Messianic program.¹⁹

(3) "to set at liberty those who have been oppressed." "Oppressed" is found only here in the NT. The LXX uses it the sense of being "destroyed, broken hearted, grieved, discouraged."²⁰ In the passage quoted by Jesus (Isa 58:6), the reference is to acts of loving mercy that constitute true worship, "set the oppressed free" (a reference to those in Babylonian captivity). Jesus may have conflated the Isa 61 passage with this one for emphasis, release for the "broken spirited captives." The common noun, "release," triggers the association.

(4) "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." In the Isaiah context this represents the period of return from Babylonian captivity; it is a time of "salvation," see Isa 49:8, "in an acceptable time, and in a day of salvation" (*cf.* 2 Cor 6:2). The ministry of the Messiah, is a ministry of "salvation" (Luke 1:69, 71, 77; 2:11, 30; 3:6; Acts 4:12; 13:23-26, 47; 16:17; 28:28); it is a spiritual message.

In sum, this passage (Luke 4:18-19) essentially outlines the Messianic agenda, which begins with the ministry of the Messiah himself ("the acceptable year of the Lord"), "in the power of the Spirit" (4:14), and will be continued in the same manner by his disciples (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5, 8).

There remain three references to the Holy Spirit in Luke's first volume. None refer to contemporary activity, but take the form of promise and warning. The first promise occurs in the context of Jesus teaching his disciples about prayer (11:1-13). Perhaps Jesus' prayer life provoked their question (11:1). There is a resemblance in the content of this prayer and that of the Isaiah passage discussed above. After the introductory address of praise, the first request—"let your kingdom come"—corresponds to "to preach good news," which is the gospel of the kingdom. The request for "daily bread" relates to God's concern for meeting needs within the community (*cf.* "the poor"). Finally, the forgiveness of sins (and debtors) follows the "release" theme of the Isaiah quote. Following the parable of the friend at midnight, concerning one seeking to have

¹⁹This presupposes the spiritual realities which these power demonstrations symbolize (*cf.* Acts 26:18). The dominion of Satan is affected by sin (*cf.* Rom 7:23) necessitating "forgiveness" ("release" in Luke 4:18 only, elsewhere always "forgiveness" 1:77; 3:3; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18). The miraculous activities of Christ should not be considered in isolation from the "spiritual" element.

²⁰To "crush" or "destroy" one's adversary (Exod 15:6; Num 24:17; Deut 38:33) or another's things (2 Chr 20:37; Jer 28:30). God "smote" David's child with Bathsheba (2 Sam 12:15). It also expresses a "broken" spirit or heart (Deut 20:3; Ezek 21:7, 15) and "grief" (1 Sam 20:34). Isaiah uses it in reference to God's judgment "when he shall arise to *strike* the earth" (2:10, 19, 21). In the Servant Song of Is 42, God's servant "will not be *discouraged* (or broken)" (v. 4, this phrase is omitted in the Matthean quote 12:18-21).

needs met, Jesus instructs his disciples to "ask...seek...knock," and their Father "will give the Holy Spirit to those asking him" (11:13).

Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit is more inclusive than his immediate audience; it is to (all) those who ask (*cf.* 11:10). In what sense the Father "gives" the Spirit is not stated. The reader is reminded of John the Baptist's words about Jesus baptizing in the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16), which sets the stage for a much wider distribution of the Spirit. There is no reason to believe Jesus is promising "a greater fullness of the Spirit" to post-Pentecost believers who already possess the Spirit. The availability of the Spirit to whomever asks is itself a promise of tremendous proportions—it is the greatest spiritual gift that involves every other spiritual gift and every necessary temporal gift. Jesus' argument from the lesser to the greater (11:11 – 13) takes his audience to the greatest gift that anyone might receive through prayer.

Jesus' last two statements concerning the Holy Spirit occur in the same context, and are set off against each other (12:10, 12). Again, Luke's presentation of the material is different from Matthew's and Mark's uses.²¹ Sandwiched in between two promises of the Holy Spirit (11:13; 12:12) is a narrative containing a common thread setting off the kingdom of Satan against the kingdom of God. A confrontation is set up, probably by the Pharisees and Sadducees,²² when demonic power is ascribed to Jesus, and a sign from heaven is demanded of him; in other words, he is challenged to authenticate his authority. Essentially the accusation is: Jesus casts out demons by a demonic spirit, not a divine spirit. In what follows, Jesus addresses the charge by turning it against his accusers. He leaves no room for "neutrality"; he and the accusers are placed in diametrically opposed camps. This section may be summarized briefly as follows (units moved to the left by significance to overall section):

11:14–16 *The challenge to Jesus' authority.* He is accused of demonic power, and asked for a sign from heaven.

11:17–22 Jesus points out the lack of logic in demonic power casting out demons. Note that he equates casting out demons "by the finger of God" (Matthew has "by the Spirit of God")²³ with the presence of "the kingdom of God." When the kingdoms collide, God's kingdom prevails!

11:23–28 There is no neutrality; one is either supportive or antagonistic (23). Complacency allows the devil to reestablish himself, stronger than before (24–26). The only means of defense is hearing and keeping the word of God (27–28).

11:29–32 Jesus calls sign seekers "evil." The pure heart responds to the word of God. Note that Jesus illustrates this point using Gentiles. Jews were more responsive to signs, Gentiles to cognitive preaching. This pattern should be considered in *Acts*.

11:33–36 Focus on God's word enlightens the soul.

11:37–38 *The challenge to Jesus' purity.* He is accused of ceremonial uncleanness.

11:39–52 Jesus points the accusing finger at the Pharisees and Lawyers, who focus on tradition and externals while neglecting the spirit of God's word; indeed, they kill those who preach the spirit.

11:53–54 *The plot to undermine Jesus' words.*

²¹Both Matthew and Mark set the Beelzebul controversy and sin against the Holy Spirit in juxtaposition (Matt 12:22–32; Mark 3:22–30). Luke sandwiches in relevant material found elsewhere in the other accounts.

²²Luke has the accusation coming from "some of them" *i.e.*, "the crowds" (11:15), whereas Matthew specifies "the Pharisees" (12:24), and Mark "the scribes" (3:22). Luke does not mention the Pharisees until 11:37ff, and lawyers until 11:45ff.

²³Thus, "the finger of God" might be a metaphor for "the Spirit of God" *cf.* "the hand of God" (Luke 1:66; Acts 4:30; 11:21; 13:11; Ezek 1:3).

12:1–7 Jesus warns against the words (hypocrisy) and potential challenge of the Pharisees; God alone—who knows and reveals—should be feared.
 12:8–12 Jesus must be confessed as the Christ, as witnessed by the Holy Spirit.

This last unit (12:8–12) contains Jesus' final direct statements about the Holy Spirit in Luke. In short, (1) blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven, and (2) the Spirit will provide words for the disciples against their antagonists. A total commitment to the word of God and Jesus as the Christ will not go unchallenged. The antagonists are those from within the religious community, but it is the Holy Spirit they oppose, and it is the Holy Spirit, empowering the disciples, who will meet the opposition. Even as they opposed the prophets before Jesus, they oppose him, and so will they oppose his disciples after him. However, it is actually the Spirit of God they resist.

These verses (12:8–12) are difficult, and almost seem contradictory (particularly 9–10a). Yet, if the confession demanded is Jesus as the Messiah (which is Luke's focus, 4:18ff), and the sin against the Son of Man is the rejection of Jesus in his earthly ministry ("Son of Man" pointing to his humanity), part of the difficulty is removed. It is clear that some who were responsible for the death of Jesus later confessed him as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:23ff; 3:13ff – note that this is never said to Gentiles). Thus, even they could be forgiven and receive the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:38 *cf.* Luke 11:13). The greater difficulty arises with Jesus' statement, "but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him" (12:10). In both the Matthew and Mark contexts this warning is a direct response to the accusation about his casting out demons, "because they were saying 'he has an unclean spirit'" (Mark 3:30 *cf.* vv.20–30; Matt 12:22–32).

Setting aside Luke's context, the reader might understand that this blasphemy could only occur during Jesus' earthly ministry. Would this suggest that those who accused him of an unclean spirit had committed the sin, and stood forever condemned? Perhaps. Is this all the sin against the Spirit entails? Luke's additional material, sandwiched between the original challenge and this warning, suggests more is intended than the simple accusation. The *motivation* behind the accusation is direct antagonism to the form the Messianic program is taking (in the person of Jesus). The very nature of his person and his methodology (of carrying out the word of God) are disdained. In short, the religious establishment does not like Jesus' style; it goes contrary to all they believe. Yet, Jesus says that his method is the true interpretation of God's word; he lives the spirit, intent, of the word. The Jews expected a different Messiah, but they got Jesus. It was not so much the man himself they rejected; it was the way he lived and what he taught. To reject this living message was to reject the Spirit; the message was the Spirit's message. In every way, Jesus was a product of the Spirit: he was conceived by the Spirit (1:35), his coming was announced by the Spirit (1:15, 41, 67; 2:25–27), he was identified by the Spirit (3:22), he was empowered by the Spirit (4:1, 14), and his ministry was defined by the Spirit (4:18ff). Of course, his earthly antagonists were not necessarily witnesses to all these things, but belief in them was essential. So to sin against Jesus in his humanity was one thing, but to reject his word is to reject that which brings life (Acts 3:15ff). To speak against the Spirit is to speak against God's plan; it is to reject the way God wants things done. It is, in short, opposition to God's revelation of himself (11:27 – 28, 33 – 36; 12:8 – 12):

The unforgivable sin is not to be understood merely as the rejection of Christian preaching or the gospel, but the persistence in consummate and obdurate opposition to the influence of the Spirit which animates that preaching; it involves a mentality which obstinately sets the mind against the Spirit of God, and as long as that obstinate mindset perdures, God's forgiveness cannot be

*accorded to such a person. It is the extreme unaltered form of opposition to God himself.*²⁴

Set off against those who reject the Messiah and his program are those who proclaim Jesus as Lord and Christ. They will face the same antagonism. Yet, they are not to be anxious, "for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that hour what is necessary to say" (12:12). The battle is always the Spirit's, which will enable the Messianic program to be proclaimed and fulfilled (in the Book of Acts). This final promise to the disciples²⁵ is a word of encouragement to those witnessing antagonism, and about to witness much more, and who will experience it themselves in their own ministries.

A brief summary of what has been found in Luke's gospel account concerning the Holy Spirit is in order.

(1) By "coming/falling upon" or "filling" certain individuals, the Holy Spirit empowered them to proclaim the word of God—in Luke, particularly the approaching Messianic kingdom (1:15, 41, 67; 2:25 – 27). This activity of the Spirit was in essential harmony with the manner in which it had previously operated in the OT (see n2). Significantly, this activity was temporal (sometimes reoccurring), given for *specific* purposes at critical times. In the unique cases of John the Baptist and Jesus, the Spirit is pictured as coming upon or filling and remaining.

(2) With regard to the Holy Spirit's relationship to the Messiah himself, it is responsible for his conception (1:35), and it empowers him to carry out his ministry (4:1, 14, 18). However, once the Messiah's ministry begins, the Spirit is conspicuously absent in other people, and is rarely mentioned as active even in Jesus' ministry (one passing reference in 10:21).

(3) During the Messiah's ministry the Spirit was yet anticipated on a much greater scale (11:13), as it was with the earlier prophets (3:16; Joel 2:28 – 39; Isa 32:15; 44:3; Ezek 39:29; Zech 3:2:15). The age of the Spirit had not yet begun.

(4) Any opposition to the ideals of the Messianic program, as defined by the Spirit (4:18ff), was equivalent to opposing the Spirit of God and would not be tolerated (12:10, 3:16 – 17). The Spirit would also enable the disciples to meet opposition (12:12).

II. The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts

Drawing upon the preceding summary, at least three themes concerning the Spirit can be observed in *Acts*: (1) the special empowering of certain individuals to proclaim the restoration of the kingdom to Israel; (2) the fulfillment of the promised Spirit for each member in the believing community; (3) the embodiment of the Messianic ideals in the new community, protected from (internal or external) opposition or compromise. Enveloping these three themes is a fourth, indeed the central motif: *the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in the mission of the early church*. For Luke, the unfolding of the gospel mission was entirely under the control of the Spirit; the Messianic program is the Holy Spirit's program. The ministry of Jesus is the ministry of the Spirit in the new community.

What is the difference (if any) in effect between the first two of these themes? Do the promises concerning the Holy Spirit, in Luke and the OT, involve something other than temporal empowerments of individuals for specific tasks? It is obvious (though frequently not considered) that the "coming/falling upon" or "filling" of individuals by

²⁴J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According To Luke X – XXIV* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1985) 964.

²⁵"You" in vv. 11–12 is specific, in contrast to "everyone who...he who blasphemes" in v. 10. Whether or not this promise is restricted to certain disciples (apostles? cf. John 14–16) is still an open question.

the Spirit in Acts could not be contingent upon the fulfillment of previous promises (Luke 3:16; 11:13; Joel 2:28ff; *etc.*). These phenomena were not new. What was new was the universal availability of the Spirit to *all* in the believing community. How was this to be realized, and what was its significance for the fulfillment of the Messianic program?

The introductory verses (1:1 – 8)²⁶ immediately present to the reader key elements in the Messianic program about to be unfolded: (1) the apostolic witness of (2) the restored kingdom of God in (3) the power and authority of the Holy Spirit. This is all set in a clear geographic framework.²⁷

Over fifty references to the Holy Spirit occur in Acts. With one exception (28:25, and even this is not contemporary activity of the Spirit), all occur before 21:15.²⁸ This de-emphasis on the Spirit's activity is also evidenced in the later epistles of Paul. D. Jackson points out that in Luke,

*...the greatest emphasis on the Spirit (is) at the times of beginnings: Jesus' birth, Jesus' baptism, and inauguration of his ministry, Pentecost and the inauguration of the Jerusalem church, Samaria, Cornelius, and the Ephesian disciples. After this point the references to the Spirit and to varieties of experiences of the Spirit decline dramatically. The Spirit functioned in guiding Paul's mission, appointed the elders of the Ephesian church, and spoke in Scripture. Perhaps Luke writes to a generation in which the miraculous phenomena accompanying the beginning of the church have diminished.*²⁹

Whether this de-emphasis in Luke is a result of the actual decline in the phenomenological presence of the Spirit, or the nature of what is occurring in Acts, remains to be seen. However, Luke clearly turns a corner in Acts 21 (similar to Luke 9) when Paul determines to go to Jerusalem. These last references to the Spirit (21:4, 11) concern a prophecy warning Paul what is awaiting at Jerusalem (arrest and delivery to the Gentile authorities). The book closes with Paul imprisoned in Rome. Did Paul ignore a warning from the Spirit not to go (as the Tyrenians perceived it, 21: 4, 12 –14), or did he merely accept the prophecy as the inevitable course of his ministry to carry the message to the Gentiles (20:23 – 25)? Of course, the resemblance between Jesus' and Paul's ministries cannot be missed. Jesus predicted his own demise at Jerusalem, which was also not understood by his disciples, and "set his face to go to Jerusalem" in spite of the harsh realities waiting (Luke 9:43 – 51). In both cases, the Spirit disappears from active participation in the dramas.

²⁶Actually, the entire first chapter may be viewed as an introductory prologue. Two key elements are dealt with to prepare for the universal spread of the gospel: (1) the ascension of Jesus, making way for the Holy Spirit, and (2) the appointment of Matthias to fill the apostolic office vacated by Judas—thus, the twelve tribes of restored Israel are once again represented. Chapter 2 begins the fulfillment of the mission.

²⁷The geographic pattern to be followed (1:8) was previously defined only as "to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47 *cf.* Luke 2:32). In Acts, the geographic theme is more specifically outlined: "in Jerusalem (2:1 – 8:1a) and in all Judea and Samaria (8:1b – 11:18) and until the extremities of the earth (11:19 – 28:31)."

²⁸There are no references in eleven chapters (3, 12, 14, 17 – 18, 22 – 27). In two of these chapters, the Lord himself appears to Paul (18:9 – 10; 23:11). In chapter 12 *cf.* 27:23) the angel of the Lord is prominent, and may even act as a subordinate surrogate for the Spirit *cf.* 5:19; 8:26 [29]; 10:3, 7, [19], 22; 11:[12] – 13).

²⁹D. Jackson, "Luke And Paul: A Theology Of One Spirit From Two Perspectives," *JETS* 32/3 (September 1989) 341. *cf.* Heb 2:1 – 3.

Following the geographic framework, given by Jesus in Luke's introduction (Acts 1:8), four watershed events explicate the Holy Spirit's sovereignty in directing the gospel mission and its role as the fulfillment of God's promise:

(1) In Jerusalem: The dawn of the new age, the kingdom is restored (2:1 – 41).

(2) In Samaria: The gospel and religious diversity, the kingdom reaches outside Jerusalem (8:12 – 19).

(3) In Caesarea: The question of circumcision, the kingdom and the symbol of Jewishness (10:44 – 48 *cf.* 11: 12 – 17; 15:8).

(4) In Ephesus: The gospel among the gentiles, the kingdom independent of Jerusalem (19:1 – 7).³⁰

Before looking at these four events, a brief examination of Luke's opening remarks (1:1 – 8) is useful. The immediate introduction of the Spirit (v2) alerts the reader to the prominent role it will have in this second volume.³¹

*Luke wishes here in an impressive introductory manner to connect the work of Jesus with the ministry of the Spirit....Luke's first sentence makes clear an intention of his entire book: the Spirit is not to be dissociated from Jesus. The Spirit is Jesus at work in continuation of his ministry.*³²

Yet, even the resurrected Jesus is somehow pictured as subject to the Spirit by the phrase "through the Holy Spirit." The apostolic witness is either *commanded* or *chosen* by Christ, "through (by) the Holy Spirit,"³³ to fulfill his ministry. In Acts, this ministry belongs to the Holy Spirit.

To understand the role of the Spirit in this ministry, vv 4 – 8 are critical, and set the parameters for the rest of the book. First (v4), the apostles were to continue waiting in Jerusalem for "the promise of the Father" *cf.* Luke 24:49. The "promise" is the Holy Spirit, which would be "poured out" (2:33 with 2:17 – 18 and 10:45) on Pentecost (*cf.* 2:5). The promise is the Father's, which he sends through the Son (*cf.* John 14:16 – 17; 15:26). Second (v5), Jesus specifically relates this promise as the fulfillment of John the Baptist's promise, "you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit" (Luke 3:16).³⁴ It would be

³⁰Each of these events is not presented to meet *geographic* demands, but rather to demonstrate the progressive transition of kingdom restoration from Jews to Gentiles. For Luke the transition is a gradual development revealed and controlled by the Spirit. Although Peter opens the door to the Gentiles (from a Jerusalem centered perspective), Paul deals with Israel's (Jerusalem's) rejection of the Messiah and Gentile prominence in the restored kingdom. This transition is delicately handled by Luke, but ends on a tragic, rather than triumphant note for the Jews (28:25 – 31). This is "divinely ordered structure" as a means of understanding problems associated with the gift of the Spirit in Acts.

³¹Especially with the Spirit's disappearance in the first volume following 12:12, and its conspicuous absence in the parallel farewell address in Luke 24:44 – 52 (where Spirit language is explicit however, 24:49).

³²Bruner, *Theology*, 156.

³³Grammatically this phrase could modify either "commanded" or "chosen." Either way, the authority of the Spirit is emphasized. If the phrase modifies the former, it may refer to inspiration—*Acts* is the outcome of the revelations of the Spirit from the risen Lord to the apostles (Acts 1:2). Some indication of Luke's view on the Spirit and Scripture is seen in 1:16; 4:25; 28:25. However, this may be more than Luke intended in this verse.

³⁴Jesus is not restricting John's promise to the apostles. He is *including* them in the wider audience who would share in the results of this baptism by himself. Indeed the apostles would be instruments through whom God would give his Spirit ontologically

fulfilled "not many days from now" (*i.e.*, on Pentecost). Third (v6), the apostles relate the Holy Spirit baptism to the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. Peter confirms this relationship in the Pentecost sermon. Finally (v8), Jesus responds to the apostle's question about *when* the kingdom would be restored (*i.e.*, the Spirit would come) by essentially reiterating his previous instruction for them to wait—"God has fixed the day, you wait!" They were to receive the answer to their question when they received power as the Holy Spirit "came upon" them (Luke 24:49).³⁵ *At that time*, the apostles would witness to the restoration of the kingdom. Thus, when they are "filled" (which is synonymous with "come upon" 2:4 with 2:17 – 18, see n. 2) with the Spirit, the witnessing begins.

In sum, and in anticipation of the rest of this paper, Jesus baptized in (*i.e.*, poured out) the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, thereby making the Spirit available for ALL who would receive it as "a gift from God." This is a once for all action by Jesus signifying his ascension to the Davidic throne, the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. Following this event, the Spirit *continued* to "come/fall upon" or "fill" individuals for special effect, as it had done *before* Pentecost. A failure to distinguish between this once for all time action (baptizing, pouring out) of Jesus on Pentecost, and the ongoing activity of the Spirit of "coming/falling upon" and "filling" individuals has, in my opinion, caused undue confusion in the texts of Acts referring to these concepts.

As the apostles (and all the disciples) wait for the Spirit, its absence is dramatized by the manner in which the apostolic office, vacated by Judas, is filled. Guidance by the Spirit is indirect through written Scripture (1:16 *cf.* 4:25; 28:25), but final selection is determined by prayer and the drawing of lots (1:24 – 26). Thereafter, the Spirit personally directed the unfolding of the kingdom's restoration to Israel; decisions made belonged to the Spirit.

(1) In Jerusalem: The dawn of the new age, the kingdom is restored (2:1 – 42).

On Pentecost "they were all together in one place" and "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (vv1, 4).³⁶ The verb "filled" and the adjective "full" are used in Luke's customary sense to emphasize a empowering by the Spirit for a special task.³⁷ Generally, one's presuppositions govern how this phenomenon is interpreted. Bruner, in an anti-Pentecostal polemic, equates all the phrases ("giving [gift]...receiving...pouring

(through their preaching, 2:38) and phenomenologically (through the laying on of their hands, 8:14 – 17).

³⁵The association of "power" with the Spirit in the proclamation of the kingdom is a clear theme in Luke-Acts (Luke 1:15 – 17, 35; 4:14, 36; 5:17; 9:1 – 2; 24:49; Acts 6:5, 8; 8:13 [*cf.* 6:3]; 10:38).

³⁶The most immediate antecedent to "all" is the apostles (1:26). However, the most immediate *subject* antecedent ("they drew lots", 1:26) is all the (120) disciples (1:15; note "together in one place" [ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ] in both 1:15; 2:1). Most translations leave "all" ambiguous (except TEV, "all the believers").

³⁷See n2. Although the nature of the adjective could imply a (continuous) characteristic (presence of the Spirit) of the individual so described, Luke's use of "full" implies a unique quality not common to all in the community of believers, which is drawn upon for special occasions (Luke 4:1; Acts 6:3, 5, 10; 7:55; 11:24). The imperfect passive in 13:52 is probably iterative, "they kept on being filled," which would be essential in the face of continued persecution. To whom "the disciples" (13:32) applies is not clear. The aorist passive participles in 4:8; 13:9 could point back to 2:4 in Peter's case, and 9:17 – 18 (?) in Paul's case. However, this cannot be determined by the participles themselves. The contexts imply fillings for these special occasions. There would seem to be little need to recall a much earlier filling if such was known to result in an existing state. Why recall it only at certain times? The participle may suggest a special inflow of power to meet this emergency.

out...coming/falling upon...filling") with "baptizing in the Holy Spirit." In short, it is the conversion-experience itself. Thus, "(water) baptism becomes the baptism of the Holy Spirit."³⁸ Likewise, Dunn equates the same seven phrases as "the first initiating, *i.e.* baptizing work of the Spirit."³⁹ Yet he also acknowledges that "Luke probably intends Acts 2:38 to establish the pattern and norm for Christian conversion-initiation." Consequently, "the relation between the gift of the Spirit and water-baptism is particularly confusing—sometimes sharply contrasted...quite unconnected."⁴⁰ Both Bruner's and Dunn's sometimes tortuous interpretations of critical passages (*e.g.*, Acts 8; 10) result not from Luke's presentations, but rather their failure to make any significant distinctions in the phrases used in conjunction with the Spirit.

Ervin, in a pro-Pentecostal critique of Dunn, also equates these phrases concerning the Spirit, but disassociates them from the conversion and initiation sequence (repentance/faith and water baptism), which is a "pre-condition" for the Spirit baptism. Repentance/faith result from direct activity of the Spirit upon the individual, which is coterminous with regeneration. The subsequent water-baptism is but a symbol (albeit necessary) of that regeneration. The baptism in/gift of/ filling with the Spirit is *subsequent* to the whole conversion-initiation sequence.⁴¹ However, concerning the obvious difficulties presented by the cases of Paul and Cornelius, Ervin states: "God is not bound by precedent...The exception simply proves that there is a rule, a normative pattern; otherwise, the exception itself becomes the rule."⁴² Beyond the obvious difficulties with such reasoning, it should also be obvious that in the subject under discussion the examples the interpreters have to work with are limited in number, and nearly equally divided between "a normative pattern" and "exceptions."

If these seven key phrases concerning the Spirit are viewed distinctively, most of the difficulties disappear. The "coming/falling upon" and "filling" activities of the Spirit are neither synonymous with nor dependent upon the "pouring out/baptizing in" activities of Jesus. The former concern the Spirit's intervention for specific occasions. Thus Peter, "filled with the Holy Spirit," addresses the Jewish hierarchy who oppose the Spirit's ministry (4:8), which is a fulfillment of Jesus' promise (Luke 12:12 *cf.* Acts 4:13). Motivated by this incident, all Peter's companions "were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness" (4:31 *cf.* 4:29; 13:46; 14:3). Stephen, in like manner, proclaimed words that culminated in his death (7:54 – 60). Saul is promised to be "filled with the Holy Spirit" (9:17), and (at least) one time later is so enabled to confront Elymas the magician (13:9). In each of these cases, there are elements of revelation and power ("boldness") manifested in the recipients.

With the disciples on Pentecost, there is also revelation and power, "and they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them to speak out."⁴³ The age of the Spirit is introduced by the Spirit. Jews (including proselytes) were present from all over the empire (2:5 – 11). The message proclaimed was "the great deeds of God" (2:11). Peter, taking his cue from those who did not know what was going on (2:12 – 13), proclaimed the gospel (2:14 – 36). For our purposes, two sections in the sermon are of

³⁸*Ibid.*, 168 – 169.

³⁹Dunn, *Baptism*, 72.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 90.

⁴¹H. M. Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation And The Baptism In The Holy Spirit* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1984) 22, 52 – 53, 64.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 49.

⁴³"Tongues" (γλῶσσαι) here are foreign languages (διάλεκτος [dialects] 1:19; 2:6, 8; 21:40; 22:2; 26:14). This may not be the first occurrence of this phenomena (or ecstatic utterance), as God's Spirit came upon people *cf.* Num 11:24 – 27; 1 Sam 10:5 – 13; 19:20 – 24.

particular importance: the Joel prophecy (2:16 – 21) and the Davidic prophecy (2:29 – 36).

First, the Joel prophecy (2:16 – 21 *cf.* Joel 2:28 – 32). There are NT variants and differences with the LXX and MT, with Christological significance. Most important is Peter's variation "'in the last days,' God says" for "and after these things" [LXX] in the first phrase. Peter's use of this phrase "has a clear theological motive. With the pouring out of the Spirit the movement toward the eschatological Day to the Lord is declared to have begun."⁴⁴ What significance would the Joel passage have for Peter's and Luke's audiences? How would these promises affect *their* generations?

Opinion is seriously divided as to when Joel prophesied (eighth to fifth centuries BC). Yet, the book is clearly couched in prophetic language of *national* judgment. Impending judgment ("the day of the Lord") is in the hands of the armies ("locusts") of Judah's enemies (1:1 – 2:11). For the repentant, deliverance is promised (2:12 – 27). The judgment of the Lord is always understood as punishment for the unfaithful, and blessing for the faithful—"I will pour out from my Spirit" is an OT figure for *blessing* (Prov 1:23; Isa 32:15; 44:3; Ezek 39:29; Zech 12:12). That it would come "upon all flesh" (*cf.* Isa 40:5; 49:6) is set in contrast to the fact that previously only a select few (judges, prophets, priests, kings) experienced God's Spirit, but not *all* the people of God. Blessing becomes judgment (2:30 – 31) for the unrepentant (*cf.* 2:10; 3:15; Isa 13:9 – 10; *etc.*). Jesus foretold in similar language of Jerusalem's coming destruction (AD70) for its rejection of the Messiah (Luke 21:11, 25 – 26; Mark 13:24 – 25). Yet for those "who call upon the name of the Lord" there is deliverance (Joel 2:32). Joel adds, but Peter omits, that there will be survivors in Jerusalem, those (Jews) "whom the Lord calls" (*cf.* Luke 21:20 – 36; Matt 24:22).

Peter understood Joel's prophecy coming to pass as he spoke, a time he called "the last days."⁴⁵ This was signified by the speaking in tongues (v16), which the apostles also recognized as a fulfillment of Jesus' promise (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4 – 8). Peter's use of the Joel quote brings in both elements of the promise of John the Baptist (Luke 3:16), "he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17 – 18) and fire (Acts 2:19 – 20)," "fire" referring to judgment upon the Jews (and ultimately all) who reject the Messiah (realized even in that generation 2:40 *cf.* Luke 3:17). Those calling upon the name of the Lord would be saved from that judgment (v20). The means of salvation was the gospel (vv22ff).

The second prophecy of importance for this discussion is the Davidic prophecy (29 – 36 *cf.* Ps 132:11; 89:4 with 2 Sam 7:8 – 17). The fulfillment of this prophecy, the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (*cf.* 1:6), is realized in the resurrection and ascension of the Messiah (2:31 – 35). As with the Joel prophecy, it was signified by the speaking in tongues ("this which you both see and hear," 2:33). The Messiah received the promise (*cf.* Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4) of the Holy Spirit from the Father and "he poured out this" (*i.e.*, the Holy Spirit manifested by the tongues). Peter's conclusion was that Israel should know that the one they crucified was now "both lord and Christ" (v36), the age of the Messiah (the age of the Spirit) had begun. The Spirit was no longer a blessing for a select few (2:17 – 18; Luke 11:13), it was made available for *all* who repent and are baptized (2:38). With forgiveness of sins, the obedient will receive "the gift of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁶ This promise is not restricted to the immediate audience, but rather it is

⁴⁴Bock, *Proclamation*, 161.

⁴⁵Whether this is understood as "the last days" of the pre-Messianic age — culminating in AD70, or the Messianic age itself—culminating in Jesus' final advent, is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it could have ramifications for one's understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in the post-AD70 church.

⁴⁶Appositional genitive, "the gift *which is* the Holy Spirit," not subjective genitive, "the gift *from* the Holy Spirit." The "gift" is the "promise (2:33, also appositional genitive). The Holy Spirit is what the Father gives (Luke 11:13; Acts 5:32), only when

extended to their children and "all those far off" (2:39, *i.e.*, nations/Gentiles 22:21 *cf.* Eph 2:13, 17). That the promise extended to the Gentiles ("all flesh," 2:17) was understood by the apostles. The issue raised by the Cornelius incident was not whether Gentiles could be admitted to full fellowship in the kingdom (*cf.* 2:10, "proselytes"), but circumcision (see comments below on 10:44 – 48).

In what sense all the obedient were to receive the Spirit was not explained by Luke. To conclude *all* would prophecy, see visions, and dream dreams is not demanded by the Joel text, is contrary to material outside Luke–Acts (*e.g.*, 1 Cor 12 – 14), and is clearly not evidenced in Acts. Certainly, the phenomenological effects realized when the Spirit came upon or filled individuals radically increased following Pentecost (to meet the demands of the world witness?), but this is distinct from the universal gift of the Spirit. "The gift of the Holy Spirit" may be understood as the "ontological" presence of the Spirit in every baptized believer (Luke 11:13; Acts 2:38 *cf.* John 4:10; 7:37 – 39; Rom 8:9 – 11), while the "gifts" (*carismata*) of the Spirit (*e.g.*, 1 Cor 12) may be understood as the "phenomenological" presence of the Spirit "coming/falling upon" or "filling" selected people (irrespective of the believer's baptism).

Acts 2 may be called the pneumatic watershed of Scripture. Luke marks it as the fulfillment of that promised in the prophets of Israel through and including John the Baptist and the Messiah himself. What had been a promise for centuries, became a reality on Pentecost: restoration of the kingdom to Israel as the Messiah was seated on the Davidic throne, and the pouring forth of God's Spirit to be received by all who called upon his name. For Luke the new age of the Spirit had begun, an age that the Spirit initiates, empowers, and becomes a blessing for every participant.

(2) In Samaria, the gospel and religious diversity, the kingdom reaches outside Jerusalem (8:12 – 19).

This passage is problematic. Succinctly stated, what takes place in Samaria appears to be contrary to Acts 2:38, and to the larger context of the NT (especially, Rom 8:9 – 11). It is all too convenient to consider this incident as "an exception to the rule," especially when it conflicts with one's presuppositions. There is little doubt this problem is addressed in the text, but it does not follow that such a break has to occur between baptism and the gift of the Spirit. The reader must remember to distinguish adequately the *ontological* and *phenomenological* presences of the Spirit (a point recognized as "plausible," yet passed over in a footnote). It is also too convenient to deny that the Samaritans were truly converted by Philip.

Why has Luke included this narrative? In addition, why is so much attention given to Simon the magician? [This latter question will be put aside for the moment, as I believe it deals with yet another critical issue concerning the Spirit.] The gospel mission left Jerusalem, and it is entering a world heavily influenced by a Gentile mindset. How central is Jerusalem to the gospel mission? Will it remain central throughout the spread of the gospel into the extremities of the earth? It does at least until the Jerusalem council (Acts 15), but after that, its influence diminishes. Critical also is the witness of the apostles (Luke 24:45 – 49; Acts 1:1 – 8, 15ff). With the persecution that forced the exodus from Jerusalem, the apostles stayed behind (8:1). The Hellenist Philip introduced the gospel in "Judea and Samaria" (*cf.* Acts 1:8). However, Luke maintains the connection with Jerusalem, at least for some time.

There are three things in the text (8:14 – 19) that indicate no "exception" to Luke's formula concerning the gift of the Spirit has occurred. First, there is no indication in the text that anyone in Samaria summoned the apostles to come to that city to impart "the gift of the Holy Spirit." If Philip preached the same gospel that Peter had preached on Pentecost (and there is no reason to believe he did not), the gift of the

Jesus was glorified *cf.* John 4:10 – 15 with 7:37 – 39. That the gift is received coincidentally with baptism and forgiveness.

Spirit was presumably promised and received. Yet, Philip ("full of the Spirit," 6:3) performed many signs that were critical in the conversion of the Samaritans (8:4 – 13). Their conversion was not merely a cognitive response. Signs play a critical role in many (if not most) of the conversion stories in Acts. Were signs (*charismata*) needed at the hands of the Samaritans to expedite the spread of the gospel? Is this sufficient reason for the apostles to come down from Jerusalem? Presumably, Philip did not have the ability to transmit "gifts" from the Holy Spirit, nor had the Spirit chosen to directly impart them. Could this be Luke's (the Spirit's?) way of maintaining the centrality of Jerusalem and the authority of the apostolic witness?

The second thing demonstrating that this event is consistent with Luke's Holy Spirit formula (2:38) is found in v16. The apostles came down from Jerusalem that the Samaritans "might receive the Holy Spirit." "Receive" in what sense? For it had not yet (first for emphasis; it was expected) *fallen upon* (perfect participle of ἐπιπίπτω) any of them; they were *only* baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Note the distinction; water baptism was not expected to include a *phenomenological* presence of the Spirit. If the position set forth in this paper is correct, there is no "exception" necessitated in this text. The believers received "*the gift*" of the Spirit when they were baptized, but there was no charismatic manifestation ["gifts"]. Perhaps, for the reasons questioned above, the apostles saw a need for such a demonstration.

In support of this, a third piece of evidence is found in v18; What did Simon see? Simon, who had clearly been impressed with Philip's signs (9 – 13), was equally impressed by the giving of the Spirit through the apostle's hands. Unless this activity was evidenced phenomenologically ("Simon saw"), Simon's response makes little sense.

In Jerusalem, the boldness with which the gospel was proclaimed, through the power of the Spirit, inevitably led to persecution. This drove the gospel mission into the world. The transition from Jerusalem to "all the nations" (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8) had begun. The Spirit directed this turn through the immediate precipitating event, Stephen's sermon. This culminated in a vision of the risen Christ enthroned in glory (revealed by the Spirit, 7:55). Did Stephen proclaim to the Jews the vision revealed to him by the Spirit, which to the Jews was blasphemous (7:57 – 8:1a)? In Samaria, the Spirit continued directing events through Philip as he confronted the demon world victoriously; the true "power of God" was glorified. This brings me to the second question raised at the beginning of this section: Why is so much attention given to Simon the magician?

The third theme mentioned at the beginning of Part II in this paper,⁴⁷ applies in the case of Simon. Simon challenges the Messianic ideals embodied in the new community. God's concern about meeting human need is a clear theme in Luke-Acts, and is lived out in the community of the Spirit (Acts 2:43 – 47; 4:32 – 37; 6:1 – 6; 11:27 – 30). Two episodes in particular threaten this ideal, and in each case, there appears to be a demonic source behind the threat. In the incidents involving Ananias and Sapphira (5:1 – 11 cf. 4:32 – 37) and Simon the magician (8:18 – 24), Christians failed to live out the principle of sacrifice because of selfish greed, and in Simon's case, there was a seeking of authority not reserved for him, a pure case of idolatry.

Peter confronts the perpetrators as demonically moved against the Spirit (5:3, 9; 8:23), and raises doubts as to any possibility of forgiveness (5:5, 10; 8:22 – 24 cf. Deut 29:17 – 21).⁴⁸ The similarities with what Jesus taught about blaspheming the Holy

⁴⁷ The embodiment of the Messianic ideals in the new community, protected from (internal or external) opposition or compromise. See also summary point four at the end of Part I, p13. Theme (1) has since been referred to as the "phenomenological" presence of the Spirit, and theme (2) as the "ontological" presence.

⁴⁸The question as to whether or not Ananias, Sapphira, and Simon were truly Christians seems to be precipitated by issues not raised by the text. The texts imply they were Christians, yet their eternal destinies remain a mystery.

Spirit (Luke 12:10) are unmistakable. Whether one resists the ideals of the Spirit, or the word of God from the Spirit (*cf.* Acts 7:51), that individual risks judgment. Sin against the Spirit will not be tolerated in the kingdom.

(3) In Caesarea: The kingdom and the symbol of Jewishness, the question of circumcision. (10:44 – 48; 11:12 – 17; 15:8)

The issue in Caesarea was not Gentile conversion, but Gentile conversion without circumcision (*cf.* 11:2 – 3; 15:1, 5). The Jews had no difficulty recognizing Gentiles in covenant with God, or that they too were included in the Messianic program (Luke 2:32; 24:47; Acts 2:10, 17, 39; 9:15). Nevertheless, as the borders of the kingdom expanded, certain missiological issues evolved that in all probability would not be encountered in Jerusalem; circumcision was such an issue, in fact, the main issue. However, in the Diaspora, Gentiles associated with Judaism ["God-fearers"] were prevalent and constituted the main thrust of the Gentile mission. Thus, the Cornelius episode finds its place in Acts to deal with a question that could not be avoided in a community increasingly dominated by Gentiles. Nearly three chapters (10 – 11; 15) are devoted to resolving this issue. Apostolic dependence and the centrality of Jerusalem gracefully diminish. The restoration theme is less and less defined in Jewish categories (15:15 – 18).⁴⁹

According to Luke's pattern, the Spirit is again in control at this critical juncture. The question of circumcision required resolution *among the Jews*. Thus, the Spirit itself revealed to Peter that Jewish distinctions between clean and unclean are no longer ritually defined (10:13, 15, 19, 28).⁵⁰ Peter understands that "God-fearers" are now acceptable to God *as is* (10:2, 22, 34 – 35, 43).⁵¹ After Peter preaches the gospel to Cornelius and his household (10:36 – 43), the Holy Spirit witnesses *to Peter and the circumcised believers with him* (10:44 – 46). The manifestation of the Spirit is for the Jews, *not* the Gentiles. This episode convinces Peter and his company that circumcision is not required for kingdom admission.

As Peter spoke the Spirit *fell upon* (ἐπιπίπτω) Cornelius and his household (v44). This is a "phenomenological" presence of the Spirit in the form of tongues (v46).⁵² It

⁴⁹Following the geographic outline given above (see n27), the Cornelius incident in Caesarea closes the Judea/Samaria section (8:1b – 11:18). The mission to "the extremities of the earth" formally begins in 11:19. Movement from Jerusalem raised the critical issue of circumcision, settled at first in the mission field. In 11:19 – 12:24 Luke continues to set the stage for the Gentile mission. The disciples in Antioch are first called "Christians," Jewish ties weaken (11:19– 26). Jerusalem becomes dependent upon churches in the Diaspora for material aid (11:27 – 30). The apostle James is put to death and not replaced (12:1 – 2 *cf.* 1:12 – 26). It is not the Lord or the Spirit that come to Peter's rescue, but a surrogate angel (12:3 – 11). Peter exits the drama almost unnoticed (12:17, "he went to another place"), only to surface briefly at the Jerusalem council and confirm the circumcision issue, which furthers the break with Jerusalem (15:6 – 11). Likewise, Paul's first mission journey (12:25 – 14:28) prepared him for the same issue (15:1 – 5, 12).

⁵⁰Only an angel appears to Cornelius (10:3 – 8, 22, 30). The conversion of Cornelius *per se* is not Luke's main concern; the revelation to Peter as representative of Israel is central.

⁵¹*i.e.*, without circumcision. Distinguished from "proselytes" (2:11; 6:5; 13:43), "God-fearers" (10:2) acknowledged one God, worshipped in synagogues (13:16, 26 *cf.* 14:1; 18:4), kept the Sabbath and food laws, and the moral code.

⁵²That the recipients had not been baptized in water has no bearing on this aspect of the Spirit's action (contrast 8:14 – 18, comments there). There is no precondition that one must have "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (2:38) before the Spirit can "come/fall upon" him/her (as is attested in all the cases prior to Pentecost). Neither

was this manifestation that convinced (v46) "the faithful of the *circumcision*," (v45, so named to emphasize the issue at hand *cf.* 11:2). That which "amazed" this group was "that even upon the Gentiles the gift (*δωρεά*, *not χάρισμα*) of the Holy Spirit had been *poured out* (perfect passive)." The perfect tense taken in its most natural sense of past action with a resultant state, probably reaches back before the immediate incident to Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out upon "all flesh" (2:17, 33).⁵³ The promise of God, the gift of the Spirit, was sent for even the Gentiles (corporately), apart from circumcision (2:33, 38 – 39; 5:32). Until the Cornelius incident, the issue of circumcision had not arisen. The Spirit raises it, and resolves it—for "the faithful of the circumcision."

Peter concluded that the uncircumcised Gentiles must be baptized (vv47 – 48). Thus, each one of them would receive forgiveness of sins (*i.e.*, salvation *cf.* 11:14) and the (ontological) gift of the Holy Spirit. There is no conflict here with what Peter preached on the day of Pentecost (2:38). What Peter means by "who *received* the Holy Spirit as also we," is subject to two basic understandings. First, the aorist of "received" could look back to Pentecost, if "who (received)" is taken corporately of Gentiles (of which Cornelius and his household are but representative). On the other hand, it might refer to what just occurred ("fell upon", v44), if "who" is taken with "these" (v47) in the limited sense of the characters in the context. With the first option, the Spirit is understood as poured out upon both the circumcised and uncircumcised on the day of Pentecost. The second option is more probable; the Spirit *came upon* Cornelius and his household in the same way it *filled* (2:4) the disciples at Pentecost (11:15).

Peter recounted the incident before the Jews in Jerusalem, who were concerned over the issue of circumcision, not the action of the Spirit (11:1 – 3). He explained the vision about ritual cleanliness (11:4 – 11), and appealed to the Spirit's sovereign authority (11:12). Verse 15 is nearly parallel to 10:44, "the Holy Spirit *fell upon* them." Peter adds, "as also *upon* us in the beginning" (*cf.* 10:47, see above). Then Peter related what happened (both to the circumcised and uncircumcised) to the Lord's promise, "you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit" (11:16). Through the incident at Caesarea, Peter understood the promise to include uncircumcised Gentiles. Peter concluded that "God gave (*i.e.*, at Pentecost) the equal gift (*δωρεάν*, *i.e.*, the gift itself at Pentecost, not tongues at Caesarea) to them (the uncircumcised) as also to us (the circumcised), having believed⁵⁴ on the Lord Jesus Christ" (11:17). Presumably, those who raised the circumcision issue (11:1 – 2) were satisfied, "then also to the Gentiles (*i.e.*, the uncircumcised) God gave repentance unto life" (11:18).

However, the issue is not formally settled until it is raised again in the Diaspora (15:1). Again, Peter recalls the Cornelius incident (15:7 – 12). In v8, Peter most likely

does any text indicate that one must be in a right relationship with God as a precondition (Num 24:1 – 2; 1 Sam 19:18 – 24 *cf.* Num 22:28; John 11:47 – 53 where the Spirit's presence may be inferred). Any view that the falling upon/baptism in/gift of the Spirit all occurring at water baptism is encumbered here.

⁵³Note the future tense of Joel 2:28 (Acts 2:17 *cf.* Isa 32:15; 44:3; Ezek 39:29), aorist tense of Acts 2:33 *cf.* Titus 3:6 which merely states the fact). The "pouring out" at Pentecost symbolized the Lord's (actual) sending of the Spirit for *all believers*. This act should not be thought of in spatial terms, as if the Spirit were somehow *materially* limited (*i.e.*, prior to Pentecost "less" of the Spirit was available "on earth"). Rather, this act should be viewed temporally, *from Pentecost on*, the Spirit was available to all.

⁵⁴"Having believed" agrees with both "us" and "them," and could modify either or both. Most translations take it with "us" ("when *we* believed"). A few translations leave it ambiguous, "who believed" (KJV, CV, NIV), or "having believed" (NASB, RBV). The position taken above (Peter's reference is to the out pouring on Pentecost) is adversely affected only if the participle modifies *both* pronouns and, at the same time, represents antecedence. Neither can be demonstrated with certainty.

refers to God giving (present participle) the Spirit by which it witnessed (*i.e.*, through tongues) to Cornelius and his household. Thus, 10:47 ("as also to us") and 15:8 ("just as also to us") refer to the "falling upon/filling" of the Spirit, whereas 11:17 ("as also to us") refers to the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.⁵⁵

The incident in Caesarea is critical in understanding a number of themes in Luke–Acts. The restoration of the kingdom to Israel began to be defined in more *universal* terms, "then *even* (placed first in the statement, even more emphatically) to the (uncircumcised) Gentiles God..." (11:18). The sovereignty of the Spirit, which initiated the change, begins to diminish the role and power of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is still formally involved, but only in the sense of confirming what the Spirit has already set into motion. For Luke, the Spirit is in total control (15:28).

(4) In Ephesus: The gospel among the Gentiles, the kingdom independent of Jerusalem (19:1 – 7).

In Ephesus, the gospel was far removed from Jerusalem. The church was perceived as dependent upon the authority of Paul, and not the twelve. The church was also viewed as the responsibility of the local elders (Acts 20:28). Jerusalem's positive influence was still felt, but only inasmuch as it declared Gentile independence (16:4). Henceforth in Acts, Jerusalem's influence is primarily negative (20:17 – 23; 21:4ff).

Paul spent a short period in Ephesus toward the end of his second journey (18:19 – 22). Clearly, at least some of the Jews in the synagogue heard Paul proclaim the full message of the Christ. Yet, there are no recorded converts. While Paul was beginning his third missionary journey in the Galatian region and Phrygia, Apollos (an Alexandrian Jew) came to Ephesus and taught "accurately the things concerning Jesus." However, his teaching was limited to the baptism of John (18:24 – 25). Thus, he could not teach beyond the fact that Jesus was the anticipated Messiah, and that John promised Jesus would baptize in the Holy Spirit. When he attempted to preach in the synagogue, where Paul had preached, Priscilla and Aquila (Paul's fellow-workers, 18:2 – 3, 18 – 19; Rom 16:3) corrected his limited knowledge. Apollos then departed Ephesus for Achaia to proclaim through the Scriptures that "Jesus is the Christ" (18:27 – 29). While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul returned to Ephesus and encountered some disciples with precisely the same limited knowledge Apollos had before he met with Priscilla and Aquila (19:1 – 3). Paul spent about three years (19:8 – 10; 20:31) in Ephesus, after which he went, by way of Macedonia, to Greece (probably Corinth, where Apollos may have remained). On his return to Jerusalem, he passed by Ephesus, but met with the Ephesian elders at Miletus (20:17ff).

Ephesus is central for Paul's final missionary journey (20:18). What role does the Apollos episode play in the narrative? It is similar to what follows, but is conspicuously differentiated by what does *not* happen. The twelve disciples were presumably at the same level of understanding as Apollos before he was instructed by Priscilla and Aquila (18:25; 19:3). Had Apollos originally taught these disciples? Why did he not teach them the way "more accurately" (*cf.* 18:26) before departing for Achaia? Why did Priscilla and Aquila not do so? In what sense were these twelve "disciples"? There is no indication in any other passage (following Pentecost) that Luke applies this term to anyone but

⁵⁵Notice that in none of the verses does Peter make the parallel with the gift of the Spirit given to the 3,000 on Pentecost (Acts 2:38). Admittedly the similarity of these phrases and of Peter's conclusions about refusing water (10:47) and standing in God's way (11:17) seem to point to the same incident. Certainly, it is because of *both* realities Peter's conclusion was necessary. In addition, because both incidents (the pouring out and the falling upon/filling) occurred to both groups, confusion results as to what Peter is always referring. If 11:17 also refers to the incident in Caesarea (*i.e.*, falling upon), then δωρεάν is used to refer to the charismata, which is not only unique, but raises questions as to what δωρεάν in Acts 2:38 refers to.

Christians. However, it is obvious that other disciples of John the Baptist could have been among those who responded to the gospel. To call these disciples "Christians," is to deny the most fundamental NT understanding of the term. Indeed, for Paul, having the Spirit was the essence of being a Christian (Rom 8:9 – 11).

Why is nothing recorded concerning Apollos' response to Priscilla and Aquila's teaching? Is it to be assumed Christian baptism was *not* required of him because he already had the Spirit? Is this why these two stories are juxtaposed by Luke? Too much is left to speculation if this is assumed, and such a situation would stand in contrast to everything that has come before in Acts. The contrast may not even rest between Apollos and the twelve, but between Priscilla/Aquila and Paul. In this narrative, which is very similar to 8:4 – 24 (where apostolic authority was a critical point), only an apostle has power to impart the Holy Spirit, in a *phenomenological* sense. This imputation of the Spirit accomplishes at least two things: (1) In a mission that is increasingly removed from the original center of authority (Jerusalem) and apostolic oversight, authentication of the message is critical. The "twelve" Ephesians speaking tongues brings the reader back to Pentecost when the twelve apostles (at least) spoke tongues and used that phenomenon as a springboard for the preaching of the gospel. Did the Ephesian disciples do the same? The number "twelve" may symbolically make this connection, and represent the continuing shift away from the centrality of the original twelve apostles. (2) The equality of Paul's apostleship is confirmed. As the apostles came down from Jerusalem to Samaria to impart the *charismata*, so too an apostle comes to Ephesus. In both cases, however the *charismata* may have been used, apostolic authority was confirmed. In a sense, the apostolic power base completes its shift from the Jerusalem twelve to Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (who are becoming the dominant element in the church). The contrast with Priscilla and Aquila's ministry heightens Paul's authority, as did the ministry of Philip for the twelve apostles (*cf.* 8:4ff).⁵⁶

Perhaps Luke had yet another purpose for this episode. It is the last detailed "conversion story" in Acts. Certainly, the fundamental element in conversion is faith.⁵⁷ Yet, for Luke, true discipleship also involves baptism in the name of Jesus Christ and the (ontological) gift of the Holy Spirit (2:38). This is reaffirmed for the reader by the events in Ephesus.

Paul asked the disciples, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit having believed?" Is Paul speaking ontologically or phenomenologically? The latter seems implied by his response to their answer (v3a). Had he been speaking ontologically, his question would have made no sense; Paul did not know of baptized Christian disciples without the Spirit (Rom 6:3 – 7; 8:9 – 11). Speaking of the phenomenological presence of the Spirit, he could have as well asked, "Did the Holy Spirit come upon/fill you since you believed?"⁵⁸ The Ephesians' answer is somewhat confusing in the Greek. Literally, it could read, "But we did not hear if there is a Holy Spirit." Taking "Holy Spirit" as a subject nominative, rather than a predicate nominative (as in this translation), there would be two options: (1) allow the copula to stand without linking a compliment ("...if a Holy Spirit *is*."), or (2) supply a predicate nominative (subject compliment). In the former case (1) the same

⁵⁶Had the emphasis been on the Ephesians having the *charismata*, the Holy Spirit could have come upon them as it did the disciples on Pentecost or those in the household of Cornelius.

⁵⁷See 3:6; 4:4; 5:14; 8:12 – 13, 37; 9:42; 10:43; 11:17, 21; 13:39, 48; 14:1; 15:7; 16:31; 17:12, 34; 18:8; 19:18.

⁵⁸Or, *when* you believed. The aorist participle ("having believed") may be either antecedent to or contemporaneous with "did you receive the Holy Spirit." Implied by Paul's question concerning baptism was a connection between Christian baptism and receiving (the gift of) the Spirit. Their ignorance of the Spirit, indicated that if they were baptized at all, it could not have been in the name of Jesus.

meaning results as in the above translation; the disciples express ignorance of the Holy Spirit's *existence*. This seems inconceivable, unless their knowledge of John's baptism, and Jewish monotheism, was woefully inadequate. In the latter case (2), their knowledge of the Spirit's existence is assumed, which obviously Paul had done. Thus, they answered his question as to whether or not they had *received* it; "We did not hear if the Holy Spirit is *being received* (or here, poured out, given, available, *etc.*)." Thus, Paul tells them of faith in Jesus (*not* of the Holy Spirit's existence) which involves the sending forth of the Spirit at Jesus' enthronement (*cf.* 2:33 – 36). Thus, the Ephesians "were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (vv4 – 5).

Following their baptism (which imparted the ontological "gift" of the Spirit), Paul accomplished his original purpose—to impart the phenomenological presence (*charismata*) of the Spirit. He laid his hands upon them, "the Holy Spirit *came upon* them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied" (v6).

Conclusion

For Luke, the Holy Spirit is the central figure in the unfolding drama of kingdom restoration to Israel in the book of Acts. To be sure, it is God's drama realized in Jesus Christ, but it is the Holy Spirit that initiates, directs, and empowers the success of the gospel mission to the extremities of the earth. There are many levels of players, ranging from the Lord himself (before he ascends and makes way for the Spirit), to the twelve apostles (particularly Peter), to the apostle Paul (who enables the shift from the centrality of Jerusalem and the twelve apostles to a predominantly Gentile kingdom), to key evangelists (Stephen, Philip), to prominent leaders (James, maintaining a Jewish connection), to outstanding converts (the Samaritans, Cornelius, the twelve Ephesians, each at a watershed in salvation history), *etc.* However, through it all, and over it all, the Holy Spirit remains for Luke the primary player in the birth of the new age.

Indeed, it is the age of the Spirit, the age when the Spirit is not only sovereign in the administration of the new community, but the personal gift for each of those participating in it. In Acts the Spirit is not only present in a phenomenological sense, as it had been at other critical points in history, but in an ontological sense⁵⁹ for every faithful follower of Christ. This raises an important question that cannot be answered here. Is the church of the twenty first century to understand the activity of the Spirit, so critical to the operation and expansion of the first century church, as something to be relegated to that watershed period of salvation history? Alternatively, should it look for, and expect, the same dynamic presence of the Spirit, without which the first century church would have laid to rest in the waste of its own exigencies.

⁵⁹I have made no effort to define "ontological sense" beyond what Luke (and Paul) actually stated in distinction from the "phenomenological sense" (the outward manifestations of the Spirit's direct interventions for special effect). By "ontological," I mean a "real" presence of the Spirit with every believer. Customarily, this is referred to as the "indwelling" Spirit, but this opens yet another debate as to *how* the Spirit indwells. This discussion is beyond the scope of this paper, and I believe beyond anything that Luke deals with. As in the case of the "trinity," when one gets too specific defining how "the gift of the Spirit" is present with every believer, he or she inevitably ends up in some heresy.