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*Foreword by Michael Horton*

# BAPTISM & FULLNESS



The Work of the Holy Spirit Today



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## The Promise of the Spirit



**T**he Christian life is life in the Spirit. All Christians are happily agreed about this. It would be impossible to be a Christian, let alone to live and grow as a Christian, without the ministry of the gracious Spirit of God. All we have and are as Christians we owe to him.

So every Christian believer has an experience of the Holy Spirit from the very first moments of his Christian life. For the Christian life begins with a new birth, and the new birth is a birth “of the Spirit” (Jn 3:3-8). He is “the Spirit of life,” and it is he who imparts life to our dead souls. More than this, he comes himself to dwell within us, and the indwelling of the Spirit is the common possession of all God’s children.

Is it that God makes us his sons and daughters and then

gives us his Spirit, or that he gives us his “Spirit of sonship” who makes us his sons and daughters? The answer is that Paul puts it both ways. On the one hand, “because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts” (Gal 4:6). On the other, “all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship” (Rom 8:14-15). Whichever way you look at it, the result is the same. *All* who have the Spirit of God are the sons and daughters of God, and *all* who are sons and daughters of God have the Spirit of God. It is impossible, indeed inconceivable, to have the Spirit without being a son or daughter or to be a son or daughter without having the Spirit. Moreover, one of the first and graciously continuing works of the indwelling Spirit is to assure us of our sonship, notably when we pray. “When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom 8:15-16; cf. Gal 4:6). He has also flooded our hearts with God’s love (Rom 5:5). Paul sums it up by affirming that “any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him” (Rom 8:9; cf. Jude 19).

This whole passage in Romans 8 is of considerable importance because it demonstrates that in Paul’s mind to be “in Christ” and “in the Spirit,” to have “the Spirit in you” and “Christ in you” are all synonymous expressions. No one can have Christ, then, without having the Spirit. Jesus himself made this plain in his Upper Room discourse when he drew

no distinction between the “coming” to us of the three Persons of the Trinity. “I will come,” he said; “we will come” (the Father and the Son); and “the Comforter will . . . come” (Jn 14:18-23; 16:7, 8).

Once he has come to us and taken up his residence within us, making our body his temple (1 Cor 6:19-20), his work of sanctification begins. In brief, his ministry is both to reveal Christ to us and to form Christ in us, so that we grow steadily in our knowledge of Christ and in our likeness to Christ (see, e.g., Eph 1:17; Gal 4:19; 2 Cor 3:18). It is by the power of the indwelling Spirit that the evil desires of our fallen nature are restrained and the good fruit of Christian character is produced (Gal 5:16-25). Nor is he a kind of private possession, ministering only to the individual Christian; he also unites us to the body of Christ, the church, so that Christian fellowship is “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,” and Christian worship is worship in or by the Holy Spirit (e.g. Phil 2:1; 3:3). It is he, too, who reaches out through us to others, prompting us to witness to Christ and equipping us with gifts for the service to which he summons us. In addition, he is called “the guarantee of our inheritance” (Eph 1:13-14), for his presence within us is both the pledge and the foretaste of heaven. And on the last day he will be active in raising our mortal bodies (Rom 8:11).

This rapid rehearsal of some of his major activities in the experience of a Christian should be enough to show that, from the very beginning to the very end of our Christian life,

we are dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit, Paul writes, “which has been given to us” (Rom 5:5). On this I believe and hope all Christians are agreed.

Is this promised “gift” of the Spirit the same as the “baptism” of the Holy Spirit, however? It is here that convictions differ. Some say yes and others say no. Those who say no, who believe that the “gift” and the “baptism” are distinct, go on to teach that the “baptism” is a second and subsequent experience even if, at least ideally, it follows very closely on the first. On the other hand, those who believe that the two are identical—and that to have been “baptized” with the Spirit is a vivid figure of speech for to have “received” the Spirit—regard this “baptism” as something that all Christians have had. This is my own position, and I will shortly elaborate what I understand to be its biblical basis.

This is not just a rather frivolous quibble over words, as it may appear on the surface to be. On the contrary, it is bound to have a considerable effect on our understanding of our own Christian pilgrimage as well as on our counseling of other people. So we must investigate some important passages of Scripture that bear on this question. But first we must set the scene for our discussion.

It is always important in biblical studies to interpret a text in its context, and the broader the context the more accurate our interpretation is likely to be. The broadest context of all is the whole Bible. We believe that the whole Bible is God’s Word written. Therefore, since God does not contradict him-

self, we further believe that the Bible is a harmonious divine revelation. We must never “so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another” (Article 20 of the Church of England’s 39 Articles), but rather interpret each Scripture in the light of all Scripture.

If we apply this principle to our inquiry as to what the “baptism of the Spirit” is, the first point we will notice is that this is an exclusively New Testament expression (occurring seven times), but that it is also a fulfillment of Old Testament expectation. This expectation was usually expressed in terms of God’s promise to “pour out” his Spirit, and the apostle Peter in his sermon on the day of Pentecost specifically equated the “outpouring” of the Spirit (promised by Joel) with the “baptism” of the Spirit (promised by John the Baptist and Jesus). The two expressions were alluding to the same event and the same experience.<sup>1</sup>

### THE PROMISE OF A DISTINCTIVE BLESSING

We can go further. This “outpouring” or “baptism” of the Holy Spirit was to be one of the main distinctive blessings of the new age. So much so that the apostle Paul could describe the new age inaugurated by Jesus as “the dispensation of the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:8).

This is not, of course, to say that the Holy Spirit did not exist before. The Holy Spirit is God and therefore eternal.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Acts 1:4-5; 2:17, 33.

Nor is it to say that he was not active before. In Old Testament days he was ceaselessly active—in the creation and preservation of the universe, in providence and revelation, in the regeneration of believers, and in the equipping of special people for special tasks.

Nevertheless, some of the prophets foretold that in the days of the Messiah God would grant a liberal effusion of the Holy Spirit, which would be new and distinctive, and also (as we shall see) available for all. Thus, Isaiah spoke of the day when the Spirit would be “poured upon us from on high” (32:15). In Isaiah 44:3 God promised: “I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring.” The same phraseology was used by Ezekiel to whom God said: “Then they shall know that I am the Lord their God . . . when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel” (39:28, 29). Again, in a better known passage, God said: “and it shall come to pass . . . that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh” (Joel 2:28).

John the Baptist, the last prophet of the old order, summarized this expectation in his familiar saying, which ascribed the outpouring of the Spirit to the Messiah himself: “I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Mk 1:8).

Now it is instructive to note that this prophecy of John, recorded by the three Synoptic Evangelists as a simple future (“he will baptize”), takes the form in the fourth Gospel of a



present participle: “I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit’ ” (Jn 1:33). This use of the present participle is timeless. It describes not the single event of Pentecost, but the distinctive ministry of Jesus: “this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the very same words *ho baptizōn*, which refer here to Jesus, are used by Mark to denote John the Baptist himself! Usually John is called *ho baptistēs*, “the Baptist,” but three times in the narrative of Mark (1:4; 6:14, 24) he is called *ho baptizōn*, an expression rendered in RSV, “the baptizer.” In other words, just as John is called “the Baptist” or “the baptizer,” because it was characteristic of his ministry to baptize with water, so Jesus is called “the Baptist” or “the baptizer,” because it is characteristic of his ministry to baptize with the Holy Spirit.

This reference to the distinctive and continuing ministry of Jesus is strengthened by verse 29 of the same chapter (Jn 1), in which John the Baptist says, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” It is another present participle, *ho airōn*. If we put verses 29 and 33 together, we discover that the characteristic work of Jesus is twofold. It involves a removal and a bestowal, a taking away of sin and a

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<sup>2</sup>Another example of this Greek construction is in Gal 1:23, where Saul of Tarsus is described as *ho diōkōn hēmas pote*, “he who once persecuted us,” or simply “our former persecutor,” indicating what was characteristic of him in his preconversion days.

baptizing with the Holy Spirit. These are the two great gifts of Jesus Christ our Savior. They are brought together by the prophets in the Old Testament and the apostles in the New, and they cannot be separated. Thus, through the prophet Ezekiel God promised: “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean. . . . And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes” (36:25, 27).

These two promises of God are in fact the two major blessings of that “new covenant,” which was predicted by Jeremiah. For the terms of the new covenant include these words: “I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts. . . . I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”<sup>3</sup>

It is a wonderful witness to the unity of Scripture to see how the apostles took up these promises relating to the new covenant. They knew that the new covenant had now been established and ratified by the blood of Jesus (Mt 26:28; Heb 7:22; 8:1-13) and so they spoke freely of the availability through the same Lord Jesus of the promised blessings of the covenant. Thus Paul designated Christian ministers “ministers of a new covenant” and went on at once to describe it as both “the dispensation of righteousness” (i.e., justification) and “the dispensation of the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:6-9).

Similarly, the apostle Peter cried on the day of Pentecost:

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<sup>3</sup>Jer 31:31-34. The writing of the law on the heart would of course be the work of the Holy Spirit, as is plain from Ezk 36:27 and 2 Cor 3:3, 6-8.

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Thus Peter assured all who would repent and believe,<sup>4</sup> and give public evidence of their penitent faith in Jesus by being baptized in his name, that they would receive from God two free gifts, namely the forgiveness of their sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, a careful reading of the first two chapters of the Acts leads to the conclusion that this “gift of the Spirit” is synonymous with what has earlier been termed “the promise of the Spirit” (1:4; 2:33, 39), “the baptism of the Spirit” (1:5) and “the outpouring of the Spirit” (2:17, 33), although two of these expressions may be said to emphasize more the giving, and the other two more the receiving, of the Spirit. We could sum it up by saying that these penitent believers received the *gift* of the Spirit that God had *promised* before the day of Pentecost, and were thus *baptized* with the Spirit whom God *poured out* on the day of Pentecost. Further, the apostle Peter retained his conviction about this identification. When later Cornelius was converted and received the Spirit, he referred to this equally as the “baptism” and as the “gift” of the Spirit (Acts 11:16, 17).

In the light of all this biblical testimony it seems to me

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<sup>4</sup>That faith was required in addition to repentance is plain from verse 41 “those who received his word” and verse 44 “all who believed,” quite apart from the rest of the New Testament.

clear that the “baptism” of the Spirit is the same as the promise or gift of the Spirit and is as much an integral part of the gospel of salvation as is the remission of sins. Certainly we must never conceive “salvation” in purely negative terms, as if it consisted only of our rescue from sin, guilt, wrath and death. We thank God that it is all these things. But it also includes the positive blessing of the Holy Spirit to regenerate, indwell, liberate and transform us. What a truncated gospel we preach if we proclaim the one without the other! And what a glorious gospel we have to share when we are true to Scripture! When sinners repent and believe, Jesus not only takes away their sins but also baptizes them with his Spirit. Indeed, as Paul put it in dramatic terms to Titus, when God “saves” us he not only “justifies” us by his grace but also gives us a certain “washing” or “bath.” If, as is probable, this is a reference to water-baptism, then it indicates what water-baptism signifies. For Paul describes it by a remarkable, composite expression. It is a “bath of rebirth and renewal of [i.e., by] the Holy Spirit whom he abundantly poured out upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior” (3:4-7, literally). So the outpoured Spirit to regenerate and renew us is again seen to be part of our salvation. The “baptism” or “gift” of the Spirit is indeed one of the distinctive blessings of the new age ushered in by Jesus Christ.

#### THE PROMISE OF A UNIVERSAL BLESSING

The next step in our argument is to see that the outpouring or baptism of the Spirit is not only a *distinctive* blessing of the

new age (in that it was not available previously) but also a *universal* blessing (in that it is now the birthright of all God's children). This has already become apparent from the fact that it is part of the salvation that God gives us through Christ. But there are other evidences that confirm it.

The first is Joel's prophecy and Peter's understanding of it. The emphasis in God's promise through Joel is on the universality of the gift of the Spirit. Here are the terms in which Peter quoted it: "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh" (Acts 2:17). This cannot mean "all flesh" irrespective of their inward readiness to receive the gift, their repentance and faith, but rather "all flesh" irrespective of their outward status and privilege. It indicates that there is to be no distinction of sex or age, of rank or race, in the reception of this divine gift, for both sons and daughters, young men and old men, menservants and maidservants, and even "all that are far off" (verse 39), which means the Gentiles, are to receive it. Further, out of every age, sex, race and rank it includes *all* who repent and believe.

In Old Testament days, although all believers were indeed regenerate,<sup>5</sup> the Holy Spirit came upon special people for

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<sup>5</sup>The chief evidences for this are indirect. First, they were certainly "justified" (cf. Rom 4:1-8, based on Gen 15:6 and Ps 32:1-2), and it is difficult to conceive how a sinner can be justified without being regenerate. Second, they claimed to love God's law (e.g., Ps 119:97). Since the unregenerate nature is hostile to God and resistant to his law (Rom 8:7), they seem to have possessed a new nature. We sing the Psalms in Christian worship because we recognize in them the language of the regenerate.

special ministries at special times. He still does endue special men and women for special tasks, as we will see. But now his ministry is wider and deeper than ever it was in Old Testament days. What, then, is the difference between his ministry in Old Testament days and his ministry today? First, all believers of all flesh now share in the blessing of the Spirit. Second, although Old Testament believers knew God and experienced a new birth, there is now an indwelling of the Spirit, which they never knew, which belongs to the new covenant and the kingdom of God, and which both the prophets and the Lord Jesus promised (Jer 31:33; Ezk 36:26-27; Jn 14:16-17; Rom 14:17). Third, the Holy Spirit's distinctive work now relates essentially to Jesus Christ. We saw earlier that in his sanctifying ministry he reveals Christ to believers and forms Christ in believers, and this, in the nature of the case, he could not have done before Christ came (e.g., Jn 16:14; Gal 4:19; Eph 3:16-17).

That Peter understood the Joel prophecy to promise this gift or baptism of the Spirit to all believers seems clear from the conclusion of his great sermon (Acts 2:38-39), in which he applied it to his hearers: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise [i.e., which we have inherited, see verse 33] is to you [as well as to us] and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him." This last phrase is a very clear and striking assertion. It is that the

promise of the “gift” or “baptism” of the Spirit is to as many as the Lord our God calls. The promise of God is coextensive with the call of God. Whoever receives the divine call inherits the divine promise.

### THE DAY OF PENTECOST

And this is what happened! Three thousand of those who heard the word that day repented, believed and were baptized with water. And although we are not specifically told that they received the remission of sins and the gift of the Spirit, the strong presumption is that they did. This is not a precarious argument from silence. It is based on the unequivocal promise of the apostle Peter that they would receive these gifts if they repented, believed and were baptized. We are told that they were baptized (verse 41), having “received his word” (i.e., with penitent faith). Since they thus fulfilled the conditions, God must have fulfilled his promise. This means that, according to the second chapter of Acts, two separate companies of people received the “baptism” or “gift” of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost—the 120 at the beginning of the chapter, and the 3,000 at the end.

The 3,000 do not seem to have experienced the same miraculous phenomena (the rushing mighty wind, the tongues of flame, or the speech in foreign languages). At least nothing is said about these things. Yet because of God’s assurance through Peter they must have inherited the same promise and received the same gift (verses 33, 39). Nevertheless,

there was this difference between them: the 120 were regenerate already, and received the baptism of the Spirit only after waiting on God for ten days. The 3,000 on the other hand were unbelievers, and received the forgiveness of their sins and the gift of the Spirit simultaneously—and it happened immediately: they repented and believed, without any need to wait.

This distinction between the two companies, the 120 and the 3,000, is of great importance, because the *norm* for today must surely be the second group, the 3,000 and not (as is often supposed) the first. The fact that the experience of the 120 was in two distinct stages was due simply to historical circumstances. They could not have received the pentecostal gift before Pentecost. But those historical circumstances have long since ceased to exist. We live after the event of Pentecost, like the 3,000. With us, therefore, as with them, the forgiveness of sins and the “gift” or “baptism” of the Spirit are received together.

This is not to say that everything connected with the second group on the day of Pentecost is normative for Christian experience today. I think it will be agreed that the ingathering of 3,000 converts as the result of a single sermon was a bit exceptional; it is certainly not the average expectation of an evangelist in the modern world!

The truth is that the day of Pentecost had at least two distinct meanings, and a failure to grasp the distinction between them lies at the root of much modern confusion. In the first



place, it was the last event of the saving career of Jesus, the long-promised outpouring of the Spirit consequent on Christ's death, resurrection and ascension. As such it completed the inauguration of the new or Messianic age, the age of the Spirit. In itself, it is unrepeatable, as unrepeatable as the Savior's death, resurrection and ascension that preceded it. But its blessings are for all who belong to Christ. All Christians since that day, without any exception, have become participants in this new age and have received the gifts of forgiveness and the Spirit which Christ made available by his death, resurrection, ascension and outpouring of the Spirit. In this sense those converted on the day of Pentecost as a result of Peter's sermon were typical of all subsequent believers.

But the day of Pentecost had another and more unusual meaning. It was the fulfillment not only of the general Old Testament expectation of the Spirit's coming, but also of those special promises of Jesus in the Upper Room, which were addressed primarily to the apostles and whose fulfillment was intended to equip them for their particular apostolic work as inspired and authoritative teachers.

Pentecost may also have a third significance. It may rightly be considered the first "revival," the first time the Spirit put forth his power in such an abundant measure that as many as 3,000 were simultaneously convicted of sin, born again and welcomed into the Christian community. Such revivals or unusual manifestations of the Spirit's power have continued in the history of the Christian church from time to

time. But they cannot be regarded as a norm.

What was normative, however, was the experience specifically promised in Peter's conclusion to *all* whom God calls and who respond in penitent faith, namely that they would receive both forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. These two gifts were and still are bestowed and received together. There is no interval between them as there had been (for the exceptional historical reason explained above) in the case of the 120.

Some readers may immediately object that the 120 were not unique, since the experience of certain Samaritan believers and of some disciples of John the Baptist, recorded later in the Acts (8:5-17 and 19:1-7), was in two stages also. We shall look at these two passages in a moment. Meanwhile, I must first repeat that a doctrine of the Holy Spirit must not be constructed from purely descriptive passages in Acts. It would be impossible to build a consistent doctrine from them because there is no consistency about them. You cannot even derive a doctrine of the Holy Spirit from the *description* of the day of Pentecost; what I have attempted above is some deductions from the *interpretations* of the event that Peter gave in his sermon. Further, it is a fundamental principle of biblical interpretation to begin with the general, not the special. The essential question to ask is what is the general teaching of the New Testament authors regarding the reception of the Holy Spirit. We will then be in a position to consider in the light of this general teaching both apparent deviations from this norm and the narrative portions of the Acts.

What, then, did the apostles teach about when and how the Holy Spirit is received? To this question we can give a plain and definite answer. We have just observed what Peter taught. Now consider that Paul consistently taught the same thing. We “receive the Spirit,” he insisted, not because of any good works of obedience that we may have done, but “by hearing with faith,” that is, by hearing and believing the gospel (Gal 3:2). More simply, “we . . . receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal 3:14). And the context makes it clear that this “faith” is not some second, postconversion act of faith, but saving faith, the faith that responds to the gospel and lays hold of Christ.

### THE SAMARITAN BELIEVERS

Having grasped the plain, general teaching of Jesus and his apostles that the gift or baptism of the Holy Spirit is a universal blessing, the common possession of all the children of God, we are ready to come back to the two passages in the Acts in which we meet people who appear to have become believers without receiving the Holy Spirit. As we study them carefully, we shouldn't fail to observe that there is something unusual, something irregular, about both situations.

The first is Acts 8:5-17. Philip the evangelist has preached the gospel in Samaria, and many have believed and been baptized. There can be little, if any, doubt that they were genuine Christian believers; no hint is given that their response had been defective. The only exception was Simon Magus,

who is said to have “believed” (verse 13), but whose profession of faith turned out later to have been spurious (verses 20-23). The first sign that anything is unusual about this incident is that “when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John” (verse 14). Why? There is no evidence that on other occasions evangelistic work had to be inspected or vetted by two apostles. For example, at the end of the same chapter (verses 26-40) the same Philip preached the gospel to an Ethiopian eunuch and baptized him when he believed. But no apostle was sent to investigate or to lay hands on him. What then is the explanation of this exceptional procedure of an apostolic delegation?

The most probable answer is not just that this was the first time the gospel had been preached outside Jerusalem (verses 1, 4), but that these converts were Samaritans. This is certainly the importance of the story in Luke’s account of the unfolding Christian mission. He is describing how Jesus’ pre-Pentecost command came to be fulfilled: “you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (1:8). Philip’s decision to proclaim Christ to the Samaritans (8:5) was a very bold step to have taken. For centuries there had been bitter rivalry between Jews and Samaritans, and still at that time the Jews had “no dealings with Samaritans” (Jn 4:9). But now not only had a Jew preached to Samaritans, but Samaritans had accepted the Jew’s message! What would happen? It was an exciting

moment, and a dangerous one too. Was Philip right to have taken this step? Could Samaritans really have embraced the gospel? And, more important, would they be acceptable to Jewish believers? Or would the ancient Jewish-Samaritan schism survive in the church and become a disastrous division between Jewish Christians and Samaritan Christians? Is it not reasonable to suppose that it was precisely in order to avoid the development of such a situation that God deliberately withheld the gift of his Spirit from the Samaritan believers (or at least outward evidence of the gift) until two of the leading apostles came down to investigate and, by the laying on of their hands, acknowledge and confirm the genuineness of the Samaritans' conversion? No other explanation of the Samaritan story (a) brings it into harmony with the apostles' general teaching, from which it deviates, and (b) at the same time sets it in its historical context.

Because this Samaritan incident was so clearly abnormal, it is *difficult* to see how most Pentecostal and some charismatic Christians can regard it as constituting a norm for spiritual experience today, namely that the Holy Spirit is given subsequently to conversion. It is equally difficult to justify the Catholic view that the Spirit is given only through the imposition of apostolic hands (which they understand as meaning the hands of bishops regarded as “in the apostolic succession”). Is it not clear from the rest of the New Testament that both the timing and the means of the gift to the Samaritans were atypical? If so, then neither a two-stage ex-

perience nor the laying-on of hands is the norm for receiving the Spirit today.<sup>6</sup>

Some charismatics accept this argument about the norm, but come back with a counter-suggestion. Granted, they say, that the Samaritans' experience was abnormal; could not this abnormality be repeated sometimes today? Our answer to this question will be determined, I think, by our understanding of the reasons for the Samaritan abnormality. If it could be shown that their original nonreception of the Spirit was due to their own defective grasp of the gospel or response to the gospel, then it could perhaps be argued that a similar defective response today might result in a similar defective initiation. But I do not think this can be shown. At least there is simply nothing in Luke's narrative to suggest either that Philip did not teach properly or that the Samaritans did not believe properly, so that the apostles had to supplement Philip's teaching or improve the Samaritans' understanding. On the contrary, what brought the apostles to Samaria was precisely the news that these people "had received the word of God" (verse 14). There does not appear to have been any-

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<sup>6</sup>Episcopal "confirmation" is the way the Anglican church has chosen to receive into full church membership those who have been baptized (usually in infancy) and have themselves repented and believed. The laying-on of hands is a seemingly biblical sign of blessing, but it is not the normal means by which the Holy Spirit is given and received. The 1662 Book of Common Prayer implies no more than that God may use this sign, accompanied by the prayers of the congregation, to "certify" the candidates of his favor toward them and to "strengthen" them by the Holy Spirit.

thing faulty either *in* the Word of God that they heard or in the reception that they gave it. Instead, as has been urged above, the reason why the Spirit was not given seems to lie in the historical situation. And since this historical situation was unique and cannot be repeated (the Jewish-Samaritan schism having long since been swallowed up by the universal Christian mission), I cannot see how the abnormality in the Samaritan reception of the Spirit could be taken as a precedent for today.

#### THE EPHESIAN DISCIPLES

The second unusual incident is described in Acts 19:1-7. Paul had begun the third of his famous missionary journeys and had come to Ephesus. There he met about a dozen men who, if we may judge from Luke's description of them, do not seem to have been Christians at all. It is true that he calls them "disciples" (verse 1), but this need mean no more than *professing* disciples, just as Simon Magus is said to have "believed" (8:13), although the context indicates that he had only *professed* to believe. Commenting on a different passage of Scripture, Charles Hodge, the nineteenth-century Princeton scholar, wrote: "the Scripture always speaks of men according to their profession, calling those who profess faith, believers, and those who confess Christ, Christians."<sup>7</sup> Paul

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<sup>7</sup>C. Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, (1856; reprint, London: Banner of Truth, 1964), p. 124.

asked them if they received the Holy Spirit when they “believed” (verse 2). This at least indicates that he knew they professed to be believers. But it also suggests that for some reason he doubted the reality of their faith or he would never have asked the question. He taught consistently, as we have seen, that the Spirit is given to believers; so how could he have asked his questions unless something made him suspicious of their Christian life and therefore of their profession of faith?

Events proved his suspicions correct. We may note these points: (1) In answer to his question whether they had received the Spirit, they said neither a simple “yes” or “no,” nor even a puzzled “don’t know,” but “we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit” (verse 2)! (2) Then Paul immediately asked them about their baptism (verse 3), for water-baptism is in the name of the Trinity (Mt 28:19) and, as will be shown, dramatizes Spirit-baptism. So how could they have received Christian baptism if they had never heard of the Holy Spirit? He was right. They had not been baptized. (3) What they had received was John the Baptist’s baptism, probably because of the incomplete teaching of Apollos who had just visited Ephesus (18:24-26). So what did Paul do? He did not go on to some higher or fuller teaching; he went right back to the beginning, to the very essence of the gospel. He explained that “the one who was to come,” in whom John the Baptist had told them to believe, was in fact “Jesus” (verse 4). (4) Paul then baptized them “in the name of the Lord



Jesus” and laid his hands on them, with the result that “the Holy Spirit came upon them” with accompanying signs (languages and prophecy) as visible, audible evidence.

Now some teachers use this story to endorse their view that in normal Christian experience the gift or baptism of the Spirit is a second and subsequent experience, following conversion. But the story really should not be used in this way. I am not, of course, denying that these men received the Spirit when Paul baptized them and laid his hands on them. But the question is: were they Christians before this? We have seen that they were in some sense professing “disciples.” But is it seriously maintained that people who have never heard of the Holy Spirit, nor been baptized in the name of Jesus, nor even apparently believed in Jesus, were true Christian disciples? Surely not. If they were anybody’s disciples, they were disciples of Apollos and of John the Baptist. They were not clearly converted Christians. They certainly cannot be regarded as typical of Christian believers today.

Other expositors draw attention to the sequence of events, namely belief in Jesus, baptism in the name of Jesus, the imposition of Paul’s hands, the coming of the Holy Spirit. They emphasize that the Spirit came upon these Ephesians not only after they had believed but also after Paul had both baptized them and laid his hands on them. This is so; but I do not myself think the order is very significant. To me the really important point is that all four events belonged together and cannot be separated. They were different parts of

a single initiation into Christ, which took place by both baptism and the laying-on of hands (outwardly) and by both faith and the gift of the Spirit (inwardly).

### THE LANGUAGE OF BAPTISM

What has emerged from our study so far, and is not negated by the exceptional cases of Acts 8 and 19, is that the gift of the Holy Spirit is a *universal* Christian experience because it is an *initial* Christian experience. All Christians receive the Spirit at the very beginning of their Christian life.

This truth is further confirmed by the New Testament use of the expression “*baptism of the Spirit*” as an equivalent to “gift of the Spirit,” or rather of the verb (for the expression is always verbal) to “baptize” or “be baptized” with the Holy Spirit. The very concept of “baptism” is initiatory. Water-baptism is the public rite of initiation into Christ. It signifies visibly both the washing away of sin (Acts 22:16) and the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. See Acts 2:38, where both aspects of salvation are linked to baptism. It is the symbol of which Spirit-baptism is the reality. This must be why Peter’s immediate reaction, when Cornelius was baptized with the Spirit, was to say: “can anyone forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” (Acts 10:47; 11:16). If they had received the reality, how could they be refused the sign? It also explains Paul’s second question to those Ephesian “disciples.” When they told him they had never even heard of the Holy Spirit, he at once asked into

what they had been baptized. Both apostles clearly associated the two baptisms.

Moreover, there can be no doubt that Cornelius' baptism with the Spirit was his initiation into Christ, his conversion. He had been told by an angel of God to send for Simon Peter who would declare to him a message by which he and his household would be "saved" (11:14). So Peter preached the gospel to him, ending with the promise of forgiveness of sins through the name of Jesus (10:43). After Cornelius and his household had believed (15:7), and been baptized both with the Spirit and with water, they are described as having "received the word of God" (11:1), while (in two significant phrases) God is said to have both "granted them repentance unto life" (11:18) and "cleansed their hearts by faith" (15:9).

This recognition of the *initial* nature of the gift of the Spirit, as indicated by the term "baptism" and illustrated by the conversion of Cornelius, is entirely in keeping with the general teaching of the apostles, as we have already considered. To be "in the Spirit" (which in Pauline language is the same as to be "in Christ"), to "have" the Spirit, to "live by the Spirit" and to be "led by the Spirit"—these are all descriptions of every Christian believer, however young in the faith he or she may be, indeed from the very moment of his or her new birth (Rom 8:9, 14; Gal 5:25). The New Testament authors take it for granted that God has "given" their readers his Holy Spirit (e.g., Rom 5:5; 1 Thess 4:8; 1 Jn 3:24; 4:13);

there is no single occasion on which they exhort them to receive him.

### 1 CORINTHIANS 12:13

Further confirmation that to “be baptized with the Spirit” is initiatory comes from a comparison of the seven verses in which the expression occurs, and in particular from a study of the only one outside the Gospels and Acts.

The first four uses of the expression are found in John the Baptist’s descriptive prophecy of the ministry of the Lord Jesus: “He will baptize with the Holy Spirit” (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:33). The fifth is our Lord’s quotation of John’s prophecy, in which he applies it to Pentecost: “before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5). The sixth is the apostle Peter’s quotation of our Lord’s quotation of John’s prophecy, in which he applies it to the conversion of Cornelius, which we have just been considering. He tells the Jerusalem apostles and others: “I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit’ ” (Acts 11:16).

The seventh—and only other—occurrence of the expression is found in 1 Corinthians 12:13. Here Paul writes: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” This cannot be a simple reference to the day of Pentecost, for neither Paul nor the Corinthians were there to

share in the event itself. Yet both he and they had come to share in the blessing that that event made possible. They had received the Holy Spirit, or rather, to use his own terminology, they had been “baptized” with the Holy Spirit and had been “made to drink” of the Holy Spirit.

What is immediately striking about this verse is the emphatic repetition of the word *all* (“*all* baptized,” “*all* . . . made to drink”) and the similarly emphatic repetition of the word “one” (“by *one* Spirit,” “into *one* body,” “of *one* Spirit”) with which it is deliberately contrasted. This is in keeping with the context. What the apostle is doing in 1 Corinthians 12 is to emphasize at the beginning of the chapter the *unity* of the Spirit, the giver of spiritual gifts, before he goes on in the second half of the chapter to unfold the *diversity* of the gifts themselves. He is underlining our common experience as Christian believers of the Holy Spirit. This is the difference between “the gift of the Spirit” (meaning the Holy Spirit himself) and “the gifts of the Spirit” (meaning the spiritual gifts that he distributes).

Three times in the first half of the chapter, he writes (literally) of “the one Spirit” (9b, 13a and b), three times of “the same Spirit” (4, 8, 9a), and once of “the one and the same Spirit” (11). This is his emphasis. His climax comes in verse 13: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . . and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” So the baptism of the Spirit in this verse, far from being a dividing factor (some have it, others have not), is the great uniting factor (an expe-

rience we have all had). It is, in fact, the means of entry into the body of Christ. And Paul's mention of Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, may even be an allusion to Joel's "all flesh," irrespective of race or rank. The oneness of the body is created by the oneness of the Spirit, which is exactly what Paul implies in Ephesians 4:4: "There is one body and one Spirit." It is difficult, then, to resist the conclusion that the baptism of the Spirit is *not* a second and subsequent experience enjoyed by some Christians, but rather is the initial experience enjoyed by all.

Some do not accept this conclusion, however, but draw a subtle exegetical distinction. They argue that, while the other six verses refer to a baptism by Jesus Christ in or with the Holy Spirit, the seventh verse (1 Cor 12:13) refers to a baptism by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ, and is therefore something quite different. "The Holy Spirit has indeed baptized us all into the body of Christ," they say, "but this does not prove that Christ has baptized us all with the Holy Spirit." To me this is an example of special pleading. The Greek expression is precisely the same in all its seven occurrences,<sup>8</sup> and therefore a priori, as a sound principle of interpretation, it should be taken to refer to the same baptism experience in each verse. The burden of proof rests with those who deny it. The natural interpretation is that Paul is echoing

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<sup>8</sup>The only difference is that six times the Spirit is characterized as *holy*, and in the seventh verse as *one*.

the words of John the Baptist as first Jesus and then Peter had done (Acts 1:5; 11:16). It is unnatural to make Jesus Christ the baptizer in six instances, and the Holy Spirit the baptizer in the seventh. I think we must even dissent from the RSV translation of 1 Corinthians 12:13, “by one Spirit we were all baptized.” The Greek preposition in this verse is *en*, just as in the other six verses, where it is translated “with”; why should it be rendered differently here? If it is because the words *en heni pneumati* (RSV “by one Spirit”) come at the beginning of the sentence, the reason for this is surely that Paul is stressing the oneness of the Spirit in whom we share, not that the Spirit is the baptizer.

Let me enlarge on my point in this way. In every kind of baptism (of water, blood, fire, Spirit, etc.) there are four parts. To begin with, there are the subject and the object, namely the baptizer and the baptized. Third, there is the element with or in (*en*) which, and fourth, there is the purpose for (*eis*) which, the baptism takes place. Take, as an example, the crossing of the Red Sea, which the apostle Paul describes as a kind of baptism (1 Cor 10:1-2). Presumably God himself was the baptizer. Certainly the escaping Israelites were the baptized. The element in which the baptism was administered was water or spray from the cloud and the sea, while its purpose is indicated in the expression “baptized into Moses,” that is, into relationship with him as their God-appointed leader.

In John’s baptism, John the Baptist was the subject, while

the objects were the people of “Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan” (Mt 3:5). The baptism took place in (*en*) the waters of the River Jordan and was for or unto (*eis*) repentance (Mt 3:11) and therefore the remission of sins (Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3).

Christian baptism is similar. The minister baptizes the professing believer with or in (*en*) water. And the baptism is into (*eis*) the one name of the Trinity (Mt 28:19), or more precisely into the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 8:16; 19:5), that is, into Christ crucified and risen (Rom 6:3-4).

It will be seen from these examples that in every kind of baptism there are not only a subject and an object, but also both an *en* and an *eis*, that is, both an element with or in which, and a purpose for which, the baptism is administered. The baptism of the Spirit is no exception. If we put the seven references to this baptism together, we learn that Jesus Christ is the baptizer, as John the Baptist clearly foretold. According to 1 Corinthians 12:13 the baptized are “we all.” The Holy Spirit is himself the “element” with, or in (*en*), which<sup>9</sup> the baptism takes place (if one may so describe the Third Per-

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<sup>9</sup>Pentecostal and charismatic Christians usually speak of “baptism *in* the Spirit” rather than “baptism *with* the Spirit.” The Greek preposition *en* may be translated either way. The expression chosen is likely to depend on whether one considers that water-baptism should be administered by immersion or by affusion. Those who practice immersion speak of baptism in the Spirit presumably because they think of the Spirit as the element in which one is plunged. Since, however, it is when the Holy Spirit is “poured out” upon people that they are said to be “baptized,” “baptism *with* the Spirit” seems to me preferable.



son of the Trinity; the analogy between baptism with water and baptism with the Spirit seems to make it legitimate). And the purpose of this baptism is incorporation “into (*eis*) one body,” namely the body of Christ, the church.

It is quite true that of these four aspects of baptism the only one that is explicitly common to all seven verses is that this baptism is “with (*en*) the Spirit.” Although all thus mention the “element,” not every verse specifies either the subject or the object or the purpose of the baptism. This should not surprise us, however, since the same omissions occur with New Testament references to water-baptism. It is sometimes argued that in 1 Corinthians 12:13 the Holy Spirit must be the baptizer, since otherwise the baptism would have no subject. But no baptizer is mentioned in Acts 1:5 and 11:16 either. We find no difficulty in supplying Jesus Christ as the baptizer in those verses; why should we not do the same in 1 Corinthians 12:13? The reason why Christ is not specifically mentioned as the baptizer in these three verses is not far to seek. It is that, whereas in the four Gospels the verb is in the active and Christ is its subject (“he will baptize,” “this is he who baptizes”), in these other three verses the verb is passive and the subject is those baptized (“you shall be baptized,” “we were all baptized”). The active verbs contrast John and Jesus as the two baptizers. When the verbs are passive, however, the identity of the baptizer fades, and the emphasis lies rather on either the favored people who receive the baptism or the one

Spirit with whom they are baptized. I reaffirm, therefore, that in 1 Corinthians 12:13, although he is not named, Jesus Christ must be regarded as the baptizer.

The argument rests partly on the six other verses in which the same expression occurs, and partly on the impossibility of the alternative. If 1 Corinthians 12:13 were different and in this verse the Holy Spirit were himself the baptizer, what would be the “element” with which he baptizes? That there is no answer to this question seems enough to overthrow this interpretation, since the baptism metaphor absolutely requires an “element”; otherwise, the baptism is no baptism. Therefore, the “element” in the baptism of 1 Corinthians 12:13 must be the Holy Spirit, and (consistently with the other verses) we must supply Jesus Christ as the baptizer. Similarly, at the end of the verse it is the Holy Spirit of whom we drink and (consistently with Jn 7:37-38) it must be Christ by whom we are “made to drink” of him.

Having tried to see that 1 Corinthians 12:13 refers to Christ baptizing with the Spirit and causing us to drink of the Spirit, we must note next that “we all” have shared in this baptism and this drinking. The being baptized and the drinking are clearly equivalent expressions. All Christians have experienced them both. Moreover, the aorist tense of both verbs (“were . . . baptized,” “were made to drink”) must be taken as an allusion, not just to the Pentecost event, but also to its blessing personally received by all Christians at their conversion.

## CONCLUSION

The evidence, then, which I have sought to gather from the New Testament in general, and in particular from Peter's sermon in Acts 2 and Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 12:13, indicates that the "baptism" of the Spirit is identical with the "gift" of the Spirit, that it is one of the *distinctive* blessings of the new covenant and, because it is an *initial* blessing, is also a *universal* blessing for members of the covenant. It is part and parcel of belonging to the new age. The Lord Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant and the bestower of its blessings, gives both the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit to all who enter his covenant. Further, baptism with water is the sign and seal of baptism with the Spirit, as much as it is of the forgiveness of sins. Water-baptism is the initiatory Christian rite, because Spirit-baptism is the initiatory Christian experience. So then, whatever post-conversion experiences there may be (and I shall come to them later), "baptism with the Spirit" cannot be the right expression to use for them.

God's purpose is that all his people shall both receive the new covenant blessings of the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit, and receive water-baptism as the sign and seal of these blessings. They are then to continue to be filled with the Spirit and manifest this fullness in holiness of life and boldness of testimony. All Christians are described in the epistle to the Hebrews as being "partakers of the Holy Spirit," who have "tasted . . . the powers of the age to come" (6:4, 5).

The whole Christian life according to the New Testament is life in the Spirit following birth of the Spirit.

Moreover, the overwhelming emphasis of the New Testament letters is not to urge upon Christian readers some entirely new and distinct blessing, but to remind us of what by grace we are, to recall us to it and to urge us to live by it. This is a very important point and not sufficiently grasped. The horizons of some Christians seem to be bounded by a second and subsequent experience that they call “baptism in the Spirit.” In conversation with them, if they think you have had it, then this is what they are looking back to, and this is the chief bond which unites you. If, on the other hand, they think you have not had it, then this is what they are looking forward to, and this is the chief longing they have for you. So whether they are looking to the past or the future, it is “the baptism of the Spirit” as a second experience that fills their horizon. But I have to say, really without any fear of possible contradiction, that this is *never* the perspective of the New Testament authors. When they are looking back, they are recalling that great act that God performed when he put us in Christ, justified, redeemed, regenerated and recreated us. To that they constantly appeal. And when they are looking forward, it is to their readers’ growth into maturity and, beyond that, to the perfection that awaits the glorious appearing of the Savior.

For example, when the apostle John handles in his first letter the necessity and the possibility of holiness, to what

does he relate it? Not to a special “baptism of the Spirit,” which his readers either have had or should have, but to their original birth of God and to their duty to abide in Christ. Thus, “No one born of God commits [or practices] sin . . . and he cannot sin [or continue in sin] because he is born of God.” Again, “We know that any one born of God does not sin [or go on sinning]” (1 Jn 3:9; 5:18).

What, next, are the apostles looking forward to? They urge upon us ethical conduct, often in considerable detail. They appeal to us to live out in the concrete realities of daily life what God has already done for us in Christ. They command us to grow in faith, love, knowledge and holiness. They warn us of judgment and challenge us with the expectation of the Lord’s return. Meanwhile, they beg us not to grieve the Spirit, but rather to walk in the Spirit and to go on being filled with the Spirit, as we shall see in the next chapter. But never, not once, do they exhort and instruct us to “be baptized with the Spirit.” There can be only one explanation of this, namely that they are writing to Christians, and Christians have already been baptized with the Holy Spirit.

This is not a mere argument about words, but about doctrine. The fundamental truth that is involved is that, by uniting us to Christ, God has given us everything. By the unutterable grace of God we have already been “blessed . . . in Christ with every spiritual blessing” (Eph 1:3), and our responsibility is constantly and progressively to appropriate these blessings that are already ours in Christ.

Similarly, since in Christ “the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,” therefore if we are ourselves in Christ we “have come to fullness of life in him” (Col 2:9-10). If God has given us the Lord Jesus Christ in his fullness, and if Christ already dwells within us by his Spirit, what more can God possibly add? Is not the very suggestion that there is some additional gift still to come derogatory to the fullness and the satisfactoriness of Jesus? Growth in Christ, yes! Additions to Christ, never! Thus, we have been begotten of God, we are his sons and heirs, we have died and risen with Christ, our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19), and this indwelling Spirit is the guarantee, even the first fruits, of our eternal inheritance in heaven. So what the New Testament authors constantly do is to remind us of our Christian privileges, in order to exhort us to lead a life that is worthy and appropriate. It is because of what we already are in Christ (God’s children) and because of what we shall be when he appears (like him) that we are incited to be what we should be (pure as he is pure). See 1 John 3:1-3.

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