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BAPTISM IN THE SCHEME OF SALVATION AS UNDERSTOOD BY  
ST. LUKE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO  
*ACTS 2:37-3:21*

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# BAPTISM IN THE SCHEME OF SALVATION AS UNDERSTOOD BY ST. LUKE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ACTS 2:37 - 3:21.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate what can be discovered from Luke-Acts about early Christian baptism, recognising that the environment in which Luke's tradition developed was both Jewish and Gentile. The thesis begins with a brief survey of the Jewish practice of ritual washings. The ideas and practices which encouraged the formal rite of John the Baptist and the early church are identified and evaluated.

The second chapter focuses attention on Acts 2:37-3:21. Baptism is defined in this passage (Ac. 2:38) in the context of the proclamation by Peter (Ac. 2:14-36) and the life of the community, which includes koinonia (Ac. 2:42-47), the performance of a miracle (Ac. 3:1-10), and a further proclamation (Ac. 3:12-26). Using the methods of redaktiongeschichte and narratological analyses, the literary unity of Luke-Acts will be shown in the light of the elements of baptism.

In the third chapter the different accounts of baptism recorded in Luke-Acts will be analysed and compared in order to determine how the church tradition which Luke represents understood baptism, and what was the significance of the rite and the practice of baptism in the early church.

Finally, in order to emphasise the importance in the Greek world of the ideas and

example of the moral philosophers, the meaning of terms related to baptism, such as akouo, metanoeo and pisteuo, is examined in the light of both Jewish and Greek concepts. The community life of the baptised expressed also practices and ideas which appear to owe more to the Greek world than the Jewish. These concepts include parrhesia, koinonia, and the way in which Christianity is described by its members and outsiders - Christianoi, hairesis, hodos. Finally the setting of the Christian meetings in the Gentile context is discussed. The conclusion indicated by the evidence is that Christianity was organised in a form which was scarcely distinguishable from a school under a kathegetes. Baptism initiated the believer into a relationship with a teacher. It was the nature of the teacher as well as the content of the teaching which gave to Christianity its uniqueness.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE BEGINNINGS OF BAPTISM

#### 1. Introduction

Recent years have seen the development of several methods of analysing the Lucan texts from a literary point of view. While redaktionsgeschichte investigated how Luke edited his sources (e.g. Conzelmann)<sup>1</sup>, narratological analyses (Tannehill)<sup>2</sup> tried to determine how the two texts of Luke form a literary unit and display features typical of narratives e.g. characters, plot, point of view etc. These methods state emphatically how important it is to read the works of Luke together as a single unit and to relate the different aspects of the text. The Gospel of Luke and Acts together illustrate how Luke understood Jesus and early Christianity. In this thesis much will be made of the synchronic approach. An attempt will be made to delineate the way in which Luke understood baptism and how this understanding fits into his view of the contents of the gospel. A focus of the study will be Acts 2:37-43 and especially baptism as representing initiation into a new lifestyle.

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<sup>1</sup> Conzelmann H., 1960, *The theology of Saint Luke*, London, Faber and Faber.

<sup>2</sup> Tannehill R.C., 1986, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: a Literary Interpretation*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia.

In this chapter we shall consider the background to baptism in the early church. We shall note the presence in the Old Testament of ceremonies of cleansing and ideas which would assist the emergence of purificatory rites in the intertestamental period and the first century of the Christian era. We shall consider two developments from this period in Judaism - the Qumran initiation and ritual washings and also proselyte baptism. Finally we will look at the practise of John the Baptist. In each case we will look at these ritual cleansings in order to shed light on baptism in the early church.

2. Some aspects of Old Testament thought and practice promoting the development of baptism.

In the ancient world there was no difficulty in understanding the symbolism of water. "Jewish Israel washes daily because it is defiled daily," wrote Tertullian (De Baptismo 15). In the Jewish cult there was provision for purificatory washing (Lev: 14-16). Bathing served as a preparation for sacred rites. On the Day of Atonement the High Priest immersed himself before putting on his sacred garments. Moreover after he had carried out the purification of the sanctuary, of the burnt offerings and of the congregation, he had to bathe in the holy place (Lev.16:4,26). In the Mishnah these requirements were made even more elaborate and five washings and 10 kiddushim (washings of feet and hands) were stipulated<sup>3</sup>. The tebilah is criticised on the ground that the emphasis was

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<sup>3</sup> In Luke's gospel (11.38) there is the use of ebaptisthe to describe the washing before a meal. All this must mean is that there is no cultic fixity which would limit the use of the word.

on the ceremonial rather than ethical restoration. This concern is more a reflection of our own way of thinking, largely based on Greek dualism. For the Jews "body" and "soul" form a single, indivisible entity. What is done to one must affect the other. The cult itself had great importance. "In Israel the cult exists in order to maintain and purify the communion between man and God (for fundamentally the relation between God and man in good): the cult exists as a means to integrate the communion between God and man which God has instituted in His Covenant, in other words the cult exists for the sake of atonement (this word taken in a general sense of 'reconciliation')"<sup>4</sup>. Certainly the prophets took these ceremonial washings seriously enough to advocate them.

Isaiah (1:16) exhorts his hearers not only to use washing as a means of cleansing, but as a way into a new kind of righteous living which would ensure justice for all. "Wash and be clean; put away your evil deeds.....cease to do evil, learn to do good. Pursue justice, guide the oppressed; uphold the rights of the fatherless, and plead the widow's cause." In Ezekiel there is both judgment and forgiveness. He knew the awful holiness of God and became aware that nothing unholy could remain in his presence. In Chapter 22 the people are indicted for specific sins which include not only cultic abuses, but also ethical crimes -bloodshed, adultery, extortion, dishonouring parents, neglecting the orphan, the widow and the stranger. "I looked among them for a man who would build a barricade in the breach and withstand me, to avert the destruction of the land; but I found no such

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<sup>4</sup> Vriezen T.C., 1966, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, p. 280.

person" (Ezek. 22:30). After the destruction of Jerusalem God makes himself known to His people not by continuing judgment, but by acting to initiate a new beginning. "I shall sprinkle clean water over you, and you will be purified from everything that defiles you...I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you" (Ezek. 36:25f.). The restoration of Israel begins with the cultic ceremony of consecration, carried out by God himself. Through the sprinkling of water a new beginning is possible for the whole people, a new spirit is conferred on them to empower them to shun idolatry and to walk in the way of God's laws. Man's own strivings are of no avail without the redemptive activity of God, Further, it is by the grace of God that man is able to recognise and acknowledge his faults. Ezekiel also recalls a myth in Chapter 47 of the rivers of paradise. Joel (3:18) speaks also of the well from the Temple and watering the "wadi of Shittim". Zechariah, using the same myth, (14:8) speaks of the living water which will flow out in the time of salvation to the eastern and western seas, in both summer and winter and again (13:1) looks forward to a day when "a fountain will be opened for the line of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem to remove their sin and their impurity." For Ezekiel that river and the miraculous effects brought by its passing are a sign of the world being transformed into the garden of paradise, where all earthly diseases and also sin and guilt have been expelled and God's delight in His creation comes to full effect "and works a complete inward and outward transformation of the whole shape of human life" <sup>5</sup>.

The healing as well as the cleansing properties of water are well illustrated by the story

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<sup>5</sup> Eichrodt W., 1970, Ezekiel, London, SCM, p. 585.

of Naaman, the Syrian, who is instructed by the prophet, Elisha, to wash seven times in the river Jordan to receive healing (2 Kings. 5:24) <sup>6</sup>. In the Law immersion is prescribed for the first and seventh day of cleansing in the case of this disease (Lev. 14:1-9).

While we have in these instances gracious acts of God to restore the people and their representatives, through the symbol of water, the need for personal cleansing is stressed in some of the Psalms. For example, Ps. 51:2,7 appeals to God to cleanse an individual with water from the stain of sin and to restore his purity. The ritual in mind was probably that described in Num. 19:19. "The one who is clean must sprinkle the one who is unclean on the third day and the seventh; on the seventh day he is to purify him; then the one who is unclean must wash his clothes and bathe in water, and at sunset he will be clean" (cf. Ps. 26:6; 73:13)<sup>7</sup>.

Without considering the particular ceremonies from which baptism might have originated, we have simply recognised the importance of water as a symbol of cleansing and healing. From here it is a short distance to the baptismal practice we find in Acts, even though the first developments towards this practice may have occurred within enthusiastic groups in Judaism. Particular rites of purification were to develop in the Qumran community and in the enthusiastic outreach into the Gentile world. These we now consider.

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<sup>6</sup> ebaptisanto ev tei Iordanej is the LXX rendering of 2 Kings. 5:16.

<sup>7</sup> This derivation of baptism is argued by Oepke A., 1964, in TDNT, Baptizo, Vol. 1, pp.529-545.

### 3. Ritual initiation and washing in Qumran.

The Qumran community provides interesting parallels for the understanding of baptism in Acts. The motifs of purity and repentance are particularly prominent. Millar Burrows<sup>8</sup> summarises the admission of a neophyte from 1QS vi. 14-23 in this way:

Candidates for admission are investigated by him (that is the mebaqqer or Censor). If their wisdom and deeds are satisfactory, they are brought into the covenant and appear before the assembly. Lots are cast, and the candidate approaches or withdraws, according to the result. If he is accepted, he may not touch the "purity" (that is, either the holy things or the rites of purification) until after a year's probation. Then he is investigated again, and the lot is cast a second time. If it is favourable, he enters the order, bringing his wealth and his work; but he still may not participate in the common meal for another year, when lots must be cast a third time."

Here were a group of ascetics bound to a Covenant of Repentance<sup>9</sup> which signifies that the movement was one of repentance, and repentance was a condition for entry into the community. Then again, just as in the first preaching of Peter (Acts 2:1-37), initiation into the New Covenant took place in the presence of the whole assembly. Those who were already members of the community took part in this ceremony by renewing the vows they had taken on entering the New Covenant. This ceremony is thought to have co-incided

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<sup>8</sup> Burrows M., *The Discipline Manual of the Judean Covenanters*, in *Oudtestamentische Studien*, Vol. 8, p. 163, quoted in Black M., 1961, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons p. 93.

<sup>9</sup> CD 9.15

with one of the great festivals and Pentecost may well have been the chosen festival<sup>10</sup>. New members were admitted in two stages, first with "rites of purification" and then by participating in a sacred meal<sup>11</sup>. The construction of the "baths" in Qumran, in full view of an open area which forms an amphitheatre makes it probable that the initiation "purification" rites were performed in public.

### 3.1 The baptism of John and the rites of Qumran.

The synoptists all have the quotation from Isaiah 40:3-5 (Matt 3:3, Mk 1:2-3, Lk.3:4-6) as the introduction to the ministry of John the Baptist. The Manual of Discipline uses this same reference to describe and justify all that the Qumran community aimed to do. "Now when these things come to pass in Israel to the Community, according to these rules, they will separate themselves from the midst of the (habitation) of perverse men to go to the wilderness to clear there the way of (the Lord), as it is written:

In the wilderness clear the way of (the Lord);

Level in the desert a highway for our God.

That (means) studying the Torah (which) he commanded through Moses, so as to do according to all that was revealed time after time and according to that which the

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<sup>10</sup> This is argued by Brownlee W., 1951, Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Studies, Vol., 53, pp. 10-12.

<sup>11</sup> So Josephus B.J. II.7.7. It is only obliquely referred to by the Manual of Discipline (1QS 5.13) which refuses entry into the water to the unrepentant. Here once again the importance of repentance is stressed, but also the rites of purification as part of the initiation ceremonies is only inferred.

prophets revealed through the Holy Spirit<sup>12</sup>. Here is the invitation to the faithful to march out into the desert, to witness by the purity of their lives, to prepare for the coming conflict with the sons of darkness and to await the coming of the Prophet and the Messiah of Aaron and Israel<sup>13</sup>. Here is a link with the traditions about the ministry of John the Baptist which explains why there was such urgency in his appeal for repentance<sup>14</sup>.

Much of the evidence points to the unrepeatability of John's baptism<sup>15</sup> and it became Christian teaching to believe that there was one baptism once for all. Christians further abandoned the washings associated with eating and the temple sacrifices. Mark (7:3f.) has to explain the customs of the Pharisees with their constant baptismoj to readers who would know only one baptism.

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<sup>12</sup> 1QS viii,12-16.

<sup>13</sup> 1QS ix.11. This interpretation is only probable but it has support from other parts of the literature e.g. 1QM vii,5. "They shall all be volunteers for war, blameless in spirit and in flesh, and ready for the day of vengeance."

<sup>14</sup> Luke 3.2 emphasises that egeneto rhema theou epi ioannen. 3.9 ede de kai he axine pros ten rhizan ton dendron keitai emphasises the imminence of the coming of judgment. Thyen H.,1971, Baptisma metanoias eis aphasis hamartion in ed. Robinson J.M., 1971, The Future of our Religious Past, London, SCM, pp.131-168 has argued that John's mission is to effect sacramentally an eschatological forgiveness which rightly belongs to God alone. This forgiveness in baptism is a gift. It is offered only once before the coming judgment. Luke 7:29-30 supports the idea that the Pharisees and lawyers missed the opportunity.

<sup>15</sup> e.g. Conzelmann H., 1960, The Theology of St. Luke, London, Faber and Faber, p. 229. "The linking of forgiveness with Baptism makes clear the meaning of aphesis; the word is used, as generally at that time.... for the once-for-all forgiveness of sins at Baptism. This might seem surprising in Luke's case, as he has in mind a long duration for the Christian life, but the problem of a second repentance does not yet exist as far as Luke is concerned."

Nevertheless this was part of a process and even John could not have thought his rite was to end all purification ceremonies. This needs to be borne in mind when we consider the relation of John's baptism to the Qumran initiatory and purificatory rites.

The Covenanters had taken a first step by abandoning the temple and the rites of sacrifice. Other groupings would, perhaps, feel just as free to exercise the same discretion in abandoning aspects of the Law that were meaningless in their own environment.

As we have seen above much was made of entry into the community and although the wider community shared in the occasion and renewed their own commitment, it would be strange if the neophyte did not regard that particular ceremony in a different light from all the other washings that were part of the community's way of life. In 1QS v.8 and 13 "to enter the covenant" is synonymous with "to enter water". Here at the solemn moment of entry into the community an initiate went down into the water for the first time. It would mark a decisive break from the past and the beginning of a new relationship with God in the community.

What did entry into the water signify for the Qumran community? Again there are some striking similarities with Christian baptism. Like John, there was an insistence on prior repentance<sup>16</sup>. A mere ritual washing would be no protection from the coming

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<sup>16</sup> 1QS v.13f. 1.24f. Josephus describes John's baptism as being "for the purification of the body when the soul had previously been cleansed by righteous conduct" (Antiq.xviii 117).

judgment<sup>17</sup>. Then this baptism was administered to Jews, who rather than trust their racial inheritance, sought to become a people penitent and purified for God.

Another common emphasis is that both John and Qumran saw their baptisms as provisional. For John the baptism in water was preparatory. After him one would come who would baptise with Holy Spirit (Mk. 1:8; Ac. 1:5; 11:16) or with Holy Spirit and fire (Matt.3:11; Lk.3:16). The Qumran community lived in expectation of the coming of the Messianic age when a new era of the Holy Spirit would come. "And then God will purge by His truth all the deeds of man, refining for himself some of mankind in order to abolish every evil spirit from the midst of all flesh, and to cleanse him through a holy Spirit from all wicked practices, sprinkling upon him a Spirit of truth as purifying water" (1QS iv:20f)<sup>18</sup>.

There is one aspect of these rites which the tradition of Luke could not countenance. Those who enter the Qumran community are tested according to their "wisdom". When they are accepted into the community they bring with them their "wealth". This assumes certain grading of candidates. Neither John nor the early church exercised any

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<sup>17</sup> 1QS iii.3-12.

<sup>18</sup> If we look at the wider passage i.e. Luke 3.7-17 we will find other themes of John's message - the refining fire, cleansing water and the Holy Spirit, all set within the context of the fire of the Holy Spirit, the eradication of evil and making everything new.

Brownlee W.H., 1955, John the Baptist in the light of Ancient Scrolls, Int. 9, pp.71-90 provides support and added evidence for these arguments.

examination to qualify for baptism. The spontaneous expression of repentance and faith was sufficient qualification.

#### 4. Proselyte baptism.

The second possibility to consider within Judaism is proselyte baptism. In the Prayer of Asenath there is an account of how the daughter of an Egyptian priest turned from the Egyptian gods to marry Joseph. She destroyed her idols and began to fast when Joseph refused to kiss her. Her mouth, he maintained, was polluted with food offered to idols. "And she broke into a great sweat as she heard these words from Joseph, and as he spoke to her in the name of the Most High God. Then she wept with long and bitter weeping and repented from her gods which she worshipped and the idols to which she prayed..." (ix). She fasted for seven days and then offered a long prayer of penitence, recalling that the God of the Hebrews was true and living and merciful, and that He kept no record of the sin of the humble, especially if they sinned in ignorance (xi). The Archangel Michael appears to her and tells her that her prayer has been heard and her name is written in the Book of life. Her name will be changed, and will become "City of Refuge", "because many nations will flee to you, and will settle under your wings, and through you will many nations be sheltered, and those who come to the Most High God through repentance will be guarded under your walls (xv). Asenath is regarded as the protector of all proselytes and is admitted to Israel by eating the bread of life and drinking the cup of immortality and being anointed with the ointment of incorruption. Here we see a Gentile accepting the obligations to obey the Law. The new name given to Asenath is

a symbol of abandoning the old way of life and of entering into the faith of Israel through a rite of initiation.

Little evidence exists to suggest that proselyte baptism was practised before the end of the first century of the Christian era. J. Thomas in his book Le mouvement Baptist en Palestine et Syrie ends his careful study with these words. "The baptism of proselytes is attested at the end of the first century AD. It is possible that one could admit its existence from the beginning of the century. But there is little probability that it was accepted so soon and above all that it constituted a practice clearly distinct from ordinary baths of purification"<sup>19</sup>. Proselyte baptism is clearly related to the later missionary enthusiasm of Pharisees, and was a ritual act of purification for Gentiles who wished to confess the Jewish faith and to be fully incorporated into the Jewish community.

The rite involved immersion in water<sup>20</sup> and was carried out, without a baptiser, by the candidate himself, in the presence of witnesses. Nowhere is it said that it mediated the forgiveness of sins. In the Sibylline Oracles (4:165ff.) it is accompanied by a prayer for the forgiveness of sins. It was therefore simply sign of repentance and an act of ritual cleansing which bestowed on heathen men and women the status of holiness necessary

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas J., 1935, Le mouvement Baptist en Palestine et Syrie, Gembloux, p.365, quoted in Robinson J.A.T., 1962, Twelve New Testament Studies, London, SCM, p.16.

<sup>20</sup> Some time in the first century of the Christian era leading Pharisees constructed the mikveh, an immersion pool used in the initiation of proselytes.

for acceptance into God's covenant people. In the case of males it was accompanied by circumcision.

## 5. Summary.

What both Qumran and Proselyte initiation show is the longing for holiness and the prevalence of the call for repentance both within Judea and also in the Diaspora. There are, however, some fundamental differences between these practices and the rite of John. While these washings in Jewish cultic circles dealt with ritual impurity, they did not overcome sin. That was the function of sacrifice and as long as there was some adherence to the temple cult that understanding continued. Secondly with the religious enthusiasm of the Pharisees encouraging ritual washing within mainstream Judaism we find that there is no concept of crossing the threshold from the impure world into the pure once for all. Purity had always to be re-established. The third and most significant difference is described by Meeks: "By making the cleansing rite alone bear the whole function of initiation, and by making initiation the decisive point of entry into an exclusive community, the Christian group created something new. For them the bath becomes a permanent threshold between the "clean" group and the "dirty" world, between those who have been initiated and everyone who was not" <sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Meeks W.A., 1983, *The First Urban Christians*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press p.153.

## 6. The baptism of John.

John is recognised as "the Baptist" or "the Baptiser" in the synoptists and in Josephus<sup>22</sup>. This must indicate that whatever the content of his preaching, what was distinctively Johannine was the rite of baptism. Whatever other purification rites were practised in Judaism, the title must further recognise that compared to John's movement of repentance and righteousness all others were overshadowed.

John's call to repentance seems in some cases to include the offer of the forgiveness of sins. Has Luke within his gospel a tradition which contradicts much of the New Testament by claiming that from John and his baptism comes the forgiveness of sins? Luke 3:3 seems consistent with the song of Zachariah where John "tou dounai gnosin soterias toi laoi autou en aphesei amarption auton" (Lk. 1:77). In other places in the New Testament forgiveness is the gift of the exalted Christ (Ac. 5:31; 11:18) or it is "in Christ" (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14) or it is given through His name (Lk. 24:47; Ac. 10:43; 1 Jn. 2:12). So for Matthew John's baptism is a baptism of repentance only (Matt. 3:2,11). The fact is that nowhere else in Luke-Acts is the forgiveness of sins brought together with the baptism of John (cf. Ac. 13:24; 19:4), and this suggests either the influence of Mark upon Luke or the relationship of John to Jesus being so close that the message of John was identified with that of Jesus<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Ant. xviii,116; Matt.3:1, Mk 6:14. There seems to be some reticence by Luke in using the title. It only occurs in the confession of Peter (Lk. 9:19).

<sup>23</sup> The closeness is represented by Lk. 3:4-6; 16:16 and Mk. 1:1-4. The offer of the forgiveness of sins may, however, be due to an older Jewish understanding which

We may conclude that John was the first to initiate a real baptist-movement. Among the Essenes the ritual washing formed one part of the community life. It ensured an attitude of exclusivity, which meant that the community separated itself totally from other people and regarded itself as the true congregation of God. John the Baptist, on the other hand, directed his message to the whole people. His task was to prepare a people for the Lord. He appears to have had no intention of founding a new sect, nor did he form an exclusive "congregation" of baptised persons. No continuing rule of life except "poiesate karpous axious tes metanoias" (Lk.3:8), and no organisation has survived in the tradition although John had a group of disciples (Luke 5:33; 7:18; cf. Mk.6:29; Matt. 14:12; Jn 1:35; 3:25; 4:1) and some time after his death Paul encounters a group of mathetai who were baptised into the baptism of John (Ac. 19:1-6). These disciples were distinguished by their asceticism, which was often contrasted with the enjoyment of company that characterised Jesus and His disciples (Lk. 5:33; 7:31-34).

#### 6.1 John and Jesus.

The ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus must have been sufficiently close in content to create confusion. Luke recognises this by including in his narrative the possibility that John was the Messiah. "Prosdokontos de tou laou, kai dialogizomenon panton en tais kardiais auton peri Ioannou, nepote autos eie ho Christos" (Lk. 3:15). He mentions twice that Jesus was considered to be John redivivus ( Lk. 9:7,19).

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precedes the Christian, namely that God removes sins in response to a plea for forgiveness e.g. 2 Sam. 12:13 or Isa. 1:16-18, or Ps. 32:5.

At the same time there is a clear disavowal of any Messianic claims for John. He points to one who is ho ischuroteros (Lk. 3:16). The word is associated with a parable recounted in Lk. 11:21-24 where the stronger dispossesses the strong man. The exorcisms of Jesus are taken to be signs of His strength over Satan. The implication would then be that John's baptism in water offers cleansing from sin, while the stronger will not only cleanse, but give victory over sin. The era of Jesus is to be contrasted with the period of man's weakness and Satan's power. That Luke has in mind conflict and victory is further illustrated by his changing of Mark's imagery (Mk. 3:27). Mark pictures a burglary, while Luke has in mind a battle. What Luke had in mind is reminiscent of the Old Testament picture of God making war on His enemies (Isa. 59:16-18). Danker<sup>24</sup> has given an interesting insight by identifying the strong man with Israel which does not realise the source of her peace (Lk. 19:41-44) and is in danger of being overwhelmed by Satan. John's baptism enables people to recognise the one who will give peace, because of His victory over Satan. John must point Israel away from himself to this man.

Luke has included in his writing two sayings which give an estimate of John. The first is in the message of the angel to Zechariah: "estai gar megas enopion kyriou" (Luke 1:15). Jesus appears almost to recall this saying when he himself refers to John: "lego hymin, meizon en gennetois gunaikon Ioannou oudeis estin" (Lk. 7:28). John outshines all human beings. He does so not only because of his personal faithfulness to God's call, but also

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<sup>24</sup> Danker F.W., 1972, *Jesus and the New Age*, Clayton, St Louis, p.138.

because of his nearness to the coming eschatological crisis of which he is herald.

This latter saying continues by contrasting the times of Jesus with those of John. "O de mikroteros en tei basileiai tou Theou meizon autou estin". So vast is the difference between the life of the coming kingdom of God, that no matter how great a person may be according to human estimate, the least in the kingdom of God surpasses him. Some indication of what this means is given in the previous pericope (Lk. 7:18-23) when John sends His disciples to Jesus and Jesus again refers to Isa. 61:1-3 as the guide and test of His ministry (cf. Lk. 4:18). The practical achievement of Jesus outshines that of John. It is possible now not only to speak of, or hope for, the realisation of God's rule. "Sameron peploretai he graphe" (Luke 4:21). The need to emphasise the difference between John and Jesus shows that there was continuing tension between their followers regarding the distinctive roles of John and Jesus (Acts 19:1-6).

In John's baptism repentance is the vital element. It was also an eschatological act, since to turn from sin is to prepare for the coming of the kingly rule of God. It points beyond itself to the One sent by God to usher in the Day of Salvation.

## 6.2 The baptism of John and baptism in the early church.

It is not always possible to find evidence in the New Testament that Christian baptism grew out of John's baptism. The people who gathered at Pentecost (Ac. 2:1-13) have no direct link with those who had heard John or received his baptism. John proclaims his

baptism of repentance "eis pasan ten perichoron tou Iordanou" (Lk. 3:3). Although the crowd who came out to be baptised is from an undefined area, they do not seem to have any special link with Jerusalem. The importance of this argument is that there is no necessary continuity between John's baptism and Christian baptism. Luke is not affirming that those who were present at Pentecost had previously been baptised by John.

There are two striking features which are common to the baptism of John and the baptism which Peter offers. Firstly both rites were public demonstrations of intent. Secondly they were associated with repentance.

The differences are also marked. John is reported to have preached a baptism of repentance (Lk. 3:3). This would not have been possible for Peter. In the LXX kerussein usually means "to perform the duty of a herald", and so "announce". Less frequently it was used to give notice of God's coming action (Isa. 61:1), and yet it is in this sense that Luke seems to have taken the word into his own vocabulary (e.g. Lk. 4:44; 8:1; Ac. 8:5). In the Gospel the coming of the Kingdom of God is proclaimed. In Acts it is Jesus as Messiah and Saviour who sums up the proclamation. Hence Luke is maintaining that God is active in the baptism of John<sup>25</sup>. The baptism created the sense of expectancy that the Messiah was about to come or even to be revealed as John himself. John speaks of the coming Messiah whose distinctive gift would be to baptise with Holy Spirit and fire (Lk.

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<sup>25</sup> Lk. 7:30 criticises the Pharisees and lawyers who refused John's baptism "ten boulen tou theou ethetesan eis eaulois."

3:16). This is the content of Peter's proclamation. He does not therefore speak of baptism until he has proclaimed Jesus as Messiah.

## 7. The elements of baptism.

Common elements of the baptismal movements have been identified. The washings symbolise the longing for purity from the stain of sin. People entered into a community in which this would be pursued as a common goal. In Qumran the movement reacted against the laxity of official Judaism and in particular the temple cult to form a purified community. Proselyte baptism, with its stress on the Law, brought the Gentile from the worship of foreign gods to the holy God. Christian baptism, in the tradition Luke followed, accepted this radical turning from the past and the need to pursue holiness, but included both Jew and Gentile in its insistence on repentance. It went further in acclaiming Jesus as Messiah as part of the ritual, and claiming that the new age had already dawned because Christians had received the Holy Spirit as scripture foretold (Jl. 3:1-5; Ezek. 36:26). What each of the elements of baptism meant we now consider.

### 7.1 Repentance

Baptism was the public demonstration of a willingness to repent. Metanoia is never defined in the Old or New Testaments, and yet it contained for the Jew clear guidelines for action - turning away from the worship of foreign gods (especially clear in proselyte baptism) and from a rebellion against the will of God to serve Him with a true devotion in holiness of living, particularly apparent in Jewish ritual washings and Qumran. Metanoia

was a recurring demand of God through the prophets<sup>26</sup>. In later Judaism it became associated with Jewish piety and the synagogue<sup>27</sup>. It is also connected with eschatological hopes in which the call became urgent since God would grant to Israel a single act of repentance as a prelude to the coming of His Kingdom<sup>28</sup>. And, finally, the act of metanoia obtained a liturgical character in the church.

Metanoia by man, would lead to God's metanoia. He would not follow through His plan to destroy humankind. "O ill-starred mortals, let not these things be, and drive not the Great God to diverse deeds of wrath; but have done with swords and moanings and killings of men, and deeds of violence, and wash your whole bodies in ever-running rivers, and, stretching your hands to heaven, seek forgiveness for your former deeds, and with praises ask pardon for your bitter ungodliness. God will grant repentance (Theos dosei metanoian) and will not slay: He will stay His wrath once more if with one accord ye practice godliness in your heart"<sup>29</sup>.

What is more difficult to determine is what exactly was involved in the act of repentance in the early church. Was there some kind of affirmation, turning away from evil and

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<sup>26</sup> Am. 4:6f.; Hos. 6:1f.; Isa. 55:6f.; Jer. 25:4f.; Ezek. 18:30f.etc.

<sup>27</sup> Ecclus 17:24f.; Wisd. 11:23-12:19; Dan 9; Tobit 3:2f.; Prayer of Menasseh 4f.

<sup>28</sup> Assumpt. of Moses 1:18f.; Ps. Sol. 18:4f.; Jubilees 23:26. This understanding may account for the swift judgment meted out to Ananias and Sapphira (Ac. 5:1-11).

<sup>29</sup> The Sibylline Oracles lines 163-170, translated by Lancaster H.C.O. in Charles R.H., 1913, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

confessing complete devotion to God? In Ac. 3:17 (cf. Ac. 17:30) the fact of the ignorance of the Jewish leaders is mentioned and this is followed by a call to repentance and turning to God "eis to exaleiplthenai hymon tas hamartias". All indications are that this is a general acceptance of their failure and not a specific invitation to confess their sins<sup>30</sup>. Much more likely is the requirement publicly to confess Jesus as Messiah while the officiant also performed the rite in the name of "the Lord Jesus". In this way the baptisand publicly affirmed the holiness of Jesus and bound himself to him in the struggle against evil.

Luke may also have deliberately created an echo of the John's baptism by re-introducing the question ti poiesomen (Ac. 2:37 cf. Lk. 3:11,12,14)<sup>31</sup>. If this is so, Peter's reason for recalling John's baptism will be to emphasise its incompleteness. The instruction poiesateoun karpous axious tes matanoias (Lk. 3:8) is replaced by Peter's baptistheto

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<sup>30</sup>If one looks at the Qumran community we find a public confession of sin. "Then all who enter into the Covenant shall confess after them (the Levites) saying: We have perverted ourselves, we have transgressed, we have sinned, we have done wickedly, both we and our fathers before us, because we have walked contrary to true ordinances. And God is righteous who has executed justice upon us and upon our fathers before us; but the abundance of His grace He has bestowed upon us from everlasting to everlasting ( 1QS 1.24ff.)

<sup>31</sup> The fact is that the question is posed to govern behaviour after John's baptism to escape the judgment he predicted (Luke 3:11,12,14). If there is a link it may be not so much with the act of baptism but as a reminder to the reader that further steps are necessary to remain faithful to the ongoing demands of God. Alternatively it may be that possession of the Holy Spirit by the baptised renders the question impossible after baptism. In this case the position of the question will be to draw the readers attention to the difference in the baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus.

ekastos hymon en toi onomati Iesou Christou (Acts 2:38)<sup>32</sup>.

While the element of water and metanoia formed part of all the rites we have been considering, there are two elements which are not found outside the practice of baptism in the early church. These two elements are briefly discussed here in order to indicate the uniqueness of Christian baptism and to illustrate in what way Christian baptism differed from any other known comparable rite.

## 7.2 In the name of Jesus Christ.

\* Whatever liturgical form was given to the act of metanoia, there is no doubt about the formula which accompanied the person to be baptised through the water. Faith in Christ was confessed before entry into the water and His name was proclaimed when the neophyte emerged from the water. Baptism now has a ritual form of words to which we have already referred - "in the Name of Jesus Christ." The significance of this formula will be discussed when baptism in the book of Acts as a whole is considered in the third chapter.

For the present we shall simply note the occasions where the formula "in the name of Jesus Christ" occurs. It is found in eight places. In Ac. 2:38 it is related to baptism; in Ac.

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<sup>32</sup> The similarity between this and the words of Jesus in John's Gospel is apparent. "eipon oun pros auton (Iesou), Ti poiomen hina ergazometha ta erga tou Theou; apekrithe ho Iesous kai eipen autois, Touto estin to ergon tou Theou, hina pisteuete eis hon apesteilen ekeinos" (John 6: 28-29).

3:6 and 4:10 it is used in the healing of the lame man; in Ac. 10:36 it is used in Peter's speech in the house of Cornelius; in Ac. 10:48 and 11:17 it is used of the baptism of Cornelius and his friends; in Ac. 15:26 it refers to Paul and Barnabas parededokosi tas psychas auton hyper tou onomatos tou Kyriou hymon Iesou Christou; and finally in Ac. 16:18 it is used by Paul in an exorcism. From this we can determine that the formula is used only on solemn occasions, and only in direct speech. There is also a connection between baptism and the mission of Christ. As His baptism inaugurated His mission, so for the Christian baptism is initiation into mission. It is a cultic act which is meant as a pattern of life based on the presence of Christ.

### 7.3 You will receive the Holy Spirit.

The difference that is noted from the beginning of the two volume work between the baptism of John and that of Jesus is that John baptises with water, while Jesus baptises with the Holy Spirit. The baptism of John is preparatory as we have already noted. It leads on to the baptism of Jesus and in Him finds its fulfilment<sup>33</sup>. The promise of the Spirit to the followers of Jesus is given in Ac. 1:4-5, 8 and it finds its fulfilment in Pentecost. Thereafter, according to his particular style, Luke sets up models of "men of the Spirit" -Peter, Barnabas, Stephen, Philip, Paul and Apollos. What makes these men

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<sup>33</sup> Conzelmann H., 1960, The Theology of St. Luke, London, Faber and Faber p.23: "It is John's role to prepare the way for this (the Kingdom) by preaching and baptism, and his great merit is that he refused to claim for himself the messianic role. At the same time, however, this makes plain John's limitations: it is only through the proclamation of the Kingdom that John's preaching and only through the Spirit that John's baptism, are raised to the level appropriate to the new epoch."

outstanding is their participation in the mission of God to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth (Ac. 1:8) which is achieved through their powerful testimony to Jesus as the Christ. Without the Spirit nothing distinctively Christian can be achieved. The question of Paul to the Ephesians in Ac. 19:2, "Ei pneuma hagion elabete pisteusantes", must indicate the indispensibility of the Spirit for the Christian even if it fails to clarify how the presence of the Spirit is known. The Spirit is given in baptism (Ac. 2:38; 8:17; 9:17; 19:6).

It will be clear that there were a number of groups bent on personal holiness, and a discovery of God's purpose in their own day, which used purificatory rites. These rites had a general and specific character. The Qumran community used constant washings as part of their rule. Special occasions were also marked by washings - initiation into the Covenanters of Qumran, or of proselytes into Judaism. Both Qumran and proselyte washings gave people access to what was important - the life of the community or Judaism. The Baptism of John is associated with calls for repentance, but he places his emphasis on the coming of the Messiah and sees his baptism not as a preparatory rite for entry into a community, but a prophetic action summing up belief that God is about to act. His baptism is fulfilled in Jesus and in the experience of the Holy Spirit.

Christian baptism, therefore, retained John's emphasis on repentance but introduced its distinctive features of calling on the name of the Lord Jesus in the belief that those who were baptised would receive the Holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BAPTISM IN LUKE-ACTS. PART 1.

#### 1. Introduction

Peter's address to the crowd that had gathered after the strange and exciting events of Pentecost reaches its climax in the proclamation "asphalos oun ginoketo pas oikos Israel, hoti kai Kypion auton kai Christon o Theos epoiese, touton ton Iesoun hon hymeis estaurosate" (Ac. 2:36). God in an incredible act of generosity has sent His Son to offer salvation to humankind and His offer has been rejected in the most brutal way possible. Jesus of Nazareth has been crucified. Even then God's plan has not been thwarted. Jesus is enthroned "kai Kyrion auton kai Christon ... epoiese."

The question that follows: "ti poiesomen andres kai philoi" (Ac. 2:38) sums up the helplessness of people who see the pain and misery caused by sin. In Lk. 15:11-27 we have a graphic picture of sin. The journey of the son represents either the abandonment of God or remoteness from Him, which creates an environment leading from unrestrained desire to depravity. When the son "comes to himself" he confesses his sin and returns to the home of his father. His love is undiminished. For Peter the sin which has estranged people from God is the rejection of Jesus as Son of God. It is of this sin that they need to repent.

Herein lies the importance of Peter's original offer of baptism. The offer is made where its effect will be greatest - to the very people who had rejected Jesus <sup>1</sup>. It is they who are called to repentance and faith, to take the practical step necessary to restore fellowship with God. But it is more than just a second chance for the Jews. The prophecy of Joel which Peter has quoted in his speech (Ac. 2:17-21) points to the scope of salvation. Luke has deliberately avoided the restriction in the original saying of the promise of salvation to those on Mount Sion and in Jerusalem (LXX Jl. 2:28b). In Ac. 2:39 those hous Kyrios proskekletai is extended beyond the bounds of Jewry. The rite of baptism will allow those who wish to be saved to call on Kyrios Iesous and so open the way for Gentiles to share with Jews their fellowship with God.

Baptism is clearly not an end, but a beginning which has practical implication for the believers. It brings people into a loving and supportive fellowship of practical sharing, of teaching and of worship (Ac. 2:42).

Further Jesus himself had said, "alla lempsesthe dynmin, epelthontos tou Agiou Pneumatos eph' hymas: kai esesthe mou martyres..." (Ac. 1:8). Empowerment by the Holy Spirit gives an authority to the words of the members of the early Christian

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<sup>1</sup> What I have in mind as "people" is faithful Israel which was present in Jerusalem at the Passover when Jesus was rejected, and would also form the crowd at Pentecost. I do not mean to suggest that the Passover and Pentecost crowds were identical.

community which is based on the integrity of their lives<sup>2</sup>. "Egineto de pasei psychei phobos. Polla te terata kai semeia dia ton apostolon egineto" (Ac. 2:43). The presence of the Spirit is seen in the miracle which Peter and John perform - the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate (Ac. 3:1-10). This is the first miracle recorded as being performed by the apostles, even though in commissioning the Twelve Jesus edoken autois dynamin kai exousian epi panta ta daimonia kai nosous therapeuein (Lk. 9:1)<sup>3</sup>. Here is a manifestation of the power of God accomplished en toi onomati Iesou Christou tou Nazaraiou (Ac. 3:6). The healing is a witness to the association of the power of the Spirit with the name of the Lord Jesus (Ac. 3:12-26). It is also worthy of note that the speech is not given to an all-admiring audience, but in the face of opposition and impending conflict (Ac. 4:1).

The question which we first address is: Which of these matters forms the focus of attention in the tradition Luke has recorded? We shall argue that the context of baptism and the way in which the essential elements of the rite are constantly presented to the reader makes it a focus which lends coherence to the scheme of Acts and warrants more attention than it normally receives.

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<sup>2</sup> In introducing Acts Luke refers to two aspects of the ministry of Jesus "peri panton .. hon erxato ho Iesous poiein te kai didaskein" (Ac. 1:1). What Jesus was is as important as what he said. Hence the witness of the early Christian community is seen in its common life as well as in its proclamation.

<sup>3</sup> The same instruction is given to the Seventy - therapeuete tous.. astheneis. (Lk. 10:9). Yet it is significant that when they report back to Jesus they rejoice only that ta daimonia hypotassetai hemin (Lk. 10:17). The power to perform signs and miracles is given to Stephen (Ac. 6:8), to Ananias (Ac. 9:12) and to Paul (Ac. 14:8ff. etc.).

2. The relationship of Acts 2:37-3:21 to the rest of the book of Acts.

### 2.1 Preparation

The Book of Acts begins with a series of events which are clearly foundational for the church as a whole. The first is the departure of Jesus - the end of His earthly ministry, containing as it does the promise of a new era. We are specifically reminded of the prophecy of John the Baptist: hymeis de baptisthesesthe en Pneumati Agioi (Ac. 1:5). It is Jesus who baptises and the gift conferred by the glorified Christ is the Holy Spirit. It is not without significance that the pattern of mission laid out by Jesus before His ascension will be marked by the outpouring of the Spirit conferred through baptism (Ac. 2:38; 8:17: 10:44).

The new community is seen in action after the ascension. Its task is to point to the fulfilment of God's promises in the Old Testament<sup>4</sup>. The function of the leadership group is to bear witness of the life of Jesus, arxamenos apo tou Baptismatos Ioannou (Ac.1:22). The leaders are shown by this description to have a very specific relationship with baptism. The new community is also to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit with whom Jesus will baptise. The way has been prepared by ancient prophecy - legei ho Theos (Ac.

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<sup>4</sup> The themes of judgment and turning to God in absolute dependence are clear in this passage. The apostles recognise God's judgment on Judas who betrayed Jesus. Turning to God in complete dependence is shown by the prayer and the casting of lots so that the number of apostles may be brought again to twelve. The theme of the failure of the chosen to recognise Jesus as fulfilling the hopes of Jewry and the need to turn to a replacement will have a place in the book as a whole. Here the community acts only in obedience to the will of God.

2:17) as well as the word of John the Baptist. For those intimately involved in the event there is the message of the angels (Ac. 1:11). The coming of the Spirit assumes something of the importance of the birth of Jesus, while at the same time constantly reminding the readers of their own baptism.

## 2.2 Pentecost

The symbolism of Pentecost must have been significant for the group of disciples. The fire, wind and voices all proclaim the objective reality of God<sup>5</sup>. The presence of the Spirit is demonstrated by the miracle of languages. Peter explains the experience to the astonished Jews, both from Jerusalem and those in Jerusalem from the Diaspora. What he expounds to them, though, is not so much the witness of their own eyes and ears but the background to God's free gift of the Spirit - the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is these events which have culminated in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and it is with this gift which God will enable the new community to become identified with the Spirit-filled Son of God. The way in which people respond to the proclamation about Jesus defines whether or not they are to share in the benefits of this new era marked by the Spirit's presence, or come under a judgment<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> The language is reminiscent of Isa. 66:15f. (LXX). Philo in a midrash on Exod. 19 speaks of a marvellous, heavenly sound which was changed into "flaming fire like pneuma and of a voice coming out of the stream of fire from heaven and speaking in the language customary for the hearers" (Decal.,33,46.).

<sup>6</sup> The most important aspect of the Spirit is that it is poured out upon "all flesh" and the Spirit causes prophecy. He continues in v. 21 that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord on that day shall be saved". This is a theme of the book of Acts and gives us an insight into Luke's understanding of the "last days" as the age of the Spirit and

Peter focuses in his speech on a prophecy in Joel, which the events of Pentecost have fulfilled. Yet there is a way in which the experience of Pentecost is seen to continue. Joel declares: "kai propheteuseusousin hoi huioi hymon kai hai thygateres hymon" (Ac. 2:17)<sup>7</sup>. Visions are given to the leaders of the Christian community in order to venture into new territory. Both Peter (Ac. 10:9-16) and Paul (Ac. 16:9) have visions to prepare them for crucial advances in the mission to the "ends of the earth"<sup>8</sup>. Prophecy and visions are clearly not given only to those who were present at Pentecost. Yet they are associated with "the last days" when the Spirit is poured out. What, then, is the link between those who have visions and Pentecost? The answer must be found in the coming of the Spirit at baptism. Peter connects the experience of receiving the Spirit with Pentecost in recounting the Spirit coming upon Cornelius and his baptism (Ac. 11:15).

### 2.3 Baptism.

The fact that Peter advocates baptism in this context must make it clear that the rite provides the opportunity to call on the name of Kurios Iesous and that this expression of faith brings salvation. Through it the believer enters en tais eschatais hemeras (Ac. 2:17). While much of the prophecy of Joel is fulfilled, yet the particular signs and wonders

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salvation.(Cf. Maddox R., 1982, The purpose of Luke Acts, Edinburgh, T&T Clark p.138).

<sup>7</sup> cf. Ac. 11:27-28; 13:1-3; 15:32; 21:9-11. Luke seems to make a point of including both male and female prophets in his record e.g. Anna (Lk 2:36) Agabus (Ac. 11:27f.; 21.10f.) and the daughters of Philip (Ac. 21:9).

<sup>8</sup> Five visions are recorded as taking place in the night and so double up as dreams. (Ac. 12:6-7; 16:9; 18:9; 23:11; 27:23)

associated with the end of history (Ac. 2:19-20) are not. Luke maintains that the final chapter is now being written. For the church as a whole and the individual believer maintaining the eschatological faith continues to be important because it gives an urgency to the proclamation of Jesus as Lord. Here are the means whereby people can hear and respond to the word - in baptism. "Where Jesus is preached (as Lord), and where that message is received, the eschatological outcome is established already here and now. When God completes His saving activity in the world, people will take their place in God's kingdom because they have lived believing, faithful, and vigilant lives in the interim"<sup>9</sup>.

It can be no accident that at the beginning of his second volume Luke highlights precisely those three elements which are part of the rite of baptism:

- \* In the name of Jesus
- \* The presence of the Holy Spirit
- \* The inclusion of all who call on the name of the Lord among the people of God.

### 2.3.1 In the name of Jesus.

The immediate consequences of the proclamation of God's saving acts are that thousands are baptised, according to the pattern prescribed in Ac. 2:38, in the name of Jesus Christ to receive the Holy Spirit. These two elements will identify the new

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<sup>9</sup> Carroll J.T., 1988, Response to the End of History, SBL Dissertation series, Missoula, Scholars Press, p.92 .

community of believers.

Peter is able to perform a miracle in the "name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Ac. 3:6 cf.19:13), and he confounds the authority of the Jewish leaders by his witness to this name. The repetition of onoma in Ac. 3:16 serves further to emphasise the source of the apostles' power. Ac. 4:7 again draws attention to the name and allows Peter to climax his witness in Ac. 4:12: "kai ouk estin in alloi oudeni he soteria.oude gar onoma estin eteron hypo ton ouranon to dedomenon en anthropois en hoi dei sothenai hemas." That the leaders recognise the importance of the name is also clear from the prohibition which they impose -apeilesometha autois meketi lalein epi toi onomati toutoi medeni anthropon (Ac. 4:17)<sup>10</sup>.

### 2.3.2 The presence of the Holy Spirit.

What is meant by the presence of the Spirit is not as clear as it appears at first. "The general picture in Acts is that of the Spirit now and then springing into action so that His power is externally observed, yet He is always latently present in those to whom He has once been given"<sup>11</sup>. In the context of the great outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost and the miraculous events that follow it is easy for all those present to have in mind that the Spirit is given and is powerfully present. What are we to say about the apparent intermittent, though astounding, appearances of the Spirit in the rest of Acts? Firstly, the

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<sup>10</sup> See also p. 22 above.

<sup>11</sup> Davies J.G. 1954 *The Spirit, the Church and the Sacraments*, London, The Faith Press Ltd. p.27.

Spirit continues to be associated with baptism. In three cases it is conveyed by the laying on of hands (Ac. 8:17; 9:17; 19:6). In the case of the Samaritan converts and the Ephesian twelve we learn that God, having given the Spirit to the church, relies on the leaders to be present where the gospel has advanced into new areas. Just such a consideration would lie behind the importance of Peter's being God's agent in the conversion of Cornelius (Ac. 10:1-48) which would make him responsible for the outpouring of the Spirit on the Gentiles. That the Spirit is in some special way entrusted to the leaders of the church is seen in two other usages. In Ac. 5:31, in a situation of testing, Peter concludes his remarks to the Sanhedrin with these words: "kai hemeis esmen martyres ton rhematon touton, kai to pneuma to agaion ho edoken ho Theos tois peitharchousin autoi". What is implied is a relationship of trust, and while the Spirit is not limited to the apostles, yet they are responsible to the Spirit for the exercise of their leadership. If in the testing they should fail by renouncing Christ, they would put themselves beyond the realm of His activity<sup>12</sup>. This association with inspired leadership is found also in Ac. 15:28: "edoxen yar toi pneumati toi agioi kai hemin". There is in each case a solemn, almost ritual, use of the Holy Spirit as a reminder of another decisive moment in the life of the believer - baptism. Here the confessing of the name of the Lord Jesus had been followed by the gift of the Spirit. If the believer failed to confess Jesus Christ then there would be no gift of the Spirit. This may help to shed some light on the vexing problem of Apollos. He is described as zeon toi pneumati (Ac. 18:25) and he is

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<sup>12</sup> cf. Basil, De Spiritu Sancto, 27: "If a man reject the Spirit, I tell him that his faith in the Father and the Son will be futile, for he cannot even have faith without the presence of the Spirit."

found in Paul's writing as a leader in Corinth (I Cor. 1:12; 3:4-6,22; 4:6; 16:12). It is impossible to believe that his authority did not rest on the solid foundation of baptism and an orthodox experience of the Spirit.

It is clear that not every record of baptism includes a specific mention of the Spirit. It has been suggested<sup>13</sup> that some form of the word "rejoice" (Ac. 8:39, 16:34) would indicate the presence of the Spirit. It is also apparent, from the record of Ac. 19:1-6, that Luke could not conceive of a Christian who had not received the Spirit.

But there is another way already hinted at in which the Spirit is important. Trials are to be the lot of faithful witnesses but God will continue to strengthen the community with the Spirit to witness to the victorious power of the name of Jesus. It is not without significance that in the face of the antagonism of the Jewish authorities the community needs a renewed awareness of the Spirit's presence which again bring it back to its roots<sup>14</sup>.

It is Stephen who is singled out as andra plere pisteos kai Pneumatos Hagiou (Ac. 6:5; 7:54). He condemns the Jewish leaders: "hymeis aie toi Pneumati toi Hagioi antiptete" (Acts 7:51). He shares with Jesus the pain and death caused by their rejection.

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<sup>13</sup> Lampe G.W.H. 1957, *The Holy Spirit in the Writings of St. Luke*, in Nineham D. E. ed., *Studies in the Gospels*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell p.198.

<sup>14</sup> Acts 4.31. Here again the role of the Spirit in creating community is stressed, and the richness of the community life is the work of the Spirit.

The relationship of this concept to baptism is indirect. When the word of God is proclaimed there are two possible responses. There are those who recognise the call of Jesus Christ and leave all (Lk. 5:11) to follow Jesus. It is this group who recognise Jesus as "ton Christon tou Theou" (Lk. 9:20) and receive the promised Holy Spirit (Ac. 2:1-13). These are the elements of baptism. We have already argued that for Peter the sin of Israel is focused in its rejection of Jesus as Messiah which becomes obvious in the crucifixion (Ac. 2:36). This is what Stephen refers to in his accusation: "Hymeis aei toi pneumati toi agioi antiptete" (Ac. 7:51,53), where this action is defined as "hymeis prodotikai phoneis egenesthe"<sup>15</sup>. Satan is at work in both the betrayal of Jesus (Lk. 22:3), in denial of him (Lk. 22:31) and in the crucifixion (Lk. 22:53 cf. 23:44). The baptised offers resistance to any manifestation of this darkness (Ac. 26:18). In the consequent struggle the suffering of the baptised is a sign that they truly belong to Christ<sup>16</sup>.

There is no gift of the Spirit without repentance. So Peter calls the people to repentance both directly in Ac. 3:19 and indirectly in v.23 estai de pasa psyche hetis ean my akousei tou prophetou ekeinou exolethrethesetai ek tou laou. Hence the "kair oi anapsyxeos" are bracketted by repentance and the response to the proclamation<sup>17</sup>. Israel is to be

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<sup>15</sup> The refusal of the leaders of the people - hoi Pharisaioi kai nomikoi - to accept the baptism of John is defined in similar terms in Lk. 7:30: "(autoi) ten Boulen tou Theou ethetsan eis eautous."

<sup>16</sup> The baptism of Jesus is followed at once by the denial of the claim by the devil that Jesus is the Son of God (Lk. 4.1-13). The proclamation of the word by Jesus "armed with the power of the Spirit (in baptism)" (Lk. 4:14-30) lead to violent opposition. This is a test of his faithfulness as it is of his followers.

<sup>17</sup> kairoi anapsyxeos and chronos apokatastaseos are almost certainly primitive eschatological terms, which point to the fulfilment of expectations, though they have been the subject of widely differing interpretations. E. Grässer (Die Parussieerwartung in der

restored by its turning away from past error and ignorance and accepting the salvation offered through Jesus Christ as the prophet of the end times. It is more generally by implication that this element of baptism is brought into the narrative. Without repentance there can be no faith, and the trials which the believers undergo are caused by those who will not repent.

### 2.3.3 The inclusion of all who call on the name of the Lord among the people of God.

Finally the scope of God's activity is extended beyond Judaism. The quotation from Joel

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Apostelgeschichte, in Kremer J.(ed.), 1977, *Les Actes des Apotres*, BETL 48, Gembloux and Leuven, Louvain pp. 99-127) understands them to be identified with the Gentile mission, while Flender H. (1967, *St. Luke, Theologian of Redemptive History*, London S.P.C.K. p. 97) believes them to have been transferred from references to the parousia to the exaltation of Jesus.

John T. Carroll (1988, *Response to the End of History*, SBL Dissertation series, Missoula, Scholars Press, p. 96) argues convincingly that achri in Ac.3:21 is used for the completion of a period of time. "The phrase achri chronon apokatastaseos... has in view a return of Jesus after the completion of the times of restoration." The apokatastasis recalls the question of the disciples in Acts 1.6, where the verb apokathistemi is used. In the proclamation the house of Israel is restored. The Son of David is enthroned (Luke 1.32-33; Acts 2.30-36). The twelve are reconstituted, so that they may judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Ac.1:15-26 cf. Lk. 22.28-30), and finally the inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God is bound up with the restoration. It is clear that a new council of Jerusalem has been constituted in Ac. 15 in which its leader states clearly that the mission is undertaken on the basis of words of the prophets: "meta tauta anastrepso kai anoikodomeso ten skenen David ten peptokuian: kai ta katestrammena autes anoikodomeso kai anophoso auten..." (Ac. 15:16-17). The coming of Christ does not depend on the reconstitution of a national state, but on the discovery afresh of a God-given mission to "the ends of the earth", which holds up for all people the claim that Jesus is Lord and enables them to respond by calling on the Name of the Lord. Hence the significance of the identification of Jesus with the eschatological prophet (Acts 3.22) who will not only lead his people outward to the ends of the earth, but will bring a lasting salvation.

in Peter's speech offers salvation to all who call on the name of Jesus. Before the Council he reminds his hearers of God's promise kai en toi spermati sou eneugolethesontai pasai hai patriai tes ges (Gen.12:3 is quoted in Ac. 3:25). Yet it is only after Stephen's death and the persecution associated with it when the believers are scattered that the message is proclaimed in Samaria and beyond. At once four baptisms are reported (Ac. 8:12; 8:38; 9:18; 10:48). Believers in Samaria "are baptised in the name of Jesus Christ" and receive the Holy Spirit (Ac. 8:17). Both Paul and Cornelius address Jesus as "kyrie" (Ac. 9:5; 10:4). As Peter had foretold salvation comes to all "who call on the name of the Lord (Jesus)" (Ac. 2.21,39). Baptism is the occasion for calling on the name of the Lord, and through it salvation comes to the Samaritan and the Gentile. The movement continues throughout the book culminating with the decision of Paul in Rome to go to the Gentiles. (Acts.28:28)

3. The consistent witness of the significance of the elements of baptism in Luke-Acts. A general reading of Luke's two-volume work will indicate that these elements which we have derived from Ac. 2:37-3:20 and depend upon the call to baptism are basic to his concept of salvation.

### 3.1 Theocentric focus

God intervenes directly in the affairs of ordinary men and women. The table below will give some indication of the consistency of this understanding. God approaches individuals personally in four different ways - in visions, through the visits of angels, through a word

of prophecy and in the risen Christ. These approaches are reviewed in three different periods in Luke's record - the infancy narratives, the life of Jesus of Nazareth, and in the early church.

	Vision	Visit of an angel	Prophecy	Jesus Risen	Holy Spirit as guide
Luke 1-2	Lk.2.26	Lk.1,11f. Lk.1.26f. Lk.2.8f.	Lk.1.67f		Lk.1.80 Lk.2.27
Jesus	Lk.10.18  A.7.59	Lk.22.43  A.1.10f.	Lk.19.41f. Lk. 22.69 A.11.27f.	A.1.4f.	Lk.4.1 Lk.4.14 A.6.10
Acts	A.9.10f. A.9.12 A.10.10f A.16.9 A.18.9	A.5.19 A.8.26 A.10.3f. A.12.9f A.27.23	A.19.6 A.21.9 A.21.10 A.27.10	A.9.3f. A.23.11	A.8.30 A.16.7

This table is too formal and suggests categories which would be foreign to Luke. An angel of the Lord might appear in person or in a vision, as might the risen Christ. The Lord, the Spirit, an angel all seem to signify the fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy. "Eulogetos Kyrios, ho Theos tou Israel, hoti epeskepsato kai epoiese lutrosin toi laoi autou" (Lk. 1:68

cf. 1:78; 7:16; 19:44). How God appears is not as important as the fact that He does. When there is an obedient response to the will of God, new and creative possibilities emerge for the people of God. Yet God is not limited to a positive reaction and sometimes acts in spite of the unbelief of His chosen instrument (e.g. Zechariah (Lk. 1:5-20] or Paul (Ac. 8:1; 9:1-9]). The Gospel of Luke opens with two people, both of priestly descent. Zechariah is fulfilling his duty in the temple at the hour of prayer when he sees a vision and hears the voice of God foretelling the birth of his son. The Gospel ends with the disciples in the temple, joyfully responding to their encounter with God in Jesus Christ (Lk. 1:8f.; 24:53). In both cases the temple is the place of anticipation. God has spoken. Now He will act.

This accounts for another emphasis in Luke. Prayer plays a vital role in the life of Jesus and in the early church. At every important advance in His ministry Jesus is reported at prayer - at His baptism (Lk. 3:22), in the face of opposition in the Galilean ministry (Lk. 4:42), in calling the twelve apostles (Lk. 6:12), at Caesarea Philippi (Lk. 9:18), on the mountain of transfiguration (Lk. 9:29) and in Gethsemane (Lk. 22:41f.). The guidance derived from this constant submission to this direction of God helps us understand the frequent use of dei<sup>18</sup>. Prayer is a normal activity of the church (Ac. 2:42). So Luke constantly holds up for his readers the example of men of faith at prayer - Stephen (Ac. 7:59f.), Paul (Ac. 9:11), Cornelius (Ac. 10:9). Communities are also seen at prayer - the first disciples (Ac. 1.14), Peter and John (Ac. 3:1), the Christian community in Jerusalem

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<sup>18</sup> Lk. 2:49; 4:43; 9:22; 13:16,33; 17:25; 22:37; 24:7,26,44.

(Ac. 4:24-30; 12:5,12), the Christian community in Antioch (Ac. 13:1-3), Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail (Ac. 16:25). Prayer was the way in which believers were entrusted to God (Ac. 14:23 cf. 20:36; 21:5). Prayer also formed the prelude to God's activity (Ac. 9:40; 28:8). This accounts for the close relation between prayer and the pouring out of the Spirit in baptism (Ac. 2:1; 8:15; 10:3;19:6).

This theocentric emphasis has implications for man. Peter's reply to the troubled question of the crowd at Pentecost is: "Metanoesate" (Ac.2:38). This is no magical formula. "Metanoia is an ethical and not a cultic process"<sup>19</sup>. What it involves is given by a series of models in Luke's writing. The first is the parable of the tax collector and Pharisee. The one who recognises that he was in need of God's mercy goes home justified (Lk. 18:9-14). The second is contained in the uncompromising demands of discipleship. "Kai katagontes ta ploia epi ten gen, aphenentes apanta, ekolouthesan autoi" (Lk. 5:11 cf. Matt. 4:22; Mk.1:20). An instruction making identical demands is given to a Jewish leader: "Panta hosa echeis poleson, kai diados ptochois" (Lk. 18:22 cf. Matt.19:21; Mk.10:21). In the instructions to the twelve as they go out on their initial missionary journey, Mark (6:8) and Luke (Lk. 9:5) both record Jesus's instructions forbidding them to take bread and money. But while Mark allows the disciple the support of a staff, Luke will not permit the disciples to take one<sup>20</sup>. What discipleship means is given concrete form in the sort

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<sup>19</sup> Conzelmann H., 1960, *The Theology of Luke*, London, Faber and Faber, p.229.

<sup>20</sup> cf also Lk. 6:30, which is an intensified form of Matt. 5:42. Luke allows disciples no compromise and insists that the call of Jesus involves a total commitment (Lk. 9:58-62; 14:26).

of people who joined the apostles in following Jesus - the woman living an immoral life (Lk. 7:36-50), Mary and Martha of Bethany (Lk. 10:38-42) and the chief tax collector (Lk. 19:1-10).

### 3.2 Human equality.

The second concern of Luke is that ouk estin prosopolemptes o Theos<sup>21</sup>. The community of faith will consist not only of Pharisees and priests and women of good standing in the community, but outcasts of all sorts restored to fellowship by the generous invitation of God. Jesus is portrayed as the friend of the sick, the poor, the penitent, the outcast. In Acts this will be seen in the way God acts to extend the scope of the mission of the early church. This interest is not in these groups per se, but because they are those who through faith find their salvation in Jesus Christ. Former social or economic barriers ceased to be significant after baptism. The concern of Luke is reflected in the way baptism is open to all people. It is not limited to Jews or Gentiles. Everyone must be baptised.

### 3.3 The community of believers.

The third emphasis is that discipleship means sharing together, particularly apparent in table fellowship, but seen also in preaching and healing and casting out of demons in

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<sup>21</sup> Ac. 10:34. While this is spoken in the context of the conversion of the Roman Cornelius, it has wider connotations in the light of the coming of the Son of Man "zetesai kai sosai to apololos" (Lk. 19:10).

the name of Jesus Christ<sup>22</sup>.

In Luke's writing the word koinonia occurs only in Acts.2:42. It is linked to the common ownership of goods (Ac. 4:32b-35; 6:1) and the 'breaking of bread' in a shared meal (Acts 2:42,46; 20:7) and the contribution made to support the needy (Ac. 11:29). These activities do not fully encompass the meaning of the word, which probably also referred to the way in which believers co-operated and supported one another<sup>23</sup>. Much has been written about the meaning of the word koinonia and its link with a word in the Qumran literature YHT because of the similarity of concept contained in the two words. The word often denotes the Qumran community as such,<sup>24</sup> but it also has a wider meaning. "This is the rule for the men of the community (ANSHE HYHT) who devote themselves to turning away from evil and adhering to all that He (God) has commanded according to His good pleasure: to separate from the congregation the men of iniquity, to form a

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<sup>22</sup> The "mission of the Twelve" ends with the feeding of the five thousand (Lk. 9:1-17) and even then the provisions are only partially consumed indicating that the work has still room for expansion. In Acts the figure of five thousand is reached through the work of the apostles in Jerusalem. The work had still to progress to Judea and Samaria and beyond. The sending out of the seventy two (Lk. 10:1-24) ends with the difficult word of Jesus plen en toutoi me chairete hoti pneumata hymin hypostassetai, chairete de hoti ta onomata hymon engegraptai en tois ouranois. The victory over evil is not an end in itself. It is the experience of the life and power of God which are definitive for the disciple.

<sup>23</sup> Acts 4.32 simply describes the community of believers as being "kardia kai psyche mia".

<sup>24</sup> 1QS1.1,16;5.1,2.16,6.217.20 etc. 1QSa1.26,27; 4QPB 5 etc.

communal spirit with respect to the Law and wealth" (LYRH LYHT)<sup>25</sup>. Here the first meaning of the word YHT seems to be the name of the group, community, whereas the second seems to point to the common activities of the community -its study of the law and sharing its wealth.

While this use of YHT opens some interesting possibilities for the meaning of koinonia, from Acts all that seems to be clear is that it refers to the communal ownership of property<sup>26</sup>. When new members came into the community they sold what they had and laid the proceeds at the feet of the apostles (Ac. 4:35; 5:2). So a common fund was set up which was first administered by the apostles and later by the Seven. From it distribution was made according to the needs of the members of the community. Scholars have argued whether this fund was voluntary or not, and have found in the early references that the concept is part of the Christian way of life and hence like the Qumran community it was obligatory for members to abandon all their possessions to the care of the community - "kai oude heis ti ton hypoarchonton autoi elegen idion einai" (Ac. 4:32). Deceivers who withheld their goods were punished (Ac. 5:1-11). Others have suggested that it was either voluntary or an ideal which soon faded. The argument for this position rests on Peter's words of judgment on Ananias: "Ouchi menon (he time tou choriou) soi emenen kai prathen en tei sei exousiai hyperchen" (Ac. 5:4)? It was his deceit about the price that was culpable, not the fact that he did not give all to the apostles. There is no

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<sup>25</sup> 1QS i.16ff.

<sup>26</sup> Ac. 2:44-45; 4:32-35.

evidence that this community of property was practised outside Jerusalem.

Nevertheless it is clear that Luke had at least two traditions which he included in his record. The first seems to allow disciples to retain their property and resources, and makes them providers for others, and the other instructs the disciples to abandon all property or wealth (cf. Luke.5:11; 8:3; 9:57f.; 10:4). The climax of the story of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus asking what he must do to inherit eternal life (Lk. 18:18-23) is the instruction panta ho echeis poleson kai diados ptochois. Luke has strengthened Mark's "what you have" to emphasise that giving must be total. Nevertheless the difficulty is in understanding which is of primary importance - the giving away of possessions or the following of Jesus. As the text stands it would seem that a disciple of Jesus will first have surrendered all that he has and given it to the poor, and he will have "treasure in heaven".

Treasure in heaven is the reward for almsgiving in several Rabbinic sources (cf. Tobit. 4:8ff, SB 1 pp.430ff). E.P.Sanders<sup>27</sup> quotes T. Peah 4:18 where a king who gives his earthly treasure to the poor is said to be storing up treasure in heaven. Luke appears to be making the command to the rich young ruler a general demand for all Christians. Evans<sup>28</sup> suggests in his commentary that Luke is concerned "to provide a basis in the

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<sup>27</sup> Sanders E.P., 1977, Paul and Palestinian Judaism, London and Philadelphia, SCM, p. 197.

<sup>28</sup> Evans C.F., 1990, Saint Luke, London, SCM, p. 531.

teaching of Jesus for the practice of the first Christians of selling possessions and distributing the proceeds."

In Acts the baptism of only two individuals is recorded (Ac. 8:26-39; 9:1-19a). In the next chapter we will investigate this more fully. Baptism usually involves a community. Peter's call (Ac. 2:38) is not only related to the listeners and their children, but to the 3000 who respond and are baptised, forming the nucleus of the church community.

### 3.4 Suffering.

Luke brings home again and again that suffering is the lot of the believer<sup>29</sup>. "At His baptism Jesus is presented as a heaven-sent agent, indeed God's Son (reiterated in the genealogy), but the temptation scenes stress a secondary, but equally programmatic aspect of the mission that He is about to undertake. They reveal the adversarial aspect of that mission and its cosmic dimensions"<sup>30</sup>.

Peter sums up the ministry of Jesus in his speech at Pentecost in this way: "touton (lesoun ton Nazoraion) tei horismenei boulei kai prognosei tou Theou ekdoton dia cheiros anomon prospexantes aneilate" (Ac. 2:23). The cross is God's way of bringing to

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<sup>29</sup> Maddox R., 1982, *The purpose of Luke-Acts*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, (see esp. pages 80-82), has pointed out the amount of space allocated to the imprisonment and suffering of Paul in the narrative in order to encourage ordinary Christians to accept that this is part of their witness to Christ - "dia pollon thlipseon dei hymas eiselthein eis ten Basileian tou Theou" (Ac. 14:22).

<sup>30</sup> Fitzmyer J.A., 1989, *Luke the Theologian*, London, Geoffrey Chapman, p. 163.

fulfilment His purpose for Israel. As real as are the events of Exodus in the faith of Israel, and as they give the basis for its faith in the redeeming purposes of God, so real and basic for the new community is the cross. Luke describes his death as "ten exodon autou hen emellen pleroun en Ierusalem" (Lk. 9:31)<sup>31</sup>. The context of the transfiguration gives us two other insights. The affirmation of Jesus as son of God (Lk. 9:35) is a conscious echo of the words spoken at Jesus's baptism (Lk. 3:22). There, as in the transfiguration the life of heaven is exposed. That life is bound by the word exodon to Jesus's crucifixion. This is consistent with the way in which Jesus explained the cross on the Emmaus road: "ouchi tauta edei pathein ton Christon kai eiselthein eis ten doxan autou" (Lk. 24: 26).

Another indication of the importance of suffering in the fulfilment of God's purpose is found in Luke's use of the prophecies of Isaiah 40-66. There are at least eight quotations from this book in the Gospel (Lk. 2:25,30-32; 3:4-6,22; 4:18-19; 6:20-22; 7:22; 22:37) and nineteen from Acts (Ac.2:23; 3:14,18,27; 4:25,27,28,30; 8:32-33; 9:15; 10:43; 13:27,29,47; 17:2,3; 22:14; 26:22)<sup>32</sup>. Many of these quotations are used to bring out qualities of the Servant of the Lord<sup>33</sup>. He embodies the tension which is probably applicable to Luke's

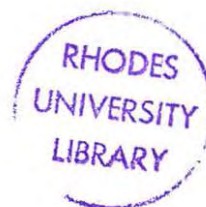
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<sup>31</sup> cf. Luke 22.16 where the reference is to fulfilling the Passover.

<sup>32</sup> It will be seen from this list that I accept the arguments of Jeremias J. in Zimmerli W. and Jeremias J., 1957, *The Servant of God*, London, SCM. pp.79-104. These are questioned by O'Neill J.C., 1961, *Theology of Acts in its Historic Setting*, London, S.P.C.K. pp.133-139.

<sup>33</sup> The four "Servant Songs" are found in Isa. 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; and 52:13-53:12. The other attractive link which Luke emphasised was the mission to all the earth.

"It is too slight a thing for you as my servant,  
to restore the tribes of Jacob,  
to bring back the survivors of Israel:



own community - the drive to proclaim salvation to all the peoples of the earth in the face of aggressive and destructive opposition. Of all the aspects of the Suffering Servant which are highlighted by these references, what is significant is his passivity (Ac. 8:32-33 cf. 22:37). The absolute use Luke makes of the verb paschein further illustrates this emphasis in his Gospel and Acts (cf. Lk.22:15; Ac. 1:3)<sup>34</sup>. The primary meaning of this verb implies a being subject to the action of others. The same thought, that Jesus is destined to suffer, is conveyed by the statement that Jesus must be handed over (Lk. 9:4; 18:32; Ac. 3:15). "This means essentially that He is transferred from the sphere where He is His own agent, into the sphere where He is subject to the will and purpose of others" <sup>35</sup>. The assurance of ultimate victory which is found in these prophecies and to which Jesus witnesses by His resurrection would be a necessary emphasis in such a community.

Suffering may be connected with the outpouring of the Spirit, and new impetus in the mission of God. The mission of Jesus follows the imprisonment and death of John the Baptist (Lk. 4:1). The Spirit is poured out on the disciples after the death of Jesus (Ac.

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I shall appoint you a light to the nations  
so that my salvation may reach earth's farthest bounds" (Isa. 49:6).  
This is reflected in the Song of Simeon (Lk. 2:30-32).

<sup>34</sup> More concrete examples of the use of paschein are found meaning "to be killed" (Lk. 9:22; 18:33; Ac. 3:15), "to be crucified" (Lk. 24:7, Ac. 2:36), "to be destroyed" (Lk. 23:32, Ac. 2:23) and "to be murdered" (Ac. 5:30).

<sup>35</sup> Evans C.F., 1990, Saint Luke, London, SCM, p. 76.

2:1-13)<sup>36</sup>. The Samaritan and Judean mission follow the death of Stephen (Ac. 8:1f.), and the Gentile mission that of James (Ac. 13:1f.).

The conjecture above will need much deeper argument and study than it has been given. It is beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice it to note that there is a connection between death and the Spirit, which, while it was present in the tradition that came to Luke, is not abandoned by him.

What we have attempted to show is that baptism neatly summed up for Luke all the elements of salvation and in a practical way gave to those outside Judaism an entry into the people of God according to the plan laid out by the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:8). What he had in mind is not "the rite of a moment, but the principle of a lifetime". In the next chapter we will examine baptism in the Gospel of Luke and Acts in order to attempt to develop our understanding both of the sacrament and the life into which the believer was introduced. We will do this in the light of new methods available in New Testament scholarship, the literary approach to New Testament documents, which will delineate a Lucan perspective on baptism. We will look first at the Gospel record of the baptism of Jesus and then at ways in which baptism is also used in the Gospel. We shall then proceed to investigate the practice of baptism in Acts.

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<sup>36</sup> The link is specifically made in Peter's sermon (Ac. 2:22-33).

## CHAPTER THREE

### BAPTISM IN LUKE-ACTS. PART 2.

#### 1. BAPTISM IN LUKE

##### 1.1. Introduction

In the following chapter baptism in Luke-Acts will be considered. The question of the place of John the Baptist in God's plan of salvation will point to Luke's understanding of the extent to which the Baptist expressed both continuity and a new beginning. The baptism of Jesus will then be considered. Finally in Luke the meaning of baptism will be further explored in the light of the metaphorical use Luke makes of baptizomai in the gospel. The second section will consist of a general survey of the narratives in Acts in which baptism forms part of the story. Although Luke appears to feel no obligation to include a record of baptisms as the church advances, the available evidence will lead to some general conclusions on the way baptism was understood in the tradition of Luke and its importance in the life of the community.

##### 1.2. John's baptism, a new beginning?

Unlike Matthew, Luke does not introduce his Gospel with the genealogy of Jesus. He begins with the intervention of God in the affairs of humankind, enabling a childless couple to have a son (Lk. 1:8f.). It is the initiative of God which marks a beginning. This son - John the Baptist - is given a special ministry to purify a people fit to meet the Messiah (Lk. 1:76f.). This passage offers no indication of how salvation is effected. It must be assumed that since the ministry of John is to baptise, as Luke 3 makes

abundantly clear, this is the means provided by God for entry into salvation. Hence baptism is associated with the initiative of God and the response of man in baptism.

Does Luke 16:16 deny the newness of God's activity in John the Baptist? John is linked in this verse to the time of promise in the Old Testament. The function of the law and the prophets is to foretell pathein ton Christon kai anastenai ek nekron tei tritei hemera<sup>1</sup>. John's role is not simply prophetic, pointing forward to Jesus. In his proclamation the "good news" becomes a present reality (Lk.3:18). The significance of John as part of God's purpose fulfilled in Jesus is further attested by the fact that an apostle is required to have been present at Jesus' baptism by John (Ac.1:22). Hence mechri in Luke 16.16 must mean more than that John is the end of an era. He does not experience the full fruit of his proclamation - the one who comes after him baptises with Holy Spirit. Nevertheless throughout his work Luke consistently maintains that metanoia is the first step toward the experience of the life of the Kingdom of God. The tension in John's role of bringing an era to an end and ushering in another in translating mechri is well expressed by Conzelmann. "Even if in the original sense the verse pointed to a break, to the supersession of the old aeon by the new, Luke makes it point at the same time to a continuity: until now there was 'only' the Law and the prophets, but from now on there is 'also' the preaching of the Kingdom. Therefore the preaching of repentance is continued

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<sup>1</sup> Lk 24:46. In contrast to the old dispensation which simply points to Christ, the work of the disciples is to keruchthenai epi toi onomati autou metanoian eis aphenin hamartion eis panta ta ethne (Lk. 24:47). Christ has empowered his people to offer what the people of God had in previous generations hoped for.

by Jesus. It is John's role to prepare the way for this by preaching and baptism, and his great merit is that he refused to claim for himself the messianic role. At the same time, however, this makes plain John's limitations: it is only through the proclamation of the Kingdom that John's preaching, and only through the Spirit that John's baptism, are raised to the level appropriate to the new epoch"<sup>2</sup>.

The importance of this understanding is that it is not the past that is significant. It is the fulfilment of the promise of God that needs attention. John embodies the riches of Judaism, not because he is faithful to a tradition, but because in faith he steps out in expectant anticipation. Metanoia is a clearing of the slate in preparation for what God is about to do.

Although there is continuity between the two ages of which John forms a bridge, it is not the lot of everyone to pass from one to the other. The latter half of Luke 16:16 kai pas eis auten biazetai must at least suggest an earnestness and an active seeking for the establishment of the Kingdom, rather than a passive reception of the inevitable. The Kingdom is not for those who look backwards and maintain the tradition of their forefathers only. There must be the preparedness to wait eagerly for God's intervention in ordinary experience to bring His plans to completion<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Conzelmann H., 1960, *The Theology of St. Luke*, London, Faber and Faber, p. 23

<sup>3</sup> In Chapter 1 pp. 16-20 a more detailed study of the baptism of John as background for the practice in Acts has been given.

### 1.3. The baptism of Jesus (Lk. 3:21-22)

The baptism of Jesus occurs as the final act of the ministry of John the baptism. After it the word acclaiming Jesus as the "Son of God" is emphasised by tracing back Jesus's ancestors to God himself. Mark and Matthew show Jesus coming to John and asking for baptism (Matt. 3:13; Mk.1:9). For Luke the baptism is part of the general activity of the day. Jesus is identified with the movement of repentance which John launched. Luke, following his particular style, describes the intervention of God in the context of the prayer of Jesus - kai proseuchomenou (Lk.3.21). The Spirit descends in a physical form. While Matthew suggests that the words from heaven are a public declaration of the identity of Jesus: "outos estin ho huios mou" (Matt.3:17), Luke follows Mark in making the words person from God to Jesus - "su ei." (Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:22). This is an intensely personal experience<sup>4</sup>. Evans sums up the account as follows: "The divine empowering rather than the baptism of Jesus expresses the content of the story" <sup>5</sup>.

#### 1.3.1 Theocentric emphasis.

Once again we notice the importance to Luke of the breaking in of the life of heaven in

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Caird G.B., 1963, Saint Luke, London, Penguin Books, p. 77: "The baptismal experience represented the end of a long development, of deepening appreciation of the divine fatherhood and his own filial responsibility, of growing insight into his mission and the world's need, of meditation on the meaning of the scriptures and their application to himself."

<sup>5</sup> Evans. C.F., 1990, Saint Luke, London, SCM, p. 245. The discussion on the meaning of the word from heaven - "You are my beloved Son; in you I delight" - is beyond the scope of this inquiry. Marshall I.H., 1978, The Gospel of Luke, Exeter, Paternoster Press p. 155-157 comprehensively brings the evidence together.

the ordinary course of events. This is invariably a consequence of prayer, and the reality of the divine presence is known by the gift from heaven of the Holy Spirit.

#### 1.3.1.1 The agent of baptism.

Luke seems to place very little emphasis on the actual baptism of Jesus, almost as if the ceremony itself was of little significance and served merely as a prelude to the more important events which are to follow. It is not even separated from the general affairs of the day.

Luke makes no mention of John baptising Jesus. John is the bridge between the old and new eras. Repentance and baptism are required of the believer to enter the new age. That is a necessary fact, emphasised by the voice from God, which not only affirms Jesus, but approves the action He is taking. It is, however, on the consequence of baptism that the focus falls.

A frontier has been crossed in the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus stands in the new age. It is the new age that is significant and the Holy Spirit is the distinguishing sign of the new age. The process of entry is bound to receive little attention. God is active in bringing about the new era and the one who baptises does not draw attention away from Him.

This feature is consistent with descriptions of baptism in Acts. Only in one instance is the name of the person who baptises mentioned - Philip in Ac. 8:38. Earlier in the same

chapter the baptism of believers in Samaria seems to be of less importance than the fact that the apostles Peter and John come down to lay hands on them. When Ananias is sent to Saul of Tarsus his message to him is, "Saoul adelphe. o Kyrios apostalke mou, Iesous ho ophtheis soi en tei hodoi hei erchou, hopos anablepseis kai plestheis Pneumatos Agiou" (Ac.9:17). Again the stress is on the coming of the Spirit. One may assume that Ananias himself baptised Paul, but it is not specifically stated. Nor is the person who baptised Cornelius (Ac.10:48), nor Lydia (Ac.16:15), nor the Philippian jailer (Ac.16.33), nor Chrispus (Ac.18:8) nor the twelve Ephesians (Ac.19:5). It is inevitable that the reader will move through the initiation to the life that is offered. Luke follows the baptism with the telling clause, kai autos en ho Iesous arxomenos (Lk.3:23), to ensure that this is the real substance of God's activity and of his own interest.

In proselyte baptism, the person being admitted to Judaism, went down into the water and baptised himself. The practice of John was to baptise the person himself and this custom was followed in the early church. Nevertheless, Luke wishes to draw attention away from the action of man to express his understanding that God's action was incomparably greater.

#### 1.3.1.2 Prayer

What is stressed is the consequence of the prayer of Jesus, through which He is no longer just one of a crowd, but the focus of God's anointing. The people fade. John has

achieved the goal of his ministry<sup>6</sup>. The one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit has been revealed. Here is the beginning of a new era<sup>7</sup>.

#### 1.3.1.3 Divine Intervention.

The baptism of Jesus is followed by a significant divine intervention. In common with the other Synoptists, Luke mentions three signs - the heavens open, the Holy Spirit descends and the voice of God speaks. In these signs there may be a complex of Old Testament imagery, possibly pointing back to Elijah, more definitely to the creation and to the appearance of God at Sinai.

#### 1.3.2 The gift of the Holy Spirit.

The activity of the Spirit is not new in Luke's writing. It has already been associated with the birth of John the Baptist (Lk.1:15) and Jesus (Lk. 1:35). The Spirit is also the agent of growth in wisdom (Lk.1:80; 2:52)

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<sup>6</sup> Could this be the significance of the imagery, with Elijah's chariot of fire in the mind of the evangelist as he compares the spirit coming upon Elisha with the experience of Jesus ?

After Elijah had vanished in a whirlwind,  
Elisha was filled with his Spirit (Ecclus.48:12).

<sup>7</sup> Corresponding to he basileia tou theou euangelizetai is pas eis auten biazetai. In each case this is hardly realistic in a literal sense. There were many who were offended by the proclamation. Lagrange M.-J. (1941, *Evangelie selon St Luc*, Paris, quoted in Marshall I.H. 1978, *The Gospel of Luke*, Exeter, Paternoster Press, p.630) translates the latter, "Anyone who wishes to enter must strive to do so." It is part of Luke's style to focus on the responsive community and to ignore any other. The entry into the Kingdom involves an effort and a zealous and single-minded response.

### 1.3.2.1 The heavenly gift.

For Luke the Spirit is the gift from heaven to Jesus during His baptism<sup>8</sup>. Here it is given and received when the heavens open. For the disciples at Pentecost the same truth holds - "kai egeneto aphno ek tou ouranou" (Ac.2:2). There it will be a gift for all mankind - "epi pasan sarka" - and will flow from the exalted Christ (Ac.2:34-35). Baptism is in this way seen in an implicitly theocentric way<sup>9</sup>.

### 1.3.2.2 The recreative Spirit.

C.K. Barrett<sup>10</sup> has shown that in the Old Testament the Spirit was active in two ways - in creation and in regeneration<sup>11</sup>. Luke has the same understanding of the work of the

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<sup>8</sup> Lampe G.W.H., 1952, *Baptism in the New Testament*, SJT 5, pp.163-174 has drawn attention to the significant word anabainein in some accounts of baptism (Mark 1.10; Matt.3.16; cf. Acts 8.39), which also occurs in the New Testament 7 times of the Ascension of Christ. It is the ascended Lord who pours the Spirit out upon the church at Pentecost. In Ephesians 4.4-10 there is a similar connection between the "one baptism" and the ascended Christ as the giver of the gifts of the Spirit.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. pp.39-42 above.

<sup>10</sup> Barrett C.K., 1966, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition*, London, S.P.C.K., p. 23: "Just as the Spirit of God was active at the foundation of the world, so that Spirit was to be expected also at its renewal."

<sup>11</sup> The presence of the Spirit at creation is the basis for the first of these assumptions, and this activity is well described by the Psalmist - Exaposteleis to pneuma sou kai ktisthesontai (LXX Ps.103.30). The regenerative power of the Spirit is illustrated in the parabolic vision of the dead bones in Ezekiel 37. Judgment is superseded by the miraculous intervention of God. Yahweh commands the prophet to speak. The words are the words of God, the hope of restoration depends on the breath of God doing again in Israel what he has done in the first man in Eden - "I shall.... give you breath and you will live." (v.6) Ezekiel " is in actuality going back to an ancient Israelite notion, according to which the mystery of natural life is comprised in spirit and the created world is assured of being kept alive by the ever-renewed pouring out of this breath of life from God." (Eichrodt W.,1970, *Ezekiel*, London, SCM, p.508)

Spirit in Baptism. He stresses the creative power of the Spirit in the first two chapters of his Gospel. The Spirit is at work in the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. There is, however, a difference in the way the Spirit is at work in the life of Jesus. His ministry is to bring salvation to the lost and the agent of that redemption is not Christ crucified taking upon himself the burden and guilt of universal sin, but Christ the giver of the Spirit which renews the life of the individual.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.3.2.3 The Spirit fully present.

Luke's account implies that the Spirit was fully present in Jesus from His conception. He grows, like John, in wisdom, but there is no mention of ekrataiouto pneumati (Lk.1:80). What He has cannot be added to. The gift of the Spirit at His baptism does not add anything to the Spirit He already possessed. The gift here is for the ministry that followed -the power to set people free from the grip of satan. This meaning is the one that John

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<sup>12</sup> It seems to me that the crucifixion is for Luke no more than the means of returning to the Father. There is no triumphant cry of tetelestai as in John, but there is the emphatic "Pater eis cheiras sou paratithemai to pneuma mou" (Lk. 23:46). The pattern of the life of Jesus laid out by the prophets includes the crucifixion, but this events serves only as a prelude to the completion of the work of Jesus which still lies in the future. The focus is on the gift of the Spirit from the Father which will be poured out on all humankind.

It may well be that the pneuma which he surrenders to the Father is the one given at his baptism. This may help us to understand Luke's use of somatikoi. Both the resurrection (Lk. 24:36-43) and ascension (Ac. 1:9) retain the physical element. The way in which this same Jesus returns is in the way that gives his life its essential quality - through that same Spirit coming upon the disciples. Yet it is only in the physical body that it is at work. In death the Spirit is returned to the giver (cf. Stephen in Ac. 7:59).

the Baptist appears to express in linking the baptism en pneumati agioi with judgment (Lk.3:16-17)<sup>13</sup>.

#### 1.3.2.4 The physical Spirit.

The descent of the Spirit during the baptism of Jesus is further described as somatikoi (Lk.3:22). This must imply that the possession of the Spirit by Jesus is not like the transient inspiration of the Old Testament prophets, and applicable only to their words.

The whole being of Jesus is permeated with the Spirit, which will become the source of regenerative power for those who repent, believe and are baptised<sup>14</sup>.

So in Luke 1 and 2 we see the Spirit active in Elizabeth and Mary in the fulfilment of

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<sup>13</sup> Dunn J.D.G., 1972, Nov.T, 14, pp.89-91, argues in favour of a view he claims to discern in the Qumran literature, namely that the community was looking for an Anointed One who would share his own possession of the Spirit with God's people. He continues, that, if John thought similarly, the Spirit is an agent for cleansing from sin active in his water baptism. It is, however, implied that those who fail to respond to John's teaching by repenting and being baptised will face judgment. While there is certainly an element of judgment in baptism, it is difficult to take the word "baptise" to mean simply "to judge". The parallelism between John and the Coming One is surely synonymous rather than antithetical. Both are saviours, setting those who come to them free from sin, and the contrast is between the limited effectiveness of John's baptism as the symbol of Spirit baptism and the full cleansing achieved by Spirit baptism which Jesus will offer. If Dunn's argument is correct, then Luke's understanding of baptism depends on the recognition that John expressed in his rite what Jesus was fully to achieve in the Baptism of the Spirit.

<sup>14</sup> The inclusion of this word may also be a conscious reference to the Gentile environment with which Luke and his readers will be familiar - the teachings of the moral philosophers. In a passage in Epistulae Morales, Seneca affirms: "We of the Stoic school believe that the good is corporeal, because the good is active, and whatever is active is corporeal" (Seneca, Ep., 117.2, in the translation by Gummere R.M., 1925, Loeb Classical Library, London, William Heinemann).

God's promises and a creative act like that of Genesis 1 and 2 takes place. In the baptism of Jesus there is a redemptive act. John has responded to the divine calling to proclaim judgement and to announce the coming of one hymas baptisei en Pneumati Hagioi kai pyri (Lk. 3:16). The repentance that follows the proclamation of John leads to the revival of the people through the power of the Spirit given to Jesus<sup>15</sup>.

Human actors feature not at all in this baptism. The stage is heaven, whence the Spirit comes down, and the voice is from God affirming Jesus as His son<sup>16</sup>. God will again speak these words at the transfiguration (Lk. 9:35). The word of God ushers in the ministry of Jesus - kai autos en Iesous archomenos (Lk. 3:23) - and carries Him forward on His journey to Jerusalem. There is also a way in which God is confirming the

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<sup>15</sup> cf. Exod. R. 48 (102d): "God said to Israel, 'In this world my spirit has put wisdom in you, but in the future my spirit will make you live again, as it is said, "I will put my spirit in you that you may live (Ezek.37.14).'"

Dunn J.D.G., 1970, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, London, SCM, p. 27 n. 13, refers to the dove in the story of Noah (Gen. 8:3-8). He claims that an allusion to this dove "gains plausibility if John's baptism was intended to symbolise the coming flood of judgment and the beginning of a new era of grace". This view is not widely supported (see Marshall I.H., 1978, *The Gospel of Luke*, Exeter, Paternoster Press, p. 153. The attractiveness of the suggestion for this study is the tension between judgment (symbolised by water) and regenerate life (the gift of the Spirit).

<sup>16</sup> In other parts of the New Testament there is a connection between the Sonship of Jesus and that of the baptised. In the Gospel of John it is faith which gives the believer the right to become a "son of God" (Jn. 1:12). In Gal. 3:26-4:7 and Rom. 8:14-16 the connection between Christian baptism, the Spirit and the sonship of the believer is developed. In Eph. 1:5f. the believers' hiothesian dia Iesou Christou is linked with grace hes echaritosen hemas en toi agapemenoi. The consistent record of the affirmation of the voice from heaven - Su ei ho huios mou ho agapetos (Lk. 3:22) - may indicate that the foundation for the acceptance of the sonship of the believer is the baptism of Jesus. Luke gives no indication that he shares this understanding.

of those under the guidance of the Spirit who recognise Jesus as God's anointed. Simeon, Anna and John the Baptist look to Jesus's coming as the fulfilment of their ministry<sup>17</sup>.

#### 1.4. The metaphorical use of baptizomai.

In this section the metaphorical use of baptizomai will be considered in order to understand the word in the context of Luke 12:50. The relationship with pyr will be investigated to gain some insight into what aspect of the ministry of Jesus is most relevant to baptism - crucifixion, the sending of the Spirit, or judgment.

Whenever the word of God is proclaimed a difference of response between those who accept the word gladly and those who reject it leads to tension. This may underline the metaphorical use of baptizomai in Luke 12:50. "Pur elthon balein epi ten gen; kai ti thelo ei ede anephte. Baptisma de echo baptisthenai:kai pos sunexomai heos hotou telesthe" (Lk. 12:49-50). Although the imagery used by Jesus does not directly refer to water

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<sup>17</sup> It is interesting to note that Peter's recognition of Jesus as Messiah (9.20) is again confirmed by the voice of God from heaven (Lk. 9:35). The third scene which seems to echo many of the characteristics of the baptism and transfiguration of Jesus is the stoning of Stephen. Here is the man full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom suffering at the hands of the Jewish authorities, whom he accuses, "You always resist the Holy Spirit" (Ac. 7:51). At the beginning of his testimony he stands before the Council "and his face seemed to them like the face of an angel" (Ac. 6:15). After they have condemned him to death he sees the heavens opened as he gazes intently upwards, and the glory of God is revealed. The fact that this is a martyrdom may well be significant for our understanding of the meaning of baptism.

baptism, yet it conjures up in the mind an event which will be linked in meaning to baptism<sup>18</sup>.

#### 1.4.1 Pyr.

It is not uncommon in the Old Testament to read of men passing through fire as a test (Ps.66:12). More frequent is the use in prophetic and apocalyptic writings of the fire of God's judgment (Isa.66:15f.; Jer.11:16; Ezek.15:6f.; Zeph.1:18; Joel.2:3; 1 Enoch 102:1; Ps. Sol.15:4; Jub.9:15). It is found in this latter sense in other New Testament passages (Lk.9:54; Rev.8:5,7; 11:5; 13:13.) Evans<sup>19</sup> points out that such fire does not need to be kindled and assumes that because Jesus will be active in sending the fire it must refer to the Holy Spirit and be reflected in the "tongues of fire" (Ac.2:3). Ellis<sup>20</sup> follows this meaning and identifies the "fire" with the Spirit "who will mediate the 'judging' message of the kingdom." We may follow Delling and take Ps.11:6 (LXX 10:7) as the background. In this verse fire is linked with judgment. "(Kyrios) epibrexai epi hamartolous pagidas, pur kai theion kai pneuma kalaigidos e meris poteriou auton"<sup>21</sup>. E. Schweizer<sup>22</sup> recalls a

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<sup>18</sup> Luke uses exodos (Lk. 8:31) to point out the significance of the death of Jesus.

<sup>19</sup> Evans C.F., 1990, Saint Luke, London, SCM, p. 539.

<sup>20</sup> Ellis E.E., 1974, The Gospel of Luke, London, Oliphants.

<sup>21</sup> Delling G., 1958, Baptisma baptisthenai, Nov. T., 2, pp. 92 - 115. What attracts him to this verse is the association of fire as the instrument of God's judgment and a scorching wind being the content of the cup of the wicked. Baptism and cup are linked in Mk. 10:38.

<sup>22</sup> Schweizer E., 1984, The Good News according to Luke, London, S.P.C.K., p. 216.

saying from the Gospel of Thomas: "Whoever is near me is near the fire; whoever is distant from me is distant from the kingdom." "Fire" and "kingdom" stand in parallel and so have the same meaning<sup>23</sup>.

#### 1.4.2 Baptizomai

Baptizomai is not an Old Testament word. It occurs four times in the LXX as a synonym for baptein, the usual Greek word for "to wash". Of the LXX passages<sup>24</sup>, Isa.21:4 is, perhaps the most interesting. It appears to be a metaphorical use similar to that of Plato, e.g. bebaptismenoi describes those "soaked in wine" [Symposium 176b], and baptizomenon a youth "getting into deep water" (Euthyd.277d). It is widely used in classical Greek in a metaphorical sense to describe men "sunk" in sleep or "drowned" by passion. The LXX reading seems to mean "overwhelm". If this is correct it offers the only evidence for the use of baptizo in the LXX with the classical or Hellenistic sense of "to sink" or "to drown". There are many passages in the Old Testament where disasters or troubles are described in terms of being overwhelmed by water (Ps.42:7; 69:2; 15: 124:4f.:

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<sup>23</sup> In the Hellenistic world fire is viewed much more positively. The Pythagoreans understood it as the most vital of all the elements. Prometheus had stolen fire from heaven, which was regarded as a great gift for mankind. It brought doom upon himself. There is an echo of the self-sacrificing heroism of his act and the deliberate journey of Jesus to Jerusalem in Aeschylus's play, Prometheus Desmotes.

"Of mine own will, aye, of mine own will I erred - gainsay it I cannot. In succouring mortals I found suffering for myself: nevertheless I thought not to be punished thus - to waste away upon cliffs in mid-air, my portion this desolate and drear crag...Take part in the trouble of him who is now in sore distress. Of a truth affliction wandereth impartially abroad and alighteth upon all in turn."

<sup>24</sup> cf. 2Kgs. 5:14, Judith 12:7, Sir. 31:30.

Isa.43:2: Song of Sol.8:7). In passages more nearly contemporary with Luke, Josephus (BJ.4:137) speaks of robbers "sinking" Jerusalem by exhausting its supplies. Plutarch (Education of Children 9B) uses it to describe a "heaviness" of the soul. Apart from its formal meaning of a rite of initiation it is used in a metaphorical sense of death in Luke 12:50 and in Mark 10:38<sup>25</sup>.

#### 1.4.3 Pyr and Baptizomai.

##### 1.4.3.1 The separation of the righteous from the wicked.

Interest in the parallel saying of Luke 12:49;50 rests on two points. The first is the linking of pur in v.49 with baptizo in v.50. It is natural to look back to the saying of John the Baptist in Luke 3:16. "Ego men hydati baptizo hymas....autos hymas baptisei en Pneumati Hagioi kai puri." Fire is closely associated with the Holy Spirit and in the following verse with judgement - "to de achyron katakausei puri asbestoi". If the saying has the agricultural images which most naturally spring to mind, the work of the Spirit would be to separate the good from the evil, or the profitable from the unprofitable. Fire would destroy all that is useless. Both fire and wind are images of the Spirit (Acts 2:3) and the work of the Spirit is seen to be a composite of separating, purifying and ultimately judging. In this sense, then, the ministry of Jesus for which John the Baptist prepares is the spark of righteousness which will be kindled into flame at Pentecost and the Spirit will drive out the disciples of Jesus in a movement marked no longer by repentance only but by the

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Foakes Jackson F.J. and Lake K., 1939, The beginnings of Christianity, London, Macmillan, pp. 332-334.

recognisable presence of the Spirit's own activity<sup>26</sup>. Baptism then is the way in which the believer would become part of that fire burning with righteousness. The baptised would be obligated to spread the fire in deed and word.

#### 1.4.3.2 Passover or Pentecost?

If Luke has deliberately put together two sayings from his source, he must have done it to shed some light on the way he understands the death of Jesus to which baptizo is referring<sup>27</sup>. It may be argued that in the light of this verse Luke.12:50 is an example of poetic parallelism in which the fire and baptism are synonymous. The fire is then the crucifixion. In the three references to John's original prophecy in Acts (1:5: 11:16 and 19:4) pur is significantly absent. This would give weight to the argument that the reference is to the cruxifion rather than Pentecost.

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<sup>26</sup> Manson W., 1948, *The Gospel of Luke*, London, Hodder and Stoughton. The association of baptism with fire and the Spirit is brought out in the picturesque description by Justin Martyr of Jesus's baptism ( Dialogue with Trypho 88.3 ): "When Jesus went down into the water a fire was kindled in the Jordan." If we link this with the quotation from the Gospel we would find added evidence for the concept of the fire being present in the ministry of Jesus. On the day of Pentecost the fire would be kindled for the whole earth.

<sup>27</sup> Conzelmann would not see any association (1960, *The Theology of St. Luke*, London, Faber and Faber, p. 109), but see for support Marshall (I.H., 1978, *The Gospel of Luke*, Exeter, Paternoster Press, p. 545), Fitzmyer (J.A., 1985, *The Gospel according to Luke*, New York, Doubleday p. 994), and Evans (C.F., 1990, *Saint Luke*, London, SCM p.539). Caird (G.B. 1963, *Saint Luke*, London, Penguin Books), Manson (T.W. 1930, *The Gospel of Luke*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, p. 160) and Morris (L. 1974, *The Gospel according to St. Luke*, Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, p. 219) all simply take it for granted that the two have been put together.

"The purpose of Jesus" coming is to loose upon the earth the Pentecostal fire of the Spirit, which must in the first instance be the fire of judgment..... The release of the Spirit waits upon the completion of the baptism in Jesus's death"<sup>28</sup>. Already it is evident that there are those who oppose this purifying fire, and Jesus sees that suffering comes from those who will not repent. In Peter's speech on the day of Pentecost the death of Jesus is linked to the Old Testament concept of the Day of the Lord. The Spirit of God is to be the agent of judgement on that day. Resisting the Spirit is as much part of a person's response as receiving of the Spirit. Hence no protection is offered to the righteous. All that is important is that they possess the Spirit, for He is the life from heaven. "Lego hymin tois philois mou, me phobethete apo ton apokteinonton to soma kai meta tauta my echonton perissoteron ti poiesai. Hypodeixo de hymin tina phobethete; phobethete ton meta to apokteinai echonta exousian embalein eis ten geennan" (Lk. 12.4-5). This understanding would explain the urgency of Peter's pleading with the crowd: "Sothete apo tes geneas tes skolias tautes" (Ac. 2:40).

It should also be noted that in speaking of "baptism" Jesus is made to speak of entering into an experience which will be common to His followers. It is the way that Luke likes to portray Jesus, sharing in the experiences which will subsequently be the lot of His followers. Like them He is faced with temptation, and because of His victory is able to

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<sup>28</sup> Robinson J.A.T., 1962, Twelve New Testament Studies, London, SCM. p. 161. Although there is a natural association of baptism and the death of Christ for those as well versed as he is in Pauline writing (e.g. Rom. 6:3 ), I would take issue with him as to whether Luke understood the completion of baptism in Jesus's death. Its completion is in His exaltation.

announce the plan of ministry en tei dynamei tou Pneumatos (Lk. 4:14). So too He will experience the testing fire in Jerusalem, and again because of His triumph over death will offer the Spirit as the guarantee of power for His followers (Ac. 1:8)<sup>29</sup>. Jesus baptises with the Holy Spirit in the sense that He brings judgment. Indeed His coming is meant to enkindle a blaze (Lk. 12:49). He views His ministry, Fitzmyer<sup>30</sup> says, as a "baptism" not only of water but of fire. "Ouchi tauta edei pathein ton Christon kai eiselthein eis ten doxan autou;" (Lk. 24:26). In the same way those who receive the Spirit will witness to His power in their lives, but none is as significant as the witness of suffering and death<sup>31</sup>.

Hence there are a number of important insights which have been gained. The first is that baptism is not an end in itself. Secondly in order to achieve the goal for which Jesus longed, baptism was necessary and unavoidable. The aim of His ministry, as recorded

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<sup>29</sup> Luke alone among the evangelist has linked the act of crucifixion to baptism in another way too. On the cross Jesus is subject to temptation. The words spoken by the tempter, "ei huios ei tou Theou" (Lk. 4:3,9) become significantly, "ei houtos estin o Christos tou Theou" (Lk. 23:35), or "ei su ei o basileus ton loudaion" (Lk. 23:37). This must be a way in which the follower of Jesus was particularly close to the experience of the master.

<sup>30</sup> Fitzmyer J.A., 1985, The Gospel according to Luke, Vol.2, New York, Doubleday, p.995.

<sup>31</sup> Teleo in Luke 12:50 conveys the thought that the death of Jesus is not just an accident of history, but the purpose for which he entered upon his ministry. So the great figures portrayed by Luke - John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter, Stephen and Paul - all bear witness that the Spirit kindles both the fire of righteousness within the believer and the antagonism of those who resist the Spirit. In the face of persecution, the followers of Jesus are equipped by the Spirit to go beyond the pain of suffering to the triumph of faith. This is the ultimate test of their baptism.

in this passage, is to set the earth ablaze. The blaze has elements of judgment. So, thirdly baptism is a separation in which the righteous person or community is revealed. Fourthly, baptism is not administered to others. Jesus must himself face the testing. Finally baptism will lead to discord.

#### 1.5 Baptizesthai en pneumati agioi.

The second figurative use of baptizo applies to the baptism which Jesus will administer. Here the concept of "being deluged" or "overwhelmed" will be uppermost. What is being implied in the metaphor is being overwhelmed by the Spirit of God, perhaps in the way that the world was overwhelmed by the waters of the flood. The connection between the flood and baptism is found in 1Peter 3:18-22, where it is linked with both purifying the soul and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have examined above the understanding of the Spirit as recreative<sup>32</sup> and as preserving the life of the one who has received the Spirit<sup>33</sup>.

#### 1.6 Summary.

The Gospel gives to baptism a significance, which, as we saw in our discussion of John the Baptist, opens the way into the ordinary life of a new, divine element. There is both continuity and newness. The baptism of Jesus again draws our attention not only to the

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. p. 58-59 above.

<sup>33</sup> It is interesting to note that the link suggests that baptism renders judgment to be already in the past. This would provide another common understanding with St. John (e.g. 5:25; I Jn. 3:14).

initiative of God, but also to prayer as a waiting upon the God who acts. The Spirit is a gift from heaven, an insight into the life above, which will empower Jesus in meeting and overcoming temptation and setting free those held by evil spirits and disease<sup>34</sup> Baptism is used metaphorically of judgment and death, and is identified by some commentators with the Spirit himself.

## 2. BAPTISM IN ACTS.

### 2.1 Introduction.

At the beginning of the Book of Acts, in a Lucan summary (Ac. 1.4-5), the risen Christ reminds His disciples of that basic event of His own ministry - John baptised with water - and at the same time directs them to the fulfilment of John's prophecy which is imminent - you will be baptised by the Holy Spirit<sup>35</sup>. By this statement we are explicitly prepared for the events of Pentecost and the central place of baptism in the life of the early Christian community.

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Dunn J.D.G., 1975, *Jesus and the Spirit*, London, SCM, p. 78: "The eschatological kingdom was present for Jesus only because the eschatological Spirit was present in and through him. In other words it was not so much a case of 'Where I am there is the kingdom' as 'Where the Spirit is there is the kingdom'. It was the manifestation of the power of God which was the sign of the kingdom of God."

<sup>35</sup> In Mk. 11:27-33 Jesus appears to be affirming the importance of John's baptism. "My authority rests on John's baptism" which when translated into concrete terms means, "My authority rests on what happened when I came to John for baptism." An event so significant in the life of Jesus could scarcely have escaped the notice of His followers. The practice of baptism in the early church is likely to be bound up with the estimate Jesus gave of the value of His baptism.

Acts 2 would seem to contain Luke's view of the process of becoming a Christian. According to Luke, God acts in a miraculous way in the historical events of Pentecost to fulfil the promise made through the prophets. Christ is proclaimed as God's Messiah in Peter's sermon (Cf. the climax in Acts 2:36). At the end of his proclamation people are convicted and ask, "ti poiesomen;" Peter's reply spells out the steps required for salvation. "Metavoeseate...kai baptistheto ekastos hymon epi toi ovomati Iesou Christou eis aphasiv ton hamartion hymon, kai lempsesthe ten dorean tou agiou pneumatos" (Ac. 2:38).

The question ti poiesomen is no longer asked by those who have been baptised as in Luke 3, but by those who wish to enter the salvation offered by Peter. The direction has changed. John sends the baptised out to "poisate karpous axios tes metanoias" (Lk. 3:8) by their conduct and relationships with others. In the Jerusalem community those who have been baptised are gathered into an ideal community in which they live out their loyalty to the Christ<sup>36</sup>.

What is this baptism to which Peter calls people? Doubts have been expressed about the possibility of Peter calling for baptism on the day of Pentecost. What may be reflected in Peter's call is a later development in the life of the church which deviated it from a

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<sup>36</sup> This difference will be increasingly apparent in the book of Acts. The deacon, Philip, later called the evangelist, goes out. Paul has an itinerant ministry establishing Christian communities. Those who are converted are settled within a particular community, and usually based in the home of a leading Christian. Jesus is cited as encouraging this: me metabainete ex oikias eis oikian (Luke 10.7).

reliance on baptism in the Spirit only to re-introduce water baptism.

It has been argued<sup>37</sup> : "This sudden introduction of baptism seems quite inconsistent with what was stated; the disciples had received the Spirit without having been baptised for the purpose, and the words of Jesus in Acts 1.5 imply a baptism in Spirit as a substitute for baptism in water, not as a consequence of it." The authors conclude that we are led to recognise the hand of the editor in framing this account in the light of the later practice of the church, and the clue for this redaction is given by the use of the double proper name, Jesus Christ in Acts 2:38. Johannes Weiss<sup>38</sup> also claimed that baptism was not universally practised in the early church on the basis of the silence of the record about the baptism of the 120 on whom the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost and the apparent recognition of the Ephesus 12 as mathetai, and so concluded "baptism was not from the outset a necessary mark of the disciples of Jesus". Later in *The Beginnings of Christianity*<sup>39</sup> it is also argued that baptism was not originally practised in the Christian community and was introduced only to cater for the needs of the Hellenist believers. The fact is that both Philip and Paul are linked to the Hellenists - the angry Saul being party to the execution of Stephen (Ac. 8:1) as well as the newly converted

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<sup>37</sup> Foakes Jackson F.J. and Lake K., 1939, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, Vol. 1, London, Macmillan and Co., p. 340.

<sup>38</sup> Weiss J., 1917 (reprinted, edited and translated by F.L. Cross), *Earliest Christianity: A History of the period A.D.30 -150*, New York, Harper and Bros. Vol.1, pp. 36-37.

<sup>39</sup> Foakes Jackson F.J. and Lake K., 1939, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, Vol.5, London, Macmillan, p. 134.

Paul boldly witnessing in Jerusalem (Ac.9:29). Nevertheless there is no evidence to suggest that for Paul there was any other way into the Christian community than baptism. His polemic against the Judaisers in his letter to the Galatians is not based on their refusal to practise water baptism; nor does he hold that the rite of initiation they were advocating was the retention of circumcision. It is noteworthy, nevertheless, that the first descriptions of baptism recorded in Acts after chapter 2 come from the Hellenistic tradition. This in itself is not a sufficient base for arguing the case that baptism comes from the Hellenistic milieu. Luke seems to record only the unusual and to leave the reader to believe that the norm already laid down (e.g. Ac. 2:38) continued to be generally practised.

Marshall<sup>40</sup> states rightly that there is no exclusivity suggested by the contrast between the baptism of John and that of Jesus. They are complementary. "It is probable that the saying means "John baptised (merely) with water, but you shall be baptised (not only with water but also) with the Holy Spirit"."

The record of Acts certainly is not consistent. Flemington<sup>41</sup> has identified three different practices in Acts.

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<sup>40</sup> Marshall I.H., 1980, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press p.197 cf. also Marshall I.H., 1978, *The Gospel of Luke*, Exeter, The Paternoster Press p. 145.

<sup>41</sup> Flemington W.F., 1964, *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism*, London, S.P.C.K. pp.38-51. Cf. Foakes Jackson F.J. and Lake K., 1939, *The Beginnings of Christianity* Vol 1, London Macmillan pp. 337-338.

- \* The first of these contrasts water baptism with baptism in the Holy Spirit. Here the Spirit is conferred without any reference to a rite.
- \* The second asserts as the first does that John's baptism does not confer the gift of the Holy Spirit. There are three requirements of those to whom the Spirit is given.
  - i) They are baptised in water.
  - ii) They are baptised eis to onoma tou kyriou Iesou.
  - iii) They have hands laid upon them by the apostles.
- \* Baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus is not sufficient to confer the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is given only after the apostles come from Jerusalem and lay their hands upon those who have been baptised with prayer.

## 2.2 Baptism in the Holy Spirit contrasted with water baptism.

The first of these practices mentioned by Flemington is described in Acts 2:1-4;<sup>42</sup> and in Acts 11:15-17. In Acts 2 the focus of the narrative is the experience of the coming of the Spirit rather than a rite of immersion in water. As early as Tertullian it is clear that the argument as to whether the apostles had been baptised in water or not had continued for some time<sup>43</sup>. J. Weiss says categorically that no evidence exists that the hundred and

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<sup>42</sup> The reason for referring to Acts 2 as a "baptism" is found in Acts 1.4ff.

<sup>43</sup> De Baptismo xii. He takes issue with various ingenious suggestions that were current in his own day e.g. the fact that waves engulfed the boat on the Sea of Galilee during a storm (Mk. 4.37) constituted a baptism, or Peter was sufficiently immersed when

twenty were baptised<sup>44</sup>. Flemington has assumed that they had experienced the rite of baptism in the Jordan as disciples of John before they were called by Jesus. Hence there would be no need to repeat that rite and the gift of the Spirit is given to them at Pentecost as a mark of the new age inaugurated by Jesus. This was the completion of their baptism<sup>45</sup>.

The reason for this argument is the placing so soon afterwards (in Ac. 2:38) of Peter's instructions to his hearers that they should be baptised "en toi onomati Iesou Christou". Here is the rite of water baptism in the name of Jesus. As in the baptism of Jesus the intervention of God becomes apparent after the rite when believers receive the Holy Spirit. In the words spoken by the risen Christ at the beginning of the book (Ac. 1:4f.) the baptism of John is spoken of together with the promise of baptism with the Holy Spirit. The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost does not preclude the rite of John being adapted for the first believers and the closest association being maintained by the earliest

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he was trying to walk on the water (Matt.14.30). He says that the intimacy of the apostles with Jesus following their call was a "compendium baptismi".

<sup>44</sup> Weiss J., 1917, *Das Urchristentum*, (reprinted, edited, and translated by Cross F.L., 1957, *Earliest Christianity: a History of the Period A.D. 30-150*, New York, Harper and Bros., Vol. 1, p.50-51.

<sup>45</sup> Flemington W., 1964, *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism*, London, S.P.C.K. p. 46. This argument is weakened by the fact that other followers of John had to be baptised in water first, in the name of the Lord Jesus before they received the Holy Spirit (Ac. 19.1-7). This is the only record in Acts of a "second baptism" and for this no satisfactory reason has been found. It is possible that with the development of Christian self-consciousness clearer instructions about baptism were formulated which included water baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus to ensure the validity of the rite. Those who had not been baptised according to this formula had to undergo the ceremony again.

Christians between water baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 11:15-17 Peter gives an account of the baptism of Cornelius and there is no reference at all to Cornelius or his household being baptised in water. In fact the reference (Ac.11:16) to Jesus's promise (Ac.1:5) seems to contrast baptism by the Holy Spirit with John's baptism. The implication might well be that Cornelius was deliberately not baptised with water. There was no further need for water baptism, since God would confer the gift of the Spirit on believers, and so they would experience the true baptism. That leaves us with the difficulty that in Acts 10:47-48 the rite of water baptism is mentioned. It has been argued that this reference is due to the redactor<sup>46</sup>, and the fact that Peter's account must be taken as the more trustworthy. As will become clear in our review of the evidence in Acts Luke is not bound in every new advance of the work to record the detail of initiation into the faith.

It is simplistic to try to discover a pattern even in the two episodes under consideration. The stress placed on Pentecost, both in the preparation and in the actual events of the day must indicate that Luke thought of this baptism as a unique event. The passive in Acts 1:5 is often a circumlocution for God's intervention so that he saw this event as from God. Without this there would be no new age, nor sign of its dawning in the activity of the Holy Spirit. In the light of this the consideration about whether the apostles had been

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<sup>46</sup> Foakes Jackson F.J. and Lake K., 1939, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, Volume 1, London, Macmillan, p. 340.

baptised by John is unfruitful. It would also seem an exaggeration to ascribe to the redactor the writing in of water baptism in Acts 10:47-48. If Luke had changed his sources in one place, it is incredible that he did not do it in the other to prevent problems arising in his own community. It must, however, be emphasised that in both these passages the link between baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit is extremely strong.

### 2.3 The baptism of the Ephesian twelve.

An example of the second type of baptism identified by Fleminton is to be found in Acts 19:1-7. The account begins with the puzzling position of Apollos. Not only does he have gifts which are associated with the presence of the Spirit, but he is described as zeon toi pneumati elalei kai edidasken akribos ta peri tou Iesou<sup>47</sup>, in spite of the fact that he knew only of the baptism of John. We learn of the teaching of Aquilla and Priscilla but of no baptism or laying on of hands. Lüdemann gets round this difficulty as follows: "By telling the stories in parallel Luke is saying indirectly that Apollos, too, only received the Holy Spirit by being instructed. In this way Luke endorses the view described in the previous pericope that non-Pauline forms of Christianity first need to be sanctioned by Jerusalem\Paul (cf. already 8:14f.)"<sup>48</sup>. But this does not really overcome the problems. Is Luke maintaining that Apollos possessed the Spirit although he had not received

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<sup>47</sup> Acts 18.25. Perhaps we have an attempt by various ancient copyists to put the record right by adding to Iesou either Christou or Kyriou so that a baptismal form of words could be found in his teaching.

<sup>48</sup> Lüdemann G., 1989, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts* - a commentary, London SCM p.211.

Christian baptism, or can it be argued that instruction followed Christian baptism and so must be assumed? Is he comparable with Simeon (Lk.2:25-35) to whom the Lord has given a special revelation and promise from which he is able to witness to the nature of Jesus and His mission to the Gentiles? And why is it that the twelve men of Ephesus who also know only the baptism of John are said to have been baptised eis to onoma tou Kyriou Iesou, and then when hands are laid upon them they receive the Spirit, and Apollos does not?

Käsemann's<sup>49</sup> attempt to deal with the problem must now be considered. He argues that in the face of the heretics of his day Luke could not accept freelance missionaries like Apollos who would operate independently of mainstream Christianity. So he shows how Apollos had to be properly instructed in order to be effective in his confrontation with the synagogue Jews. He did not dare report the baptism of one who was known to be possessed by the Spirit and gifted for missionary service. According to Käsemann, he fabricated the detail that Apollos merely received the baptism of John, and by linking the story with that of the twelve men at Ephesus he attempted to make Apollos "guilty by association".

There must surely be strong objections to these arguments. Apollos is a native of Alexandria. It is well known that much early Christianity in that city had a heretical

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<sup>49</sup> Käsemann E., 1964, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, London, SCM, pp. 136-148.

character<sup>50</sup>. It would therefore be important that his entry in the Christian community be known to be orthodox so that a clear movement away from any defective understandings was apparent. Secondly, although Luke was aware that John had mathetai (Lk.5:33:7:18), Luke uses mathetai most frequently of Christian disciples<sup>51</sup>. Thirdly, Luke knew that in exceptional circumstances people received the Spirit before they were baptised<sup>52</sup>. Apollos clearly was different from the Ephesian twelve. In his missionary activities he revealed the presence of the Spirit, whereas they knew nothing of the Spirit's existence. It is not clear, nevertheless, why Luke did not state the fact that Apollos received the gift in a special outpouring from God himself. The repetition of Jesus's promise must mean that the twelve disciples were not yet fully empowered for work and witness in the church, and that here an example is being set to others who may not have been fully initiated in the way of Christ.

One wonders whether all that Luke is saying is that there are three different groups of

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<sup>50</sup> Bigg C., 1913, *The Christian Platonist of Alexandria*, London, O.U.P., pp.49-53 argues for the dependence of Alexandrian Christianity upon Philo. Two remarks are significant in relation to this passage. "The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which has no place in his (Philo's) system, remained for a long time meagre, inarticulate, uncertain...(p.52), and, "Forgiveness has no real place" (p. 52).

<sup>51</sup> The fact, however, that these disciples of John became Christians would allow Luke to give a generous allocation of status. For this reason too close a definition of the term is impossible. If someone ultimately becomes a mathetes Christou, it will never be easy to identify when one crossed the threshold of orthodox belief. Nevertheless, in view of his own clear understanding of the difference between the baptism of John and Christian baptism, it is unlikely that Luke would consider those who knew only the baptism of John as full members of the church.

<sup>52</sup> Ac. 10:44-48 and perhaps also Paul in Ac. 9:17.

people in the Christian community he knew. The first is the Jew who finds the fulfilment of his faith in accepting Jesus as the Messiah. The second is the unbelieving gentile who miraculously finds his faith rewarded and is accepted into the fellowship of the church of Christ. The third is the seeker who needs to be instructed "akribesteron" by the accredited representative of orthodox faith. Many may appear to be believers, but the essential question will test them "Ei pneuma hagion elabete pisteusantes" (Ac.19:2). The ascended Christ alone conferred that gift.

It is unlikely that there was only one ritual washing which could claim to be the baptism, or that Christianity alone practised it. Hebrews 6:2 shows that the word is used in the plural. So in recounting the entry of the Ephesians into the church all the elements of baptism are mentioned - water with its association with repentance, calling on the name of the Lord Jesus, and the reception of the Holy Spirit.

The Ephesians' response is recognised in their "hearing" and so they are baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul further lays his hands upon them and they receive the Holy Spirit and share in the experience of the first Pentecost. "The laying on of hands should be understood as a special act of fellowship, incorporating the people concerned into the fellowship of the church. This was necessary in the case of the Samaritan converts in Chapter 8 to make it quite clear that they were fully accepted into the Jewish church centred on Jerusalem; and it was necessary in the present instance to make it clear to these members of a semi-Christian group that they were now becoming part of

the universal church<sup>53</sup>.

#### 2.4 The baptism of the Samaritans.

So we come to the third difficult area referred to by Flemington - Acts 8:1-17 - where the Spirit comes upon the community at Samaria after they had been baptised. Their baptism followed Philip's proclamation "peri tes basileias tou Theou kai tou onomatos tou Iesou Christou" (Ac. 8:12). Here we are told that the Spirit is given by the laying on of hands and the point is further stressed when the magician Simon in seeking to understand the source of the apostles' power "idon... hoti dia tes epitheseos ton cheiron ton apostolon didotai to Pneuma to Hagion" (Ac. 8:18).

The background of these events may make them special. The persecution which resulted from the death of Stephen has scattered the church and so a new phase of the church's mission begins. The Jewish leaders have rejected the word of God. Believers are driven from Jerusalem. They must now proclaim the good news in Samaria and Judaea. A new situation arises when the gospel is to be proclaimed to new groups. Conzelmann<sup>54</sup> has argued that in this context Luke's narrative is composed in such a way as to answer the question, "What legitimates a new Christian community?" Although Luke speaks of baptism as taking place at the beginning of the life of the new community and links it intimately with the outpouring of the Spirit, it is more important to note the orderly

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<sup>53</sup> Hanson R.P.C., 1967, *The Acts*, Oxford, Clarendon Press p. 190f.

<sup>54</sup> Conzelmann H, 1987, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press p. 64.

advance of Christian witness and the fact that any new community must be sanctioned by the Jerusalem church. This is done by the apostles coming down from Jerusalem to lay their hands on the Samaritans so that they receive the Holy Spirit. Luke wants to stress that this is the important gift. He does this by having Simon come to the apostles, not Philip, who has so obviously exhibited God's power, and asking not to be able to heal or exorcise but Dote kamoi ten exousian tauten ina hoi ean epitho tas cheiras lambanei pneuma hagion (Ac.8:19).

Two things are to be added. The first is that in some way the power of the Spirit was so apparent that Simon Magus could ask to have access to such power. Is this, perhaps, what Luke has in mind when he refers to the Spirit given at the baptism of Jesus as somatikoi? Secondly the ecstatic phenomena which accompany the other special cases (Cornelius and the Ephesian twelve) we have been considering are absent. There is no glossolalia to attest to the Spirit's presence, and Luke remains silent about the great miracles which overwhelmed Simon. Haenchen concludes this section of his commentary: "It is not the healings and exorcisms which are the supreme endowment constituting the Church superior to the pagan religions. No: its highest gift consists in its power to confer, to mediate God's Holy Spirit. But since the Spirit has to be represented as a demonstrable phenomenon (Simon must see it if he is to covet it), it can only take the form of the ecstatic Spirit - not the Spirit of agape of which 1 Cor.13 speaks"<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Haenchen E., 1971, Acts of the Apostles, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, p. 308.

In Acts 8:1-17 and Acts 10:1-11:18 Luke is concerned to show how the proclamation of the good news breaks down barriers of hostility which have hitherto divided people, and possibly also brings those on the fringes of faith into the centre. The Samaritans were hated by the Jews and regarded as heretics. Cornelius was a Roman who would remain outside the Jewish community until he accepted circumcision even though he was also phoboumenos tou Theou (Ac.10:2) which would give him access to the synagogue. The task of bringing the first Roman into the Christian community is given to Peter. Yet unlike the episode in Samaria Peter has no part in conferring the Spirit. It is as if the Spirit breaks in according to His sovereign purpose and overwhelms those who hear the proclamation.

In Acts 10 Peter is given a puzzling vision. At the same time God has appeared to Cornelius. "Hai proseuxai sou kai eleemosunai sou anebesan eis mnemousynon emprosthen tou Theou" (Ac.10:4). Mention of the fact that this vision co-incides with the hour of prayer reminds the reader of the earlier episode in which Peter was involved (Ac.3:1-10). Deeds, though mentioned twice and consequently highly valued, will not bring the desired wholeness. It is the proclamation of the name of Jesus - outos esti panton Kyrion (Ac.10:36) - that completes his incorporation into the scheme of salvation, and not his only, but pantas tous akouontas ton logon (Ac.10:44). As in the incorporation of the Samaritans and the Ephesian twelve, the conferring of the Spirit is the climax of the story of Cornelius. It opens the way to introduce into the Christian community a Gentile, which would be unthinkable to a Jew faithful to the Torah. Once God has indicated His will, then

the apostle responds, giving instruction that he is to be initiated into the community by baptism.

It is worth noting that this story is considered so important for Luke that, like the conversion of Paul, the original event is recorded in some detail, and then it is used on two other occasions (Ac.11:5-17; 15:7-12). At the Council of Jerusalem James concludes the debate about Gentile participation in the life of the church and adherence to the Mosaic practice as follows: "Symeon exegesato kathos proton ho Theos epeskepsato labein ex ethnon laon toi onomati autou" (Ac.15:14)<sup>56</sup>.

Though the account of the conversion of Cornelius reaches its climax with the conferring of the Spirit, it does not end at that point. What the social implications are of God's intervention must also be brought out. The vision of Peter in the first instance related to eating (Ac.10:13). The story is repeated because of a Jewish accusation: "pros andras akrobystian echontas eiselthes, kai synephages autois" (Ac.11:3). Tension, therefore, arises not because of the baptism but because Peter saw no reason to refuse Cornelius's invitation - "tote erotesan auton epimeinai hemeras tinas" (Ac.10:48). "It shows in fact that Peter has entered upon a relationship with Cornelius which is so real as to entail sharing a common table with him"<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> This passage would lend support to the name Kyros Iesous being spoken not only by the person who is being baptised, but also by the one who is baptising so that the one baptised receives or bears the name.

<sup>57</sup> Dibelius M., 1956, Studies in the Acts of the Apostles, London, SCM, p.114.

There is nothing in these accounts that denies the basic structure of the rite of baptism as given in Acts 2:38 - namely repentance, baptism into the name of Jesus Christ and the reception of the Spirit. Events such as we have considered were in any case exceptional and it is important to see that missionary activity does not follow some blueprint devised by the apostolic band, but follows the breaking in of God in situations where it is not expected. Thus the rite of initiation possesses no magic to evince a response. It is not its orthodoxy that is important, but the presence of God. The one constant is that the Jerusalem church is a point of reference both to test the faithfulness of the apostles and to provide a secure salvation for the members of the church.

The one element of baptism which has very little place in these accounts is metanoia. Cullmann has sought evidence to deny such a proposition<sup>58</sup>. He notes that the word koluo occurs in five different baptismal references, two of which are different accounts of the baptism of Cornelius and his household (Ac.10:47 and 11:17)<sup>59</sup>. He believes that the question in the form it is found in Acts 8:36 ti koluei me baptisthenai is an ancient part of the liturgical service of baptism. Because Peter (Ac.2:38) had stipulated two requirements for baptism - repentance and faith - this question examined whether or not the candidate had fulfilled these conditions<sup>60</sup>. So, having stated all the requirements at

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<sup>58</sup> Cullmann O., 1950, *Baptism in the New Testament*, London, SCM, pp.71-76.

<sup>59</sup> The others are Ac. 8:36, Matt. 3:13, and the Gospel of the Ebionites (Epiphanius 30:13).

<sup>60</sup> When the early church established a more formal catechumenate the church took seriously the need to separate the upright candidates whose motives for baptism were pure from those who intended to pursue a lifestyle which was incompatible with accepted

the beginning of his narrative, all that was needed when baptism formed part of the narrative was an echo of the liturgical service to remind the reader that metanoia continued to be demanded. The weakness of such a proposition is that the word is not used uniformly. If it was consistently in the form "ti koluo me baptisthenai" (Ac.8:36) confession of sin might be implied. In the account of Cornelius the question is, "Meti to hydor dunatai kolusai tis tou me baptisthenai toutous...." (Ac.10:47). Here the natural interpretation is that God the Holy Spirit is compelling him to baptise Cornelius. On the other hand the inquiry may have been understood from the first to involve a responsibility for both the parties in baptism - the candidate who was to search his heart to confirm his metanoia and the congregation and officiant who guided by the wisdom of God would need to be satisfied of the rightness of their action.

## 2.5 The baptism of individuals.

In Acts there is a record of only two people being baptised individually. The more usual description is the baptism of a group. Acts 2 describes a large group responding to the proclamation of Peter and being baptised together. Next as the church ventures into new areas, a group of Samaritans responds to the preaching of Philip and everyone is baptised together. Then in the latter part of Acts 8 and in Acts 9 the focus shifts to two individuals - the Ethiopian official and Paul of Tarsus. Why Luke should record such baptisms when his tradition seems to emphasise the importance of community needs to be investigated.

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Christian norms (Tertullian, De Baptismo, 18).

## 2.5.1 The Ethiopian official.

In the first baptism of an individual, Philip, under the command of the Lord, encounters an Ethiopian. He is reading from Isa. 53:7f., and the way is opened for Philip to proclaim Jesus as the One foretold by the prophet. Accepting the message, the Ethiopian takes the initiative and asks to be baptised. Philip responds to the request at once.

### 2.5.1.1 The focus of the baptism.

As this account appears after the successful Samaritan mission, what the reader is to understand is that in this episode there is a further advance eos eschatou tes ges (Acts 1.8). We must then ask what the identity of the Ethiopian is (or was). The most obvious advance after the conversion of the Samaritans and before the conversion of a Gentile would be among the ranks of the proselytes. Conzelmann's favours the view that the Ethiopian was a proselyte<sup>61</sup>. "Apparently he (Luke) did not venture to describe him (the Ethiopian) as a proselyte because of what he found in his sources; he could not let him appear as a Gentile, because the Gentile mission really begins in chapter 10." Proselytes were among the crowds in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Ac. 2:10) and one of the seven deacons, Nicolaus of Damascus, is a proselyte (Ac. 6:5). Yet no proselyte conversion has been recorded, and Conzelmann regards it as fitting for him to do so at this point<sup>62</sup>. A major obstacle posed to this argument is whether or not a eunuch would

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<sup>61</sup> Conzelmann H., 1987, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press p.68.

<sup>62</sup> The next to be converted will be a God-fearer - Cornelius- and only then will there be a response to the gospel from Gentiles who have no connection with Judaism.

be acceptable to the Jews as a proselyte (cf. Deut. 23.1). The discussion will then be whether a eunuch is always castrated. There is clear evidence that this was not always so<sup>63</sup>.

Lüdemann<sup>64</sup> sees this narrative as the fulfilment of Isa. 56:3b-5. This passage which promises a better deal for eunuchs also focuses attention on the temple. "These I shall bring to my holy hill and give them joy in my house of prayer" (Isa. 56:7). Since both Samaritans and proper eunuchs were excluded from the temple this would create a link with the previous episode. While this is an important detail, it offers no criterion for the advancement of the Gospel<sup>65</sup>. Eunuchs were not likely to form a recognisable or sizable minority outside Judaism which merit special attention. At best Isaiah 56:3-8 may have suggested the ordering of material - the eunuch first, then the Gentile.

We are left to consider whether the eunuch was a Gentile or not. The problem which arises from accepting that the Ethiopian is a Gentile is that it gives to Philip rather than

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. Foakes Jackson F.J. and Lake K., 1939, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, London, Macmillan, Vol.4, p. 96.

<sup>64</sup> Lüdemann G., 1987, *Early Christianity according to the traditions in Acts*, London, SCM, p. 105.

<sup>65</sup> Hengel M., 1979, *Acts and the History of the Earliest Christianity*, London, SCM, p. 79, adopts the same position as Lüdemann in a different form. "The eunuch could not become a complete proselyte because of his physical defect (Deut.23.2). Legal barriers of this kind no longer existed for the Hellenists."

to Peter the first conversion of a Gentile<sup>66</sup>.

Bauernfeind<sup>67</sup> argues convincingly that Acts 8:26-40 comes from Hellenistic Christian circles, where it was particularly handed down as the first conversion of a Gentile. It survives as a Hellenistic parallel to the first account of the conversion of a Gentile by Peter. This would indicate that in Hellenistic circles evangelism was the primary concern, and that the Hellenist deacons joined the Twelve not in providing some sort of social service to Greek speaking Jews, but in this more fundamental work<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup> The problem is perhaps less acute if we accept that for Luke there were Gentiles and Romans, the latter being much more important.

<sup>67</sup> Bauernfeind O., 1939, *Die Apostelgeschichte. Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament*, Leipzig, Vol.3, pp.149-151, quoted in Haenchen E., 1971, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, pp.313-314.

We may add to this the fact that the introduction of a synagogue for Hellenists in and around Jerusalem was advocated by the Pharisees. This party was not only enthusiastic about the worship of the Jewish community, but also taught thoroughly the commandments, and practised ritual cleansing. Hengel M., 1979, *Acts and the History of the Earliest Christianity*, London, SCM, p. 71-80, has argued for the re-evaluation of the Jewish law and institutions in the light of the pouring out of the Spirit. "Through it (the Spirit) the message and action of Jesus were now present as the work of the risen Lord. That meant that the traditional Jewish "saving event" of the Exodus and the revelation on Sinai were basically devalued in the light of the time of salvation which had now dawned with Jesus. In Jesus there was the expression of something more not only than Solomon and Jonah, but of Moses. The law of Moses and its interpretation by the prophets extends only as far as John the Baptist (Lk. 16:16). Then began a new stage which Jesus himself introduced...." Hence there was a breakaway from the normal Jewish understanding of piety based on Torah, the temple, and the practice of good works. Now there was a new wisdom and power, and also a new and wider understanding of the community. In the light of the eschatological expectations about the Gentiles finding salvation together with the Jews there may well have been a movement away from religious exclusivism. It was this which above all aroused the bitter antagonism of orthodox Jews. Paul himself rebukes the Jews in Pisidian Antioch with the reminder that they have no monopoly on

As we have seen the first attempts to carry the gospel outside Judaism were made by the Hellenists. Philip comes to prominence after the death of Stephen, and he is seen to be acting in conformity with the authorities in Jerusalem. Peter and John approve of the work and their presence in the Samaritan mission seals the correctness of outward movement when in response to their prayers the Spirit comes upon the community. Philip's ministry once tested is now free to develop. There is nothing strange about the fact that he should baptise a Gentile and in this way further the scope of the gospel.

#### 2.5.1.2 The use of baptizo.

Acts 8:38 records the only occasion in Acts that an active verb is used of baptism and in which there is no doubt about God's agent - kai ebaptisen auton. Luke is at pains to avoid any suggestion that God is not in control of redemptive history<sup>69</sup>. Everything that happens in the ministry of Jesus and in the life of the early church is governed by God. So baptism is seen as an act in which the earthly participant is incapable of achieving salvation. It is God who continues to offer salvation in the name of Jesus Christ and He confirms His gift by pouring out the Holy Spirit on the baptised. What is unusual in this

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God: "outos gar entetaletai hemin o kyrios, Tetheika se eis phos ethnon tou einai se eis soterian eos esxatou tes ges" (Ac. 13:47). This may reflect the understanding of the Hellenist community (cf. also Lk. 2:32; 3:8).

<sup>69</sup> It is not our purpose to consider sayings concerning God and His rule in general, for they are part of the normal belief of the Church. We shall turn rather to the related ideas which are elaborated in the context of redemptive history, ideas concerning God's plan, will and providence. See further Conzelmann H., 1960, *The Theology of Luke*, London, Faber and Faber p. 149.

account is that both the baptizer and the baptized go down into the water. An explanation for this is that in a source which stressed evangelism, the evangelist (cf. Ac.21:8) is worthy of mention. His task includes baptism. The second is that this is an expression of koinonia in that Philip enters the water with him.

### 2.5.1.3 The absence of the Spirit.

Another striking feature of the baptism of the Ethiopian is that there is no reference to the Spirit being given to the Ethiopian (Ac.8:38). Two explanations are offered. The first is Luke's refusal to accord to the Hellenist evangelist the freedom to confer the Spirit. As in the account of the beginning of the Samaritan church this power is given to the apostles only who are sent (apestalken) by the church in Jerusalem<sup>70</sup>. The argument seems unsatisfactory from the point of view that the narrative requires a genuine advance of the gospel. The reader is surely not to be left wondering whether the man was fortunate enough to meet a genuine apostle and so receive the gift of the Spirit. Luke would scarcely have advocated the idea of a half-converted man let loose on his countryfolk. Added to this is the fact that in the following account (Acts 9.10-19) the otherwise unknown Ananias is God's agent in equipping Paul for the mission to the Gentiles - o kyrios apestalken me...opos anablepseis kai plestheis pneumatos agiou<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. G.W.H. Lampe, 1962, Acts, in Peake's Commentary on the Bible, ed. by M. Black and H.H. Rowley, London, Nelson, para. 782d.

<sup>71</sup> Ac. 9:17. Paul's whole ministry is encapsulated in the events at Damascus even if he later journeys to Jerusalem to submit to the authority of the apostles.

There are no reservations about his ability to confer the Spirit<sup>72</sup>. So the reception of the Spirit must be taken as read and the inclusion of the word chairon (Ac.8:38) would give some support to this<sup>73</sup>. This would bring the account of the baptism of the Ethiopian in line with other baptism stories in Luke's works. As an individual baptism it does not differ essentially from the description of the baptism of a group in Acts 2.

### 2.5.2 Saul\Paul.

Another example of the baptism of an individual is found in the description of the conversion and baptism of Saul. So important does Luke regard this event that, like the conversion of Cornelius, it is recorded three times (9:1-19a, 22:3-16, and 26:4-18). He meets the risen Christ in a blinding blaze of light. Christ confronts him with his sin in speaking to him (Ac. 9:3-7). He is then led into Damascus where he fasts for three days (Ac. 9:9) - probably understood as an act of penance. Finally Ananias is given an orama in which Christ speaks to him about His purpose and gives him detailed instructions - the burden of this is to turn upside down all Ananias's preconceived ideas about Saul.

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<sup>72</sup> The Western Text reading - Ac 8:39 - includes the coming of the Spirit upon Luke. An idea which seems to originate with Rackham R.B., 1902, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Westminster, Philadelphia p. 123: "We can imagine that Luke, when revising his work, in his effort after conciseness, drew his pen through it", has recently been closely argued and extended by M.-E. Boismard (in *New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. E.J. Epp and G.D. Fee, 1981, Oxford, Clarendon Press. His article is entitled, *The Text of Acts: A Problem of Literary Criticism.*) to state a more definite position that Luke was the author of both the standard and western texts.

<sup>73</sup> *Idem* para. 782m: "The frequent association of joy with the Spirit may imply...that the eunuch departed possessed by the Spirit."

It is interesting to note that the baptism of Paul is explicitly mentioned in Acts 9.18, in contrast to the apostles who are never reported to have been baptised. An analysis of the events accompanying this baptism will reveal the consistent picture of Luke's understanding of baptism. Paul is baptised at the beginning of his missionary work; he is given the Spirit and baptism represents a concrete new lifestyle (he eats after being baptised and becomes stronger (Ac. 9.19). Some other elements of his baptism need also to be investigated.

#### 2.5.2.1 The Name of the Lord Jesus.

In the vision on the road Saul is introduced to Jesus. In ignorance he calls him Kyrie (Ac.9:5), and discovers His name is Jesus. Then Ananias enters the room with the words: "Saoul adelphe, ho Kyrios apostalke me, Iesous ho ophtheis soi en tei hodoi erchou" (Ac.9:17). This repetition could scarcely be accidental in the lead up to baptism. It is significant also for our understanding of the relationship of the baptised to the risen Christ which Lüdemann<sup>74</sup> has rightly discerned: "As to the content, the stress on the name of Jesus seems to point to the redaction. As many instances show, according to Acts, 'the whole realisation of faith is linked with the concept of the name' (Conzelmann, 1960, p. 178 n.1)<sup>75</sup> and the effect of the name may be described as 'the specifically Lucan way of depicting the presence of Christ' (Conzelmann, 1960, p.178)." Christ is present,

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<sup>74</sup> Lüdemann G., 1987, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts*, London, SCM, p.112.

<sup>75</sup> Lüdemann is here referring to Conzelmann H., 1960, *The Theology of St. Luke*, London, Faber and Faber.

therefore, in the rite of baptism, and those who are baptised are assured of His presence and guidance - "kai lalethesetai soi ho ti se dei poiein" (Ac.9:6).

#### 2.5.2.2 The three day fast.

For three days after the incident on the Damascus road Paul takes neither food nor drink (Ac.9:9)<sup>76</sup> and prays (Ac.9:11 proseuchetai) for three days. The Didache tells us that prayer and fasting became customary for a baptisand - "keleuseis de nesteusai ton baptizomenon pro mias e due" (7:4). This was probably the practice in Luke's own community, and he may be pointing back to Paul who adopted the same practice in preparation for his baptism that Jesus had used when preparing for the beginning of His ministry.

#### 2.5.2.3 The laying on of hands.

The laying on of hands is mentioned twice in the narrative of Paul's conversion (Ac.9:12;17). It is specifically recognised as the medium for healing Paul of his blindness<sup>77</sup>. It is tempting to see in this a reference to something more than physical healing and to argue that it is a form of exorcism<sup>78</sup>. In Acts 13:9-12 Paul confronts

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<sup>76</sup> In the Gospel (Lk. 4:2) Luke seems to avoid the word fasting. He changes Matthew's nesteusas (Matt. 4:2) to ouk ephagen which he uses here also.

<sup>77</sup> cf. Lk. 4:40.

<sup>78</sup> Philo, Concerning the virtues from Philo vii, translated by F.H. Colson, 1939, Loeb Classical Library, London, Wm Heinemann, p. 179. He describes repentance as passing from darkness to light. "So therefore all those who did not at first acknowledge their duty to reverence the Founder and Father of all, yet afterwards embraced the creed of one instead of a multiplicity of sovereigns, must be held to be our dearest friends and closest

Elymas with his wickedness. He is specifically called "huie diabolou, echre pases dikaiosunes" (Ac.13:10). His evil brings judgment. "Kai nun idou, cheir tou Kyriou epi se, kai esei tuphlos, me blepon ton helion" (Ac.13:11). It is also tempting to see a close relationship between the laying on of hands and baptism. In Acts 8:17 and 19:6 the two are closely linked and the laying on of hands follows baptism. Further weight may be given to the concept by Paul's own record of God's commission at his baptism: "anoixai ophthalmous auton (ton ethnon) tou epitrepesai apo skotous eis phos kai tes exousias tou Satana epi ton Theon..." (Ac.26:18).

#### 2.5.2.4 The coming of the Spirit.

In other references linking the laying on of hands with baptism (Ac. 8:17 and 19:6) the laying on of hands is followed by the Spirit coming upon the believers. There is no mention in the text of the Spirit coming upon Paul after his baptism. It is before the baptism that Ananias speaks to him of healing and being filled with the Spirit. Since the healing obviously occurred, the second is assumed and must, therefore, have preceded baptism.

#### 2.5.3 Summary.

What is surprising considering the importance Luke attaches to Paul's mission is that there was no representative of the Jerusalem church at his baptism. Secondly

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kinsmen. They have shown the godliness of heart which above all leads to friendship and affinity, and we rejoice with them. As if, though blind at first, they had recovered their sight and had come from deepest darkness to behold the most radiant light."

geographical advances appear not to be Luke's only concern. These baptisms are mentioned because the ministry of each is vital in the spread of the Gospel. Luke is selective in focusing his attention on Paul, but what is true of him is assumed to be true of the Ethiopian also.

## 2.6 The baptism of a community.

The baptism of only two individuals is mentioned in Acts - the Ethiopian Eunuch and Saul of Tarsus. They were associated with no particular community since their task was to establish communities and then to move on. All other baptisms mentioned are either of households or a group of people already associated with one another. These group-baptisms are held between the baptism of Cornelius and his household (Ac.10:44 and 11:14) and that of the Ephesian twelve (Ac.19:1-7). Between these important events three households are baptised - Lydia (Ac.16:15); the Philippian jailer (Ac.16:33) and Crispus (Ac.18:8). The first household is converted in response to Peter's preaching, all the others stem from Paul's missionary activity, though apparently from some different aspect of the gospel. Lydia already has links with the Jewish faith, since she is described as "sebomene ton Theon" (Ac.16:14). She hears the word, believes and is baptised with her household. She invites Paul to stay in her house as a centre for his work. The Philippian jailer is overwhelmed by the conduct of Paul and Silas, the earthquake which co-incides with their imprisonment and their concern for his welfare. His awe and his question are reminiscent of Pentecost (Ac.2:12 and 37), as are the instructions of Paul (Ac.16:31 cf. 2:38). The fact that he has no ties with the Jewish faith is recorded - "pepisteukos toi

Theoi" (Ac.16:34). In Corinth Paul turns his back on the Jewish community after encountering considerable opposition, and takes up residence in the home of a God-fearer (presumably now Christian) Titius Justus (Ac.18:7). A second household community was established when the president of the synagogue, Crispus, episteue toi Kyrioi syn holoι toi oikoi aulou (Ac.18:8). Of the elements of baptism there is silence about metanoia and receiving the Spirit, especially noteworthy in the Corinthian church whose enthusiasm for charismata Paul tried to bring to order (I Cor.12-14).

This centering of the church on a particular household probably arises from deliberate policy. It was not considered wise to baptise isolated individuals. Already established communities came to faith and were together in their discipleship. This shows, as Meeks rightly observes<sup>79</sup> " social solidarity might be more important in persuading some members to be baptised than would understanding or conviction about specific beliefs." This may again be the reason for spelling out at the beginning of the Acts (Acts 2:42) a clear outline of the common life.

## 2.7 Church growth without specific mention of baptism.

In each phase of the church's expansion it appears that Luke mentions baptism only at the beginning (e.g. Ac.2:41 for Jerusalem, 8:1-17 for Samaria)<sup>80</sup> and then assumes that

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<sup>79</sup> Meeks W.A., 1983, *The First Urban Christians*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press p.77.

<sup>80</sup> If Luke is constrained by the outline of the church's mission in Ac. 1.8, there is no clear development of missionary activity. No churches are established in Judea, and after

words like pisteuo, (apo)dexesthai or prosechein convey the response of the new converts and their acceptance into the Christian community.

Between the baptism of Cornelius and the Council of Jerusalem no baptism is recorded, in spite of new communities coming into existence in Antioch (Ac.11:19-26) and the fact that Barnabas and Saul were set apart (Ac. 13:1-3) for the spread of the gospel in Cyprus, Galatia and Pamphylia. The proconsul of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus, is among those who episteusen ekplessomenos epi tei didachei tou kuriou (Ac.13:12). This must be a form of shorthand. There is no mention of Sergius Paulus receiving instruction. He merely witnessed a miracle. Does this simple sentence mask a development in the Christian mission in which instruction was followed by a declaration of faith in baptism? Or does it denote a group similar to the sebomenoι ton Theou who in spite of their interest in the God of the Christians were not prepared to make the public declaration of faith in Jesus Christ in baptism?

In each of the cities visited by Barnabas and Paul a group of disciples - mathetai - is identified and they are said to have the charis tou Theou, edoxazon ton logon tou kyriou, and eplerounto charas kai Pneumatos Agiou (Ac.13:43,48,52), all of which would be expected to accompany baptism. The section ends with the apostles returning to Pisidian

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the conversion of the Samaritan community, he returns to an area which could loosely be described as Judea for the baptisms of the Ethiopian official and Cornelius. Paul's baptism is recorded in between these. Luke seems simply concerned to record the spread of the gospel.

Antioch to consolidate what they had begun by appointing elders to oversee the work<sup>81</sup>.

After the Council of Jerusalem groups of disciples are identified in Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens without any specific mention of baptism (Ac.17:4,12,34). Following the incorporation of the Baptist sect into the church in Ephesus there are two references to the growth of the church after the overthrow of the sons of Sceva (Ac.19:17-18;20). As in the story about Sergius Paulus the response of the crowd is characterised by pisteuein (19:18) rather than baptizesthai<sup>82</sup>.

What is clear from this cursory glance at the rest of Acts is that although there are echoes of baptism, and even signs of a development in the preparation for baptism, the references to actual baptisms are so few that they are omitted more often than not even in the founding of significant centres of Christian mission.

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<sup>81</sup> This phase may well continue through the Council of Jerusalem, since no new work is mentioned in the areas to which he travelled to take the decision of the apostles. Growth is, however, recorded in Syria and Cilicia and in Derbe, Lystra and Iconium (Ac. 15:41; 16:5).

<sup>82</sup> Meeks W.A., 1983, *The First Urban Christians*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, p. 153, points out the coming of the Spirit at the baptism of Cornelius was marked by glossalalia and megalunonton ton Theon (Ac. 10:46). The same phrase occurs in Ac. 19:18 kai emegaluneto to onoma tou Kyriou Iesou. He takes this to be a kind of acclamation which was shouted by the newly baptised, and was not uncommon in pagan rites, cf. Epictetus Diss. 1.15-21 in which he encourages giving thanks in the form of a "hymn to God" and as an example he gives, "Great is God, that he has provided us these instruments". Aelius Aristides, Sacr. Serm. 2.7,21 and Minucius Felix, Octav. 18.11 provide other examples.

## 2.8 Overview of baptism in Acts.

We now review the matters we have considered. Acts 2 we have argued must be taken as foundational. Just how far this goes is difficult to determine. As we have seen there is some difference over the pouring out of the Spirit. Is Luke saying that for normal Christians the Spirit is given as at Pentecost without any other rite? Certainly there are those who would argue that the apostles had previously been disciples of John the Baptist, but the source for this is the evangelist John<sup>83</sup> and there is no evidence to suggest that Luke was aware of this link. It is further likely that he regarded Pentecost as too important to serve merely the completion of something John the Baptist had begun. He also seems to be at pains not to link the baptism of John with the outpouring of the Spirit in the Gospel.

### 2.8.1 Prayer.

The Spirit's descent in both the baptism of Jesus and at Pentecost is linked to prayer. This seems also to be what is revealed in all the special instances we have referred to. Acts 1:14 tells of the preparation for the day of Pentecost "outoi pantes esan proskarterountes omothumadon te proseuche" and points forward to the great events of that day "esan pantes omou epi to auto". After the baptism of the Samaritans Peter and John travel to Samaria. There they do two things - "hoitines.... proseuxsanto peri auton....tote epetithoun tas cheiras ep'autous" (Ac.8:15;17).

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<sup>83</sup> Jn. 1:35ff.

In the vision given to Ananias he is specifically told that Paul is praying (Acts 9.12). Again he comes to restore his sight and to give him the gift of the Spirit: "o Kupios apostalke me hopos anablepseis kai plestheis Pneumatos Agiou" (Ac.9:17). The evidence suggests that the healing and the pouring out of the Spirit preceded the baptism and as in the case of Cornelius the water baptism is included almost as an afterthought.

The conversion of Cornelius is initiated by the vision that he sees "osei peri hora ennaten tes hemeras" (Ac.10:3), a time of which the reader has already been informed - when Peter and John went to the temple "epi ten horan tes proseuches ten ennaten" (Ac.3:1). When Cornelius begins to tell Peter why he has summoned him we are again reminded that this is the hour of prayer: "Apo tetartes hemeras, mechri tantes tes horas emen ten ennaten proseuchomenos..." (Ac.10:30). Here was a man marked out by his fear of God, his acts of charity and his regular prayers, all of which are indicative of an attitude so dedicated to doing the will of God that it is summed up in his words to Peter: "nun oun pantes hemeis enopion tou Theou paresmen akousai panta ta prostetagmena soi hupo tou Kypiou" (Ac.10:33). Only in the episode of the Ephesians who knew John's baptism is there no specific mention of prayer. Paul does not only proclaim the Lord Jesus, but he disregards their previous baptism. "Ebaptisthesan eis to onoma tou Kyriou Iesou kai epithentos autois tou Paulou tas cheiras elthe to Pneuma to Hagion ep'autous" (Ac.19:5;6). The answer may be found in the laying on of hands which would presuppose prayer (Cf. Ac.13:3). Prayer opens the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The gift of the Spirit is seen as the consequence of prayer not only in baptism. After Peter and John are set free from prison, they join the other disciples in a prayer for boldness to continue their witness "kai deethenton auton esaleuthe ho topos en hoi esan sunegmenoi,kai eplesthesan apantes tou Agiou Pneumatos, kai elaloun ton logon tou Theou meta parresias" (Ac.4:31).

So remarkable is the effect of this prayer and so reminiscent of other occasions when God made himself known<sup>84</sup> that some commentators conclude that this is a variant tradition of the first Pentecost<sup>85</sup>. There is a clear sign that God has heard the prayer and in response gives them a measure of His Spirit so that they can meet the challenge presented<sup>86</sup>. All this evidence must lead to the conclusion that for Luke the gift of the Holy Spirit is not conveyed in the rite of baptism, but in response to the expectant prayers of the disciples and it is given to empower the disciples for a particular ministry<sup>87</sup>.

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<sup>84</sup> Exod. 19:18, Isa. 6:4 are good examples.

<sup>85</sup> Harnack A.,1907, Luke the Physician, London, Williams and Norgate, p.206.

<sup>86</sup> Jesus had also promised that in such circumstances the disciples could be assured of the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Lk. 12:12). The power of the Spirit is demonstrated by Peter confronting opposition both within and without the Christian community as well as performing signs which attest to the power of God in Ac. 5.

<sup>87</sup> Lampe G.W.H., 1967, The Seal of the Spirit, London, S.P.C.K. p. 64, in noting the parallel between Jesus praying before the descent of the Spirit on Him and the disciples praying before the Spirit comes on them says this illustrates Luke's "repeated doctrine that the grand object of prayer is the gift of the Holy Spirit."

### 2.8.2 The baptism of those who meet the risen Christ.

The second thing we would claim for this gift of the Holy Spirit was that it was given without prior water-baptism to those who had seen the risen Jesus. The beginning of Acts and the conversation of the risen Jesus with the disciples is the forerunner to the gift of Pentecost. He prepares the disciples for its coming and the two experiences are held together to suggest the closest possible association between Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Paul meets the risen Christ in the phos ek tou ouranou (Ac.9:3). This Christ comes to Ananias and sends him to Paul.

Cornelius has a vision of one he does not know. The Angel of God comes to him and he asks, "Ti estin, Kyrie?" and is assured: "hai proseuchai sou kai hai eleemosunai sou anebesan eis mnemosunon emprosthen tou Theou" (Ac.10:4). So when Peter proclaims Jesus Christ, he adds, "houtos esti panton Kyrios" (Ac.10:36) to remind Cornelius of his earlier meeting with one whom he called "kyrie". The angel of God is none other than the risen Christ.

### 2.8.3 Baptism as a response to hearing the kerygma.

Where there is no direct meeting with the risen Lord, the pattern seems also to be fixed. In the case of the Samaritan Christians, the Ethiopian Eunuch, Lydia, the Philippian Jailer, Crispus and the Ephesian twelve water baptism follows the reception of the proclamation concerning Jesus. This may owe its origin to the ministry of John the

Baptist. He was sent to prepare for the coming of the Messiah<sup>88</sup>.

The typical response to the spoken words is by no means clear from Luke's own record. We have seen above several instances where it is reported that the gospel message is proclaimed and there is an immediate response. Individuals or groups of people are baptised. Again the standard example is Peter's speech on the day of Pentecost, which leads on to the baptism of 3000 people. There is only one other major speech which has the effect of leading directly to a baptism and that is the speech of Peter to Cornelius (Ac.10:34-43). We are left to assume that Paul's speech in Pisidian Antioch brought many converts into the Christian community, since it was necessary for him to make a later visit to structure the newly established church. (Ac.14:23). In the speech before the Areopagus (Ac.17:22-31) there are no direct references to baptism, though the fact that some people became believers including Dionysius and a woman named Damaris leads us again to surmise that they were baptised. In the synagogue in Rome, after speaking about his imprisonment, Paul "diamarturomenos ten Basileian tou Theou, peithon te autous peri tou Iesou apo te tou nomou Moseos kai ten propheten" (Ac.28:23) and "hoi men epeithonto tois legomenois".

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<sup>88</sup> Lk. 1:76. kai su de, paidion, prophetes hypsistou klethese, proporeusei yar evopion kupiou hetoimasai hodous autou, tou dounai gnosin soterias toi laoi autou en aphesei hamartion auton. In recalling the prophecy of Isaiah (40.3-5) Luke alone among the synoptists records the line kai opsetai pasa sarx to soterion tou Theou(Lk. 3:6).

#### 2.8.4 Repentance and the gift of the Spirit.

The second observation that should be made about the group who encounter the risen Christ is that a period of waiting before the giving of the Spirit is always mentioned. The closest companions of Jesus wait in Jerusalem for ten days. Paul waits three days and this is said to be a time of fasting, which must be associated with repentance. There are three indications in the conversion of Cornelius of the fact of repentance. The first is that Peter had reached a point in his speech where he declares: "toutoi pantes hoi prophetai marturousin, aphenin amartion dia tou onomatos autou panta ton pisteuonta eis auton" (Ac.10:43). In the two reports of the conversion of Cornelius in Acts 11 and 15 repentance can be inferred. In Acts 11:18 the people give glory to God: "Ara kai tois ethnesin ho Theos ten metanoian eis zoen edoken", and in his address to the Council of Jerusalem Peter speaks of God "tei pistei katharisas tas kardias" (Ac.15:9). And it may be that the restructuring of the 12 at the end of chapter 1 is a recognition of the need to turn to God - Satan had taken possession of Judas (Lk.22:3). In appointing another to take his place the disciples acknowledge their need to turn back to God and their total dependence on him. So meeting with the risen Christ will lead to repentance and prayer which will culminate in the reception of the Holy Spirit.

For those whose contact with Jesus is through the proclamation, and a decision to call upon the name of the Lord, the normal channel of entry into the Christian community is through repentance, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, which will lead to the reception

of the Holy Spirit. Dunn<sup>89</sup> rightly affirms that the justification for the continued practice of water baptism was that it was able to offer what God promised, namely the gift of the Holy Spirit.

#### 2.8.5 Baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Of all the elements of baptism, the most important is the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the gift of the new age dawning in the events of Pentecost. The question, "Ti poiesomen", has not only the negative connotation of escaping "apo tes geneas tes skolias tantes" (Ac.2:40), but also of entering into the realm of the Spirit, and this must make present the eschatological hope<sup>90</sup>. With the Samaritans, and with the disciples of John the Baptist it is the absence of the Spirit which is noteworthy. Without it they would not have an accurate awareness of the presence and power of the risen Christ. Dunn<sup>91</sup> goes so far as to suggest that the presence of the Spirit in the narrative about Apollos and the Ephesian twelve determined the need for baptism. "For the one, Christian baptism was unnecessary, for his possession of the Spirit indicated that he was already a Christian; for the others baptism was necessary, for the absence of the Spirit indicated that they were not Christians".

Thus where there were new directions in the work of God or unusual experiences, the

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<sup>89</sup> Dunn J.D.G., 1970, Baptism in the Holy Spirit, London SCM. p. 62.

<sup>90</sup> The presence of the Spirit is the proof of being in "the last days" but there still lies ahead the consummation of history over which Jesus the Messiah will preside (Ac. 2:17).

<sup>91</sup> Dunn J.D.G., 1970, Baptism in the Holy Spirit, London, SCM, p.92

determining factor does not appear to be the reception into the Christian community through a rite, but the acknowledgement of the presence of God's gift of the Holy Spirit. It is this which determines the man's status - salvation or judgement - in the presence of God. Conversely there is no evidence to suggest that Luke did not believe that all who were baptised received the Spirit. "It is fairly clear, in view of Acts 2.38 and the prophecy of Joel, that St. Luke believes the gift to be conferred on all Christians, and it is probable that he deems it unnecessary to mention in every case of baptism that the baptized person received the Spirit. It could safely be left to the reader to infer so much" <sup>92</sup>.

#### 2.8.6 The achievement of baptism.

Does Luke indicate what is achieved in baptism? It appears that Luke recognises baptism as a public testimony of faith<sup>93</sup> and it appears from Acts 19 that pisteusai and baptisthenai are two ways of describing the act of faith. Bruce says this forcefully in his commentary:<sup>94</sup> "The idea of an unbaptised Christian is simply not entertained in the New Testament."

The use of Christ's name in the rite must furthermore be expressive of a new relationship. The baptised now belongs to Christ in a special sense, and the power at work in Christ is now given to the believer, not only to establish that relationship, but also to offer power

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<sup>92</sup> Lampe G.W.H., 1957, *The Holy Spirit in the writings of St. Luke*, in *Studies in the Gospel*, ed. Nineham D.E., Oxford, Basil Blackwell, p.198.

<sup>93</sup> Acts 2:38; 8:12f.; 8:37f.(D); 16:14f.,31-33; 18:8.

<sup>94</sup> Bruce F.F., 1954, *The Book of Acts*, London, Nelson, p. 77.

for continuing the mission begun by Christ. Like Jesus, Peter, Stephen, Paul and even James all exhibit some aspect of the life of Jesus. Peter heals (Ac.3:1-10), exorcises (Ac.8:18-24), raises the dead (Ac.9:36-42), convicts and wins followers for Christ (Ac.10:1f.). Stephen's wisdom causes a stir (Ac.6:10), Paul matches Peter's achievements (Ac.14:8-11; 16:16-18; 20:7-12; 26:27-29) James the Lord's brother writes with such perspicacity that through his letter to the churches many are strengthened in their faith or come to believe (Ac.15:41: 16:5).

#### 2.8.7 The rite of baptism.

Finally we might notice the different elements of the rite of baptism. These are most fully described in the baptism of Paul. Paul is convicted. He is blinded. He spends some days in prayer and fasting as he awaits the coming of Ananias. Ananias, presumably the leading representative of the local community, welcomes him into fellowship - "Saoul adelphe" - lays his hands upon him in order that he may receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. He is then baptised with water and a fellowship meal follows. We should add to this from other sources in Acts. The baptism itself is "ev toi onomati tou kyriou Iesou" (Ac.2:38: 10:47) or "eis to onoma tou kyriou Iesou" (Ac.8:16: 19:5). The longer expression at the end of the Gospel of Matthew - "eis to onoma tou patros kai tou Iou kai tou hagiou pneumatos" (Matt.28:19) - is repeated nowhere in Acts although it is found in the Didache<sup>95</sup>. Paul speaks, in one account of his conversion, of the instruction of Ananias: "anastas baptisai kai apolousai tas hamartias sou, epikaloumenos

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<sup>95</sup> Didache 7.1.

to onoma autou" (Ac.22:16). This may indicate a calling on the name of Christ by the person who is baptised - for the forgiveness of sins and as an expression of faith in Christ as the source of forgiveness - and a calling on the name of Christ by the baptiser - for salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit. In both Acts 8:17 and Acts 19:6 the laying on of hands is associated with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Other references<sup>96</sup> reserve the laying on of hands for healing or the commissioning of those who have already been baptised for some special form of ministry. It could be claimed that Luke believed it to be part of the rite of baptism, even though he does not mention it on each occasion. Hanson in his commentary maintains that there is no association of the laying on of hands with the gift of the Holy Spirit before 200A.D.<sup>97</sup>. Even then it occurs only sporadically. Hence Marshall prefers to think of the laying on of hands as a special act of fellowship, necessary to overcome the alienation created by being half in and half out of the community of faith - as both the Samaritans and members of the Baptist sect were. This may be so and Paul may qualify for such a designation, since, though he was a Jew, his actions had pushed him beyond the bounds of normal Jewry<sup>98</sup>. The difficulty with this position is its absence in the case of Cornelius, where there is a specific mention of fellowship. In fact Dibelius goes so far as to claim that it is table fellowship that was the

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<sup>96</sup> e.g. Acts 6:6; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6f.

<sup>97</sup> Hanson R.P.C., 1967, *The Acts*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p. 190f.

<sup>98</sup> Marshall I.H. 1980, *Acts*, London, Inter-Varsity Press p. 308.

climax of the whole incident<sup>99</sup>. Whatever the significance of the laying on of hands, it is quite probable that the rite would conclude, as it does in Paul's baptism, with a fellowship meal.

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<sup>99</sup> "We might think the account would have to conclude with the actual baptism by the apostle. Perhaps this expected ending has simply been supplanted by the concluding sentence: 'Then they asked him to stay with them for a few days longer.' For it is possible that this account is not so unimportant in the case of Cornelius as might otherwise appear, and that, to Luke, it expresses more than a description of the actual ceremony of baptism would have done. It shows, in fact, that Peter has entered into a relationship with Cornelius which is so real as to entail sharing a common table with him." Dibelius M., 1956, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, London, SCM. p.114.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### INSIGHTS FROM A GREEK BACKGROUND WHICH SHARE COMMON GROUND WITH JEWISH UNDERSTANDING AND WHICH MAY SHED LIGHT ON LUKE'S UNDERSTANDING OF BAPTISM

It is important to read Luke's two-volume work not only as a description of events which took place at the beginning of Christianity, but to understand it also as a description of events in a form that was accessible to readers from a Hellenistic background. Luke's readers would have been familiar with the ideas and example of moral philosophers. He therefore took care to present his material in a way which reflected the thought world of these moral philosophers<sup>1</sup>.

An investigation of Luke's understanding of baptism would be incomplete without attempting to discover the environment within which the moral philosophers lived and taught. Because this background was known both to Luke and his readers it will shed light on his understanding of baptism.

#### 1. Awareness of Christian practice in the Gentile world.

Epictetus lived from about 50 -120 A.D. and was thus a contemporary of both Plutarch and Tacitus and teaching philosophy at much the same time in which Luke composed his two-volume work<sup>2</sup>. He was born in Phrygia, an area noted for its religious intensity. He

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Malherbe A.J., 1986, "Not in a Corner": Early Christian Apologetic in Acts 26:26, The Second Century 5.

<sup>2</sup> The suggested dates for the composition of Luke-Acts range from soon after 60 A.D., before Paul's supposed trial and martyrdom in Rome to some time in the first half

was a slave in Rome, owned for a time by Epaphroditus the freedman and secretary of Nero. He was exiled to Nicopolis, where according to Titus 3.12 Paul spent a winter, probably in company with other Christians.

In the record of his teaching it is generally believed that there are two references to Christians, whom he called either Jews or Galileans<sup>3</sup>. It is the first of these that is of interest, since it reveals an awareness of baptism.

"For whenever we see a man halting between two faiths, we are in the habit of saying, 'He is not a Jew. He is only acting the part.' But when he adopts the attitude of mind of the man who has been baptised (bebammenou) and has made his choice, then he both is a Jew in fact and is also called one. So we are also counterfeit baptists (parabaplistai), ostensibly Jews, but in reality something else, not in sympathy with our own reason, far from applying the principles which we profess, yet priding ourselves upon them as being men who know them...."

Epictetus gives no explanation of the term. He assumes that the concepts of baptism and pseudo-baptist will be readily intelligible to his hearers. This will indicate that the word had

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of the second century. The early date had been vigorously championed by such different scholars as Harnack A. (1907, *Luke the Physician*, London, Williams and Norgate, Chapter 2) and Robinson J.A.T. (1976, *Redating the New Testament*, London, SCM, p. 86-117), while the later date is advocated by O'Neill J.C. (1961, *The theology of Acts in its Historic setting*, London S.P.C.K. p.1-42). The most commonly accepted view is that the work was written between the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the end of the first century.

<sup>3</sup> Diss. II, 9,19ff. and IV,7,6. The second of these passages is difficult, but appears to refer to the "madness" of Christians who have no fear of earthly loss, either of possessions or of life.

a currency beyond the narrow confines of the Church. Secondly, he is aware of the significance of the rite. It denoted a definite decision which brought to an end "halting between two faiths". It involved putting into practice particular principles of life.

The philosopher uses the term baptism positively and correctly from a Christian point of view. This means that among educated people of whatever religious persuasion there was a trading of terms to illustrate points. This may further be supported by Pliny's use of sacramentum<sup>4</sup>, although he fails to understand the riches of its meaning in the Christian milieu and gives only the Roman meaning.

Would philosophical terms have been foreign to Luke and would he have suppressed them if indeed his purpose was to show that the appeal of the Gospel was universal? Would he not rather have sought to find common ground with a man like Epictetus and others like him to draw them into the faith which had transformed his own lifestyle, and would he not show this by using terms which reflect a sympathy for their pursuit of truth and an invitation to investigate the Christian gospel<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> The Letters of Pliny X.96.7. Adfirmabant autem hanc fuisse summam vel culpae suae vel erroris, quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire carmenque Christo, quasi deo dicere secum invicem seque sacramento non in scelus aliquos obstringere, sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegarent...

<sup>5</sup> This question presupposes Luke's concern for an audience that was not simply Jewish. J. Fitzmyer (Fitzmyer J.A., 1981, 1985, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2 Vols., New York, Doubleday, Vol.1 p.57-59) has conveniently collected the evidence for such a conclusion. He notes that the prologue exhibits "Luke's obvious concern to relate his account of the Christ-event and its sequel to a Greco-Roman literary tradition" (p. 58).

No-one should doubt the seriousness of the philosopher's search for God and there are few who would not find themselves moved and inspired by Epictetus's own description of his discipleship: proskeisomai diakonos kai akolouthos ekeinoi sunormo, sunoregomai<sup>6</sup>. From the Christian perspective we find the spiritual biography of Justin Martyr outlined in the Dialogue with Trypho<sup>7</sup>. To him philosophy was the greatest of possessions and those who studied it were truly holy men. He first became a Stoic, then met a Peripatetic, then a Pythagorean and finally met a simple old Christian man who was responsible for his conversion. "The perception of immaterial things quite overpowered me, and the contemplation of ideas furnished my mind with wings, so that in a little time I supposed that I had become wise; and such was my stupidity, I expected forthwith to look upon God, for this is the end of Plato's philosophy." He became a Christian only after he had run the whole gamut of philosophy. But it was as a philosopher that he became a Christian.

## 2. Some evidence of Luke's attitude to the Gentile world.

On two occasions some indication is given in Acts of Luke's attitude, and probably that of the Christian community from which he came to the Gentile faith. The first is in Athens where Paul takes his hearers from their own belief in an unknown god to proclaim: "ho

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The use of the LXX for most of his quotations from the Old Testament, "his manifest desire to relate the salvation promised to Israel in the Old Testament to Gentiles or non-Jews, and the fact that Luke clearly spoke Greek, all argue for a Gentile community behind the work.

<sup>6</sup> I shall attach myself to Him as a servant and a follower, my choice is one with His, my desire one with His, in a word, my will is one with His will.

<sup>7</sup> Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 2ff.

Theos,ho poiesas ton kosmon kai panta ta en autoi" (Ac.17:24). The second is the assurance given to the rioting citizens of Ephesus put into the mouth of the town clerk:"egagele gar tous andras toutous oute hierosulous oute blasphemountas ten Theon hemon" (Ac. 19:37). No attempt is made to antagonise the Gentile nor to dissuade him from the importance of his search for God nor to dismiss his faith<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> This is of course a complicated matter, and of the simplicity of my argument I am well aware. There were indeed Christians who would give little credibility to philosophers and the process of finding truth. The shrill Tatian, talking as usual at the top of his voice: Be not led away by the solemn assemblies of the philosophers who are no philosophers, who dogmatise one against another, though each one vents the crude fancies of the moment. They have moreover many collisions among themselves;each one hates the other; they indulge in conflicting opinions, and their arrogance makes them eager for the highest places.(To the Greeks 4).

Tertullian's famous passage from De Praescriptione is also worth quoting:

What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians?...Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition ! We want no curious disputation after possessing Jesus Christ, no inquisition after enjoying the gospel! With our faith we desire no further belief (De Praescriptione 7).

But while there were those voices which utterly condemned all that the Gentile had to offer, there were those who believed that much came through the inspiration of God and helped Christians understand more about their faith. Even those who were doubtful about some of the teaching were so steeped in the culture that they could not avoid using examples from a pagan background. A good example of this is from Hippolytus.

The pupils of these men, when they perceive the doctrine of the heretics to be like an ocean when tossed into waves by the violence of the winds, ought to sail past in quest of the tranquil haven. For a sea of this sort is both infested with wild beasts and difficult of navigation, like as we may say, the Sicilian Sea, in which the legend reports were Cyclops, and Charybdis, and Scylla, and the rock of the Sirens. Now poets of the Greeks allege that Ulysses sailed through this channel, skilfully using for his purpose the terribleness of these strange monsters. For the savage cruelty of those to these who were sailing was remarkable. The Sirens, singing sweetly and harmoniously, beguiled the voyagers, luring by their melodious voice those who heard it towards the rocks. So, the story goes,that Ulysses, when he knew that this was so, smeared with wax the ears of his companions, and, lashing himself to the mast, sailed, free of danger, past the Sirens, although he heard their song. And my advice to my reader is to adopt a similar expedient,

If Luke is concerned to express his understanding that the gospel brings salvation to all men then it will be seen in his use of language and the structure of the community he wants to commend. He will want to show the Greek that he is welcome in the church as is the Jew, the God-fearer and the proselyte. In this chapter we shall look at some key words associated with baptism and its consequences in order to test this principle.

3. The significance of akouo, metanoeo and pisteuo and their cognates for Jew and Gentile.

There are three words closely associated with baptism. For the majority those who are baptised, their initial awareness of the promise of God would come through the spoken word. So akouo is the first step towards baptism, and it is seen as such in the way it is used in Acts. It is the common witness that without metanoia there would be no baptism. This showed a change of attitude and lifestyle, particularly in the acceptance of Kyrios Iesous. It was in him they put their trust - and here faith (pistis) was a necessary emphasis. What, then, did these steps mean in a culture divorced from Jewish ethical

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either on account of their infirmity to smear their ears with wax, and sail straight on through the tenets of the heretics, not even listening to teaching that is easily capable of seducing them into pleasure, like the luscious lay of the Sirens, or by binding oneself to the Cross of Christ, and faithfully obeying His word, not to be distracted, inasmuch as he placed his trust in Him to whom long ago he has been firmly knit, and so continue steadfastly in the faith. (Refutation of Heresies 7.1)

Hippolytus sees no incongruity using the familiar Odyssey as a source for an illustration and even in comparing the wood of the cross to the mast of Ulysses' ship.

Harnack has spoken of "the marvellous attempt to present Christianity to the world as the religion which is the true philosophy, and as the philosophy which is true religion." (History of Dogma 2.177 quoted in Barclay W., 1974, Educational Ideals in the Ancient World, Grand Rapids, Baker Books House, p. 75).

monotheism? This is the object of our investigation.

### 3.1 Akouo

Luke describes the response of ordinary faithful Jews from all over the world to the proclamation as akousantes (Ac.2:37). This is a favourite Lucan word (Luke uses it 63 times in his Gospel and 89 times in Acts). It appears in many, though not all, cases to imply a community jargon<sup>9</sup>. In the early part of the book the apostles are attended by hoi akousantes<sup>10</sup>. Speeches in which the message is spelt out begin "akousate (mou)"<sup>11</sup>. The conclusion of a speech is marked by akousantes<sup>12</sup>. The word is often linked with an expression of faith, perhaps most fully in the account of Lydia. After she had heard, hys ho Kyrios dienoixse ten kardian prosechein tois laloumenois hypo tou Paulou. hos de ebaptisthe (Ac.16:14-15). Hearing leads first to faith and then to baptism.

But there is another side to the word which we can see most clearly from the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Ac.5:1-11). "Hearing" can lead either to faith (and so brings the respondent into salvation) or to judgment (by which a person is excluded from the promises of God). In Ac.5:5 Ananias hears Peter's pronouncement and for him it brings

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<sup>9</sup> What I am saying is well illustrated by the jargon of another community. In the Anglican community many of the hymns associated with Advent and Christmas begin with the word 'Hark'.

<sup>10</sup> Ac. 4:24; 5:5,11.

<sup>11</sup> Ac. 7:1; 13:17; 15:14.

<sup>12</sup> Ac. 7:54; 11:18; 17:32; 19:5,28.

judgment - "peson exsepsysxe". For the others present there is a different result: "egeneto phobos megas epi pantas tous akousontas." Here there is a deep awe aroused by God's omniscience and power which leads to a renewed faith.

### 3.1.1 The Jewish background.

There are two Old Testament texts which Luke uses which may help us to approach the community's understanding of the term from a Jewish point of view. Luke twice quotes from a passage in Isaiah<sup>13</sup> in which man's sinfulness is linked to his inability to see and hear<sup>14</sup>. It is also noteworthy that Luke reserves the full quotation for the end of his two-volume work. The scope of the proclamation has been made apparent and those who have heard have been identified. In the end Paul turns his back on the Jews of Rome

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<sup>13</sup> Isa. 6:10.

<sup>14</sup> Lk. 8:9-10 in a reversed order and Ac. 28:26-27 in the correct order. If we compare the parable of the sower in the Synoptic Gospels we see that Mark places his emphasis on the word which is offered rather than on the response. Matthew sees the parable as the fulfilment of Isaiah 6:9-10 and he quotes it in full. Luke makes changes in the parable which indicate his emphases.

1. The word is the Word of God.

2. Luke speaks much of the environment into which the seed is cast as if to stress that the response is all important, and that is always "hearing" (akousantes or akousosin is used of each type of seed (Lk. 8:11-14)). The enemies of an adequate response are:-  
a) Inadequate preparation - repentance - so that the devil is able to remove the seed before it becomes fruitful.

b) A lack of foresight .

c) Relativised discipleship, which fails to separate the demands of the word from other concerns. Hence it is not only "faith" which is spoken about, but also peirasmos, and the practice of hupomene.

3. Fruitful seed produces a hundredfold.

with these words: "gnoston oun esto hymin hoti tois ethnesin apestale touto to soterion tou Theou" (Ac.28:28). Here is a principle for all generations of readers. The obstinacy that marked out the old Israel must be superseded by a constant willingness to hear in the new. Only by seeking to penetrate ever more deeply into the mysteries of the Kingdom of God can men be sure of salvation.

The second text from the Old Testament is Deuteronomy 18:15. "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; it is to him you must listen." Jesus is recognised in His ministry as a prophet (Lk.4:24; 7:16,39; 9:8,19; 13:33; 24:19). Only in Acts is there the further association of Jesus with this eschatological prophet like Moses (Ac.3:22-3; 7:37). Luke prepares his reader for this indirectly in the Transfiguration (Lk.9:28-36). We are given a vision of the glorified Jesus. It is of him that the voice of God speaks, "autou akouete", which echoes "autou akousesthe" of Deut.18:15. Hearing him implies obedience to God which provides the disciple with entry into the new community.

These two Old Testament passages come together in the final episode of the book. The Jews of Rome fulfil the words spoken by Isaiah. Paul turns to the Gentiles with the certainty, "autoi kai akousontai" (Ac.28:28)<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> In the consideration of the prophet of the end times, the description by Jesus of his death, resurrection and exaltation as exodos (Lk. 9:31) may also point forward to a salvation and a new Israel finally achieved when the word is proclaimed by the faithful witness in the capital of the Roman Empire. Here is the ultimate fulfilment of the words of Simeon.

Hearing relates to the acknowledgment of God's activity in Jesus and the introduction of the end times (Ac.2:17). Those times meant the opening of the mission of the church to all who will listen, and respond to the word acclaiming Jesus at their baptism.

### 3.1.2 Gentile background.

It must be clear that if Luke is writing not only to Jews, but to Gentiles, he will make the same attempt for each community to draw from the riches of their tradition in order to unfold the life of the Christian community. An obvious place to look for the Gentile background is in their philosophical schools.

In the school of Pythagoras the oral instruction was called akousma<sup>16</sup>, and akousmatikoi were the probationers of the school<sup>17</sup>. Epictetus from the Stoic school uses akoustikos<sup>18</sup>, and adds an interesting implication. Arrian speaks of his approach to Epictetus. "What did Epictetus observe in me," you will say to yourself, "that, although he saw me in such a condition and coming to him in so disgraceful a state, he should let me

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<sup>16</sup> Iamb. VP 18.82.

<sup>17</sup> Iamb. idem, Gellius 1.9, writes in some detail about the initiation of disciples into the school of Pythagoras. Stage one of the process is an external physical assessment - ephysiognomenoi - and this is followed by acceptance into the community. "When he (Pythagoras) has examined a man and found him suitable, he at once gave orders that he should be admitted to the school and should keep silence for a fixed period of time. This was not the same for all, but differed according to his estimate of the man's capacity for learning quickly. But the one who kept silence listened to what was said by others; he was, however, religiously forbidden to ask questions, if he had not fully understood, or to remark upon what he had heard. Now no one kept silence for less than two years and during the entire period of silent listening they were called "akoustikoi", or auditors."

<sup>18</sup> Epict. Diss. III.1.13.

be so and say never a word to me?" The readiness to listen leads on to a change variously described as tosauten metabolen metabalein and hotan eis sauton etheis.

The second century Latin author Gellius uses the word "auditor" as a translation of akoustes and "audire" with the meaning "to study under a philosopher". For him the word has a sort of anachronistic connotation, in that contemporary pupils are "sectatores" while those who sat at the feet of ancient philosophers are "akoustes"<sup>19</sup>.

Among the moral philosophers the spoken word was highly valued. "It is only the spoken word of the wise and the prudent.....that can prove a competent and perfect guide and helper of a man endowed with a tractable and virtuous nature, and can lead it toward all excellence by fitting encouragement and direction"<sup>20</sup>. The word was further important because it made an impact on the hearer. So Plutarch speaks about the effects of listening. "I think you may not find unwelcome some preliminary remarks about hearing which Theophrastus asserts is the most emotional of all senses. For nothing which can be seen or tasted or touched brings on such distractions, confusions and excitements, as takes possession of the soul when certain crashing, clashing and roaring noises assail the hearing. Yet this sense is more rational than emotional (esti de logikotera mallon e

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<sup>19</sup> Gellius describes public lectures given by sophists as "auditiones". He uses "auditor" only once with reference to a contemporary philosopher (XII 1,1), but more often it is used of pupils of famous philosophers of a bygone age (IV 11,4; V 10,7; VII 10,4 XV 20,4).

<sup>20</sup> Dio Chrysostom, Discourses 1.8., cf. also 18.2-3, 19.3; and Plato Phaed. 275C-277A.

pathetikotera). For while many places and parts of the body make way for vice to enter through them and fasten itself upon the soul, virtue's only hold upon the young is afforded by the ears." And he goes on to give the basis of the authority of the philosopher who by speaking enables the hearer to listen. "You have often heard that to follow God and to obey reason are the same thing"<sup>21</sup>. Dio Chrysostom supplements this understanding by refusing to accord any value to oracles as means of divine communication, but claims that in the speech of the wise God is heard.

"The words and all the sophistries of men are worth nothing compared to the inspiration and speech that comes from the gods. Indeed whatever wise and true words about the gods and the universe there are to be found among men, none have ever lodged in human souls except by the divine will and Fortune through the early prophets and divine men"<sup>22</sup>.

The spoken word, which is so significant in the proclamation and teaching of the first Christians because it is the most common way in which people are brought to repentance

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<sup>21</sup> Both these quotations come from Plutarch, On listening to Lectures, 38A\B. cf. Lucian Heracles 3,5,8; Scythian 11, and Diog. Laert. 7.24.

<sup>22</sup> Dio Chrysostom, Discourses 1.57 cf. also 34.4-5. Epictetus says that this is the ground for attributing value to the words of the philosopher. This must motivate change in the hearer. "Once you have heard these words go away and say to yourself, It was not Epictetus who said these things to me; why, how could they have occurred to him? but it was some kindly god or other speaking through him. For it would not have occurred to Epictetus to say these things, because he is not in the habit of speaking to anyone. Come then, let us obey God, that we may not rest under his wrath." (Diss. III.1.36-37). Plato himself accorded such value to the word of the rhetorician. "Its greatness comes over me as something supernatural" (Plato, Georgias 454 E).

and faith, is also highly prized by the philosophers whose schools flourished in many areas and rivalled the appeal of Christians. Christians would not only use the same terms and experiences, but also attempt to extend what they conceived to be incomplete. Words are of no avail, however, without bringing a change to the hearer<sup>23</sup>.

Here then there is a remarkable agreement. The word is laid before the audience. The word is not simply man's thoughts, but through it God speaks. A response is expected. Where the word is received there is change for the better, leaving behind impurities of the past and discovering all truth of a new lifestyle. Just as the philosophers were critical of

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<sup>23</sup> Another common factor associating the work of the apostle with that of the philosopher may be found in the words which follow akousantes in Ac. 2:37, kategnusan ten kardian. The work of the philosopher is often likened to that of the physician who by his words cures the illnesses of the people that come to him. Cf. Seneca, Epist. 52.9. "Numquid aeger laudat medicum secantem? Tacete, favete et praebete vos curationi."

Epist. 75.6-8 "A sick man does not call in a physician who is eloquent; but if it so happen that the physician who can cure him likewise discourse eloquently about the treatment which is to be followed, the patient will take it in good part. For all that, he will not find any reason to congratulate himself on having discovered a physician who is eloquent. For the case is no different from that of a skilled pilot who is also handsome. Why do you tickle my ears? Why do you entertain me? There is other business at hand; I am to be cauterised, operated upon, or put on a diet. That is why you were summoned to treat me!

You are required to cure a disease which is chronic and serious - one which affects the general weal. You have as serious a business on hand as a physician. Are you concerned about words? Rejoice this instant if you can cope with things. When shall you learn all that there is to learn? When shall you so plant in your mind that which you have learned, that it cannot escape? When shall you put it all into practice? For it is not sufficient merely to commit these things to memory, like other matters; they must be practically tested. He is not happy who only knows them, but he who does them (Non est beatus, qui scit illa, sed qui facit)."

stagnation so Luke perceives the risen Christ continually opening the minds of believers "tou sunievai tas graphas" (Lk.24:45)<sup>24</sup>.

But not all words have the same harmonious coincidence of meaning. If we look for example at two other important words associated with baptism, we see that there was no equivalent outside biblical language to encompass the meaning of each.

### 3.2 Metanoeo\ Metanoia

Another word closely linked by Luke with baptism is metanoia. Here, again, is an investigation of the use of the word and the ideas associated with it by moral philosophers. The aim of the philosopher's discourse is to reveal impurity - "to set it forth in public and cure it" - and to remove it. "Oute gar balaneiou physin ho Atiston oude logou me kathairontos ophelos estin"<sup>25</sup>. But the prime objective of the discourse is to bring about a change in the lifestyle of the hearer. Plutarch speaks about the change wrought by words in a way that brings it very close to a conversion experience. "To hear a reprehension or admonition to reform character, delivered in words that penetrate like a biting drug, and not to be humbled at hearing it, not to run into a sweating and dizziness,

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<sup>24</sup> The word sunieimi is frequently applied to pupils of a philosopher. cf. also Plutarch, On Listening to Lectures 48C. "For the mind does not require filling like a bottle, but rather, like wood, it only requires kindling to create in it an impulse to think independently and an ardent desire for truth."

<sup>25</sup> "For, as Ariston says, neither a bath nor a discourse is of any use unless it removes impurity." Again both quotations are from Plutarch, On Listening to Lectures 42B.

not to burn with shame in the soul, but, on the contrary, to sit unmoved, grinning dissembling in the face of it all, is a notable sign of an illiberal nature in the young, dead to all modesty because of an habitual and continued acquaintance with wrongdoing, with a soul like hard and calloused flesh, upon which no lash can leave a weal"<sup>26</sup>.

There is another dramatic picture of the influence of the philosophical lecture which might well be used to describe the first stage of Christian initiation. "For this reason he who is taken to task must feel and suffer some smart, yet he should not be crushed and dispirited as though at a solemn rite of novitiate which consecrates him to philosophy, he should submit to the initial purification and commotions in the expectation that something delectable and splendid will follow upon his present distress and perturbation"<sup>27</sup>.

It was Nock<sup>28</sup> who explained the Greek idea of metanoia as an intellectual value-judgement. This would imply that it simply means "to take another view", a meaning that we find in Diod. Sic I;67;5 and Xenophon 1;1;3. The word also has an emotional content since the change of view will bring regret or in more serious cases remorse.

"When you get an external impression of some pleasure, guard yourself as with

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177 On Listening to Lectures 46D. Cf. Epictetus, Diss.II.15.13-20 and Seneca, Epist. 94.24.

<sup>27</sup> idem 47A. It is not clear whether Plutarch is speaking of some actual rite or using metaphorical language. If in fact there was such a initiation Christians would have been bound to speak in similar terms to enable those who had no Jewish background to comprehend the meaning of baptism.

<sup>28</sup> Nock A.D., 1933, Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo, Oxford, Clarendon Press p. 192.

impressions in general, against being carried away by it; nay, let the matter wait upon your leisure, and give yourself a little delay. Next think of the two periods of time, first, that in which you will enjoy your pleasure, and second that in which, after the enjoyment is over, you will later repent and revile yourself (kai kath' hon apolausas husteron metanoeseis kai autos seautoi loidoresei); and set over against these two periods of time how much joy and self-satisfaction you will get if you refrain<sup>29</sup>.

Here is a moment of temptation and an appeal to pause and think so that there will be no regrets after some thoughtless action. Metanoeseis refers to a single incident only<sup>30</sup>.

The philosophers use metanoia to indicate an intellectual ability recognise what is ethically correct. For the Stoic no wise man - probably no perfectly wise man - could exhibit metanoia since it would reveal him as capable of error and would be a denial of the wisdom that is the mark of the wise man. Seneca reflects this attitude in describing the value of philosophy as being able to settle problems and give to persons obeying its tenets that blessing numquam te paeitebit tui. Cicero is even more precise. Sapientis est enim proprium nihil quid poenitere possit facere<sup>31</sup>. Such an ideal state while earnestly

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<sup>29</sup> Epictetus, Encheiridon 34. cf. Xenop., Hist. Graec. 1,7,19.

<sup>30</sup> Dio Chrysostom 72.15 appears to me to give more significance to metanoeo in recounting Aesop's fable about the owl and the birds and the oak and the mistletoe. The birds reject the advice of the owl and decide to ignore the growth of mistletoe in their chosen oak. When his advice is seen to be correct, the birds "repent". It appears to me that this is more than a single, intellectual value-judgment.

<sup>31</sup> Seneca, Epist. 115,18, Cic. Tusc. V 28.

to be desired, was the experience of a few, and the vast majority were only too aware of the need to accept failure and courageously try to overcome it.

The fact that a different meaning was given by some philosophers to metanoia did not, however, mean that experiences which lead to a break with the past and a change of lifestyle were foreign to them.

"Or tell me, who that ever heard you reading a lecture or conducting a discourse felt greatly disturbed about himself, or came to a realisation of the state he was in, or on going out said, "The philosopher brought it home to me in fine style; I must not act like this any longer""<sup>32</sup>.

Philosophic speeches aimed to overcome human error or sins which were thought to result from ignorance<sup>33</sup>. There were other vices, too, which the philosopher hoped to reveal and remove. By bringing to light the inconsistencies of behaviour or belief that exists, the philosophers would disturb their hearers and help them realise their condition

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<sup>32</sup> Epict. Diss. II.32.37. cf. Sen. Epist. 75.5: "Videbimus, qualis sit, quantus sit; unus sit. Non delectent verba nostra, sed prosint", Lucian Nigrinus 3-5, and The Double Indictment 17.

<sup>33</sup> Dio Chrysostom, Discourses 32.33 Epictetus Diss. 1.26.7. In this latter reference the cause of error is laid bare - ignorance (he agnoia). This is a Stoic usage also reflected in Diog. Laert. VII 93 which gives agnoia as the basis of all wickedness. The linguistic influence of the Stoics on the Biblical writings has long been established (TDNT ad. loc.). Hence Luke's use of agnoia to describe both Jewish and Gentile guilt (e.g. Ac. 3:17; 17:30) in rejecting God cannot be without consciousness of its background. He would also want to add that the remedy for this human malady is not human reflection and enquiry but acceptance in faith of the kerygma.

so that they would turn away from what was wrong<sup>34</sup>. Without recognising wickedness there is no progress possible in life<sup>35</sup>, and Seneca went so far as to describe such acknowledgment as "initium salutis"<sup>36</sup>.

The world of Judaism understands metanoia to mean a change involving every aspect of moral behaviour or a completely new direction in life. It affected the whole of life, rather than individual actions. This accounts for the summons of John the Baptist because metanoia meant a break with the ungodly past and a recognition of the ultimate claims of God upon each person. John associated the act of repentance with baptism so that his rite becomes baptisma metanoias<sup>37</sup>. He offered two gifts from God in this rite. The first is aphesis hamartion and the second awareness of God's coming judgment which will be

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<sup>34</sup> Epictetus, Diss. III.23.33-37.

<sup>35</sup> Seneca, Epist. 53.8, Plutarch, Progress in Virtue 82 Af.

<sup>36</sup> Seneca, Epist. 28.9 "'Initium est salutis notitia peccati.' Egregie mihi hoc dixisse videtur Epicurus. Nam qui peccare se nescit, corrigi non vult; deprehendas te oportet, antequam emendes." According to Plutarch - On Listening to Lectures 46E- it is one's natural sense of shame that is the beginning of salvation. Hence in many places lists of vices are given from which those who hear the philosopher are expected to turn e.g. Dio Chrysostom, Discourses 33.13; 72.13; Plutarch Progress in Virtue in Virtue 82A, Lucian, The Double Indictment 17.

See further the full discussion of conversion in Malherbe A.J., 1987, Paul and the Thessalonians, Philadelphia, Fortress Press pp.21-28. He ends his discussion with a quotation from A.D. Nock in which he states that those who heard the philosophers were "doing the thing most nearly equivalent to hearing a Christian sermon later: the technique was in fact inherited."

<sup>37</sup> Mk. 1:4 and parll., Ac. 13:24; 19:4.

effected by ho erchomenos<sup>38</sup>. Hence John made baptism a requirement to all and not just notorious sinners or Gentiles. No single act, however, encompasses metanoia. It must be shown in particular decisions and forms of behaviour, and so John appeals to his audience poiesate karpous axios tes metanoia (Lk.3:8). Does the plural karpous contradict the accepted position that there is only one fruit of repentance - baptism? Not at all. But Luke held together this truth with the necessity for ongoing teaching to believers on the ways in which God required them to exhibit the complete change . There are two facets to metanoia. The one recognises it as a gift of God for the end times, the second as a task to be worked at by man "to maintain and authenticate it as the divine basis of its own existence so long as this aeon lasts"<sup>39</sup>.

In Luke 24:47 metanoia is given as the content of the preaching and it is part of the whole of God's plan which is also revealed in the suffering of Christ and in His resurrection from the dead on the third day. This understanding is shown throughout Acts<sup>40</sup>.

There is an interesting association between metanoia and the Holy Spirit in Acts 11:18 (cf. Ac. 11:15). The explanation of this must be that Jesus fulfilled the expectation of John the Baptist that He would baptise with the Holy Spirit. He further fulfils the prophecy of

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<sup>38</sup> This title is used by John in sending disciples to Jesus in Lk. 7:19. It refers back to the God-given awareness "but there is one coming who is mightier than I....He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Lk. 3:16).

<sup>39</sup> E. Lohmeyer, quoted in TDNT under metanoia by J. Behm p. 983-1022.

<sup>40</sup> Ac. 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20.

Simeon (Lk. 2.29-32). God has opened a door through which the Gentiles may enter and take an equal place among the disciples of Jesus Christ - metanoia. In the early church metanoein became a synonym for becoming a Christian<sup>41</sup>.

We may conclude this discussion by noting the common ground. Hearing led to a response, which involved the following of a particular guide in recognition of the fact that all previous conduct has been misguided. The change is called in one place, "hotan eis sauton eltheis" (Epict., Diss. III.1.13) which is remarkably similar to the description of the change that comes over the prodigal son in Luke eis eauton de elthon (Lk. 15:17), where it is a practical example of metanoia. The distance between the two cultures is not as great as is sometimes imagined, although the full riches of the Hebrew tradition need to be recognised.

### 3.3 Pisteuo\pistis

The close links between baptism and pistis are plain in Peter's original exhortation to the crowd on Pentecost. Having put before them the saving events of the life of Jesus, he

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<sup>41</sup> Did. 10.6 and Ignatius, Letter to the Ephesians 10.1

There is an interesting field of study from Hermas as to whether the pagan influence was not beginning to change the Christian understanding of metanoia. Hermas states definitely that repentance is once for all and that he who has received remission of sins should sin no more, but maintain the purity of his life. Nevertheless he laments the condition of the church which he sees not like the pure virgin but more like a wizened old woman. So he allows for those long in the church to renew their commitment to God, a topos metanoias. Consequently the emphasis falls on the task to keep the commandments or to achieve moral excellence. Here we come much closer to the philosophers who saw metanoia not in terms of God's once-for-all act of restoration, but as a road to be travelled toward perfection.

appeals to the people "Baplistheto ekastos hymon epi toi onomati Iesou Christou" (Ac. 2:38) and then defines the word in terms of the promise of Joel (Ac. 2:21), urging them to believe. Metanoia led to faith.

The words pistis or pisteuo were suspect among the Greeks and belonged to the world of superstition and religious propaganda. Here is a major area of difference between the Christian and the pagan understanding. The difference has been summed up as that between logismos and pistis, between reasoned conviction and blind acceptance. No trained mind would give any value to pistis; it was the state of mind of the uneducated who believed anything they heard and could give no reason for their belief. Luke and Paul, as typical witnesses to the Christian faith, would say that pistis was the very basis of Christian life. What amazed early pagans was that this "unproved acceptance" of the Christian Way had such power over the Christians that they were willing to die rather than deny their faith.

In The Laws Plato wrestles with proof of the existence of God and comes up with a solution that does not depend on the mind but the solid evidence of the senses.

"First there is the evidence of the earth, the sun, the stars and all the universe and the beautiful ordering of the seasons marked out by years and months; and then there is the further fact that all Greeks and barbarians

believe in the existence of gods"<sup>42</sup>.

In a famous passage in *Gorgias* the nature of belief is discussed and it is accepted that pistis pseudēs kai alethes exist<sup>43</sup>. Plutarch also thinks of discussions on these matters as a "slippery place" in which men are to "divest themselves of excessive credulity (eautous to agan tes pisteos aphairomen)". Lucian takes Christians to task for holding beliefs for which there is no evidence<sup>44</sup>. Celsus ridicules some Christians as saying, "Ask no questions: just believe"<sup>45</sup>. Marcus Aurelius expresses his weariness and frustration with the Christians by accusing them of being ready to die not on any reasoned grounds, but out of sheer contrariness (kata psilen parataxin)<sup>46</sup>. For Galen, who was not aggressively opposed to Christians, Christians have three of the four important virtues - courage, self-control and justice. What they lack is phronesis, the intellectual insight, which gives a sound base to the other three<sup>47</sup>.

Luke would no doubt have been sceptical of a faith which had no basis in the activity of

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<sup>42</sup> Plato, Laws 886 A.

<sup>43</sup> Plato, Gorgias 454a. The argument proceeds to differentiate between two forms of persuasion - "the one providing belief without knowledge and the other sure knowledge."

<sup>44</sup> Lucian, The passing of Peregrinus, 13. "Therefore they (Christians) despise all things indiscriminately and consider them common property receiving such doctrines traditionally without any definite evidence (aneu tinōs akribous pisteos)." He delights in the naiveté and gullibility of the Christians.

<sup>45</sup> Contra Celsum 1.9, 6.11.

<sup>46</sup> Marcus Antoninus, Meditations 11.3.2.

<sup>47</sup> Walzer R., 1949, *Galen on Jews and Christians*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p. 15.

God. The witness of the senses was paramount. The visual and aural impact of Pentecost are essential (Ac.2:2-4;12) if man is to recognise the fulfilment of the promise of God. Or, to take another example, when the apostles come down to Samaria, even though there is no record of exhibitions of power, Simon Magus is sufficiently aware of them to seek baptism theorom te semeia kai dynameis megalas ginomenas existato (Ac.8:13). When the apostles come down to Samaria and the Spirit is given to believers he asks them Dote kamoi ten exousian tauten, hina hoi an epitas cheiras lambanei Pneuma Agion (Ac.8:13,19). There is no evidence of gullibility, or of acting on hearsay in any of the accounts Luke gives of conversion.

Yet not all philosophers were as dismissive of pistis as this comprehensive list might suggest. If we look once more at the work of the contemporary of Luke, Epictetus, much more value is ascribed to faith. Indeed he emphasises it as the essence of life.

"As Epictetus was remarking that man is born to fidelity (pros pistin gegonen) and that the man who overthrows this is overthrowing the characteristic quality of man ( to idion tou anthropou), there entered one who had the reputation of being a scholar, and had yet been caught in the city in the act of adultery. But, goes on Epictetus, if we abandon this fidelity (pistin) to which we are by nature born, and make designs against our neighbour's wife, what are we doing? Why, what but ruining and

destroying? Whom? The man of fidelity (ton piston), of self-respect, of piety"<sup>48</sup>.

Here is an interpretation of pistis which involves not only a declaration of intent, but a consistency between declaration and conduct to which Luke was not averse.

The association in Luke's writings of akouo and pisteuo is an important one. In Judaism faith was the appropriate attitude to the God who had long ago made himself known in the saving events of the nation's history and experience. In the Christian kerygma God's work is summed up in the events of the life of Jesus Christ. These need to be told <sup>49</sup>. Hence there is an urgent need to respond, to believe now. Faith then is not a general attitude to a god or the gods but an acknowledgment - Iesous Kyrios as expressed in baptism, which involved acceptance that in Him God was at work, and through the resurrection He takes His place at the right hand of God. So in every proclamation of the gospel, the events of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus are recorded<sup>50</sup>.

In Acts 17:18 the accusation is made against Paul "zenon daimonion dokei katangeleus einai". The invitation to believe in Christ is not the revealing of some previously unknown

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<sup>48</sup> Epict. Diss. II 4, 1. In the same discourse he further adds ei piston esti to theion, kai touton einai piston. (II 14, 13).

<sup>49</sup> "God himself meets us in Christ. He meets us only in Christ. In Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 1:19, 29)." Bultmann R., 1967, TDNT Vol 6, pistis.

<sup>50</sup> Ac. 2:22-24; 3:13-15; 10:37-41; 13:26-37.

deity, who acted at some distance from those who were now being enlightened. In the events of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God is acting on behalf of all humankind. This history of Jesus which Paul is setting out is salvation history. So when these events are proclaimed, what God has done, and is doing for those who hear at the time is made clear. The goal of salvation is being achieved when this knowledge takes root in the believer. Response to God's initiative is a necessary part of salvation<sup>51</sup>. Hence pisteuo is frequently coupled with baptisthenai (Ac.2:41; 8:12; 11:18; 16:31-2; 18:8). In addition pisteuo often bears the whole weight of the process of coming into the church. It was for hearers' benefit that these events took place. The only fitting response must contain the acknowledgment lesous kyrios<sup>52</sup>. The personal awareness will be confessed publicly in baptism in the name of lesous Kyrios and that confession will give assurance of the presence of Jesus Christ in the life of the believer<sup>53</sup>.

Believing is often coupled with metanoia (e.g. Ac.2:38; 20:21) and they suggest a living and dynamic relationship with the object of faith.

What has been illustrated, is a simple point of missionary strategy. There is the need to

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<sup>51</sup> Ac. 8:13f; 17:11f; Lk. 8:13.

<sup>52</sup> Ac. 2:36; 5:31.

<sup>53</sup> The importance of the message to faith is that it does not simply provide the context of belief, but the content of faith. The presence of Jesus, who lived, died and rose again for the believer, is the guarantee of faith. Ac. 14:23, "paretheto autous toi Kyrioi eis hon pepisteukeisan" illustrates this well. Cf. also Ac. 1:17,21; 16:34; 18:27; 19:18; 20:21,25.

engage those that hear the message in a way that makes sense to them, and does not insist on their learning basic jargon before they know whether there is any point in accepting it or not. The message was proclaimed contextually and those who found their hearts or minds "strangely warmed" were encouraged to take a definite step which bound the believer both to God in Jesus Christ and also to the community who followed him. There is no compromise on the exclusive Christian understanding of the sacrament, nor of its component parts - metanoiein and pisteuein. While this is today often felt to be a weakness, and toleration is widely advocated and admired, in the uncertainty and unease which prevailed in the era when the message was first proclaimed this exclusivity was a source of strength. Many mysteries and different philosophies of life may have been a source of endless inquiry for the wise, but to the majority they simply added to insecurity. Christianity made its demands quite clear. One choice - akouein, pisteuein, baplisthenai - and the road to salvation in company with Jesus Christ and His followers was laid open. Put in Greek terms the believer was initiated into Christ's school. This will account for the distinctively Lucan emphasis of faith involving more than a verbal assent, but a complex of teaching and practical experience which encompasses the whole of life. The importance of baptism is that it provides a constant reminder of the content and the process of salvation. Akouo involves attentiveness to the word, and particularly to the word of God, which breaks into ordinary life through prayer, proclamation and worship. Metanoia is the turning to God and the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord. That will be again a process which will involve a daily denial of self (Lk.9:23). Above all there was a need to express in faithful living that for the Christian the act of faith, the decision to be

baptised, did not involve a leap into the dark, but was a reasonable decision based on his knowledge of what God had done in Jesus Christ.

It would be strange if the call to repentance did not involve change. Here we have seen how the Christian concepts alter commonly held understandings in philosophical schools.

4. Greek insights into the thought and practice of the early Christian community.

Not only does the act of belief, and its association with baptism, share common ground with the understanding of philosophers, but the consequences also indicate relationships.

I will briefly like to mention six of these.

#### 4.1 Parrhesia\parrhesiazomai.

Luke uses this word as a noun 7 times and as a verb 5 times (Ac.2:29; 4:13,29,31; 9:27f.; 13:46; 14:3; 18:25f.; 19:8; 26:26; 28:31) <sup>54</sup>. What is significant is that he never uses the word in either form except when people from the Hellenistic world are present. In the brief summary of the opening phase of Paul's ministry in Damascus and Jerusalem the word is used twice to describe his activity - en Damaskoi eparrhesiasato en toi onomati tou Iesou (Ac.9:27) and again parrhesiasiazomenos en toi ovomati tou Kyriou (Ac.9:28). This might well express the need to emphasise the orthodoxy of Paul's proclamation. His parrhesia is directly related to the confession of the name Iesous Kyrios (baptism). It is also directly related to receiving the Spirit (the consequence of baptism). This is the gift

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<sup>54</sup> In the N.T. parrhesia is used 31 times and parrhesiazomai 9 times. Among the synoptics it occurs in only one verse as a noun, Mk. 8:32. As a verb, apart from Acts it is found only in Eph. 6:20 and I Thess. 2:2.

for which the disciples prayed after the imprisonment of Peter and John: "Kyrie...dos tois doulois sou meta parrhesias pases lalein" (Ac.4:29). After their prayer there was a clear manifestation of the Spirit (Ac.4:31) and the disciples were assured of the parrhesia to speak out and to withstand the attacks of opponents of the gospel. The fact that it is a supernatural gift is further emphasised by linking it with semeia kai terata (Acts 14.3).

All philosophers extolled parrhesia which held nothing back in the pursuit to benefit the listeners<sup>55</sup>. It was particularly associated with the Cynics, but by no means confined to them. Plutarch devotes a major section of How to tell a Flatterer from a Friend to a discussion on this word. Lucian in telling of the many admirable qualities of Demonax, tells a story to illustrate the presence of parrhesia.

"All Athens, high and low, admired him enormously and viewed him as a superior being. Yet in office he ran counter to public opinion and won from the masses quite as much hatred as his prototype (Socrates) by his freedom of speech and action (epi te tei parrhesiai kai eleutheriai). He too had his Anytus and his Metetus who combined against him and brought the same charges that their predecessors brought against Socrates asserting that he had never been known to sacrifice and was the only man in the community uninitiated in the Eleusinian mysteries..."<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Seneca, Epist. 40; 59.4-7; 75.1-7; 100; 114; 115.1-2,18. Epictetus, Diss. III.23.33-37.

<sup>56</sup> Lucian Demonax 11.

Parrhesia is what is required in the conduct of a public life. Christianity also saw the gift as giving its members a freedom in their relationship with God, deriving from their baptism, which enabled them to resist the temptation to deny Christ in the face of official opposition, and to proclaim Him as Lord to all who wished to hear.

"He who has seen God alone can truly pray to God; he can thank Him sincerely: he may ask Him, indeed he should ask him for all things; he has free access (parrhesia) to God and can speak to Him as a friend"<sup>57</sup>.

The ultimate outworking of this is found in the eucharistic liturgy and specifically in the parrhesia which man can claim in addressing God as Father.

The Spirit given at baptism is the source of parrhesia. Here was the freedom to proclaim Christ, and the boldness to resist the temptation of denying Him. No other word could adequately encompass both concepts for Luke, so he drew from the vocabulary of the moral philosophers. The Christian community is reminded also of the value of the association with such people and schools, and the inclusion through baptism of those with a purely Hellenistic background in the Christian community was as much an enrichment as the Jew.

#### 4.2 Koinonia

Why was it that Luke intensified the requirements for discipleship? He made it clear that the apostles had left all to follow Jesus (Lk.5:11). And even after baptism there was a

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<sup>57</sup> Mart. Polyc. 10.1

demanding common life as the use of koinonia in Ac.2:42 shows. Luke offers a definition for the term - eichon hapanta koina (Ac.2:44) and en kardia kai psyche mia. (Ac.4:32) - would lead a Gentile reader to see a reference to a common feature of philosophical schools, particularly those of the Pythagoreans. There is an impressive literary support for this view from both Latin and Greek sources. Terence contains this dialogue in Adelph. V.3. "Vetus verbum hoc quidem est, communia esse amicorum

inter se omnia.

Donatus: Inter Pythagororeos ortum dicitur proverbium."<sup>58</sup>

There are three further features which strengthen the link with moral philosophers. The first is the connection between sharing and being part of the family of God. In the introduction to his translation of the Sentences of Sextus, Chadwick depicts the community to which the Sentences were addressed as a primal community of Pythagoreans. Among the instruction is included: "those who have in common God as their Father but do not have possessions in common are impious"<sup>59</sup>.

The second is the concept of the ideal society which was often viewed as still being the possession of ancient peoples like the Scythians, whom Strabo describes as follows:

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<sup>58</sup> Wettstein has references from Cicero, Porphyry, Justinus Aristophanes and a number of quotations from Plato's works as well as those from Euripides, Aristides and Josephus all saying in different ways koina ta ton philon. Gellius 1.12 gives the fullest description of the Pythagorean community. "All of them as soon as they are admitted by Pythagoras into that band of disciples, at once devoted to the common use whatever estate and property they had, and an inseparable fellowship was formed."

<sup>59</sup> Chadwick H. in his introduction to The sentence of Sextus cf. no. 278.

"They are frugal in their ways of living and not money-getters, they not only are orderly towards one another, because they have all things in common (koina panta echontes), their wives, children, the whole of their kin and everything, but also remain invincible and unconquered by others, because they have nothing to be enslaved for" (Geography 7;3;9).

Thirdly we may find from this source the reason why Luke thought to include the judgment against Ananias and Sapphira. If the ideal was to be maintained there could be no allowance made for the greed of man. "But avarice broke in upon a condition so happily ordained, and, by its eagerness to lay something away and to turn it to its private use, made all things the property of others, and reduced itself from boundless wealth to straitened need. It was avarice that introduced poverty, and, by craving much, lost all"<sup>60</sup>.

What we have established is that there is an association between the rite of initiation and pooling of resources for the common good in a number of movements in the first century of the Christian era. We have seen that both Qumran and the Pythagoreans had a form of initiation. Both advocated a common purse for the community. In both of these the initiative for entry into the particular community rested with individual choice. Luke believes that the initiative must be seen to belong to God. It is the proclamation of the saving events of the life of Jesus that leads to the question "What shall we do?" God has taken the initiative and is acting for the benefit of humankind before a person is aware

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<sup>60</sup> Seneca, Epist. 90.38.

of His goodness. Baptism is a response to the amazing generosity of God. It is not the despicable pleonexia that leads us to share. Ei de en agro ton chorton onta semeron kai aurion eis klibanon ballomenon o Theos outos amphiezai, posoi mallon hymas, oligopistoi (Lk.12.28). Those who take the initiative and come to Jesus and offer to follow him receive little encouragement and are seen to be incapable of fulfilling its demands<sup>61</sup>.

#### 4.3 Table fellowship.

Baptism creates fellowship between Christians. As we see from Acts 2.42 (Cf. Ac 10:48; 16:34) those who were baptised immediately share a common table. Luke describes the normal Christian gathering as an open one in which members of the community assembled for teaching and to renew relations with each other in the presence of God. The Greek practice of the Symposium offers an obvious model, though it was probably too unstructured to be closely imitated<sup>62</sup>. The importance of a shared meal in a closely knit community is further shown by the archaeological excavations at Porta Maggiore. A group of the followers of Pythagoras had constructed a meeting hall in Rome. They met regularly in this building for religious worship which included a cultic meal. It is further well attested that the community at Qumran had a common meal to which members were admitted as the climax of their initiation.

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<sup>61</sup> Lk. 9:57-62; 18:18-26. Cf. Levi (Lk. 5:27-32) and Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1-10), both of whom are summoned by Jesus himself.

<sup>62</sup> There is an interesting discussion of this possibility in an essay by E. Springs Steele, 1984, Luke 11:37-54: A modified Symposium? JBL 103, pp. 379-394.

To those then who looked at Christianity as Luke wanted it to be seen, here was none other than a community committed to the teachings of its founder, and the "breaking of bread" which stemmed from the last supper created a vivid memory of Christ's presence. In his description of Christian activities Tertullian<sup>63</sup> seems content to accept that this was common understanding so that he was quite content to describe a Christian in terms that come from the philosophical school.

"We are a corpus bound together by our religious profession, by the unity of our way of life (disciplina) and the bond of our common hope.... We pray for the emperors..... We assemble to read our sacred writings.... With sacred words we nourish our faith, we animate our hope, we make our confidence more steadfast, and no less by inculcation of God's precepts we confirm good habits.... The tried men of our elders preside over us, obtaining the honour not by purchase but by established character.....Though we have our treasure chest, it is not made up of purchase-money.... On the monthly meeting day, if he likes, each puts in a small donation ...The gifts are, as it were, an offering for piety."

#### 4.4 The name "Christianoi".

It was in Antioch that the early followers of Jesus Christ were called "Christianoi" (Acts 11.26). The word is used once more by Luke to describe the reaction of Agrippa to Paul's proclamation: "En oligoi me peitheis Christianon poiesai" (Ac.26:28). It is usually noted

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<sup>63</sup> Tertullian, Apology 39D.

that this word is not one that the church gave itself. It is only found on the lips of outsiders. But is this in fact what we are led to believe from Paul's own remarks? "Euxaimen an toi Theoi... ou monon se alla kai pantastous akousantas mou semeron genesthai toioutous hopoios kago eimi" (Ac.26:29). At the very least Paul is not rejecting the name given to the Christian community. He could also be saying. "Yes, here is a meeting place for both Jew and Roman. All who want to hear are welcome in the school of Christ."

There had been a longstanding tradition in the philosophical movement to call schools of thought after their founder. A good example of this is found in the Latin playwright, Terence.

"ille ubi miser famelicus mi esse tantum honorem et  
tam facile victum quaerere, ibi homo coepit me obsecrare  
ut sibi liceret discere a me: sectari iussi,  
si potis est, tamquam philosophorum habent disciplina ex ipsis  
vocabula, parasiti ita ut Gnathonici vocetur"<sup>64</sup>.

Gnatho is telling the other man that he is prepared to teach him on condition that he adopts his name and calls himself "Gnathonicus", as a follower of another philosophical school might call himself "Platonicus", or "Epicureus", or "Pythagoreus." This does not, however, imply the more traditional master-pupil relationship. Gnatho speaks of his

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<sup>64</sup> Eunuchus 260-264.

school embracing all parasites. Hence what he shows is that the "Gnathonici" follow the "doctrines" of the founder without necessarily living in close geographical proximity with him. What this group share is a common teaching. It is a school of thought.

Cicero goes further and talks about branches of Socratic thought. In De Oratore III 62 he says, "Fuerunt etiam alia genera philosophorum, qui omnes fere Socraticos esse dicebant, Eretricorum, Erillorum, Megaricorum, Phyrhoneorum." And Quintilian speaks of little known schools in the same way. "Hi diversas opiniones tradiderunt appellatique inde Apollodorei ac Theodorei ad morem certas in philosophia sectas sequendi."

We have already noted that Tertullian took no exception to the fact that Christianity should be likened to a school of philosophy. There are two other passages from his writing which are relevant in investigating the significance of the name given to Christians.

At enim secta oditur in nomine utique sui auctoris, quid novi, si aliqua disciplina de magistro cognomentum sectatoribus suis inducit? nonne philosophi de auctoribus suis muncupatur Platonici, Epicurei, Pythagorici? etiam a locis conventiculorum at stationum suarum Stoici, Acedemici? atque medici ab Erastristrato et grammatici ab Aristarcho, cqui etiam ab Apicio? nec tamen quemquam offendit professio nominis cum institutione transmissi ab instulore, plane si qui probet malum auctorem et malam sectam, is probabit et nomen malum, dignum odio de reatu sectae et auctore sectam

recognoscere vel auctorem de secta"<sup>65</sup>

Primo quidem sectam de appellationem mutuari utique probum usitatumque ius est, dum philosophi quoque de auctoribus cognominetur Pythagorici et Platonici, ut medici Eristratei et grammatii Aristarchii" <sup>66</sup>

Tertullian is aware of the tradition to which we have already referred that some sects take their name from the founder or the original venue of the school. Secondly he notes that a student takes the name of the teacher's "secta". He not only calls Christianity "secta" - indeed, it is as "secta" that he has already defended Christianity<sup>67</sup> - but he connects it with other associations of medical, grammatical and philosophical schools which were known in the Roman Empire. This may have two implications for baptism. In the first place a Christian is one who is known not merely to be following the "secta" of Christ. He belongs to him as a slave belongs to his master and is called by his name. Secondly we have seen that Luke uses the "name" of Christ as a synonym for the "presence" of Christ. Those who are baptised live continually in the presence of Christ.

#### 4.5 Hairesis, kathygoumai and hodos.

In the prologue to the Gospel, Luke states it as his purpose to give Theophilus "authentic

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<sup>65</sup> Apology 3.6-7.

<sup>66</sup> Ad Nationes 1,4,1.

<sup>67</sup> Tertullian, Apology, 1,21; 21,1; 40,1.

knowledge about the matters of which you have been informed" (Lk.1:4). A difficulty here is the interpretation of katecheisthai. Does this imply that Theophilus has received some form of Christian instruction<sup>68</sup>? The word did come to have this meaning<sup>69</sup>. In the other uses made in the writings of Luke the word has the sense of communicating information which is damaging to the tradition which is to be upheld<sup>70</sup>. Epiginoskein which is also used in v. 4 may help our understanding. It means "not so much fuller or more perfect knowing, as knowing arrived at by the attention being directed to a particular person or object"<sup>71</sup>. Taken at its face value Luke states that his purpose is to give instruction. It may be to clear away misunderstandings. It certainly will be to focus the readers attention on the person of Jesus Christ.

In Matt. 23:10 Jesus is twice described as kathegetes. Nowhere else is He spoken about in this way. An obvious clue to the Christian usage may be provided by the literature of the Qumran community and especially the references to the Teacher of Righteousness. Hence the title here would indicate that those who await such a teacher will find him in

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<sup>68</sup> T. Zahn quoted in Maddox R., 1982, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, p. 13 makes the important point that until the third century no Christian is known to have addressed another with an honorific title, like kratiste (Lk. 1.3).

<sup>69</sup> Paul lays the foundation for this in passages like Rom. 2:18; I Cor.14:19; Gal.6:6. Luke uses the word in the same way in Ac. 18:25. The first recorded use of the word in a technical sense of formal teaching is 2 Clem 17.1, which was written in the second century of the Christian era.

<sup>70</sup> Ac. 21:21,24. In Ac. 17:25 the word is used of Apollos before Aquilla and Priscilla had taught him the way akriboteron.

<sup>71</sup> Moulton J.H. and Milligan G., 1930, London, Macmillan, ad loc.

Jesus Christ. It has, however, been argued that v. 10 is a doublet of v. 8 and the different translations of rabbi merely suggest different cultural backgrounds. Kathegetes is in the Gentile world what Rabbi is in the Jewish. Hence the focus of investigation will shift to a consideration of this designation (Rabbi) especially as it often is used by disciples of Jesus<sup>72</sup>. Rabbi is a title found frequently in the gospels for Jesus. Jesus's followers were most persistently called mathetai. Yet the title Rabbi had only limited currency, since it belonged to the Jewish milieu and in that milieu involved payment of fees and so the term was translated into kathegetes to describe the openness of the teacher to all who would listen<sup>73</sup>. Luke himself is fond of referring to Jesus as didaskalos. On only two of the sixteen occasions that the word is used does it not refer to Jesus. In more than half of the occurrences which do<sup>74</sup> Jesus is asked a question which is able to reveal His wisdom. Here again Jesus is portrayed as a man of superior wisdom.

In Acts the Christian movement became known as an haireisis. The same word is used to describe the Sadducees (Ac. 5:17), Pharisees (Ac. 15:5; 26:5) and Christianity itself (Ac.24:5,14; 26:5; 28:22). The meaning of this term is well laid out by J. Glucker as

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<sup>72</sup> Glucker J., 1978, *Antiochus and the Late Academy*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, pp.424-448 provides a most stimulating discussion of the subject.

<sup>73</sup> The ordering of the community rests with the apostles after Jesus's exaltation. Their responsibility is given: "Hemeis de tei proseuchei kai tei diakoniai tou logou proskarteresomen (Ac. 6:4). They are supported by a body of functionaries known as presbyteroi who appear to be leaders of each community established by the apostles and have the authority to determine orthodox practice. They appear unannounced from Ac. 11:39 (cf. 14:23; 20:17; 21:18). We find them also in 1 Tim. 5:17; Tit. 1:5; Jas. 5:14; 2 Jn. 1; Rev. 4:4. It is unlikely that they bear any relation to the diadoxoi.

<sup>74</sup> Lk. 3:12; 10:25; 11:45; 12:13; 18:18; 20:21,28,38; 21:7.

(Ac.24:5,14; 26:5; 28:22). The meaning of this term is well laid out by J. Glucker as follows. "Both concepts (the Greek hairesis and the Latin secta) came into Christian parlance from the language of the philosophical and medical 'schools of thought' or 'persuasions'; and .. in the language of Pagan philosophy and Christian theology alike, they refer not to an establishment or an institution, but to a political, philosophical, medical or religious 'school of thought' - and in the best cases, to the rather loose body of people, the sect, who subscribe to such 'persuasions'"<sup>75</sup>.

It has been pointed out that opponents of Christianity refer to it as an hairesis, whereas when Christians are talking about their own faith or community they call it, "he hodos"<sup>76</sup>. Luke's use of hodos in this way is unique in biblical literature as Michaelis has shown<sup>77</sup>. He further shows how hodos can refer to a philosophical method or school, but adds "it is most unlikely that Luke would be so influenced by a philosophical use of hodos as to call the Christian message this way." The ground from which Luke drew this interpretation is difficult to determine. Parmenides has the phrase aph'hodou dizesios. Plato compares the contribution to education of Homer and Pythagoras.

"...Is Homer reported while he lived to have been a guide

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<sup>75</sup> Glucker J., 1978, *Antiochus and the Late Academy*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, pp.206-207.

<sup>76</sup> Ac. 9:2; 16:17; 18:25,26; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14.

<sup>77</sup> TDNT Vol.5 pp.42-114. He imposes an unnecessary restriction on the meaning of the word, by applying it to "teaching" only. He argues that it should not be used of the community itself. Liddell H.G. and Scott R., 1961, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, give as its meaning "the Christian faith and its followers".

in education to men who took pleasure in associating with him and transmitted to posterity a certain Homeric way of life (kai tois usterois hodon tina paredosan biou Homericen) just as Pythagoras was himself especially honoured for this, and his successors, even to this day, denominating a certain way of life as Pythagorean (kai hoi usteroi eli kai nun Pythagoreion tropon eponomazontes tou biou), are distinguished among their contemporaries"<sup>78</sup>.

Yet both these precedents are remote and rather obscure. Unless we owe the originality to Luke himself more searching will be required. The implications, however, for baptism are clear. The emphasis was clearly on the need for proper instruction. Baptism was not a magical transformation from one state into another, it was continually related to the person and teaching of Jesus

#### 4.6 The Christian meeting place.

In the early chapters of Acts the Christians meet in one place. This relates to our understanding of baptism as bringing people together into a community. Alternatively an existing community, like a household, was baptised and became a focus for the missionary activity of the church. Now while it is clear that topos can mean the room of a house, the context makes it difficult to believe that the early Christians, who numbered about 120 (Ac.1:15), could all huddle together in one room. The concept of meeting in homes is written into the original Christian community, which was so structured to allow the assembly to 'break bread' kat' oikon (Ac.2:46). The same phrase is used later in

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<sup>78</sup> Republic X 600a.

describing the preaching of the good news in the Temple and from house to house (Ac.5:31). Paul in speaking about his ministry speaks about a public ministry and an 'in-house' service, "demosiai kai kat' oikous" (Ac.20:20). Together these must imply that the leaders gave instruction in public as well as teaching smaller groups in homes where baptised members met regularly for teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer<sup>79</sup>.

The emergence of homes as centres of Christian community life seems to be specially apparent in the movement of the community outwards. So it is no surprise that the missionary instruction of Jesus includes instruction about staying in one house<sup>80</sup>. In the Gospel homes are used as places for teaching and ministry as well as attending to the religious needs of Jesus as, for example, when Jesus and His intimate group of disciples were given access to a home to celebrate the Passover. The home of Mary the mother of John Mark in Jerusalem served as a meeting place for the community<sup>81</sup>. It is, however, after the Council of Jerusalem that homes become an particularly important base for missionary activity.

"If indeed the household provided the primary context for Paul's evangelisation....then it is necessary to ask in what way such a household would

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<sup>79</sup> Titus 1:11 emphasises the importance of this function in the church's life by noting that false teachers are leading whole families astray and ruining them.

<sup>80</sup> Lk. 9:4; cf. Ac. 9:43; 10:48; 16:15; 17:5; 18:3,7. Luke's interest is on a household rather than a town. The evangelisation of a town begins from a single residence.

<sup>81</sup> Ac. 12:12

have been appropriate both as a workshop and an appropriate setting for preaching and teaching. The residence in view was most probably not a domus, which could be afforded only by the extremely wealthy, but housing in an insula, a type of apartment that served the vast majority of people in the large cities of the Roman Empire. A typical insula would contain a row of shops on the ground floor, facing the street, and provide living accommodations for the owners and their families over the shop or in the rear. Also on the premises would be space for the manufacturing of goods sold in the shops, and living quarters for visitors, employees, servants or slaves. These households were therefore quite unlike the modern nuclear family. They represented a considerable cross section of a major portion of society, made up of manual labourers and tradespeople. Such households were part of the intricate social network, being linked to other households by ties of kinship, friendship, professional advantage, and so on. Paul's strategy in initiating his work in such households was a sound one, because the household provided him with a relatively secluded setting and a ready made audience as well as a network along which his influence could be spread<sup>82</sup>.

In the philosophical schools homes provided a less formal type of education. While formal lectures would be given in public, informal gathering to investigate matters at greater leisure took place within the relaxed atmosphere of the home. Two symposia in particular

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<sup>82</sup> Malherbe A.J., 1987, Paul and the Thessalonians, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, pp. 17-18.

provided the models for such gatherings - those of Plato and Xenophon. There is also evidence that homes would also be centres of teaching<sup>83</sup>.

## 5. Conclusion.

What then is Christianity for Luke? In the outward form it has all the elements of the school of the moral philosopher. There is initiation, a deep and deepening commitment exhibited not only by the discovery of the truth in Jesus Christ through the teaching of the community, but also by sharing the common life with other Christians. Not only would this community be open and welcoming, an open house offering constant hospitality, it would provide support in times of persecution and be unflinching in maintaining the principles for which its members suffered. The example of its teachers are a source of continuing inspiration. So Luke focuses on selected leaders of the community as examples of those who follow Jesus Christ. Seneca uses Cato in this way.

Nevertheless the outward form is only a necessary exhibition of the content of the teaching. It is the ongoing pursuit of this wisdom which he advocates through faithfulness to the teaching of the apostles about Jesus Christ. This is the purpose for which he writes. To provide a source book for the kathegetes, to place alongside the LXX, so that in every area and in each generation the way of Jesus may be learnt more adequately.

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<sup>83</sup> There is also a common feature with the world of Judaism. The great schools of this period were known as Beth Hillel and Beth Shammai.

And how does baptism relate to these objectives? John the Baptist is shown and drawing out of the riches of the Jewish tradition an authentic strand. Those who hear him, repent and are baptised. His baptism is a preparation for the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit. This baptism is fulfilled in Jesus and opens the way for Gentiles to share in the salvation of God. Paul speaks of this in Pisidian Antioch: "Gnoston oun esto hymin, andres adelphoi, hoti dia toutou (Iesou) hymin aphasis amartion katangelletai kai apo panton hon ouk edunethete en vomoi Mouseos dikaiouthenai en toutoi pas pisteueon dikaiountai" (Ac. 13:38-39). This offer is rejected by the Jews and becomes available to the Gentiles (Ac. 13:48). The expression of faith in Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of all the aspirations of Judaism. What I have been seeking to establish is an affirmation that the same was also true of the Gentile. He did not have to become a Jew or even well-versed in the LXX. There was an integrity in his own tradition which finds fulfilment as does the Jewish tradition, in Jesus Christ. He would know the importance of the word of the teacher, the need to respond and to belong to a particular school. He would find these concepts summed up in the Christian stress upon akouo, metanoeeo and pisteuo. All the teachings of philosophy are summed up in the work and words of Jesus Christ. So for the Gentile there is a need for metanoia (instead of denying Jesus, turn to him, as the true didaskalos or kathegetes), and by pronouncing in baptism the name Iesous Kyrios he received the Holy Spirit, the source of wisdom and life. Although baptism is unrepeatable, yet there is also a process of learning under way, in which the need for parrhesia and koinonia will make demands on the one who belongs to Christ. The baptised is a learner, attached often to a place of meeting, following a particular course of learning in company with

others who are baptised. In the meeting, as in baptism, Jesus is always present. He baptises and He teaches.

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