

Originally appeared in *Advance*, June 1993

Affirmed: the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

By Edgar R. Lee

In the Pentecostal baptism in the Holy Spirit, biblical doctrine and Christian experience come together to provide the spiritual impetus for a worldwide revival. This revival still gathers momentum through the waning years of the 20th century. As should be expected, the scope of this great move of the Spirit brings intense scholarly examination from all sides to determine its biblical legitimacy.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking with other tongues, is the uniquely defining doctrine of the Pentecostal churches. Still, with time frequent restatement is needed. It is important to address the questions of our critics and to reemphasize the significance of this vital experience with God in our churches today.

Certainly the urgency of reaching an exploding population around the world requires a fresh supernatural endowment of spiritual power. The great question of the Galatian letter is always before us, "After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" (Galatians 3:3~).

Statement of the doctrine

We have historically understood the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a supernatural experience intended for all believers which empowers them for life and service. It logically and temporally follows the new birth, or regeneration, and is thus often called a second work of grace. Our belief in this experience deliberately contrasts that of other Christians who insist that the biblical fullness of the Spirit comes at the time of the new birth and is indistinguishable from it.

The terminology "baptism in the Holy Spirit" is from the prediction of John the Baptist that Jesus would "baptize. . . with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1 :8; cf., Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). The risen Lord himself reaffirmed this prophecy to His disciples before the Ascension, "in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5). Clearly the descent of the Spirit in fiery tongues on the Day of Pentecost was intended to be understood as the promised "baptism in the Spirit" for those disciples (Acts 2:1-4).

Actually, a variety of biblical expressions are used for baptism in the Spirit in its several occurrences in Acts: "filled" (Acts 2:4, 4:8, 4:31, 9:17); "poured out" (Acts 2:33,10:45); "came [literally fell]" (Acts 10:44,11 :15, cf.19:6); and "received" (Acts 10:47,19:2). We also find "gift of the Spirit" (Acts 2:38) and "the same gift" (Acts 11:17). Persons living in the Spirit's presence and power are said to be "full of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 7:55, 11:24, 13:9 ["filled"]).

Doctrinal statement, however, demands precision and uniformity in communicating the great truths of salvation. Terms used should be drawn from Scripture wherever possible and retain their biblical denotations. Therefore, the term "baptism in the Holy Spirit," with its rich baptismal imagery and its central place in the pneumatology of the New Testament, is a logical metaphor to denote the biblical reality of a post-conversion encounter with the Spirit.

A subsequent experience

An ongoing debate in scholarly circles is whether or not Pentecostals correctly teach that the Holy Spirit's baptism is, in fact, subsequent to conversion. This review of the basic biblical evidence is in order.

The Life of Jesus. Finding the narratives of the Gospels and Acts to be theological as well as historical, Pentecostals identify several paradigms for their experience. The first comes from the work of the Spirit in Jesus. While His incarnate life is not in every respect identical to ours, since He did not sin and had no need to be regenerated, we nonetheless find it notable that at the outset of His life He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb (Luke 1:35). Years later, in a second decisive encounter following Jesus' baptism in water, the Spirit visibly descended upon Him (Luke 3:21-23).

The result was an immediate transformation, not of character but of aptitude and power for ministry. Jesus "full of the Holy Spirit" (Luke 4:1) immediately was led into the desert to be tempted. Shortly thereafter He returned to Galilee to begin His ministry "in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14). By His own testimony, Jesus was anointed by the Spirit to preach good news to the poor (Luke 4:18; cf., Isaiah 61:1).

The significance of this work of the Spirit in Jesus was quickly grasped by the Early Church. As a vital part of his proclamation, Peter taught that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power" as a prelude to His ministry of

"doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil" (Acts 10:38). For Jesus, the pattern of the Spirit's work was (1) conception and (2) anointing for service.

The Disciples. Somewhat different from us in that they lived both in the old economy of the Law and the Prophets and in the new age of the Gospel (Luke 16:16), the first disciples of Jesus still offer a paradigm in their experience of the Spirit. The point at which they were regenerated by the Spirit is never addressed in precisely those terms in the New Testament. However, signs of their conversion are numerous.

The disciples apparently participated in a baptism of repentance administered by John the Baptist (John 1:35) or Jesus (John 3:22). Jesus himself pronounced them clean (John 13:10, 15:3) and took note of their faith (John 16:31) and obedience (John 17:6). On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus administered to them the elements of the Last Supper, emphasizing His "blood of the covenant...poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28; cf., Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20), the basis for their salvation and ours.

Many scholars, both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal, believe the actual moment of regeneration for the disciples may be found in the events of John 20:22 where Jesus, in an unusual act, "breathed" on the disciples and commanded them to "receive the Holy Spirit." While this passage is replete with motifs of commissioning for ministry—it is John's "Great Commission"—it appears that the disciples were spiritually reborn at this time in preparation for their baptism in the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The Greek word for "breathed" (*emphysao*), used only here in the New Testament, is found in the Septuagint at Genesis 2:7 and Ezekiel 37:9 where it clearly speaks of new creation and resurrection. The disciples, then, were regenerated prior to being filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

Acts. The evidence of Acts also argues for a logical and temporal differentiation between regeneration and Spirit baptism. Peter carefully sequenced repentance, baptism in water, and the gift of the Holy Spirit in his Pentecost altar call (Acts 2:38). Paul apparently came to faith at his encounter with the Lord on the Damascus Road and 3 days later received the Holy Spirit through the prayer of Ananias (Acts 9:17). The Samaritans evangelized by Philip believed and were baptized but did not receive the Holy Spirit until the later arrival of Peter and John (Acts 8:12, 1-17).

The Ephesian followers of John the Baptist may have been believers before Paul's arrival but, in any event, they were first baptized in water by Paul and only secondly received the Holy Spirit as the apostle laid his hands upon them (Acts 19:1-7). Ample support is found in Greek grammar for the classic translation of Paul's opening question, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit after you believed?" (Acts 19:2; cf., NIV margin).

Only in the case of the household of Cornelius are regeneration and baptism in the Spirit indistinguishable in the Acts narrative. While Peter was preaching, the Holy Spirit suddenly fell on his Gentile audience without any advance assurance of new birth. Even here, however, it is possible to differentiate logically and temporally between regeneration and Spirit baptism. Modern Pentecostal history is replete with testimonies of those saved and baptized in the Spirit in quick succession.

To insist that Luke's narrative in Acts intended to merge regeneration and the baptism in the Holy Spirit into one inseparable saving event (called by some "conversion/initiation") is to impose one's own views on the text. Luke's concern clearly is to show the Spirit's coming in power with a primary mission of equipping believers for service. While he always assumes life changing belief in Christ as the necessary prerequisite for Spirit baptism, Luke is not at great pains to explain it theologically.

Paul. Paul's letters do not so much narrowly focus upon the Spirit's coming in power for mission as upon a broader explanation of the ministry of the Spirit in Christian life and service with particular emphasis upon holiness. Even so, Paul's writings do not, as many critics claim, preclude a baptism in the Spirit subsequent to regeneration. Increasingly, exegetes are demonstrating that key Pauline texts, as 1 Corinthians 12:13 with its twofold "baptized by one Spirit" and "given one Spirit to drink," may reflect (1) regeneration and incorporation into the church and (2) baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Similarly, the "washing of rebirth" and the "renewal by the Holy Spirit" of Titus 3:5 may represent two separable events in the life of the believer. One would be specifically directed toward conversion and regeneration, perhaps with a focus on water baptism; the other to a subsequent work of the Spirit in this case directed more toward spiritual maturation.

In brief, Paul's theology of the Spirit is not incompatible with that of Luke, and it certainly may not be used to reinterpret

and set aside Luke's obvious intent to depict a decisive baptism in the Spirit after conversion.

The initial evidence

In keeping with the New Testament's witness to the Spirit's coming in power and with observable phenomena, we have understood the initial evidence of His coming to be speaking with other tongues, a position often challenged by nonPentecostals. Though widely experienced around the world, this phenomenon must be demonstrably grounded in Scripture and regularly restated if we are to present it as viable doctrine.

Among Pentecostals the doctrine has always been based upon the fact that the Acts narrative records speaking with other tongues, technically known as glossolalia, in conspicuous concurrence with three incontrovertible examples of Spirit baptism in the Book of Acts. The Pentecost recipients "were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:4). In the home of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, "the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message," and their Jewish guests "heard them speaking in tongues and praising God" (10:44,46). When Paul placed his hands on the Ephesian followers of John the Baptist "the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied" (19:6).

The evidential significance of tongues was clearly recognized by Luke in his pointed record of the Spirit's activity in Cornelius' circle of relatives and friends: "The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. *For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God*" (Acts 10:45,46, italics mine).

In writing his book, Luke was almost certainly aware of the Jewish law of evidence that called for two or three witnesses for capital trials (Deuteronomy 19:15). Any event (as Paul's conversion, for example) noted three times is highly significant for this or any other ancient narrative. Repeated references would be redundant, an unnecessary luxury for expensive ancient writing.

That Luke knew the practice of glossolalia to be widespread can hardly be questioned. Glossolalia was almost certainly present in Samaria, for Simon saw something dramatic he wished to cash in on (Acts 8:18,19). We have biblical evidence for Paul's practice of glossolalia (1 Corinthians 14:18; cf., Acts 9:17),

and the Corinthian excesses must have been well known to Luke (1 Corinthians 12-14). Yet he mentioned none of these nor any other cases. Instead, he carefully positioned three strategic accounts to signal the importance of tongues in Spirit baptism.

While no overt explanation is given for God's sovereign choice to employ glossolalia in this way, the narrative of Acts contains subtle hints. For example, words common to the Septuagint account of the confusion of languages at Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) are found in Acts. In the aftermath of Babel, Gentiles were excluded from God's revelation which immediately turns to Abraham and Israel. Pentecost is the reversal of Babel as the Gentiles once again were brought into God's saving activity. Luke's attention to the diverse language groups affected by the Pentecost glossolalia is highly significant (Acts 2:5-12) as is the later "Gentile Pentecost" at Caesarea (Acts 10).

Whatever the merits of the Babel connection, there is no questioning the impact of speaking in tongues on the visiting pilgrims: "We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" (Acts 2:11). Luke understood glossolalia to be a sign, not always properly understood to be sure (cf., Acts 2:13; 1 Corinthians 14:22-25), of the universality of salvation in the new age of the Spirit.

The biblical text does not directly define glossolalia as human or heavenly speech. Certainly, known human languages were among the tongues on the Day of Pentecost when the bewildered crowd heard the disciples speaking in their own native languages (Acts 2:8). No such recognition is in subsequent accounts, however. While the Greek words for tongues point toward human languages, Paul referred to a tongues of men and of angels" (1 Corinthians 13:1). He also saw the gift of interpretation, not as multilingual ability but as the work of the Spirit (12:10, 14:26). The evidence of the New Testament, then, permits an understanding of tongues as both human and heavenly speech.

The obvious conclusion is that Luke was a careful theologian and historian who clearly intended to demonstrate the actuality and importance of glossolalia in the baptizing work of the Spirit.

The purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit

While the baptism in the Spirit has always been understood among us to involve a powerful and joyous experience with Christ much like that of early believers (Acts 2:46, 5:41), we have never taught that its primary purpose is to induce private or public

ecstasy. To the contrary, our Statement of Fundamental Truths states the purpose to be "the enduement of power for life and service, the bestowment of the gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry."

That understanding is carefully crafted from the Scriptures. Luke, in his Gospel, recorded the promise that the disciples as Christ's witnesses would be "clothed with power from on high" so that they could preach "repentance and forgiveness of sins...to all nations" (Luke 24:4~49). The Acts account includes a similar word from the Lord: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses..." (Acts 1:8). The entire Book of Acts powerfully documents the work of the Spirit in equipping believers to carry out the work of Christ in the world. Therefore, we understand that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is given to energize the mission of the church.

Still, the emphasis upon mission must not obscure the continuing work of the Spirit in the transformation of life and character. A uniform apostolic witness connects the Spirit with holiness. In John's Gospel, Jesus' promise of the Spirit was prefaced with a call for love and obedience (John 14:15). For Luke, the Spirit is "the *Holy Spirit*, whom God has given to those who obey him" (Acts 5:32), and he used "repent" and "repentance" more often than any other biblical writer. For Paul, one filled with the "Spirit of holiness" (Romans 1:4) will of necessity "put to death the misdeeds of the body" (Romans 8:13; cf., Galatians 5:16), produce the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), and display the gifts of the Spirit in love (1 Corinthians 13). Peter pointed out that we are "chosen...through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2). Power for mission is inseparable from holiness of life.

Initial evidence and the gift of tongues

While the Acts narratives clearly present tongues as evidence and accompaniment of the Spirit's coming, Paul's writings demonstrate a widespread and continuing practice of tongues in the lives of believers. Paul himself continued to speak with tongues after his initial reception of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:18), desired that all do so (14:5), declared it to be edifying speech (14:4) addressed to God (14:2), and forbade prohibition of the practice (14:39). However, because of the importance of understanding for edification (14:16-19), tongues were to be a featured part of public worship only when interpreted (14:26-28). This is not, of course, to deny the value of unobtrusive personal worship in tongues in the service or the possibility of singing in tongues (14:15).

Paul also understood "different kinds of tongues" to be a spiritual gift for ministry to the church, which required a parallel gift of interpretation (1 Corinthians 12:10). When he posed the rhetorical question, "Do all speak in tongues?" anticipating an obviously negative answer, he was clearly referring to this gift (1 Corinthians 12:30). Any understanding of Paul's question that limits the evidential and devotional use of tongues to a select few contradicts his teaching in 1 Corinthians 14.

Tongues may thus fulfill (1) an evidential purpose when one is baptized in the Spirit, (2) a devotional purpose as the believer prays and worships, and (3) a ministry purpose when the gift leads to utterance and interpretation in the gathered congregation. In every case, the tongues are essentially the same, but the manifestation differs in purpose and use.

Our doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is crucial to the nature and mission of our church. More than ever before we need to understand and proclaim the reality and power of Spirit baptism to a church easily preoccupied with prosperity and comfort. Without the Spirit's power, taught and sought through dynamic biblical doctrine, we have very little to offer a desperately needy world.

Receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit

How one evangelist leads people to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit

1. Tell people that believers have the Holy Spirit— they received Him when they accepted Christ as their Savior (Acts 2:38,39; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19). If you feel some have not yet received Christ, lead them in the sinner's prayer. Then proceed.

2. Since the Holy Spirit dwells in believers' hearts, the manifestation blessing—tongues—comes from within. He came into their hearts at the time of salvation. (Quote John 7:37-39.) Emphasize, "Out of [your heart] shall flow rivers of living water. [But this spake he of the Spirit.]" The heart is the source of the flow (see John 4:13,14). Believers are simply going to manifest the indwelling Spirit in speaking with tongues. (This procedure tends to remove anxiety.)

3. Tell them you are going to pray that God will baptize them with the Holy Spirit, and when you have prayed, they are to begin worshiping God, not in their native language but in

tongues. An act of faith and a decision of the will are involved in this worship.

4. Explain further, ~hen I have prayed for you, open your mouth and make a start; i.e., give voice, make a sound, an utterance. God will lead you into your own prayer language." I then pray in tongues and encourage them, ~Follow me in the Spirit; that is, follow me in prayer. Open your mouth and speak out. Strange-sounding syllables may come to your mind. If so, speak them out."

5. People readily understand this procedure and quickly and easily receive the manifestation of speaking in tongues. You may have to be patient with some folk who are shy or reticent. Emphasize that whatever they may say will be the manifestation of the Spirit. They are to accept it as such. It is faith in action that brings the blessing.

6. Assemble Spirit-filled believers and instruct them to pray in the Spirit with you quietly but audibly (no screaming or shouting) when you have prayed for the group. I Usually-it is easier for the uninitiated to enter into the manifestation in the company of others. (Memorize Scripture quotations herein for ready reference.)

7. Give recipients the pamphlet, ~After You Have Received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit," which will inform them how to continue their prayer language. Encourage them to pray daily in the Spirit. (See Ephesians 5:18-20, 6:18, NIV.)

Give God the glory.

-Stanford E. Linzey, Jr.

Stanford E. Linzey, Jr., D.Min., is a retired Assemblies of God Navy chaplain, Escondido, California. He presently conducts conventions, seminars, and revivals on the Holy Spirit.

**Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.*

Edgar R. Lee, S.T.D., is academic dean of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

