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Archie Hui

The Pneumatology of Watchman Nee: A New Testament Perspective

Dr Archie Hui did research at the University of Aberdeen on the Holy Spirit in Ephesians and has continued to maintain his interest in pneumatology. Watchman Nee is a major figure in the Chinese church with a strong continuing influence through his writings.

Key words: Theology; New Testament; Holy Spirit; Watchman Nee.

I. Introduction

Watchman Nee (1903-72) is one of the most significant and influential Christian leaders and preachers in the history of the Chinese church. He founded the ever expanding indigenous church movement called 'the Little Flock' or 'the Local Church'. By the time the communists took over Mainland China in 1949, the movement gathered around 70,000 followers. When Leslie T. Lyall wrote a book on Chinese Christian leaders in the China Inland Mission and independent churches, he picked three people and compared them to King David's three mighty men.¹ Watchman Nee (Nee Duo-sheng of Shanghai) was one of those three and he was called 'man of insight' (the others being Yang Shao-t'ang of Shansi, 'man of humility', and Wang Ming-dao of Peking, 'man of iron').

Among Chinese Christian leaders, Nee has the rare distinction that his influence is felt not only among the Chinese, but also in the world at large. Some of his books (especially the popular *The Normal Christian Life*)² have been translated into many languages and sold in the millions. Dana Roberts writes: 'through the printed media his books continue to influence the interpretation of the Bible within the global evangelical movement.'³ In terms of Nee's theology and its lasting influence on the Chinese church and her theology, scholars

1 Leslie Lyall, *Three of China's Mighty Men* (London: OMF Books, 1973) 9-10.

2 Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life* (Fort Washington: Christian Literature Crusade, 1958).

3 Dana Roberts, *Understanding Watchman Nee* (Plainfield: Haven Books, 1980) ix.

have tended to focus on Nee's anthropology or ecclesiology,⁴ few have written on his pneumatology. In this article, we shall examine Nee's understanding of the Holy Spirit from the perspective of NT studies.⁵

II. Watchman Nee's Pneumatology

Nee believes that the works of the Spirit in the Old and in New Testaments are significantly different.⁶ He thinks that while the OT only speaks of the Spirit coming upon people, the NT speaks of the Spirit both coming 'upon' (*epi*) people and coming to dwell 'in' (*en*) them. For Nee, the external coming of the Spirit has to do with power and ministry, whereas the indwelling presence of the Spirit has to do with Christian daily living, sanctification and holiness. We are told that the two comings of the Spirit are not to be confused. The internal coming (or the Spirit within) has to do with new life, the external coming (or the Spirit without) to do with Christian service.

Nee subsequently elaborates these two comings of the Spirit. He cites the example of Jesus' earliest disciples who, according to him, received two gifts of the Holy Spirit: one from Jesus himself and one from God.⁷ The first gift comes on the night of Jesus' resurrection when, in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus appeared to his disciples and breathed on them, and they received the Holy Spirit (John 20:22).

4 For example, James Mo-oi Cheung, *The Ecclesiology of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee* (Fort Washington: Christian Literature Crusade, 1972); Lam Wing-hung, *Shu Ling Shen Xue: Ni To Sheng Si Xiang De Yan Jiu* [The Spiritual Theology of Watchman Nee] (Hong Kong: China Graduate School of Theology, 1985); Yuan-wei Liao, 'Watchman Nee's Theology of Victory: An Examination and Critique from a Lutheran Perspective' (ThD Dissertation, Luther Seminary, 1997); Luke Pei-Yuan Lu, 'Watchman Nee's Doctrine of the Church with Special Reference to its Contribution to the Local Church Movement' (PhD Dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1992); Grace Y. May, 'Watchman Nee and the Breaking of Bread: The Missiological and Spiritual Forces that Contributed to an Indigenous Chinese Ecclesiology' (ThD Dissertation, Boston University, 2000); Paul Siu, 'The Doctrine of Man in the Theology of Watchman Nee' (ThM thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1983).

5 For Nee's pneumatology, see especially Watchman Nee, *The Communion of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1994) or *Ni To Sheng Zhu Shu Quan Ji* [The Collected Works of Watchman Nee's Writings] (Hong Kong: Manna Publisher, 1994) 21:1-166 (abbreviated to *Collected Works*). It is regrettable that a number of the chapters in the Chinese work are missing in the English. Equally unfortunate is that the chapter orders of the two works are not the same.

6 Nee, *Collected Works*, 21:17-19, 28, 32-33, 105; *Communion*, 49, 79-83.

7 Nee, *Collected Works*, 17:403-23, 21:19, 27-29, 106-12, 115-16; *Communion*, 49-67, 79-83; *Life*, 113-40.

This is Jesus' gift of the Spirit in fulfilment of his earlier promise of the Paraclete (14:16-17, 15:26, 16:13, cf. 7:39). The second gift of the Holy Spirit comes fifty days later at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-42). This is God's gift of the Spirit in fulfilment of his OT promise in Joel 2:28-32. Nee reasons that we must not confuse these two gifts of the Spirit: John 20:22 must be read within the context of John 14-16, and Acts 2:1-42 must be read within the context of Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4-8. While the Pentecost gift has to do with the external coming of the Spirit upon the believers granting them power for Christian ministry, the Easter gift has to do with the indwelling presence of the Spirit giving the disciples abundant life.

It is important to note that the Johannine or resurrection gift is not simply new or regenerate life. For Nee, Jesus' disciples are already regenerated and have new life. The Johannine gift is therefore not new life, but the kind of abundant life promised by Jesus in John 10:10. This abundant life comes as a result of being filled with the Spirit and allowing the Spirit to take control and be the lord of our lives. Here, Nee makes a distinction between the Spirit as an influence and the Spirit as a person.⁸ When somebody is regenerated, they experience the Spirit as an influence. At this point, although the believer has new or spiritual life, he/she is still weak and often fails to overcome sin and flesh. As long as believers do not recognise the personhood of the Spirit and refuse to give themselves over to the Spirit's control, their old nature will continue to dominate over their new nature. What believers lack at this stage is not spiritual life, but healthy or consistent spiritual life. This happens when believers come to see the Spirit as a person and allow the Spirit to take control and be the lord of their life. According to Nee, when believers take this crucial step, they are being 'full' of the Spirit and enter into a mature and abundant life.

Nee makes a further distinction at this point. He argues that we must distinguish between being 'filled with the Holy Spirit' (Luke 1:15, 41, 67, Acts 2:4, 4:8, 31, 9:17, 13:9) and being 'full of the Holy Spirit' (Luke 4:1, Acts 6:3, 5, 7:55, 11:24, 13:52, Eph 5:18).⁹ The two are significantly different. On the one hand, to be 'filled' with the Spirit is something that happens only for a short duration. People like Elizabeth (Luke 1:41), Zechariah (1:67), and the apostles (Acts 2:4, 4:8, 31, 9:17) are temporarily empowered to do some specific work of ministry such as prophesying, witnessing, evangelising, and preaching. On the other hand, to be 'full' of the Spirit is something

8 Nee, *Collected Works*, 17:416-17, 21:24-26, 32, 124-25; *Communion*, 37-43; *Life*, 129-33.

9 Nee, *Collected Works*, 21:30-32.

that happens for a much longer duration. People like the Lord Jesus (Luke 4:1), Stephen (Acts 6:5), Barnabas (11:24), and the disciples in Pisidian Antioch (13:52) are not full of the Spirit for a short time only. That is their normal spiritual state.

In conclusion, Nee (somewhat like the Wesleyan-Holiness Pentecostals)¹⁰ thinks that the Holy Spirit works in a believer's life in three distinguishable ways.¹¹ The first is the regenerating work of the Spirit, giving the believer new life. This happens when a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ. The second is the indwelling work of the Spirit, bringing the believer into a fuller and richer spiritual life. This happens when the believer recognises the Spirit as a person (and not just as an influence) and allows the Spirit to take control and be the lord of their life. This is otherwise known as being 'full' of the Spirit. The third is the empowering work of the Spirit, giving the believer strength for ministry and Christian service. This is otherwise known as being 'baptised' or 'filled' with the Spirit.¹²

III. Issues Raised by Nee

Nee's pneumatology raises a number of issues. These include:

1. Does the NT distinguish between being 'filled with the Holy Spirit' and being 'full of the Holy Spirit' in terms of duration (shorter versus longer period of time) and in terms of function (power for ministry versus spiritual maturity and life)?
2. Does the NT distinguish between the outpoured Spirit (the Spirit coming 'upon' a person) and the indwelling Spirit (the Spirit entering 'into' and dwelling 'in' a person)? Are these technical terms for the Spirit's different activities (external work of empowerment versus internal work of personal renewal)?
3. Does the NT more or less equate baptism in the Holy Spirit with being 'filled with the Holy Spirit' as power for ministry and Christian service, with the only difference between them being Spirit-baptism is an once-for-all event and being 'filled with the Holy Spirit' is a repeatable event in a believer's life?¹³
4. Are there two comings of the Holy Spirit, one at Easter giving the disciples deeper and more abundant life (John 20:22), and the other at Pentecost giving the disciples power for ministry and

10 H. I. Lederle, *Treasures Old and New: Interpretations of 'Spirit-Baptism' in the Charismatic Renewal Movement* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988) 16-17.

11 Nee, *Collected Works*, 21:21, 32-35, 105; *Communion*, 49.

12 Nee, *Collected Works*, 21:30-35, 101-31, 147-52; *Communion*, 29-78, 84-88.

13 Nee, *Collected Works*, 21:34.

Christian service (Acts 2:1-42)?

5. Does the NT distinguish the Spirit as an influence giving converts new life and the Spirit as a person enabling believers to enter into a deeper and more Spirit-filled life?

We shall examine these issues one after the other below.

A. *Filled with the Spirit' and Full of the Spirit'*

Nee's understanding of the two almost distinctively Lukan phrases (see section II above) suggests that he regards them more or less as technical terms with fixed meanings: while being 'filled with the Holy Spirit' means power for ministry and is temporary or short in duration, being 'full of the Holy Spirit' means mature spiritual life and is permanent or long in duration.

Max Turner, however, has argued that the two phrases are actually general metaphors and they should be read alongside other Lukan 'filled with' phrases (such as 'filled with rage' in Luke 4:28, 'filled with fear' in 5:26, 'filled with fury' in 6:11, 'filled with wonder and amazement' in Acts 3:10, and 'filled with jealousy' in 5:17 and 13:45) and other Lukan 'full of' phrases (such as 'full of leprosy' in Luke 5:12, 'full of grace and power' in Acts 6:8, 'full of good works and acts of charity' in 9:36, 'full of deceit and villainy' in 13:10, and 'full of rage' in 19:28).¹⁴ In other words, just as 'filled with rage' and 'full of leprosy' are not technical terms but general metaphors, even so 'filled with the Holy Spirit' and 'full of the Holy Spirit' are not technical terms but general metaphors. The two phrases merely draw our attention 'to the observed rich degree or intensity'¹⁵ of the presence of the Spirit in the life of the person so described, whether it be Jesus, Peter, Stephen, or Paul.

In and of themselves, the phrases do not tell us what the presence of the Spirit means concretely or what the precise effect of the Spirit is. For this, we have to turn to the co-texts around the two phrases. In the case of Zechariah, the Spirit's presence means charismatic praise and prophecy (Luke 1:67-79). In the case of Peter before the Jewish council, the Spirit's presence means charismatic proclamation in boldness (Acts 4:8). In the case of the seven deacons, the Spirit's presence means charismatic wisdom (6:3). In the cases of Stephen and Barnabas, the Spirit's presence means dynamic faith (6:5, 11:24).

Although Turner does not distinguish the two phrases in terms of function, he does so in terms of duration. He thinks that 'filled with

14 Max Turner, 'Spirit Endowment in Luke/Acts: Some Linguistic Considerations', *VoxEvang* 12 (1979), 45-63.

15 Turner, 'Some Linguistic Considerations', 53.

the Holy Spirit' would normally mean short outbursts of specific and immediate spiritual power, and 'full of the Holy Spirit' would normally mean the presence of the Spirit in exceptional degree over a long period of time. At this point, it might seem that there is no difference between Turner and Nee, who also makes a distinction in terms of duration. But Turner does not make a clear-cut distinction and is well-aware of the exceptional cases.¹⁶ Thus, Luke 1:15 (the birth of John the Baptist) and Acts 9:17 (the conversion of the apostle Paul) hardly conform to the view that 'filled with the Holy Spirit' means short outbursts of spiritual power. Likewise, Acts 7:55 (Stephen's heavenly vision) and 19:28 (the fury of the Ephesians against Paul) hardly conform to the view that the 'full of' phrases describe events of long rather than short duration.

A similar situation appears in the Septuagint. In LXX Deut 34:9, Joshua was said to be 'filled with the Spirit of understanding' so that he might succeed Moses and lead the people of Israel into the promised land. In Sir 48:12-14, Elisha was 'filled' with the Spirit and did wonders in his life. We should note that both Joshua's leadership and Elisha's prophetic ministry lasted close to half a century each, hardly a short duration of time. In LXX Job 32:18, Elihu said that he was 'full of words'. The following verses explain that he was, in fact, under great compulsion to speak immediately and could not wait a moment longer (32:19-20). Wis 11:18 is a significant text in that when God led Israel out of Egypt, he could have destroyed all the Egyptians with newly created beasts 'full of fury', but he mercifully did not choose to do that. From these two passages, it is obvious that the 'full of' phrases have more to do with extent (how much) rather than duration (how long). Admittedly, there is no reference to the Holy Spirit in these passages. But if the two Spirit-fullness phrases are general metaphors rather than technical terms, then this lack of reference to the Spirit would not be a critical factor in our consideration of the evidence.

Thus, the two phrases primarily address the question of extent (how much a person is influenced by the Spirit: a lot or not at all) and not the question of duration (how long a person is influenced by the Spirit: a long or short time). They differ in that while 'filled with the Holy Spirit' is normally inceptive (informing the readers that the mighty Spirit came and started to affect so-and-so at this moment in time), 'full of the Holy Spirit' is normally stative (informing the

16 For a fuller account and treatment of this issue, see Archie Hui, 'Spirit-Fullness in Luke-Acts: Technical and Prophetic?', *JPT* 17 (2000), 24-38.

readers that so-and-so is already under the mighty inspiration and power of the Spirit at this moment in time). Whether the presence or fullness of the Spirit means power for ministry or vibrant Christian living does not depend on the Spirit-fullness phrases in and of themselves, but on the co-texts which surround the two phrases.

Perhaps, one of the main reasons we often misinterpret these two phrases is the fact that we are too scientifically and theologically minded. We first take the phrases to be technical (theological) expressions. Then we work at their theological content, hoping that through them we can get a handle on Luke's pneumatology. But, in reality, Luke first looks at the historical or phenomenological situation (for example, Stephen is an exceptionally charismatic and wise Christian). Perceiving that this phenomenon (Stephen's charismatic wisdom) is a fulfilment of Jesus' promise and subsequent gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, Luke then gives it his logical and theological explanation by using one or the other of the Spirit-fullness phrases (Stephen is a man full of the Spirit and wisdom). The problem arises when Luke uses these Spirit-fullness phrases not just once or twice but regularly, which misleads us into thinking that they are indeed technical expressions with definite and substantial theological freight. Our preconception is finally 'confirmed' and deepened when we find Paul exhorting his readers to be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18), not always alert to the fact that Paul is, in fact, a very different author and writes for quite different purposes and uses a different genre for his writings.

B. The Outpoured Spirit versus the Indwelling Spirit

As we have noted above (see section II above), Nee distinguishes between the external work of the Spirit which results in the believer's empowerment for ministry (this happens when the Spirit comes 'upon' him externally) and the internal work of the Spirit which results in the believer's spiritual renewal (this happens when the Spirit comes to dwell 'in' him internally).¹⁷ Like his treatment of the two Spirit-fullness phrases (see section III part A above), Nee more or less regards these prepositional constructions as technical expressions for the Spirit's two very different kinds of activities. But is Nee right in doing so?

Once again, Turner has argued that these prepositional construc-

17 Nee's distinction between the Spirit 'upon' and 'in' the believer is similar to that of Moody. See D. L. Moody, *Power from on High* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1992) 31-55. While he appears to know about Moody (Nee, *Collected Works*, 17:412-14; *Life*, 126-28), it is not sure if he was influenced by him in any way or not.

tions are not to be taken literally. They are merely 'two different spatial metaphors denoting the same reality: viz. that God's Spirit is at work in and through the life of'¹⁸ the person receiving the Spirit. In the NT, this could be seen in the case of Jesus, when he was baptised by John the Baptist at the river Jordan. While Mark 1:10 describes the Spirit coming down and entering 'into him' (*eis auton*), both Matt 3:16 and Luke 3:22 speak of the Spirit coming 'upon him' (*ep' auton*). Unless we think that there are significant differences between the Gospel of Mark and the other synoptic Gospels, we have to say that the different prepositions do not communicate radically different types of the Spirit's work in the life and ministry of Jesus. After all, all three Gospels portray Jesus as endowed with the Spirit to inaugurate the kingdom of God.

Similarly, in the Septuagint, it is questionable to see any significant difference between the Spirit 'on' (*epi*) Moses or the seventy elders (LXX Num 11:17, 25-29) and the Spirit 'in' (*en*) Joseph (LXX Gen 41:38), Joshua (LXX Num 27:18), or Daniel (LXX Dan 5:11).¹⁹ We should note especially the case of Moses and Joshua. Num 27:12-23 tells us that God has appointed Joshua to succeed Moses in leadership and ministry. It is highly questionable to see any significant difference between the work of the Spirit in the life and ministry of these two individuals. Both of them are Spirit-inspired leaders appointed by God to lead the people of Israel, whether in the wilderness or into the promised land. Turner rightly notes that we must not press these spatial metaphors beyond the rather limited authorial intent.²⁰ It is simply not helpful to ask where the Spirit comes from and where the Spirit ends up exactly. It is true that, in one sense, the Spirit is from heaven and ends up with Mary (Luke 1:35), Jesus (3:22), or the believers (Acts 8:17, 10:44, 11:15, 19:6). But we must also note that there is a sense in which Luke knows that the Spirit was not literally 'up there in heaven' and did not only end up 'in' or 'upon' the particular believers he happened to be describing in his various accounts: the Spirit was, according to Luke, also with Philip (6:3-5) when he was preaching to the Samaritans; with Peter (2:4, 4:8, 31, 5:3, 32) when he was preaching to Cornelius and his household; and with Paul (9:17, 13:9, 16:6-7) when he laid his hands on the Ephesian disciples.

More importantly, we must not overlook the fact that the same kind

18 Turner, 'Some Linguistic Considerations', 48.

19 Nee (*Collected Works*, 21:17, 105; *Communion*, 49-50, 79-80) seems to have overlooked OT and Septuagint passages such as these.

20 Turner, 'Some Linguistic Considerations', 49.

of spatial metaphor is used by Luke with reference to things other than the Holy Spirit. Luke speaks of fear 'coming upon' people (Luke 1:65, Acts 5:5, 11), or men's fate 'coming upon' them (Luke 21:26, Acts 8:24, 13:40), or famine 'coming upon' Egypt and Canaan (Acts 7:11). We are not to think that fear or fate comes upon people externally rather than affecting them internally. Similarly, we are not to think that famine only touches the outskirts of Egypt and Canaan rather than affecting the lands internally.

This is not to say that there is no difference whatsoever between the Spirit coming 'upon' a person and dwelling 'in' him. In fact, their differences are similar to the two expressions for Spirit-fullness, 'filled with the Holy Spirit' and 'full of the Holy Spirit'. To say that the Spirit comes 'upon' a person is to say that at this very moment or from this moment forward, the Spirit begins or starts to function in the life of the person in a certain way, whether it be Mary (Luke 1:35), Jesus (Matt 3:16, Luke 3:22, John 1:33), the early disciples (Acts 1:8, 2:17-18), Cornelius and his household (10:44-45, 11:15), or the Ephesian believers (19:6).²¹ To say that the Spirit dwells 'in' a person is to say that the Spirit is already present and is currently at work in the life of the person, whether it be Joseph (LXX Gen 41:38), Joshua (LXX Num 27:18), Daniel (LXX Dan 5:11), the OT prophets (1 Pet 1:11), or the NT believers (John 14:17, Rom 8:9, 11, 1 Cor 3:16, 6:19, 2 Cor 1:22, 2 Tim 1:14, Jas 4:5).

This inceptive-stative distinction, however, is not absolute and needs to be qualified. It is possible to speak of the Spirit as already 'upon' a person, such as Moses (LXX Num 11:17, 25), the seventy elders (LXX Num 11:25-26), Elisha (LXX 4 Kgdms 2:15), and Simeon (Luke 2:25). In these cases, there is little difference between the two prepositional phrases. In sum, we can say that 'upon' is more flexible than 'in'. This is because 'upon' could be used to express either the inceptive or the stative presence of the Spirit, depending on the accompanying verb.²² while an inceptive verb plus *epi* suggests the inceptive presence of the Spirit (Matt 3:16, Luke 1:35, 3:22, Acts 1:8), a stative verb plus *epi* suggests the stative presence of the Spirit

21 Note also LXX Num 11:17-29 (70 elders), 23:7 (Balaam), 24:2 (Balaam), Judg 3:10 (Othniel), 11:29 (Jephthah), 14:6 (Samson), 19 (Samson), 1 Sam 10:10 (Saul), 11:6 (Saul), 16:13 (David), 19:20 (Saul's men), 23 (Saul), 2 Chr 15:1 (Azariah), 20:14 (Jahaziel), Ezek 2:2 (Ezekiel), 3:24 (Ezekiel). For a convenient list of the different verbs used in these LXX texts, see Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1984) 18.

22 The accompanying verb could be *ginomai*, *ekcheō* or *ekchunnō*, *epanapauō* or *anapauō*, *epipiplō*, *epitithēmi*, *erchomai* or *eperchomai*, *ephallomai* or *hallomai*, *katabainō*, *kateuthunō* or *menō*. While most of these are inceptive verbs, some are stative.

(LXX Num 11:25-26, 4 Kgdms 2:15, Luke 2:25, 1 Pet 4:14). John 1:32-33 is a little unusual in that it emphasises both the inceptive coming and the stative presence of the Spirit in the person of Jesus the Son of God.

C. *Spirit-Baptism and Spirit-Fullness*

Nee more or less equates baptism in the Holy Spirit with being 'filled with the Holy Spirit' (see section II above).²³ Both mean power for Christian ministry and service. The only difference lies in the fact that Spirit-baptism is an once-and-for-all event and being 'filled with the Holy Spirit' is a repeatable event in a believer's life.²⁴

As far as Spirit-baptism is concerned, it is important for us not to assume that John the Baptist and Jesus shared exactly the same view. After all, the saying of John and the saying of Jesus are not identical. First, while John speaks of Spirit-baptism in an active sense, namely the coming one will baptise people with the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11//Luke 3:16, Mark 1:8, John 1:33); Jesus speaks of it in a passive sense, namely people will be baptised with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5, 11:16, cf. 1 Cor 12:13). Second, their respective hearers are not the same. While John addressed the Jews of his day, most of whom turned out not to believe in Jesus; Jesus addressed his disciples, who had already been with him for some time. Third, neither Mark nor Matthew reported the coming of the Spirit at Easter (John 20:22) or Pentecost (Acts 2:1-42). Why would Mark and Matthew mention Spirit-baptism at such a prominent place in their Gospels, if they are not going to say that it has come into fulfilment in due course? If the fulfilment part of the equation is missing, why keep the promise part?

23 Michael Eaton conveniently lists eight different views on Spirit-baptism. He divides these eight views into two main groups, depending whether Spirit-baptism is regarded as an experience or not. Under the first or non-experiential group, there are three views: sacramental interpretation (Roman Catholicism), non-experiential part of conversion (Richard Gaffin), and non-experiential post-conversion event (F. B. Meyer). Under the second or experiential group, there are five views: associated with conversion (George Whitefield, James Dunn), a gift of holiness (John Wesley, A. M. Hills, Lewis T. Corlett), power for service (D. L. Moody, R. A. Torrey), gifts of the Spirit (Don Basham), and assurance or sealing of salvation (Thomas Goodwin, Martyn Lloyd-Jones). Eaton actually adds a ninth view, namely seeing Spirit-baptism as a post-conversion experience that releases that which was already given in principle at conversion (David Watson). For more details, see M. A. Eaton, *Baptism with the Spirit: The Teaching of Martyn Lloyd-Jones* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) 13-37.

24 Nee's view of Spirit-baptism and Spirit-fullness is similar to that of Torrey. See R. A. Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He is and What He does* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1927) 107-53. While he appears to know about Torrey (Nee, *Collected Works*, 17:412-14; *Life*, 126-28), it is not sure if he was influenced by him in any way or not.

All these go to suggest that John the Baptist's saying of Spirit-baptism should not too quickly be equated with Jesus' saying of Spirit-baptism. Indeed, there are reasons to believe that John the Baptist does not envisage the coming one to give or pour out the Spirit upon his followers, but to cleanse or purify Israel from sin by means of the power of the fiery Spirit of Yahweh.²⁵ First, while the OT and Judaism expected the Holy Spirit as an eschatological gift, this is a gift from God himself and not a gift from the Davidic Messiah.²⁶ Second, what the OT and Judaism expected was that the Davidic Messiah would be endowed with the Holy Spirit (Isa 11:1-5, 1 Enoch 49:3, 62:2, 1QSb 5:25, 4Q161 frs. 8-10, Pss. Sol. 17:37, 18:7) and because of this spiritual empowerment, he would be able to cleanse and purify Israel from sin by executing justice and judgment on all her sinners (Pss. Sol. 17:22-45, 18:5, cf. 1 Enoch 46:1-8, 48:1-50:5, 62:1-63:12, 1QSb 5:24-29, 4Q161 frs. 8-10, 2 Apoc. Bar. 39:1-40:4, 4 Ezra 12:31-35, 13:21-50).

Third, this interpretation fits well with the story line of the synoptic Gospels where John the Baptist's words are followed immediately by the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus. Clearly the Evangelists intend the readers to see Jesus as the Davidic Messiah endowed with the Spirit for his messianic mission (Matt 3:16, 12:28-32, Mark 1:10, 12, 3:29, Luke 3:22, 4:1, 14, 18, 10:21, 12:10, Acts 10:38). In other words, the fulfilment of John's prophecy needs not wait until Easter or Pentecost, it was there to be seen by all in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Of course, this does not mean that either Jesus or the Evangelists accepted without reservation or modification John's messianic view of the coming one. The evidence suggests that while John the Baptist tends to see Spirit-baptism in terms of Isaiah 11, Jesus and the Evangelists tempered this portrayal with the picture of the Spirit upon the suffering Servant of Yahweh in Isaiah 42:1-4 and 61:1-2 (Mark 1:10-11//Matt 3:16-17//Luke 3:21-22, Matt 12:17-21, Luke 4:17-19). It was this softer picture of Jesus that caused John the Baptist to wonder whether Jesus was indeed the Davidic Messiah who will come with power and judgment (Matt 11:2-6//Luke 7:18-23, cf. Matt 11:16-19//Luke 7:31-35).

Fourth, the Evangelists are unanimous in depicting Jesus (not John

25 For a fuller treatment of this issue, see Archie Hui, 'John the Baptist and Spirit-Baptism', *EvQ* 71 (1999), 99-115.

26 E. Best, 'Spirit-Baptism', *NovT* 4 (1960), 236; Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) 179-80; V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (2d ed.; London: Macmillan, 1966) 157.

the Baptist) as the one who promised the gift of the Spirit to the disciples. For example, Jesus promised his disciples the assistance of the Spirit before trials (Mark 13:11 and Matt 10:19-20//Luke 12:11-12). In Luke 21:15, this kind of assistance is attributed to Jesus himself, implying his future gift of the Spirit. In view of the wisdom displayed by Stephen in Acts 6:10, Luke understood this gift of Jesus to have been fulfilled at Pentecost (cf. 2:33, 16:7). Similarly, Jesus promised his disciples God's gift of the Paraclete or the Spirit of Truth to take his place (John 14:16-17, 26, 15:26, cf. Luke 11:13). On a few of these occasions, this gift is attributed to Jesus himself (John 15:26, 16:7, cf. 6:63, 14:26). According to the Fourth Evangelist, this gift of Jesus is fulfilled at Easter (20:22). Most importantly, in Luke-Acts Jesus not only told his disciples to wait for God's promised Spirit, he also made it clear that he himself is going to give them this Spirit (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-8, cf. John 7:38-39). What is significant about Acts 1:4-8 is that here for the first time, Jesus himself linked the promise or gift of the Spirit to John's Spirit-baptism prophecy (cf. 11:16).

All of the above point to the fact that it was Jesus (not John the Baptist)²⁷ who made the crucial connection between God's or his gift of the Spirit with Spirit-baptism, and it was Jesus (not John) who shifted the primary focus of Spirit-baptism from that of a Spirit-endowed Messiah (based on Isaiah 11) to that of a Messiah who will also bestow God's Spirit to his followers (based not on the OT, but on his own self-understanding and relationship to God). The implication of this connection or shift is anything but insignificant. It amounts to no less than a transcendent divine Christology.²⁸

If it was Jesus (not John the Baptist) who made the connection between God's or his gift of the Spirit with John's Spirit-baptism prophecy, the question remains as to what he envisaged the role or function of the Spirit to be. Is the Spirit so given the Spirit of power for ministry and service, as Nee suggests? There is little doubt that for Luke-Acts, the Spirit is primarily the Spirit of prophecy and mission: the prophetic manifestations of the Spirit abounds in Luke-Acts (Luke 1:41 [Elizabeth], 67 [Zechariah], 2:26-27 [Simeon], 12:12 [disciples], Acts 2:17-18 [Pentecost], 11:28 [Agabus], 20:23 [Paul],

27 Scholars believing in the originality of John (rather than Jesus) include J. D. G. Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', *NovT* 14 (1972), 91; R. L. Webb, *John the Baptist and Prophet: A Socio-Historical Study* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991) 274.

28 Turner, 'The Spirit of Christ and Christology', in H. H. Rowdon (ed.), *Christ the Lord* (Leicester: IVP, 1982) 168-90; 'The Spirit of Christ and 'Divine' Christology', in J. B. Green and M. Turner (eds.), *Jesus of Nazareth* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994) 413-36.

21:11 [Agabus]), and the Spirit is very much the force or power behind the various Christian missions, whether such mission is commissioned by Jesus (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8), or happened in the life of Peter with reference to Jews (4:31, 5:32) or Gentiles (10:19), or in the life of Paul in his missionary journeys (13:2, 4, 16:6-7). Given this Lukan interest and emphasis on mission, it is not surprising for preachers (such as Nee) and scholars (such as E. Schweizer, R. Stronstad, and R. P. Menzies)²⁹ to think that the Spirit is given subsequent to conversion for power in ministry and so has no or little soteriological consequence for the believer himself.

But this view of Spirit-baptism is too narrow for the following reasons.³⁰ First, neither the OT nor Judaism understands the Spirit simply as the Spirit of mission with little ethical and soteriological relevance as Schweizer and Menzies argue. While the Spirit is only given to a few individuals in Israel for divinely appointed tasks, the presence of the Spirit is essential rather than optional because these appointed tasks have significant soteriological relevance for the well-being of Israel. Her judges and kings are raised up by God to save Israel from her enemies. Her prophets, priests, and sages are raised up by God to instruct and help Israel to live in a manner consistent with his holiness and righteousness. What is more important is the fact that the OT and Judaism see the eschatological Spirit as given for the purpose of restoring and maintaining Israel's relationship with her God (Isa 32:15-17, 44:3-5, Ezek 36:25-27, 37:1-14, 39:29, Joel 2:28-32, 1QH 16:11b-12, 17:25-26, 4Q434). Thus, the eschatological Spirit will be 'the saving self-manifesting presence of God, in gifts of revelation, guidance, wisdom and spiritual understanding.'³¹ As such, the Spirit is not only prophetic and revelatory (as most would agree), but also fundamentally ethical and soteriological.

29 R. P. Menzies, *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology with Special Reference to Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991); E. Schweizer, *Pneuma*, TDNT 6.389-455; Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1984). Menzies has provided the strongest case for the classical Pentecostal distinction between conversion-initiation and subsequent Spirit-baptism. For a summary and response to Menzies, see Turner, 'The Spirit in Luke-Acts: A Support or A Challenge to Classical Pentecostal Paradigms?', *VoxEvang* 27 (1997) 75-101. The view of J. B. Shelton, *Mighty in Word and Deed: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991) is somewhat similar, though less extreme. For a summary and response, see Turner, 'Empowerment for Mission? The Pneumatology of Luke-Acts: An Appreciation and Critique of James B. Shelton's *Mighty in Word and Deed*', *VoxEvang* 24 (1994) 103-22.

30 Archie Hui, 'The Spirit of Prophecy and Pauline Pneumatology', *TynBul* 50 (1999) 94-104; Turner, *Power from on High*, 81-455; *idem*, 'The Spirit in Luke-Acts', 79-101.

31 Turner, 'The Spirit in Luke-Acts', 85.

Second, given the above and the dominating interest of Luke-Acts in Israel's restoration and salvation, it seems singularly unlikely that the Lukan Spirit affects salvation in others but not in those so inspired. For example, why should John the Baptist be filled with the Spirit right from the time of his birth (Luke 1:15), if the Spirit is only a *donum superadditum* for his adult ministry to others? Or, how are we to explain Jesus' exceptional wisdom and knowledge of God as his Father (2:47, 49), if not by the Spirit that came upon Mary (1:35)? Here, we must not overlook the step-parallelism between John the Baptist and Jesus the Messiah in Luke 1-2. If John the 'prophet' of God is filled with the Spirit from birth (1:76), is it really thinkable that Jesus the 'Son' of God can be any less affected by the Spirit in his childhood (1:32, 35)? Luke 4:1-2 is also significant. Luke did not simply follow his sources (Mark and Q) in their descriptions of the role of the Spirit in Jesus' life. His redaction rather suggests that 'the Spirit aids Jesus in his fight against the tempter . . . [and] is thus of immediate ethical significance too.'³² Even more important are two key passages: Luke 24:49, which alludes to Isa 32:15-17 where the Spirit effects righteousness and peace in Israel, and Acts 2:16-21, which quotes Joel 2:28-32 where the Spirit of prophecy brings revelation and salvation to Israel.

Third, there are numerous texts in Luke-Acts that do not relate the Spirit to power for mission. Some of these texts relate the Spirit to the life and well-being of the church, including Acts 5:3-9 (Ananias and Sapphira are condemned because of their deception against the Spirit), 6:3 (seven Spirit-filled people are chosen to serve tables), 11:28 (Agabus is inspired by the Spirit and prophesied of a famine), 15:28 (wisdom is given to leaders to resolve conflict and disagreement within the church), and 20:28 (overseers are appointed by the Spirit to pastor the church). Other texts relate the Spirit to the life of certain individuals, including Stephen (6:5, 7:55), Barnabas (11:24), and Paul (20:22-23, 21:4, 11). While these three people are all used of God to proclaim the gospel in one way or another, it is simply not true to say that all of the texts cited above have to do with mission. Related to these are the texts which link the Spirit to the conversion-initiation of the believers, including the 3000 converts on the day of Pentecost (2:38-41), the Samaritans (8:15-20), Cornelius' household (10:44-48, 11:15-18, cf. 15:7-11), and the Ephesian disciples (19:1-6). In none of these texts is the Spirit specifically to do with mission. While Acts gives us a picture of a vibrant church eager for missions, it falls short of portraying the early church consisting only of preach-

³² Turner, 'The Spirit in Luke-Acts', 88.

ers and missionaries like Peter and Paul. We simply do not get the picture of people getting converted and immediately rushing out to evangelise the world. In other words, the scenario is not one of all mission with no church life (2:42, 44-46, 4:32-5:11, 6:1-6, 9:36-41, 20:17-35).

Fourth, we need to return to the conversion-initiation texts mentioned above, since some of these texts are disputed. For example, it is often argued that, like the early apostles, the Samaritans and the Ephesian disciples have already attained authentic faith before their reception of the Spirit. Consequently, Spirit-baptism is given to believers subsequent to their conversion.³³ The case of the Ephesian disciples, however, is not entirely persuasive. It is true that initially they looked like Christian disciples (Acts 19:1). But on closer examination Paul found out that they have merely received the baptism of John the Baptist (19:2-4). Paul's two questions in 19:2-3 (linking the three themes of the Spirit, faith, and water baptism), in fact, strongly suggests that conversion-initiation normally leads to the reception of the Spirit. In other words, 19:1-6 is entirely consistent with 2:38-39, where Peter promises his hearers that repentance and water baptism will be followed by God's gift of the Spirit. Two things about 2:38-39 need to be noted: one, contrary to many (including Nee),³⁴ no further conditions need to be met beyond those of repentance and water baptism; two, no delay is envisaged by Peter (or Luke) in the gift of the Spirit subsequent to repentance and baptism.

The case of the Samaritans is indeed different.³⁵ They believed, and

33 Nee (*Collected Works*, 21:108, 115; *Communion*, 54-55, 65) believes that the Samaritans and the Ephesian disciples already have the indwelling Spirit of Romans 8, but they lack the empowering Spirit of Acts 2 and 10. But this is to mix Lukan and Pauline pneumatologies. We have already argued (section III point B) that Nee's distinction between the Spirit coming 'upon' a person for ministry power and the Spirit dwelling 'in' a person for vibrant life is not a valid one.

34 For example, Torrey (*The Holy Spirit*, 154-201) names seven steps for Spirit-baptism: faith in Jesus Christ, renunciation of sin, water baptism, obedience or surrender of one's will to God, thirst for Spirit-baptism, prayer for Spirit-baptism, and faith in God's promise of Spirit-baptism. Nee (*Collected Works*, 21:123; *Communion*, 37) names three: repentance concerning known sins, spiritual hunger and thirst, and fervent prayers. F. D. Bruner (*A Theology of the Holy Spirit* [Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1970] 92) notes: "There appear to be as many suggested conditions for the reception of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as there are, in fact, advocates of the doctrine".

35 Also different is the case of Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44-48), though in an entirely different way since the Spirit is given before water baptism. But this is explained by the fact that Peter was hesitant about the full inclusion of Gentiles within the Christian church and needed divine initiative and intervention (10:9-20, 11:4-18).

yet they only received the Spirit after an interval. 'But Luke effectively stylises this as exceptional in 8:16.'³⁶ If 8:4-25 (rather than 2:38-39) is the norm, there would be no need for Luke's editorial comment in 8:16. This unusual situation is best explained by its uniqueness in salvation history. This is the first time the gospel has come to a non-Jewish community. The involvement of the apostles would serve to authenticate the faith of the Samaritans and ensure that the historical rift between Jerusalem and Samaria would not continue within the Christian church. Even in the case of the early apostles, Spirit-baptism is not given to them simply for power in mission. Neither Luke 24:49 nor Acts 2:16-21 supports such a reading. Luke 24:49 alludes to Isa 32:15-17 which speaks of the Spirit as the power for a life of righteousness and peace (cf. Isa 44:3-5). Acts 2:16-21 quotes from Joel 2:28-32 which speaks of the Spirit as the power for revelation and salvation. We must not forget that while the apostles have authentic faith before Pentecost, they are not thereby spiritually self-sufficient. They need either the earthly Jesus or the Holy Spirit to mediate to them the divine presence. In other words, Pentecost is just as essential for the apostles themselves as for their ministry to others. This is why the gift of the Spirit is so intimately tied to conversion-initiation in Acts. Without it, the convert is deprived of the presence of God and Jesus Christ (cf. 2:33, 16:6-7).

If Spirit-baptism is not simply a matter of power for ministry or mission, neither is being filled with the Spirit. As we have already seen above (section III part A), the two Spirit-fullness phrases ('filled with the Holy Spirit' and 'full of the Holy Spirit') are general metaphors rather than technical expressions. Admittedly, some of the relevant passages seem to have ministry in mind, most notably Zechariah's prophecy at the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:67), Peter's speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:8), the disciples' proclamation of the gospel (4:31), and Paul's words of judgment against Elymas the sorcerer (13:9). But the association is not inevitably so. We have already mentioned the case of John the Baptist in Luke 1:15. While the Spirit no doubt empowered John in his adult ministry, the fact that the Spirit was given from birth suggests that the Spirit is not simply given to him in order that he might minister to others. Acts 9:17 is essentially the same. No doubt, Luke wants to tell us that Paul (like Peter before him) is empowered by the Spirit for ministry, but this does not

36 Turner, 'The Spirit in Luke-Acts', 92. More recently, Turner writes 'Acts 8 does not support subsequence—it subverts it by branding it anomalous' ('Interpreting the Samaritans of Acts 8: The Waterloo of Pentecostal Soteriology and Pneumatology?', *Pneuma* 23 [2001] 278).

mean there is nothing more to the Spirit's work than power for mission. The fact that Paul's reception of the Spirit is so closely tied to his conversion-initiation suggests that his case is not entirely different from that of John the Baptist, namely the Spirit is given before they absolutely need the Spirit for ministry. Acts 2:4 is often interpreted as power for ministry.³⁷ But the text primarily has to do with praise and worship, and only secondarily with proclamation (cf. Luke 1:41, Acts 10:46, 19:6). We, therefore, cannot agree with Nee in seeing both Spirit-baptism and filled with the Spirit as empowerment for ministry.

D. Easter and Pentecost

As we have noted above (see section II above), Nee distinguishes two comings of the Spirit: one at Easter when the risen Jesus breathed upon the disciples the Holy Spirit giving them deeper and more abundant life (John 20:22); the other at Pentecost when the risen Jesus poured upon the disciples the Holy Spirit giving them power for Christian ministry and service (Acts 2:1-42). We have just looked at the case of Luke-Acts (see section II part C above) and found that the Spirit of prophecy given at Pentecost has a wider role than that of empowering believers for ministry or mission only. Moreover, the Spirit is normally given to the believers at conversion-initiation rather than later. It remains for us to look at the case of John 20:22, especially the relationship between the Easter gift of the Spirit in John 20 and the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit in Acts 2.

When it comes to John 20:22, we could perhaps classify the many proposed solutions into three major groups, depending on how they relate the Easter and Pentecostal gifts. First, a few scholars take John 20:22 to be a symbolic gift of the Spirit, later to be given at Pentecost. This view was proposed long ago by Theodore of Mopsuestia (c.350-428). Although it was condemned at the fifth ecumenical council at Constantinople in AD 553, it has modern supporters including G. E. Ladd, D. Guthrie, and D. A. Carson.³⁸ The advantage of this view is the fact that it harmonises John 20:22 easily with Acts 2. There is, in

37 Nee (*Collected Works*, 21:150-51; *Communion*, 74-75) thinks that while the 120 disciples received both Spirit-baptism and Spirit-fullness at Pentecost (Acts 1:15, 2:4), the 3000 and 5000 converts received Spirit-baptism but not Spirit-fullness (2:41, 4:4). Again, Nee failed to see the metaphorical nature of Luke's language and turned them into technical terminology. Nee also seems to have been confused between 'filled with the Holy Spirit' and 'full of the Holy Spirit' at this point.

38 G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 289; D. Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1981) 533-34; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 649-55. Carson is criticised by Thomas R. Hatina, 'John 20,22 in Its Eschatological Context: Promise or Fulfilment?', *Bib 74* (1993) 196-219.

reality, only one single gift of the Spirit to the disciples. The Spirit was symbolically given at Easter, and was later actually given at Pentecost.

Second, more scholars take John 20:22 to be the actual impartation of the Spirit, but this gift of the Spirit is defined in such a way as to make room for Pentecost. For example, B. F. Westcott thinks that while Easter has to do with quickening or new spiritual life, Pentecost has to do with endowing or the gift of the Paraclete.³⁹ Max Turner is much more nuanced here.⁴⁰ He takes Jesus' bestowal of the Spirit to the disciples in the Fourth Gospel as one theological gift given in two chronological stages. The first stage is a long drawn-out process which begins in Jesus' earthly ministry and reaches its climax in John 20:22. During this stage, Jesus brings the disciples to the new creation life of the resurrected Israel by imparting to them spiritual wisdom and understanding (cf. LXX Gen 2:7, Ezek 37:9, Wis 15:11, Philo Leg. All. 1.33, 37, 3.161, Op. 135, Det. 80, Plant. 18, 24, 44, Tg. Onq. Gen 2:7, Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 2:7, Tg. Neb. Ezek 37:14). The second stage is after Jesus' ascension, when the Spirit comes (at Pentecost) as the Paraclete giving the disciples Jesus' continued presence and power to witness to the world. While Turner's view is ingenious, it is unfortunately not without problems.⁴¹ First, the notion of the Spirit-Paraclete

39 B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 294-95. Note also J. D. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM, 1970) 173-82; H. M. Ervin, *Spirit-Baptism* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987) 14-21; H. B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1931) 166-67.

40 Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996) 90-102.

41 More recently, Cornelis Bennema both develops and qualifies Turner's position ('The Giving of the Spirit in John's Gospel - A New Proposal?' *EvQ* 74 [2002] 195-213). He argues that the giving of the Spirit starts symbolically at the cross (19:30) and finds its realization in 20:22. But this realization is the fulfilment of the promised Spirit in 7:39 (for new life and salvation), not the fulfilment of the promised Paraclete in 16:7 (for missionary empowerment, as well as for salvation). The Spirit as Paraclete is not given until Pentecost in Acts 2. But there are problems with this view. First, it is questionable if the release of Jesus' human spirit at his death in 19:30 should be read symbolically as the start of the giving of the Holy Spirit. The divine Spirit is linked closely with Jesus' words (3:34, 6:63), and is associated symbolically with a dove (1:32) and water (3:5), but never with Jesus' human spirit. If there is more to the verb *paradidōmi* in 19:30 (as compared to *aphiēmi* in Matt 27:50 and *paratithēmi* in Luke 23:46), we should probably look for it in LXX Isa 53:12, rather than in a symbolic giving of the Spirit. See J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928) 2.641. Second, it is also questionable if the Fourth Gospel bifurcates the two promises of the Spirit in 7:39 and 16:7. If anything, the promised 'Spirit' (7:39) is repeatedly associated or identified (rather than dissociated) with the promised 'Paraclete' (14:16-17, 26, 15:26, 16:7-13). John 14:17 is especially significant since, like 7:39 and 20:22, it speaks of receiving (*lambanō*) the Spirit. Indeed, one of the key roles of the Paraclete is to provide the disciples with saving wisdom

as one theological gift given in two chronological stages is overly subtle and complicated. The theology-chronology distinction is more likely to be Turner's, rather than the Evangelist's, creation. Second, while there are numerous references to the future coming of the Spirit-Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel (7:39, 14:16-17, 26, 15:26, 16:7-13), there is only one obvious reference to its fulfilment, namely John 20:22. To align 20:22 with Jesus' earthly ministry of word and Spirit and to propose a future date (which is not actually mentioned by the Evangelist) for the Spirit-Paraclete is surely a most unnatural reading of the Johannine narratives. Third, if John 20:22 were the climax of a long-drawn process which began in Jesus' ministry, would it not be more appropriate for the earthly, rather than the risen, Jesus to breathe on the disciples and to pronounce the unforgettable words?

Of course, not every scholar within this group regards John 20:22 as the gift of new life or new creation. Thus, for example, F. F. Bruce thinks that Easter has to do with empowerment for ministry.⁴² D. E. Holwerda is somewhat similar, though he thinks the gift is for the apostles only. It meant that they now have authority to forgive sins.⁴³ This is, however, a minority view within the group and it has obvious problems, such as paying too much attention to forgiving sins and not enough to Jesus' act of breathing on the disciples which alludes to Gen 2:7 and related texts. Likewise, the notion that it is an apostolic gift is not supported by the evidence. The gift is for 'the disciples' rather than the apostles only (20:19-20, 24-26, cf. 17:18-21).

Third, most scholars take John 20:22 to be John's Pentecost when the promised Spirit or Paraclete is given. So far as John is concerned, there is no other gift of the Spirit apart from this. Some scholars within this group think that it is simply not possible to harmonise

and understanding (14:26, 16:7-15). If this is so, then there is little that distinguishes between the promised Spirit and the promised Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel. Given this, it is difficult to see why the Evangelist would want to bifurcate the two promises in 7:39 and 16:7. In our view, the Spirit of saving wisdom is precisely the Paraclete that takes Jesus' place after his ascension, and the Paraclete that gives saving wisdom to the disciples and so mediates Jesus' presence is also the Paraclete that bears witness to the world (15:26). Third, Bennema fails to address the theological problem raised by his interpretation of John 20:22 that the Spirit secures and sustains the disciples' faith and salvation between Jesus' departure and the coming of the Paraclete, since Luke-Acts paints a very different picture, namely the Spirit was not given to the disciples until Pentecost!

42 F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 392, 397.

43 D. E. Holwerda, *The Holy Spirit and Eschatology in the Gospel of John* (Kampen: Kok, 1959) 21-24. For a critique of Holwerda, see Burge, *Community*, 119-20; Max Turner, 'The Concept of Receiving the Spirit in John's Gospel', *VoxEvangel* 10 (1977) 32-33.

John 20:22 with Acts 2.⁴⁴ Others think that John knows about Pentecost, but he chooses to move the historical gift of the Spirit from Pentecost to Easter for literary and theological purposes: literary, because he wrote one volume, not two; theological, because he wanted to tie the coming of the Spirit to the unified event of Jesus' glorification which consists of his death, resurrection, and ascension.⁴⁵ Nee belongs to this major group, accepting John 20:22 as the fulfilment of Jesus' promise of the Paraclete that brings deeper and more abundant life to the disciples. However, he does not choose between Easter and Pentecost, taking the gift of the Spirit at Easter for abundant life and Pentecost for empowerment.⁴⁶

Needless to say, all of these positions have their strengths and weaknesses.⁴⁷ The strength of the symbolic view is that it takes the historical and dramatic coming of the Spirit in Acts 2 seriously. Its weakness is that it tends to play down the literary and theological aspects of the Fourth Gospel. The strength of the Johannine Pentecost view is that it takes the literary and theological aspects of the Fourth Gospel seriously. Its weakness is that it tends to leave Acts and early church history on the sidelines. The strength of the two impartations view is that it tries to do justice to both John and Acts. Its weakness is that it often ends up with two comings of the Spirit, while the early church appears to emphasise only one inceptive coming of the Spirit.⁴⁸ It is also questionable if it does full justice to the theme of

44 C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (2d ed.; London: SPCK, 1978) 570; J. N. Sanders and B. A. Mastin, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1968) 433.

45 G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Waco: Word Books, 1987) 380-82; G. M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 114-49.

46 In view of the problem created by John 16:7 (the Paraclete would not come unless Jesus went away), Nee (*Collected Works*, 21:29-30) argues that Jesus ascended heaven between appearing to Mary (John 20:17) and meeting the disciples that evening (Luke 24:39, cf. John 20:27). But Barrett (*John*, 565) notes that 'it is very strange that so vital a fact [as Jesus' ascension] should be left as a matter of inference.' Ladd (*Theology*, 289) and Carson (*John*, 650) also question if we are to assume that Jesus ascended twice. Other scholars see Jesus' different responses to Mary and Thomas not in terms of his ascension but in terms of the contrasting needs of the disciples (so Burge, *Community*, 124; Dunn, *Baptism*, 176; C. F. D. Moule, 'The Individualism of the Fourth Gospel', *NovT* 5 (1962) 175; Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, 95).

47 For fuller assessments of these views, see Bennema, Burge, Carson, Hatina, and Turner.

48 Burge, *Community*, 126-27; Carson, *John*, 650; Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1975) 135-56; Ladd *Theology*, 289. Both Luke and Paul emphasise one definitive coming of the Spirit in the life of a believer and they link this to his conversion-initiation. There is no indication in the Fourth Gospel that the Spirit will be given more than once. Rather, when the Spirit comes, he will be with the disciples permanently (John 14:16).

eschatological fulfilment in the Fourth Gospel.

In view of these strengths and weaknesses, perhaps we can find a way out of our dilemma by looking at John 20:22 from two very different perspectives. First, from the perspective of narration and theology, the Johannine Pentecost view is preferred. Given the realised eschatology of the Fourth Gospel and the references to peace (14:27, 16:33, 20:19, 21, 26) and joy (15:11, 16:20-24, 17:13, 20:20, 26) in both the Farewell Discourses and the resurrection appearances, it is difficult not to see John 20:22 as the fulfilment of Jesus' Spirit-Paraclete promises in the Farewell Discourses. In other words, the resurrection appearances bring proper closure to the story of the Fourth Gospel (significantly, *lambano* and *pneuma* appear in 7:39, 14:17, and 20:22). While it is true that Jesus has not yet ascended to the Father and the results of the gift of the Spirit to the disciples are disappointing, yet these may be regarded by the Evangelist as acceptable tensions (rather than crippling disjunctions) created by linking the Spirit so closely with Easter (rather than with Pentecost), a linkage which also appears in Luke 24:36-49.

Second, from the perspective of chronology and history, the symbolic view is preferred. Had the Evangelist said that Jesus breathed on the disciples and they received the Spirit there and then, we would have far less difficulty with his pneumatology. But he did not, and this leaves room for a symbolic interpretation of Jesus' action. This, however, does not mean that 'all the anticipation in the narrative and the eschatological fulfilment in the Johannine corpus would only lead to a further parable or symbol.'⁴⁹ Here, we must distinguish between Jesus' action and John's situation. As Carson already noted, 'John 20:22 is not mere symbolism anticipating an endowment of the Spirit that is nowhere mentioned, it is symbolism anticipating the endowment of the Spirit that the church at the time of writing has already experienced, and of which outsiders are inevitably aware.'⁵⁰ So while Jesus' action may well be symbolic and anticipatory, the Evangelist intends his readers to read his Easter story from their post-Pentecost experience and perspective which is anything but anticipatory. Such

49 Thomas R. Hatina ('John 20,22', 214) seems to have misread Carson here.

50 Carson, *John*, 655. We are in basic agreement with Carson on a number of points, though not in relation to his interpretation of *emphusaō* (which he takes to mean 'to exhale' rather than 'to insufflate'). Linguistic considerations aside, Carson has to consider the more important question as to what the Evangelist is trying to say to his readers, whether Jesus' action be exhalation or insufflation. Jesus' action here is surely not insignificant. Carson's point that Jesus' action was symbolic in some sense, unless we are to adopt 'a literalistic and mechanical view of the action' (652), however, is well made and needs to be taken seriously.

a reading of John 20:22 (namely, from the perspective of fulfilment since Pentecost) would, to a large extent, alleviate the tensions mentioned above.

No matter how we understand the experience of the early disciples in John 20, and no matter how we interpret the relationship between the gifts of the Spirit in John 20 and Acts 2, Nee's contention that the experience of Jesus' earliest disciples in John 20:22 should be the experience of every subsequent believer is questionable. Dunn's view that the experience of these early disciples should not be seen as a pattern for post-Pentecost Christians is to be preferred.⁵¹ The sequence of events in the lives of the earliest disciples (such as encountering Jesus, hearing his Spirit-inspired words, following him, witnessing his death, resurrection, and ascension, and receiving his gift of the Spirit) are all unique and unrepeatable. Their spiritual experiences were in accordance to what was appropriate and possible for this particular period of salvation history. But this period, important as it undoubtedly was, came to an end and the post-Pentecost Christian no longer lives in it with its staggered experience of Jesus and the Spirit. 'What we now call full Christian experience was possible only after the ascension and Pentecost, when the 'advocate from heaven' [the Spirit] came to represent and act for the 'advocate in heaven' [Christ].'⁵² Since the experience of the earliest disciples was determined by their relation to the life and ministry of the earthly Jesus, their experience could be described as normative for later Christianity if and only if Jesus were to live, die, rise, and ascend again and again. Since this is not possible, Dunn is right to say that 'If a norm is desired for the gift of the Spirit we have it not in John 20.22 or Acts 2.4, but in Acts 2.38.'⁵³

E. Spirit as an Influence versus Spirit as a Person

As we have noted above (see section II above), Nee distinguishes between the Spirit as an influence bringing new life and the Spirit as a person helping the believer to enter into a deeper and richer spiritual life. Nee reasons that believers may not know about the personhood of the Spirit. When this happens, they would still be the masters of their own life and would not be able to overcome sin and the flesh. But when they come to know about the personhood of the Spirit and give the Spirit the control of their own life, they would experience the richer life promised by Jesus in John 10:10.

51 Dunn, *Baptism*, 178-82; cf. Bennema, 'Spirit', 213; Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, 101-2.

52 Dunn, *Baptism*, 181.

53 Dunn, *Baptism*, 182.

Nee is not the only one who makes this kind of distinction. R. Bultmann, for example, makes a distinction between the animistic and the dynamistic conceptions of the Spirit.⁵⁴ While the animistic conception sees the Spirit as an independent agent or a personal power like a demon (cf. John 14:26, Acts 10:19, 16:7, Rom 8:16), the dynamistic conception sees him as an impersonal force which fills a man like a fluid (cf. Luke 1:17, Acts 2:38, 6:3, Rom 5:5). While both conceptions appear in the Bible and can, in fact, intertwine in the same biblical author, the animistic conception is characteristic of the OT and the dynamistic characteristic of the NT. But Max Turner objects, reasoning that while the two types of languages may have corresponded to animistic and dynamistic conceptions of the Spirit in the oldest strata of the OT, in NT times such language can no longer be considered 'a sure indication of the way men *thought*; it could merely have been a *way of speaking*.'⁵⁵

Related to this is the issue of the presence or absence of the definite article before 'Holy Spirit'. For some scholars, the absence of the article in John 20:22 indicates that an impersonal gift of the Spirit (such as divine breath or spiritual life) was meant.⁵⁶ This stands in contrast with the gift of the personal Spirit at Pentecost. But this interpretation has rightly been rejected by other scholars.⁵⁷ In John 7:39, the Evangelist refers to the Spirit twice, once with the definite article, the other without. There is, however, no obvious difference between these two references. Luke-Acts is no different. Compare, for example, Acts 2:4 (*kai eplēsthēsan pantes pneumatos hagiou*) with 4:31 (*kai eplēsthēsan hapantes tou hagiou pneumatos*), or 8:15-19 (*lambanō plus pneuma hagian*) with 10:47 (*lambanō plus to pneuma to hagian*). Not surprisingly, Dunn concludes his examination of Luke-Acts by saying that 'the variation is due to stylistic reasons and lacks any real theological significance'.⁵⁸ Gordon Fee comes to the same conclusion for the Pauline Epistles.⁵⁹ Note, for example, the fluctuation between the articular and anarthrous usages in Rom 8:1-17, 1 Cor 12:1-11, 2 Cor 3:1-18, and Gal 5:16-25

While the issue of the use and non-use of the definite article is eas-

54 R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1952) 1.155-57.

55 Turner, 'Some Linguistic Considerations', 50 (emphasis his).

56 G. Johnston, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: CUP, 1970) 11; H. B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit*, 166-67, 396; cf. N. Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1965) 17-22.

57 Beasley-Murray, *John*, 380; Bruce, *John*, 392; Carson, *John*, 650.

58 Dunn, *Baptism*, 70.

59 G. D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994) 15-24.

ily resolved, there is a more complicated issue having to do with the question whether the believers received and experienced the Spirit himself or not, be it at Easter (Nee) or Pentecost (Adler, Bruner, Johnston, Swete).⁶⁰ Max Turner is firmly against such notion.⁶¹ He argues that there is a failure to distinguish between the Spirit whose actions (such as teaching, testifying, sending, forbidding, etc.) can be considered as personal and the Spirit who is experienced as a distinct person different from the Father and the Son. Concerning the former, there is little disagreement over the NT. Indeed, this kind of personal language for the Spirit's actions is readily found in the OT and Judaism (cf. 2 Sam 23:2, Neh 9:20, Ps 143:10, Isa 63:10, Ezek 11:5, Zech 7:12, Wis 9:17, 1QH 9:32, 12:11-12). But it does not imply that the OT or Judaism sees the Spirit as a distinct person different from Yahweh. Rather, the personal language merely reflects the widespread and typically Jewish tendency to personify divine attributes and to portray the Spirit as the extension of Yahweh's personal presence. Admittedly, John 14-16 gives the clearest presentation of the Spirit as a distinct person in the NT (and so Nee may seem, at first sight, to have a stronger case than Adler and others). But even here there is no suggestion that the disciples will receive the Spirit and experience him as a divine person distinct from the Father and the Son. In fact, the evidence goes the other way as John 16:13-15 notes that the Spirit will reveal the Father and the Son but not himself.

In what way, then, should we understand the NT language of receiving the Spirit? For Turner, 'virtually all Luke's language of Spirit endowment is metaphor for different aspects of the activity of the Spirit, and accordingly . . . [the reception of the Spirit] is perhaps best explained as a metaphorical way of referring to the *inception* of a specific new activity, or coherent set of activities, believed to be initiated in and through the person concerned.'⁶² From this perspective, 1 Sam 10:6 and 16:14 could be understood as God's initial gift of royal authority and power to king Saul and its subsequent withdrawal, and Acts 9:17-19 could be understood as God's gift of power to the apostle Paul by which he was to fulfil the commission he received from God. The need of the NT reader in each case is to find out what charismatic activity or coherent set of activities the NT author intends to communicate when he speaks of people receiving the Holy Spirit.

60 N. Adler, *Das erste christliche Pfingstfest. Sinn und Bedeutung des Pfingstberichtes Apg 2:1-13* (Munster: Aschendorff, 1938) 74, 91; Bruner, *Theology*, 163; Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 11; Nee, *Collected Works*, 21:24-29, 32-35, 125; Swete, *The Holy Spirit*, 166, 396.

61 Turner, *Power from on High*, 39-48; idem, 'Some Linguistic Considerations', 55-60.

62 Turner, *Power from on High*, 47 (emphasis his).

Turner has certainly presented a strong case for taking the language of receiving the Spirit metaphorically rather than literally. For, otherwise, it is difficult to explain Jesus' reception of the Holy Spirit at the Jordan (Luke 3:21-22, cf. John 1:32-33, 3:34) and his subsequent reception of the same Spirit on his ascension-exaltation (Acts 2:33). It is, however, important not to misconstrue Turner's words to mean simply the inception of some new spiritual gifts, like some natural talents or abilities. There is a real sense in which the (inceptive) coming of the Spirit means that the Spirit is both present and active in the person where he was not before. This is especially true with regards to the initial reference to the Spirit's coming. For, otherwise, we will have a problem with the fact that the NT (including Luke-Acts) emphasises one inceptive coming of the Spirit for the believer and this is normally linked with his conversion-initiation. It also conflicts with Jesus' words in John 14:16-17 which stresses the presence of the Paraclete (not just some charismatic activities or gifts) with the disciples, a divine presence which is at least comparable, even if not exactly identical, to that of Jesus himself (cf. Gal 4:4-6). Similarly, it conflicts with certain Pauline metaphors: the Spirit is a seal by which God has marked the believer for his own (2 Cor 1:21-22, Eph 1:13, 4:30); the Spirit is a down payment or guarantee given by God (2 Cor 1:22, 5:5, Eph 1:14); and the believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19, cf. 3:16-17, 2 Cor 6:16, Eph 2:21-22). We should note that the emphasis in these passages is not on some charismatic activities or gifts, but on the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. Thus, while the believer may not usually experience the Spirit as a distinct person different from the Father and the Son, it is still important to maintain that the coming of the Spirit means both the presence and activity of the Spirit in the life of the believer. Not surprisingly, Gordon Fee describes the Spirit in the Pauline Epistles as 'God's empowering presence',⁶³ and Turner describes the Spirit in Luke-Acts as 'a powerful revelatory and wisdom-giving presence of God.'⁶⁴ In terms of the Fourth Gospel, perhaps we could describe the Spirit-Paraclete as first and foremost Jesus' self-revealing, wisdom-giving and empowering presence.

We can now return to Nee's distinction between the Spirit as an influence and as a person. From the above discussion, it seems clear that while the NT (especially John 14-16) may see the Spirit as a person distinct from the Father and the Son, this is not its emphasis

63 Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 5-9, 827-45.

64 Turner, 'Interpreting the Samaritans of Acts 8', 281; note also his 'Receiving Christ and Receiving the Spirit: In Dialogue with David Pawson', *JPT* 15 (1999) 19, 22-23, 29 n65.

when it comes to speaking about the experience of the believer. From the believer's point of view, what the Spirit brings or mediates is actually the presence and power of the Father and the Son. In other words, if Nee wants to emphasise the theme of lordship and the believer's need for obedience, then it should be the lordship of God the Father or Jesus Christ his Son that should be emphasised, not the personhood of the Holy Spirit as such.

IV. Conclusion

Nee's pneumatology raises a number of interesting issues. But we find that we differ consistently from Nee at most of these points. First, we find that the two Lukan Spirit-fullness phrases ('filled with the Holy Spirit' and 'full of the Holy Spirit') do not differ in terms of duration (shorter versus longer period of time) and function (power for ministry versus spiritual maturity and life), as Nee suggests. The two phrases primarily address the question of extent (how much) rather than duration (how long). While the first phrase is normally inceptive, the second phrase is normally stative. Whether the presence of the Spirit means power for ministry or vibrant Christian living does not depend on the two phrases in and of themselves, but on the co-texts surrounding them (see section III part A).

Second, we find that there is a difference between the language of the Spirit coming 'upon' and dwelling 'in' a person. But, unlike Nee, we do not find that the difference lies in the outpoured Spirit being an external work of empowerment and the indwelling Spirit being an internal work of personal renewal. Rather, the difference lies in the former being usually inceptive, and the latter stative. But even this inceptive-stative distinction is not absolute and needs to be qualified (see section III part B).

Third, we find that contrary to Nee, neither Spirit-baptism nor Spirit-fullness is technical expression or language for power for ministry and Christian service. The Spirit of prophecy poured out at Pentecost cannot simply be defined in terms of power for mission. It has a wider role to play, including in the life of the individual believer, as well as that of the local community. Similarly, the gift of the Spirit is not a *donum superadditum*, but is usually given at a person's conversion-initiation (see section III part C).

Fourth, we find that there are not two comings of the Spirit (one at Easter and the other at Pentecost), as Nee suggests. From the perspective of chronology and history, the Spirit is given at Pentecost. From the perspective of narration and theology, the Fourth Evangelist wants his readers to see Jesus' promise of the Spirit-Paraclete as

fulfilled at Easter. The tension created by these two perspectives is significantly reduced when we realise that at the time of the writing of the Fourth Gospel, the church has already experienced the Pentecostal endowment of the Spirit. However we interpret John 20 and Acts 2, the experience of the earliest disciples at Easter should not be seen as a pattern for post-Pentecost believers today (see section III part D).

Finally, we find that contrary to Nee, the NT does not distinguish between the Spirit as an influence giving converts new life and the Spirit as a person enabling believers to enter into a deeper and more Spirit-filled life. If the theme of lordship is to be emphasised, then it should be the lordship of the Father or the Son, rather than the personhood of the Spirit, that needs to be emphasised (see section III part E).

Although our examination of Nee's pneumatology shows up a number of major disagreements in the area of NT interpretation, there is no denying the fact that much of what Nee said in relation to the Holy Spirit should be affirmed. These include: spiritual gifts are important for ministry and edification of the church; if a person cannot have both giftedness and sanctification, they should give priority to the Spirit's sanctifying work in their own life; people have different experiences of the Spirit and we should not press for too much uniformity or conformity; and the lordship of Christ is the key to a victorious and Spirit-filled life.

Abstract

The article discusses the pneumatology of Watchman Nee and the five questions raised by it. First, does the NT distinguish between being 'filled with the Holy Spirit' and being 'full of the Holy Spirit' in terms of duration (shorter versus longer period of time) and function (power for ministry versus spiritual maturity and life)? Second, does the NT distinguish between the outpoured Spirit (the Spirit coming 'upon' a person) and the indwelling Spirit (the Spirit entering 'into' and dwelling 'in' a person)? Third, does the NT more or less equate baptism in the Holy Spirit with being 'filled with the Holy Spirit'? Fourth, are there two comings of the Holy Spirit, one at Easter (John 20:22) and the other at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-42)? Fifth, does the NT distinguish the Spirit as an influence (giving converts new life) and the Spirit as a person (enabling believers to enter into a deeper and more Spirit-filled life)? The article concludes that while there are indeed differences between the various phrases, they are not of the kind specified by Nee. More importantly, there are not two comings of the Spirit in the NT.