

THE
CHARISMATIC
THEOLOGY OF
ST. LUKE

Trajectories
from the Old Testament
to Luke-Acts

• • • SECOND EDITION • • •

ROGER STRONSTAD

FOREWORD BY MARK ALLAN POWELL


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To Clifford and Dawn Stronstad
and Amy and Jody,
and to Irene and Robert Jonas
and Jennifer, Pamela, and Jeramy,
with affection.

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Foreword

In my college years, I had a number of charismatic experiences and for quite some time I spoke in tongues every day. I had visions; I believed God was leading me and guiding me in remarkably detailed ways; I experienced divine empowerment to accomplish things I never could have done otherwise. The book of Acts seemed to me to be the most relevant and realistic book in the Bible.

By the time I entered doctoral school fifteen years later (1984–87), my theological vision had shifted. Though I have never liked categories, I probably would have identified myself as an “evangelical” while everyone else would have called me “a mainline Lutheran.” The words “charismatic” and “Pentecostal” would not have come up.

In my doctoral program, I read numerous scholarly and academic works on Luke’s gospel and the book of Acts; eventually, I would even publish two books on Lukan scholarship: *What Are They Saying about Luke?* (Paulist, 1989) and *What Are They Saying about Acts?* (Paulist, 1991). Throughout those studies, I could not help but notice that most scholars regarded the charismatic aspect of Lukan theology as an oddity. For most authors, Luke’s description of the various ways in which the Spirit of God directed and empowered people lacked credibility as straightforward history. For some, this meant that Luke’s reporting was simply too infected by primitive superstition to be taken seriously; for others, it only meant that Luke needed to be granted an extraordinary degree of literary license. Further, even those scholars who did grant that Luke was reporting what had actually occurred

usually took his accounts as descriptive of a bygone era, the passing of which they did not much regret: the book of Acts describes things as they *were*, not as they *are*, nor as they should be, nor (truth be told) as we would want them to be. Thus scholars dealt with the charismatic aspect of Luke's theology in diverse ways, but everyone seemed to agree it was a problem.

I am not saying that any of these scholars were wrong. I simply note that *they* did not regard the book of Acts as realistic or relevant. Perhaps, I thought, this is appropriate: these are scholars studying ancient literature. Scholars typically approach such works with a degree of critical distance, recognizing for instance that first-century authors (and readers) espoused a worldview different from our own. But in this case the "critical distance" seemed extreme: most New Testament scholars seemed to think that the book of Acts was actually kind of weird. So, even when I was convinced that a scholar was correct or insightful in his or her observations, I often felt like I was reading the comments of someone on the outside looking in.

When I read Roger Stronstad's *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, I knew that I had found something different: the very tone of the book was at that time unique in Lukan studies. Stronstad not only found the charismatic elements of Luke's theology to be credible; he also found them *appealing*. Stronstad too writes as a scholar; his primary goal is elucidation, not edification, and he knows he is dealing with ancient literature for which meaning is not always transparent or application obvious. Yet he also writes unapologetically as a pentecostal scholar, as someone who does regard even the strangest aspects of Luke's books to be both relevant and realistic. He does not simply prize those aspects of Luke's writings as depictions of some quaint form of first-century piety, or even as descriptions of how things once were in some safely defined previous dispensation. Stronstad does seek to elucidate Luke's understanding of the Spirit as might any biblical scholar, but he does so as a scholar who actually believes Luke's understanding of spiritual guidance and empowerment remains credible and commendable for contemporary theology and mission.

In noting this, again, I certainly do not mean to disparage the value of more detached, external perspectives: there is absolutely nothing wrong with scholarship produced by outsiders looking in. We all do that kind of research sometimes, and, indeed, there are instances in which such detachment is to be preferred. But let us grant that

something is missing. If I were so inclined, I expect that I could research and write a pretty good book on the writings of some hermit monk who lived in isolation for most of his life. But no matter how much I admired such an individual, I would regard him as someone who lived his life in a way that I would never want to live mine. My observations might be accurate and even insightful, but my volume would not be the same sort of book as might be produced by a competent scholar who lived in isolation himself and who commended such an existence for others.

Stronstad's scholarship has merit on its own terms, and his understanding of the Spirit in Luke-Acts warrants comparison with that of James D. G. Dunn, Jacob Jervell, and many other modern interpreters. His particular contributions include (1) an emphasis on Luke's reliance on the Hebrew tradition, as opposed to conceptions of spirit in Greek thought; (2) an exposition of Luke's transformation of that tradition in ways that testify to new developments; and (3) delineation of significant elements in Luke's perspective that set his theology apart from that of other biblical writers (including Paul) in distinctive but not necessarily contradictory ways. These points, of course, are arguable, and the crucible of scholarship will ensure that they continue to be argued. Stronstad's positions have at least become established as one of the primary options: his arguments are now regarded as defensible by all, and as persuasive by many.

I do not know if he is right or not. If he is, then Luke's theology becomes problematic for many churches (including mine). But if Luke's theology is problematic for a church, doesn't that mean that the church's theology would also have been problematic for Luke? And isn't Luke the one whose theology has been canonized?

Bottom line: this is a book that gives me a lot to think about (including reconsideration of those college experiences). I am grateful to Roger Stronstad for writing it, and to Baker Academic for giving it renewed life in this second edition. And I am happy to report that whatever updates and other changes have been made, one thing remains the same: Stronstad still bucks the trend of most scholarship in that he does not view Luke's charismatic theology as a problem to be dealt with if we want to make Luke's message relevant for today; rather, he thinks that Luke's charismatic theology *is* a message relevant for today.

Mark Allan Powell

Preface to the Second Edition

The first edition of this book, a mild revision of my master's thesis, "The Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts" (Regent College, 1975), was published as *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Hendrickson, 1984), and it quickly achieved modest critical acclaim and ongoing sales success. The basic soundness of this exposition and interpretation of Luke's charismatic theology is reflected in the fact that it has gone through ten printings with no apparent falloff in demand. But with the book in print for more than twenty-five years, its new publisher, Baker Academic, has given me the opportunity to update the book.

This updated edition is true to the first edition's foundational presuppositions. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are one two-volume book, Luke-Acts.
2. These volumes thus have the same author, who is traditionally identified as the New Testament character Luke.
3. Both volumes are also of the same genre—namely, historical narrative.
4. Luke's narrative is historically reliable.
5. Though the genre of Luke-Acts is historical narrative, Luke reports sacred history and therefore writes with didactic and theological purposes.
6. Luke is, therefore, both a unique and an independent theologian among New Testament writers.

Since the book's publication in 1984, these presuppositions have achieved a broad consensus within the evangelical community, though not, of course, complete unanimity.

The above presuppositions illustrate that I write from within the tradition of evangelical scholarship. I also write from within the tradition of Pentecostalism—that is, as one who has been baptized in the Holy Spirit with the attesting sign of speaking in other tongues. A believer who has spoken in tongues, been empowered by the Spirit, manifested the gifts of wisdom and knowledge, received visions, and so on, is not likely to interpret Luke's reports about the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit as simply words—sentences and paragraphs on a page to be analyzed and pushed and pulled in any and every direction. The twenty-first-century pentecostal scholar knows in part by tangible experience that Luke has reported earlier tangible experiences of like kind.

When I wrote my thesis in 1974–75, and even later when I revised it for publication in 1984, the literature in the complementary disciplines of Lukan and Holy Spirit studies was quite sparse. Therefore, by necessity what I wrote was primarily an inductive Bible study of the relevant data in Luke-Acts. Since that time there has been a veritable explosion in the literature in the field of Lukan studies.¹ In retrospect, being forced by circumstances to explore the Lukan literature on its own terms has proven to be one of the strengths of *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*. For the present edition I have chosen to retain this approach. To engage in a detailed analysis and comparison of the recent literature would result in a very different book, likely at the expense of what has made the first edition a long-lived success.

I am gratified that *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* has made a significant, if modest, contribution to the church's understanding of Lukan theology. For example, referencing the studies of Luke's doctrine of the Holy Spirit by James B. Shelton, Robert P. Menzies, and myself, Francois Bovon observes: "I note that the number of books published marks the arrival of Pentecostal scholars in the field of New Testament scholarship. . . . In my survey published in 1976, I suggested that the study of Lukan pneumatology had reached an end. Was I wrong?"² Bovon's question highlights that there remains a need to present Luke's charismatic theology afresh and as clearly as possible. Hence, this updated edition of *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*.

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Those persons whom I acknowledged in the first edition of this book, Drs. W. Ward Gasque, Clark H. Pinnock, and William W. Menzies, continue to merit my deep appreciation for their encouragement and help in bringing my master's thesis, "The Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts," to publication as *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*. This second edition owes its genesis to the initiative and guidance of Robert Hosack of Baker Academic. I also acknowledge and deeply appreciate the work of Christina Jasko and the rest of the Baker Academic team in bringing this second edition to production. Also, I thank Dr. Mark Allan Powell for his foreword to this edition of *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*.

I am grateful to the board of governors of Summit Pacific College, to Dr. Dave Demchuk (president), and to Dr. Wilf Hildebrandt (academic dean) for their encouragement and support for this project. I also owe a special debt to Miss Sarah Switzer, who has taken my handwritten manuscript and transformed it into an electronic version of the text. Once again, above all I am deeply grateful to my wife, Laurel, for her constant, patient, and loving support throughout this whole endeavor.

Roger Stronstad
Abbotsford, BC, Canada
September 2011

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The Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts

A Challenge in Methodology

For his lead essay in the *Festschrift* presented to Paul Schubert, W. C. van Unnik chose the title, “Luke-Acts, a Storm Center in Contemporary Scholarship.”¹ As van Unnik chronicles Lukan scholarship in the 1950s and 1960s, this storm center includes, among others, the following subjects: (1) the relationship between the historical and theological aspects of Luke-Acts, (2) Luke’s alleged shift from the expectation of an imminent Parousia in the theology of the primitive church to a history-of-salvation theology, and (3) the differences between the Paul of the Acts and the Paul of the Epistles.² Richard I. Pervo’s commentary on Acts in the Hermeneia series identifies numerous ongoing controversial issues in Lukan studies. These controversial issues are as fundamental as (1) the date when Acts was written, (2) the identity of the author, (3) the unity of Luke and Acts, and (4) the genre of Luke and Acts.³ The publication of two benchmark books in 1970, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* by Frederick Dale Bruner and *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* by James D. G. Dunn, added new winds of controversy to the storm center of Lukan scholarship—namely, over the meaning of the activity of the Holy Spirit recorded in Luke-Acts.⁴ Of the two books, Dunn’s has proven to be the more significant. It

has also sparked a number of responses from biblical scholars in the pentecostal tradition.⁵

These winds of controversy rage most strongly over the interpretation of the “baptism in the Holy Spirit” that happened on the day of Pentecost and throughout the book of Acts. Traditionally, the church has associated the baptism in the Holy Spirit with conversion and has identified it with incorporation into the body of Christ.⁶ However, beginning primarily with John Wesley’s seminal teaching on sanctification, Christians have increasingly challenged this interpretation. For example, holiness groups, emerging out of Methodism, “came to speak of entire sanctification as a ‘baptism of the Holy Spirit.’”⁷ Moreover, Pentecostalism, the synthesis of late nineteenth-century fundamentalist, dispensational, and holiness theology with camp-meeting and revival methodology,⁸ identified “baptism in the Holy Spirit” as an empowering for service. The sole distinctive element in Pentecostalism is its insistence that glossolalia is the essential evidence for the baptism in the Spirit.⁹ Most recently, charismatics, children of the marriage between pentecostal experience and traditional Lutheran, Reformed, or Catholic theology, often interpret the baptism in the Holy Spirit to be a subsequent experiential actualization of the Spirit who was given earlier in conversion/confirmation.¹⁰ Thus winds of division and controversy now sweep across current interpretations of the gift of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts.

This division is not simply theological. Fundamental hermeneutical or methodological differences lie at the heart of the matter. These methodological differences arise out of and are coextensive with the diverse literary genres of the New Testament. For example, Luke’s theology of the Holy Spirit must be inferred from a two-volume “history” of the founding and growth of Christianity—of which volume 1 is classified as a gospel and volume 2 is classified as the Acts.¹¹ In contrast, Paul’s theology of the Holy Spirit must be derived from his letters, which he addressed to geographically separated churches at different times in his missionary career. These letters are circumstantial; that is, they are addressed to particular circumstances: for example, news of controversy (Galatians), answers to specific questions (1 Corinthians), or plans for a forthcoming visit (Romans). Thus while Luke *narrates* the role of the Holy Spirit in the history of the early church, Paul *teaches* his readers concerning the person and ministry of the Spirit.

It is this difference between narration and theology in the New Testament literature that raises the fundamental methodological issues for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the experiential and theological tensions over the doctrine of the Holy Spirit will be resolved only when the methodological issues have first been resolved. Therefore, the following discussion focuses upon the methodological issues of the *crux interpretum* in the current debate: the meaning of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts.

In order to correctly interpret Luke's record of the Holy Spirit we must resolve three fundamental methodological problems: (1) the literary and theological homogeneity of Luke-Acts, (2) the theological character of Lukan historiography, and (3) the theological independence of Luke.

The Literary and Theological Homogeneity of Luke-Acts

Though the canon of the New Testament separates them, Luke and Acts are a single two-volume composition (Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1). Ending several decades of skepticism concerning the literary unity of these two books, W. C. van Unnik reports:

We speak of it [Luke-Acts] as a unit. . . . It is generally accepted that both books have a common author; the possibility that the Gospel and the Acts, contrary to Acts 1.1, do not belong together is not seriously discussed. By almost unanimous consent they are considered to be two volumes of a single work.¹²

This scholarly consensus on the literary unity of Luke-Acts has remained without serious challenge.¹³ In spite of this consensus concerning the literary unity, interpreters often assume that Luke-Acts reflects a theological discontinuity between its two parts.

Since the publication of *The Theology of St. Luke* (English translation) in 1961, Hans Conzelmann has cast a long shadow across Lukan studies. The central feature of his theology is his peculiar, though popular, division of Lukan history into three epochs:

1. The period of Israel, of the Law and the Prophets;
 2. The period of Jesus, which gives a foretaste of future salvation;
- and

3. The period between the coming of Jesus and his Parousia, in other words, the period of the church and of the Spirit. This is the last age. We are not told that it will be short.¹⁴

According to Conzelmann's interpretation, "There is continuity linking the three periods, and the essence of the one is carried through into the next."¹⁵ Nevertheless, Conzelmann emphasizes that in Luke's theology there is "emphasis on the separation between the epochs."¹⁶ Thus, as he interprets Luke-Acts, Conzelmann emphasizes the theological discontinuity between John the Baptist (the period of Israel), Jesus (the middle of time), and the epoch of the Spirit (the church).¹⁷

The theological homogeneity of Luke-Acts is also denied on grounds other than the epochs of redemptive history. For example, in "The Holy Spirit in the Acts and the Fourth Gospel," W. F. Lofthouse asserts that the record of the Spirit in the Synoptic Gospels is "unable to act as a basis [for the Spirit] in Acts 1-15."¹⁸ Rather, the basis for the portrayal of the Holy Spirit in Acts 1-15 is to be found in the teaching on the Spirit recorded in John 14-16.¹⁹ Thus, according to Lofthouse's perspective, Luke's record of the activity of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts is influenced by two distinct traditions: (1) the Synoptic tradition for the Gospel and (2) the Johannine tradition for the Acts of the Apostles. Amazingly, the Synoptic tradition about the Holy Spirit has no influence on the record of the Spirit in the Acts.

Not only is it commonplace to assert discontinuity between the successive pictures of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts; it is also commonplace to assert discontinuity for the identical terminology that describes the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts. For example, concerning the phrase "filled with the Holy Spirit," J. H. E. Hull writes:

Elizabeth and Zechariah were, in Luke's view, momentarily filled with the Spirit. In other words, they could only be aware of His (seemingly) fleeting presence and His (seemingly) fitful and necessarily limited activity. The disciples, on the other hand, were permanently filled with the Spirit.²⁰

To undergird his exegetically baseless affirmation that the phrase "filled with the Holy Spirit" has a different (and superior?) meaning in Acts than it does in Luke, he changes the Lukan metaphor, writing:

As there is no indication that Elizabeth and Zechariah permanently possessed the gift of prophecy, we may say . . . that their experience

of the Spirit was a momentary flash, illuminating them solely on the occasions referred to in the first chapter of Luke. As Acts suggests, however, the disciples' experience of the Spirit was, and continued to be, an all-consuming flame.²¹

The answer to Hull's distinction between the alleged temporary gift of the Spirit of prophecy to Elizabeth and Zechariah and the permanent gift of the Spirit of prophecy to the disciples is that there is evidence to the contrary on both counts. For John the gift of the Spirit of prophecy was certainly *permanent* (Luke 1:15, 76, 80; 20:6), and for the disciples it was demonstrably *repetitive* (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31).

Conzelmann, Lofthouse, and Hull are three examples of the widespread tendency to emphasize the theological discontinuity between Luke and Acts. However, since Luke and Acts are a single work, it would be far more natural to stress their theological continuity or homogeneity. In fact, their homogeneity proves to be the case. In *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, I. Howard Marshall demonstrates that important Lukan themes such as salvation, forgiveness, witness, and the Holy Spirit bind Luke-Acts together as one—albeit a two-volume story.²² He rightly observes:

What is significant is his [Luke's] combination of the story of Jesus and the story of the early church in one account. Thereby he testified that the two stories are really one, and that the break between them is not of such decisive importance as that between the period of the law and the prophets and the period in which the gospel of the kingdom is preached.²³

On this issue of continuity and discontinuity between Luke and Acts, as the above examples illustrate, the balance is too often arbitrarily tipped in favor of discontinuity. Except where the evidence clearly leads elsewhere, the literary unity of Luke-Acts must compel the interpreter to recognize a theological homogeneity of the two books. This homogeneity is no less true for the charismatic theology of St. Luke than it is for his other distinctive doctrines and motifs.

The Theological Character of Lukan Historiography

Pentecostalism, and to a lesser extent its younger sibling, the charismatic movement, has not only presented an experiential and theological

challenge to contemporary Christianity, but it has also offered a fundamental methodological challenge. This challenge raises the question of the theological significance of Luke's narrative "history" of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts. In interpreting the book of Acts, Pentecostals, on the one hand, tend to emphasize the theological character of the narratives and de-emphasize their historical uniqueness. On the other hand, those who respond to their methodological challenge maximize the historical character of the narratives and minimize their theological character.

Pentecostals build their distinctive theology on five episodes in Acts regarding the gift of the Spirit to the following: (1) the disciples on the day of Pentecost (2:1–13), (2) the believers at Samaria (8:14–19), (3) Saul of Tarsus (9:17–18), (4) Cornelius and his household (10:44–46), and (5) the disciples at Ephesus (19:1–7). In general terms, these "five events in the Book of Acts become the Biblical precedents of Spirit Baptism."²⁴ More specifically, "the events that occurred on the day of Pentecost are held to be the pattern for centuries to come,"²⁵ and the Pentecost narrative established "the Scriptural pattern for believers of the whole church age."²⁶ As a natural corollary to their methodology, Pentecostals conclude:

On Biblical grounds, tongues are a necessary and essential evidence of baptism in the Spirit. . . . God promised that the Biblical pattern was the standard for future times: "The promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off" (Acts 2.38). What was true at the Day of Pentecost, and on subsequent occasions in Scripture, must continue to be true throughout the ages.²⁷

Clearly Pentecostals emphasize the normative theological intent of Luke's historical record of the gift of the Spirit for contemporary Christian experience.

Many interpreters, however, believe that this "Pentecost-as-Pattern" methodology violates the narrative or historical character of the book of Acts. For example, in his *Christianity Today* article, "Outburst of Tongues: The New Penetration," Frank Farrell writes:

The few historical accounts of tongues in Acts, in comparison with the other Scriptures, provide a flimsy foundation indeed upon which to erect a doctrine of the Christian life; no directives for normative Christian experience are contained in these passages.²⁸

In his widely influential book *The Baptism and Fullness of the Holy Spirit*, John R. W. Stott expresses similar sentiments.

This revelation of the purpose of God in Scripture should be sought in its *didactic*, rather than its *historical* parts. More precisely, we should look for it in the teaching of Jesus, and in the sermons and writings of the apostles, and not in the purely narrative portions of the Acts.²⁹

Later in his book Stott reiterates: “A doctrine of the Holy Spirit must not be constructed from descriptive passages in the Acts.”³⁰ Farrell and Stott typify a methodological approach to Acts that drives a wedge between διδασχί (instruction) and narrative, between theology and history.

This criticism of the pentecostal interpretation of Acts has forced Pentecostals to articulate a more sophisticated methodology for the descriptive, historical, or narrative passages in the Acts.³¹ Their response, however, is not wholly convincing, for it concedes to their critics the legitimacy of the rigid distinction between history and διδασχί in New Testament literature. For example, in his pamphlet, *I’m Still There!*, Ronald Kydd concludes:

I think such [historical] material may, and even should, be called upon when it meets the tests we’ve been talking about: that is, when the sequence of events in *historical* material is the only sequence in which events relating to that particular experience appear in Scripture and when *didactic* material does not modify the pattern observed in the historical material.³²

Ironically, this new pentecostal hermeneutic has wandered into the same methodological cul-de-sac as that previously trodden by their critics—namely, an unbiblical dichotomy between the so-called descriptive (historical, narrative) and didactic (teaching) passages of Scripture.

While a full discussion of biblical historiography is beyond the scope of this investigation, this alleged distinction between description and διδασχί is alien to the general New Testament understanding of biblical (that is, Old Testament) historiography. For example, Paul incontestably perceived a didactic purpose in historical narrative. Including the historical literature of the Old Testament within his compass, he writes:

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching [διδασκαλίαν], for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16–17)

Similarly, he affirms, “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction [διδασκαλίαν]” (Rom. 15:4). Thus, to cite but one example of Paul’s methodology, the experience of the Israelites in the wilderness “happened to them as an example [τυπικῶς], and [these things] were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor. 10:11). If for Paul the historical narratives of the Old Testament had didactic lessons for New Testament Christians, then it would be most surprising if Luke, who modeled his historiography after Old Testament historiography, did not invest his own history of the origin and spread of Christianity with a didactic significance.

As mentioned, the historical narratives of the Old Testament served as a model for Luke’s historiography. In *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, I. Howard Marshall concludes, “The writings of Luke are plainly indebted to the Old Testament tradition.”³³ Rather than modeling himself after the Hellenistic historiographer, Luke uses a writing style that “is frequently reminiscent of the Septuagint” and “demands that he also be compared with Jewish historians.”³⁴ In *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, Martin Hengel carries this comparison between Luke and Jewish historians beyond Jewish biblical historians to Jewish intertestamental historians. He writes:

A comparison of his [Luke’s] work with that of Josephus or the books of the Maccabees, and here above all to II Maccabees, . . . shows his particular proximity to Jewish Hellenistic historiography. Luke is evidently influenced by a firm tradition with a religious view of history which essentially derives from the Septuagint. His imitation of the Septuagint shows that he wants quite deliberately to be in this tradition.³⁵

Thus Hengel correctly affirms that Luke, with the other Evangelists, “did have a theological interest which was at the same time a historical one.”³⁶

Having asked the question, “Do history and theology stand in opposition to each other?”³⁷ Marshall answers:

Luke conceived his task as the writing of history and . . . we shall fail to do justice to his work if we do not think of him as a historian. Modern research has emphasized that he was a theologian. . . . His view of theology led him to write history.³⁸

Therefore, since Luke has a theological interest, his narratives, though they are historical, are always more than simply descriptions or the record of brute facts.

Clearly, in Luke-Acts, both by what he includes or excludes from his record and by his actual description of events, Luke always gives an interpreted narration. As W. F. Lofthouse observes, “Whether we consider the narrative of Pentecost or any other references to the activity of the Spirit in Acts 1–15, we are clearly dealing with the interpretation of certain experiences.”³⁹ Thus the so-called *purely narrative* portions of the Acts prove to be a myth created by the contemporary critic, rather than a legitimate evaluation of Lukan historiography.

In light of Luke’s indebtedness to both biblical and Jewish Hellenistic historiographers, and also the fact that his narratives are invariably an interpreted record of events, it is imperative that interpreters adopt a fresh methodological approach to the interpretation of the historical narratives in Luke-Acts. This approach must focus on the actual nature of the narrative. Luke’s narratives fall into one or more of the following four categories: (1) episodic, (2) typological, (3) programmatic, and (4) paradigmatic. In general, all of the narratives are *episodic*. A *typological* narrative looks back to a historically analogous and relevant episode from earlier times, either in Luke-Acts or in the Old Testament. In contrast to the typological narrative, the *programmatic* narrative points ahead to the unfolding of future events. Finally, a *paradigmatic* narrative has normative features for the mission and character of God’s people living in the last days.

To illustrate, Luke’s inauguration narrative (Luke 3:1–4:44) has explicit typological elements: the rejection of Jesus by his own townspeople in Nazareth echoes Israel’s earlier rejection of the charismatic prophets, Elijah and Elisha (Luke 4:22–30). Similarly, the Pentecost narrative (Acts 1:1–2:42) has typological overtones—the transfer of the Holy Spirit from Jesus to the disciples reflects the earlier transfer of the Spirit from Moses to the seventy elders (Num. 11:16–30). Moreover, just as the infancy narrative (Luke 1:5–2:52) is programmatic for the mission of Jesus to Israel, so the Pentecost narrative

is programmatic for the mission of the disciples from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Finally, just as the anointing of Jesus (Luke 3:22; 4:18) is a paradigm for the subsequent Spirit baptism of the disciples (Acts 1:5; 2:4), so the gift of the Spirit to the disciples is a paradigm for God's people throughout the "last days" as a charismatic community of the Spirit—a prophet-hood of all believers (Acts 2:16–21). Other narratives in Luke-Acts may or may not have all these elements. Nevertheless, these episodic, typological, programmatic, and paradigmatic elements are the key to interpreting the historical-theological dimension of Lukan historiography.

In the light of these four narrative elements, the solution to Pentecostalism's methodological challenge is not to retreat behind an artificial and arbitrary dichotomy of "descriptive" versus "didactic." Rather, it is to come to grips with the true nature of Luke's historiography. Deeply influenced by his biblical-septuagintal historiographical model, Luke narrates the story of the founding and growth of Christianity. As in his model, his episodes are historical-theological in intent. In other words, Luke never intended to give his readers a simple description of events, either to inform or to satisfy the curiosity of his readers about the origins of their faith. Therefore, however the details play out, in principle Luke's narratives are an important and legitimate source for constructing a Lukan doctrine of the Spirit. Thus, rather than providing a flimsy foundation upon which to erect a doctrine of the Holy Spirit—as is commonly alleged—the historical accounts of the activity of the Spirit in Acts lay the groundwork for a doctrine of the Spirit that has normative implications for the mission and religious experience of the contemporary church.

The Theological Independence of Luke

The tendency to drive a wedge between διδασκαλία and historical narrative, which I have just reviewed, has led to an unfortunate corollary for the interpretation of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts: a widespread belief that whereas we look to Luke for history we must turn to Paul for theology. As a result of this methodological program, Luke's data on the Holy Spirit are interpreted as though written by Paul. In *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, James Barr classifies this procedure as an "illegitimate identity transfer."⁴⁰ This Pauline interpretation of

Luke is most evident in readings of the characteristic Lukan phrases “baptized in the Holy Spirit” and “filled with the Holy Spirit.”

In their *Christianity Today* article, “A Truce Proposal for the Tongues Controversy,” Clark H. Pinnock and Grant R. Osborne speak for many interpreters when they write:

This [pentecostal] argument is weak methodologically and exegetically. Didactic portions of Scripture must have precedence over historical passages in establishing doctrine. We ought to move here from the teaching of First Corinthians to the narrative of Acts rather than the reverse. When one follows this proper methodology, one notes that there is no manifestation of tongues which is normative.⁴¹

Authors of well-known books on the Holy Spirit, such as Dunn, Green, and Stott, commonly adopt this faulty methodological approach to the teaching of Luke and Paul on the Holy Spirit.

Scholars typically define Luke’s characteristic phrase “baptized in the Holy Spirit” according to Paul’s meaning of it. Instructing the church at Corinth, Paul writes, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). According to this metaphor, Spirit baptism “is the spiritual transformation which puts the believer ‘in Christ,’ and which is the effect of receiving the gift of the Spirit (hence ‘baptism in the Spirit’).”⁴² Therefore, according to Paul, the metaphor signifies initiation and incorporation;⁴³ that is, “it is, in fact, the means of entry into the body of Christ.”⁴⁴ Invariably, the references in Luke-Acts (Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5; 11:16) are given this Pauline meaning. Having surveyed the references to the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, Stott writes:

The Greek expression is precisely the same in all seven occurrences, and therefore *a priori*, as a sound principle of interpretation, it should refer to the same baptism experience in each verse.⁴⁵

Consequently, when Luke reports this baptism of the Holy Spirit, by definition, it always and necessarily has the Pauline meaning.

Because in Pauline theology “baptism in the Holy Spirit” is always initiatory and incorporative, it is assumed that no alternative interpretation is admissible. Thus we are told, “The Pentecostal arguments fall to the ground.”⁴⁶ Similarly, we read, “So baptism with the Holy

Spirit is not a second stage experience for some Christians, but an initiatory experience for all Christians.”⁴⁷ However, in a review of Michael Green’s book *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Clark Pinnock rightly observes:

If you read Luke by himself, and listen to him, it seems rather clear that the outpouring of the Spirit he has in mind is not brought into relation to *salvation* [initiation/incorporation], as it is in Paul, but in relation to *service* and *witness*. Therefore, Luke does not tie the coming of the Spirit to the salvation event. . . . Even non-charismatics like Green, sensitive and open as they are to the renewal, seem unable to grant that the pentecostals may understand Acts better than they do.⁴⁸

Similarly, Luke’s phrase “filled with the Holy Spirit” is often defined or qualified by Paul’s use of a similar one in Ephesians 5:18: “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.” Though Luke uses the term nine times and Paul uses it but once,⁴⁹ Paul’s use seems to be normative. For example, in *The Baptism and Fullness of the Holy Spirit*, Stott devotes a few random paragraphs to Luke’s use of the term but devotes no less than nine pages to Paul’s use of the term.⁵⁰ Again, not only is Luke’s characteristic term made to sound Pauline, but also its importance is subordinated to Paul’s meaning of the term.

The methodology whereby Luke is read as though he were Paul presses him into the Pauline mold and strips him of his independence as a theologian in his own right. At the very least, as the following table demonstrates, this methodology is absurd.

	Luke	Paul
“baptized” in the Spirit	3x	1x
“filled” with the Spirit	9x	1x

Of course, though theology is not to be reduced to mere statistics, it is strange, indeed, that in each case Paul’s one use of the term should define Luke’s majority use of the term. Since Luke’s use of the terms “baptized” and “filled with the Spirit” differs from Paul’s, then this a priori methodological program has effectively silenced his teaching on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

In regard to the general theological independence of Luke, I. Howard Marshall observes:

Luke was entitled to his own views, and the fact that they differ in some respects from those of Paul should not be held against him at this point. On the contrary, he is a theologian in his own right and must be treated as such.⁵¹

Therefore, since Luke “is a theologian in his own right,” interpreters ought to examine his writings with a mind open to the possibility that his perspective on the Holy Spirit may, in fact, differ from Paul’s. Consequently, just as the recognition that Luke is a theologian as well as a historian makes Luke-Acts a legitimate source for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, so the recognition that Luke is independent of Paul will broaden the New Testament source for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. To recognize these two facts is to rehabilitate Luke as a historian-theologian of the Holy Spirit and to allow him to make a significant, unique, and independent contribution to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Interpreters may sometimes adopt unfounded interpretations of biblical texts that prove awkward to their theological tradition. This happens with Luke’s reports about the relationship between “believing” and “conversion-initiation.” He provides four examples: (1) the disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–21), (2) the Samaritan believers (Acts 8:12, 14–17), (3) the believing community of Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44–48; 11:17), and (4) the Ephesian disciples/believers (Acts 19:1–2, 6). Theologian Donald G. Bloesch states that “the disciples were not believers until the Day of Pentecost,”⁵² and to justify this groundless assertion explains: “They had been converted to the ‘way’ of the cross, yet not to the gospel of the cross. They had accepted Jesus as Messiah in the Jewish sense, but they did not embrace him as the Savior of the world. The Holy Spirit was *with* them, not yet *in* them” (John 14:17).⁵³ To clinch his argument he affirms: “The disciples before Pentecost were seekers rather than believers. They had an incipient faith but not the faith that is ‘the power unto salvation.’”⁵⁴ The same tendentiousness is found in Dunn, who denies that the Samaritans, Cornelius, or the Ephesian twelve were true or full believers before they received the Spirit.⁵⁵ This is in spite of the fact that Luke explicitly reports their antecedent belief in every case (Acts 8:12; 11:17; 19:2). Dunn asserts (as an explanation of the data in Acts) that “the only thing that matters in deciding whether a man is a Christian or not is whether he has received the Spirit or not.”⁵⁶ Therefore, “God’s act is to give

the Spirit to man on believing (Acts 2:38; 11:17; 15:9; 19:2; cf. John 7:39; Gal. 3:2).”⁵⁷ But since Luke reports that this did not happen in the Acts 8, 10–11, 19 cases, one must conclude that these “believers” were not “believers” until they had subsequently received the gift of the Spirit. Only by this logical “sleight of hand” can Dunn interpret “baptism in the Holy Spirit” to be about conversion-initiation rather than commissioning-empowerment.

Though it is a formidable challenge, we can resolve the theological and methodological impasse in the contemporary church concerning the meaning of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts. On the one hand, where appropriate, all parties in the current debate must abandon those largely self-serving methodological programs that conspire to either silence or manipulate Luke’s distinctive theology. On the other hand, all parties must develop a methodological consensus for interpreting the gift of the Spirit in Luke-Acts. At a minimum, this consensus must include the following principles: (1) Luke-Acts is theologically homogeneous, (2) Luke is a theologian as well as a historian, and (3) Luke is an independent theologian in his own right.

When Luke-Acts is interpreted in light of this methodological program, Luke’s message often proves to be radically different from some of the contemporary interpretations given to it. For example, contrary to some popular interpretations, Luke’s characteristic phrase “filled with the Holy Spirit” (1) is modeled after its use in the Old Testament (the Septuagint), (2) has the same meaning in the Gospel as it has in the Acts, and (3) has a different meaning in Luke-Acts than it has in Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians. In general terms, for Luke, the Holy Spirit relates not to salvation or to sanctification, as is commonly asserted, but exclusively to a third dimension of Christian life—service. Thus when interpreted by the methodological program discussed here, Luke is found to have a charismatic rather than a soteriological theology of the Holy Spirit. This charismatic theology of the Spirit is no less valid for disciples in the twenty-first century than it was for the disciples in the first century.