

## THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST AND PENTECOST

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**D**ID LUKE invent the ascension? Why is the Christian feast of Pentecost referred to only by Luke in the NT?<sup>1</sup> How are these two early Christian events recounted by him to be understood in relation to the resurrection of Christ? These modern questions are occasioned by the annual liturgical celebration of the Ascension between two feasts inherited by the Christian community from the Palestinian Jewish calendar and "baptized": Passover celebrated as paschal Easter and Weeks celebrated as Pentecost. The article of the Creed of Nicaea and Constantinople recited by Christians every Sunday includes the affirmation "He ascended into heaven," but only rarely does one reflect on the implications of such an affirmation. Furthermore, the way in which modern Christians think about the ascension of Christ and about the Pentecost-experience often gives rise to problems in the understanding of the NT texts that treat of these two early Christian events. Hence it may be worthwhile to try once again to sort out what the NT itself has to say about the ascension of Christ and about Pentecost to deepen our theological understanding of them, for the two events are not only intimately connected but are also related to the resurrection, the heart of Christian faith.

### THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

Data about Christ's ascension are found only in certain NT writings. In fact, in the majority of the books there is not a line referring to it: nothing in Matthew, Mark,<sup>2</sup> most of the Pauline corpus, the Catholic Epistles, or Revelation. Allusions to the ascension are found in Romans, Ephesians, John, and Hebrews, whereas the appendix of the Marcan Gospel and Luke-Acts treat it explicitly. It is an affirmation of major importance in Lucan Christology and intimately related to the Lucan

<sup>1</sup> In 1 Cor 16:8 Paul speaks of staying in Ephesus for a feast of Pentecost, but that is undoubtedly to be understood as Pentecost according to the Jewish calendar; see E. Lohse, "Pentēkostē," *TDNT* 6.50; cf. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 389. In Acts 20:16 Paul is depicted by Luke as hurrying to be in Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost; this may again be meant as the Jewish festival, but even if it is understood as the Christian Pentecost, it is still a Lucan reference. See further A. Weiser, "Pentēkostē," *EWNT* 3.165-66.

<sup>2</sup> I.e., apart from the non-Markan, canonical appendix to this Gospel, 16:9-20, which will be discussed below.

theme of testimony about the word of God and the Lucan teaching about the Spirit. The relation of the Lucan material to the rest of the NT data has been discussed before from a variety of viewpoints, but not always with the requisite distinctions.<sup>3</sup> If such distinctions are not properly made, one runs the risk of picturing to oneself the ascension differently from the way the NT itself presents it. In this study we shall treat the NT data that bear on the ascension of Christ under three headings: (1) the exaltation of Christ; (2) diverse NT assertions about the ascension; and (3) the NT meaning of the ascension.

### *The Exaltation of Christ*

The earliest NT references to the phase of Christ's existence following his burial cast it in terms of his *exaltation*, i.e., his being taken up to the

<sup>3</sup> The literature on the NT accounts of the ascension is vast; among the more important recent literature one may cite: J. E. Alsop, *The Post-Resurrection Appearance Stories of the Gospel Tradition* (Calwer theologische Monographien 5; Stuttgart: Calwer-V., 1975); A. W. Argyle, "The Ascension," *ExpTim* 66 (1954-55) 240-42; P. Benoit, "The Ascension," *Jesus and the Gospel* 1 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973) 209-53; J. G. Davies, *He Ascended into Heaven* (London: Lutterworth, 1958); J. van Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars* (Leiden: Brill, 1959) 195-205; J. Haroutunian, "The Doctrine of the Ascension: A Study of the New Testament Teaching," *Int* 10 (1956) 270-81; W. Kern, "Das Fortgehen Jesu und das Kommen des Geistes oder Christi Himmelfahrt," *Geist und Leben* 41 (1968) 85-90; G. Kretschmar, "Himmelfahrt und Pfingsten," *ZKG* 66 (1954-55) 209-53; G. Lohfink, *Die Himmelfahrt Jesu: Untersuchungen zu den Himmelfahrts- und Erhöhungstexten bei Lukas* (SANT 26; Munich: Kösel, 1971); "Der historische Ansatz der Himmelfahrt Christi," *Catholica* 17 (1963) 44-84; M. McNamara, "The Ascension and the Exaltation of Christ in the Fourth Gospel," *Scr* 19 (1967) 65-73; X. Léon-Dufour, *Resurrection and the Message of Easter* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974) 80-94; P.-H. Menoud, " 'Pendant quarante jours' (Actes i 3)," *Neotestamentica et patristica: Eine Freundesgabe, Herrn Prof. Dr. Oscar Cullmann*. . . (NovTSup 6; Leiden: Brill, 1962) 148-56; "Remarques sur les textes de l'Ascension dans Luc-Actes," *Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann*. . . (BZNW 21; ed W. Eltester; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1954) 148-56; B. M. Metzger, "The Ascension of Jesus Christ," *Historical and Literary Studies Pagan, Jewish, and Christian* (NTTS 8; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968) 77-87; "The Meaning of Christ's Ascension," *Search the Scriptures: New Testament Studies in Honor of Raymond T. Stamm* (Gettysburg Theological Studies 3; ed J. M. Meyers et al.; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 118-28; P. Miquel, "Le mystère de l'Ascension," *Questions liturgiques et paroissiales* 40 (1959) 105-26; C. F. D. Moule, "The Post-Resurrection Appearances in the Light of Festival Pilgrimages," *NTS* 4 (1957-58) 58-61; R. Pesch, "Der Anfang der Apostelgeschichte: Apg 1, 1-11: Kommentarstudie," *EKKNT* Vor. 3 (1971) 7-35; A. M. Ramsey, "What Was the Ascension?" *SNTS Bulletin* 2 (1951) 43-50; B. Rigaux, *Dieu l'a ressuscité: Exégèse et théologie biblique* (Gembloux: Duculot, 1973) 258-63; K. H. Schelkle, "Christi Himmelfahrt," *Geist und Leben* 41 (1968) 81-85; G. Schille, "Die Himmelfahrt," *ZNW* 57 (1966) 183-99; E. Schillebeeckx, "Ascension and Pentecost," *Worship* 35 (1960-61) 336-63; H. Schlier, "Jesu Himmelfahrt nach den lukanischen Schriften," *Geist und Leben* 34 (1961) 91-99; A. Wikenhauser, "Die Belehrung der Apostel durch den Auferstandenen nach Apg 1,3," *Vom Wort des Lebens: Festschrift für Max Meinertz* (NTAbh Erg. 1; Münster in W.: Aschendorff, 1951) 105-13; S. G. Wilson, "The Ascension, a Critique and an Interpretation," *ZNW* 59 (1968) 269-81.

glorious presence of the Father, but without specifying the mode of such a taking up. Such an assertion is found in the pre-Pauline hymn, probably of Jewish-Christian origin, preserved in Phil 2:8–11:<sup>4</sup> “He still further humbled himself with an obedience that meant death, even death upon a cross! That is why God has so greatly exalted him. . . .” In a striking assertion about the sequel to Jesus’ obedience in death, and even in crucifixion, early Christians acknowledged that God “exalted” him and bestowed on him a name which is superior to every name, i.e., *Kyrios*, the title par excellence for the risen Christ, unto “the glory of God the Father.” What is noteworthy in this early Christian *homologia* or confession is the omission of any reference to Jesus’ resurrection, or even his burial; one passes from his death upon the cross to his exaltation to glory. Likewise noteworthy is the adoration which is owed to him as *Kyrios*: that which Isa 45:23 ascribed to Yahweh, as the allusion makes clear, “to me (God [*’El*]) every knee shall bend, every tongue shall swear.” Here, then, in this pre-Pauline hymn adopted and adapted by Paul one finds affirmed the exaltation of the crucified Christ Jesus.

Another reference to Christ’s exaltation is found in another primitive Christian hymn or confession embedded in a much later writing, 1 Tim 3:16:

Who was manifested in the flesh,  
justified in the spirit;  
seen by angels,  
preached among the nations;  
believed in in the world,  
taken up in glory.<sup>5</sup>

Whereas the pre-Pauline hymn in Phil 2 affirmed that God has “so greatly exalted him” (*hyperpsōsen*, lit. “superexalted him”), Christ is

<sup>4</sup> See further R. P. Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians ii.5–11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* (SNTSMS 4; Cambridge: University Press, 1967) 197–248; P. Grelot, “Deux notes critiques sur Philippiens 2,6–11,” *Bib* 54 (1973) 169–86, esp. 176–79; J. A. Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (SBLMS 25; Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1979) 118, 125.

<sup>5</sup> See further J. T. Sanders, *The New Testament Christological Hymns: Their Historical Religious Background* (SNTSMS 15; Cambridge: University Press, 1971) 15–17, 94–95; E. Schweizer, “Two Early Christian Creeds Compared, I Corinthians 15.3–5 and I Timothy 3.16,” *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation* (ed. W. Klassen and G. F. Snyder; New York: Harper & Row, 1962) 168–77; *Lordship and Discipleship* (SBT 28; London: SCM, 1960) 64–66; J. Jeremias, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus* (NTD 9; 8th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963) 23–25; M. Dibelius and H. Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972) 61–63.—Though the verb in the last line is *anelēmphthē*, that used elsewhere in the New Testament for Jesus being “taken up,” the assertion is not intended as a description and no mode of ascent is mentioned; it means no more than “exaltation.”

here said to have been "taken up in glory" (*anēlēmphthē*), i.e., enthroned. In both instances "glory" (*doxa*) is associated with Jesus' risen status, and in this instance it is the term of the various phases of his existence mentioned: earthly manifestation, vindication (by God), association with angels, object of proclamation and faith, and glorious enthronement. Again, in noteworthy fashion all this is acknowledged without any reference to the resurrection.

To such early references to the exaltation of Christ one has to relate certain assertions in the Johannine Gospel that seem to allude to the same phase of his existence. In his conversation with Nicodemus the Johannine Jesus says, "As Moses lifted on high the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted on high (*hypsōthēnai*), that everyone who believes in him may have life eternal" (3:14). Later on in the same Gospel Jesus is made to say to the Jews, "When you have lifted on high the Son of Man, then you will know that I am (he)" (8:28). In this instance the allusion seems to be to a lifting on high in crucifixion, because human beings are the subject of the verb (*hypsōsēte*). The ambiguity, whether lifting up on the cross or lifting up to glory, which may be found in the first instance is found again in 12:32, "If I am lifted up on high (*hypsōthō*) from the earth, I shall draw all things to myself"; or again in 12:34, when the crowd replies that it has learned from the Law that the Messiah remains forever, "How then may you say that the Son of Man must be lifted on high (*hypsōthēnai*)?" Though some commentators would restrict the "lifting on high" in 3:14 and in 12:32, 34 to the crucifixion of Jesus, as in 8:28,<sup>6</sup> the verb *hypsoun* is used elsewhere in the NT of Jesus' glorious exaltation (e.g., Acts 2:33; 5:31) and may be a relic of a primitive tradition. Other commentators on the Johannine Gospel have little difficulty in seeing Jesus' "being lifted on high" in these verses as "one continuous action of ascent,"<sup>7</sup> in which he begins his transit to the Father in crucifixion and completes it with his exaltation to glory. Once again, if this interpretation is correct, it would be a transit from cross to glory without an allusion to the resurrection. Even though the final redaction of the Johannine Gospel postdates the Synoptic Gospels, it clearly contains many early Christian traditional affirmations which have developed independently of the Synoptic tradition.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> E.g., J. H. Bernard, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John 1* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1928) 114.

<sup>7</sup> E.g., R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (i-xii)* (AB 29; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966) 146; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978); B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (NCB; Greenwood, SC: Attic, 1972) 157; R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John 1* (New York: Crossroad, 1980) 396.

<sup>8</sup> See further C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1965).

In time, however, references to Jesus' exaltation came to be coupled with his resurrection. Indeed, this is found in the so-called Jerusalem kerygma, elements of which have been embedded in the early speeches in Acts according to the thesis of C. H. Dodd.<sup>9</sup> In his speech on the first Christian Pentecost Peter affirms: "This Jesus God raised up (*anestēsen*), and of that we are all witnesses. Being therefore lifted on high (*hypsōtheis*) to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the holy Spirit, he has poured it out—this which you see and hear" (2:33). Similarly in 5:30–31.

Thus some of the earliest references to Jesus' postcrucifixion status were expressed in terms of his exaltation, sometimes without allusion to his resurrection, sometimes with it. Those without the allusion do not deny it, of course, but they reveal at least that Jesus' status as the risen *Kyrios* was at times thought of independently as an exaltation to the Father's glory, as a glorious enthronement. Indeed, on one occasion Paul even speaks of Jesus' resurrection as being effected by "the glory of the Father": "... so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4).<sup>10</sup>

This belief in the glorious exaltation of Christ is further implied in a series of NT texts that speak of his being in heaven or at the right hand of the Father, with no mention of how he arrived there. Thus, in Paul's earliest letter, the Thessalonians are said to be awaiting "His Son from heaven whom He raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the coming wrath" (1 Thess 1:10); or "he will come down from heaven" (1 Thess 4:16).<sup>11</sup> The same presence of Christ in heaven is depicted with apocalyptic stage-props in the Book of Revelation (1:12–18; 3:21b; 6:1b–7; 7:17). In all of these references the celestial existence of Christ is affirmed or assumed without any reference to ascension.

#### *Diverse New Testament Assertions about the Ascension*

Since we have found NT assertions of Christ's exaltation to heavenly

<sup>9</sup> *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936; reprinted, New York: Harper, 1962) 17–24. For another view of this matter, see U. Wilckens, *Die Missionsreden der Apostelgeschichte* (WMANT 5; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener-V., 1961); but cf. J. Dupont, "Les discours missionnaires des Actes des apôtres," *RB* 69 (1962) 37–60, esp. 39–50.

<sup>10</sup> For the relation of the Father's "glory" and "power" in the resurrection, see my article "To Know Him and the Power of His Resurrection" (Phil 3:10), *Mélanges bibliques en hommage au R. P. Béda Rigaux* (ed. A. Descamps et al.; Gembloux: Duculot, 1970) 411–25; reprinted, *To Advance the Gospel: New Testament Studies* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 202–17, esp. 209–13.

<sup>11</sup> See further Phil 3:20; 1 Cor 4:5; 15:47; Rom 8:34; 2 Thess 1:7; Col 3:1; Eph 1:3, 20; 2:6; 6:9; 1 Pet 3:22; 2 Tim 4:18; Acts 7:55; Heb 1:3, 13; 7:26; 8:1; 9:12, 24; 10:12–13; 12:2. Cf. the references to Christ in heaven with the Father presented with apocalyptic stage-props in Rev 1:12–18; 3:21; 6:1–7; 7:17.

glory without any mention of his resurrection, it is not surprising to find the primitive proclamation of his resurrection without any reference to his exaltation or ascension. Thus, in the fragment of early kerygmatic preaching passed on to us by Paul in 1 Cor 15:3-5, "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve, . . ." Here, though the resurrection and Jesus' postresurrectional appearances are proclaimed, nothing is said of the ascension.

That the exaltation of Christ should in time have been thought of in terms of an assumption or an ascension is not surprising, given the OT notices of the assumption of Enoch (Gen 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kgs 2:11) and the development of this theme in the case of other OT figures in the intertestamental and later Jewish literature.<sup>12</sup>

In dealing with Jesus' *ascension* in NT writings, one has to distinguish two sorts of references to it: (1) those which allude to an ascension in the context of other affirmations, without describing it; and (2) those which describe or depict it, i.e., situate it in time and space.

1. *Texts That Allude to Jesus' Exaltation as an Ascension.* Here we must further distinguish between texts (a) that imply motion upwards without using the word "ascend"; and (b) those that employ the verb or its equivalent. Thus (a) in Heb 4:14 we read of Jesus as "a great high priest who has passed through the heavens" (*dielēlythota tous ouranous*; cf. 6:19-20); or of his having "entered . . . into heaven itself" (*eisēlthen . . . eis auton ton ouranon*, 9:24). Or again, in 1 Pet 3:22, "who has gone into heaven (*poreutheis eis ouranon*) and is at the right hand of God." In these passages the motion is not only that of Christ himself, but one that implies either passage through the heavens (plural *ouranoi*) or into heaven (*ouranos*, understood as a place). There are also the texts (b) that employ the word "ascend" in a context in which some other affirmation is primary. Thus in Romans Paul argues that God's new way of righteousness through faith in Christ Jesus is open to all and easy of access. He alludes to Deut 30:11-14, where Moses persuades the Israelites that the observance of the Law just promulgated does not require one laboriously to scale the heights or descend to the depths. Paul accommodates these words of Moses in an allusion to Christ himself. The ease of the new righteousness is seen because the heights have been scaled and the depths have been plumbed, for Christ has come to the world of humanity

<sup>12</sup> See G. Bertram, "Der religionsgeschichtliche Hintergrund des Begriffs der 'Erhöhung' in der Septuaginta," ZAW 68 (1956) 57-71; E. Bock, "Von der Himmelfahrt im Alten und Neuen Testament," *Christengemeinschaft* 4 (1927) 45-50; and especially G. Lohfink, *Die Himmelfahrt Jesu* 32-79.

and been raised from the dead: "Who will ascend into heaven' (that is, to bring Christ down) or 'who will descend into the abyss' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)? But what does it say? The word is near to you, on your lips and in your heart . . ." (10:6-8). Paul thus alludes to the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus; but his use of *anabēsetai* in v. 6, though derived from Deut 30:12 (LXX), makes the Christian reader think of someone "ascending" into heaven, as Christ Jesus did. The allusion here to the ascension may be remote, but it is unmistakable.

Such an allusion is, however, clearer in Eph 4:7-11. In this Deutero-Pauline writing, the author speaks of the gifts that the risen Christ has bestowed on his church:

To each one grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. That is why it [Scripture] says, "Ascending on high, he led a host of captives; he gave gifts to human beings." In saying "he ascended," what does it mean but that he also descended to the lowest parts of the earth? He who descended is the same as he who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and teachers.

In these verses the writer quotes Ps 68:19, adapting it to his purpose by inserting the verb *edōken*, "he gave" (gifts), in place of the psalm's verb *elabes*, "you took" (gifts), thus Christianizing the quotation for the purpose of affirming that the ascended Christ graced his church with apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. His main affirmation bears on the giving, and the ascension of Christ is incidental to that affirmation.

In this category also belongs Jesus' statement to Mary Magdalene on the day of the resurrection itself, when he appears to her and bids her not to cling to him, "for I have not yet ascended" (Jn 20:17). Immediately he adds the charge that she go to his brethren and tell them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Jesus' real intention in this Johannine episode is to get Mary Magdalene to go and inform his disciples about his risen status: he is returning to him who sent him,<sup>13</sup> and the tenses of the verbs are not to be pressed. Jesus speaks of his "ascension," which in this Gospel is to be understood as "the terminus of 'the hour' in which Jesus passed from this world to the Father (xiii 1)."<sup>14</sup> In other words, for the Johannine Jesus the "lifting

<sup>13</sup> See further Jn 7:33; 16:5-7; or (going to the Father) 13:1; 14:12, 28; 16:10, 17, 28; 17:11, 13; or (going to God) 13:3.

<sup>14</sup> R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (xiii-xxi)* (AB 29A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970) 1012; A. Vergote, "L'Exaltation du Christ en croix selon le quatrième évangile," *ETL* 28 (1952) 5-23.

on high," which began with the crucifixion, finds its climax in his "ascending to my Father" (17:15).

This category of NT texts thus mentions the ascension by the way, incidentally to other affirmations, and it differs from another category of texts that deal with the ascension more explicitly.

2. *Texts That Describe or Depict the Ascension.* The ascension in these passages is now treated as something happening to the risen Christ, situating it as an event in time and space, as "an observable incident,"<sup>15</sup> an "objectified ascension,"<sup>16</sup> or an "objectified transfer"<sup>17</sup>—as various writers have sought to describe it. To this category belong three NT passages:

a. Lk 24:50–51: "Then he (Jesus) led them (the Eleven and others) out as far as Bethany, and raising up his hands he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he happened to be parted from them and was carried up into heaven."

Several things should be noted about these verses: (i) The last clause of v. 51, "and was carried up into heaven," has been treated as a Western Non-Interpolation ever since Westcott and Hort published their critical edition of the Greek NT in 1881.<sup>18</sup> Because of their influence the last part of v. 51 has either been bracketed or omitted entirely in many more modern critical editions of the Greek NT. The reason: because it is lacking in the so-called Western text-tradition of the Lucan Gospel. As late as the twenty-fifth edition of Nestle-Aland (1975), it was still relegated to a footnote, despite the fact that all the major Greek manuscripts except the *prima manus* of Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Bezae contain it.<sup>19</sup> The discovery and publication in 1961, however, of Papyrus Bodmer XIV (P<sup>75</sup>),<sup>20</sup> a text dated to A.D. 200 (±25 years), has clinched the matter; it contains the clause and supports what is in reality the *lectio difficilior*, which is to be preferred in any case. As a result, the twenty-sixth edition of Nestle-Aland and the United Bible Societies' Greek NT (third edition) now read the clause without brackets.<sup>21</sup> Yet,

<sup>15</sup> Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John* 566.

<sup>16</sup> E. J. Epp, "The Ascension in the Textual Tradition of Luke-Acts," *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis* (ed. E. J. Epp and G. D. Fee; Oxford: Clarendon, 1981) 134.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 144.

<sup>18</sup> See *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (2 vols.; rev. ed.; Cambridge/London: Macmillan, 1890–96).

<sup>19</sup> On the Western Non-Interpolations, see my commentary *The Gospel according to Luke I–IX* (AB 28; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981) 130–32.

<sup>20</sup> For a good survey of all the evidence, see Epp, "The Ascension" (n. 16 above). Cf. V. Martin and R. Kasser, *Papyrus Bodmer XIV–XV: Evangiles de Luc et Jean 1* (Cologne: Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, 1961) 150.

<sup>21</sup> See further B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*



even if someone were to continue to question the reading, one would have to cope with the beginning of the Lucan second volume, which implies that the "first volume" (*prōtos logos*) ended with a mention of the ascension: "until the day when he was taken up" (Acts 1:2), seemingly a reference to Lk 24:51b.

(ii) The Greek verb in 24:51 is the passive *anephereto*, "he was carried up," and not a form of the intransitive *anabainein*, "go up, ascend." Here one encounters the same sort of problem that one does at times when the NT speaks of Jesus' resurrection in the passive, *egēgertai* or *ēgerthē*, "he has been/was raised" (1 Cor 15:12; Rom 4:25), rather than in the active intransitive *anestē*, "he rose."<sup>22</sup> In all of these instances one has to do with the so-called theological passive, "he was carried up" or "he was raised" by God. In the case of the resurrection one often also finds the active of *egeirein* with "God" or "the Father" as its subject (e.g., 1 Thess 1:10; Gal 1:1; 1 Cor 6:14).<sup>23</sup> The apparently more primitive expressions of the ascension, as of the resurrection, were couched in the passive; with the gradual development of a higher Christology in the early Christian communities, the use of the active intransitive forms for both the resurrection and the ascension became more common.

(iii) This taking up of Jesus from Bethany, as he was blessing his disciples, is recounted in Lk 24 as happening on the evening of the day of the resurrection itself. The series of temporal adverbs, prepositional phrases, and subordinate clauses used in that chapter make this dating clear: v. 1, "on the first day of the week" (i.e., Sunday); v. 13, "that same day" (Cleopas and his companion leave for Emmaus); v. 33, "that same hour" (they set out to return to Jerusalem); v. 36, "as they were saying these things" (the Eleven and others report about Jesus' appearance to Simon; thereupon Jesus appears to them all); vv. 44, 50, "but" (= "then," *RSV*). Thus Luke ends his first volume with a description of Jesus being carried up to heaven from Bethany on the first Easter Sunday evening.

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(London/New York: United Bible Societies, 1971) 189–90, where the pejorative judgment of the committee is recorded as D ("a very high degree of doubt concerning the reading selected for the text," xxviii). I have been told that the ratings of many of the Western Non-Interpolations are to be upgraded in the next edition of *UBSGNT* (oral communication of B. M. Metzger). I note, however, that A. Huck and H. Greeven (*Synopse der drei ersten Evangelien*. . . [Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1981] 281) still relegate it to the *apparatus criticus*, despite the fact that it is the *lectio difficilior* and the form of text that best explains the other variants.

<sup>22</sup> Contrast the passive expressions for the resurrection in 1 Cor 15:20; 2 Cor 5:15; Rom 6:4, 9; 7:4; 8:34 with the active, intransitive forms in 1 Thess 4:14; Mk 8:31; 9:9, 31; Lk 24:46; Acts 17:3. Cf. J. Fernández y Fernández, "La ascensión del Señor: Subió al cielo por su propia virtud," *CB* 11 (1954) 134–42; J. Dupont, *Etudes sur les Actes des apôtres* (LD 45; Paris: Cerf, 1967) 477–80.

<sup>23</sup> See further my article "To Know Him. . ." (n. 10 above) 413–15 or 204–6.

In this connection one should recall the timing of Jesus' statement to Mary Magdalene (Jn 20:17) discussed above.<sup>24</sup>

b. Acts 1:9–11. The second text in this category is found at the beginning of Luke's second volume, addressed to the same Theophilus and fitted with an allusion to Jesus' being "taken up" (*anelēmphthē*, Acts 1:2), a reference to the detail at the end of the first volume (Lk 24:51b). The first two verses of Acts make it clear that Luke regards the ascension of Jesus as the term of his public ministry.<sup>25</sup> If the reference to Jesus' ascension were confined to vv. 1–2, there would be no problem; his being "taken up" would simply be understood as a reference to that which was recounted at the end of Lk 24. But immediately thereafter one reads about the appearance of the risen Christ to the "apostles whom he had chosen" (v. 2b; cf. Lk 6:13) and about his "speaking of the kingdom of God" during a period of "forty days" (v. 3). At first one might think that these were postascension appearances of Christ, but then we soon learn that during one of the appearances, when he had commissioned the apostles to be witnesses to him "in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the end of the earth" (v. 8), he was taken up from them: "As they were looking on, he was lifted up (*epērthē*), and a cloud took him out of their sight" (v. 9). As they continued to gaze into the sky, two white-robed persons stood by and asked, "Galileans, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up (*analēmphtheis*) from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you have seen him go into heaven" (v. 11).<sup>26</sup>

Again, several things should be noted about these verses: (i) The "forty days" of appearances of Christ and of instruction about the kingdom now create a problem when this time notice is compared with Lk 24:51. It seems clear that this difference in timing is the reason for the textual omission of v. 51b that was mentioned above.<sup>27</sup>

(ii) This passage in Acts supplies a date for Jesus' "ascension" some time after "forty days" had elapsed from his resurrection; but note that in Acts 13:31 the interval is referred to merely as "many days" (*epi hēmeras pleious*), which suggests that Luke was taking "forty days" merely as a round number. In any case, this passage supplies not only a temporal *terminus ad quem* for this event in Christ's existence, but also

<sup>24</sup> For details see Brown, *Gospel according to John (xiii–xxi)* 992–94; R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John 3* (New York: Crossroad, 1982) 318–19.

<sup>25</sup> For the textual problems of v. 2 and the reading of the Western text that does not include the verb *anelēmphthē*, see Epp, "The Ascension" (n. 16 above) 136–37.

<sup>26</sup> For the textual problems of Acts 1:9–11, see Epp, *ibid.* 137–44.

<sup>27</sup> One should not neglect the further reference to the ascension in Acts 1:22; as in 1:2, it is again used to mark the end of Jesus' public ministry. In this context, however, that end is to be understood as some forty days after the resurrection.

a spatial *terminus a quo*, the Mount of Olives (1:12),<sup>28</sup> and a spatial *terminus ad quem*, "heaven" (1:11); moreover, it specifies the mode of motion, "lifted up," with a cloud taking him out of sight and with angels commenting on the connection of his ascension with his parousia.

(iii) Luke has here employed apocalyptic stage-props to recount the ascension of Christ. Whereas in the Lucan Gospel Christ was simply said to have been "carried up into heaven," in Acts 1 this is done with the aid of clouds<sup>29</sup> and angel-interpreters.<sup>30</sup> Such props are found only in the Lucan story.

(iv) Some commentators think that vv. 9–11 are actually a later insertion by Luke into a context that originally did not contain these verses or that Luke had originally composed a continuous story that would have gone from Lk 24:49 directly to Acts 1:3 (without the mention of the "forty days").<sup>31</sup> Whatever one wants to say about such suggestions, the second alternative is attractive, because the story would flow smoothly from Lk 24:49, with its mention of the "promise of my Father," to the reference of Jesus' appearance "alive after his passion" and his instructions about the kingdom, and especially to the further charge to await the "promise of the Father . . . before many days" (Acts 1:3–5). I shall return to the question of the "forty days" in the second part of this paper, but one should note at the moment that the insertion of "during forty days" into Acts 1:3 could well have come to pass when Luke decided to divide his *opus ad Theophilum* into two books. Further discussion of this matter would involve the whole question of the composition of Luke-Acts, into the details of which we cannot enter here. I need only recall that many commentators on the Lucan writings consider it highly likely that these works existed at one time in an earlier form, to which Luke later added not only the infancy narrative and prologue, but even the secondary prologue of Acts 1:1–2 and the ending in Lk 24:50–53.<sup>32</sup>

But why would Luke insert a reference to the ascension of Christ on two occasions, on the day of the resurrection in Lk 24 and after forty days in Acts 1? Part of the reason is his decision to divide his *opus* into

<sup>28</sup> In Lk 24:50 it was "Bethany," a locality not significantly different, since that village was on the Mount of Olives.

<sup>29</sup> For clouds being used in other apocalyptic passages, see Dan 7:13; 1 Enoch 14:8; 1 Thess 4:17; Rev 1:7; 11:12. More remote OT background can be found in Exod 13:21–22; 24:15–18 (as a sign of divine or heavenly presence). Cf. W. K. Lowther Clarke, "The Clouds of Heaven: An Eschatological Study," *Theology* 31 (1935) 63–72, 128–41; R. B. Y. Scott, "Behold, He Cometh with Clouds," *NTS* 5 (1958–59) 127–32; M. D. R. Willinck, "Studies in Texts: 'A Cloud Received Him' (Acts 1:9)," *Theology* 14 (1927) 297–99.

<sup>30</sup> For angel interpreters see 1 Enoch 19:1; 22:3; 23:4; Rev 10:9; 19:9–10; 22:8. Cf. 1 Thess 4:17.

<sup>31</sup> See Pesch, "Der Anfang" (n. 3 above) 7–35; Lohfink, *Die Himmelfahrt Jesu* 147–62.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 25–32.

two parts; part of it is his lack of concern to eliminate all inconsistencies in his writing; and no little part of it is the emphasis that the double reference gives to the ascension as the line of demarcation for two periods of Lucan salvation-history. This is why H. Conzelmann's theory of the three phases of Lucan salvation-history is basically correct,<sup>33</sup> and not the two-phased theory of W. G. Kümmel, C. H. Talbert, and others.<sup>34</sup> The two phases are said to be that of promise and fulfilment. But whereas this motif is found in the Lucan writings, it is also found in Matthew and John and thus is scarcely distinctive of the Lucan story. Alone among the evangelists Luke has added a sequel to the Jesus-story, and it forms the beginning of the third phase in his view of salvation-history. To the Period of Israel and the Period of Jesus Luke has added the Period of the Church under Stress (*ecclesia pressa*, in Conzelmann's words). It is precisely the ascension that acts as the line of demarcation between the last two phases.

(c) Mk 16:19: "When the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven (*anelēmphthē eis ton ouranon*) and took his seat at the right hand of God." This is the third text in the category of descriptive passages. It records that after Jesus "appeared to the Eleven themselves as they sat at table" (16:14, presumably still in Jerusalem) on the evening of the day of the resurrection (because vv. 12-13 probably record a primitive, abridged form of the Emmaus incident, Lk 24:13-35), he was so taken up. Here, once again, we find a notice of Jesus' ascension on the day of his resurrection, and the mention of a spatial *terminus ad quem*.

We have thus noted the diversity of ways in which different NT writers refer to or depict the ascension of Christ. They range from mere allusions to graphic descriptions of his passage through the heavens. Given this diversity of modes of speaking about the ascension, we may pose the real question about the meaning of the ascension in the NT. It is important, however, to stress at this point that the "ascension" of Christ is scarcely a Lucan creation or invention. Even though he may be the only one to describe it, apart from the author of the appendix of the Marcan Gospel, and situate it in space and time, other NT writers have already spoken of Jesus' exaltation, sometimes not with clear distinction from his resurrection, sometimes with such a distinction. In other words, the exal-

<sup>33</sup> *The Theology of St Luke* (New York: Harper, 1960) 12-16. See further my commentary, *Luke I-IX* 179-87.

<sup>34</sup> See W. G. Kümmel, "Current Theological Accusations against Luke," *Andover Newton Quarterly* 16 (1975) 131-45; C. H. Talbert, "Promise and Fulfilment in Lucan Theology," *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar* (New York: Crossroad, 1984) 91-103. Talbert lists the "others."

tation is already pre-Lucan, even if the graphic details of its mode are not.

### *The Meaning of the Ascension*

The major problem for modern readers of the NT passages referring to the ascension stems from the way they tend to think about or imagine to themselves what the NT is saying about it or about the risen Christ. In this regard we must recall several things:

1. Despite Acts 1:22, where criteria are set forth for the person to replace Judas among the Twelve and one of them is that such a person must have been a "witness to the resurrection," no one witnessed the resurrection of Jesus. It is never so stated or depicted, not even in Mt 28:2b, where mention is made of an earthquake and of an angel of the Lord who comes down to roll back the tombstone and sit on it. In Acts 1:22 Luke has formulated *in the abstract* what is really meant: the person to replace Judas has to be someone who has been a witness to the risen Lord, i.e., someone to whom the risen Christ has appeared (similarly in Acts 4:33). For none of the canonical Gospels tries to do for the resurrection what the later apocryphal *Gospel of Peter* does:

Now in the night in which the Lord's day dawned, when the soldiers were keeping guard, two by two in every watch, a loud noise sounded in heaven. They saw the heavens opened, and two men descending from there in great splendor and drawing near to the tomb. That stone which had been laid against the entrance started to roll of itself and gave way to the side. The tomb was opened, and both of the young men entered in. When, then, those soldiers saw this, they woke up the centurion and the elders—for they too were there keeping guard. While they were explaining what they had seen, they again saw three men coming out of the tomb, two of them holding the other upright, and a cross following them. They saw that the heads of the two reached to heaven, but that of him who was led by them by the hand surpassed the heavens. Then they heard a voice crying out from the heavens, "Have you preached to those that sleep?" And the answer was heard from the cross, "Yes." (35–43)<sup>36</sup>

The developing gospel tradition has here come to a description of the resurrection itself, such as none of the canonical Gospels contains. One sees immediately that the sort of development found in the *Gospel of Peter* for the resurrection is similar to what Luke has given by his description of the ascension in Acts 1:9–11, albeit in more sober fashion.

<sup>36</sup> The Greek text of this fragmentary Gospel can be found in A. de Santos Otero, *Los evangelios apócrifos* (BAC 148; 3rd ed.; Madrid: Edica, 1979) 389–90. Cf. E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha* 1 (London: Lutterworth, 1963) 185–86. The translation given above is my own.

He has supplied the concrete termini for what was earlier known in the tradition as the "exaltation" or the "ascension."

2. The NT, moreover, never presents the resurrection of Jesus as a resuscitation, i.e., a return to his former mode of physical, terrestrial existence, such as that of, say, Lazarus in Jn 11:43-44; 12:1-2. Jesus is never depicted in the NT inhabiting the earth for forty days or appearing to people as someone who has been ensconced behind an arras. Indeed, he walks the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus with Cleopas and his companion: "Jesus himself drew near and walked with them" (Lk 24:15); but their eyes are at first kept from recognizing him (v. 16), and when they are finally opened (v. 31), Jesus "vanished out of their sight." The question to be asked here is, whence did Jesus appear to them along that road? What was the *terminus a quo* of this appearance of him?

3. We are never told explicitly in the NT whence Jesus appears in his postresurrection encounters with his disciples. Regularly enough, the beginning of these encounters is narrated; but at the end, where does he go? A clue, however, is hidden away in the Emmaus account, one on which most readers do not usually reflect. At one point the Lucan Jesus exclaims to the two disciples, "Was not the Messiah bound to suffer all this and so enter into his glory?" (24:26). Thus on the day of the resurrection itself Luke refers to Jesus as having entered "his glory," i.e., the glory (*doxa*) of the Father's presence. The implication, then, is that the crucified and risen Christ appears to his disciples from glory, i.e., from the glorious presence of his heavenly Father, on whose right hand he has already been installed.<sup>36</sup> In this connection one might recall how Paul says of Christ that he was "raised from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Rom 6:4).<sup>37</sup> The spatial *terminus a quo*, then, for all the appearances of the risen Christ to his disciples was the glory of his Father's presence—if one may be permitted the use of the adjective "spatial."

4. To make this point a bit clearer, we may ask what difference there was between the appearance of the risen Christ "to Cephas, to the Twelve," etc. (1 Cor 15:5-6) and his appearance to Paul on the road to Damascus (Gal 1:12, 16; cf. Acts 9:3-5; 22:6-8; 26:13-15). As far as I can see, the only difference was temporal; in Paul's case it was postpentecostal, whereas for the others it was prepentecostal. But in either case its "spatial" *terminus a quo* was the same.

5. The risen Christ who appears to his disciples insists on his identity, even though on one occasion the NT tells us that he appeared to two disciples, as they were walking into the country, "in another form" (*en*

<sup>36</sup> See further W. Michaelis, "Horoō. . .," *TDNT* 5.355-56.

<sup>37</sup> See section "The Exaltation of Christ" above.

*hetera morphē*, Mk 16:12). This is recorded in the appendix to the Marcan Gospel, but it may also be taken as the reason why the eyes of Cleopas and his companion in Lk 24:16 are at first “kept from recognizing him” and why Mary Magdalene at first supposes him “to be the gardener” (Jn 20:15). However one wants to explain this “difference, yet identity,” one must recall what Paul says of the difference between a “physical body” sown in death and a “spiritual body” raised therefrom (15:42–44). Indeed, when he tries to describe the risen body, he identifies it expressly with all that is *not body*, viz., with the “spirit” or with what is “spiritual.” That may be something more than rhetorical oxymoron, but it is not very enlightening. In any case, it should say something to the modern reader about how one should exercise caution in envisioning the risen Christ and his “glorified” body.

6. The resurrection of Christ formed part of the primitive Palestinian kerygma (1 Cor 15:4). Originating in such a Jewish-Christian setting, where many Jews (the Pharisees at least) believed in the resurrection of the dead (see Dan 12:2; cf. Acts 23:6), that kerygma must have carried with it the connotation of a bodily resurrection. The Greek philosophical dichotomy of body/soul and its consequence of the immortality of the soul, to which many modern people are tributary in their thinking, even though it was beginning to invade Palestinian Jewish thinking,<sup>38</sup> should not be allowed to obscure the connotations of the primitive *Palestinian Jewish-Christian* kerygma. Such a kerygma would imply that Jesus had been “raised” by the Father to the state of glory *in some bodily form*, even if modern expositors cannot explain adequately how this happened—any more than Paul could.<sup>39</sup>

7. The foregoing considerations provide a background for the transit of Christ Jesus from “death on a cross” to the state of exaltation in the glory of the Father, to which the pre-Pauline hymn in Phil 2:8–11 referred. They also explain the ambiguity of assertions about his “being lifted up” in the Johannine texts to which we referred earlier.

8. “Ascent/ascension” means motion upwards, and implied in the NT account of Jesus’ ascension is his movement upward through the heavens or the celestial spheres (see Eph 4:10).<sup>40</sup> It is this sort of time-conditioned

<sup>38</sup> Josephus records that some Palestinian Jews thought in terms of the immortality of the soul (*J.W.* 2.8,11 §154). Even if he is predicating of them a view that reflects other thinking, at least he is aware of this idea.

<sup>39</sup> See further the comments of Epp (“The Ascension” [n. 16 above]) on the attempts made by scribes of the Western text to get rid of any thought of a bodily ascension of Christ.

<sup>40</sup> In this connection one may recall Paul’s boast, “A man in Christ . . . who was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know” (2 Cor 11:2). Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphys.* 12.8 §1037a.

thinking about where God is that likewise led to the use of apocalyptic stage-props to describe Jesus' ascent: "He was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9). Though the Lucan description has made use of such time-conditioned stage-props, they are not necessarily part of the essential NT affirmation of the presence of the risen/ascended/exalted Christ to the Father in glory, *wherever* that may be. From the Father's glory Jesus not only appears to his disciples but also sends forth the promise of the Father.

9. Once we understand these fundamental NT modes of speaking about the risen/ascended Christ, we can see that his "ascension" is nothing more than *the* appearance from glory in which Christ took his final leave from the community of his followers—his last visible leave-taking from the assembled followers: "And when he had said this . . ." (Acts 1:9). In other words, Christ would no longer present himself to them in their corporate unity; henceforth his "presence" to them would be either through "the promise of my Father" (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:4), which he as the exalted one pours out (Acts 2:33), or "in the breaking of the bread," as the Emmaus incident makes clear (Lk 24:35): "... how he became known to them in the breaking of the bread."

10. Finally, this explains why Luke, John, and the appendix of the Marcan Gospel speak of the "ascension" of Jesus as an aspect of his entrance into glory associated with the day of his resurrection. If the exaltation or ascension of Christ makes it easier to understand the period during which he manifested himself as risen to his early followers, we see that the risen Christ could appear to his disciples at any time, on the *day* of the resurrection or "many days" later (Acts 13:31). Luke has not invented the "ascension" as something distinct from Jesus' resurrection—that was in the tradition before him—but he has *historicized* it in a way that no other NT writer has, by his introduction of the "forty days," about which I shall say more in connection with Pentecost.<sup>41</sup> Luke has done this because of his concern for a *historical perspective*, which he more than any of the other evangelists has introduced into his form of the early Christian kerygma and the Jesus-story.<sup>42</sup> He has, indeed, periodized aspects of the existence of the risen Christ in a way that no other Christian writer has done. The passion, death, burial, resurrection,

<sup>41</sup> It has to be emphasized in contrast to such modern writers as A. R. C. Leaney ("Why There Were Forty Days between the Resurrection and the Ascension in Acts 1,3," *SE IV* [TU 102] 417–19), who speaks of Luke having "invented the Ascension as a physical event" (417). I am also uneasy with G. Schille's description of the Lucan story in Acts 1:9–11 as a *Kultätologie* for an assembly of the Jerusalem community on the Mount of Olives forty days after Passover in which the ascension of Jesus was recalled (*ZNW* 57 [1966] 193). See the critique of this view by Wilson, "The Ascension" (n. 3 above).

<sup>42</sup> See further my commentary, *Luke I–IX*, 171–92.



exaltation or ascension, and heavenly intercession of Christ has often been called the "paschal mystery." Luke has periodized aspects of this unit in an attempt to make it more comprehensible—in effect, to "eff" the ineffable.

Moreover, one might recall here the diverse ways in which the ascension of Christ was understood in the patristic tradition.<sup>43</sup> It was not until the fourth century A.D. that the feast of the Ascension was celebrated distinctly. Even so, Jerome could still write that "the Lord's Day, the day of the Resurrection, the day of Christians . . . is also called the Lord's Day, because on it the Lord ascended as a victor to the Father."<sup>44</sup>

In concluding this first part, we must stress that the ascension of Christ is the guarantee of Christian destiny. Even if Luke assures the Christian reader that "this Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11), Paul in his earliest letter to his Christian followers assures them that "the Lord will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive . . . shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall *always be with the Lord*" (1 Thess 4:16–17). Here Paul, no less than Luke, makes use of apocalyptic stage-props to assure his Christian followers of their destiny, "to be with the Lord always." In his own way the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews affirms this belief too when he says that "we have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (6:19–20).

According to Lk 24:50, Jesus' final leave-taking was accompanied by a hieratic gesture: "lifting up his hands, he blessed them." Like Melchizedek, "the priest of God Most High," who blessed Abram (Gen 14:16–19), or like Aaron of old blessing the people of Israel (Num 6:23–27), or even like Simon son of Onias, the high priest (219–196 B.C.) who blessed the "whole congregation of the children of Israel" (Sir 50:20), the departing risen Christ calls heaven's blessing down upon the assembly of his followers.

With these considerations we may pass to the second part of this paper.

<sup>43</sup> See V. Larrañaga, *L'Ascension de Notre-Seigneur dans le Nouveau Testament* (Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1938) 12–17; Benoit, "The Ascension" (n. 3 above) 218–21; U. Holzmeister, "Der Tag der Himmelfahrt des Herrn," *ZKT* 55 (1931) 44–82; Davies, *He Ascended* (n. 3 above) 108–11.

<sup>44</sup> *In die dominica Paschae* 52–54; CCLat 78.550. See G. Morin, "S. Hieronymi presbyteri tractatus novissime reperti," *Anecdota maredsolana* 3/2 (1902) 418.

## PENTECOST

Before Christ ascends in Lk 24, he charges his disciples to await “the promise of my Father” (24:49). In that chapter we are not told what that promise is, but at the beginning of the second volume Christ describes it as a baptism “with the holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5). As the Lucan story continues, when “the day of Pentecost” (2:1) finally arrives and is running its course, the promise is realized: a sound from heaven like a mighty rushing wind fills the whole house where the apostles and others are sitting; tongues as of fire appear resting on them, and they are all filled with the holy Spirit and begin to speak in other tongues (2:2–4). The Lucan description of the pentecostal event does not end there, but many readers of Acts 2 tend to think that what is recorded in vv. 2–4 is the most important part of the early Christian Pentecost-experience. However, the outpouring of the Spirit occupies but four verses of the forty-two that Luke devotes to his account of that experience. Those four verses are only introductory to the real pentecostal event, the first proclamation by Spirit-filled, tongue-speaking Galileans to the “Jews and proselytes” sojourning in Jerusalem from all over the Jewish diaspora. For Peter then stands up with the Eleven and addresses such Jews in Jerusalem, climaxing his discourse with the words, “Let the whole house of Israel know with certainty that God has made both Lord and Messiah this Jesus whom you crucified” (2:36). Shortly before this climax Peter explains that the phenomenon of tongues is not caused by “new wine” (2:13) or by the drunkenness of the speakers (2:15), but by the outpouring of the Spirit: “This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses; being exalted then at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the holy Spirit, he has poured it out; this is what you see and hear” (2:32–33). The event of Pentecost, then, was not merely the outpouring of the holy Spirit on Jesus’ followers, but also the first Spirit-filled proclamation of “the word of the gospel” (Acts 15:7) made by the spokesman of the group, Peter, to the Jews in Jerusalem.

As the Lucan story continues, we see the newly empowered Christian community growing daily into the Spirit-guided institutional church, so idyllically depicted in Acts. The promise of the Father has been realized in the pouring out of the Spirit by the risen/ascended Christ. This gift of the Spirit to the Christian community is known, however, elsewhere in the NT, but it is spoken of in different ways. These differences raise questions about the origin of the Christian Pentecost and the meaning of that event in the Lucan story.<sup>45</sup> The different descriptions of the gift

<sup>45</sup> Again, the literature on Pentecost in the NT is vast; the more important recent studies are the following: N. Adler, *Das erste christliche Pfingstfest: Sinn und Bedeutung des*

of the Spirit also create problems in the modern understanding of that primitive phenomenon. Hence an attempt has to be made again to sort out the different aspects of this so important heavenly gift from the ascended Christ to his church. We may treat these problems under the following four headings: (1) the relation of the Lucan story to the Johannine and other NT references to the gift of the Spirit; (2) the relation of the gift of the Spirit to Pentecost; (3) the relation of the fifty to the forty days; and (4) the role of Spirit of the ascended Christ in Christian life.

*The Relation of the Lucan Story to the Johannine and Other NT  
References to the Gift of the Spirit*

We have just recalled briefly the Lucan story of the gift of the Spirit, with which the apostles and others were to be clothed (Lk 24:49) or baptized (Acts 1:5) on "the day of Pentecost" (Acts 2:1). In the Lucan story "fifty days" have elapsed since Jesus' resurrection. In the Johannine Gospel, however, the risen Christ appears to the disciples on "the evening of that day" (20:19), announces to them his peace, commissions them for a sending, and then breathes on them, saying, "Receive the holy Spirit! If you forgive the sins of any people, they are forgiven; if you hold back the sins of any, they are held back" (20:22-23). In both the Lucan and the Johannine stories the phrase for the gift bestowed is the same, "a

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*Pfingstberichtes* Apg 2,1-13 (NTAbh 18/1; Münster in W.: Aschendorff, 1938); F. Bovon, "Le récit de Pentecôte," *Luc le théologien: Vingt-cinq ans de recherches (1950-1975)* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1978) 235-44; S. Brown, "Easter and Pentecost: A Biblical Reflection on Their Relationship," *Worship* 46 (1972) 277-86; M. Delcor, "Pentecôte (La fête de la)," *DBSup* 7.858-79; J. D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (SBT 2/15; Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1970); J. Dupont, "La nouvelle Pentecôte (Ac 2,1-11)," *AsSeign* n.s. 30 (1970) 30-34; "The First Christian Pentecost," *The Salvation of the Gentiles* (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist, 1979) 35-59; C. H. Giblin, "Complementarity of Symbolic Event and Discourse in Acts 2,1-40," *SE VI* (TU 112) 186-96; W. Grundmann, "Der Pfingstbericht der Apostelgeschichte in seinem theologischen Sinn," *SE II* (TU 97) 584-94; K. Haacker, "Das Pfingstwunder als exegetisches Problem," *Verborum veritas: Festschrift für Gustav Stählin zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. O. Böcher and K. Haacker; Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1970) 125-31; E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971) 166-89; J. Kremer, *Pfingstbericht und Pfingstgeschehen: Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu Apg 2,1-13* (SBS 63-64; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1973); "Was geschah Pfingsten? Zur Historizität des Apg 2,1-13 berichteten Pfingstereignisses," *Wort und Wahrheit* 28 (1973) 195-207; I. H. Marshall, "The Significance of Pentecost," *SJT* 30 (1977) 247-69; P.-H. Menoud, "La Pentecôte lucanien et l'histoire," *RHPR* 42 (1962) 141-47; J. Ramos García, "Significación del fenómeno del Pentecostés apostólico," *EstBib* 3 (1944) 469-93; R. Schnackenburg, "Pfingsten damals und heute," *Glaubensimpulse aus dem Neuen Testament* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1972) 106-12; G. Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte: I. Teil: Einleitung, Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1-8,40* (HTKNT 5/1; Freiburg im B.: Herder, 1980) 239-79; D. L. Tiede, "Acts 2:1-47," *Int* 33 (1979) 62-67.

holy Spirit" (*pneuma hagion*). In Luke-Acts fifty days separate the resurrection of Jesus from the *outpouring* of the Spirit (Acts 2:1,33), whereas in John the *insufflation* of the Spirit by the risen Christ takes place on the occasion of his first appearance to the assembled disciples (20:19-23). Indeed, some writers have even called this episode the "Johannine Pentecost."<sup>46</sup> But in contrast to the effect of the outpouring of the Spirit in the Lucan story, by which Peter and the others are emboldened to stand up and proclaim the risen/ascended Christ, the breathing of the Spirit on the disciples in the Johannine story has no recorded effect. In fact, "eight days later" (20:26) the disciples are still closeted in the house, apparently as yet "for fear of the Jews" (20:19). This difference of description of the bestowal of the Spirit on the Christian community raises the question whether Pentecost is another Lucan "invention."

Moreover, Paul shows no awareness of the meaning of Pentecost for Christian life or conduct,<sup>47</sup> nor for that matter of the Johannine "insufflation," even though he is fully aware of the gift of the Spirit to Christians. In his earliest letter, the first to the Thessalonians, he insists that his gospel came to them "not only in word but also in power and in the holy Spirit" (1:5). A few years later, in writing to the Galatians, he expostulates, "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? . . . Did you receive the Spirit through the works of the law or through a hearing with faith?" (Gal 3:1-2). And with the Corinthians he insists, "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except through the holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3). Paul does indeed speak of the "outpouring" of God's love into Christian hearts "through the holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5), but it is unrelated to Pentecost; and his formulation may be no more than an independent echo of Joel 3:1-2 or an antithetical reflection of the OT idea of God pouring out His wrath or anger on His people.<sup>48</sup> At any rate, Paul either affirms or takes for granted the bestowal of God's Spirit on the Christian community in a new way related to faith in the risen Lord.<sup>49</sup> The same awareness of the presence of the Spirit to Christians is found in other NT writings as well (e.g., Heb 2:4; 10:15; Jas 2:5; Jude 20), but again without a reference to Pentecost.

Though Luke has similarly recorded the bestowal of the Spirit on the

<sup>46</sup> Bp. Cassien, as quoted by P.-H. Menoud, "La Pentecôte lucanien" (n. 45 above) 146 n. 11; see M.-A. Chevallier, "'Pentecôtes' lucaniennes et 'Pentecôtes' johanniques," *RSR* 69 (1981) 301-13.

<sup>47</sup> Despite 1 Cor 16:8, on which see n. 1 above.

<sup>48</sup> See Ezek 7:8; 36:18.

<sup>49</sup> Indeed, sometimes Paul does not clearly distinguish the Spirit from the risen Lord (e.g., 2 Cor 3:17, "the Lord is the Spirit"; or 1 Cor 15:45, "the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit").

Christian community, only he has temporally distanced the bestowal from the resurrection of Christ. This again ties in with what we have noted above about his periodization of salvation-history.<sup>50</sup> What John has closely related to the risen Christ, Luke has associated with the exalted/ascended Christ in view of his idea of such history. The result is that we cannot be sure today just when the early Christian community first became aware of the gift of the Spirit to it—or apropos of what function it was performing, whether the forgiveness of sins, as in Jn 20:22–23, or the first proclamation of the Christian message to Jews of Jerusalem, as in Acts 2:5–42. Neither the Lucan nor the Johannine testimony about the *time* of that bestowal comes to us from the earliest strata of the NT tradition.

It is important, however, to note that the Lucan tradition is not alone in separating temporally the Christian disciples' reaction to the resurrection of Christ from their carrying out the commission laid on them by the risen Jesus. The Lucan Jesus, appearing to the disciples on the day of the resurrection, commissions them to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem: "You are witnesses of this" (Lk 24:27–48). But first they must remain "in the city" and *await* "what my Father has promised" (v. 49)—so Luke explains the interval. The Johannine Jesus, however, though he charges his disciples, "As the Father has sent me, I too send you" (20:21), says nothing further either about the specifics of their mission or about a waiting period. Yet the disciples likewise delay in the Johannine story. Indeed, the Johannine account distances this first appearance of the risen Christ from another one "eight days later," when Thomas is present with them, presumably in the same house (20:26), and the Johannine appendix (chap. 21) portrays seven of the disciples, having returned to their old haunts in Galilee, going out to fish. In fact, we never learn from the Johannine Gospel whether the disciples ever carried out their mission, on which they were "sent" (20:21). That, of course, is implied, but what is important is that the Johannine Gospel, in effect, testifies to a period between the resurrection of Christ and the beginning of the Christian mission—to a period during which the risen/ascended Christ appeared to his followers. This shows that the periodization that one finds in the Lucan tradition is not without some foundation in the gospel tradition apart from it. The Johannine Gospel may not know of a "Pentecost" in the Lucan sense; but it does imply at least that the period between the resurrection and the beginning of the Christian mission was more than a matter of hours.

<sup>50</sup> See no. 10 of the section "The Meaning of the Ascension" above.

*The Relation of the Gift of the Spirit to Pentecost*

Only two of the great Jewish feasts of old have become part of the Christian tradition, Passover and Pentecost; the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles, though mentioned in Jn 7:2 as an occasion when Jesus made his way to Jerusalem (7:10) and perhaps reflected in the transfiguration scene of the Synoptic tradition (Mk 9:5 and parallels), remained without significance for the Christian community. Passover (*pesah*) was transformed into the Christian paschal feast of the resurrection at an early date, and Paul himself may already allude to such a Christian feast in writing, "Christ, our passover lamb, has been sacrificed; let us celebrate, then, the festival not with the old leaven, the leaven of wickedness and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor 5:7-8).

The first feast that would normally occur after Passover in the Jewish calendar was the Feast of Weeks (*ḥag šābū'ôt*, Deut 16:10). Though Luke is the only NT writer to pass on to us an event connected with such a Jewish feast, he has scarcely invented this connection. E. Lohse would have us believe that Luke inherited an oral tradition about a mass ecstasy of members of the primitive Christian community, with some of them speaking in tongues on some occasion.<sup>51</sup> E. Haenchen rather associates with Pentecost the beginning of the church's mission to diaspora Judaism.<sup>52</sup> Either of these suggestions is possible, but it seems more likely that Luke inherited a tradition about Jerusalem as the place and Pentecost as the occasion when Peter and the Eleven, empowered and emboldened by the Spirit, confronted diaspora and Jerusalem Jews for the first time with the kerygma about the crucified and risen Jesus, who was now Lord and Messiah. The dramatization of the scene is Lucan, and the details are sketched in typically Lucan style in imitation of the Septuagint. But why would Pentecost have been the occasion? To answer that question, something has to be said about the nature and celebration of this feast among Palestinian Jews of the first century. This will enable us to appreciate the significance of the Lucan story in Acts 2.

The Feast of Weeks was known among Greek-speaking Jews as Pentecost: *hē hēmera pentēkostē*, "the fiftieth day," or *hē hēmera pentēkostēs*, "the Day of Pentecost" (or "of the Fiftieth"), or even *hē pentēkostē hē heortē*, *hē estin hagia hepta hebdomadōn*, "the fiftieth feast, which is the sacred (festival) of the Seven Weeks."<sup>53</sup> It was originally a farmers' feast

<sup>51</sup> See *TDNT* 6.51.

<sup>52</sup> See *Acts of the Apostles* (n. 45 above) 75.

<sup>53</sup> See the LXX of Tob 2:1 (Sinaiticus omits *hepta*); cf. 2 Macc 12:32. Josephus (*Ant.* 3.10.6 §252) records the postbiblical Aramaic name of the feast as *Asartha*, which he interprets as meaning "fiftieth." But that is impossible, since 'āšartā means "gathering," a

at the end of a harvest. In Num 28:26 it is identified with "the day of the first-fruits" (*yôm habbikkûrîm*; cf. Exod 23:16a). But it came to be understood *specifically* as the feast at the end of the wheat harvest (Exod 34:22: *bikkûrê qêšîr hiṭṭîm*). According to Deut 16:9, one was to "count seven weeks from the time you first put the sickle to the standing grain." In time this was more specifically explained as a counting "from the morrow after the sabbath (*mimmohōrat haššabbāt*), from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven full weeks shall they be, counting fifty days to the morrow of the seventh sabbath" (Lev 23:15–16). This became the feast when two loaves made of new flour and baked with leaven were to be offered to Yahweh. Hence, fifty days after the beginning of the harvest, fifty days after Passover, when *maššôt*, "unleavened bread," had been eaten, the Jews would offer farmers' leavened bread to the Lord. The date of the Feast of Weeks, however, was not really fixed until the Priestly tradition had related it to the joined feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread.<sup>54</sup>

Then debate among the Jews of Palestine ensued. Some of them, the Sadducees, started to count the fifty days from "the morrow after the Sabbath," understanding *šabbāt* generically as "feast day," hence equal to Passover itself (15 Nisan, the first month). Reckoning from the day after Passover, they celebrated Pentecost on 6 Siwan (the third month). Other Jews, however, the Pharisees, counted from the Sabbath after Passover, whenever that would come. But still others, e.g., the Essene community of Qumran and those who used the *Book of Jubilees*, who depended on a calendar in which the feasts fell every year on the same day of the week, held that the first sheaf, which was to be offered on "the morrow of the Sabbath," was to be presented on the Sunday following the Passover octave (22 Nisan).<sup>55</sup> Reckoning from that date, they celebrated the Feast of Weeks on the 15th of Siwan (the third month).<sup>56</sup> The debate persisted for centuries, and traces of it are found in the rabbinical writings of subsequent centuries.<sup>57</sup> This dispute about how to reckon the date of Pentecost need not detain us, since in the Lucan story the only important thing is "the fiftieth day," and the connotations that it carried.

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generic term for a festive assembly. In time it was used specifically for the gathering of Jews for the Feast of Weeks (see Tg. Onqelos of Num 28:26). Cf. *Ant.* 13.8.4 §252; 14.13.4 §337; 17.10.2 §254; Philo, *Decal.* 30 §160; *De spec. leg.* 2.30 §176.

<sup>54</sup> See further R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961) 493–95; E. Lohse, *TDNT* 6.44–53.

<sup>55</sup> Note the LXX version of Lev 23:11: *tē epaurion tēs prôtēs*.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Jub.* 15:1; 44:4–5.

<sup>57</sup> See Str-B 2.598–600. The dispute continues even today; see M. A. Sweeney, "Sefirah at Qumran: Aspects of the Counting Formulas for the First-Fruits Festivals in the Temple Scroll," *BASOR* 251 (1983) 61–66, and the literature cited by him.

According to Exod 19:1, Israel arrived in its exodus-wandering at Mt. Sinai in the third month after leaving Egypt, i.e., after Passover. This gave rise in time to the celebration of the giving of the covenant, or to a yearly renewal of the Sinai covenant, in the middle of the third month. This celebration may be reflected in the assembly of Jews in Jerusalem in the fifteenth year of King Asa recorded in 2 Chr 15:10–12, but in recent decades it has been customary to think that this association of the renewal of the Sinai covenant with the Feast of Weeks is attested in Judaism only in the Christian period.<sup>58</sup>

However, a more thorough study of the *Book of Jubilees* and of certain Qumran texts seems to show that some Palestinian Jews at least were celebrating the Feast of Weeks in the middle of the third month precisely as the renewal of the Sinai covenant. From *Jub.* 1:1; 6:17–19; 14:20 it has been concluded that on that feast all the ancient covenants, from Noah to Sinai, were celebrated in renewal.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, part of the ritual of the annual celebration seems to be recorded in the *Manual of Discipline* (1QS 1:16–2:25).<sup>60</sup> According to many interpreters of the Qumran literature, this celebration was held on the Feast of Weeks itself.<sup>61</sup> However, the question is not unanimously answered in the affirmative, for R. de Vaux states categorically that “there is no connection between the Christian feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Weeks as understood by the Qumran community, or in later days, by orthodox Judaism. The story in Acts contains no allusion to the Sinaitic Covenant nor to the New Covenant of which Christ is the mediator.”<sup>62</sup> That might seem to clinch the matter,

<sup>58</sup> According to Str-B (2.601), the Feast of Weeks in the OT was a thanksgiving festival for the recently-ended wheat harvest, and the later interpretation of it as the feast of the memorial of the Sinai covenant cannot be traced back *quellenmässig* before the second century of the Christian era.

<sup>59</sup> See B. Noack, “The Day of Pentecost in Jubilees, Qumran, and Acts,” *ASTI* 1 (1962) 73–95. For a different interpretation of some of these texts, see M. Delcor, “Das Bundesfest in Qumran und das Pfingstfest,” *BibLeb* 4 (1963) 188–204. Delcor would translate *ḥag šābū’ot* as “feast of oaths,” but that is a farfetched translation.

<sup>60</sup> See M. Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark’s Monastery 2/2: Plates and Transcription of the Manual of Discipline* (New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1951); cf. A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961) 74–76; O. Betz, “Die Proselytentaufe der Qumransekte und die Taufe im Neuen Testament,” *RevQ* 1 (1958–59) 213–34, esp. 226–28. In this passage the renewal of the covenant is made into a ritual for the renewal of the members’ commitment to the community. Of particular significance in it is the recounting of the deeds of God by the priests and of the iniquities of Israel by the levites, with corresponding blessings and curses.

<sup>61</sup> See J. T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea* (SBT 26; Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1959) 103, 116–18; G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective* (Cleveland: Collins & World, 1978) 177–79. Cf. F. M. Cross, Jr., *The Ancient Library of Qumran & Modern Biblical Studies: Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980) 90 n. 74, 219 n. 40.

<sup>62</sup> *Ancient Israel* (n. 54 above) 495. See further H. Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (HNT 7; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1963) 27.



but many NT commentators continue to associate the Jewish celebration of Pentecost with the giving of the Torah.<sup>63</sup>

It is difficult, indeed, to find in the Lucan story of Pentecost any *direct* "allusion to the Sinaitic Covenant," but there are allusions to be pondered. First of all, Luke recounts the gift of the Spirit on an occasion when not only "Judeans" but "devout Jews from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5; cf. Deut 2:25) were gathered or assembled for a feast in Jerusalem. Even though Luke refers to them as a *plēthos* that *synēlthen*, "a multitude that came together" (RSV), he is speaking of a festive assembly (what Josephus would call 'āṣartā'). Second, Peter "standing up with the Eleven" (Acts 2:14) confronts the assembled Jews: the "twelve apostles" (Lk 6:13) confront "the twelve tribes of Israel" (Lk 22:29) and function as their judges. This scene is clearly an echo of the saying of Jesus at the Last Supper in the Lucan Gospel, wherein only shortly before allusion was made to the pouring out of Jesus' blood as a sign of "the new covenant" (Lk 22:29 and 20). This allusion may seem subtle, but in a correct understanding of Lucan foreshadowing it is not. Here Peter as the spokesman for the newly reconstituted Twelve confronts the assembled "house of Israel" on its Feast of Weeks and lets it be known that, despite what it had done in crucifying "this Jesus," the promise of old made by God to that house was still valid for it and its children, far and near, as being those "whom the Lord our God calls to Him" (Acts 2:39). That "promise" cannot be limited in the Lucan story to that given to Abraham alone; implied as well is an allusion to the ancient experience of the twelve tribes at Sinai. Third, J. Dupont has worked out a list of verbal allusions in Acts 2 to the important chapters 19 and 20 of Exodus, wherein are recounted the theophany at Sinai and the giving of the Torah.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the adverb *homou*, "together"—or its variant *homothymadon*<sup>65</sup>—may be an echo of *pas ho laos homothymadon* of Exod 19:8, "all the people together." In Acts the "sound" from heaven is *ēchos* (v. 2) and *phōnē* (v. 6); in Exod 19:16 one reads of *eginonto phōnai* ("there were sounds" [= thunders]) and *phōnē tēs salpingos ēchei mega* ("a sound of the trumpet blasted loudly"). The source of the sound is *ek tou ouranou* (Acts 2:2); cf. Exod 20:22, *ek tou ouranou lelalēka pros hymas*, "I have spoken to you from heaven." Yahweh's descent to Mt. Sinai in fire (Exod 19:18) gives an OT background to "the tongues as of fire" of Acts 2:3. And further support for the allusions may come from an—unfortunately fragmentary—liturgical text of Qumran, which asso-

<sup>63</sup> See G. Kretschmar, "Himmelfahrt" (n. 3 above) 209–53; G. Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte* 1 (HTKNT 5; Freiburg im B.: Herder, 1980) 246–47.

<sup>64</sup> "The First Christian Pentecost," *The Salvation of the Gentiles: Essays on the Acts of the Apostles* (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist, 1979) 35–59; "La nouvelle Pentecôte (Ac 2,1–11)," *AsSeign* n.s. 30 (1970) 30–34.

<sup>65</sup> So read in mss. C<sup>s</sup>, E, and the Koine text-tradition.

ciates "tongues of fire" (*lēšônôt 'ēš*) with Yahweh commanding assembled Israelites to "observe all these words" (1Q29 1:3 and 5-7:4),<sup>66</sup> and one fragment of which carries the isolated word *tôrāh* (frg. 16). Dupont further suggests that Acts 2:33, which mentions Jesus' exaltation to the right hand of God, may be an allusion to Ps 68:19, the very passage used in Eph 4:8 (about the ascension!), and drawn from a psalm which Jews of the later rabbinic tradition interpreted of Moses and his ascent of Mt. Sinai to get the Law and promulgate it.<sup>67</sup> Admittedly, none of these allusions is clear or unambiguous; but if there is any validity to them, they supply a significant OT and Palestinian Jewish background to the first Christian Pentecost, when the newly reconstituted Twelve, filled with and emboldened by the Spirit promised by the risen/ascended Christ, confronted "the whole house of Israel" (2:36) with its "word of the gospel" (Acts 15:7).

Until recently it has been customary to interpret the Pentecost of Acts 2 as the equivalent of the Feast of Weeks alone, i.e., as the feast celebrated at the end of the wheat harvest, when at least some Palestinian Jews may have gathered for the renewal of the Sinai covenant. In the newly published Temple Scroll from Qumran Cave 11, however, we learn that the Jews, who used this scroll and who may have considered it as their "sectarian Torah,"<sup>68</sup> actually celebrated three pentecostal feasts, and one of them may shed some light on what has always been a puzzling aspect of the Lucan story of the first Christian Pentecost.

The texts from the Temple Scroll which speak of the three pentecostal feasts run as follows:

1. 11QTemple 18:10-13

Feast of Weeks or the Feast of First Fruits, third month, fifteenth day (*ḥag šābū'ôt hū' wēḥag bikkûrîm*, 11Q Temple 19:9):

- <sup>10</sup> *wsprrth*  
<sup>11</sup> [*lkmh*] šb' šbtwt tmymwt mywm hby'kmh 't h'wmr  
<sup>12</sup> [*htnwph ts*]pwrw 'd mmwḥrt ḥšbt ḥšby'yt tspwrw  
<sup>13</sup> [*ḥmšym*] ywm whby'wtmh mnḥh ḥdšh lyhwh . . .

<sup>10</sup> "You will count  
<sup>11</sup> [for yourselves] seven Sabbaths complete from the day you bring the sheaf  
<sup>12</sup> [of waving]; you will count until the morrow of the seventh Sabbath; you will count

<sup>66</sup> See D. Barthélemy and J. T. Milik, *Qumran Cave I* (DJD 1; Oxford: Clarendon, 1955) 130-32.

<sup>67</sup> "Ascension du Christ et don de l'Esprit d'après Actes 2:33," *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament: In Honour of Charles Francis Digby Moule* (ed. B. Lindars and S. S. Smalley; Cambridge: University Press, 1973) 219-28.

<sup>68</sup> As B. Z. Wacholder (*The Dawn of Qumran: The Sectarian Torah and the Teacher of Righteousness* [Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1983] 1-4) has recently argued.

<sup>13</sup> [fifty] days and you will bring a new meal-offering to Yahweh . . .”

2. 11QTemple 19:11-14

Feast of New Wine, fifth month, third day (*ḥag yayin ḥādās*):

<sup>11</sup> [wspr]tmh lkmh mywm hby'kmh 't hmnḥh ḥdšh lyhw[h]

<sup>12</sup> [t] ḥm hbkwrym šb'h šbw'wt šb' šbtwt tmymwt

<sup>13</sup> [thyynh 'd mmwḥrt ḥšbt ḥšby'yt tspwrw ḥmšym ywm

<sup>14</sup> w[hby'wt]mh yyn ḥdš lnsk . . .

<sup>11</sup> “You [will count] for yourselves from the day you bring the new meal-offering to Yahweh,

<sup>12</sup> [the] bread as the first fruit, seven weeks; seven Sabbaths complete

<sup>13</sup> [they will be un]til the morrow of the seventh Sabbath; you will count fifty days,

<sup>14</sup> and [you will bring] new wine for a libation . . .”

3. 11QTemple 21:12-16

Feast of New Oil, sixth month, twenty-second day (*ḥag šemen ḥādās*):

<sup>12</sup> wspr[tm]h [lkm]h mywm hzh šb'h šb'wt šb' p'mym tš'h

<sup>13</sup> w'rb'ym ywm šb' šbtwt tmymwt thyynh 'd mmwḥrt ḥšbt

<sup>14</sup> ḥšby'yt tspwrw ḥmšym ywm whqrbtmh šmn ḥdš mmsbw

<sup>15</sup> [m]ṭwt b[ny ys]r'l mḥsyṭ ḥhyn 'hd mn ḥmṭh šmn ḥdš ktyt

<sup>16</sup> [ ] yšhr 'l mzbḥ h'wlh bkwrym lḥny yhw

<sup>12</sup> “You w[ill] count for y[ourselves] from this day seven weeks, seven times (seven), forty-nine

<sup>13</sup> days, seven Sabbaths complete they will be until the morrow of the seventh

<sup>14</sup> Sabbath; you will count fifty days, and you will offer new oil from the dwelling-places of

<sup>15</sup> [the] tribes of the Is[rael]ites, a half hin from each tribe, new oil crushed

<sup>16</sup> [ ] fresh oil upon the altar of holocaust as fresh-fruits before Yahweh.”

In other words, fifty days from the morrow of the Sabbath of the Passover octave occurred the Pentecost of New Grain/Wheat. Then, fifty days from the morrow of the Pentecost of New Grain/Wheat was celebrated the Pentecost of New Wine. Finally, fifty days from the morrow of the Pentecost of New Wine was celebrated the Pentecost of New Oil.<sup>69</sup>

This seems to have been the complete cycle of the pentecostal feasts for the Palestinian Jews who used this scroll. One should note the multiplicity of pentecostal feasts now attested. Also to be noted is the

<sup>69</sup> See Y. Yadin, *The Temple Scroll 2* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1983) 78-96. Cf. 1.105-14.

express mention of "fifty days" in the formulation of each of the regulations.

Now it is nothing new to suggest that Luke's knowledge of Palestinian Jewish matters may not have been profound or always accurate. If I am right in thinking that Luke was a non-Jewish Semite, a native or *incola* of Syrian Antioch, to which ancient ecclesiastical tradition has rather uniformly assigned him,<sup>70</sup> then it may be plausibly understood that he did not comprehend everything perfectly about Palestinian Jewish usage. He may indeed have heard about the Jewish Pentecost or even about Jewish Pentecosts, and perhaps he has unwittingly mixed some of the traditions. This may be why he introduces Peter trying to justify the disciples speaking in "other tongues" as *not* being "filled with new wine" (Acts 2:13, 15). It has always been a problem to understand why Peter brings in the mention of "new wine" or "sweet wine," since new grain and new wine were not normally harvested together—if that is the way to put it.<sup>71</sup> Now from the Temple Scroll we learn that there were two (at least) Pentecosts—one of New Wheat/Grain and one of New Wine. This at least provides a background for the association in the Lucan story of "new wine" with Pentecost.

But there is still a problem to be faced. Acts 2:13 uses the Greek word *gleukos*, which the RSV and the NAB translate as "new wine." Actually the word should mean "sweet wine." Is it the same as *yayin hādāš* of the Temple Scroll?<sup>72</sup> The noun *gleukos* occurs only in Acts 2:13 in the NT and only once in the LXX, in Job 32:19, where it is the translation of Hebrew *yayin*, "wine." When Josephus recounts the story of the chief butler's dream, which Joseph eventually interprets (Gen 40:9–10), he depicts the butler dreaming of having pressed grapes into the Pharaoh's cup to let the *gleukos* run into it so that the Pharaoh may drink. Here *gleukos* is added to Josephus' version of the dream and corresponds literally to nothing in either the MT or the LXX of Genesis.<sup>73</sup> It is the only time that Josephus uses the word, and Philo does not use it at all. However, *oinos neos*, which would be the exact Greek translation of *yayin hādāš*, does occur in the LXX of Isa 49:26, where Deutero-Isaiah speaks of Judah's oppressors eating their own flesh and being drunk on their own blood as with "new wine"; but here *oinos neos* is the rendering of

<sup>70</sup> See *The Gospel according to Luke I–IX* (n. 19 above) 35–47.

<sup>71</sup> See H. Conzelmann, *Apostelgeschichte* (n. 62 above) 27: "Der Einwand, an Pfingsten gebe es noch keinen 'Heurigen', ist komisch."

<sup>72</sup> G. Schneider (*Die Apostelgeschichte* [n. 63 above] 1.256 n. 111) insists that *gleukos* is *Most* ("must"), whereas the *yayin hādāš* of the Temple Scroll is rather *heuriger* (*Wein*). But the problem is to decide when the former becomes the latter in the fermentation process.

<sup>73</sup> *Ant.* 2.5,2 §64.

Hebrew *'āsîs*.<sup>74</sup> The expression *yayin hādās* occurs nowhere in the Hebrew Bible, but it is found later in the Mishnah (*Ṭebul Yom* 1:1; *Shebi'ith* 7:7). Finally, though the Hebrew word *tîrôš*, often translated as "must, new wine," occurs frequently enough in the Hebrew Bible, it is never translated in the LXX as *gleukos*. But in his introduction to the Temple Scroll Y. Yadin entitles his discussion of the Feast of New Wine as *Mo'ed bikkûrê hattîrôš!*

Whatever the relation of these various terms for "new wine" really is, it is at least possible that Luke in his story of the first Christian Pentecost has mingled allusions to the Jewish Pentecost of New Wheat/Grain with those of the Pentecost of New Wine. For him, however, it makes little difference, since the only thing that is of importance is that a period of "fifty days" has separated the resurrection of Christ, shortly after Passover, from the occasion when the Spirit-guided proclamation of the Word was made to Jews of Jerusalem, "Judeans" and Jews from every nation under the heavens.

Lastly, if there is any value in the suggestion that I am making here, it would be a substitute explanation for the connection of "sweet/new wine" with the speaking in "other tongues." O. Betz once tried to explain that connection by appealing to Isa 28:7-13, but he had to appeal to Tg. Jonathan on the Prophets to establish what has turned out to be a farfetched connection at best.<sup>75</sup> Appeal to such a targumic writing, which cannot be dated earlier than about A.D. 300, has merely complicated further the entire issue.

In any case, in the Lucan story the "promise of the Father" is bestowed on the nucleus community of Christian disciples empowering them to begin their mission of testimony on a feast that is marked in more than one way as pentecostal. The "Pentecost" of Acts 2:1, then, has connotations that are not to be missed.

### *The Relation of the Fifty to the Forty Days*

According to H. Conzelmann, the dating of the event on Pentecost is related to the "forty days" of Acts 1:3 and "need not belong to the substance of history."<sup>76</sup> However, to my way of thinking the "fiftieth day" is more important than the forty days, since this seems to be the

<sup>74</sup> W. Baumgartner et al., *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament* 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1983) 814. The definition given is "Traubensaft . . . der neuen Ernte, *gleukos*," i.e., grape juice . . . of the new harvest, *gleukos* (and reference is made to Acts 2:13!).

<sup>75</sup> See "Zungenreden und süßer Wein: Zur eschatologischen Exegese von Jesaja 28 in Qumran und im Neuen Testament," *Bibel und Qumran: Beiträge zur Erforschung der Beziehungen zwischen Bibel- und Qumranwissenschaft: Hans Bardthe zum 22.9.1966* (ed. S. Wagner; Berlin: Evangelische Haupt-Bibelgesellschaft, 1968) 20-36.

<sup>76</sup> *Apostelgeschichte* (n. 63 above) 25.

import of Luke's formula "when the day of Pentecost was running its course" (lit. "was being filled out").<sup>77</sup> This specific designation stands in contrast to the vague expression "during forty days" (1:3). But if, as I have suggested earlier, Luke has inherited from the tradition before him Jerusalem as the place and Pentecost as the time when the first disciples confronted Jerusalem Jews with the kerygma, what is the point of the "forty days"? Several things must be considered in answering that question. First, the fact that Acts 13:31 refers to the same interval merely as "many days" (*hēmeras pleious*) implies that the forty is to be understood as a round number, the OT background of which is clear.<sup>78</sup> Second, the "forty days" are not meant by Luke to be a period needed by Jesus himself, i.e., for some development in *his* role in salvation-history. Third, Acts 1 suggests rather that the interval was needed for the disciples, who during that time were instructed about the kingdom (v. 3c). Their continuing misunderstanding of the role of the risen Christ in regard to the kingdom is recorded in v. 6: "Lord, are you going to restore the kingship to Israel at this time?" Though he stresses the disciples' lack of comprehension, he again commissions them to bear witness to him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and "to the end of the earth" (v. 8), once they have received the promise of the Father. Fourth, since in the Lucan view of salvation-history the exalted Christ had to be with the Father in order to pour forth that promise as Spirit (Acts 2:33), Luke used the end of that classic interval of forty days to depict the final leave-taking of the risen Christ from his disciples as a preparation for the fiftieth day. This is part of the Lucan periodization of salvation-history, as was explained earlier.

#### *The Role of the Spirit of the Ascended Christ in Christian Life*

As we have seen, the gift of the Spirit of Christ to the Christian community is not a Lucan invention; Pauline, Johannine, and other NT writings are likewise tributary to a primitive tradition about that gift. If only Luke associates that gift with Pentecost, he clearly wants the connotations of that feast of old to be associated with the gift. In the Palestinian Jewish tradition Pentecost, despite its Greek name, was clearly a feast of first-fruits, whether that be understood in the conventional sense of the wheat harvest or now, in the light of the Temple Scroll, in the sense of multiple harvests, wheat, wine, or oil. This is why the Pentecost story in Acts 2 ends with the note of the first Christian

<sup>77</sup> The Lucan formula *en tō symplērōusthai tēn hēmeran tēs pentēkostēs*, though it echoes an OT phrase (see Gen 25:24; Lev 8:33; 12:4; 25:30, etc.), is not to be stressed in some sense of eschatological fulfillment; it denotes rather the completing of a period of time, in this case a day.

<sup>78</sup> See, e.g., Gen 7:4, 12, 17; 8:6; Exod 24:18; 34:28; Deut 9:9, 18, 25; 1 Sam 17:16; Jonah 3:4; cf. H. Balz, *TDNT* 8.136-37; *EWNT* 3.843-44.

harvest: "Those who welcomed his word (= Peter's message) and were baptized and added on that day were about three thousand persons" (2:41). Thus the first-fruits of Christian harvest come from the Spirit-filled proclamation of Peter, the spokesman of the nucleus community.

A. R. C. Leaney once summed up various ways in which the Lucan pentecostal story has been interpreted: "The reversal of Babel, the proclamation of the New Law, the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, of the threat of John the Baptist and of the promise of Jesus, and an earnest of the spread of the gospel throughout the world."<sup>79</sup> Though the last-mentioned interpretation may seem related to the suggestion that we have made in the foregoing paragraph, it really goes beyond it. As for the other modes of interpreting the Lucan story, they seem to verge on the eisegetical, apart from the one about the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy; yet even that is to put an emphasis on a minor detail in Peter's speech that is not warranted. Anything that might be valid in these suggestions has to be subordinated to the main Lucan emphasis: it is the Spirit, as the poured-out promise of the Father by the ascended Christ, who empowers the disciples to make the first proclamation of the Christ-event to Jerusalem Jews which results in three thousand of them becoming the first-fruits. This is the role of the Spirit in the corporate life of the early Christian nucleus community. This is indeed the Lucan emphasis.

But another aspect of the role of the Spirit of the ascended Christ can be found in the Deutero-Pauline Epistle to the Ephesians: "You were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise" (1:13). The suggestion here is that individual Christians have been marked or "sealed" as belonging to the Spirit, since in antiquity a seal (*sphragis*) was used to show ownership. Again, in the same writing the author mentions how Gentiles have become "fellow heirs, members of the same body, and fellow sharers of the promise in Christ through the gospel" (3:6). What is significant here is the use of "promise" in a way resembling the Lucan relation of the "promise of the Father" with the Spirit, but the latter's influence is now depicted as having other effects, on individuals, on Gentiles. In the use of "promise" in both Luke-Acts and Ephesians one has to recall its OT background. God's promise(s) made to the patriarchs of old is/are now related to the Spirit of God and realized in a new way. In the OT the Spirit of God expressed Yahweh's presence to His people in a creative, prophetic, or renovating fashion. In these NT writings those modes of presence either to individuals or to the Christian community are realized as the promise of the Father of the risen and ascended Christ.

It would really take another whole article to discuss the role of the

<sup>79</sup> "Why There Were Forty Days between the Resurrection and the Ascension in Acts 1,3," *SE IV* (TU 102) 419.

Spirit in Christian life, and that is not my purpose here. That is, moreover, the reason why I have limited this last section to the discussion of the role of the Spirit of the *ascended* Christ—to highlight the view of the Spirit's role in those NT writings that speak of the *ascension* of Christ. For Paul, for example, the Spirit is the gift of the *risen* Christ (see Rom 1:3–4, cf. 1 Cor 15:45; 2 Cor 3:17); and to Paul we owe the teaching of the influence of the Spirit in individual Christian life (recall his insistence that the Spirit-given charisms not be church-divisive, 1 Cor 12:4–31), whereas the gift of the ascended Christ's Spirit in Acts and Ephesians stresses more the corporate setting of the early Christian community. Though I emphasize the Lucan view of the pentecostal gift of the Spirit of the ascended Christ to the *corporate* community of Christians in Jerusalem, I should hesitate to characterize that outpouring of the Spirit as the occasion when “the church” was born, as has been done at times.<sup>80</sup> For it takes a while in the Lucan story before the community is depicted as aware of itself as *ekklēsia*, and this may reflect the primitive situation. The first designation of the early Christians' awareness of their corporate character is described in Acts 2:42 as *koinōnia* (RSV, “fellowship”). In Acts *ekklēsia* occurs regularly as the name of the community from 8:1 on, significantly enough with the beginning of the story of Saul/Paul.<sup>81</sup> It has always been problematic to try to determine what the earliest designations for the Christian community were, and that affects one's interpretation of the pentecostal event in Acts 2.

In any case, my discussion comes to an end with the hope that this review of the NT data on the ascension and Pentecost has put them in the proper perspective.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>80</sup> S. M. McLean, “Easter and Pentecost,” *JBL* 81 (1962) 62–66, esp. 65; he attributes the same idea to E. Schweizer, *Spirit of God* (Bible Key Words 9; London: Black, 1960) 46–48.

<sup>81</sup> See further my *Pauline Theology: A Brief Sketch* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967) 75–76; *Luke I–IX* (n. 19 above) 251–52.

<sup>82</sup> I have deliberately not discussed the question of “other tongues,” Acts 2:4, since that is incidental to the purpose of this paper. I have nothing new to add to the interpretation of that phrase as a Lucan modification of “speaking in tongues,” to which another whole article might be devoted.