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ACTS 19:1-7 RECONSIDERED IN LIGHT OF PAUL'S THEOLOGY OF BAPTISM[1]

WILSON PAROSCHI
Latin American Adventist Theological Seminary
Engenheiro Coelho, SP, Brazil

Few passages in the NT have received as much scholarly attention as Acts 19:1-7. The debate generated by these few verses is so vigorous that about a half-century ago Ernst Käsemann could already say in his best mordant style: "This conspectus has brought before us every even barely conceivable variety of naïveté, defeatism and fertile imagination which historical scholarship can display, from the extremely ingenuous on the one hand to the extremely arbitrary on the other."[2] Käsemann's own solution to the problem, however, only added to the existing confusion, for it relied too heavily on redactional arguments, under the assumption that the whole story was fabricated by Luke in the pursuit of some theological interest. In contrast, recent scholarship has been much more cautious about redactional fabrications. Also, irrespective of whether the story of John the Baptist was subsumed by the early church, the NT Baptist traditions are no longer so quickly reduced to mere propagandistic efforts to promote the story of Jesus, thus totally devoid of any historical value.[3] In this essay, there is no

[1]I am grateful to Robert M. Johnston for his kindness in reading an earlier version of this essay and for some helpful suggestions, though responsibility for the conclusions reached rests with the author.

[2]Ernst Käsemann, "The Disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus," in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague (London: SCM, 1964), 140.

[3]The quest for the historical John the Baptist was an integral part of the twentieth-century quest for the historical Jesus. For an overview with full bibliographic information, see Clare K. Rothschield, *Baptist Traditions and Q*, WUNT 190 (Tübingen: Mohr, 2007). The classical view is that, as in the case of Jesus, the Baptist traditions found in the canonical Gospels and the book of Acts do not reflect the historical John, but only what the early church came to believe about him. It has even been suggested that before reaching the Christian community, those traditions had already been molded within the Baptist community itself, thus making the historical John "something of a chimera" (John Reumann, "The Quest for the Historical Baptist," in *Understanding the Sacred Text: Essays in Honor of Morton S. Enslin on the Hebrew Bible and Christian Beginnings*, ed. John Reumann [Valley Forge: Judson, 1972], 187). There is no question that the Gospel writers present John in a narrowly defined way, as if he had no importance other than to prepare the way for Jesus. This, however, does not necessarily imply that all NT material on John has been severely compromised. On the contrary, recent studies of the Baptist tradition-history, such as the ones by Walter Wink (*John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition*, SNTSMS 7 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968]), Ernst Bammel ("The Baptist in Early Christian Tradition," *NTS* 18 [1971-1972]: 95-128), Josef Ernst (*Johannes der Täufer: Interpretation, Geschichte, Wirkungsgeschichte*, BZNW 53 [Berlin: De

prejudgment regarding the question of what and how much in Acts 19:1-7, as well as in other NT references to John, can preferably be understood as redactional or the end product of a tradition-historical process. This means that the passage is taken as it now stands in view of its own dynamics and interrelation with the immediate context (synchronic approach). The research gravitates toward two major points: the religious identity of the main characters in the narrative and the nature of the baptismal rite administered to them by Paul. It is not my intention here to offer an extensive bibliographic review of the discussion, nor an entirely new solution to the problems involved, but to provide a somewhat detailed assessment of the evidence and perhaps to advance the discussion on specific issues. In due course, it is argued that an important clue to understanding one of the major issues may be found not in the book of Acts proper, but in Paul's theology of baptism as reflected in his writings.

Baptists or Christians: The Identity of the Ephesian Disciples

The first problem as we approach Acts 19:1-7 is the religious affiliation of the twelve men[4] Paul met in Ephesus during his three-year stay there (see 20:31) at the time of his third missionary journey. Because the text suggests that they had been baptized by John the Baptist (19:3-4), several scholars have concluded that they were followers of John, that is, members of what has been called the Baptist sect. Other alleged major biblical evidence for the existence of such a sect in the second half of the first century are the Lucan infancy narratives (Luke 1–2) and, especially, John's Prologue (1:1-18). It is to this last passage that the Baptist-sect hypothesis actually owes its origin in modern NT scholarship.

The Baptist-Sect Hypothesis

The idea of reading John's Prologue against the background of a sectarian group that exalted John at the expense of Jesus seems to have been first

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Gruyter, 1989]), Robert L. Webb (*John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-Historical Study*, JSNTSup 62 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991]), Edmondo R. Lupieri ("John the Baptist in New Testament Traditions and History," in *ANRW*, II/26:1, ed. Wolfgang Haase [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992], 430-461), and Joan E. Taylor (*The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997]) have come to the conclusion that the Gospels are indeed historically valuable in this respect, as is the independent narrative found in Josephus (*Ant.* 18.116-119, with the exclusion of the Slavonic version).

[4]The Greek actually reads ἄνδρες ὡσεὶ δώδεκα ("*about* twelve men"). This makes it doubtful whether any symbolic significance is attached to the number twelve, as claimed by William Neil (*The Acts of the Apostles*, NCB [London: Oliphants, 1973], 203) and Luke Timothy Johnson (*The Acts of the Apostles*, SP 5 [Collegeville: Liturgical, 1992], 338). Neil even suggests, 203, in reference to Acts 20:21, that the "twelve" comprised a "college" set up by Paul to oversee the church in Ephesus.

suggested as early as 1788 by J. D. Michaelis,[5] but it was only a century later that this view became highly popular when it was taken up and defended at some length by Wilhelm Baldensperger in his remarkable volume on John 1:1-18.[6] Though Baldensperger was not followed in all the details he suggested but by a minority, many scholars still think that at least a secondary purpose of John's Gospel was to contradict or to correct the views of some followers of John the Baptist.[7] The statement, "he was not the light, but he came to testify to the light" in 1:8, the identification of Jesus as "the true light" in v. 9, the subordinative emphasis in v. 15, and several other passages in the main part of the Gospel (1:19-20, 26-27, 30-31; 3:26-30; 5:33-36; 10:41) are usually taken as polemical remarks directed against the claims of the Baptist sect.

Although this idea has been surprisingly influential, it faces two serious objections, one hermeneutical and one historical. On the hermeneutical level, Walter Wink has already questioned the legitimacy of reconstructing "the views of John's disciples by reversing every denial and restriction placed on John in the Fourth Gospel."[8] Rudolf Bultmann, for example, assuming that John's Prologue was originally a Gnostic hymn from the Baptist circles used by the fourth evangelist to sing the praises of his Christ,[9] suggested that John was esteemed and worshiped as the Messiah, the preexistent Logos through whom all things were made, and even as the Logos made flesh.[10] But, if there ever existed a Baptist sect with such advanced theological claims, this can only be deduced from the Gospel by means of an arbitrary reading of the evidence.

[5]J. D. Michaelis, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 4 vols., trans. Herbert Marsh (London: Rivington, 1802), 3:285-287.

[6]Wilhelm Baldensperger, *Der Prolog des vierten Evangeliums: Sein polemisch-apologetischer Zweck* (Freiburg: Mohr, 1898).

[7]See, e.g., Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, ed. Francis J. Moloney, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 155; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John*, BNTC (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005), 101.

[8]Wink, 102.

[9]Rudolf Bultmann, "The History of Religions Background of the Prologue to the Gospel of John," in *The Interpretation of John*, 2d ed., ed. John Ashton, SNTI (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 27-46.

[10]Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 17-18, 48-52. Likewise, Walter Bauer takes almost every statement about the Baptist in John's Gospel as polemical in character, as if they pointed reversely to the tenets of the alleged Baptist sect (*Das Johannesevangelium*, 3d ed., HNT 6 [Tübingen: Mohr, 1933], 16-17). Clayton R. Bowen goes as far as to see the same polemic in 1 John as well, where the sentence "not with the water only" (5:6) would refer to John's baptism (cf. John 1:31, 33), and "the antichrist" (2:18, 22: 4:3) to John himself ("John the Baptist in the New Testament," in *Studies in the New Testament: Collected Papers of Clayton R. Bowen*, ed. Robert J. Hutcheon [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936], 75; reprint from the *AJT* 16 [1912]: 90-106). On the pitfalls of using texts potentially polemical for historical and theological reconstructions, see John M. G. Barclay, "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case," *JSNT* 31 (1987): 79-83.

There are certainly not enough exegetical reasons to take John 1:1-3 and 14 as a Christianized version of statements used within the Baptist circles.

Concerning the negative statements on John, Robert L. Webb has suggested an interesting alternative interpretation. Since the main target of the fourth evangelist was the Jews of his own time, he thinks that the issue of John the Baptist may have been only "one of the many points of contention" within the framework of the Jewish-Christian debate. The Jews at the end of the first century considered John a "good man," as Jewish historian Flavius Josephus reports.[11] Both groups, therefore, might have claimed the Baptist in support of their own ideas: the Jews contending that "John's ministry was prior to that of Jesus and that Jesus was John's disciple," to which the Christians responded that "Jesus was prior because he was the Word and . . . John witnessed to Jesus' superiority."[12] In addition, the negative statements on John must be balanced with the positive ones, and there are several instances in John's Gospel in which the Baptist is spoken of in a highly favorable manner (cf. 1:6-7, 31, 33-34; 3:29; 10:41).[13]

The alleged evidence from the Lucan infancy narratives (Luke 1–2) faces the same methodological difficulty, with the difference that the argument runs primarily the other way around. The hypothetical reconstructions are not based on negative statements about John but on positive ones, with the aggravating circumstance of being also dependent on a conjectural early source from the Baptist circles, probably written in Hebrew or Aramaic, for the material in 1:5-25, 57-66. This source, it is argued, "not only displayed a detailed interest in the birth and infancy of John, but . . . also thought of him much more highly than any Christian would."[14] There is no question that John

[11]Josephus *Ant.* 18.117.

[12]Webb, 77. Referring to Webb's view, Taylor declares: "The solution seems far better than one that sets up a hypothetical Baptist movement continuing into the early second century—somehow separate from church or synagogue—that the Fourth Gospel is trying to address" (197).

[13]Wink, 102. In light of the verses above, it is rather strange that E. F. Scott would make a statement such as this: "The evangelist shows a constant anxiety to assure us . . . that John was inferior to Jesus. Indeed, it is not too much to say that John is introduced into the narrative for no other purpose than to bring out this fact of his inferiority" (*The Fourth Gospel: Its Purpose and Theology*, 2d ed. [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908], 78). Still more problematic is the attempt to bring this controversy back to the time of the Baptist himself and to say, e.g., that after their separation John and Jesus became rivals of each other (see Maurice Goguel, *Au seuil de l'évangile: Jean Baptiste*, BH [Paris: Payot, 1928], 272-274). In John's Gospel, the relations between John and Jesus are depicted as uniformly friendly and cordial throughout, which means that there is no basis at all, not even in chap. 3, for such a conclusion as that of Goguel that John "did not see in Jesus but an unfaithful disciple, that is, a renegade" (274). For the salvation-history role of John the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel, see Wilson Paroschi, *Incarnation and Covenant in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel (John 1:1-18)*, EUS 23 [Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2006], 63-75).

[14]Charles H. H. Scobie, *John the Baptist* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 189. See

plays a distinguished role in the narrative (cf. vv. 15-17),[15] but there is nothing there that goes beyond common Christian belief about John as found in other parts of the Gospel tradition (e.g., 7:28; Matt 11:11).[16] And when it comes to source analysis, on which the discrepancies among all theories could hardly be greater,[17] it is one thing to recognize that part of this material may have come to Luke from an earlier Baptist source, for example from John's disciples who eventually became Christians,[18] and quite another to think of a continuing Baptist sect that thought of its master in messianic terms. This hypothesis, as Joseph A. Fitzmyer puts it, is mere speculation.[19]

On the historical level, the objection to the existence of a sectarian Baptist group in the first century refers to the scarcity as well as ambiguity of the evidence. Besides the biblical passages already mentioned, which provide little if any basis for the hypothesis, the patristic literature has also been evoked to argue that this group did exist. An old argument, which surprisingly still finds some supporters today, is that the sectarian Baptists are mentioned in the first half of the second century by Justin Martyr, who began his Christian life in Ephesus, the same place where the incident of Acts 19 is reported to have taken place, and a little later by Hegesippus, who would have referred to them as Hemerobaptists in his inventory of Jewish sects.[20] In the fourth century, the argument continues, the Hemerobaptists are mentioned by Epiphanius of

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also Paul Winter, "The Cultural Background for the Narratives in Luke I-II," *JQR* 45 (1954): 159-167, 230-242, 287; idem, "The Proto-Source of Luke 1," *NovT* 1 (1956): 184-199.

[15]It has been argued that even the messianic ascriptions of the Benedictus (vv. 68-79) also derive from a Baptist source and were originally applied to John (e.g., Philipp Vielhauer, "Das Benediktus des Zacharias [Lk 1:68-79]," *ZThK* 49 [1952]: 255-272).

[16]For more details, see Stephen Ferris, *The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives: Their Origin, Meaning and Significance*, JSNTSup 9 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985), 86-98; Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, 2d ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 273-279.

[17]Heinz Schürmann, a major supporter of source theories in Luke's infancy narratives, admits that "despite all astute researches, the tradition-history of Luke 1–2 still lies in the darkness of contradictory hypotheses" (*Das Lukasevangelium*, vol. 1, 3d ed., HThK 3 [Freiburg: Herder, 1984], 143-144).

[18]"Or, to state it perhaps more accurately," says Wink, "the church possessed these traditions from the very beginning by virtue of the fact that it was itself an outgrowth of the Baptist movement" (71).

[19]Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 2 vols., AB 28 and 28a (New York: Doubleday, 1981-1985), 1:378. For a full analysis of the hypothesis, see Wink, 58-82.

[20]E.g., Bowen, 74; Theodor Innitzer, *Johannes der Täufer: nach der heiligen Schrift und der Tradition* (Vienna: Mayer, 1908), 391-392; Goguel, 105-107; Joseph Thomas, *Le mouvement baptiste en Palestine et Syrie (150 av. J.-C.–300 ap. J.-C.)* (Gembloux: Duculot, 1935), 114-139. For a recent endorsement of this argument, see Rothschild, 3, n. 8, 33-34.

Salamis and in the Apostolic Constitutions, a collection of ecclesiastical laws of Syrian provenance. At last, the definitive connection between this sect and the Baptist movement is allegedly made by the Pseudo-Clementine literature in the third century: the Clementine Homilies (2.23) speak of John as a Hemerobaptist and the Clementine Recognitions (1.60) have this passage:

> One of the disciples of John asserted that John was the Christ, and not Jesus, inasmuch as Jesus himself declared that John was greater than all men and all prophets. "If then," said he, "he be greater than all, he must be held to be greater than Moses, and than Jesus himself. But if he be the greatest of all, then he must be the Christ."[21]

However, though the evidence for the Hemerobaptists is admittedly precarious, it seems to suffice for making any identification between them and the supposed followers of John the Baptist rather difficult, if not impossible. In Hegesippus's inventory, which is preserved by Eusebius of Caesarea, the Hemerobaptists appear side by side with the Essenes, Galileans, Masbotheans, Samaritans, Sadducees, and Pharisees.[22] According to Epiphanius, their beliefs were akin to those of the Scribes and Pharisees, except that they denied the resurrection, and daily baths were an essential part of their religion, hence the name ἡμεροβαπτισταί (i.e., καθ᾽ἡμέραν βαπτιζόμενοι).[23] And the Apostolic Constitutions add that the Hemerobaptists "do not eat until they have bathed, and do not make use of their beds and tables and dishes until they have cleansed them."[24] With regard to the "Baptists" mentioned by Justin Martyr along with six other Jewish groups,[25] most Jewish and Christian scholars believe them to be the same Hemerobaptists, who are also possibly identical with the *t'ovelei shaḥarit*, or "morning bathers," mentioned in Rabbinic literature.[26] These "morning bathers" are sometimes identified with the Essenes,[27] and Josephus speaks of at least two different Essene "orders."[28]

[21]See F. Stanley Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.27-71*, SBLTT 37 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1995), 138-150, 164.

[22]Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.22.

[23]Epiphanius, *Pan.* 1.1.17.

[24]*Apostolic Constitutions* 6.6.

[25]Justin, *Dial.* 80. The other groups mentioned by Justin are Sadducees, Genistae, Meristae, Galileans, Hellenists, and Pharisees.

[26]E.g., T. *Yadayim* 2.20; B.T. *Berakoth* 22a; J.T. *Berakoth* 3:6c. See Marcel Simon, *Jewish Sects at the Time of Jesus*, trans. James H. Farley (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 88-92; Ernst, 366-368; Hermann Lichtenberger, "Syncretistic Features in Jewish and Jewish-Christian Baptism Movements," in *Jews and Christians: The Partings of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 87-88; Igor R. Tantlevskij, "Hemerobaptists," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1:352-353.

[27]See Tantlevskij, 352.

[28]Josephus *J. W.* 2.160-161.

The affinities between the Hemerobaptists and the Essenes cannot be underestimated. According to Josephus, the Essenes practiced ritual purifying baths every day, apparently in the morning,[29] and purification and sanctification by water is mentioned in their Manual of Discipline (1QS 3:4-9).[30] Josephus also reports that they did not believe in resurrection but in immortality of the soul,[31] and despite the fact that the evidence for this is admittedly somewhat confusing, it is possible to say that "Josephus' account . . . corresponds more closely to the typical expectations of the Scrolls."[32] As far as John is concerned, though there is no question that his teachings could have been changed over time, his baptism was a "baptism of repentance" (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 13:24; 19:4) performed for the "forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3) in view of the "wrath to come" (Matt 3:5-10; Luke 3:7).[33] This implies a distinctive, unrepeatable, symbolic, and prophetic act of initiation that was radically different from the Hemerobaptists' daily ablutions or, for that matter, from any other first-century Jewish ritual washing,[34]

[29]Ibid., 2.129, 138.

[30]According to another passage of the same document (1QS 5:13-14), "They shall not enter the water to partake of the pure meal of the men of holiness, for they shall not be cleansed unless they turn from their wickedness: for all who transgress his word are unclean" (trans. by Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* [New York: Penguin, 1997], 104).

[31]*J. W.* 2.154-158.

[32]John J. Collins, "The Expectation of the End in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Peter W. Flint (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 88.

[33]David Flusser argues that the Essenes also combined ritual baptism with moral cleansing, thus providing the pattern after which John's baptism was modeled (*Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1988], 50-54). According to the Scrolls, however, Essene baptism was different from John's, as well as from Christian baptism (cf. Acts 2:38; Heb 10:22), in the sense that instead of leading to forgiveness the actual immersion comes after moral cleansing, which is caused by repentance. That is, moral purity is a precondition for ritual purity (see 1QS 3:5-9; 5:13-14; 5:17-18; cf. Philo *Cher.* 95). Flusser acknowledges this, but he contends that Josephus supports his view of a dependence of John's baptism on the Essenes' purification baths. The argument, however, is rather precarious. It is true that Josephus describes the baptism of John as something that effects only the purification of the body, while a previous moral cleansing should be achieved by "righteous conduct" (*Ant.* 18.116-119). But besides colliding with the NT accounts of John, Josephus's description can be perfectly understood as if he was acquainted with the special significance of John's baptism but "desired to rank it within the common Jewish understanding of purity" (Hermann Lichtenberger, "Baths and Baptism," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2 vols. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 1:86).

[34]Essene texts do refer to ritual washings as a way of entering the covenanted life of the community (CD 10:12-13; 1QS 3:3-5; 5:13-14), but even those seem to be more related to purification than to initiation. Joseph A. Fitzmyer states rather positively that

including proselyte baptism,[35] though it may be located within the context of the ideas and expectations of contemporary Judaism.[36] In addition, it is highly possible that John shared Jesus' belief in the resurrection of the body (cf. Luke 7:18-23).

In relation to the Pseudo-Clementines, the passage in the Homilies that refers to John as a Hemerobaptist is historically anachronistic and part of a religious and philosophical romance of legendary nature influenced by Gnosticism. And on the basis of the Recognitions, which share with the Homilies the same literary and theological outlook, the most one can say is that around the third century there might have existed a Gnostic group that looked at John the Baptist as the divine Christ. What is not correct is to use this evidence to suggest that already in the first century there were followers of John posing a threat to the church.[37] Walter Bauer's and Bultmann's claim

such washings "were not unique, initiatory, or not-to-be-repeated" (*The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins*, SDSSRL [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 20).

[35]Attempts have been made to understand John's baptism, as well as Christian baptism, in connection with the baptism of proselytes among the Jews (e.g., H. H. Rowley, "Jewish Proselyte Baptism and the Baptism of John," *HUCA* 15 [1940]: 313-334; Karen Pusey, "Jewish Proselyte Baptism," *ExpTim* 95 [1983-1984]: 141-145; Joachim Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*, trans. David Cairns [London: SCM, 1960], 24-42). Proselyte baptism, however, was not associated with confession and remission of sins, had no eschatological meaning, was not a passive rite in the sense that the act proper was administered by someone else, and, of course, did not apply to Jews, as John's did. Derived from the purificatory lustrations of the Mosaic Law (e.g., Lev 14:8-9; 15:2-30; 16:4, 24, 26-28; 22:3-7; Num 19:2-8; Deut 23:11), the baptism within Judaism of converted Gentiles signified a cleansing from pagan, idolatrous impurity and the rite was fulfilled by means of a self-immersion, though in the presence of two men learned in the Law (B.T. *Yebam*. 47a; cf. M. *Pesaḥ*. 8:8; M. *ʿEd*. 5:2). Recent scholarship is even arguing more fervently that it was only after the Bar Kochba's revolt (135 A.D.) that proselyte baptism came to be unequivocally required by the rabbis (see esp. Irina Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in Its Diaspora Setting*, BAFCS 5 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 19-49). Scot McKnight comes to suggest that it was actually John's baptism, as well as Christian baptism, that gave impetus within Judaism to initiatory baptism of converted Gentiles (*A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], 85). For the traditional view, according to which proselyte baptism was known and practiced in the second-temple period, see Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interaction from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 288-341. For the distinctiveness of John's baptism within first-century Judaism, see Lars Hartman, "Baptism," *ABD* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:583-584.

[36]Webb, 164, notes that "Elements of his [John's] baptismal practice and aspects of its function appear distinctive in comparison with immersions as practiced commonly within the Palestinian Judaism of his day—distinctive, though not so unique that it is incomprehensible in a Jewish context."

[37]See Stephen S. Smalley, *John: Evangelist and Interpreter*, 2d ed., NTP (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 163-164. As C. H. Dodd says, "to base a theory upon the

that the Mandaean literature also affords attestation for a Baptist sect rival to Christianity[38] is even more problematic. Not only do the references to John the Baptist belong to the latter strata of this literature, but he "is never pictured as a messiah or savior or founder of the sect, and does not even institute the rite of baptism."[39] According to Kurt Rudolph, the attempt to see in Mandaeanism historical traditions that actually go back to followers of John cannot be proved. "It is more likely," he argues, "that the Mandaeans took over legends of this kind from heretical Christian, possibly Gnostic, circles and shaped them according to their ideas."[40]

μαθηταί and πιστεύσαντες

The significance of the foregoing discussion is that, to all intents and purposes, there remains only Acts 19:1-7 as a possible evidence for the Baptist-sect hypothesis, and this is usually taken for granted without any further consideration.[41] On close inspection, however, the passage appears to point to another direction, and this is what has puzzled several scholars. The alleged Baptists mentioned by Luke are actually described as "disciples" (μαθηταί, v. 1) and "believers" (πιστεύσαντες, v. 2), which in Acts cannot mean but that they were, at least in some sense, Christians. When not otherwise specified, as in this passage, μαθητής in Acts always refers to a disciple of Jesus (6:1, 2, 7; 9:1, 10, 19, 26 [2x], 36 [μαθήτρια], 38; 11:26, 29; 13:52; 14:20,

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evidence of the late and heretical Clementine romance is to build a house upon sand" (*Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963], 298, n. 1).

[38]Bauer, 16-17; Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, esp. 18, n. 1. See also Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. 2, "History and Literature of Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 73.

[39]Wink, 100, n. 2. Edmondo Lupieri adds: "The idea of Messiah, as it is understood in Judaic and Christian traditions, is absent in Mandaeanism. . . . The hypothesis of a messianic role or quality for John, therefore, cannot even be suggested" (*The Mandaeans: The Last Gnostics*, trans. Charles Hindley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 162, n. 58).

[40]Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. and ed. Robert M. Wilson (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 363. Birger A. Pearson even suggests that this Mandaean appropriation of Christian traditions would not have taken place before the third century (*Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007], 328). As for the origins of Mandaean religion, there are sufficient elements in vocabulary and tradition to demonstrate that, despite its harsh anti-Jewish polemic, the community originated from heterodox Judaism (see Rudolph, 363; Dan Cohn-Sherbok, "The Mandeans and Heterodox Judaism," *HUCA* 54 [1984]: 147-151); Pearson thinks of the Masbotheans as a reasonable guess, since the Mandaean word for baptism is *masbuta* (329).

[41]E.g., Marie-Emile Boismard, "The First Epistle of John and the Writings of Qumran," in *John and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 165.

22, 28; 15:10; 16:1; 18:23, 27; 19:9, 30; 20:1, 30; 21:4 [2x]),[42] and πιστεύω, whether used transitively or intransitively, always points to Jesus as the object of belief (2:44; 4:4, 32; 5:14; 8:13; 9:42; 10:43; 11:17, 21; 13:12, 39, 48; 14:1, 23; 15:5; 16:31, 34; 17:12; 18:8 [2x], 27; 19:18; 21:20, 25; 22:19).[43] Exceptions are those few instances in which other specific situations are involved (8:12; 9:26; 13:41; 15:7, 11; 24:14; 26:27 [2x]; 27:25). It is also important to note that Paul's question to those "disciples" (19:1) was not related to the person or the object of their belief, but only whether they had received the Holy Spirit when they first believed (v. 2).[44] Such a question would hardly make any sense if the apostle were not addressing believers in Jesus.

K. Haacker confronts this difficulty by suggesting that Luke narrates the episode from the standpoint of Paul as he first perceived the situation. Since Luke does not recognize the possibility of being Christian without possessing the Spirit, the believers Paul encountered in Ephesus were not actually true disciples; they only appeared to be so before the apostle became more acquainted with them. Once he had done so, he found out that those men had not even heard about the Holy Spirit, which means they could not be Christians. They were disciples of John the Baptist who needed to be baptized in Jesus' name and receive the gift of the Spirit. Thus what appears to be rebaptism was because the first baptism was not Christian.[45] According to Stanley E. Porter, however, two fundamental points militate against this interpretation. The assumption that Luke does not conceive anyone to be a Christian who does not possess the Spirit is an argument from silence and begs the question of whether this passage does not in fact indicate just such

[42]James D. G. Dunn argues that the absence of the article before "disciples" (τινας μαθητάς) means that they were not Christians, for in Acts whenever the plural μαθηταί is used as a technical term for Christian believers it always comes with the article (*Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970], 83-84). In his examination of Dunn's view, however, Robert P. Menzies correctly points out that the similar phrasing in the singular (τις μαθητής) in Acts 9:10 and 16:1 indicates that the usage in 19:2 is not as unique as Dunn contends (*The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology with Special Reference to Luke-Acts*, JSNTSup 54 [Sheffield: JSOT, 1991], 273-274).

[43]See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 346, 642; J. L. Teicher, "The Teaching of the Pre-Pauline Church in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *JJS* 4 (1953): esp. 139-145.

[44]It is strange, therefore, that Lars Hartman would come to the conclusion that "they were not really 'disciples,' although they are called so. Their faith, if any, was not in Jesus" (*'Into the Name of the Lord Jesus': Baptism in the Early Church*, SNTW [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997], 138).

[45]K. Haacker, "Einige Fälle von 'Erlebter Rede' im Neuen Testament," *NovT* 12 (1970): 75-76. See also I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 305-308.

a situation. The second point is Haacker's assumption that Luke has told the story from the perspective of Paul. It is by no means clear that Luke uses such a technique in this passage or in any other of the book of Acts, especially with regard to Paul. On the contrary, it is more likely that the narrative reflects his own perspective, as he looked back at the episode at the time of his writing.[46]

It has also been argued that μαθηταί and πιστεύσαντες only reflect Luke's editorial hand in depicting those men as almost Christians for apologetic reasons. This view, which is especially associated with Käsemann,[47] is based on two untenable assumptions, one historical and one redactional. The historical assumption is that the adherents of the Baptist movement, which continued to exist long after John's death and was opposed to Christianity, could not be incorporated into the church without threatening the Church's function and unity, as they would be bound to owe more allegiance to John than to Jesus. In relation to redaction, it is assumed that the whole story was fabricated by Luke because of a specific theological agenda: to reduce the risk posed by John's followers' conversion, he portrayed them as semi-Christians who needed only a minimum of persuasion to become full members of the church, thus radically eliminating any suggestion of real rivalry.[48]

There is no reason to deny that Luke made use of traditions and shaped his story of the apostolic church, but this does not require a negative assessment of the historical character of the essential elements in the narrative.[49] Also, the complexity in determining both the content and the extent of his sources, whether oral or written, should definitely prevent one from building too much on redactional arguments. In other words, redactional fabrications are essentially incapable of proof; they are more the result of individual presuppositions than the conclusion of a sustained argument. One example is Käsemann's argument that the sentence "into [εἰς] the baptism of John" (19:3) is a Lukan euphemism for baptism in the name of John.[50] The substitution of the instrumental ἐν for εἰς, however, is a common feature of

[46]Stanley E. Porter, *Paul in Acts*, LBS (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001), 83.

[47]Käsemann, "The Disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus," 142-144.

[48]A variation of Käsemann's view is offered by John H. Hughes, who argues that the way Luke portrays Apollos and the twelve men of Ephesus as quasi-Christians is due to the fact that the church's "most fruitful source of new members was among the followers of John, whose expectation of the Holy Spirit and the advent of the Lord would have made them particularly receptive to the Christian message" ("John the Baptist: The Forerunner of God Himself," *NovT* 14 [1972]: 214-215).

[49]Menzies, 270.

[50]Käsemann, "The Disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus," 137. See also Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and Donald H. Juel, ed. Eldon J. Epp with Christopher R. Matthews, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 159; Hartman, *'Into the Name of the Lord Jesus*,' 139.

the NT Greek, particularly Luke (see Luke 7:50; 8:48; Acts 7:53).[51] Since it is also frequently found in the LXX and only rarely in the papyri, A. T. Robertson thinks this construction was probably influenced by Semitic idiom.[52] Being so, it must have an impact on our understanding of the tradition-history of the expression in Acts, which means that it greatly reduces the possibility of a redactional strategy.[53]

The point is that Acts 19:1-7 does not provide any evidence that the Baptist movement continued to exist in the late first century, and much less that this movement represented a threat to the church. The "disciples" that Paul met in Ephesus are presented by Luke as Christians, not Baptists, and should be treated as such. This is the most natural reading of the passage, and words should always be taken in their plain, basic sense, unless this becomes absolutely impossible, which is not the case here, despite the information in v. 3 that those disciples had received John's baptism.[54] Most scholars would now agree that they were Christians. The only disagreement, as Ernst Haenchen remarks, is over what was lacking in their Christianity.[55] In fact, the Baptist-sect hypothesis rests entirely on circumstantial evidence, whether biblical or extrabiblical. On the basis of the Pseudo-Clementines, if there is any credibility in that account, it may be possible to say that

[51]See F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and ed. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), §206; Wilfrid Haubeck and Heinrich von Siebenthal, *Neuer sprachlicher Schlüssel zum griechischen Neuen Testament*, 2 vols. (Giessen: TVG, 1994-1997), 1:789.

[52]A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 482. See also C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 70; Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples*, trans. Joseph Smith, SPIB 114 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963), §101.

[53]Not even in the Mandaean literature is there evidence of a baptism in the name of John. On the contrary, according to Lupieri, though John plays a very important role in Mandaeanism, the Mandaeans define their baptism as "baptism by Bihram the Great," not by John. John is called "Baptist" only once among the many passages that mention him, for he is not the one who introduced baptism. This was revealed to Adam by Manda d-Hiia, and so Adam is the actual initiator of the Mandaean ritual baptism on earth. John only learned it when he was a child (*The Mandaeans: The Last Gnostics*, 163).

[54]B. T. D. Smith comments: "It must be confessed that if Luke meant us to understand that St Paul was mistaken, and that the men were merely disciples of John, then he has not only failed to acquaint us with the fact, but has led us into the same error by his own description of them" ("Apollos and the Twelve Disciples at Ephesus," *JTS* 16 [1915]: 244).

[55]Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, trans. Bernard Noble and Gerald Shinn (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 554.

a heretical group around the third century acclaimed John as Christ.[56] To assume a continuity between John and these heretics, however, would be similar to assuming that the third-century Gnostic Sethians were, in fact as they claimed, the guardians of the divine knowledge transmitted by Adam to Seth, his third son (Gen 4:5).[57]

A continuing Baptist sect would require Johannine baptism to be self-administered on a regular basis, such as the Essene purification baths, or capable of being carried out by John's disciples, or both if a one-time initiatory baptism was combined with repeatable baths related to cultic purity. Though it is never safe to build on the silence of the text, there is not a single hint in the NT to support any of these. As already argued, John's baptism was a unique immersion received passively (see Matt 3:14, 16; Mark 1:8, 9; Luke 3:21; John 1:25, 28, 31; 3:23; 10:40) for the achievement of moral cleansing, not of cultic purity after which, according to cultic needs, other immersions followed.[58] The controversy referred to in John 3:25 that arose between John's disciples and a certain Jew does not indicate that John's baptism was somehow connected to ceremonial "purification" (καθαρισμός; cf. 2:6). On the contrary, it may demonstrate exactly the distinctiveness of John's baptism in relation to more traditional Jewish practices. Since various Jewish groups bathed every day in cold water for cultic reasons, John's moral baptism was totally open to misunderstanding by Jewish observers.[59]

Also, contrary to Christian baptism, which could be administered by the disciples of Jesus (John 4:1-2), there is no information of any of John's

[56]It may be worth mentioning that the same passage of the *Recognitions* (1.60) that talks about John being hailed as Christ by some also refers to Barabbas as an apostle who replaced Judas the traitor.

[57]On the legendary origins of the Sethians and their sacred texts, see James E. Goehring's introduction to "The Three Steles of Seth," in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 3d ed., ed. James M. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 396-397. For the speculative view that the Sethians were related to the Baptist movement and that the original Prologue to the Fourth Gospel was actually a hymn sung to John the Baptist within such Gnostic circles, as already defended by Bultmann, see Stephen J. Patterson, "The Prologue to the Fourth Gospel and the World of Speculative Jewish Theology," in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 323-332.

[58]There is no evidence at all for Fitzmyer's suggestion that John "apparently would administer his baptism for the forgiveness of sins to any Jew who would come to him, and as often as one would come" (*The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins*, 20). At least Jesus does not seem to have been rebaptized when he came to John a second time (see John 1:29-36). Taylor, 30, states rather emphatically: "No one has managed to prove that John was concerned that his disciples participate in repeated daily ablutions" (30).

[59]See Lincoln, 159-160; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 210. For the differences between John's baptism and existing Jewish rites of purification, see Colin Brown, "What Was John the Baptist Doing?" *BBR* 7 (1997): 40-43.

disciples performing or being commissioned to perform baptisms, with the obvious exception of those who left him to follow Jesus (cf. Matt 28:19). The title "the Baptist" (ὁ βαπτιστής) itself, as Adolf Schlatter points out, suggests that John's baptism was something inextricably his own, both in character and in administration.[60] Finally, the insistence of the Gospel writers on the preparatory and provisional character of John's ministry (Matt 11:3, 13; Mark 1:7; Luke 16:16; John 1:6-9, 15, 24-27, 29-31; 3:25-30) may actually provide an indirect evidence for the premature end of the Baptist movement, which seems to have been quite popular while it lasted (e.g., Matt 3:5-8; 11:7-9; 21:24-26; Mark 1:4-5; 6:14-28; Luke 7:24-29; John 1:19; 3:23, 26; 5:33).[61] The fact is that after John's burial by his disciples and the report they brought to Jesus (Matt 14:12), the NT says nothing more about them. It could be that not all of them became Christians, but that some remained loyal to their master, formed a group rival to Christianity, and lasted for more than two centuries is, at best, a wonderful conjecture.[62]

Baptism or Rebaptism: The Episode and Its Theological Implications

Another major question related to Acts 19:1-7 is whether those twelve believers had formerly had any relationship with John, that is, whether they had been baptized by John and been his disciples. On this, the first point that needs to be emphasized is that not all who were baptized by John became his disciples in a stricter sense. Though discipleship in first-century Judaism was usually understood as the act of standing in relation to another as pupil and being instructed by that person, it could at times also refer to a wider group of followers or listeners (see Luke 6:13, 17; 19:37; John 9:28).[63] In this sense, anyone who would listen to John and follow his teachings would be a disciple

[60]Adolf Schlatter, *Johannes der Täufer*, ed. Wilhelm Michaelis (Basel: Reinhardt, 1956), 61. The title ὁ βαπτιστής is regularly used by Matthew (3:1; 11:1-12; 14:2, 8; 16:14; 17:13) and to a lesser extent by Luke (7:20, 33; 9:19). Mark uses ὁ βαπτίζων ("the one who baptizes") once (1:4) and ὁ βαπτιστής twice, both of them when quoting persons outside the group of the disciples (6:25; 8:28). That this is the designation by which John was known even among the Jews seems confirmed by Josephus, who refers to him as "John, called the Baptist" (Ἰωάννης τοῦ ἐπικαλουμένου βαπτιστοῦ) (*Ant.* 18.116).

[61]Josephus confirms the popularity John enjoyed among the Jews. He not only says that the crowds were "very greatly moved by hearing his [John's] words," but also clearly echoes Matthew (14:5) by saying that Herod "feared lest the great influence John had over the people" (*Ant.* 18.118).

[62]See John A. T. Robinson, "Elijah, John and Jesus: An Essay in Detection," *NTS* 4 (1957-1958): 279, n. 2. Robinson adds that "none of the Fathers mention the disciples of John in their lists of heretics, just as in the New Testament the Baptists are never among the enemies of Jesus" (ibid.).

[63]See P. Nepper-Christensen, "μαθητής," *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990-1993), 2:372-373.

of his, even if that person was not always closely associated with him. Joan E. Taylor correctly highlights that the implication of John's teaching in Luke 3:10-14 is that he expected that most of those who were taught and baptized by him "would return to their usual jobs in towns and villages."[64] It seems clear, however, that John had an inner circle of disciples (see Matt 9:14; 11:2; 14:12; Mark 2:18; Luke 11:1) with whom he had a sort of relationship not shared by the others (see Matt 3:5-6; Mark 1:5; Luke 3:7-14; 7:28-30). These disciples were the ones who addressed him as "rabbi" (John 3:26),[65] subjected themselves to his new ascetic ethical demands (Mark 2:18; John 3:25), were taught by him to pray (Luke 11:1), were sent to probe Jesus (Matt 11:2-3), and took the responsibility of burying their master (14:12).[66] With regard to the Ephesian believers, even if it is assumed that they had, in fact, been baptized by John, it is impossible to know whether or not they had once belonged to John's inner circle of disciples. Syntactically speaking, however, not even their baptism by John is actually beyond dispute.

τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα

According to Greek syntax, there are at least two possible ways of reading the genitive Ἰωάννου in the expression "John's baptism" (τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα) of Acts 19:3. One way is to understand it as a simple adjectival genitive, making τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα to mean only "the Johannine baptism" or "a baptism like John's," not necessarily a baptism performed by John. In other words, the baptism those twelve believers received would have been similar to John's, thus leaving open the chance that they had been Christians all along and that their Christianity had not been mediated by John the Baptist. This is Jerome Murphy-O'Connor's view, though he does not resort to any syntactical argument per se.[67] It just has to be noted that the early Christian baptism, albeit rather difficult to reconstruct on the basis of the existing evidence, apparently stood closer to John's baptism than to anything else in first-century Judaism. It seems to have been inspired by and modeled after John's baptism, and in a sense to have been a mere continuation of it (see John 3:22-23; 4:1-2).[68] In this case, τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα would have to be

[64]Taylor, 102.

[65]Although this is the only place in the Gospels where John is called "rabbi" (cf. Luke 3:12), it seems to indicate how his disciples addressed him (cf. John 1:38).

[66]See Martin Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, trans. James Greig (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 35-37. The information in the Clementine Homilies that, just as Jesus "had twelve apostles according to the number of the solar months, so also there gathered about John thirty eminent persons according to the reckoning of the lunar month" (2.23), is certainly unworthy of credit.

[67]See Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "John the Baptist and Jesus: History and Hypothesis," *NTS* 36 (1990): 367-368. Taylor accepts this view (73).

[68]See Hartman, *'Into the Name of the Lord Jesus,'* 29-35; Lichtenberger, "Syncretistic Features in Jewish and Jewish-Christian Baptist Movements," 87. That baptism did not fall into disuse after the imprisonment of John, but continued to be a feature

taken as a post-Pentecost term used in the apostolic church for the Christian baptism itself prior to Pentecost.[69] The other way of reading Ἰωάννου is as a subjective genitive, in which it would actually function as the subject of the verbal idea implied in the noun of action βάπτισμα ("baptism" → "to baptize"), meaning "the baptism performed by John." The idea would then be that the Ephesian believers had been baptized directly by John, which means that they had indeed been in one way or another related to his movement before becoming Christians.[70]

Despite its attractiveness for matching the description of those believers in Acts as already Christians, and irrespective of being syntactically possible, the attempt to read Ἰωάννου as an adjectival genitive actually affords little if any exegetical warrant. From the contextual standpoint, it seems clear that Paul understood those believers' mentions of John's baptism as a baptism administered by John, rather than simply as a baptism like John's, as argued by Murphy-O'Connor. Paul's comment that "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus" (Acts 19:4), can hardly be taken as a reference only to the origin of that baptism. It is rather an explicit allusion to the baptism of those believers by John himself. This conclusion is supported by some semantic consideration as well. In addition to Acts 19:3, there are seven other occurrences of the expression "John's baptism" (τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα) in

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of the Jesus movement during the lifetime of Jesus, has been convincingly argued by R. T. France, "Jesus the Baptist?" in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 105-107. Regarding the difficult connection between John 3:25 and 26, some scholars even suggest replacing Ἰουδαίου in v. 25 with Ἰησοῦ, thus apparently making more sense of John's disciples' jealousy in v. 26 (e.g., Alfred Loisy, *Le quatrième Évangile*, 2d ed. [Paris: Nourry, 1921], 171). Besides having no manuscript support, however, such a reading would shift the focus of the controversy in v. 25 from the relative value of John's baptism and more traditional Jewish purification rites to the relative value of Christian baptism and the one performed by John, thus placing one baptism against the other and creating a tension that is alien to the passage and to the NT as a whole. See further, Hartwig Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, HNT 6 (Tübingen: Mohr, 2005), 228-229.

[69]In the case of the twelve of Acts 19, Murphy-O'Connor, 367, argues that they had been baptized by Jesus himself (cf. John 3:22) when he was preaching John's baptism of repentance in Judaea and was still associated with John; it was only after moving to Galilee that Jesus would have redefined his mission.

[70]On the subjective genitive, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 113-116. Syntactically speaking, there is yet another possible interpretation for the genitive Ἰωάννου, and that is to take it as the object of the verbal idea implied in βάπτισμα, therefore differently from the subjective genitive, in which it functions as the implied subject of βάπτισμα. If taken objectively, "John's baptism" would mean the moment or the situation in which John himself was baptized, a meaning definitely not supported by the context.

the NT, most of them by Luke himself (Matt 21:25; Mark 11:30; Luke 7:29; 20:4; Acts 1:22; 10:37; 18:25),[71] and, with the possible exception of Acts 18:25, which is discussed next, there is not a single instance in which the reference is to the early Christian, Johannine-like baptism. On the contrary, it always refers to the baptism with which John himself baptized those who came to him and accepted his message of repentance. It can be assumed, therefore, that those disciples Paul met in Ephesus, like some of Jesus' first disciples, had also had in the past some ties with the Baptist movement. We don't know exactly when they became Christians, but this must necessarily have taken place before Pentecost, probably even before the Good Friday/Easter events, which would explain their ignorance of the Holy Spirit. However simplistic in its appearance, this interpretation still figures as the most adequate one, granting the general historicity of the passage.[72]

With regard to Acts 18:25, which also refers to "John's baptism," but in connection with Apollos, a learned Jewish-Christian missionary from Alexandria,[73] it is practically impossible on the basis of the passage itself to know whether the genitive Ἰωάννου should be read adjectivally or subjectively. Because of this, the decision should be made on the basis of the proximity (context) to the account of the twelve Ephesian believers, as well as the semantic evidence from the rest of the NT. This means that, assuming the discontinuation of the Baptist movement soon after John's death, Apollos must also have been baptized by John prior to becoming a Christian, and that his becoming a Christian must also have taken place before Pentecost.

[71]Rothschild also includes Acts 13:24 (68), but Ἰωάννου . . . βάπτισμα there is part of a genitive absolute construction, and does not parallel the other passages listed above.

[72]There is no question that their conversion—if it can be called *conversion* at all—was not related to Paul's first missionary activities in Ephesus near the end of his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21). It was not related either to the scattering of believers following the persecution that broke out in Judea after Stephen's martyrdom (8:1; 11:19-21), for it is unthinkable that post-Pentecost believers from Jerusalem would not have even heard of the Holy Spirit. An early conversion, prior even to the Good Friday/Easter events, therefore, seems to be required. Menzies, 270, suggests that there might have existed in Galilee former disciples of John the Baptist who believed in Jesus without receiving Christian baptism or instruction concerning the gift of the Spirit. Whether in Galilee or in Judaea, as argued by Murphy-O'Connor, 367,—who does not think, however, of the Ephesian believers as having been baptized by John, but by Jesus at the beginning of his ministry—the twelve believers of Acts 19 must have lost contact with the Jesus movement when they moved away from Palestine still during the lifetime of Jesus. For a list of scholars who accept this interpretation, see Ernst, 149-150.

[73]F. F. Bruce suggests that Apollos was a traveling merchant (*The Book of Acts*, rev. ed., NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 358), and we know from Josephus of least another Jewish traveling merchant who also engaged in missionary activities; his name was Ananias (*Ant.* 20.34-42).

The fact is that Apollos was a Christian is hardly open to question, though it has already been suggested that he was simply a Jewish missionary,[74] an Essene,[75] a surviving disciple of John the Baptist who still proclaimed the imminence of the Messiah (not Jesus),[76] or even a sectarian Alexandrian Christian.[77] The way he is referred to in the narrative, however, should leave no doubt about his religious affiliation and even orthodoxy. Luke introduces him not only as someone who "had been instructed in the Way of the Lord" (v. 25a), and in Acts, "the way" (ἡ ὁδός) is a description of Christianity (9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22; cf. 16:17), but also as someone who "taught accurately the things concerning Jesus" (vs. 25c). The most natural way of understanding these words, as C. K. Barrett points out, is that Apollos had somehow been instructed in the Christian faith and was a Christian.[78] The argument that such statements, as also in the case of the twelve men of Ephesus, only reflect Luke's redactional efforts to bring the disciples of John closer to Christianity for evangelistic purposes is speculative and artificial, besides being completely unnecessary. It is possible to make sense of the text without resorting to such an expedient.

Apollos is presented as a Christian, and there is no compelling reason to treat him differently.[79] Nevertheless, his understanding of Christianity was imperfect, for the only baptism he knew was the one administered by John the Baptist, and this explains why he needed further instruction (vv. 25-26). In the context of Acts 18:24–19:7, whether this is regarded as a single paragraph or two distinct paragraphs, the fact that he knew "only" (μόνον) John's baptism consists in an explicit indication that, similarly to the Ephesian believers,

[74]Eduard Schweizer, "Die Bekehrung des Apollos, Ag. 18, 24-26," *EvT* 15 (1955): 247-254.

[75]Hans Kosmala, *Hebräer, Essener, Christen: Studien zur Vorgeschichte der frühchristlichen Verkündigung* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 107, 338.

[76]Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, rev. William F. Albright and C. S. Mann (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), 183.

[77]Käsemann, "The Disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus," 144-148.

[78]C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 2:887.

[79]Martin Hengel's difficulty in deciding whether Apollos made his first contact with the Christian message while still in Alexandria or already in Ephesus, through Priscilla and Aquila (*Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, trad. John Bowden [Philadephia: Fortress, 1979], 107), is hard to justify exegetically, even if there is no reliable information on how Christianity first reached Egypt. The note in Codex D, according to which Apollos had been "instructed *in his own country* [ἐν τῇ πατρίδι] in the word of the Lord" (v. 25), seems to be nothing but an effort to spell out that which is already clearly implied in the context (see v. 26). At any rate, as Gerd Lüdemann argues, it can be safely assumed that there was a Christian community in Alexandria in the forties (*Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary*, trans. John Bowden [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989], 209).

Apollos had also not experienced the Pentecost phenomenon.[80] Thus the expression ζέων τῷ πνεύματι (18:25) should not be taken as a religious statement, meaning that he was filled with the Spirit, but as a psychological statement: "burning in spirit" or "with burning enthusiasm," since the verb ζέω means literally "to boil."[81]

But, as many others in the narrative, this is also a controversial issue even among those who believe Apollos was a Christian. Ben Witherington, for example, prefers to read ζέων τῷ πνεύματι in connection with the Holy Spirit on several accounts. He argues that (1) the phrase ζέων τῷ πνεύματι is similar to the one used in Rom 12:11 (τῷ πνεύματι ζέοντες), where the reference is clearly to the Holy Spirit; (2) the fact that this phrase is surrounded by two others which describe Apollos's Christian experience favors the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is meant; (3) Acts 6:10 (τῷ πνεύματι ᾧ ἐλάλει) and 1 Cor 14:2 (πνεύματι δὲ λαλεῖ), which definitely allude to the Holy Spirit, also parallel this phrase and, therefore, should also be taken into consideration; and (4) the failure to mention Apollos's Christian baptism indicates that he had already been baptized as a Christian, and since for Luke the Holy Spirit, not water-baptism, was the crucial factor for identifying a person as a Christian, Apollos must have been baptized with the Spirit as well.[82]

These arguments, however, do not seem to carry much weight. Taking the reverse order, the last argument is correct but only with regard to Apollos's Christian identity. Yet if he was a pre-Pentecost or early disciple who had become Christian after having been baptized by John the Baptist, then his lack of the Spirit-baptism would be fully understandable in view of his need of further instruction. In the third argument, none of the passages mentioned actually provides a syntactic parallel to Acts 18:25, where τῷ πνεύματι, coming as it does right after a verb expressing

[80]This seems to explain the "contradiction" that, according to Haenchen, exists between v. 25a, c ("instructed," "accurately") and v. 26d ("more accurately"). These statements would not "really cancel each other out," as claimed by Haenchen (555), if understood in relation to two related but separate issues: Apollos was able to demonstrate "accurately" from Scripture that Jesus was the Messiah (v. 25), while, because of his missing the Pentecost, he needed further instruction on Christian faith and history (v. 26).

[81]Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles*, HT 12 (London: UBS, 1972, 358). See also William J. Larkin Jr., *Acts*, IVPNTCS (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 270; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 638-639; Howard Clark Kee, *To Every Nation under Heaven: Acts of the Apostles*, NTC (Harrisburg: Trinity, 1997), 225.

[82]Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 565. Other scholars who also see Apollos as a pneumatic or charismatic Christian include Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 88-89; Michael Wolter, "Apollos und die ephesinischen Johannesjünger (Act 18.24–19.7)," *ZNW* 78 (1987): 49-73; Barrett, 2:885-888.

emotions (ζέω),[83] falls within the category of the locatival dative,[84] whereas in Acts 6:10 and 1 Cor 14:2 [τῷ] πνεύματι is clearly an instrumental dative.[85] The second argument suffers from not carrying an appropriate cause-and-effect relationship. The two surrounding sentences seem to indicate that ζέων τῷ πνεύματι should be read within a Christian context,[86] but this does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is meant in this case. Regarding the first argument, it is obvious that the phrase τῷ πνεύματι ζέοντες of Rom 12:11 is both analogous to ζέων τῷ πνεύματι and expresses a Christian attitude, but it is hard to see why the Holy Spirit is the only referent; its meaning is not even restricted to Christians. Several of Paul's exhortations in this context (vv. 9-21) would be applicable to non-Christians as well, whether Jews or pagans.[87] Moreover, it is hermeneutically suspicious, to say the least, to make a semantic use of Paul to explain Luke, still because when referring to the religious experience of being filled with the Spirit, Luke invariably uses the verb πίμπλημι or its related noun πλήρης (Luke 1:15, 41, 67; 4:1; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9).[88] This means that, if he meant to say that Apollos was fully imbued with the Spirit, Luke would have to have ignored his own formula.[89] Though not impossible, this makes it highly problematic to take ζέων τῷ πνεύματι as a religious statement in connection with the Holy Spirit.

It seems appropriate, therefore, to assume that Apollos was an Alexandrian Christian who had received only John's baptism and who had in the past belonged to his movement. In this case, similarly to the twelve Ephesian believers, he would also have become a Christian at some point in Jesus' lifetime. Then, as a diaspora Jew, he would have lost contact with the Jesus movement in Palestine and missed out on the Good Friday/Easter events, particularly the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:38) until

[83]On ζέω, see also BDAG, 426.

[84]See Robertson, 523-524.

[85]For a discussion of πνεύματι in the NT, see Wallace, 165-166.

[86]In fact, Witherington subordinates his whole discussion of ζέων τῷ πνεύματι to the question whether Apollos was a Christian, which he answers affirmatively. He concludes his arguments stressing that "nowhere else in Acts do we find a Jew who is said to have been instructed in the things of the Lord and teaching accurately the things about Jesus who is *not* also a Christian" (565).

[87]See Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 344.

[88]This may suffice as a response to Barrett's argument, 2:888, according to which ζέων τῷ πνεύματι must refer to the Holy Spirit because of Luke's high interest in phenomena.

[89]Johnson, 332, is correct in saying, "it is striking that Luke here avoids his stereotypical prophetic characterization: Apollos is not said to be 'full of the Holy Spirit.'"

he met Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus.[90] This would explain the "vacuum" in which, according to Käsemann, Apollos and the Ephesian disciples seemed to be living, but there is no compelling reason to call them sectarians.[91]

Paul's Perspective on Baptism

What is intriguing here is that while the Ephesian disciples were (re)baptized by Paul so that they could receive the Holy Spirit, Apollos was not; at least there is no record of his being baptized again. It has been argued that it "may be safely inferred from the narrative" that Apollos did receive Christian Spirit-baptism at that point.[92] But, there is nothing in the passage to support such an inference.[93] On the contrary, the juxtaposition of the two accounts seems to suggest exactly the opposite. The relative position of these stories in the narrative, as Barrett indicates, makes it impossible to read them independently. By placing them together Luke may have intended each story to be read in light of the other.[94] When this is done, Barrett continues, a parallel and a

[90]See, e.g., Herbert Preisker, "Apollos und die Johannesjünger in Act 18:24–19:6," *ZNW* 30 (1931): 301-304; John H. E. Hull, *The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles* (London: Lutterworth, 1967), 112; F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (London: Nelson, 1969), 309; Kurt Aland, *Neutestamentliche Entwürfe* (Munich: Kaiser, 1979), 189; D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 148-149; Murphy-O'Connor, 367-368.

[91]Cf. Käsemann, "The Disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus," 138. There remains, however, one difficulty: it is just incredible that former disciples of John would not have even heard about the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2), for not only is the Spirit plainly attested in the OT, but also according to the Gospels it was part of John's own prophetic proclamation (Matt 3:11, 16; Mark 1:8, 10; Luke 3:16, 22; John 1:32, 33; Acts 1:5; cf. Luke 1:15). But, a good case could be made for the alternative reading λαμβάνουσίν τινες, which replaces ἐστίν in some important Western manuscripts ($P^{38,41}D^{*}it^{d*}syr^{hmg}cop^{sa}$). The text, then, would read: "We have never heard that *anybody has received* the Holy Spirit." Taylor, 72, offers the argument: "The usual text given provides us with something more than a difficult reading that might give us cause to consider it authentic; the premise is not only difficult but absurd" (72).

[92]Smith, 245.

[93]Another suggestion is that the plurals ἀκούσαντες and ἐβαπτίσθησαν of Acts 19:5 refer back to λαός in v. 4, meaning that those who were baptized were the crowds who listened to John and that the baptism they received was, by anticipation, baptism "in the name of Christ" (see Markus Barth, *Die Taufe—Ein Sakrament? Ein Exegetischer Beitrag zum Gespräch über die Kirchliche Taufe* [Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1951], 166-168). Being so, as in the case of Apollos, no baptism would be involved in the episode of the twelve disciples. Such a reading, however, besides the anachronism it posits, is syntactically rather awkward, to say the least, for the plurals in v. 5 must refer to the same αὐτοῖς on whom Paul laid his hands and the same αὐτούς on whom the Spirit came in v. 6, and that they were the same people who numbered about twelve in v. 7 (see Barrett, 2:897).

[94]Not only the conjunction δέ, but in fact the whole introductory sentence of

contrast immediately stand out: all the people involved in this narrative had been former disciples of John the Baptist, but only the Ephesian believers were (re)baptized.

It would be tempting to say that the order of the episodes in the narrative is meant to present Paul's attitude in rebaptizing the Ephesian believers as a correction of Priscilla and Aquila's, who did not rebaptize Apollos. The lack of any specific statement in this direction, however, weakens this possibility. Whatever reason Luke may have had for combining these stories,[95] Barrett may be correct in suggesting that the contrast only reflects a theological difference between Priscilla and Aquila on one side, and Paul on the other, on how these early Christians[96] should be treated. What is not correct is Barrett's appeal, by way of an illustration, to the well-known debate in the third century over schismatic or heretical baptism, that is, the debate between Carthage and Rome about whether the baptism of converted schismatics counted or whether baptism within the church had to be administered to them.[97] Apollos's and the Ephesian believers' position was by no means comparable to that of the Novatianists, even if these had been baptized in the name of the Trinity. Apollos and the Ephesian believers were Christians as much as Peter, James, and John were during the earthly ministry of Jesus, and the fact that they had received only John's baptism and belonged for a while to the Baptist movement should not be held against them; otherwise the baptism of Jesus himself and that of some of his first disciples who had also received only the baptism of John would be liable to objection as well.[98]

The point, as already argued, is that the earliest Christian baptism, the baptism performed by the Twelve during Jesus' lifetime, was not only derived from but also quite similar in meaning to Johannine baptism (cf. John 3:22-23;

19:1 (ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ τὸν Ἀπολλῶ εἶναι ἐν Κορίνθῳ) are clearly meant to make one account the continuation of the other (see Haenchen, 552).

[95]Barrett, 2:885, may be right by saying that "it is not to be thought that Luke put them together in order to inform later historians of the diverse attitudes to disciples of John in the first century," but since Apollos was, as were the Ephesian believers, already a Christian, it is hard to agree with Barrett that this combined narrative was intended to show how successful Paul was to the point of winning over or absorbing sectarians (ibid.; cf. Haenchen, 556-557).

[96]Aland, 11, calls them "old Christians," in comparison with the "new Christians," i.e., those who were baptized in the name of Jesus and received the gift of the Spirit at and after Pentecost.

[97]C. K. Barrett, "Apollos and the Twelve Disciples of Ephesus," in *The New Testament Age: Essays in Honor of Bo Reicke*, 2 vols., ed. William C. Weinrich (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984), 1:37-38.

[98]Early attempts to downplay the baptism of Jesus by John were generated by the suggestion that Jesus received the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (e.g., *Gos. Naz.* 2; cf. Matt 3:14-15), and not because John's baptism was inappropriate or imperfect.

4:1-2).[99] Even after the Pentecost, Christian baptism could still be defined as a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:38; 22:16; cf. Eph 5:25-27; Titus 3:5-7).[100] The two new elements that were then introduced—the administration "in the name of Jesus Christ" and "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38; 8:14-17; 10:47-48; 19:5-6)—did not change its moral (conversion) character or its eschatological orientation (John 3:5; Acts 2:38-40; Rom 6:4-5; Tit 3:5-7). They only added a sense of belonging or personal commitment that was absent from John's baptism. By being performed in the name of Jesus, post-Pentecost Christian baptism dedicated the baptized person to Jesus Christ. It represented, in the words of Eduard Lohse, "a change of lordship" that would from that point forward determine the person's whole life. He or she no longer belonged to those powers that had previously provided the norms for life, for Christ was now the Lord (see 1 Cor 1:12-13). And the gift of the Holy Spirit, apart from its prophetic empowerment (see Acts 1:8; 13:1), was known in the person's life as a guiding influence, meaning that God was really experienced as present and active (see Gal 4:6; 5:22-25; cf. 1 Cor 12:3).[101]

Post-Pentecost baptism, therefore, while keeping the fundamental moral and eschatological character of early Christian baptism, introduced an important ecclesiological emphasis not formerly present. Baptism in the name of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit became the basic presupposition of discipleship to Jesus and, as such, of the establishment of the eschatological community of salvation.[102] From the perspective of the similarities between

[99]This is also evidenced by the use of the terms βάπτισμα/βαπτίζω ("baptism/to baptize") within the Christian tradition, whose adoption is unquestionably owed to the influence of John the Baptist (see James D. G. Dunn, "'Baptized' as Metaphor," in *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church: Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R. E. O. White*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross, JSNTSup 171 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 302-305).

[100]On the continuity between post-Pentecost Christian baptism and the baptism of John, see Joel B. Green, "From 'John's Baptism' to 'Baptism in the Name of the Lord Jesus': The Significance of Baptism in Luke-Acts," in *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church: Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R. E. O. White*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross, JSNTSup 171([Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 157-172.

[101]Eduard Lohse, *The First Christians: Their Beginnings, Writings, and Beliefs*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 68. Schuyler Brown argues that Christian baptism also changed the limitations of John's baptism with relation to time and space. Whereas John's baptism was performed before the coming of Jesus and within the limits of Israel only (Acts 13:24; 19:4), Christian baptism should be taken to all nations (Luke 24:47) ("'Water-Baptism' and 'Spirit-Baptism' in Luke-Acts," *ATh*R 59 [1977]: 142). For an alternative view on the meaning of baptism "in the name of Jesus," see Hartman, "*Into the Name of the Lord Jesus*," 44-50.

[102]See Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years*, trans. John Bowden (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 345, n. 199.

these two baptisms, the baptism of the Ephesian believers by Paul should truly be regarded as a rebaptism, but if the stress falls on the differences, then post-Pentecost baptism was something new and unique, of which John's baptism was but a preparation (cf. Acts 19:4). This may help to explain why Paul did rebaptize them and Priscilla and Aquila did not rebaptize Apollos.[103] As a post-Pentecost disciple who had been baptized in the name of Jesus (22:16),[104] Paul may have focused on the differences between both baptisms, while Priscilla and Aquila, though there is no information at all on their Christian life prior to their expulsion from Rome after Claudius's edict of c. 49 A.D. (Acts 18:1-3),[105] may have looked at Apollos's baptism from the standpoint of those formative years of Jesus' ministry.

Historically speaking, the validity of John's ministry could not be denied. To do so would be equivalent to denying the salvation-history, Johannine, and pre-Pentecost roots of Christianity, a step that not even Paul, as a post-Pentecost apostle, was willing to take (see Acts 13:24-25);[106] but he did deny the efficacy of John's baptism in a post-Pentecost era. For Paul, John's

[103]Note that after Paul's comment in 19:4 that "when they heard this they were *baptized*" (v. 5), and not that "when they heard this they *believed*" (see Smith, 244).

[104]This seems to be the meaning of his invocation of the name of Jesus referred to in the passage (see Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 418, n. 23). At any rate, Paul's baptism in the name of Jesus seems to be presupposed on the basis of his entire missionary practice and especially the first-person plural "we have been baptized into Jesus Christ" of Rom 6:3 (Hengel and Schwemer, 43).

[105]Nothing is said either by Luke in Acts or Paul in his Epistles about the conversion of Priscilla and Aquila. Since they are not included among those whom the apostle baptized in Corinth (1 Cor 1:14-16; cf. 16:15), where he first met them, they were probably already Christians (Acts 18:1-4), meaning they were already Christians when they left Rome. Suetonius's possible reference to Christ as the spark of the disturbances within the Jewish community in Rome that led to their expulsion by Claudius (*Life of Claudius* 25.4), would confirm this hypothesis. It has been suggested that Priscilla and Aquila were among the founders of the church in Rome (F. F. Bruce, *The Pauline Circle*, BCL [Carlisle: Paternoster, 1985], 46), and it is possible that the suggestion is correct. Luke reports that among the converts at Pentecost there were "visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes" (2:10-11). It is not impossible that Priscilla and Aquila were among them, though Jerome Murphy-O'Connor prefers to credit their conversion to the activity of early Christian missionaries in Rome ("Prisca and Aquila: Travelling Tentmakers and Church Builders," *BRev* 8, no. 6 [1992]: 45-47).

[106]James D. G. Dunn raises the question whether 1 Cor 12:13 ("in one Spirit we were all baptized") does not indicates Paul's awareness of the tradition, according to which John the Baptist declared that the Coming One would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). His position is that "the most obvious interpretation" of his passage "is that Paul himself was aware of this tradition and deliberately alludes to it at this point" (*The Theology of Paul the Apostle* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 451). For several other echoes of John's preaching in Paul's missionary activities in Acts and the Epistles, see J. Ramsey Michaels, "Paul and John the Baptist: An Odd Couple?" *TynBul* 42 (1991): 245-260.

baptism was both prophetic and temporary by nature (19:4), so it needed to be renewed or replaced by the proper Christian baptism. Priscilla and Aquila may have thought differently, either because they did not know how the apostle would handle similar situations, since the episode of Apollos actually took place in the absence of Paul and before the incident of Acts 19, or perhaps because of their acquaintance with the practice of the church in Jerusalem, which does not appear to have administered Christian baptism to those who had been baptized by John. According to Luke, in Jerusalem alone there were about 120 of early disciples, including some former disciples of John the Baptist, who apparently were not required to be baptized again, now "in the name of Jesus" (see Acts 1:15).[107]

Whether Paul and Priscilla and Aquila ever paused to discuss this issue is unknown, but it is important to note that what really caused Paul to rebaptize the Ephesian believers was not so much their ignorance of the Holy Spirit, but their lack of what he considered to be the proper Christian baptism. Their astonishing statement (19:2) that they had not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit,[108] or perhaps that the Holy Spirit had already been given,[109] only provided the occasion for Paul's assessment of the baptism they had received (vv. 3-4), and it was his discourse on the preparatory character of John's baptism that seems to have persuaded them to accept another baptism (v. 5). The coming of the Spirit upon them was associated with Paul's laying on of hands, not primarily with baptism (v. 6).[110]

It would be wrong to conclude from this that Paul detaches the gift of the Spirit from the rite of baptism. He does not. For Paul, baptism and the reception of the Spirit are not only fundamentally connected, but also simultaneous. In 1 Cor 6:11, for example, justification and sanctification are given by the Spirit at baptism, and in 12:13 the Spirit is the divine agent who unites the believers with Christ through baptism (cf. 6:17). In Gal 3:26-27, baptism is also associated with union with Christ, and Rom 8:9-11 makes it clear that union with Christ is possible only through the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 3:17-19).[111] The reception of the Spirit by those twelve believers through

[107]On the case of the 120 who were not required to be rebaptized at or after Pentecost, see France, 107.

[108]Wallace's attempt to translate οὐδ' εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἔστιν ἠκούσαμεν (Acts 19:2) as "we have not heard whether a spirit can be holy" (312) is not convincing. The position of the verb εἰμί implies that ἅγιον must be taken attributively (see Haubeck and von Siebenthal, 1:789).

[109]See above, n. 90.

[110]Contrary to what Porter affirms (85-86), this is not the only instance in Acts in which Paul lays hands on someone (cf. 28:8), but it is indeed the only time in which the laying-on of hands comes immediately after baptism.

[111]G. R. Beasley-Murray says: "Clearly Paul associated baptism and unity with Christ and all that follows from it on the basis that for him baptism in water and baptism in the Spirit are ideally one" ("Baptism," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993], 63).

Paul's laying-on of hands can probably be described as a sort of miniature Pentecost that sanctioned the incorporation of those early, marginal disciples into the fellowship of the church (cf. 10:44-48), while at the same time it vindicated Paul's apostolic authority.[112] It is noteworthy that the Spirit those disciples are reported to have received was not the soteriological gift related to conversion and baptism, but the gift of charismatic phenomena, such as speaking with tongues and prophesying (see 19:6).

Whatever the precise facts, the episode of rebaptism in Ephesus can most likely be ascribed to Paul's highly developed theological perspective on baptism as the rite of Christian initiation. Baptism lies at the very heart of Paul's understanding of conversion.[113] This is true of other NT writers as well, but there is an important difference: since for Paul conversion is an experience that comprises justification by faith, participation in Christ, and the gift of the Spirit, he conceives baptism from basically the same perspective (Rom 6:1-11; 1 Cor 6:11; 12:13; Gal 3:26-28).[114] This means that Paul's theology of conversion as a whole can figuratively be expressed in relation to baptism: "justification is the effect of baptism; the means of union with Christ is baptism; and the Spirit is mediated through or bestowed in baptism."[115]

[112]See Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 644. Several scholars see a parallel with the Samaritan converts in Acts 8:14-17, where Peter and John laid hands on them so that they could receive the Holy Spirit. The fact that Paul was now the medium for this bestowal would also be intended to legitimate his authority in conveying the Spirit (cf. Marshall, 307-308; Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 364-365; Johnson, 338; Barrett, 2:898).

[113]See Kevin Roy, *Baptism, Reconciliation, and Unity* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997), 38; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1962), 174; idem, *Baptism Today and Tomorrow* (London: Macmillan, 1966), 37-38; Eduard Lohse, "Taufe und Rechtfertigung bei Paulus," in *Die Einheit des Neuen Testaments: Exegetische Studien zur Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 228-244; Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard De Witt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 396-414; Udo Schnelle, *Gerechtigkeit und Christusgegenwart: Vorpaulinische und paulinische Auftheologie*, GThA 24 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 106-145; Ralf P. Martin, "Patterns of Worship in New Testament Churches," *JSNT* 37 (1989): 59-85; Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 860-864; Anthony R. Cross, "'One Baptism' (Ephesians 4:5): A Challenge to the Church," in *Baptism, the New Testament, and the Church: Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R. E. O. White*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross, JSNTSup 171 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 173-177. The idea that Paul deemphasizes baptism (Rothschild, 227, n. 84) seems more a rash conclusion based solely on the number of references to baptism in the apostle's writings than the result of a careful theological analysis of such references.

[114]On this, see Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 317-459.

[115]Ibid., 443. Baptism and conversion, however, should not be confused. Dunn correctly warns against extending the meaning of baptism too much so as to include everything that is actually involved in the experience of conversion (*The Theology of Paul*, 445). That is to say, baptism is not in itself a synonym for conversion. It is rather an outward sign of the spiritual process of becoming a believer (see Richard N.

A metonymy, thus, is at play here. Because Paul does not think of conversion without baptism, he could transfer to the latter his understanding of the former, bringing together the spiritual reality and its symbolic objectification. But, perhaps we can move a step further. This metonymical transfer may owe its origin to Paul's ability to envision the baptismal rite, properly speaking immersion, as a fitting metaphor for the death and resurrection of Jesus (Rom 6:1-11; cf. Gal 2:19-20; Col 2:11-12). By using preferably the formula "into [εἰς] Christ" rather than "into the name of Jesus Christ" (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27; cf. Acts 19:5; 1 Cor 1:13),[116] the apostle was, then, able to connect soteriological concepts about Christ with baptism. So by being immersed, the believer not only identifies himself or herself with Jesus in his death (Rom 6:3-4), but also experiences the death that frees from sin (v. 7). By emerging from the water, he or she participates in the resurrection of Jesus for a new life (vv. 4-5). In other words, for Paul it is baptism that actualizes Christ's death and resurrection in the believer's life.[117]

This metaphor is so appealing that some authors even take it as the inherent meaning of Christian baptism, which is not correct. Referring to the baptism performed by the disciples of Jesus, Arthur G. Patzia, for instance, argues that at that stage "the baptism of the Jesus movement was not a baptism associated with his death and resurrection and thus cannot be regarded as Christian baptism in the way the rite was understood and practiced later."[118] Though the association of death and baptism had already been expressed by Jesus (Mark 10:38; Luke 12:50), the description of baptism itself in connection with his death and resurrection is a theological argument used by Paul to convey the meaning of conversion,[119] not of baptism proper. That is to say, no matter how attractive and significant this concept can be,

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Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC 41 [Dallas: Word, 1990], 155-156).

[116]The two formulas may be equivalent. Dunn suggests that the former is only an abbreviation of the latter, though it may include the meaning of it (*The Theology of Paul*, 448; see further, James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, BNC [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993], 203).

[117]Hartman, "Baptism," 1:587. "Baptism made this death relevant in the present, applying it to the person baptized, and was the external . . . sign of the forgiveness of the sins" (idem, *'Into the Name of the Lord Jesus,'* 74).

[118]Arthur G. Patzia, *The Emergence of the Church: Context, Growth, Leadership and Worship* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 234.

[119]For the idea that Paul's view of baptism as an expression of the death and resurrection of Jesus derived from the Greek-Roman mystery religions, in which initiates supposedly died and rose in identification with their god, see e.g., Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols., trans. Kendrick Grobel (London: SCM, 1952-1955), 1:140-144; see esp. Günter Wagner, *Pauline Baptism and the Pagan Mysteries: The Problem of the Pauline Doctrine of Baptism in Romans 6:1-11, in the Light of Its Religio-Historical "Parallels,"* trans. J. P. Smith (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1967), 259-294; and A. J. M. Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection: Studies in Pauline Theology against Its Graeco-Roman Background*, WUNT 44 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), 37-69.

it is only a theological metaphor—like several other baptismal metaphors brought forth by Paul (see Gal 3:27; Eph 5:26; Titus 3:5-7)—that appears in the context of a discussion of justification and sin.[120] The essential meaning of baptism is conversion, not dying and rising again.

Conclusion

The whole matter regarding the Ephesian believers, therefore, was not the relationship between John and Jesus or between supposed followers of John the Baptist and followers of Jesus. Neither was it the relationship between baptism and the Spirit in Christian theology or the early church practice, but baptism itself as the event which signals the beginning of the Christian life in its full sense and which authenticates one's commitment to Jesus. The twelve disciples of Acts 19 were Christians, not Baptists, though they had once been baptized by John and belonged to his movement. Having, then, lost contact with the Jesus movement in Palestine and missed out on Pentecost, they needed now to be reincorporated into fellowship of the church. Paul, himself a post-Pentecost apostle, found it appropriate to rebaptize them, probably on account of his understanding of baptism as something which symbolizes the whole experience of conversion, all the more so because he connects baptism with the death and resurrection of Jesus. Priscilla and Aquila did not necessarily deny this, but irrespective of how much significance they attached to this rite, they would not see anything wrong with those early believers who had received a Johannine-like baptism or even, as in the case of Apollos, John's baptism itself. As far as Paul is concerned, however, problems with John's baptism or the early Christian baptism seem to have been restricted to this situation in Ephesus: the book of Acts does not report any other incident like this involving the apostle, and in his Epistles he never deals with this issue.[121]

[120]Beasley-Murray states: "It should be observed that in this passage [Rom 6:1-11] Paul was not primarily giving a theological explanation of the nature of baptism, but expounding its meaning for life" ("Baptism," 62). Cf. Hartman: "In the texts he [Paul] left behind we never encounter a passage over which could be put the title 'On Baptism'" (*'Into the Name of the Lord Jesus,'* 52). On Paul's baptismal metaphors, see Dunn, "'Baptized' as Metaphor," 294-310 (on Rom 6:1-11, see 299-300, 306-308).

[121]David Wenham attempts to see in 1 Cor 1:13-17 Paul's response to some of his critics who preferred Apollos and emphasized baptism. While interesting, it is not unjustifiable. There is not enough evidence in this passage to conclude that while in Corinth Paul was involved in discussions concerning the relative value of Apollos's (i.e., John's) and Christian baptisms, or the relationship of John and Jesus. Wenham admits that his hypothesis lies "at the level of probabilities" (*Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 345). Perhaps not even that. Paul's rhetorical questions of whether Christ was divided or whether the Corinthians had been baptized in his own name (vv. 13-14) is a clear example of a *reductio ad absurdum*, which obviously presupposes baptism in the name of Jesus. If this was true in relation to Paul, by implication it was also true in relation to Apollos and Peter (Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 60-61).