

## THE SPIRIT IN BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER: AN EXEGESIS OF 1 CORINTHIANS 12:13

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At least since John Stott published his *Baptism and Fullness*<sup>1</sup> on the question of baptism of the Holy Spirit, it has become a standard view in Anglo-Saxon evangelical circles that all Christians have been baptized by/with/in the Holy Spirit at the time of their regeneration. James Dunn's extensive study on the subject<sup>2</sup> reinforced the understanding that the passages in the Gospels and in Acts that talk about Jesus' baptizing work with the Spirit should be understood in light of 1 Corinthians 12:13 where Paul emphasizes that we were all baptized with one Spirit and thus became members of the body of Christ (ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν). The somewhat surprising fact that even Gordon Fee – a first-class and denominationally Pentecostal (!) exegete – agrees with this interpretation,<sup>3</sup> seemed to conclude the discussion in favor of this view. However, a more recent work on the Holy Spirit<sup>4</sup> written by Iain Murray, a church historian who can hardly be accused of “charismatic deviation,” challenges the evangelical consensus and shows that the traditional Reformed and evangelical view identified Spirit-baptism with the outpourings of the Spirit (even subsequent to conversion), not strictly with regeneration. Works written before the explosion of the charismatic movement (e.g. Lenski, Moffat, Roberston-Plummer, Havey) rarely link the baptism with the Spirit (of the Gospels and Acts) with the baptism that Paul makes mention of in 1Cor 12:13.<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, the baptism in 1Cor 12:13 was generally understood as water-baptism where the Spirit is the agent or efficient cause (not the element) of baptism. Some of the Reformers (both Luther and Calvin), the majority of modern English exegetes, and many in the German theological tradition (e.g. Leipoldt, Schlatter, Wendland, Lietzmann,<sup>6</sup> Käsemann, Conzelmann,<sup>7</sup> Heinrici<sup>8</sup>) understood the first part of 1Cor 12:13 (καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν) as referring to water-baptism and the second half (καὶ πάντες ἐν πνεύμα ἐποτίσθημεν) as alluding to the Lord's supper. Beasley-Murray<sup>9</sup> and Schnackenburg<sup>10</sup> identify ἐβαπτίσθημεν with water-baptism without making the same connection between ἐποτίσθημεν and the eucharist.

One of course suspects whether the Reformers' engagement in the debate over the sacramentalism of the Roman Catholic church and their desire to establish the view that there were only two sacraments, baptism and the eucharist, made them see things in the epistle that

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<sup>1</sup> John Stott, *Baptism and Fullness: The Work of the Holy Spirit Today* (Leicester, England: IVP, 1964).

<sup>2</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in relation to Pentecostalism today* (Naperville, Illinois: Alec R. Allenson Inc., 1970).

<sup>3</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987), 603-6.

<sup>4</sup> Iain Murray, *Pentecost – Today?* (Edinburgh, UK, Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Even James Dunn admits in 1970 that his position deviates from what “most commentators seem to think.” (Dunn, 130-1)

<sup>6</sup> G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1963), 170 n2.

<sup>7</sup> Fee, 605.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans; Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 2000), 1001.

<sup>9</sup> Beasley-Murray, 167-171.

<sup>10</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg (trans. by G. R. Beasley-Murray), *Baptism in the Thought of St. Paul. A Study in Pauline Theology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), 26-9.

were not there.<sup>11</sup> It is possible that they were wearing the eyeglasses of their time and thus their interpretation reflects more of their theological debates than of the original Pauline reasoning. It might be more than an accident that the Lutheran Lenski sees both baptism and the Lord's supper in 1Cor 12:13, whereas the Baptist Beasley-Murray only sees baptism there. But maybe we modern evangelicals also wear eyeglasses that influence our interpretation of Paul. Could it be that our reaction to some of the unhealthy teachings of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements on a normative two-stage experience (conversion and then post-conversion Spirit-baptism with tongues) caused us to see things in the Scriptures that are not there?<sup>12</sup> Leaving behind the heat of the charismatic debate of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, maybe it is time to have another look at 1 Corinthians 12:13 and see if we have correctly interpreted it. Was Paul really thinking of the baptism of the Holy Spirit of the Gospels and Acts when he wrote to the Corinthians: ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἐν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν? Or was he thinking of a Spirit-induced immersion into the church, coupled with a filling of the Spirit, as some Pentecostal theologians taught?<sup>13</sup> Or did the Reformers actually get it right, and Paul simply wrote about water-baptism and the eucharist?<sup>14</sup> In this paper I would like to argue that though there are several interpretive options, both contextual and syntactical considerations make the latter case indeed the most plausible one.

## A. SYNTACTICAL DIAGRAM

The syntactical diagram of 1 Corinthians 12:13 shows us that there are two parallel actions in the verse: we were all *baptized*, and we were all *made to drink*. These two parts constitute the verse.

καὶ γὰρ	ἡμεῖς πάντες	ἐβαπτίσθημεν
	εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι	ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι
	εἴτε Ἑλλήνες	εἰς ἐν σῶμα
	εἴτε δοῦλοι	
	εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι,	

καὶ	πάντες	ἐποτίσθημεν	ἐν πνεύμα
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Both verbs are in the passive voice (ἐβαπτίσθημεν, ἐποτίσθημεν). The subjects of the two verbs who suffer the actions are the same in both occasions: ἡμεῖς πάντες, πάντες. The one Spirit is

<sup>11</sup> “Those who find the Lord's Supper in verse 13 find it in the second part of the verse: baptism in the first part, the Lord's Supper in the second. Neither the verb nor the tense behind the expression ‘we were all given one Spirit to drink’ is particularly congenial to that interpretation, any more than to the interpretation that finds confirmation in verse 13b. But these debates do alert us to the fact that there is a long tradition of reading one's particular ecclesiastical tradition into the text” (D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1987, 43-4). I personally come from an ecclesiastical tradition that is not particularly favorable to the traditional interpretation, but I hope to be able to show that the text – together with the context – does make that interpretation plausible.

<sup>12</sup> Carson shows that he is aware of this danger when he continues the previous quote: “and one must wonder if history is repeating itself in contemporary debates over the charismatic movement, even though it is a rather different tradition that is now being found here.” (Ibid) My suspicion though is that even Carson falls into this trap.

<sup>13</sup> Fee mentions H. Hunter's *Spirit-Baptism: A Pentecostal An Alternative* (Lanham, MD, 1983) as an example (Fee, 605).

<sup>14</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* Vol 1. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1948), 407.

connected to both actions, but in different ways. In the first part he is either the means, or the element, or possibly the agent of the action, depending on how we understand the dative. In the second part the Spirit is the direct object of the action. We have to keep these nuances in mind when we come to discuss their meanings.

The coordinating conjunction καὶ, and the logical conjunction γὰρ indicate that the verse must be understood in its literary context. Paul is connecting this verse to the preceding verse(s), and makes 12:13 an explanation or logical basis of what was said before. If γὰρ is a causal conjunction, then verse 13 serves as the basis of verse 12,<sup>15</sup> if it is an explanatory conjunction, it adds information to what was before described.<sup>16</sup> In both cases the sentence has to be interpreted in light of the larger and the immediate literary context.

## II. LITERARY CONTEXT

### a. Larger literary context: 1 Corinthians

As the writing of epistles rarely have one single purpose, Paul also had various aims in mind when he wrote the first epistle to the Corinthians. Among these two are particularly important for our study: 1. Paul wants to admonish the Corinthian believers to restore unity in the church, and 2. he wants to answer the questions they raised in a letter he received from them.

1. *The issue of unity* is mentioned at the beginning of the epistle when in 1:10 Paul writes, “I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.” (ESV) News had reached Paul that the Corinthians had a partisan spirit: “For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, ‘I follow Paul,’ or ‘I follow Apollos,’ or ‘I follow Cephas,’ or ‘I follow Christ.’” (1:11-12 ESV) The same sad theme continues in 3:1-4: “For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? For when one says, ‘I follow Paul,’ and another, ‘I follow Apollos,’ are you not being merely human?” (ESV) In the rest of the epistle we find out that the Corinthian believers were puffed up (4:6-8), went to worldly law-courts to sue each other (6:1-8), offended the weak brothers concerning meat offered to idols (8:12), had divisions among themselves when they came together to eat the Lord's supper (11:17-22), and were competitive about spiritual gifts (12-14). Paul is therefore addressing the question of unity over and over again to remind them of their oneness in Christ and the Spirit. When we more closely examine 12:13, we have to keep in mind Paul's emphasis on unity.

2. From 7:1 (Περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐγράψατε) we learn that in the second half of the letter *Paul is answering the Corinthian believers' questions*. These relate to marriage and sexual life (7:1), meat sacrificed to idols (8:1), men and women in the church and the home (11:1), the Lord's supper (11:17), spiritual gifts (12:1), and the resurrection of the dead (15:12). These questions are dealt with in blocks, but they also pop up in the middle of the treatment of other themes, and are often connected to Paul's admonishments to restore unity (and other important themes like fornication and idolatry). Our verse (12:13) is in the middle of the treatment of spiritual gifts (Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν), which is immediately after Paul's rebuke with regard to the

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<sup>15</sup> “This use expresses the basis or ground of an action.” (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996, 674).

<sup>16</sup> “This use indicates that additional information is being given about what is being described.” (Ibid, 673.)

Corinthians` divisive practice of the eucharist (11:17-34). The Corinthians had most likely written Paul about their experience of spiritual gifts. Paul praises them at the beginning of the letter that they did not lack any of these gifts (ὥστε ὑμᾶς μὴ ὑστερεῖσθαι ἐν μηδενὶ χαρίσματι ἀπεκδεχομένους τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), and here in chapters 12-14 he gives them specific instructions about how to use these gifts in the spirit of love.

*b. Immediate literary context: 12:1-12*

In verse 1 Paul expresses his intent to instruct the Corinthians περὶ τῶν πνευματικῶν. They were once under the influence of something that led them astray to mute idols, but now they are led to praise Jesus ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ (2-3). The passive ἤγεσθε, ἀπαγόμενοι has been variously translated as “you were led astray... however you were led” (ESV, NAS), “you were influenced and led astray” (NIV), “carried away... however you were led” (NKJ). The main idea is probably that before their conversion to Christ they were *under the influence of* some evil force that led them to the idols. Whether this force was their own sinful self, the attraction of the world, the devil, or all of these together, is not explained. Now, however, they are under the influence of the Holy Spirit who makes them confess that Jesus is Lord. The words ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ and ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ should be taken as a contrast to the evil influence, and is best translated as *by*, expressing agency, or *in*, expressing a sphere of influence where the Spirit`s power is effective. This determines the note of the next passage which is about the different kinds of working (6) and manifestations (7) of the Holy Spirit. We should understand these kinds of workings (διαιρέσεις ἐνεργημάτων) and manifestations (φανέρωσις) as some kind of *influence* that is contrasted with the evil influence of their pagan past.

Paul then explains them that the Spirit`s influence is different in every believer`s life, but the Spirit is the same (4). Different gifts (χαρίσματα) are manifested through different believers: word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healings, powers, prophecy, discernment, tongues (7-10). But the same Spirit works in every case, he gives to each one of them as he wills (11). Verses 4-6 have a Trinitarian frame: first the *Spirit* is at work (4), then the *Lord* (5), finally *God* is said to be the agent (6). Although only God is named as one “who works all things in everyone” (ὁ ἐνεργῶν τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν), the passage seems to indicate that the Spirit, the Lord, and God are all at work when a gift is manifested. It is possible that God is the *ultimate* agent of these ἐνεργημάτων in the believers, but the Lord and the Spirit – especially the Spirit – is also at least an *intermediate* agent. The emphasis is on the unity of the influence: it comes from the one Spirit, the one Lord, and the one God. God works, the Lord works, and the Spirit works, and they work in unison. Or, to put it another way, God the Father works through the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in complete unity of purpose. Whatever the Spirit and Christ do, God does. God acts through Christ and his personal Spirit.

In verse 7 we read of the manifestation of the Spirit (φανέρωσις τοῦ πνεύματος). I understand the genitive here as an objective genitive: the Spirit is manifested through his work. The manifestation of the Spirit is for the common good, because when he is at work through a believer, other believers are edified (cf. 14:12). The parallelism in verses 8-9 sheds more light on the Spirit`s agency in the passage, and on the meaning of the dative ἐν πνεύματι. So far we have seen that the ἐν πνεύματι of verses 2-3 denote the influence of the Spirit (either of his person or the sphere of his power), that his influence is the same as God`s and Christ`s, and that he manifests himself through his gifts. Verses 8 and 9 move us one step further in understanding the Spirit`s role. Paul says, “For to one is given *through the Spirit* the utterance of wisdom, and to

another the utterance of knowledge *according to the same Spirit*, to another faith *by the same Spirit*, to another gifts of healing *by the one Spirit*” (ESV). This is very instructive since Paul uses three different prepositions and cases to express the same agency of the Spirit:

ὧ μὲν γὰρ διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος δίδοται λόγος σοφίας,  
ἄλλω δὲ λόγος γνώσεως κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα,  
ἐτέρω πίστις ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι,  
ἄλλω δὲ χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ πνεύματι,

The first construct, διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, clearly expresses intermediate agency.<sup>17</sup> God *through the Holy Spirit* gives words of wisdom to some believers. The second, κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα, expresses a parallel idea: words of knowledge is given *in accordance with the same Spirit*. I take κατα + accusative here as a marker of norm of similarity or heterogeneity,<sup>18</sup> an equivalent of saying that the word of knowledge is given *as the Spirit wills* (cf. 11), or that God gives this gift in conformity to *the purpose of the Spirit*. The third, ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι, and the fourth, ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ πνεύματι, should be understood in light of the previous two: *by* or *through the Spirit*. As we shall see, ἐν + dative could have a locative sense (sphere) or an instrumental sense (means), but the parallelism of verses 8-9 makes it almost certain that here it is meant to be taken as expressing personal agency. This is also reinforced by verse 11: πάντα δὲ ταῦτα ἐνεργεῖ τὸ ἐν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα διαιροῦν ἰδίᾳ ἐκάστῳ καθὼς βούλεται. This verse leaves no room for any denial that the Spirit is an active agent in the chapter. He, the Spirit, *works* (ἐνεργεῖ) all these things (referring back either to the gifts in verse 10, or to the entire list of gifts in chapter 12), the Spirit *distributes* to each one (διαιροῦν ἰδίᾳ ἐκάστῳ), and he does so *as he wills* (καθὼς βούλεται).

We have established from verses 1-11 that the Spirit is the active agent of the immediate context of 12:13. His agency is expressed by the parallelism among the ἐν τῷ πνεύματι, the διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, and the κατὰ τὸ πνεῦμα constructions; the active verbs that makes the Spirit the subject of the actions (“works,” “distributes,” “wills”); and the initial guiding idea of the chapter that the Spirit has influence on believers – also expressed by ἐν τῷ πνεύματι.<sup>19</sup>

Verse 12 is a transition between the first eleven verses and verse 13. It emphasizes again the theme of unity: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” (ESV) In light of this emphasis, and the explanation of verse 27-28, the body (σῶμα) in verse 13 must be understood as the body of Christ, the church. The central issue is *unity* again. Though the manifestations and gifts of the Spirit are diverse, as there are many members in the body, the body is *one*. The Spirit is actively working, and his manifestations are distributed differently among believers, but his influence at a foundational level creates unity in the one body of Christ. Besides the Spirit’s agency, the other most important contextual clue for the interpretation of 1Cor 12:13 is therefore the theme of

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<sup>17</sup> According to Wallace, “Apart from naming the agent as the subject, there are two common ways to express agency in the NT: ὑπό + the genitive is used for *ultimate* agent; διὰ + the genitive is used for *intermediate* agent.” (Ibid, 164).

<sup>18</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (BAGD), 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., rev. & ed. by F. W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), 512..

<sup>19</sup> This is significant since verse 13 uses this same ἐν πνεύματι construct in relation to baptism. Though other considerations must also be taken into account, the contextual clues strongly favor the view that the dative expresses agency. I will discuss this below.

unity. The contextual evidence makes it clear that it is in this framework that Paul's words must be understood. When he emphasizes that we were *all* baptized (ἡμεῖς πάντες... ἐβαπτίσθημεν) into *one* body (εἰς ἓν σῶμα), by *one* Spirit (ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι), he demonstrates again and again that the issue of unity is central for him in this verse. When he adds that the "we all" includes both Jews and Greeks (εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες), both slaves and free people (εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι), the unity of the body is verbally established. With some hairsplitting the list could be expanded, but Paul probably meant it to be taken as exhaustive. Jew or Greek (the Jews were surrounded by a Hellenistic world), free or slave: all are one in the body of Christ. Unity is not harmed by the diversity of gifts or nationalities or social standing. This is clear enough. But Paul makes one more step, and adds: καὶ πάντες ἐν πνεῦμα ἐποτίσθημεν. Why does he make this extra step? Why does he add this phrase once his point was sufficiently made? The traditional solution is that he makes here a reference to the Lord's supper, the other sign beside baptism that expresses the unity of believers. However, in the last four decades this interpretation has been challenged and rejected by most commentators. In the next pages I would like to demonstrate that there are actually good exegetical reasons to see the traditional view as a plausible one.

### III. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER IN 1 CORINTHIANS 12:13?

#### *a. Baptism, the Lord's supper, and unity*

Baptism and the Lord's supper are two themes in 1 Corinthians that come up again and again. Besides 12:13, baptism is mentioned in 1:13-17 (six times in five verses), in 10:2 (crossing the red sea and the cloud as figures of baptism), and in 15:29 (referring to the strange custom of getting baptized on behalf of the dead). Except for the figurative language in 10:2, of which we shall say more, in all these cases there is nothing to indicate that the baptism would be other than water-baptism. Similarly, the Lord's supper is a recurring theme in the epistle. Paul writes about it in 10:14-22 (especially 16, 17, 21), in 11:17-34 (the well-known passage in the close proximity of chapter 12), and most likely 10:3-4 is also an allusion to the Lord's supper. It is striking how often Paul brings these ordinances into his ongoing discussion of various issues. Both baptism and the Lord's supper are demonstrably in his thoughts while he writes the letter. It is even more interesting for us that he uses the symbols of both baptism and the eucharist to substantiate his admonishments concerning unity.

When Paul addresses the issue of unity the first time in the letter, he connects it with baptism. In 1:10-17 the apostle writes,

<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. <sup>11</sup> For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. <sup>12</sup> What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." <sup>13</sup> Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? <sup>14</sup> I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, <sup>15</sup> so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. <sup>16</sup> (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) <sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. (ESV)

Paul asks the rhetorical question, "Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" The obvious answer is that they were baptized in the name of Christ, because baptism expresses the unity not the diversity of the church. Paul gives thanks to God that he did not baptize people (except a

few), and thus baptism could not become a symbol of party-spirit. Again, in 10:2 it is an essential element in Paul's reasoning that "all were baptized into Moses" (καὶ πάντες εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν ἐβαπτίσθησαν), just as in 12:13 "by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body (καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν). The word πάντες in both verses underline the fact that baptism is a symbol of unity. There are different gifts, but there is only one baptism.<sup>20</sup>

The Lord's supper is similarly mentioned in a context where the lack of unity is rebuked by Paul (11:17-22):

<sup>17</sup> But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. <sup>18</sup> For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, <sup>19</sup> for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. <sup>20</sup> When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. <sup>21</sup> For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. <sup>22</sup> What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not. (ESV)

There were divisions in the church, and a serious sign of this was the way the Corinthians partook in the eucharist. It was so unworthy of the nature of the Lord's supper, that their eating together could not even be considered to be the Lord's supper (οὐκ ἔστιν κυριακὸν δεῖπνον φαγεῖν). Why? Because the essential motive in the Lord's supper, the eating it *together*, was missing. Everyone went ahead with his own meal, despising the church of God. According to Paul, the eucharist is such an important symbol of Christian unity, that those in Corinth who did not discern the body of Christ (29)<sup>21</sup> during the eucharistic meal were judged by the Lord with illness and even death (30).

Only thirteen verses after this line of thought Paul writes, καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ πάντες ἐν πνεύματι ἐποτίσθημεν. Why would the Corinthian believers read this sentence in any other way than a reference to their baptism and the Lord's supper, the two symbols that they have just heard express the oneness of the body of Christ? The contextual clues drive us into that direction. But is it a plausible interpretation semantically and syntactically?

#### *b. Can ἐβαπτίσθημεν refer to water-baptism?*

One argument *against* seeing ἐβαπτίσθημεν as a reference to water-baptism is that the Greek construct ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν closely resembles the words of John the Baptist: αὐτὸς δὲ βαπτίσει ὑμᾶς ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.<sup>22</sup> According to this argument Paul must have been familiar with the words of John the Baptist. Luke, who reported on baptisms with the Spirit, was after all his companion. Why would Paul use the same words if not because he was thinking of the same reality? As John had predicted it, Jesus baptized us all with the Holy Spirit. The sentence thus refers to this spiritual event and not to water-baptism. I can see the force of this argument, but I do not find it very convincing. First, similar phrases do not

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Eph 4:5

<sup>21</sup> I take the word σῶμα here to refer to the church, not the bread of the Lord's supper, but my general argument would not be affected even if the word referred to the bread.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Stott, 40. The fact that in 1Cor 12:13 ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι precedes the verb, and both the subject and a purpose clause is in between them, is usually overlooked or seen as an insignificant difference.

necessarily denote the same reality. All the six other times when “baptism with the Holy Spirit” appears, we are either in a Gospel narrative (the same utterance is reported four times), or in Acts where again the same expression is referred to at the time of its fulfillments. Paul’s expression, however, is in a very different context, and it should rather be interpreted in the light of the Pauline corpus, and especially in the light of the context of 1 Corinthians, and not the narrative context of the Gospels and Acts. Second, this would be the only time when Paul uses the word βαπτίζω in a sense other than water-baptism. Given the fact that he had talked about baptism in the letter, and that he talked about it especially in the context of the unity of the body of Christ, it would be strange if he gave the word a different meaning here without any warning. The burden of proof is on those who want to see in this verse anything other than water-baptism. A more serious argument against the interpretation that water-baptism is in view here is the grammatical argument which sees the dative of ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι as more naturally a locative of sphere or an instrumental of means than a dative of agency.<sup>23</sup> We will come back to this argument when we discuss whether ἐν + dative can express agency, and whether in this verse that is the case or not.

*c. Can ἐποτίσθημεν refer to the Lord’s supper?*

What about the Lord’s supper? Could καὶ πάντες ἐν πνεύμα ἐποτίσθημεν refer to the cup of the eucharist? Again, we have demonstrated that contextually it is very plausible. The proximity of the passage that discusses the Corinthians’ deficient practice of the eucharist, and the similar theme (unity of the body of Christ) gives this interpretation a natural flavor. But there are strong arguments against it. Some commentators, Beasley-Murray and Schnackenburg among them, who see water-baptism in the first half of the verse, but deny that the second half would refer to the eucharist. This fact demonstrates that our interpretation of the second half does not automatically affect our interpretation of the first half. What are the major problems with the view that ἐποτίσθημεν is about the Lord’s supper?

The first argument against it is that whereas the text explicitly speaks about baptism, its language does not make any explicit reference to the eucharist. Many scholars<sup>24</sup> who see water-baptism in the first part of the sentence, see a reference to baptism here as well. Others see both parts as referring to the same spiritual event: being immersed into and drenched by the Spirit. Though other considerations might lead us into one of these directions, I do not see a major problem with the lack of explicit language itself. In 1 Corinthians it is Paul’s general practice to allude to the Lord’s supper with metaphorical terms. In 10:16 he talks about the “cup of blessing” (Τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας), in 10:21 he first refers to the Lord’s supper as “drinking the cup of the Lord” (ποτήριον κυρίου πίνειν), and then as partaking in the table of the Lord (τραπέζης κυρίου μετέχειν). In this same letter in 6:11 Paul most likely speaks of baptism in metaphorical terms, too, when he says that the Corinthians “were washed” by the Spirit of God (ἀπελούσασθε... ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν). To Fee’s objection, that “Nowhere is such a metaphor [the metaphor of drinking] used for the Table,” we can answer that the metaphor of the Table is used only once, too (in 10:21)!

The second objection against the view that ἐποτίσθημεν alludes to the Lord’s supper is that the two parts of the sentence form a semitic parallelism, “where both clauses make

<sup>23</sup> “Nowhere else does this dative with ‘baptism’ imply agency (i.e. that the Spirit does the baptizing), but it always refers to the element ‘in which’ one is baptized.” (Fee, 606)

<sup>24</sup> Schnackenburg lists Bachmann, Robertson-Plummer, J. Weiss, Lietzmann, and among Catholics Ad. Maier and Allo (Schnackenburg, 83).



essentially the same point.”<sup>25</sup> If the first phrase refers to water-baptism, then this second phrase is also a metaphorical way of talking about immersion. If however the first part speaks of a spiritual experience, rather than a literal rite,<sup>26</sup> then the second part is also a spiritual event (e.g. being filled with the Spirit at conversion). But the parallelism can only be partial, since the Spirit in the first part is an agent, a means or an element (ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι), whereas in the second part a direct object (ἐν πνεύμα). It is more likely that in the second part Paul is adding one more argument to the explanatory sentence (cf. γὰρ conjunction) for the unity of the body of Christ.

For some the most powerful argument against the view presented here is that ἐποτίσθημεν is in the aorist tense, and the aorist indicates a single action. The Lord’s supper is however a repeated rite in the life of the church, not a single action, therefore ἐποτίσθημεν would be a very odd reference to the eucharist. Even though this argument is forwarded by no less exegetes than Fee,<sup>27</sup> Thiselton,<sup>28</sup> Schnackenburg,<sup>29</sup> and Beasley-Murray,<sup>30</sup> with all respect and humility I have to disagree. In his *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Daniel Wallace mentions two errors to avoid in treating the aorist: saying too little or saying too much.

First, some have *said too little* by assuming that nothing more than the unaffected meaning can ever be seen when the aorist is used. This view fails to recognize that the aorist tense (like other tenses) does not exist in a vacuum. Categories of usage are legitimate because the tenses combine with other linguistic features to form various fields of meaning. Second, many NT students see a particular category of usage (*Aktionsart*) as underlying the entire tense usage (aspect). This is the error of *saying too much*. Statements such as “the aorist means once-for-all action” are of this sort. It is true that the aorist may, under certain circumstances, describe an event that is, in reality, momentary. But we run into danger when we say that this is the aorist’s unaffected meaning, for then we force it on the text in an artificial way. We then tend to ignore such aorists that disprove our view (and they can be found in every chapter of the NT) and proclaim loudly the “once-for-all” aorists when they suit us.<sup>31</sup>

According to Wallace, it is helpful to think of the aorist as “taking a snapshot of the action.” He uses the following analogy:

Suppose I were to take a snapshot of a student studying for a mid-term exam in intermediate Greek. Below the picture I put the caption, “Horatio Glutchstomach *studied* for the mid-term.” From the snapshot and the caption all that one would be able to state *positively* is that Horatio Glutchstomach studied for the mid-term. Now in the picture you notice that Horatio has his Greek text opened before him. From this, you cannot say, “Because the picture is a snapshot rather than a movie, I know that Horatio Glutchstomach only had his Greek text opened for a split-second”! This might be true, but the snapshot does not tell you this. All you really know is that the student had his Greek text open. An event happened. From the picture you cannot tell for *how long* he had his text open. You cannot tell whether he studied for four hours straight (durative), or for eight hours, taking a ten minute break every 20 minutes (iterative). You cannot tell whether he studied successfully so as to pass the test, or whether he studied unsuccessfully. The snapshot does not tell you any of this. The snapshot by itself cannot tell if the action was momentary, “once-for-all”,

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<sup>25</sup> Fee, 605.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> “[T]he tense of the verb is aorist, indicating that a single action is in view.” (Fee, 604)

<sup>28</sup> “Even if the aorist is understood to be gnomic rather than alluding to single past event, a ‘timeless’ aorist remains ravingly inappropriate for repeating the memorial of the Lord’s Supper, which is not ‘timeless,’ but reenacts a temporal recital of a temporal event.” (Thiselton, 1001)

<sup>29</sup> “the aorist... conjures in the mind a definite act, but not a repeated reception, such as is presupposed in the Supper.” (Schnackenburg, 84)

<sup>30</sup> “[T]he aorist tense points to a single occasion of receiving the Spirit, not to a habitual reception.” (Beasley-Murray, 170) Beasley-Murray demonstrably relies on Schnackenburg.

<sup>31</sup> Wallace, 557.

repeated, at regularly recurring intervals, or over a long period of time. It is obvious from this crude illustration that it would be silly to say that since I took a snapshot of Horatio studying, rather than a movie, he *must* have studied only for a very short time!<sup>32</sup>

In light of this analogy, there is nothing in the use of the aorist that would be uncongenial to the view that it refers to the Lord's supper. In fact, the use of aorist makes a lot of sense when we look at the parallel passage of 1Cor 10:1-4. The emphasis is not on the repetition of the rite, but on the fact that we all partook in it. The aorist, that leaves the time and nature of the action more or less unmarked, is perfectly suitable for the deliberate ambiguity that Paul wants to convey if he is talking about the Lord's supper.

Even less difficult is to answer the criticism that Paul only alludes to the cup of the eucharist, and that there is no mention of bread in the verse.<sup>33</sup> Calvin's response is satisfactory to me: "it is a common thing in Scripture to speak of the sacraments by synecdoche."<sup>34</sup> Paul earlier alluded to the eucharist as "the cup of the Lord," and then as "the table of the Lord," why could he not refer to it again by a synecdoche?

Finally, some think that "drinking the Holy Spirit" as a metaphor of the Lord's supper would be really awkward. Thiselton quotes Godet, who asserts, "the expression to drink the Holy Spirit in the Supper is utterly foreign to the language of the Scripture."<sup>35</sup> But is it really so? Why is it more unusual to say that "we are made to drink the Spirit" than the images of "eating the body of Jesus" and "drinking his blood"? The image of drinking is closely associated with the idea of a cup. The cup *which* we drink (10:21; 11:25, 26, 27) is itself a synecdoche for the Lord's supper, and a metaphor of the new covenant (11:25) and fellowship with Christ's blood (10:16). Paul's discourse on the Lord's supper is highly metaphorical, just like the teaching of Jesus was. It is not surprising if he further develops the image of the cup. But what about drinking the Spirit? Is it really an unscriptural image? True, it is an unusual way of talking about the Lord's supper, but the expression is not completely unprecedented. In LXX Isaiah 29:10 says, ὅτι πεπότικεν ὑμᾶς κύριος πνεύματι καταλύξεως. The idea and the words are the same, but it is in the active voice. According to Liddel-Scott, ποτίζω can mean 1. give to drink, 2. water, irrigate.<sup>36</sup> The context makes it obvious that in Isa 29:10 the first meaning is in view, since verse 9 says, "Astonish yourselves and be astonished; blind yourselves and be blind! Be drunk, but not with wine; stagger, but not with strong drink! (ESV)" The image of irrigation is foreign to the context, but giving to drink perfectly fits. Although there is no other connection between the message of Isa 29:10 and 1Cor 12:13, the former is at least a precedent that God can make people drink the Spirit. BAGD lists two main senses for ποτίζω, one in the range of "make it possible for someone or something to drink, the other "to provide a drink for oneself, drink."<sup>37</sup> Within the first range of meanings the lexicon distinguishes a) of persons *give to drink*, b) of animals *water*, and c) of plants *water*. BAGD mentions that "G. Cuming interprets 1Cor 12:13 of 'watering' with the Spirit through baptismal affusion." In an *NTS* journal article E. R. Rogers refutes Cuming's thesis. He examines the Hebrew word קָדַח, the equivalent of the LXX ποτίζω in the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 554-5.

<sup>33</sup> Schnackenburg for example says, "the representation of the eucharist only by the picture of drinking is, to say the least, unusual." (Schnackenburg, 84)

<sup>34</sup> Calvin, 407.

<sup>35</sup> Thiselton, 1001.

<sup>36</sup> Henry George Liddel and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1996. Low-Nida (5295) gives the same basic meanings.

<sup>37</sup> BAGD, 857.

MT, and concludes that “Nowhere in the Old Testament does *nāsak* have the idea of flooding or saturating.”<sup>38</sup> The natural meaning both in Isa 29:10 (at least in LXX) and in 1Cor 12:13 is the idea of *making to drink with a spirit/the Spirit*. If this language is applied to the Lord’s supper, it is not less metaphorical than drinking Jesus’ blood and eating Jesus’ body. That this is in harmony with some early Christian views is shown by the fact that one of the textual variants, attested by Clement of Alexandria, has πόμα (drink) in the place of the much better attested variant that says πνεῦμα.<sup>39</sup>

One question nevertheless still remains concerning this picture: in what way are we *drinking the Spirit*? The parallel passage of 1Cor 10:1-4 might help us give an adequate answer.

#### *d. Baptism and the Lord’s supper in 1 Corinthians 10:1-4*

The above mentioned textual variant that substitutes πνεῦμα with πόμα (drink) shows us that some of the early Christians probably made a connection between 10:1-4 and 12:13. Not counting this textual variant, the only time πόμα appears in the NT is in 1Cor 10:4. It is possible that the scribe who corrected the original text either wanted to make this connection more explicit, or saw such a clear link between the two passages that he made an unconscious copying mistake. Given the proximity of the two passages, such a memory-slip is psychologically possible, especially in light of the fact that Paul also keeps coming back to the same concepts. Let us take a look at 10:1-4:

For I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea,<sup>2</sup> and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,<sup>3</sup> and all ate the same spiritual food,<sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. (ESV)

Οὐ θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν πάντες ὑπὸ τὴν νεφέλην ἦσαν καὶ πάντες διὰ τῆς θαλάσσης διήλθον<sup>2</sup> καὶ πάντες εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν ἐβαπτίσθησαν ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ καὶ ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ<sup>3</sup> καὶ πάντες τὸ αὐτὸ πνευματικὸν βρῶμα ἔφαγον<sup>4</sup> καὶ πάντες τὸ αὐτὸ πνευματικὸν ἔπιον πόμα· ἔπινον γὰρ ἐκ πνευματικῆς ἀκολουθούσης πέτρας, ἡ πέτρα δὲ ἦν ὁ Χριστός.

I agree with James Dunn when he says, “The key to understanding this passage is to realize that Paul is using the events of the Exodus and the wilderness wanderings as an allegory of *Christian* experience.”<sup>40</sup> His point is not to teach that even the OT people of God had sacraments. The point is to use their experience as a figure of the Christian life (ταῦτα δὲ τύποι ἡμῶν ἐγενήθησαν) (6). All of them were under the cloud, all of them passed through the red sea, and this is like Christian baptism, except that they were “baptized” into Moses.<sup>41</sup> After their “baptism” they all ate the same spiritual food, and they all drank the same spiritual drink, just as

<sup>38</sup> E. R. Rogers, “ἘΠΙΟΤΙΣΘΗΜΕΝ Again” in NTS Vol. 29 (1983) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 139-142. Contrary to Schnackenburg, who wants to see the slightly different meaning of the Hebrew word (“pour out”) as a guide to the sense of ἐποτίσθημεν, which then means “deluged, drenched, permeated with the πνεῦμα.” (Schnackenburg, 85)

<sup>39</sup> Kurt and Barbara Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo Martini, Bruce Metzger, Allen Wikgren, eds., *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27<sup>th</sup> ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001).

<sup>40</sup> Dunn, 125. Dunn calls this a “sort of Christian ‘midrash’,” in which “OT events and sayings are viewed from the standpoint and in the light of the revelation brought and the redemption effected by Christ.”

<sup>41</sup> We will discuss the meaning of εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν below.

we ate the spiritual food and drank the spiritual drink of the Lord's supper. And as they received the drink from the rock, so do we receive drink miraculously from our Rock, Jesus Christ, for that is what the rock in the desert symbolizes. It is hard to miss the sacramental symbolism, even the order is correct (first baptism, then eucharist). At this point I have to part ways with Dunn who says, "the immediate reference of the allegory is not to the elements of the Lord's Supper, for then the equation would have been drawn between the βρώμα and the πόμα on the one hand, and the body and blood on the other. But in v. 4 Christ is equated not with the spiritual food (cf. 12:12f), rather with the *source* of the spiritual drink."<sup>42</sup> But Dunn fails to understand the imagery. To expect total consistency from parabolic images is way too much to ask. (After all, Jesus can be both pastor and door in the same parable.) But the image is much more consistent than Dunn wants us to think. The relationship between "the rock" and "the spiritual drink" is the same as the relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit. We are made to drink the Spirit, but who makes us drink him if not Christ? The scribe who placed πόμα in the place of πνεῦμα in 12:13 was on the right track – at least as an exegete.

Paul's point in chapter 10 is to emphasize that though all (πάντες) were "baptized" into Moses, and all ate spiritual food and drank spiritual drink, not all entered the promised land. The reason is idolatry (7), sexual immorality (8) and grumbling (10). The same danger is threatening the Corinthian believers: "Now these things happened to them *as an example*, but they were written down *for our instruction*, on whom the end of the ages has come." (11, ESV) In verse 14 Paul especially urges them to flee from idolatry, and then he explains how this whole teaching applies to them. "I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." (15-17, ESV) The same way the Jews could not eat the spiritual food of the manna and drink the spiritual drink of the rock, and then commit idolatry, the Corinthians cannot participate in the Lord's supper and then participate in idolatrous practices, too. The positive counterpart, and the meaning of the figure of 3-4, is clearly the Lord's supper that all believers eat and drink! If Paul only had a spiritual meaning in mind when he used the words "spiritual food" and "spiritual drink," referring to some sort of fellowship with Christ, why does he make the Lord's supper the focal point of his application of the figure?

We can see some interesting parallels between 10:1-4 and 12:13. In 10:1-4 Paul speaks about the universal Christian experience – prefigured by the Israelites' experience during and after the Exodus – in the order of baptism and eucharist. In 12:13 Paul again speaks about the fact that all Christians have been baptized and all Christians were made to drink the Spirit. The same order is present in both passages. Both passages emphasize that all (πάντες) went through the same experience. This should not surprise us, seeing the close thematic link between baptism, eucharist, and unity in the church. It is true that unity here is emphasized for a different reason than in 12:13, but it is nevertheless true that here as well as in 12:13 the three things (unity, baptism, Lord's supper) are together. There is even a structural similarity between 10:2 and 12:13:

10:2 καὶ πάντες εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν ἐβαπτίσθησαν ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ καὶ ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ  
 12:13 καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν

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<sup>42</sup> Dunn, 125.

To highlight the similarities, here are the two sentences syntactically rearranged:

10:2 καὶ πάντες εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν ἐβαπτίσθησαν ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ καὶ ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ  
12:13 καὶ πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν ἐν ἓνι πνεύματι

This rearrangement shows the structural similarities, but leaves out a potentially significant dissimilarity: that in 12:13 ἐν ἓνι πνεύματι is before and not after the verb, and is divided from the verb by the subject (ἡμεῖς πάντες) and the purpose clause (εἰς ἓν σῶμα). This should caution us about a too hasty identification of the Spirit's role as an *element* just like that of the cloud and the sea in 10:2. A good reason for putting ἐν ἓνι πνεύματι in a different syntactical position than cloud or sea is that the Spirit is not a means or element of baptism, but its agent. Another occasion in 1 Corinthians when ἐν πνεύματι is used, 6:11 (probably in a context that alludes to baptism), the dative most likely signifies agency, too. Despite this dissimilarity, we must not fail to see, however, that the conceptual and syntactical parallels between the two verses are striking.

When we see the links between the two passages, some light is shed on why Paul chose to use the image of “drinking the Spirit” in 12:13. In 10:3-4 the apostle emphasizes the *spiritual* nature of the Lord's supper:

καὶ πάντες τὸ αὐτὸ πνευματικὸν βρῶμα ἔφαγον  
καὶ πάντες τὸ αὐτὸ πνευματικὸν ἔπιον πόμα·  
ἔπινον γὰρ ἐκ πνευματικῆς ἀκολουθούσης πέτρας  
ἡ πέτρα δὲ ἦν ὁ Χριστός.

The Lord's supper, of which the Israelites' experience of the (physical) manna and the (physical) water of the rock were figures, is a *spiritual* experience for the Christians. It is spiritual food (πνευματικὸν βρῶμα) that they eat, and spiritual drink (πνευματικὸν πόμα) that they drink, and all this comes from a spiritual source: Christ himself. Since the word “spiritual” is the adjectival expression of the presence or influence of the Holy Spirit,<sup>43</sup> it is only one small step from here to actually say that believers “drink the Spirit.” πνευματικὸν ἔπιον πόμα and πνεῦμα ἐποτίσθημεν is essentially the same thing. The two concepts are so close to each other that the exchange of πνεῦμα to πόμα in the textual variant could only be more logical if the scribe had added the adjective πνευματικὸν as well. Calvin's helpful summary is still very instructive:

The meaning, therefore, will be this – that participation in the cup has an eye to this – that we drink, all of us, of the same cup. For in that ordinance we drink of the life-giving blood of Christ, that we may have life in common with him – which we truly have, when he lives in us by his Spirit. He teaches, therefore, that believers, so soon as they are initiated by the baptism of Christ, are already imbued with a desire of cultivating mutual unity, and then afterwards, when they receive the sacred Supper, they are again conducted by degrees to the same unity, as they are all refreshed at the same time with the same drink.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> According to BAGD the basic meaning of πνευματικός, ἡ, ὄν is “pertaining to the spirit, spiritual.” In 1Cor 10:3 its specific meaning is “caused by or filled with the (divine) Spirit, pertaining or corresponding to the (divine) Spirit.” (BAGD, 837) Low-Nida (12.21) agrees: “πνευματικός, ἡ, ὄν; πνευματικῶς: (derivatives of πνεῦμα 'Spirit,' 12.18) pertaining to being derived from or being about the Spirit - 'spiritual, from the Spirit' (in reference to such matters as gifts, benefits, teachings, blessings, and religious songs).” Varga Zsigmond understands πνευματικός as *from the Spirit* (Varga, *Újszövetségi görög-magyar szótár*, Budapest: Kálvin Kiadó, 1996, 796). Both BAGD and Varga thinks that πνευματικὸν βρῶμα and πνευματικὸν πόμα in 1Cor 10:3-4 refer to the Lord's supper.

<sup>44</sup> Calvin, 407.

e. Is ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι expressing agency?

Although I have frequently alluded to it, I kept postponing the discussion of a problem that prevents many commentators to see water-baptism in the text. What is the exact meaning of ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι? The ἐν + dative construction can have different meanings. It can be taken as a locative of sphere (in), as an instrumental of means (by, with), or as an instrumental of personal agency (by, through). Personal agency can be either ultimate or intermediate. In the latter case the person is a “means” of the ultimate agent, an agent who acts on behalf of the other.<sup>45</sup> When the dative refers to an intermediate agent, the construct is equivalent to the διὰ + the genitive construct.<sup>46</sup> What is the relevance of this question to our study? If the Spirit is the sphere (element) or the means of the baptism that is in 1Cor 12:13, than what we are baptized with/in is not water but the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist contrasted baptism with/in water (ἐν ὕδατι) with baptism in/with the Holy Spirit (ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ). A close link between John’s prophecy and 1Cor 12:13 makes the water-baptism interpretation basically untenable.<sup>47</sup>

As Murray demonstrates,<sup>48</sup> the traditional Protestant view rarely linked 1Cor 12:13 with the words of John the Baptist in order to make baptism with the Spirit a once-for-all experience at regeneration. Traditionally it was held that in 1Cor 12:13 the Spirit is the agent, in the Gospels and Acts Jesus baptizes us with the Spirit. In his commentary on 1Cor 12:13 Calvin emphasized the personal agency of the Holy Spirit. In his opinion the verse was about the sacrament of baptism, and the nature of baptism is to connect us to Christ’s body, the church. “Lest any one, however, should imagine, that this is effected by the outward symbol, he [the apostle] adds that it is the work of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>49</sup> This was more or less the view of generations of exegetes after him.<sup>50</sup> The tide turned only when evangelical theologians began to give answers to the problematic pneumatology of the charismatic movement.<sup>51</sup> The idea of *agency* slowly went out of favor, and the idea of *sphere* and *means* gained momentum. The baptism of 1Cor 12:13 was identified as the fulfillment of John the Baptist’s prophecy, in which the Holy Spirit is *in* or *with* which Jesus baptizes us at our conversion. D. A. Carson’s words are typical of the new trend:

In the other six instances, related to the prophecy of John the Baptist, Christ as the agent does the baptizing, and the Holy Spirit is the medium or sphere *in* which we are baptized. Moreover whenever the verb *baptize* is used in the New Testament, it is the *medium* of the baptism – water, fire, cloud, and so forth – that is expressed using this preposition ἐν (en), not the *agent*.<sup>52</sup>

The new trend is also manifested in the unwillingness of grammarians to see dative of agency in many other Scripture references. Wallace, for example, calls the dative of agency as “a rare or

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<sup>45</sup> Wallace, 373.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Not everyone of the older generations of commentators recognized this problem. Many talked about the Holy Spirit as a sphere or means while still talking about water-baptism.

<sup>48</sup> Murray, *Pentecost – Today?*

<sup>49</sup> Calvin, 406.

<sup>50</sup> J. W. Dale for example presented an extensive argument for the prevalence of the dative of agency in classical Greek, a study that probably deserves more attention than it receives today. (James W. Dale, *The Usage of ΒΑΠΤΙΖΩ and the Nature of Johannic Baptism As Exhibited in the Holy Scriptures*, Philadelphia: William Rutter and Co., 1898, 206-218.)

<sup>51</sup> See footnotes 1 and 2.

<sup>52</sup> Carson, 47.

nonexistent category.”<sup>53</sup> The reason why he says this is because he reinterprets the category of agency in a way that makes most (or all) intermediate agent a means. Even the Holy Spirit becomes a *means* for him, though he admits that if the Spirit was understood to be a person by early Christians (an assertion he questions),<sup>54</sup> he was then a *personal* means (but a means nevertheless). Wallace makes four criteria for the dative to express agency:

- (a) *Lexical*: the dative must be personal. (b) *Contextual*: the person specified by the dative noun is portrayed as exercising volition. (c) *Grammatical*: the only clear texts involve a perfect passive verb, as in the classical idiom. (d) *Linguistic*: a good *rule of thumb* for distinguishing between agent and means is simply this: the agent of a passive verb can become the subject of an active verb, while the means normally cannot.<sup>55</sup>

These criteria are almost perfectly fulfilled by ἐν πνεύματι in 1Cor 12:13. 1) The Spirit is personal. 2) The immediate literary context shows that the Spirit exercises volition (even the word “wills” is used in verse 11). 4) The agent of the passive word can become the subject of an active word. Only 3) is slightly problematic, since 1Cor 12:13 does not use a perfect. But it is only problematic if we accept that the “clear texts” all involve a perfect passive, or that only clear cases should be taken into account. There are many examples in which there is some ambiguity as to agency or instrumentality (or location) is in view, but there are good reasons to take them as expressing some sort of agency or intermediate agency.<sup>56</sup> Along Wallace’s criteria, there is no compelling reason therefore to deny agency from the Spirit in 1Cor 12:13.

When Wallace discusses this verse, he nevertheless argues that it is very unlikely that ἐν πνεύματι would express agency. Beside the lack of the perfect tense, an argument I find unconvincing, Wallace has two main arguments against agency. First, he insists that intermediate agency is generally expressed in NT Greek by διὰ + the genitive, while ultimate agency is expressed by ὑπό + the genitive, ἐν + dative is more naturally taken as instrument or sphere.<sup>57</sup> Second, Wallace sees a theological problem with identifying the Spirit as the agent of baptism:

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<sup>53</sup> Wallace, 373. Also, on page 163 he says: “This is an *extremely rare* category in the NT, as well as in ancient Greek in general.” I wonder if Wallace had read Dale’s study on the frequency of the dative of agency in classical Greek literature.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 166. Wallace himself thinks that the Holy Spirit is a person, but he doubts that the early Christians understood it from the beginning.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 164.

<sup>56</sup> E.g. Mt 12:28 (Εἰ δὲ ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ ἐγὼ ἐκβάλλω τὰ δαιμόνια); Mt 22:43 (πῶς οὖν Δαυὶδ ἐν πνεύματι καλεῖ αὐτὸν κύριον λέγων); Mk 1:23 (ἄνθρωπος ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτω); Mk 5:2 (ἄνθρωπος ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτω); Mk 12:36 (Δαυὶδ εἶπεν ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ); Lk 2:27 (καὶ ἦλθεν ἐν τῷ πνεύματι εἰς τὸ ἱερόν); Lk 4:1 (Ἰησοῦς δὲ πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου ὑπέστρεψεν ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰορδάνου καὶ ἦγετο ἐν τῷ πνεύματι ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ); Acts 20:22 (καὶ νῦν ἰδοὺ δεδεμένος ἐγὼ τῷ πνεύματι πορεύομαι εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ); Rom 2:29 (περιτομὴ καρδίας ἐν πνεύματι οὐ γράμματι); 8:14 (ὅσοι γὰρ πνεύματι θεοῦ ἄγονται); 15:16 (ἡγιασμένη ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ); 1Cor 6:11 (καὶ ταῦτά τινες ἦτε· ἀλλὰ ἀπελούσασθε, ἀλλὰ ἡγιασθητε, ἀλλὰ ἐδικαιώθητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν); 1Cor 12:3 (διὸ γνωρίζω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ λαλῶν λέγει· Ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς, καὶ οὐδεὶς δύναται εἰπεῖν· Κύριος Ἰησοῦς, εἰ μὴ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.); Gal 5:18 (εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε, οὐκ ἐστὲ ὑπὸ νόμον.); Eph 2:22 (ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς συνοικοδομεῖσθε εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πνεύματι); 1Tim 3:16 (ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι); 1Pt 1:12 (ἃ νῦν ἀνηγγέλη ὑμῖν διὰ τῶν εὐαγγελισαμένων ὑμᾶς [ἐν] πνεύματι ἁγίῳ). In some of these examples the Spirit (or spirit) can be understood as means or sphere, but in most cases the natural reading is either ultimate or intermediate agency.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

Furthermore, if the Holy Spirit is the agent in this text, there is a theological problem: When is the prophecy of Mark 1:8 fulfilled? When would *Christ* baptize with the Holy Spirit? Because of the grammatical improbability of πνεύματι expressing agent in 1 Cor 12:13, it is better to see it as means *and* as the fulfillment of Mark 1:8. Thus, Christ is the unnamed agent. This also renders highly improbable one popular interpretation, viz., that there are *two* Spirit baptisms in the NT, one at salvation and one later.<sup>58</sup>

Are these arguments persuasive? I am not convinced by them. I have demonstrated in the discussion of the immediate literary context of 1Cor 12:13 that the parallelism between ἐν τῷ πνεύματι and διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, and the additional parallel with κατὰ τὸ πνεῦμα, proves that ἐν τῷ πνεύματι is meant to be understood as an immediate agent in the context. Paul expresses the same idea by different grammatical means. διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος is the conceptual frame in which ἐν τῷ πνεύματι must be understood. As far as the second argument is concerned, it is my impression that it serves rather like a last resort for Wallace. And the argument will not stand. βαπτίζω in 1 Corinthians and in the Pauline corpus invariably refers to water-baptism, why would it be otherwise in 1Cor 12:13? And we of course see the fulfillment(s) of Mark 1:8 in Acts 2 and 10-11, and maybe also in other cases where people were filled with the Holy Spirit. It is not necessary to find the fulfillment of the promise in 1Cor 12:13, as well. I understand why it would be really nice if 1Cor 12:13 talked about the same issue as Mark 1:8. It would destroy the two-stage Pentecostal theology that divides the people of God into two classes! If 1Cor 12:13 says that *all* Christians received the blessing that John the Baptist had promised, then there is no place anymore for a second-blessing theology. But I wonder if an “anti-charismatic” bias really makes us better exegetes. I would rather let that treasured argument go and allow the text to tell me what it wants.

But can the Spirit be the agent of baptism? It seems to be a rather awkward concept. Baptism is done by men everywhere in the New Testament, it is not a supernatural event, at least not in that regard. Obviously the Holy Spirit cannot be the agent of baptism, if by agency we mean *direct* agent. But he can be an *indirect* agent, one under whose influence the baptism happens. Baptism is a symbol of Christian initiation. When one gets baptized it is an expression of his conversion to Christ. When the Spirit is called the agent of baptism, he can be seen as the agent of everything that led up to the physical act. When we discussed the literary context of 1Cor 12:13, we noted that ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ and ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ in 12:3 should be taken as a contrast to the evil influence of the Corinthians` past, and is best translated as *by*, expressing agency, or *in*, expressing a sphere of influence where the Spirit`s power is effective. At this point I argue that it should be taken as an agent, but in the sense of an *influence*, almost as a sphere. This might explain why Paul expressed agency here with the ἐν + dative and not the διὰ + genitive. He wanted to convey the slight nuance that the Spirit`s agency is to be understood as an influence rather than a direct action. The Holy Spirit is *behind* our baptism, as he is behind the spiritual gifts. He *manifests* himself through the variety of gifts, but his even more important manifestation is our baptism, since by one Spirit we were all baptized into the body of Christ!

f. What does εἰς ἐν σῶμα mean?

Finally, the only issue that remained is what εἰς ἐν σῶμα means in 1Cor 12:13. Most English translations put it as “into one body,” a choice that leaves the meaning of the phrase slightly ambiguous. There has been a lengthy and probably unfruitful debate on whether baptism *brings*

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 374. In the footnote Wallace adds, “Typically associated with Pentecostal theology.”



*about* the body (the context and especially verse 27 make it clear that the body is the church), or it only incorporates believers into the *already existing* formation.<sup>59</sup> The preposition itself does not answer the question. The constructions with the preposition εἰς can be spatial (into, towards, in), temporal (for, throughout), purpose (for, in order to, to), result (so that, with the result that), reference/respect (with respect to, with reference to), advantage (for), disadvantage (against), in the place of ἐν (with its various nuances).<sup>60</sup> The phrase βαπτίζω + εἰς appears quite frequently in the NT and can be grouped in three categories:

1. Baptism as a form of identification with someone or something. a. Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19 βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος). b. Lord Jesus (Acts 8:16 βεβαπτισμένοι ὑπῆρχον εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ; 19:5 ἐβαπτίσθησαν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ). c. Christ Jesus (Rom 6:3 ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν). d. His death (Rom 6:3 εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν). e. Not Paul (1Cor 1:13 ἢ εἰς τὸ ὄνομα Παύλου ἐβαπτίσθητε; 15 μή τις εἶπη ὅτι εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα ἐβαπτίσθητε). f. Moses (1Cor 10:2 εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν ἐβαπτίσθησαν). g. Christ (Gal 3:27 εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε).

2. Baptism with reference to something. a. Repentance (Mt 3:11 βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι εἰς μετάνοιαν). b. Forgiveness (Mk 1:4 βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν; Acts 2:38 βαπτισθήτω ἕκαστος ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν). c. With reference to what? (Acts 19:3 εἰς τί οὖν ἐβαπτίσθητε). d. John's baptism (Acts 19:3 οἱ δὲ εἶπαν· εἰς τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα).<sup>61</sup>

3. The element in which the baptism takes place. There is only one example for this: Mk 1:9 ἐβαπτίσθη εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην ὑπὸ Ἰωάννου.

Which meaning is most likely in 1Cor 12:13? It is probably wise to understand it in light of other usage in 1 Corinthians. In the letter (and in Paul's epistles) we can only find examples for the first kind of use, that which sees βαπτίζω + εἰς as a form of identification with someone or something. When we are baptized by the Spirit εἰς ἐν σῶμα, the most natural reading therefore is to see that as a form of identification with the body of Christ, the church. Since the body is Christ's body (12:12), baptism identifies us both with Christ and his body, the church.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In this study I tried to prove that the traditional view which saw water-baptism and the Lord's supper in 1Cor 12:13 is not only a possible but in fact the most plausible interpretation. We learn from the larger literary context that unity is a major theme of the letter and the discussion of spiritual gifts is permeated by this theme, too. From the study of the immediate context I concluded that the Spirit was an active personal agent in Paul's line of thought, and thus in 12:13 that is the natural reading, too. Then I demonstrated that baptism and the Lord's supper are important topics of the letter, and that the apostle kept coming back to these two topics when dealing with the question of unity. I showed that the grouping together of baptism, drinking, and unity in 1Cor 12:13 is very much consistent with the reasoning of the entire epistle. I looked at the arguments against the view that the baptism of 12:13 is water-baptism, and subsequently the

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<sup>59</sup> Carson, 44.

<sup>60</sup> Wallace, 369.

<sup>61</sup> It is possible that in Acts 19:3 εἰς τί οὖν ἐβαπτίσθητε is more general, but εἰς τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα is an expression of identification, like to examples in the first group.

view that the drinking of the second part of the verse is the Lord's supper, and concluded that the arguments that see those ordinances in the verse are stronger than the arguments against the presence of these ideas in the verse. I argued that 10:1-4 and 1Cor 12:13 are parallel passages that talk about baptism and the Lord's supper as unifying themes in the Christians' lives. I finally demonstrated that there is no compelling reason to question the Spirit's agency, and that the baptism in question is a form of identification with the body of Christ.

A close exegesis of 1Cor 12:13 seems therefore to refute the common evangelical assumption that this verse should regulate the meaning of baptism with the Spirit in every other context. It is much more likely that the two themes have little or nothing to do with each other. In 1Cor 12:13 Paul is speaking about baptism and the Lord's supper as well-known signs of Christian unity. This unity is created under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the influence behind our baptism, and is expressed every time we eat the spiritual food and drink the spiritual drink of the Lord's supper.