

# THE MEANING OF *EN PNEUMATI* IN 1 COR 12:13

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A discussion by Barry Chant.

1 Corinthians 12:13 καὶ γὰρ ἓν ἐνὶ Πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες, εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ πάντες εἰς ἓν Πνεῦμα ἐποτίσθημεν.

KJV: For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

ESV: For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

NIV: For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body--whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

ISV: For by one Spirit all of us—Jews and Greeks, slaves and free—were baptized into one body and were all privileged to drink from one Spirit.

NRSV: For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit

## Background

In recent years, 1 Corinthians 12:13 has become a focus for evangelical-Pentecostal debate. What does it mean? How should it be understood? Is it a statement about baptism? Conversion? Empowerment? Church membership? Christian unity?

The text has been interpreted in a surprising variety of ways. For most of Christian history, there was a unified stance on its meaning. Initially it was taken to refer to baptism in water through which the Spirit incorporated believers into the body of Christ. Since the Reformation and particularly since the rise of the Pentecostal movement, the text has been seen differently, with the concept of 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' coming to the fore. Some of the major understandings may be briefly summarized as follows:

## Historical

*Through our baptism in water we are all incorporated by one Spirit into one body.*

The Fathers commonly express this view—Chrysostom in his Homily #30 on First Corinthians, for example, or Augustine in his Treatise on the Soul,<sup>1</sup> to give just two examples. Centuries later, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians Aquinas plainly took it for granted that Paul was referring to baptism in water.<sup>2</sup> Jesuit theologian Cornelius a Lapide spells it out clearly in his commentary on verse 13. With this the major Reformers agreed. Calvin plainly says, 'We have been grafted into the body of Christ through baptism'<sup>3</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> Augustine, *On the Soul and Its Origin*, 1:10:9.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 734, 737.

<sup>3</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.16.22, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, Volume Two, 1960:1345.

Wesley writes: 'For by that one Spirit, which we received in baptism, we are all united in one body.'<sup>4</sup> Findlay summarizes the historical position when he states—

*Paul refers to actual Christian baptism, the essence of which lay in the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5ff; Titus 3:5ff); baptism represents the entire process of personal salvation which it seals and attests (Ephesians 1:13; Galatians 3:26; Romans 6:2ff), as the Queen's coronation imports her whole investiture with royalty.*<sup>5</sup>

F. D. Bruner also argues strongly that the baptism referred to in this text is baptism in water<sup>6</sup> as does the Baptist G. R., Beasley-Murray.<sup>7</sup> In fact, McDonnell and Montague are so convinced of the universal expression of this understanding, they claim that one writer 'stands in almost solitary splendour' in taking it in a metaphorical sense, not in the literal sense of a 'water-rite'.<sup>8</sup>

### Evangelical

*At the time of conversion/regeneration, we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body.*

This popular view means that baptism in the Spirit is synonymous with conversion/regeneration. It is not water baptism and it is not a separate, discrete experience. This view was enunciated in the nineteenth century by Charles Hodge who drew a distinction between baptism in water and baptism in the Spirit, which he described as spiritual regeneration.<sup>9</sup> It is clearly taught by the majority of contemporary evangelical writers. J. I. Packer writes—

*This is already clear in the New Testament, where Paul explains Spirit baptism as something that happened to the Corinthians...at conversion (1 Corinthians 12:13).*<sup>10</sup>

MacArthur agrees. 'Spirit baptism is actually an integral part of every Christian's salvation experience,' he asserts. 'That passage (1 Corinthians 12:13) has nothing to do with water baptism... Spirit baptism brings the believer into a vital union with Christ.'<sup>11</sup>

Renowned evangelist Billy Graham believes that God's 'normal pattern' is for baptism in the Holy Spirit to occur at the moment of believing.<sup>12</sup> Kistemaker declares that all genuine believers have been baptized by the Spirit.<sup>13</sup> Australian theologian Leon Morris puts it plainly

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<sup>4</sup> John Wesley, 'Notes on St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians' in *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament, Volume Two*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986.

<sup>5</sup> G. G. Findlay, 'The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians' in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967:890.

<sup>6</sup> F. D. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991:21-294.

<sup>7</sup> G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1962:167-171. See also Norman Hillier, '1 and 2 Corinthians' in D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer (eds), *New Bible Commentary, Third Edition*, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1983:1067; F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians in The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972:292-293.

<sup>8</sup> K. McDonnell and G. T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries*, Collegeville, Mn: The Liturgical Press, 1991:42. The theologian in question is James Dunn.

<sup>9</sup> C. Hodge, *A Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1837/1978:254.

<sup>10</sup> J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984:91. See also 202-203.

<sup>11</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr, *Charismatic Chaos*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992:230-231.

<sup>12</sup> B. Graham, *The Holy Spirit: Activating God's Power in Your Life*, London: Collins, 1979:70.

<sup>13</sup> S. J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Grand Rapids: Baker academic, 2007:430; see also W. G. Scroggie, *The Baptism of the Spirit and Speaking with Tongues*, London: Pickering and Inglis, n.d.:10.

that this is a spiritual baptism which includes all believers.<sup>14</sup> Short, Grudem, Mullins and Bromiley take a similar position.<sup>15</sup>

### Pentecostal

*At the time of conversion/regeneration, we are all baptized by one Spirit into the body of Christ.*

This is a Pentecostal way of avoiding the difficulties raised by the evangelical stance. The word 'by' is taken at face value and so is seen as referring to a baptism 'by' the Spirit for incorporation into the church as distinct from a baptism 'in' the Spirit which is for empowerment and which may occur either contemporaneously with conversion/regeneration or subsequently to it. Classic Pentecostal teacher Harold Horton claims that—

*The baptism in 12:13 is thus very definitely by the Spirit into the body of Christ and is therefore distinct from the baptism by Christ into the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.*<sup>16</sup>

So J. R. Williams describes Pentecostals as viewing the agent of baptism as the Holy Spirit who baptizes us into the one body of Christ, in contrast to Christ who is the agent who baptizes us in the Holy Spirit.<sup>17</sup> Dennis and Rita Bennett argue similarly: 'This refers to a spiritual baptism into Christ.'<sup>18</sup>

It should be noted that other Pentecostals simply assume that this text refers to a discrete experience of the Spirit (as in Acts 8:17; 19:6) without considering the exclusivist implications of this view for other believers.<sup>19</sup>

Pentecostal expositor Gordon Fee argues that grammatically the reference is to baptism in the Spirit as presented elsewhere in Scripture, but that the focus is on the *one* Spirit and the consequent unity of Christ's body and that Paul is 'most likely' referring to 'their common experience of conversion'.<sup>20</sup> Christenson combines historical and Pentecostal views by arguing that through water baptism the Holy Spirit 'grafts a new believer into the body of Christ'.<sup>21</sup> Frustratingly, many Pentecostal writers make little or no reference to the text at all.<sup>22</sup>

### Extreme Pentecostal

*At the time of conversion/regeneration, we are baptized by one Spirit into one body; this is accompanied by speaking in tongues.* This view is held by a minority of Pentecostals and is generally rejected by classical Pentecostals.<sup>23</sup> The website of the Revival Centres of Australia puts it plainly enough: 'We are baptised into the Body of Christ (the Church) through the Holy Spirit, with the Bible evidence of speaking in tongues.' Quoting 1

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<sup>14</sup> L. Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: an Introduction and Commentary*, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990:171.

<sup>15</sup> A. Rendle Short, 'The ambassador from Heaven' in F. A. Tatford (ed), *Revival in Our Time*, London: Paternoster, 1947:37-38; W. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2011:767-773; E. Y. Mullins and G. W. Bromiley, 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit' in G. W. Bromiley (ed) *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979:427-428.

<sup>16</sup> H. Horton, *What The Bible Says About The Holy Spirit*, 1976:216.

<sup>17</sup> J. R. Williams, 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit' in S. Burgess and W. M. Van Der Maas (eds), *The New International Dictionary of Charismatic Movements*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002:355.

<sup>18</sup> D. and R. Bennett, *The Holy Spirit and You*, Plainfield: Logos, 1971:34.

<sup>19</sup> For example, K. J. Conner, *The Foundations of Christian Doctrine*, Chichester: Sovereign World, 1988:79.

<sup>20</sup> G. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians in The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987:603-606.

<sup>21</sup> L. Christenson, *In the Spirit*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1979:40.

<sup>22</sup> David Pawson is one exception. See D. Pawson, *Jesus Baptises in One Holy Spirit*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1997:101-107.

<sup>23</sup> In Australia, the Revival Centres and the United Pentecostal Churches are not part of the Australian Pentecostal Ministers' Fellowship.

Corinthians 12:13, the author goes on to say, 'Receiving the Holy Spirit is essential to join the church. Without the Holy Spirit we are not yet in "the body"'.<sup>24</sup>

### Contemporary

*We are baptized in one Spirit in reference to the one body of which we are already members.*

This may occur either contemporaneously with conversion/regeneration or subsequently to it. A discussion of this approach is the theme of this paper.

### **Contention**

The major contention is between the evangelical and Pentecostal views. The evangelical case generally rests on the assumption that regeneration/conversion and Spirit-baptism are synonymous and synchronous. The Pentecostal case rests on the assumption that the two may be synchronous, but that they are not synonymous.

Evangelicals hold that by baptism in the Spirit we are incorporated into the body of Christ. This seems a logical point of view when you read the text, especially as it is commonly given in English. If this view is correct, then there is clearly no place for an immersion in the Spirit subsequent to conversion. On the other hand, if we argue that a discrete Pentecostal baptism is what Paul does have in mind, then we must also argue that those who are not so baptised are not members of Christ's body (as do some minority Pentecostal groups). Each of these views is problematic.

Evangelicals hold their ground, because if the Pentecostals are right, and speaking in tongues is the sign of being baptised in the Spirit, those who don't speak in tongues are not truly Christian. Orthodox Pentecostals hold their ground, because if the Evangelicals are right and it is by being baptised in the Spirit that we enter the body of Christ, then it is possible to be baptised in the Spirit without tongues. Only extremist Pentecostals are happy because this view proves all along that you must speak in tongues to be saved!

Paul is writing in the context of a church where, whatever position we adopt, it is plain that it was normal practice for people to be baptised in the Spirit virtually at the same time as conversion. The modern distinction that we have been forced to draw today between being born of the Spirit and empowered by the Spirit was not an issue then.<sup>25</sup>

One difficulty with the evangelical approach is that certain Acts passages appear to draw a clear distinction between regeneration/conversion and Spirit-baptism (e.g. Acts 8:14-19; 9:1-17; 19:1-7).<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, Pentecostals face the dilemma that if 1 Corinthians 12:13 refers to regeneration/conversion, how can they explain other biblical occurrences of the term? Can the issue be resolved by suggesting that Paul's employment of the phrase (the only occasion on which he does) is different from its usage by others? This could well be the case. Biblical metaphors are not all used the same way. A lion is a metaphor for both Jesus and the devil (1 Peter 5:8; Rev 5:5); yeast symbolises both the kingdom of God and pervasive sin (Matt 13:33; 16:11); fire may mean either blessing or judgement (Exodus 19:18; Rev 20:10).

So there is no *requirement* for Paul to use the phrase 'baptise in the Spirit' in the same way as the Synoptic writers. 'Immerse' is a term that can be used in many ways. If this is so, then the debate over word-usage would be less significant. But again, the question must be raised as to why we should assume that this is so. Why not take the obvious position that the same phrase is more likely to be used in the same way? It is worth noting that Paul's own

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<sup>24</sup> Simon Longfield (?), <http://revivalcentres.org/>.

<sup>25</sup> The former three paragraphs originally appeared in B. Chant, *Empowered by the Spirit*, Miranda: Tabor, 2013:78.

<sup>26</sup> A common evangelical approach is to explain this distinction as being necessitated so that there could be an apostolic presence in each new ethnic group and that the sign of tongues was given to authenticate the coming of the gospel to each new community. For example, see Graham, 1979:70. This is a specious argument which fails to address the historical situation.

experience was of experiencing a dramatic conversion and acknowledging the Lordship of Christ three days before he was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 22:10; 9:17).

Even so, what if his intended meaning is different? Then it is the majority usage, not his single usage, that should be our guide in determining the general meaning of the phrase. This principle is indicated by what we might call the two-or-three principle detailed more than once in Scripture—that only in the mouth of two or three witnesses should a matter be determined. Both Old and New Testaments attest to this (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:5; 2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19; Hebrews 20:28; Revelation 11:3) as does Jesus himself (Matthew 18:16). In this case, whatever Paul means, unless there is some undeniable contextual reason for doing so, our understanding of the general meaning should not be determined by what he says but by the repeated and consistent usage of John, Jesus, Luke and Peter.

### **The context**

1 Corinthians 12:13 is a bridge between the apostle's focus on spiritual gifts to that of unity. The repetition of the word 'one' in verse 13 clearly shows this. The emphasis in the text is not so much on the term 'baptised' as on the phrase 'one body'. Gordon Fee correctly writes: 'Paul's present concern is not to delineate how an individual becomes a believer, but to explain how many of them, diverse as they are, are in fact one body.'<sup>27</sup> Pawson puts it even more strongly: 'Paul's overriding concern is for the unity of the body'.<sup>28</sup> It is important to stress this, as it puts the emphasis where it belongs, on Christian unity. Whereas the previous verses summarise the gifts of the Spirit, the following sentences engage the reader in a detailed description of the implications of being part of the human body and by extension members of the body of Christ. So in verse 13, which is introductory to this discussion, it is the unity of the body that plainly demands our attention: a remarkable organism where Jew and Gentile, slave and free are all bonded together in love in a unique formulation that defies both human experience and logic. Paul's reference to the work of the Spirit is not a theological definition of how, when or where we are baptised in the Spirit: it is a reminder that it is the Holy Spirit who makes possible the union of such a rare and different collection of people.

It is possible that he would have been amazed and bemused at discussions like this one. I can imagine him saying, 'Look, brethren, what are you so vexed about? I was just using a couple of word pictures to make a point. I didn't intend to provoke a theological controversy. Take it easy.' Well, whether that be so or not, we do have the text and it is incumbent upon us to try to understand it.

### **Person or power?**

Of interest is the usage of the definite article ('the') with the word 'Spirit'. In general, when the reference is to the power of the Holy Spirit, the article is absent; when it is to the Person of the Holy Spirit, the article is present. So John, Elizabeth, Zechariah and Simeon are all described by the meticulous Luke as being filled 'with Holy Spirit' (Luke 1:25; 1:41; 1:67; 2:25). Similarly John the Baptist declared that Jesus would immerse 'in Holy Spirit' (Matthew 3:11). But then we are told he saw 'the' Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus in the form of a dove. The next chapter tells how Jesus was led by 'the' Holy Spirit into the desert (Matthew 4:1). Later Jesus promised that 'the' Spirit of the Father would assist the disciples in their hour of need (Matthew 10:20) and that he himself cast out demons by 'the' Spirit of God (Matthew 12:28).

Yet in Luke 11:13, Jesus points out how willing the Father is to give 'Holy Spirit' to those who ask him, and later promises the disciples that they will be immersed 'in Holy Spirit' (Acts 1:5). Both usages are combined in Acts 2:4 where the disciples are described as being filled (full) 'of Holy Spirit' and then speaking as 'the' Spirit enabled them. Later that day,

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<sup>27</sup> G. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994:178; see also Morris, 1990:171.

<sup>28</sup> Pawson, 1997:106.

Peter tells the waiting crowd that what they were witnessing was the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy that God would pour out 'from my Spirit' (literally 'the Spirit of me') upon all flesh (Acts 2:17-18)<sup>29</sup>; and then if they repented and were baptized they would receive the gift of (from?) 'the' Holy Spirit.<sup>30</sup> Consistently in Acts the definite article is used to indicate the work of the Holy Spirit as a Person (Acts 5:9; 10:19; 11:12, 28; 16:7; 20:23; 21:4).<sup>31</sup> The article is absent when the focus is on power (Acts 19:2).

In the epistles, there is also a consistent pattern.<sup>32</sup> We are not 'in flesh' but 'in Spirit' if 'Spirit of God' dwells in us (Romans 8:9). But it is 'the' Spirit who raised Christ from the dead (Romans 8:11) and it is 'the' Spirit who helps us in prayer (Romans 8:26).<sup>33</sup> In 1 Corinthians 2:4, where the focus is on power, the article is missing. But in 12:7-10, the emphasis is clearly on 'the' Spirit who bestows gifts as he chooses. Similarly, it is 'the' Spirit whom we are not to grieve (Ephesians 4:30) but it is 'Spirit' with whom we are to be filled (5:18); and to the Thessalonians Paul writes that the gospel came to them 'in power and in Holy Spirit and in much assurance' (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

In 1 Corinthians 12:13 the article is also omitted as the meaning is clearly that of being immersed in one Spirit and drinking of one Spirit, metaphors that cannot sensibly be employed of a person. Plainly the translation 'by' is inappropriate here. Being immersed 'in' and being immersed 'by' are not the same thing.

### The meaning of βαπτίζω

As we have seen, traditionally, the verb *baptizo* here has been widely assumed by theologians to refer to baptism in water. It is always hazardous to fly in the face of redoubted scholarship and one does so with due diffidence. But it has to be argued that this is not the obvious meaning of the text. Part of the problem lies in the way that from the days of Wyclif and Tyndale the Greek term has been rendered in English by transliteration rather than translation. Had a rendition such as 'immerse' been used there would have been less confusion. In plain terms, the most common meaning of *baptizo* is immerse, dip, plunge or wash.<sup>34</sup> In the earliest use in the papyri, it had the meaning of 'flood'.<sup>35</sup> From the time of Hippocrates, there are examples of it being employed to describe such incidents as the sinking of a ship, sinking in mud or drowning.<sup>36</sup> Jesus used it to refer to washing hands or dishes (Mark 7:4) and also of being overwhelmed or flooded with sorrow and pain (Mark 10:38; Luke 12:50). When Philip baptized an Ethiopian eunuch, they both 'went down' into the water, a needless action if the rite were expressed through effusion or sprinkling (Acts

<sup>29</sup> Most contemporary versions of the Bible omit the word 'from' but it is clearly part of the original text. See older versions such as the KJV, the RV and the ASV.

<sup>30</sup> This makes it clear that it is the Holy Spirit himself who is the gift.

<sup>31</sup> Acts 8:39 is an interesting exception where the article is inexplicably absent.

<sup>32</sup> The pattern is not inflexible. There are grammatical nuances that also come into place. In commenting on the absence of the article in John 1:1 prior to the word *theos*, Leon Morris points out that in the New Testament, definite nouns that precede a verb often lack an article (L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973, 77). Machen notes that the article may or may not be included before 'certain nouns, referring to persons or things which instead of being only one of a class are quite unique' including terms such as *theos* or *pneuma* (J. G. Machen, *New Testament Greek for Beginners*, New York: Macmillan, 1963:141). See also S. D. F. Salmond, 'The Epistle to the Ephesians' in W. R. Nicholl (ed), *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Volume Three, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967:274.

<sup>33</sup> An exception occurs in 8:13, 14, where it is 'by Spirit' that we put to death the deeds of the flesh and 'by Spirit' that we are led. This may simply be explained by the optional usage of the article before unique nouns (see previous footnote). Or is this to be interpreted as referring to the human spirit in contrast to the human intellect? The context does not suggest this.

<sup>34</sup> A *Lexicon*, abridged from *Liddell and Scott's Greek Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872:126.

<sup>35</sup> J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985:102.

<sup>36</sup> G. Kittel (ed), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969:530.

8:38). Similarly, Augustine relates the tale of one Curubis, who was cured of paralysis as he ‘came up out’ of the baptismal font.<sup>37</sup>

With that in mind, it would be more helpful to render the text, ‘*In* one Spirit we were all immersed into one body...’ When we put it like this, it cannot be taken to refer to immersion in water. The obvious reference is to immersion in the Spirit. The reference at the end of the sentence to drinking of that one Spirit is another metaphor giving the other side of the question—like a man swimming who both plunges into water and drinks of that same water, so we arewhelmed by the Spirit and drink of the Spirit.<sup>38</sup> Or to take up the basic meaning of *pneuma* (wind), just as we are surrounded by air and breathe in the air, so we are engulfed by the Spirit and breathe in the same Spirit.

### Use of prepositions

In English, we use different prepositions to convey different ideas—by, with, in etc. Each of these has a different meaning. New Testament Greek is not so clear-cut. Varied effects are commonly achieved simply by changing the ending of the noun. This usage has limitations: as there are only two or three ways in which noun endings can be changed, several possible meanings may be conveyed by the same suffix. For example, the phrase *to pneumati* can mean several things—by the spirit, with the spirit, through the spirit, in the spirit (compare Gal 5:16 and 18 where *pneumati* may mean either ‘in’ or ‘by’ the Spirit). We have to judge from the context which meaning to adopt. This necessarily makes translation a bit tricky.

In order to overcome this, the writer may precede the phrase with a preposition. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, the preposition *en* (‘in’) is added (*en to pneumati*) so the meaning is clearly ‘in the spirit’.<sup>39</sup> Even this is not beyond dispute. New Testament Greek usage is flexible. Prepositions may have several alternative meanings. So *en* (‘in’) can also mean ‘with’ (as in Luke 14:31—‘with ten thousand’) or ‘on’ as in Luke 8:32 (‘on the hillside’) or even ‘by’ as in Matthew 5:34-35 (‘by heaven... by earth’). But these variant usages of *en* are exceptional and the most common meaning is clearly ‘in’. Unless there are contextual reasons that make it impossible or illogical, there is no good reason for translating it differently.

In 1 Corinthians 12:13, there should be no doubt: ‘in’ is the obvious preposition to use. The verb ‘immerse’ only makes sense if succeeded by ‘in’. So when John the Baptist says that he baptises in water but Jesus will baptise in the Holy Spirit, *en* is used every time for ‘in the Holy Spirit’ and three times for ‘in water’ (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16). So why do most translators opt for ‘with’? Is this because they really believe this is the better translation or because it allows for the different contemporary views of the mode of baptism?<sup>40</sup>

We also need to look at similar phraseology elsewhere. It is of interest to note that except for the numeric adjective, the structure of the phrase *en heni pneumati* (= *in one Spirit*) is identical to the six phrases in the gospels and Acts which refer to being baptised in

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<sup>37</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 22:9.

<sup>38</sup> This is another metaphor not employed elsewhere in the New Testament of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Without such contextual referencing, we have no way of determining exactly what he means other than to take it at face value; that he is making the point that the Spirit is both all around us (‘immerse’) and within us (‘drink’). It is also of interest that the Greek text literally means ‘drink into (*eis*) one Spirit’, as in the KJV—an unusual way to put it. This again indicates the flexibility of Greek prepositions. It may be further noted that the verb *potidzo* (‘drink’) may also be rendered ‘irrigate’ or ‘water’ as in 1 Corinthians 3:6-8. If so, this is still a rare metaphor for the work of the Spirit.

<sup>39</sup> Morris, 1990:171.

<sup>40</sup> It is true that a simple dative is used of John’s baptism on three occasions (Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5; 11:16), which could possibly allow for the translation ‘with’, although there is no doubt that ‘in’ is a more logical option; but in reference to being immersed in the Holy Spirit, the preposition *en* is consistently employed.

the Holy Spirit as an experience discrete from regeneration (*en pneumati hagio* = in holy Spirit). The only difference is the employment of 'one' instead of 'holy'.

It also needs to be noted that *en* is commonly rendered 'by' in translations of 1 Cor 12:3 and 9. The context may seem to favour this approach, but the use of *dia* (through) and *kata* (according to) in verse 8 suggests a different focus. To retain 'in' is probably nearer the intent of the writer: in other words, is Paul actually affirming that all these gifts are 'in' the Spirit rather than 'by' the Spirit? That it is when we are in the Spirit that gifts are likely to function more readily? Of course, he does go on to say that it is the Spirit who distributes gifts as he chooses (12:11), but this does not obviate this point. And in any case, this part of 1 Corinthians 12 forms a discussion of individual gifts, not of the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

All in all, there is a compelling case for arguing that the best translation of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is 'in' one Spirit. This is further reinforced by the fact that it is Jesus who baptises in the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11; Acts 2:33). There are no other biblical references to people being baptised 'by' the Spirit. The question must be raised as to why some translations have chosen to render it in this case as 'by' as this is not an obvious or even a reasonable translation.

### The purpose

This discussion would be incomplete without consideration of the preposition *eis* ('into') in the phrase 'into one body'. This has several possible meanings including 'for', 'on account of', 'before', 'with reference to', 'as far as', 'to the extent of'; 'against'; 'before' or 'in the presence of' (Acts 22:40, 'stood 'into' them'); 'with a view to' (Mark 1:38, 'into this I came'); 'in accordance with' (Matt 12:41; Luke 11:32: repented 'into' the preaching of Jonah).

It does not usually mean 'in'. Certainly, it would be surprising for Paul to use *eis* ('into') in this sense, when it is not used this way anywhere else in the New Testament in reference to baptism, either in water or in the Spirit.<sup>41</sup> Yet this is how some people understand it, although this is not only grammatically, but also logically inconsistent. How can you be immersed in a body?

It is helpful here to compare the phraseology used when referring to baptism in water. The preposition 'into' is never used about the water itself. We are always baptised 'in' water. The word 'into' is regularly used of the purpose of baptism. So John baptised '*in* water *into* repentance' (Matthew 3:11). Jesus told his disciples to baptise '*into* the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 28:20). Peter told people to be baptised '*into* the forgiveness of sins' (Acts 2:38). In all these cases, *eis* clearly has a sense of purpose.

Findlay puts it like this—

*En defines the element and ruling influence of the baptism, eis the relationship to which it introduces.*<sup>42</sup>

Fee agrees, noting that the phrase 'in the Spirit' is probably locative, describing the element in which we are immersed.<sup>43</sup>

The preposition *eis* can also mean 'in reference to' or 'for' something already present, as in the phrase 'baptise for repentance' (Matthew 3:11), a repentance *that had already occurred*. The baptism of his hearers was not the cause of their repentance; they were baptised because of it. Repentance was the motivation for which baptism was the action.

A similar phrase is used by Jesus prior to the ascension when he tells the disciples to baptise 'into' (*eis*) the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). The name is the authority on which the act of baptism is based: baptism is the outcome of this authority. Similarly, at Pentecost Peter tells people to be baptised 'into' (*eis*) forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). As with repentance, forgiveness, the outcome of believing, precedes baptism (Acts 10:43). So it was in Samaria and Caesarea (Acts 8:12; 10:48). Baptism,

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<sup>41</sup> See also Fee, 1987: 606.

<sup>42</sup> G. G. Findlay, *St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians in The Expositor's Greek Testament, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967:890.*

<sup>43</sup> Fee, 1987:605-606.

therefore, is an expression of an act of faith *already undertaken*. We are justified by faith (Romans 1:17). Clearly, the simple meaning of 'into' does not apply in any of these cases. Phrases such as 'for' or 'on account of' or 'with a view to' must be employed.

So here, in 1 Corinthians 12:13, it makes more sense to say that Paul is arguing that we are baptised in one Spirit 'for' or 'because of' the one body to which we *already* belong.

This, then, resolves the question of Paul's usage of the phrase 'baptise in the Spirit'. He is evidently employing it with the same understanding as that of Jesus, John the Baptist, Luke, and Peter—that being baptised in the Spirit is an empowering experience, discrete from regeneration/conversion that gives expression to the one body to which we all belong.

To paraphrase his statement, it may now be seen to read—

*For we were all immersed in one Spirit in relation to our participation in one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

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