

# THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY.

VOL. IV.

MARCH, 1924.

No. 3.

## What Is the Baptism of the Holy Ghost?

REV. L. BUCHHEIMER, St. Louis, Mo.

The phrase "baptize with the Holy Ghost" occurs in each of the gospels and twice in the Acts. Matt. 3, 11: "I [John the Baptist] indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but He [Jesus] that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Mark 1, 8: "I [John the Baptist] indeed have baptized you with water; but He [Jesus] shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." Luke 3, 16: "John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; He [Jesus] shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." John 1, 26, 33: "John answered them saying, I baptize with water; but there standeth One among you whom ye know not. . . . And I knew Him not; but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." Acts 1, 5: "John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Acts 11, 16: "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that He said, John baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."

It will be seen from these passages that the Lord Jesus appears always as the Baptizer. And it will also be seen that the historical occasions of the baptism are two only: the Day of Pentecost and the closely parallel occasion, when, in the house of Cornelius, Peter, the Apostle of Pentecost, was permitted to "open the door of faith to the Gentiles." Acts 11, 15. 16: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the

beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that He said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."

Nowhere in the epistles does the phrase "baptism of the Holy Ghost," or "Spirit," occur except in 1 Cor. 12, 13: "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."

The definition generally given of the baptism of the Holy Ghost is: "that overwhelming abundance of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit which our Savior, after His ascension, poured forth upon His disciples." It is identified with such passages as John 7, 37—39: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" And Eph. 5, 18: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit."

And while the connection is indeed close, methinks there is a difference. The "filling" (Acts 2, 4; 4, 31; 9, 17; 13, 52) is not identical in idea, whether or not it coincides in time, with the initial work of the Spirit as the Author and Giver of life. The Scriptural teaching of the Sacrament of Baptism would lead us to connect the baptism of the Spirit rather with the beginning of the new life than with a great development of it. Titus 3, 5, 6: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior."

True, with the apostles, who had been the subjects of this baptism of the new birth before Pentecost, this must be stated without reserve. In their case it was a confirmation and sealing of the new birth, as it is with adults who have been regenerated by the Word, upon whom we bestow water-baptism. Coincident in time with such confirmation was the "filling." Acts 2, 4: "And they were all *filled with the Holy Ghost* and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." In the case of Cornelius and the assembly met in his house, *the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word*. (Acts 10, 45: "And they

of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." Water-baptism was then administered, Vv. 47. 48: "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.")

Still, both Pentecost and the visit to Cornelius were not only historical events, occasions that had reference only to the original partakers (Acts 2, 38. 39: "The promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off"), but great representative occasions, each of which, as it were, was a birth-time of the true Church by the power of the Spirit. And each may thus be held to typify and signify on a great scale the true birth-process and birth-time by the same power in the case of the individual soul. At any rate, it is remarkable and significant that the epistles contain no appeal to seek the baptism of the Spirit. It is not like the "filling," presented to us as a blessing which the Christian is to seek. We are to be filled and to be full of Him as those who have already received Him in the new birth. That reception, that new birth, as our Lord in John 3 ("Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God") and His apostle in Titus 3 ("Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost") tell us, is wrought by the Holy Ghost in the Sacrament of Baptism, hence rightly called "baptism of the Holy Ghost."

Another consideration. When we regard the baptism of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost and in the house of Cornelius, where the term is used, we find that it was connected with miraculous power and works. The immediate result of Pentecost was an instantaneous "speaking with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." The same is said in Acts 10, 46: "For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." And 1 Cor. 12, 4—12: "Now, there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, that worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit; to another, faith, by the same Spirit; to another, the gifts of healing, by the same Spirit; to another, the

working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues. But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will. For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ."

Does, then, baptism of the Holy Ghost always imply a miracle-working power, a supernatural endowment of faculties and gifts? Can we not be said to have received that baptism unless inner life exhibits itself in such manifestations of the Spirit? I would not be misunderstood as if I meant to relegate to the apostolic age all manifestations of the presence and power of God through His people in the way of signs and wonders. I do gather, both from the history of the Church and from the pregnant verse of Scripture, 1 Cor. 13, 8: "Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away," that on the whole the commonly called miraculous displays of that power were intended for the first days only. That period had characteristic conditions and needs which can never quite recur, even where the Gospel is a new thing among the heathen of our time. For the Gospel was then everywhere and absolutely new, with no history as yet behind it, no results of long years to give it their credentials. I do not think, with some earnest Christians, that it is lack of faith that holds in abeyance miraculous manifestation. Not as if I would deny *a priori* the possibility of signs and wonders in any age, our own or another, since the apostolic. Upon the whole, however, such operation, it appears to me, is not the will of God now as it was of old, and this is so because the people of God are to be led more and more to rest in that "more excellent way," 1 Cor. 12, 30. 31: "Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet show I unto you a more excellent way," which already in that wonderful first age the apostle preferred to even "the best gifts" of the other kind.

The work of the Spirit in the general testimony of God's Word has to do not so much with the miraculous, in our common sense of that term, as with the moral, the transformation and transfiguration of the will, of the heart, by the action of the Spirit. Its highest concern lies in the believer's full knowledge of his Lord by faith and in the manifestation of that knowledge and faith by

a life of holiness and consecration to the will and work of God. Referring to Pentecost, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which then took place, our Lord had promised to His disciples miraculous power by the Spirit, but it was not chiefly as a miracle-working power that He had foretold His coming. (John 16, 4. 7. 13. 14: "But these things I told you that, when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. . . . It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. . . . Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you.") It was as a spiritual Power, a Comforter, a Guide into all truth, a Revealer of the things of God, a Remembrancer of the words of Christ, One who would embolden the apostles to bear witness before the most terrible adversaries. When, then, we, by the Holy Ghost, say that Jesus is the Lord (1 Cor. 12, 3: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost"), we can safely say (1 Cor. 12, 13: "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body") that we have the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Not uncommon among Christian denominations is it to speak of a special baptism of the Spirit in order more effectually to serve the Lord. It is an invitation to a spasmodic or tempestuous enthusiasm, to a revival of spiritual life. A mistake underlies such phraseology and practise. 1 Cor. 12, 13 reads: "By one Spirit *we have been ἐβαπτίσθημεν*" — all baptized into one body. It needs no special baptism.

We are indeed exhorted to open all the avenues and regions of the soul and life to the influences of the Spirit. And how shall this be done? St. Paul gives the answer, Gal. 3, 14: "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit *through faith.*" We are to take the Lord at His word, to trust Him to bless us fully in keeping it. We are to open to Him all the inner doors of the soul, as in Holy Baptism the main portal has been opened, and by the same key, the key of simplest and most confiding faith. Believing, we receive. And blessed then will be the manifestations of the holy Gift received. We shall know something of what it is to be "filled" with all joy and peace in believing, that

we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost. Rom. 15, 13. We shall be filled with the fruit of righteousness. Phil. 1, 11. We shall be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Col. 1, 9. And this baptism of the Holy Ghost, with its holy fruit, is the "earnest" of his full possession of God in eternity; the "first-fruits" of the harvest of life everlasting, which is to be reaped "of the Spirit." Gal. 6, 8: "He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

The baptism of the Holy Ghost is to have received in the Sacrament of Baptism the new birth by the Life-giver, the Holy Ghost, to be enlightened with His gifts, sanctified and kept in the true faith, which secures for us the "promise" and "fruits" of the Spirit, making us true members of the Church of Christ and "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." Rom. 8, 17.

---