

Power from on High

A Study of the Enduement of the Holy Spirit in Relation to Entire Sanctification

Leslie D. Wilcox

(This survey of doctrines related to Holiness and the Holy Spirit is probably written in the 1950's.

St. Augustine put it this way: "First comes faith, and then comes understanding." Mr. Wilcox was fairly well informed about Pentecostalism, but apparently had not been actually Baptised in the Holy Spirit. He therefore could not be qualified to be a Charismatic apologist.

This excellent survey of doctrinal streams until his time needs to be brought up to date by somebody who is not only saved and sanctified, but also Baptised in the Holy Spirit. If I cannot find somebody more qualified, I may attempt it at some time.

From some of the key statements Mr. Wilcox makes, we can see how he and fellow holiness people explained away rather than accepting the experience of the newly arrived Pentecostals. -Edit.)

(brief excerpt only)

While we must look at man's opinions and interpretations we must ever keep in mind that a doctrinal position is to be determined not by what any man or men have said, but by the "Thus saith the Lord." However, we find certain teachings on this subject which tend to affect our thinking or sway our decisions on doctrinal matters. So we will take time for a brief examination of some of those positions.

The question at stake is to find a scriptural position on this subject of the meaning of Pentecost that will strike a proper balance in interpretation of this vital subject, while at the time avoiding the excesses both of those who over-emphasize Pentecost by equating it with some miraculous manifestation, as well as of those who reduce emphasis on it until it means no more than a born-again experience.

In dealing with this subject, we will note those theories about the work of the Holy Spirit with which we are most likely to come into contact. We will note some of the marks or characteristics of each and compare them with

Scriptural teaching. Then, finally we will note those vital truths about the work of the Holy Spirit that we of the Holiness Movement need to conserve.

We note three types of teaching which we will refer to by rather brief titles, although the title in some cases may not be full enough or comprehensive enough to describe all facets of the particular type of doctrine under consideration. It needs to be clearly understood at the beginning, that within these groups we mention there are differences of teaching or emphasis, and all writers espousing a given type of interpretation may not agree in every detail. However, the similarities are sufficient for them to be grouped together.

Charismatic View

Under this heading we group together those who believe that the baptism with the Holy Spirit produces some kind of miraculous or spectacular results. It is commonly associated with speaking in tongues, and often places an undue stress on healing. **These persons may or may not believe in three works of grace.** If they believe in three works of grace, sometimes sanctification precedes the baptism, and sometimes it follows. In either case the entire tendency is to exalt the so-called "gifts" above heart purity or holiness. Some groups omit any teaching on heart cleansing. Others pay it lip service, but to all practical intents treat it as a matter of much less importance than the miraculous display of gifts.

We have dealt with the question of the meaning of the words "endowment" and "power" in Part I, so that perhaps no further attention need be given to this theory. Any teaching which minimizes the importance of holy character in favor of anything else, is going wide of the mark of Biblical emphasis.

Keswick View

This teaching insists on a further need in the life of the Christian. He has received the Spirit in His regenerating power, but needs a filling of the Spirit later. Their language often approximates the terminology of holiness teachers very closely. However, there is one major, and very vital, point of difference.

Any filling or baptism of the Spirit received subsequent to the born-again experience is strictly for empowerment in service, but does not produce heart-cleansing.

They teach a "counteraction" rather than a cleansing. Some well-known names are included among Keswick leaders of the past. Included in the number are Andrew Murray, F. B. Meyer, Griffith Thomas, Alan Redpath. In more recent times the Keswick theory has tended to adopt the language of the men who advocate positional holiness, so that the two theories have tended to approximate each other in present day presentation.

The key point to be noted about them is their denial of cleansing of the heart. Since this subject is also pertinent in any discussion of the next group, we will leave consideration of this point of doctrine for consideration at that time.

Two Natures Theory

The title given this group may not be the best, since it only describes one facet of their teaching, but we use it as a convenient short designation for a rather large group of people who take a specific position relative to the work of the Holy Spirit and couple with that certain other doctrinal ideas which are closely associated with their teaching on the Holy Spirit, so that it becomes necessary to examine several phases of their doctrine.

This type of teaching first became prominent in the teaching of the Plymouth Brethren in Great Britain. Its first leader was John Darby, and so this theory is sometimes called Darbyism. However, Darby also had a special teaching on the church and on the Second Coming which are not necessarily a part of this phase of his teaching. Most of the modern followers of the teaching of John Darby have dropped his peculiar ideas about the church. His teachings on the Second Coming have spread widely into holiness circles, and so go beyond the area where his teaching on the Holy Spirit is accepted.

However, in adopting his ideas of the Second Coming, one must watch that they do not accept his ideas on the subject of Christian experience for in some cases the two are closely interwoven.

The theories of Darby, both on the subjects of Christian experience and of the second coming have been widely disseminated by many writers since his day. We will give particular attention to his theories on Christian experience which involve his position relative to the work of the Holy Spirit and relative to the question of sin. Among some of the best-known men who have propagated this theory about the Holy Spirit and the question of sin are C. I. Scofield, Harry Ironsides, Lehman Strauss, John R. W. Stott, Charles C. Ryrie.

For a brief summary of these teachings, we note that they teach that the Christian receives the Holy Spirit at regeneration, so that there is no further need of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's life, except to appropriate what He has already done. To them the baptism with the Holy Spirit is equivalent to the experience of the new birth. If the Christian has already received the Holy Spirit, he is positionally sanctified. That is—He is in Christ and because Christ is holy, the Christian is holy. But while this is his standing as far as God is concerned, he may actually be very unholy, and in fact can never be rid of sin in this life. He now has a new nature, received when he was born again, but the old nature remains and must remain throughout life. He must struggle against this old nature, but it can never bring him into condemnation no matter what it leads him to do, for he will always retain this new nature which he received in regeneration. Thus, it also involves the teaching of unconditional eternal security.

Due to these peculiarities of teaching it is known by other names besides the Two-Natures Theory. It is also called by the names **Positional Holiness**, and the **Holy-in-Christ** Theory. This theory by whatever name it goes, denies any second work of grace, and it denies any real cleansing of the heart. [1] Since these theories have become so influential in popular radio broadcasts and in a tide of religious literature of our day, it may be well to examine

certain earmarks of this teaching at greater length, in the following sections of this paper. In each case, we will try to state the doctrinal position we are studying, and then compare it with Scriptural truth.

The Baptism with the Spirit Is Regeneration According to this Theory

This is one of the strong tenets of Darbyite teaching and we believe it is totally unscriptural.

The theory under consideration teaches that all Christians possess the Holy Spirit in such a way that it is quite wrong for any believer to pray for the Spirit since he already possesses Him as a result of the new-birth experience. The following references to various authors will give an example of this position.

C. I. Scofield, who is known for his notes in the Scofield Bible, makes it plain that in his opinion when a child of God is born of the Spirit, he is at the same time baptized with the Spirit, sealed with the Spirit, and will henceforth be indwelt with the Spirit (Without any possibility of ever losing that Divine indwelling). [2]

Harry Ironsides, author of the book, *Holiness the False and the True*, expresses the same idea. Henry Brockett has carefully examined his position and has summarized it as follows; "He (Ironsides) teaches only one critical work of grace in the believer and contends that all that is meant by the baptism with the Spirit is received by everyone the moment he first believes and is born of the Spirit. We "get it all" at conversion. This is the root error of the two-naturist doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit and the believer." [3] John R. W. Stott, a more recent writer, makes it plain that he considers the gift of the Spirit and the baptism of the Spirit to be identical, and that this is an initial blessing bestowed on all persons who enter the new covenant. [4] George Turner, in summarizing Stott's book, points out that the effect of what he (Stott) has to say would be to discourage a Christian from seeking any specific blessing. [5]

The references given above all deny a second work of grace, and although they do not specifically say so, in the passages referred to above, they all definitely deny any possibility of heart cleansing. Furthermore, the position represented by these writers confuses Bible terminology relative to the work of the Spirit. We have already given this matter a careful examination in Part I of this discussion. By confusing the terminology relative to the work of the Spirit, it also takes the position that no one is born again until he is baptized with the Spirit, and that this act of the Spirit is that by which one is constituted a member of the body of Christ. By thus equating the birth and the baptism, these writers tend to make the baptism only something done for us—a sort of formal induction into the body of Christ. This makes the baptism something which does not affect our own consciousness. One writer even calls it "imperceptible. Probably this tendency is intended to combat "[6] charismatic teaching which over-emphasizes the baptism with the Spirit. But certainly no good result is accomplished by thus minimizing, or mis-interpreting the meaning of the baptism with the Spirit. Certainly those who received the baptism with the Spirit in the book of Acts were fully aware of

it, and Peter knew exactly what that experience had wrought in him and in others. There are other erroneous ideas also, which are involved in making the birth of the Spirit and the baptism with the Spirit synonymous.

The attempt to make the baptism with the Spirit equivalent to a born-again experience presupposes either that the disciples were not yet believers until the day of Pentecost, or that although they had been justified by faith in Christ they were only in an Old Testament state of justification and therefore were not born again prior to Pentecost. This last position involves a question of difference in dispensation. We will try to answer all three of these ideas.

(and so he goes on)