

## XXVI.

**Israel and the Nations.**

“Because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.”—*Acts x.*  
45.



The question that arises with reference to Pentecost is: Since the Holy Spirit imparted saving grace to men before and after Pentecost, what is the difference caused by that descent of the Holy Spirit?

An illustration may explain the difference. The rain descends from heaven and man gathers it to quench his thirst. When householders collect it each in his own cistern, it comes down for every family separately; but when, as in modern city life, every house is supplied from the city reservoir, by means of mains and water-pipes, there is no more need of pumps and private cisterns. Suppose that a city whose citizens for ages have been drinking each from his own cistern proposes to construct a reservoir that will supply every home. When the work is completed the water is allowed to run through the system of mains and pipes into every house. It might then be said that on that day the water was poured out into the city. Hitherto it fell upon every man's roof: now it streams through the organized system into every man's house.

Apply this to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and the difference before and after Pentecost will be apparent. The mild showers of the Holy Spirit descended upon Israel of old in drops of saving grace; but in such a manner only that each gathered of the heavenly rain *for himself*, to quench the thirst of each heart *separately*. So it continued until the coming of Christ. Then there came a change; for He gathered the full stream of the Holy Spirit for us all, *in His own Person*. With Him all saints are connected by the channels of faith. And when, after His ascension, this connection with His saints was completed, and He had received the Holy Spirit from His Father, then the last obstacle was removed and the full stream of the Holy Spirit came rushing through the connecting channels into the heart of every believer.

Formerly isolation, every man for himself; now organic union of all the members under their one Head: this is the difference between the days before and after Pentecost. The essential fact of Pentecost consisted in this, that on that day the Holy Spirit entered for the first time into the organic body of the Church, and individuals came to drink, not each by himself, but all together in organic union.

To the question where that system of connecting channels uniting us in one body under our Head may be found, we can give no answer. This belongs to things invisible and spiritual which escape our observation, of which we can have no other representation than that by an image.



Yet this does not alter the fact that the organic union really exists. The Word of God is to us its undeniable witness. Organic life appears in nature in two forms: in the plant, and in the body of man and animal. These are the very types that Christ uses to illustrate the spiritual union between Himself and His people. He said: "I am the Vine, ye are the branches." And St. Paul speaks of having become one plant with Christ. And he frequently uses the image of the body and its members.

Hence there can be no doubt that there exists a mystic union between Christ and believers which works by means of an organic connection, uniting the Head and the members in a for us invisible and incomprehensible manner. By means of this organic union the Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost from Christ the Head into us, the members of His body.

If it were possible to construct the city's water-works in the air above the city, the chief engineer could properly say: "When I turn on the water for the first time I will baptize the city with water." In similar sense Christ may be said to have baptized His Church with the Holy Spirit. For the word of John the Baptist, "I indeed baptize you with water, but He that cometh after me is mightier than I; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost," is explained by Christ Himself as referring to the day of Pentecost ([Acts i. 5](#)): "And being assembled together with Him, He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence";—a promise that undoubtedly referred to the Pentecost miracle. This agrees with the fact that Jesus during His ministry allowed His disciples to continue the Baptism of John. And this shows that even before the crucifixion, John and Peter, Philip and Zaccheus, and many others received saving grace of the Holy Spirit, each for himself, but none of them was baptized with the Holy Spirit before the day of Pentecost.

With reference to the apostles, we must therefore distinguish a threefold giving of the Holy Spirit:

First, that of *saving grace* in regeneration and subsequent illumination—[Matt. xvi. 17](#).

Secondly, *official gifts* qualifying them for the apostolic office—[John xx. 22](#).

Thirdly, the *Baptism with the Holy Ghost*—[Acts i. 5](#) in connection with [Acts ii. 1 ff.](#)

One more difficulty remains. We often read of outpourings of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost. How can this be reconciled with our explanation? In [Acts x. 44, 45](#) we read: "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all who heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." And Peter confirms this by saying: "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost *as well as we*?" From this it is evident that the outpouring on the house of Cornelius was of the same nature as that on Pentecost. Moreover, we hear of a descent of

the Holy Ghost in Samaria ([Acts viii.](#)), and of another in Ephesus ([Acts xix. 6](#)). This descent took place in both instances after the laying on of hands by the apostles; and at Caesarea and Corinth it was followed by a speaking with foreign tongues as in Jerusalem.

It is evident, therefore, that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was not limited to Pentecost in Jerusalem, but was afterward repeated in a weaker and modified form, but still extraordinarily, as on Pentecost.

And who would deny that there is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to-day in the churches? Without it there can be no regeneration, no salvation. Yet the Pentecost signs are lacking, *e.g.*, there is no more speaking with tongues. Hence it is necessary to distinguish between the ordinary outpouring which occurs now, and the extraordinary at Corinth, Caesarea, Samaria, and Jerusalem.

Hence the question stands as follows: If on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out *once for all and forever*, how do we account for the ordinary and extraordinary outpourings?

Allow us once more to recur to our former illustration. Suppose that the city above referred to consisted of a lower and an upper part, both to be supplied from the same reservoir. Upon the completion of its system the lower city may receive the water first, and the upper part receive it only after the system shall have been extended. Here we notice two things: the distribution of the water took place but once, which was the *formal opening* of the waterworks, and could take place but once; while the distribution of the water in the upper city, altho extraordinary; was but an after-effect of the former event. This is a fair illustration of what took place in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Church consisted of parts sharply defined, *viz.* the Jewish, and the Gentile world. Yet both are to constitute one body, one people, one Church; both are to live one life in the Holy Ghost. On Pentecost He is poured out into the body, but only to quench the thirst of one part, *i.e.*, the Jewish; the other part is still excluded. But now apostles and evangelists start from Jerusalem and come into contact with the Gentiles, and the hour has come for the stream of the Holy Ghost to pour forth into the Gentile part of the Church, and the *whole* body is refreshed by the same Holy Spirit. Hence there is an *original* outpouring in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and a *supplementary* outpouring in Caesarea for the Gentile part of the Church; both of the same nature, but each bearing its own special character.

Besides these there are some isolated outpourings of the Holy Spirit, attended by the laying on of the apostles' hands, as in the case of Simon Magus. We explain this as follows: as from time to time new connections are made between individual houses and the city reservoir, so new parts of the body of Christ were added to the Church from without, into whom the Holy Spirit was poured forth from the body as into new members. It is perfectly natural that in these cases the apostles appear as instruments; and that, receiving into the



Church persons that come from a part of the world not yet connected with the Church, they extend to them by the laying on of hands the fellowship of the Holy Ghost who dwells in the body.

This also explains why to-day newly converted persons receive the Holy Spirit only in the ordinary way. For they who are converted *among us* stand already in the *covenant*, belong already to the *seed of the Church* and to the *body of Christ*.<sup>5</sup> Hence no new connection is formed, but a work of the Holy Spirit is wrought in a soul with which He was already related by means of the body.

And thus every objection is met and every detail is put in its own place, and the lines of the domain which had become vague and confused are once more clearly drawn.

It is evident also that the prayer for another outpouring or baptism of the Holy Spirit is incorrect and empty of real meaning. Such prayer actually denies the Pentecost miracle. For He that came and abides with us can no more come to us.



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5 The author refers either to persons baptized in infancy, instructed by the ministers of the Word in the doctrines of the Church and at suitable age received into the Church on confession of their faith, or to persons not so received into the Church, and then on the ground that Holland belongs to the baptized nations.—Trans.

## XXVII.

**The Signs of Pentecost.**

“Signs in the earth beneath.” — *Acts ii. 19.*



Let us now consider the signs that accompanied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit—the sound of a rushing, mighty wind; tongues of fire; and the speaking with other tongues—which constitute the *fourth difficulty* that meets us in the investigation of the events of Pentecost (see p. 113). The first and second precede, the third follows the outpouring.

These signs are not merely symbolic. The speaking with other tongues, at least, appears as part of the narrative. Symbols are intended to represent or indicate something or to call the attention to it; hence it may be omitted without affecting the matter itself. A symbol is like a finger-post on the road: it may be removed without affecting the road. If the Pentecost signs were purely symbolic, the event would have been the same without them; but the absence of the sign of other tongues would have modified the character of the subsequent history completely.

This justifies the supposition that the two preceding signs were also *constituent* parts of the miracle. The fact that neither of them is an apt symbol strengthens the supposition; for a symbol must speak. The finger-post that leaves the traveler in doubt concerning the direction he is to take is no finger-post. Considering the fact that for eighteen centuries theologians have been unable to ascertain the significance of the so-called symbols with any degree of certainty, it must be acknowledged that it is difficult to believe that the apostles or the multitude understood their significance at once and in the same way. The issue proves the contrary. They did not understand the signs. The multitude, confounded and perplexed, said one to another: “What meaneth this?” And when Peter arose as an apostle, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to interpret the miracle, he made no effort to attach any symbolic significance to the signs, but simply declared that an event had taken place by which the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled.

Did the event of Pentecost then exhaust the prophecy of Joel? By no means; for the sun was not turned into darkness, nor the moon into blood; and we hear nothing of the dreams of old men. Nor could it; the notable day that will exhaust this and so many other prophecies can not come until the return of the Lord. But the holy apostle meant to say, that the day of the Lord’s return was brought so much nearer by this event. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is one of the great events which pledge the coming of that great and notable day. Without it that day can not come. Looking back from heaven, the day of Pentecost will appear to us as the last great miracle immediately preceding the day of the Lord. And since that day shall be attended by awful signs, as was the preparatory day of Pentecost, the apostle puts them together and makes them appear as one, showing that in Joel’s prophecy God points to both events.

