

Introduction

To be redeemed means to be rescued. Redemption is often spoken of in terms of a hostage. When the hostage is set free he is said to be redeemed, whether that redemption came by paying a ransom in money or by someone of superior strength simply liberating the hostage by force.

In this article we are not going to redeem a person, but rather a precious doctrine and Christian experience, from those who have taken it hostage and are forcing it to say and do things that it was never intended to say and do. We are speaking of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and its captor, Pentecostalism.

The mere mention of the baptism of the Holy Ghost sets some people into jitters. They have seen and heard so much commotion and unbiblical practice associated with the Holy Spirit that they automatically get suspicious just hearing the phrase “the baptism of the Holy Ghost.” We understand that concern and have felt some of that same jitteriness. But at the same time, we must not react and throw out either the doctrine or the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We simply need to rescue it from those who have mangled it so badly that it is hardly recognizable. Like Abraham who rose to the occasion and redeemed his nephew Lot from Amraphel and his three sidekicks (Ge. 14), may we rise up and rescue this precious truth and experience from those who have taken it captive.

In the recent issues of *The Heartbeat of the Remnant* we have focused pretty heavily on the kingdom of God and the neglect of the kingdom teachings in today’s “gospel.” The salvation aspect of the kingdom has been separated from the kingdom itself, and a “gospel” has been made out of Jesus dying on the cross for our sins. This is a false gospel, because it almost totally neglects the teachings of Jesus about the kingdom of God. In the same way, some have taken the biblical teachings about the baptism of the Holy Ghost and separated it from the kingdom teachings. In reaction, it is possible to just toss completely the doctrine and experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Rather than *react*, we want to *act* and rescue this much-twisted teaching and experience from perversions.

Let God be true and every man a liar. We will use extensive quotes from early Anabaptism in this article. The Anabaptists spoke more about the work and power of the Holy Spirit than any other Reformation-era group. Pilgram Marpeck, for example,

Redeeming the Baptism Pentecostalism

Mike

seems to mention the Holy Spirit on an average of about once per page in his writings. Yet, he was not even remotely a “Pentecostal.” We use these quotes not because they are Anabaptists and we are trying to be like the early Anabaptists, but rather because they reflect a biblical view of the work and experience of the Holy Spirit among God’s people.

In 1527, in the very earliest days of the Anabaptist revival, some Anabaptists told the Zurich council, “[Believers are those] who have died to the will of the flesh and are now walking in the will of the Spirit, with the fruit of the Spirit.” Amen! ~

The problem and the promise

The problem is quite simple to define: sin. When man willfully and knowingly disobeys God, God has to leave. God and sin cannot coexist in the same place.

So what do we do to remedy our situation? By nature we are all born corrupted, that is, with a self-centeredness that is contrary to the nature of God. This self-centeredness causes us to sin, to do actions that are contrary to God’s will. But beyond these actions is the problem of human nature: the very nature of man and the nature of God cannot mix. So how do you reunite man and God?

In an effort to get man to see his sin, God gave Moses a set of laws. These laws gave a basic—but incomplete—framework of what God had declared as the right way for man to live. These laws even became known as “God’s righteousness” to those who held to them.

So now man knew—in a provisional form—what God expected of them. The “schoolmaster” was given to teach



of the Holy Ghost from ostalism

Atnip



them these things. But a problem still existed. These laws had provisions for forgiveness of sins, but not for the restoration of the life of God within man.

In other words, there were no ceremonies or sacrifices given in the Mosaic Law where the final result (upon doing them) would be the infilling of God's Spirit back into the human heart. There was not a ceremony of which the end result was that God said, "When you do this ceremony just right, I will pour My Spirit back into you." Paul wrote to the Galatians:

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

There was simply no law given, no sacrifice or ceremony available, which could fill a man with the Holy Spirit. That was the weakness of the Mosaic Law, and that was why it had to be replaced by something better.

In the Old Testament, only the prophets and a few select other people are ever spoken of as being full of the Spirit. But there were promises given of a time when the Spirit of God would be poured out on every believer. Let's look at some of them briefly, in the order they appear in our Bibles.

- *Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.* Ps. 104:30 This verse's context is of the creatures in the sea. But the part we want to focus on is how that the sending of the Spirit of God "creates." The last Adam is called a "quickening spirit." 1 Co. 15:45 The word quickening is old English for life-giving or life-imparting. This verse references the fact that the Messiah would impart life through His Spirit. Of course, He would

not be doing it to the fishes in the sea, but to men dead in trespasses and sins. "And you hath he quickened ..." Ep 2:1

- *When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence.* Is. 4:4-5 We find in Isaiah 4 some promises for the gospel day. We find cleansing and purging "by the spirit of judgment ... and of burning." Then we find the promise of comfort and guidance. When the Messiah came, it was prophesied by John the Baptist that Jesus would baptize "with the Holy Ghost and with fire," as well as Jesus himself promising to send His Spirit to guide and comfort His people.

- *Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.* Is. 32:15 The context of this verse is an outpouring upon God's people that would bring about a change from barrenness and desolation to a fruitful and abundant life ... when "the spirit be poured upon us from on high."

- *And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.* Ez. 11:18-20 The context is a restoration of God's people. We find a promise of cleansing, of unity, of a new spirit, and of a new heart. This would have to be a supernatural work of God, since a man cannot give himself a new spirit. The end result of this change of spirit/heart would be that the recipients would be obedient to God, and reunited with Him.

- *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.* Ez. 36:26-28 It is hard to know where to stop quoting in this section of Scriptures! Such rich promises! But to keep the article short we will only quote these two verses. We again see the promise of a new heart, a soft heart. We

also find God motivating (causing) the recipients to obedience. And again we see a reunification between God and man.

- *And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.*

Ez 37:14 The context (which we will not print here for the sake of space) is a rebirth or resurrection of a bunch of old, dry bones. The powerful promise is that “ye shall live,” and the quickening (life-giving) force is “my spirit.” Again we see the Spirit of God imparting new life.

- *And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.*

Joel 2:28-29 These verses are the most quoted in reference to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The important point is the words “all flesh.” As mentioned earlier, before the coming of the Messiah only a few select prophets and other individuals were given the Spirit of God. With the coming of the Messiah, the ability to be baptized with that Spirit was opened to “all”; even lowly-valued slaves could be recipients.

- *Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. Ze. 4:6* The promise connected with this verse is the context of two olive trees which (as we learn later in Revelation) had a direct connection to the lamps. In other words, the lamps had a direct pipeline direct from the olive trees, a never-ending supply of oil straight from the source. This would be the power supply, so to speak, for the candlestick. The “energy” would be from God, not from man’s own abilities and efforts.

From these prophetic utterances we get a glimpse of the working and power of the Spirit of God. The Law also spoke in shadows of the Spirit, most clearly in the “anointing oil.” For this present study, however, we will skip over these types (for the sake of space) and move right into the time of the promise of the outpouring.

Holy Ghost and fire

John could not have said it any plainer. He baptized with water, but Jesus would baptize His converts with something more powerful than water: the Holy Spirit and fire. I am sure that puzzled the hearers of those words when they heard them. Baptized with fire?

On the day of Pentecost it happened. Physical tongues of fire sat upon the first recipients of the above-mentioned promises. But something happened deeper than the physical flames. A fire of divine love was lit within them, purging out the old self-centeredness. Water can only wash off exterior filth; fire purifies the actual elements themselves. Wash a silver spoon in water and the food bits come off. Throw the same spoon in a fire and the impurities come out of the silver. In the same way, when a man was baptized with John’s baptism, he could have his sins remitted. But baptize that same man with the Holy Ghost and his sins would be burned out of his heart.

By saying He would baptize with fire, Jesus was using the illustration of the interior cleansing that the Spirit of God would work in a man. Of course, in the very initial outpouring a physical flame was also seen, but that was only a sign or symbol of the invisible flame kindled in the spirit of man. Those physical flames were not necessary to accomplish the interior cleansing, and very, very rarely (if ever)¹ have been seen again since the first outpouring.



Water can only wash off exterior filth; fire purifies the actual elements themselves.

A second birth

But not only did the Messiah call it being *baptized with the Holy Ghost*, He spoke of being *born of the Spirit*. When a leading Jew came to him by night to check Him out, Jesus started talking about being born of the Spirit. He told Nicodemus that unless one was rebirthed, one could not enter His kingdom. When Nicodemus showed obvious confusion, Jesus explained that man’s spirit had to be born of God’s Spirit. In other words, there had to be a renovation on the inside before a man could enter the kingdom. Jesus also explained that although one cannot actually see the Spirit, one could see the results of His

¹ There are reports of people seeing similar things, but I take a neutral stance as to if it has really happened again. There is nothing to prohibit God from having physical flames appear again when someone is baptized with the Spirit, and I would “put God in a box” to say He will never do it again. But it is beside the point to argue whether God has ever had physical flames appear again.

work ... just like the blowing of the wind. This teaching was not just a parable; the new birth was an actual, but unseen, spiritual birth experience that was just as real as a physical birth.

Jesus then moved right into talking about having eternal life. One thing to remember here is that the name Jehovah is not found in the New Testament. But it actually is there ... because Jehovah means “always existent.” When Jesus spoke of giving eternal life, He was speaking of giving Jehovah Himself, the “Eternally-Living.” Whoever would believe on Jesus would receive that Always-Existent Life as a free gift.

It is here that much of modern theology falls short. Too often people read Jesus as saying, “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have *forgiveness*. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have *forgiveness*.”

Not so! Jesus came “that they might *have life*; and that they might have it more abundantly!” Jn. 10:10 (Note again that it doesn’t say *forgiveness*.) While forgiveness is needed and included in the gospel, we need to remind ourselves that being forgiven and being given the Always-Existent Life are not synonymous: being given Eternally-Existent Life goes way beyond a mere forgiveness. And that life is the Spirit of God, Jehovah himself, coming into man’s heart to dwell there. This was something the Mosaic Law had no provision for. Forgiveness could be obtained under the Law, but not a restoration of the life of God within the human spirit. What a difference! God and man so reconciled that God actually moves into, and becomes reunited with, the spirit of man!

This is that!

Then it happened. Jesus had told them to stay in Jerusalem until a supernatural power would be poured into them. They waited, praying. Suddenly that “wind” blew and the promises of the Father—which we looked at earlier in this article—were fulfilled. The stony hearts were taken away, and soft, new ones given. A supernatural love was shed abroad in their hearts. There was meekness and brokenness, but at the same time a great boldness. This

was Eternal Life! This was a spiritual resurrection! This was a rebirth of their inner man, something they could never have worked up in their own strength. This was the grace of God!

And, of course, on that occasion there were special gifts given also, among them the ability to speak in languages they had never known before. And they could not but help to speak about “the wonderful works of God.” There were, on that occasion, also visible flames sitting above their heads. But these gifts and the visible flames and the roaring sounds were sort of beside the point. Something was happening here that had never happened in the history of mankind.

A kingdom was being formed, a kingdom where the King ruled from the inside, not the outside.

Eternal Life was being poured *into* them; Jehovah was sitting on His throne in man’s heart once again.

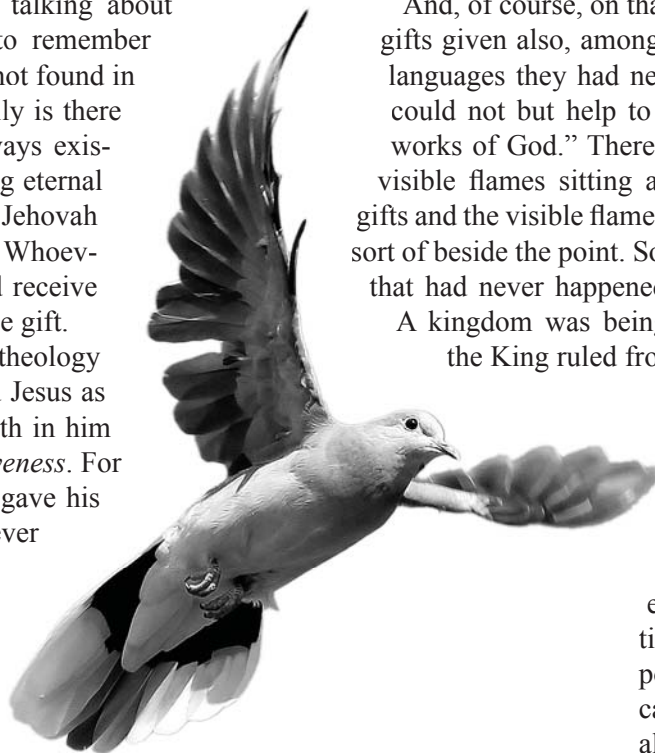
It was probably a very emotional scene, but the emotions were also beside the point. Many diverse things cause people to get emotional. The emotions of that day were “neither here nor there.” But evidently the emotional outbursts and the speaking in foreign languages caused the scene to appear as if they had just had a full-blown party

with too much whiskey and wine flowing.

Peter, who only a few days before had vehemently denied that he even knew Jesus, now was empowered to boldly stand in front of a crowd and proclaim, “This is that which the prophet Joel prophesied about!” When the crowd asked what they needed to do, Peter told them the simple steps to take: repent of their disobedience, be baptized in the name of Jesus (being “baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” implied a total submission to Him as King of their life) ... and they too could experience the baptism—the spiritual rebirth—of the Holy Spirit.

The fruits of that experience

Beginning in Acts 2:41, which is right after the end of Peter’s sermon on that great day, we will pull out a list of results of that baptism of the Spirit: People added to Christ’s kingdom, steadfastness in pure doctrine, daily fellowship, prayer, unity, godly fear, healings, selflessness in sharing



Receiving eternal life is the Spirit of God, Jehovah himself, coming into man’s heart to dwell there.

of material possessions (freedom from materialism), joy, contentment, boldness for Christ ...

Paul, who was not involved in the initial outpouring of the Spirit, later laid out a list of fruit that one would see in the life of the recipient: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Ga. 5:22-23

The thing to notice in this list is that all the fruit mentioned has to do with character attributes, something that takes place in the spirit of man. Let me say before proceeding any further that it is totally erroneous to say that "only the inside counts." Spiritually rebirthed people are not spiritual schizophrenics who lead a double life, a life where the inside doesn't match the outside. But on the other hand, it is possible to do the right things with the wrong spirit, or attitude. For example, a person can give all his goods to feed the poor, but he can do that because he really wants to get some praise from men. Or, because he wants to make himself feel good. So he can do the right thing, but from a wrong spirit. When a man is born again of the Spirit, he will begin to do the right things *with the right motive*.

Banjos for Jesus?

Let's look, but very briefly, at what happens today in many places. A group of people gather. The music starts, the rhythm picks up, the bodies start swaying to the beat, a repetitious phrase rings out (even a very godly phrase), and soon the emotions are boiling fervently. Someone falls to the floor and starts rolling back and forth, back and forth, shrieking out something. The person falling to the floor may be living in adultery, married to someone

who has a living spouse from a previous marriage. He may be a member of the Air Force bomber squadron, or perhaps a Hollywood actor. Their jewelry flashes as they roll. As they roll back and forth shrieking, perhaps the pastor will announce, "Look, there are God's banjos!"²

After a while the emotions slow down. The music stops. Everyone goes home, including the "banjos," who go home to continue living in adultery or dropping bombs on innocent children. The "pastor"—dare we use that term for false prophets?—begs everyone to "give money to the Lord." He tells them that God intended for His children to live like kings, since they are kings and priests. That is why he drives a Cadillac and lives in a house worth half a million dollars. If you want, he will lay his hands on you and you too can experience being "baptized with the Holy Ghost" and become a banjo for Jesus.

Reactions to banjos

For serious disciples of Jesus, the above-described scene is almost disgusting.³ In *reaction*, we can easily come to the place where we don't even want to hear about the baptism of the Holy Ghost. But dear brethren! We must not let the false prophets steal a precious truth and experience from us. There is a genuine baptism of the Holy Ghost, a real rebirth of the human spirit, that Jesus told us that we must go through to enter His kingdom. And we must keep in mind that the kingdom is the goal, not the experience. Being born again by the Spirit is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

2 I have heard that very phrase, believe it or not.

3 Disgust is like anger, an emotion that we do not want to let rule our attitudes.

The Tongues Test

In this simple test, we will ask a few questions concerning what the Bible has to say about speaking in tongues. The answers are so obvious that we will not even provide them. THINK about the answers.

1. Jesus said we shall know them by their (fruits, gifts).
2. We are exhorted to be filled with the Spirit, speaking to ourselves in (tongues, psalms and hymns and spiritual songs).
3. Tongues are for a sign (to the believer, to the unbeliever).
4. When Paul asked the question "Do all speak with tongues?" the implied answer was (yes, no).
5. The unbelievers in Acts 2 (needed an interpreter, did not need an interpreter) to understand what those speaking in tongues were saying.

The genuine experience

For a look at the genuine experience of being born again of the Spirit, we will now turn to some quotes from the early Anabaptists. By using these quotes, we are not saying the early Anabaptists were a perfect people who understood and experienced the Spirit in a perfect way. But we do find their teaching and practice to match closely the biblical teaching and experience. We will start with Dirk Philips, who colabored with Menno Simons.

Therefore, Christ also says he “who believes in me” has eternal life. Jn. 3:16; 11:25 Why? Because he has received a divine power, yes, a quickening power of eternal life—creating life in his heart which so thoroughly penetrates, purifies, and renews, and finally drives, leads, and transposes to the origin from which it has sprung, namely, eternal divine life itself.

So now if anyone who thus believes in Jesus Christ has received such a living power of God and who feels this throughout himself, he is a true believing Christian and confesses Christ according to the Spirit, for he is one Spirit with him. Jn. 3:18; 1 Co. 6:17. He also actually understands what the flesh of Christ is; for he himself is flesh of the flesh of Christ and bone of his bone. Ep. 5:30 In addition, he has in the Spirit and true faith eaten the flesh of Christ and drunk his blood. Jn. 6:54 Through this he has become united in one common nature with Christ. This knowledge⁴ of God and of Christ is eternal life. Jn. 17:3

But whatever anyone says about Jesus Christ without such an inner power of God, without such an enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and without such fellowship and impartation of the divine seed of the character and nature of Jesus Christ, this is idle chatter and like the speech of a blind person who (according to the common proverb) disputes and discusses about color which he has neither seen nor can see. For this reason we wish to have everyone who claims to be a Christian to be faithfully admonished that he thus learn to know Jesus Christ, believe in him, and receive him in order that Jesus Christ on the last day may confess him before God his Father

⁴ The meaning of knowledge here is more than a head knowledge, but to “know Him personally.”

and before the elect angels for his brother, sister, and mother, and receive him into his eternal kingdom. Mt. 12:50⁵

Menno Simons puts the same thing in a bit different wording:

Regeneration ... is an inward change, which converts a man by the power of God, through faith, from evil to good, from carnality to spirituality, from unrighteousness to righteousness, out of Adam into Christ, which can in no wise take place with infants. The regenerated live by the power of the new life; they crucify the flesh with its evil lusts; they put off the old Adam with his deeds; they avoid every appearance of evil; they are taught, governed, and influenced by the Holy Ghost. Ro. 1:17.

Behold this is true regeneration with its fruits, of which the Scriptures speak, and comes through faith in the word of God, without which no one, who has arrived to the years of understanding, can be saved; as Christ says, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” Jn. 3:3. **Yea, it is all in vain, if one were even baptized of Peter, or Paul, or Christ himself, if he were not baptized from above with the Holy Ghost and with fire.** Mt. 3:11 As Paul says, “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature,” Ga. 5:6; 2 Co. 5:17. All who are thus born of God, changed and renewed in the inner man, and translated from Adam into Christ, are ready to obey the word of the Lord, and say with holy Paul, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” They deny themselves with all their minds and hearts; they submit to the word and ordinances of the Lord, without dislike or opposition; they receive baptism according to the command of the Lord, Mt. 28:19. They become and manifest themselves as fruitful branches of Christ, the true Vine, and joint heirs in the church of the Lord, John 15:5. They receive forgiveness of their sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.⁶

⁵ Cornelius J. Dyck, William E. Keeney, and Alvin J. Beachy, eds., *The Writings of Dirk Philips*, (Herald Press, 1992), 149–50.

⁶ Menno Simons, *Complete Works of Menno Simon* (Pathway Publishers, 1995), 27.

Concerning 1 Peter 3:21, Menno had the following to say:

Here Peter teaches us how the inward baptism saves us, by which the inner man is washed, and not the outward baptism by which the flesh is washed; for only this inward baptism, as already stated, is of value in the sight of God, while outward baptism follows only as an evidence of obedience which is of faith; for could outward baptism save without the inner washing, the whole Scriptures which speak of the new man would be spoken to no purpose. The kingdom of heaven would be bound to elementary water; the blood of Christ would be shed in vain, and no one that is baptized could be lost. No, no! **Outward baptism avails nothing so long as we are not inwardly renewed, regenerated, and baptized of God, with the heavenly fire and the Holy Ghost.**⁷

Peter Riedemann, sometimes called “the second founder of the Hutterites,” wrote a large explanation of his beliefs while imprisoned. Concerning whether the transformation of man is a work of man or a work of God, Peter explained it with these words:

Even though a person speaks with the tongue of angels, (1 Corinthians 13:1) if God does not speak through him, he does not speak God’s Word, (Jeremiah 23:21) because God is the Word. (John 1:1)

But when God speaks through a person and wishes to build his temple in that one, God first cuts away what is coarse and wild and is not fitting for his house. He does this through the preaching of repentance. (Luke 3:1-14 Mark 1:1-8 Matthew 3:1-12) When any receive the Word

God works in the person who surrenders himself, and God gives proof of his power in the person’s renewal.

~Peter Riedemann

and repent, God places them on the foundation of Christ, (1 Corinthians 3:11) provided they die to sin and become like him in death. They will then be revived through faith and restored to a new life, (Romans 6:1-4) which comes about not through human power (Zechariah 4:6 Deuteronomy 8:1-3) but by God’s grace and work. (Ephesians 2:1-10).

Since this is done not by human effort but by God’s action, (1 Corinthians: 15:20-28), Paul exhorts us as follows: “Yield your members to be instruments of God and his righteousness, so that they may be holy.”

(Romans: 6:19) If God is to do anything good in a person, that person must surrender himself to God. (Proverbs 1:22-31) Otherwise, the good cannot be done in him. Just as a person cannot do anything good of himself, so God does not want to do anything in him, unless he gives himself with all his heart to be God’s instrument. Then that person’s surrendered will interweaves itself with the divine will in such a way that the divine will and the human will become one. From now on, God desires, chooses, and works everything in that person. The person allows himself to become God’s instrument (John 15:4-5) and thus may say with the beloved apostle Paul, “Now I live no more, but Christ lives in me.” (Galatians 2:20) This is the way God works in people. On the other hand, if a person keeps back anything, chooses for himself, or wants or undertakes something on his own and not with God, God’s work is hindered and can make no progress. Such a person remains unprepared for this building and will not be suitable for it. God works in the person who surrenders himself, and God gives proof of his power (Deuteronomy 8:1-4) in the person’s renewal. (Titus 3:1-7) Through this work God enables the person to partake of his Son’s (1 Corinthians 2:9-10) nature and character, (2 Peter 1:3-8) and even, in part, of his unlimited power. This we read in the words, “All things are possible to the one who believes.” (Mark 9:23)⁸

The proof is in the pudding

So how do we know that the spirit that comes upon us is really God’s Spirit? This is where Pentecostalism erred from day one. Someone decided that the proof of the baptism of the Holy Ghost was speaking in tongues; if the recipient did not speak in tongues he was not baptized with the Holy Ghost. Unfortunately, they seemed not to realize that the Bible is quite clear: “Ye shall know them by their fruits.” Mt. 7:16 Notice that it does not say, “by their gifts.” Nor, “by their emotions.” Nor, “by their zeal.”

None of the three things just listed are evil in themselves, and all three are desirable. Yet Pentecostalism as we know it today has been built upon the false premise that one has not been baptized with the Holy Ghost unless he speaks in tongues as proof.

There can be little doubt that the first outpouring of the Spirit mentioned in Acts was an emotional experience. Tears of joy were probably flowing quite freely. Loud

7 Ibid., 28.

8 Peter Riedemann and John J. Friesen, *Peter Riedemann’s Hutterite Confession of Faith* (Herald Press, 1999), 178-9.

shouts of victory may have resounded up the street. Yet Christians are not known by their emotions. In the same way that Pentecostalism was built upon a false premise, others have tried to say that unless you have an extremely emotional experience, you have not been baptized with the Spirit. Our emotional makeup is quite diverse, and we need to exercise extreme caution in trying to make other people respond emotionally just like we do. That said, it does seem strange to think of being forgiven, released from the power of sin, filled with joy, have love spread around in our hearts ... all that without some sort of emotion arising within us.

Most likely the men and women in that upper room were zealous (by nature) for God. But the gifts, the emotions, and the zeal are all beside the point. I have seen people who had an emotional experience, but who missed the baptism of the Holy Ghost. And I have seen extremely zealous people, zealous for God, who also missed the rebirth of the Spirit. It usually shows in the attitude, since many are zealous for biblical truths, and are practicing the correct ordinances, and have laid aside the gross sins of the flesh like drinking, swearing, and fornication. Many even practice modest dress, head coverings, and may have even taken up the doctrines of nonresistance and nonaccumulation of wealth. But Christians are not known by their religious zeal.

Zealots often fail in the sins of the spirit, in their attitudes. Others can try to talk to them about the spirit in which they operate and they just simply cannot see it ... they have not the Spirit of Christ within to “see the kingdom of God.” All they can see is that they have conformed themselves outwardly to many of Jesus’ teachings—which is wonderful that they have!

But the Holy Spirit does a work of transformation on the inside that cannot be imitated or worked up in the flesh. Great enthusiasm propels zealots onward and they mistakenly believe that they are being compelled by the Spirit of God, when in fact they are compelled only by their religious zeal. And I reiterate that there is nothing wrong with having a great zeal for God. Simply put though, great zeal and the Holy Ghost are not synonyms. Pilgram Marpeck, a South German Anabaptist, explained it this way:



Our emotional makeup is quite diverse, and we need to exercise extreme caution in trying to make other people respond emotionally just like we do.

Ah my brethren, how diligently and carefully we have to take heed that we do not consider our own impulse [to be that] of the Holy Spirit, our own course [to be] the course and walk of Christ. ...

I have experienced that in myself, also through the narratives of biblical writings, that natural piety hates evil, and is zealous about the good ... that [unconverted zealots] are overpowered therein and driven with zeal, exerting themselves considerably.

That is not therefore the compulsion of the Holy Spirit of Christ, nor do they become children through it. ... Even today ... many persons act because of zeal concerning good, who do not know or suppose otherwise than that they are driven by the Holy Spirit. ...

I write all this in order that each one may well see for themselves what drives them, from what source it flows, from what source their drive stems. This the servants do not know. The friends or children, however, know what their Lord does and why the compulsion of the Holy Spirit is in them.⁹

Partakers of the divine nature

Thomas von Imbroich was a Swiss Brethren in the early days of the Anabaptist movement. Although he was martyred in his late 20s, he had preached and helped to start a number

of congregations up and down the Rhine River. While imprisoned he wrote a widely-used expression of his faith. He has the following to say about the proof of a rebirth by the Holy Ghost:

By these words [Jn. 3:6-8] Christ indicates that the regenerated person becomes spiritual and is born of the Spirit having a spiritual nature, as Peter says. (2 Pe. 1; Ro. 8; Acts 17; Jn. 14) “You may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature.” By this everyone may know whether he is born of the Spirit, namely, if he has the characteristics of the Spirit, just as the person who is born of the flesh has

⁹ William Klassen and Walter Klaassen, eds., *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck*, New edition (Wipf & Stock Pub, 2000), 511–2.

the characteristics of the flesh—each in his sphere (Jn. 3; 1 Co. 15). Birds have their peculiar nature; so also, wild animals; likewise humans. Each person is minded according to that from which he is born. The person born of the Spirit is therefore spiritually minded (Ro. 8), as Paul says: “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.”¹⁰

God's grace is the Holy Spirit.

~Hans Betz, in an *Ausbund* hymn

Those who are thus born of this spiritual seed of Abraham will bring spiritual fruits; that is, all kinds of kindness, righteousness, and truth: They are obedient to their Father; they keep his commandments and follow his precepts (Ep. 5; Jn. 10, 14, 15; Is. 55); they abandon ungodly living (Ro. 12), and are not conformed to the world;

they seek the things that are above, where Christ is, and not those things that are on earth; they mortify and crucify their sinful flesh (Co. 3): they follow in the footsteps of Jesus (their predecessor) in grief, in wretchedness, in persecution, and are obedient to him unto death (Ga. 3; 1 Pe. 2; He. 11). We therefore say that those who are thus driven by the Spirit of God are the spiritual descendants of Abraham and are children of God (Ro. 4, 8).

Thus, all the scriptures cited above testify that no one is born of God who does not have such faith and has not received the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our inheritance (Ep. 1).¹¹

Grace!

You have likely heard the typical definitions of grace. Hans Betz, an early Anabaptist who wrote a number of the songs that formed the core of the original *Ausbund*,¹² defined grace in simple terms. In song number 88 he writes:

God's grace is the Holy Spirit, Who is also called the Comforter ...

Now if the Holy Spirit leads you, So that you do not yield to sin, God has birthed you anew, In Jesus Christ His Son.

Now I am sure that Hans did not mean that grace and the Holy Spirit are *always* synonymous. Yet I challenge you to read through the New Testament and put “the Holy Spirit” in every place you read the word “grace.” For ex-

10 Leonard Gross, *Golden Apples in Silver Bowls*

(Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 1999), 77–78.

11 Ibid., 98.

12 The *Ausbund* is a German language Anabaptist hymnal, still in use among the Old Order Amish.

ample, “For by the Holy Spirit are ye saved, through faith ...” Ep. 2:8 The Holy Spirit saves us in the true sense of salvation, which is to rescue or to salvage. By an infilling of the Holy Spirit, we receive power to conquer self, the flesh, the world, and even the devil himself. Now that is grace, truly a free gift! Ac. 2:38; 10:45

“For ye are not under the law, but under *the Holy Spirit* ...” Ro. 6:14 Remembering that the weakness of the Law was that it had no provision to be reunited in spirit with God, we can understand how that the New Covenant is so much superior than the Old. Now the believer can live *under the power of the Holy Spirit!* Under the Spirit, but over the Law!

How to get the Spirit

One of the biggest battles of the early church was the battle against those Jews who did not understand that the Mosaic Law was not to be put on the Gentile believers. Called Judaizers, they felt that the Law was to be kept even after it had been fulfilled. In battling against this idea, Paul asked the Galatians a thought-provoking question: “Did you get baptized with the Holy Ghost because you kept the Law so perfectly, or did you get baptized with the Holy Ghost because you believed on Jesus?” Ga. 3:2

Of course, they all knew that the free gift of the Spirit was because of their faith in Jesus as the promised Prophet, Priest, and King; the Law had no provision to receive an infilling of the Spirit. Paul then followed the first question with a similar one: “The person who led you into the experience of the infilling of the Spirit, did he do that through preaching obedience to the ceremonial laws, or did he do that by preaching faith in Jesus?” Again, they knew it was because of Jesus, not because of keeping the ceremonial laws.

Die to live

Hans Betz, the hymn writer mentioned earlier, had the following to say in one of his hymns:

Understand what's happening: when death occurs, as a man denies his flesh, **then man receives from Jesus Christ the life-giving baptism.** The same is called fire and spirit, John does tell us; this alone makes holy and pure and makes fellowship with God.

Whoever has this baptism is planted into the death of Christ; all his desires thus being crucified, he is thereby born anew. This birth has, in Jesus Christ, taken place through water and spirit.¹³

The secret to receiving the “life-giving baptism” of the Holy Spirit is to die; die to our own will in faith that Jesus

13 *Ausbund*, Song 108.

would lead him aright. This “formula”—if we dare even call it a formula—was foundational throughout early Anabaptism; we could probably fill this magazine with their quotes on the topic. They used the German word *gesehenheit* to describe it; a “letting loose” of our own will, placing that will into the hands of God. This is death to controlling our own life; we simply submit ourselves to obedience to whatever God, through Christ, has said. If you believe in someone, you will do what that person says.

This is also a renunciation of materialism, fame, and plain old-fashioned pleasure seeking. Jesus, to whom we submit our will, has told us that unless a man “forsake *all* that he hath,” he cannot be His disciple.

The dearth in our day

That word “all” is the key to understanding the dearth of real Holy Spirit power in our churches today. Materialism runs rampant, so rampant that if anyone even suggests that Jesus really meant—I mean *really* meant—a renunciation of wealth, he may well get his ears boxed . . . even in conservative Anabaptist churches. To suggest that “all” means for youth (and older ones as well) to renounce sports and pleasure seeking may get a person tagged as “legalist.” To suggest that “all” really means “all,” and that “forsake” really means “forsake,” and that “cannot” means “impossible” seems to put one into the “fanatic” class.

But Jesus really did mean what He said. It is impossible to be His disciple without forsaking *all*. We may take up a zealous obedience to certain biblical teachings, yet never truly die to self. We may find the perfect theology and expound it ever so clearly, yet never die with Christ. We may go to the ends of the earth, preaching to the unreached tribes in remote corners, denying ourselves of the comforts of modern life . . . and yet never have forsaken *all*. Forsaking all is the cross we must take up, the cost we must count before becoming a disciple.

Leonhard Schiemer was an Austrian convert to Anabaptism. He lived but nine months as an Anabaptist before martyrdom, but managed to bring in about 200 others in that short span of time. While in prison he wrote several tracts and a letter to the congregation where he had been ordained as elder. In that letter, he says the following concerning taking up the cross:

“Whoever will be my disciple,” says Christ, “must follow me.” In another place He says, “Without me you can do nothing.” Peter says, “Whoever suffers in the flesh ceases from sin.”

The first light has been our schoolmaster until the other—Christ, who is the light of the world—came. When His Spirit enters me I am no longer under the

schoolmaster, but under grace. When this happens the law of works, sin, death, and members ceases, and the law of the Spirit, faith, life, and the heart begins.

But this Spirit is given to no one except he first submit himself to the cross and the chastisement of the Lord.

Entering the kingdom of God

Dirk Philips wrote a long tract called “The New Birth and the New Creature.” He had the following to say as a conclusion, and he says it so well that we use that conclusion to conclude this article:

I say this in conclusion: the born-again children of God and new creatures in Christ Jesus are those who are born again out of God the heavenly Father through Christ Jesus and are renewed and sanctified through the Holy Spirit, who have become participants of the divine nature, of the being of Jesus Christ, and of the character of the Holy Spirit.

They are those who have died to sin and still daily die more and more, and experience righteousness; those who never boast in themselves but only in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to them and they to the world; those who in true faith walk according to the rule of Christ and follow in his footsteps, who know no one according to the flesh; those who do not have an appetite for what is human but for what is divine.

In summary, these are righteous and do righteousness just as God out of whom they are born is righteous; these are minded like Christ Jesus and are motivated by the Holy Spirit.

Where this takes place, there one sees the kingdom of God, there one comes into the kingdom of heaven; there is a new creature in Christ Jesus. ~

When His Spirit enters me I am no longer under the schoolmaster, but under grace.
~Leonhard Schiemer

This article is far from being a complete exposition of the work of the Holy Spirit in the church. Much could be said of the continuing work He accomplishes; teaching, convicting, leading, and comforting. More could be said of the gifts of the Spirit. More could be said of the unity of the Spirit. More could be said of how the Spirit works in a congregation better than in an individual.

In short, this article focuses mostly upon the initial reception of the Spirit in the believer. This is the beginning, the birth, not the end! ~