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The Second Blessing

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The word "second" seems to be especially disagreeable and offensive to many, and grave objections are urged against the expression.

We would say that we are no stickler for terms, and think it best in describing a divine work of grace to adhere to scriptural phraseology. But when a term like that of the "second blessing" does not violence to the Word of God, but is really descriptive of a work that we find taught in the Bible, then it seems it might be used without offense or objection. For instance, Christ promises His disciples another blessing. He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem until they obtained it. He called it the "promise of the Father," a "baptism," "endowment of power," and the "Holy Ghost coming down upon them." All of these terms plainly indicate something new to be received and experienced by the disciples. The "promise of the Father" was something yet unfulfilled, they had not yet been "endued with power," and according to the Saviour's words the Holy Ghost had not yet come upon them. He had breathed the Spirit upon them, but there was something yet evidently to be realized. As for the word "baptism," it cannot be tortured in any way to mean "birth;" for these two things are always distinct, and separated by an interval of time, both in nature and grace. Moreover, when this baptism—endowment—promise of the Father came upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost it was seen to be another work of the Spirit, different from anything they had experienced before in the spiritual life.

If this statement is challenged, we bring up in proof the apostle Peter, who declares in Acts xv, 8,9 that it was a purifying of their hearts by faith. He identifies here the blessing received by Cornelius with what came upon them at Pentecost. This verse is a fatal blow to Zinzendorfianism, and to those of our Church who insist that regeneration is purity; and it is one of the many foundation stones we have upon which to rest the doctrine of the second blessing.

So here is a subsequent work of grace, and as such can be truly called a second blessing. Furthermore, as both in the Bible and in the Christian experience "a baptism of the spirit" is recognized to be different from "the baptism-of the Holy Spirit," this latter named experience can truly be called the second blessing.

Right here we should cease enumerating: first, for the reason that after sanctification a child of God should receive so many blessings that he cannot count them; and secondly, because there are but two complete works of grace wrought in the soul by the Spirit. And just as any number of manifestations of God to the world fails to increase the number of persons in the Godhead, so numerous blessings, no matter how frequent and rich, cannot be scripturally distinguished by the terms third, fourth, fifth, and son on ad infinitum.

There is but one work of grace, purifying and transforming, that is subsequent to regeneration. With this additional blessing man enters into heaven. After this there is nothing left on earth or in heaven but constant and everlasting growth in grace. Hence the humorous and unkind fling by some at those who hold the second blessing, saying that they have gone much farther along in the spiritual numerals; that they have received the one hundredth blessing, etc.

This fling loses all of its force from the lack of knowledge it shows of the two distinct works of the Holy Spirit. We repeat here that there are thousands of "a baptisms" in the Christian life, but there is but one "the baptism." There are hundreds of blessings that break upon and fill the believing heart, but there is but one second blessing.

Besides all this we advance the thought that the term "second blessing" is more scriptural than some imagine. If King James's translators had been truer to the original in 2 Corinthians 1:15, we would have to-day the words "second grace" instead of "second benefit." The Greek word translated "benefit" is charis. If any Greek scholar should be asked what this word meant in the original, he never would reply "benefit," but "grace," "divine grace," "divine gift," etc. The word charis is found over one hundred and fifty times in the New Testament, and in every instance is translated "grace" except at this place. Here the prominent definition of the word is avoided and a weaker meaning taken up by the translators.

Paul alludes to this second grace in Romans 5, 2: "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace." Here is an additional grace, and entered upon through another act of faith in Christ. James speaks of it in the words: "He giveth more (another) grace." Excellent Greek scholars say that the word of the brackets is the proper word of the text. In Hebrews ix, 28 the second work appears again in the words: "Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

We know this is claimed to describe the fact of Christ's return to the earth in judgment, but we call the reader's attention to two statements in the verse that destroy that claim. One is that this coming is "unto salvation," whereas the last day brings judgment; Christ will come then as a Judge. Again we know at the judgment day "every eye shall see him," but the verse quoted declares something different in the words, "Unto them that look for him shall He appear the second time."

Some regenerated people are not looking for Him. The condition of receiving Christ in full salvation or holiness is "looking." The disciples "looked" for ten days, and were not disappointed in Christ's coming. They got

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