

The Bible Student.

CONTINUING

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**The Speeches
In Acts.** There is nothing in the Book of Acts more remarkable than the series of speeches incorporated into it. If we look at them merely quantitatively, their number and mass are so great as to constitute them an outstanding feature of the book. The slightest penetration beneath the surface reveals in them a freshness, a variety, a fitness to the several occasions on which they are said to have been spoken, to the several speakers to whom they are attributed, to the general proprieties of the several situations and the stages of development of the Church and of doctrine at which they are introduced, that are nothing less than astonishing. Their presence in it not only gives a marked vitality and vividness to the narrative, but adds to it a *vraisemblance* which is almost irresistible. It is scarcely possible to rise from an attentive perusal of these speeches without the conviction that they represent speeches actually delivered by the persons to whom they are attributed at the points of time and on the occasions to which they are assigned. Decidedly, they constitute a phenomenon with which those who would have us believe that the Book of Acts is more or

less a piece of imaginative literature, dating from post-Apostolic times, must reckon.

Are They Inventions of The Author?

What critics of this class would fain have us think of them we may learn as well as elsewhere from the article on Acts contributed by Professor PAUL W. SCHMIDEL to Dr. CHEYNE'S *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (I. 47). "With regard to the speeches," says he, "it is beyond doubt that the author constructed them in each case according to his own conception of the situation. In doing so, he simply followed the acknowledged practice of ancient historians. Thucydides (I. 22, 1), expresses himself distinctly on this point; the others adopt the practice tacitly without any one's seeing anything in it morally questionable." That is to say, briefly, the author of the Acts is to be supposed to have placed within the mouths of his characters speeches composed by himself, according to his idea of what on such occasions these characters might well be imagined to have said; and the speeches he presents us are, therefore, only a part of his art in giving vividness to the narrative, and are to be read rather as embodying his

BAPTIZING WITH THE HOLY GHOST.

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This phraseology was introduced into the language of Scripture by John the Baptist. He uses it to mark one of the distinct functions of Jesus, the Christ. By this phrase he points a contrast between his work and that of Him whom he heralded. "I indeed baptize you with water; but He 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." Evidently John attached very great importance to this particular function of the Messiah's mission. He singles it out, and points to it, as demonstrating and illustrating how immeasurably superior was the Christ to himself. It was the one token by which he would have the Messianism of Jesus recognized.

John seems to have been divinely taught to lay peculiar stress upon this function of the Coming One. "And I knew Him not; but He that sent me to baptize with water, He said unto me: Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon Him, the same is He that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit." From this it appears that in connection with his call to discharge the mission of forerunner, he was taught to regard the "baptism with the Holy Spirit," as in some sense the supreme act of the Christ. He was to make proclamation of this to the multitude as the Messiah's one distinctive function.

The four inspired writers, who gave us the Gospel, attached much importance to this proclamation of John. No one of them felt at liberty to omit it. John the Baptist gave another great testimony to Jesus: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Only one Evangelist made a record of this. Great and significant as the utterance is, it seems to have been made by John, rather as a soliloquy than as an official proclamation. It was made on the morrow after the baptism of Jesus, and arrested the attention of only two of John's disciples. But that Jesus should "baptize with the Holy Ghost" was lifted into prominence by all the Evangelists as an essential part of John's official heralding of the Messiah.

Jesus Himself puts peculiar stress upon this baptism which He

should administer. In one of His last interviews with His apostles, "He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said He, ye heard from me: for John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." We learn here, that previous to this time Jesus had made this baptism a subject of instruction in His training of the twelve. He calls it "the promise of the Father," and bids them wait for it at Jerusalem before beginning the work of witness-bearing to which He called them.

Its importance is further accentuated by the fact that it was made a matter of specific prophecy. When the baptism took place, Peter explained to the multitude that it was a fulfilment of that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: "And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; yea and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days will I pour forth of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy." The prophet puts this among the great and distinguishing glories of "the last days"—the Messianic age. Perhaps we might make the statement stronger, and say that he lifts it up as the great, the crowning glory of the last days.

While baptizing with the Spirit was the sole and divine prerogative of Jesus, the Christ, it was not a part of His earthly mission. He charged His disciples to tarry at Jerusalem for "the promise of the Father." Not until He had ascended on high, leading captivity captive, did Jesus receive this gift for men. "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses. Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath poured forth this which ye see and hear." Obviously it was to the baptism with the Holy Spirit that Jesus made more than one reference in his discourse in the upper room on the night of His betrayal. He referred to it for the purpose of comforting his apostles, whose hearts were growing heavy at the prospect of losing Him. "I will make request of the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may be with you for ever." "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 go, I will send Him unto you." The day of Pente-

cost marked the fulfilment of these promises.

We may not enter very far into the mysteries of Christ's redeeming work, but we seem justified, by what is written, in saying that the baptism with the Spirit was so connected with the expiation of sin that until the expiation was made, the baptism could not take place. The crucifixion must precede Pentecost. It was only after His exaltation that "he received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost." But His exaltation, as Mediator, was consequent on His "becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 6-11). Long after the apostle John had received in his own person, and had witnessed on a large scale, the baptism with the Spirit, he recorded a promise that Jesus made which had to wait for its fulfilment until after His exaltation. "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 believed on Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

May we not say that baptizing with the Spirit was the culmination of Christ's redeeming work? The sacrifice on Calvary was in order to the effusion of the Holy Spirit. The sacrifice would have remained ineffective without the effusion. It was by the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh that the expiation of sin by the shedding of blood was to be rendered available for the actual remission of sin. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," said Jesus, counting in this work, by anticipation, the sufferings yet to be endured. But the design of this work swept out into the future and embraced the bringing of a lost race from death to life. This design waited for its accomplishment on the exaltation of Christ that having received of the Father the promise, He might shed forth the Spirit.

Was this great work, foretold in prophecy, and made possible only by the crucifixion of the Son of God, both begun and ended on the day of Pentecost? Was that the only time that the exalted Christ has baptized with the Spirit? While Pentecost was epoch-making, and holds a unique place in the history of the Church, we think it is epoch-making and unique for the reason that it is the beginning of a dispensation, of which, throughout its continuance, the outpouring of the Spirit is to be the crowning and

blessed distinction. "The last days" of the prophet Joel are all the days of the Messianic age. This dispensation is commonly called, in contradistinction to the Patriarchal and Jewish dispensations, "the dispensation of the Spirit." By which it is not meant to imply that the Spirit performed no mission in those former ages. He was striving with men before the flood. He was resisted by apostate Israel. He was known to prophet and Psalmist, and His gracious presence and power acknowledged. But on the day of Pentecost there dawned on the Church a brighter period because on that day, as the glorious award of Christ's sacrificial death, He came down on the Church and on the world as never before. He came to make that death effective in giving life to the dead on a scale far transcending all previous experiences. In doing this His office was two-fold;—He filled the disciples and clothed them with power; He moved upon the hearts of sinners and smote them with deep and irrepressible conviction.

On the day of Pentecost the baptism with the Spirit had certain concomitants of a miraculous nature. Like all miracles of the apostolic age, they served a specific and temporary purpose. They were not a part, nor were they a necessary accompaniment of the outpouring of the Spirit. They were not mentioned in the promise. Only the power for disciples, and conviction for sinners were promised. "When He is come, He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment." "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." These are the two permanent needs in order to make Christ's redeeming work available for the salvation of a lost world. Peter needs power that he may preach; his hearers need conviction that they may repent. Christ swept away all national barriers, and sent His disciples on a mission of world-wide conquest. Never till that conquest is complete, in the bringing in of universal righteousness, will the needs be less than they were on the day of Pentecost. Peter's successors in the ministry of the word will need the power; and their hearers will need the conviction. Neither the Spirit, nor the promise is exhausted. "He shall pour out of His Spirit," always there remains the residue of the Spirit. "The promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him."

The Church throughout its whole history has had blessed ex-

perience of the gracious exercise of this office of the exalted Christ: ever is He sitting on the right hand of the Father to shed forth the Holy Spirit on all receptive hearts. Ever there have been such hearts to be filled and thrilled. Sometimes communities have rejoiced together in "seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord;" and sometimes the invigorating, uplifting and life giving power of the Spirit has swept, like a tidal wave of heavenly benediction, over a whole nation. The largeness of the promise justifies the belief that the Spirit shall yet be poured out upon all flesh, and then the glowing picture that filled with rapture the soul of Isaiah will pass from prophetic vision to blissful reality. The Lord hasten it in His time.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ASCENSION.

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The fact of the Ascension is to be accepted, to be sure. It is true that no writer describes the event save Luke, who does so at the close of his Gospel and the beginning of the Acts. Thus this great occurrence is the link in Luke's two books concerning the beginning of Christianity. Matthew and Mark (the usual ending, not the shorter) both conclude with the sending forth of the disciples on their mission of world conquest. Matthew has the promise of the perpetual presence of the Savior with his disciples to the end of the world. But certainly this is not to be understood as out of harmony with the Ascension, but rather in a spiritual sense. Matthew and Mark present the Savior's prophecy of his second coming in the eschatological discourse on the Mount of Olives, and this prophecy involves the Ascension. John does not indeed describe the Ascension, but the discourse in the upper room is full of plain allusion to his going to the Father and coming again. And in John vi. 62, Jesus expressly said that he would ascend to the Father where he was before. The Epistles and the Revelation of John are full of references to the glorification of Jesus on high, sitting at the right hand of the Father. He was received up into glory and sat down forever in