

Indications of a Second Crisis

by Charles Ewing Brown

Charles Ewing Brown preaches about the scriptural doctrine of a second crisis, emphasizing entire sanctification through a dramatic baptism of the Holy Ghost that destroys all carnality and fills believers with the fullness of God. He delves into the geological analogy of rock layers to illustrate the complexity of spiritual experiences in the early church, highlighting the need for diligent study to uncover hidden truths. Brown explores the significance of the Roman Catholic ceremony of confirmation as a theological fossil pointing to the impartation of the Holy Spirit as a second crisis in salvation, supported by biblical references and early church fathers' writings.

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Transcript

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heading: "VI" points: - "The role of Christian mystics and evangelists" - "Personal testimonies of deeper experiences" - "Conclusion on the necessity of seeking a second crisis" faq: - q: "What is the second crisis in Christian experience?" a: "It refers to a subsequent experience of entire sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, distinct from initial regeneration." - q: "How does this concept differ from Calvinist beliefs?" a: "Calvinists typically emphasize predestination and a single act of grace, while the second crisis advocates for a transformative experience after salvation." - q: "What is the significance of the ceremony of confirmation?" a: "Confirmation symbolizes the anointing of the Holy Spirit and is seen as a ritual continuation of the New Testament practice of laying on of hands." - q: "Who are some historical figures that supported the second crisis?" a: "Figures like Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine acknowledged a distinction between initial salvation and a subsequent baptism of the Holy Spirit." - q: "What role do testimonies play in understanding this doctrine?" a: "Testimonies provide experiential evidence that many Christians have encountered a deeper spiritual life, reinforcing the concept of a second crisis." quotes: - "The baptism of the Spirit is subsequent to regeneration and to water baptism." - "There is a twofold possibility. There is a lower stage of Christian character, that of the ordinary believer who attains to holiness under the influence of fear and hope." - "The very fact that this separation was made is of itself evidence that the church always believed two separate experiences of the Christian life were signified by these rites." applicationPoints: - "Seek a deeper relationship with God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit." - "Recognize the importance of spiritual maturity and strive for perfection in faith." - "Engage with historical and contemporary testimonies to understand the second crisis in Christian experience." keywords: - "second crisis" - "entire sanctification" - "baptism of the Holy Spirit" - "confirmation" - "spiritual maturity" - "Christian experience" - "historical evidence" - "testimonies" ---

Against the theory held by the Calvinists let us place the scriptural doctrine of a second crisis, in which entire sanctification is realized in one dramatic baptism of the Holy Ghost and of power that destroys all the remains of carnality and fills the believer with all the fullness of God.

THE PAGES OF ROCK

It is interesting to stand on the rim of the Grand Canyon and study the various strata of rock that have been laid down there throughout the course of ages. Here, and elsewhere in the Rocky Mountain district, one is impressed with the complexity of the geological record. An unsympathetic observer might jump to the conclusion that God wrote the story of geological development in shorthand quite indifferent to man's ability to read it. In fact, those mighty leaves of rock lay there as a closed book for ages of time and only in recent years have they been read by the diligent study of devoted scientists. Evidently, God was not careless of the readers of his geological book, but he did not insult their intelligence by making it too easy. In that ancient rock book is laid down the record of mighty upheavals of the earth's crust, gigantic clefts broken through miles of solid rock. Such was the condition at one time where now all is still as the hands of the dead. Likewise, there are written in the ancient records of the Christian church various indications of the mighty earthquake and volcanic outbursts of spiritual power in the hearts and lives of those early saints. It all reposes calm and simple in the history of the church, but diligent students can see the marks of a great experience little known and observed in our own day.

THE CEREMONY OF CONFIRMATION AS EVIDENCE

A ceremony universal in the Roman Catholic Church, and quite common in the older ritualistic churches, is called confirmation. This ceremony of confirmation is just as important a theological fossil, and in its own way means as much to the thoughtful Christian, as an ancient fossil in the rocks means to a geological

student. It is evident that some of the Protestant communions have merely imitated the Catholic ceremony without attaching the same meaning to it as does the Roman church. Therefore we shall study the Roman Catholic ceremony as being the older, both in form and meaning.

This so-called sacrament has several names, such as confirmation, the seal, the anointing, or the laying on of hands. In the Roman Catholic Church it is always administered by the bishop, or a priest authorized by him, to young baptized children old enough to have finished their catechism and to receive their first communion.

The principal feature of the ceremony is the anointing with the consecrated oil. After prayer the bishop makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the candidate and says in Latin, "I seal thee with the sign of the cross, and confirm thee with the oil of salvation, in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." However, the Greek form is undoubtedly much older and in it the bishop says, "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit (is imparted to thee)." "Its effect," says

C. Weizsacker, "is the communication of the Holy Spirit, and equipment for the battle of life."

There is such a mass of definite evidence in the ancient literature of the church as to amount to positive proof that the ceremony of confirmation is a continuation in ritual form of the New Testament custom of laying hands upon young converts and praying for them to be filled with the Holy Spirit, as a second crisis in salvation, an experience subsequent to baptism and hence subsequent to regeneration. (See Heb. 6:2; Acts 19:6; 8:12-19.) Further connection is noted between this rite and the unction of I John 2:27, the anointing of II Corinthians 1:21, and the sealing of II Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30.

The famous African Church Father Tertullian, who died about A.D. 230, undoubtedly believed in baptismal regeneration. He says that "in the water, under (the witness of) the angel, we are cleansed, and prepared for the Holy Spirit." [9] Then he goes on to say, "Thus, too, does the angel, the witness of baptism, make the paths straight for the Holy Spirit, who is about to come upon us" and continues: "After this, when we have issued from the font [of baptism], we are thoroughly anointed with the blessed unction." [10] He likens this unction to the anointing of priests in the Old Testament "In the next place the hand is laid on us, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit through benediction. . . Then, over our cleansed and blessed bodies willingly descends from the Father that Holiest Spirit"

He likens this coming of the Spirit on the newly baptized to the coming of the dove upon Christ. "So by the self-same law of heavenly effect, to earth -- that is, to our flesh -- as it emerges from the font, after its old sins, flies the dove of the Holy Spirit, bringing us the peace of God, sent out from the heavens." [11]

In another place Tertullian distinguishes very sharply between salvation and the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a second work of grace. He is pleading, like the great lawyer that he was, the value of the human body and why it was not unworthy of resurrection at the last day.

"The flesh," he says, "indeed, is washed, in order that the soul may be cleansed." Here he referred to regeneration in the act of baptism. "The flesh is anointed, that the soul may be consecrated." This refers to the anointing with the chrism after baptism, showing that consecration follows conversion. "The flesh is signed (with the cross), that the soul too may be fortified; the flesh is shadowed with the imposition of hands that the soul also may be illuminated by the spirit." [12]

The fact that Tertullian believed in baptismal regeneration reveals that sacramentalism had made inroads upon the church in his time; that does not by any means disprove our doctrine, but rather confirms it. Everything had been reduced to ritual and form, but it is important to remember that when this crystallization took place regeneration and the baptism of the Spirit were still separated into two distinct experiences, which normally took place in close connection with each other but in a definite order of time: first, regeneration; next, the baptism of the Spirit. If regeneration takes place in a mechanical ceremony, so does sanctification, or Spirit baptism. If we believe that the regeneration of which Tertullian wrote must be purely a work of the Spirit and that his conception of it was too mechanical, then we must say the same thing of the baptism of the Spirit of which he wrote; but however he may have misunderstood the inner meaning of these rites, one thing is certain -- he clearly grasped the fact that the baptism of the Spirit is subsequent to regeneration and to water baptism. In other words, the leaders of the church in that age were not any more mechanical about the reception of the baptism of the Spirit than they were concerning regeneration itself.

As we have shown that at a very early time consecration was symbolized by anointing the baptized believer with oil, Theophilus of Antioch, in the latter part of the second century, traces the name "Christian" from the chrism, or anointing, which believers received at the moment of their reception of the Spirit. He thinks that it is very necessary for Christians to have this anointing for the conflicts of life, just as the athletes of that day anointed their bodies with oil for their athletic contests.

Cyprian, the great bishop of Carthage in the early part of the third century, said concerning the baptism of the Spirit: "For they who had believed in Samaria had believed with a true faith; and within, in the Church which is one, and to which alone it is granted to bestow the grace of baptism and to remit sins, had been baptized by Philip the deacon, whom the same apostles had sent. And therefore, because they had obtained legitimate and ecclesiastical baptism, there was no need that they should be baptized any more, but only that which was needed was performed by Peter and John; viz., that prayer being made for them, and hands being imposed, the Holy Spirit should be invoked and poured out upon them, which now, too, is done among us, so that they who are baptized in the Church are brought to the prelates of the Church, and by our prayers and by the imposition of hands obtain the Holy Spirit, and are perfected with the Lord's seal. [13]

"Imposition of hands and confirmation confer something on him that is born again and regenerated in Christ." [14]

"It is not all one to obtain remission of sins and to receive such power." [15]

Augustine, greatest theologian of the ancient church, wrote: "In propriety of speech neither the apostles nor any other man but Christ alone as He Is God, could give the Holy Ghost; for the apostles only laid hands on men that the Holy Ghost by their prayers might descend on them; which custom the church now observed and practiced by her bishops and governors also." [16]

Again he writes, commenting on Acts 2:37-38: "In the Church truly in which was the Holy Ghost, were both brought to pass, that is, both the remission of sins, and the receiving of the gift." [17]

After infant baptism came in, it was regarded as unsuitable to perform the ceremony of confirmation on infants, for it would indicate that they had received the sanctifying baptism of the Holy Spirit. Therefore this part of the baptismal rites was removed and set up as a second separate sacrament to be imparted to children and youths old enough to understand something of its meaning. The very fact that this separation

was made is of itself evidence that the church always believed two separate experiences of the Christian life were signified by these rites. [18]

THE LAYMEN AND THE PERFECT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The average indifferent Christian is quite unaware that all the elements of the gospel are essentially matters of faith. They are not physical substances lying around open to the view of saint and sinner alike. They are like the elements of art, music, mathematics, and advanced science -realities which reveal their inner meaning only to those who seek it with sympathetic appreciation and diligent research. One can point out to an ignorant man an obscure feature of rock formation and tell him what the geologists understand it to mean, and he will ridicule the whole exposition. It means nothing to him, because he does not possess the scientific background that makes the argument appeal to the scientist. In the same way we are aware that there are obscure points in the New Testament which the spiritually indifferent will pass over without noticing at all and the dogmatic opposer will ridicule as having no relevancy. Yet even many of these obscure points of Scripture will have a deep meaning for the sensitive, spiritually minded Christian who has no dogmatic bias against learning all the truth as rapidly as possible.

One of these obscure points is the existence of two words in the Greek New Testament which in English mean, roughly, "laymen" and "perfect." In his great work on the History of Primitive Christianity J. Weiss devotes a long passage to these two terms. The passage is altogether too long to quote here, but any reader who is interested may find it, beginning in volume II, page 624. Not to be too technical, it seems necessary to specify the Greek word idiotai (I Cor. 14:16, 23-24). In each place in this fourteenth chapter the word is translated "unlearned." In Acts

4:13 the same term is translated "ignorant." It is clear that the translators of the Authorized Version, having neither the experience nor the scholarship to fathom these passages, were deeply perplexed as to how to translate them. The word has the general meaning of "lower class," depending upon the connection. If the class is professional, then the idiotai are the unskilled; in some cases "laymen" would describe them. The professional teachers of Jerusalem did not necessarily mean that the Apostles were ignorant men, but that they were not skilled professionally.

The term was used to distinguish the mass membership of a group from the gifted leadership. Weiss believes that idiotai was applied to those who did not possess the Spirit.

In contrast to these imperfect Christians, Christians of the lower grade, there occurs repeated mention of the perfect teleios. The following are passages where this term occurs in the Epistles and the English word which is used to translate it in the Authorized Version: I Cor. 2:6, "perfect"; 14:20, "men"; Eph. 4:13, "perfect man"; Phil. 3:15, "perfect"; Col. 1:28, "perfect"; 4:12, "perfect"; Heb. 5:14, "of full age"; Jas. 3:2, "perfect man." These passages refer to Christians as perfect.

Paul sometimes held meetings with these "perfect" Christians separately from the whole church (I Cor. 2:6; I Cor. 14:23). These perfect Christians are identified with the pneumatika, or "spiritual," Christians. Following are the passages wherein pneumatikos is applied to Christians in the New Testament. It is always translated "spiritual" (I Cor. 2:15, 3:1, 14:37, Gal. 6:1). Here is a notable and neglected layer of New Testament truth laid open to the contemplation of the reverent student. Two classes of believers are clearly distinguished in the New Testament church. The difference between them was that one group did not have the gift of the Spirit and the other one did have that gift, which made them "spiritual" and "perfect."

Some kind of distinction between believers continued permanently in the history of the church. Clement of Alexandria (d. A.I). 215) makes a distinction between the lower stage of Christian character experienced by the ordinary believer and the higher life.

Describing the theology of Clement, Dr. George P. Fisher, the church historian, writes: "The regenerated life begins in baptism. It includes the forgiveness of sins. Henceforward there is a twofold possibility. There is a lower stage of Christian character, that of the ordinary believer who attains to holiness under the influence of fear and hope; and there is the higher life, where fear is cast out by love. Simply to be saved is something very different from salvation in the nobler sense." [19]

It is not necessary to subscribe to all the details of Clement's doctrine of Christian perfection to see in him a continuation of the persistent Christian tradition that there is a higher life for believers, a second crisis in redemption. This higher life is lived by the "true gnostic" (from gnosis, knowledge), who knows spiritual things in the manner pointed out by John, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. . . . The same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie" (1 John 2:20, 27).

In later years the distinction between the higher and lower Christian life was drawn between the clergy and the laity. [20] At another time the monastic life professed to be superior, and during the Middle Ages the mystics laid claim to a higher experience. Nevertheless, throughout all the church's history, the memory of the perfect Christians of the New Testament has continually spurred the ordinary Christian to lofty aspiration. It is for us to ask, Is that aspiration vain?

THE CLOUD OF MANY WITNESSES

While not many orthodox Christians would agree with Schliermacher in his efforts to construct a systematic theology out of Christian experience alone, it is reasonable to appeal to Christian experience as an aid in interpreting the Scriptures. Of course, the main source of information regarding all Christian experience except our own is, of necessity, testimony. Please note carefully that we do not believe that any amount of testimony could overthrow or minify the plain teachings of the Word of God, but we do believe that a vast mass of testimony of experience -- not theory -- should have some weight in interpreting an otherwise obscure point.

If Christian testimony is to be allowed any such weight, then it appears that the general principle of a second crisis in Christian experience must demand consideration from all thoughtful Christians. First of all, there are the holiness people in America and throughout the world. We could not pretend to count them -- truly they are known only to God -- but their number must amount to millions in the aggregate; for they are found everywhere, not only in the holiness churches, but also sprinkled widely among the other denominations. True, we might cut their numbers down appreciably by applying rigorous standards of criticism in an effort to distinguish between those with original experiences and others who are only imitators. In thinking of such tests, however, it is only fair to consider how much the ranks of conventional Christianity in general would be thinned by such a process.

Remembering that modern people began professing this second crisis under the preaching of the Wesleys far back in the eighteenth century, it is evident that literally millions of earnest, sincere Christians have devoutly believed that by faith they entered into a second rest after regeneration. While we do not deny that they could have been mistaken, yet, recalling the heroic vigor of their experience of Christ's love, one is more likely to ask, Are we not in danger of making a mistake by neglecting the very element of their experience to which they attributed their spiritual power?

In thinking of the exponents of a second crisis we must also list the Keswick Conference Movement. This is a movement in the British Isles in which Christians of all denominations, including some notable church leaders, great scholars, and Anglican bishops, participate. While these people do not interpret the second crisis in the way that we do, especially with regard to inbred sin, they may honestly be counted as witnesses to a second crisis in Christian experience, a baptism of the Holy Spirit subsequent to regeneration which definitely initiates the justified believer into the wealth and joy of a victorious Christian life. While we wish the Keswick people were able to interpret this experience as we do, nevertheless, we rejoice that they have discovered the principal point upon which we insist -- there is a rest for the people of God subsequent to conversion

WHERE THE SAINTS HAVE TROD

Not the holiness people of the Keswickites alone have made this discovery. The Christian mystics of the Middle Ages, although intellectually confused by the tradition, superstitions, and philosophy of their time, did rise into the clear atmosphere of true perfection from a spiritual standpoint.

In this connection it is interesting to note that a good case can be made out to prove that nearly every one of the great evangelists and Christian workers of modern time, and even of all times so far as the records are available, came to a definite point where he entered into a deeper experience of the grace of God by some dramatic and epochal crisis. E Stanley Jones is an outstanding example of this. Some of these men have even preached against entire sanctification as a theory, but they have had an experience of it in their lives. Prof. William James has gathered many testimonies in his book *Varieties of Religious Experience*. While some of these testimonies are plainly examples of abnormal or deranged minds, and they are all laid out by James with the coldness of a scientist examining insect specimens, nevertheless, in many of them there is such a warmth and spiritual reality that even the professor himself is compelled to acknowledge that these people have touched supernatural sources of power.

The Quakers have preached a form of this doctrine for many generations. In 1675 Robert Barclay wrote fifteen propositions which were universally accepted by the Friends as expressing their beliefs (although the Friends do not officially recognize any binding standards of doctrine). The Eighth Proposition reads as follows:

In whom this holy and pure birth is fully brought forth the body of death and sin comes to be crucified and removed, and their hearts united and subjected unto the truth, so as not to obey any suggestions or temptation of the evil one, but to be free from actual sinning and transgressing of the law of God, and in that respect perfect. Yet doth this perfection still admit of a growth; and there remaineth a possibility of sinning where the mind doth not most diligently and watchfully attend unto the Lord. [21]

9 Tertullian, *On Baptism*, chap. 6

10 *Ibid.*, chap. 7

11 *Ibid.*, chap. 8

12 Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, p. 551

13 The Epistles of Cyprian, LXXII, to Jubaianus

14 Eusebius Emesemus, "Sermon on Pentecost" (middle of the fourth century)

- 15 Chrysostom, Homily XVIII (latter part of the fourth century)
- 16 Augustine, On The Trinity, Book XV, chap. 26
- 17 Augustine, Sermon 21
- 18 J. Gilchrist Lawson, Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians
- 19 George P. Fisher, History of Christian Doctrine, p. 96
- 20 Cf. J. Gilchrist Lawson, Op. cit.
- 21 Philip Schaff, Creeds of Christendom, Vol III, pp. 794-795

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