

EXPOSITION.

"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness."—Acts iv. 31.

There is a persistent effort in many quarters to make this passage teach that the baptism of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost was of such a character that it was necessary that it should be often repeated in the history of its recipients. The fact that this is the only passage in the Bible which can, by any kind of pressure, be made to do service here, does not seem to dampen the ardor of those champions of repeated baptisms.

Well, suppose we grant their contention, then they must not shrink from the legitimate results of what they have proved. *Filled*, then, in the above passage, means *refilled*, and so it would read "and they were all *refilled* with the Holy Ghost."

And now, to be consistent, whenever it is stated that one who had been baptized of the Spirit was full or filled with the Spirit, it means *refilled*. Hence we would read: "Then Peter, *refilled* with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people," etc. (Acts iv. 8.) "But Paul, *refilled* with the Holy Ghost, fastened his eyes on him," etc. (Acts xiii. 9.) "But he (Stephen) being *refilled* with the Holy Ghost," etc. (Acts vii. 55.) "For he (Barnabas) was a good man, and *refilled* with the Holy Ghost," etc. (Acts xi. 24.)

Of course, the puerile contention may be made that it only means *refilled* in the one passage under consideration. But nothing but dogmatic assertion is or can be given for such a discrimination.

Some have been driven to such extremity of argument as to assert that the company here mentioned was the veritable six score souls who comprised the gathering in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. But this desperate assumption only recoils on the one using it, seeing it impeaches his knowledge of the facts of the case as being strangely at fault. For this very history tells of at least eight thousand added to this little company since that date, the very

next verse denominating this company a "multitude." There is not the slightest hint that the company who were the subjects of this presumed *refilling* were in any way selected from the multitude. Indeed, it is immediately added that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul."

But on the admission that a good rule works both ways, then it follows that if in the other cases quoted it did not mean a *refilling* with the Holy Ghost, it did not mean a *refilling* at this time, but in all cases alike the words simply and only narrate a fact. That the company were *all* filled with the Holy Ghost is plainly stated. But would it falsify this statement if it were also a fact that some of them had been filled on the day of Pentecost and had remained filled up to this present hour? Surely not. The opposite contention would lead to no end of absurdities. For instance, it would prove that no one could possibly remain filled with the Spirit for a lengthened period of time, seeing that even the apostles, with all the advantages they had, both previous to and subsequent to the day of Pentecost, could not. Further, it proves that Paul, when he wrote, "Be filled with the Spirit," only meant be filled *occasionally*. For a mere tyro can see that a person cannot have the act of filling him with the Spirit accomplished if he is already filled. Hence to a man that multitude who were *refilled* must have been emptied of the Spirit, at least in part, previous to this universal *refilling*; and yet some of them were just fresh from the *refilling* which had taken place the same day, when arraigned before the rulers of Jerusalem. Strange kind of *refilling* which could not last even a few hours!

Why, it may well be asked, do some fly in the face of such absurdities in their exposition of this passage? Our answer is that, in spite often of their formulated creed, the gift of the Holy Ghost is to them a mere influence, of which they may have more or less, or which is subject to surroundings because of its being the result of an effort on their part. It is the personal experience which originates such strange Bible exegeses.