

The Higher Life.

“HAVE YE RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST?”

BY THE REV. W. S. BLACKSTOCK.

III.

OWING to the inexorable limitation of the space at our disposal, the preceding article closed rather abruptly, and a few explanatory sentences will be necessary in order to intelligibly connect it with what is to follow. Our object has been, and still is, to get as definite a conception as possible of the nature of the gift of the Holy Ghost, in the pentecostal sense, and the sense of the question which stands at the head of these articles; but in order to this it was necessary to exclude from this conception everything which did not properly belong to it. The last point which has been reached in this process is expressed in the proposition, that this gift does not consist of the power to work miracles. This existed in the Church in quite as eminent a degree before Pentecost as it did afterward. Besides, there was never a time, either before or since the inauguration of the dispensation of the Spirit, when the miracle-working power was not exceptional and extraordinary, whereas the gift of the Holy Ghost is the common heritage of all the people of God.

The only thing that affords even a colourable support to the theory that this gift consisted in the power to work miracles, or even that that particular form of supernatural endowment was one of its invariable attendants, is the fact that in two or three instances that are described in the Acts of the Apostles, the *glossolalia*, or gift of tongues, is referred to as among its effects. But even this is expressly excluded from the category of miracles by apostolic authority. It would, indeed, have been the power to work a miracle, and that, too, of one of the most extraordinary character, if it had consisted of the ability to speak one or more foreign languages which the possessor of it had never learned; but beyond question this was not the nature of it as it existed in the Church at Corinth. It is, however, a question upon which there is difference of opinion among the learned, whether the gift of tongues in that Church was precisely identical with that which was bestowed upon the disciples at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Mr. Beet, while admitting, as we have seen that the theory of this gift which makes it consist of the power to speak languages which the speaker had never learned, is entirely untenable, in view of what the Apostle says of it in 2 Cor. xii. and xiv., is, nevertheless, of the opinion, that the phenomenon of Pentecost was an exception to its general character, and that those upon whom the Spirit was poured out on that occasion were actually endowed with the power to speak a great number and variety of languages of which up to that time they had been ignorant. Neander and Meyer, however, take a different view; while admitting that the account given by St. Luke (Acts ii.), if infallibly correct and literally interpreted, would lead to this conclusion, evade the difficulty by assuming that St. Luke, following the tradition which was current in the Church at the time that he wrote, was unintentionally led to invest this gift with attributes which did not in reality belong to it.