

## Baptism of the Spirit

**T**he confirmation service completes the sacrament of baptism. Baptism is not complete without it. Through it church membership is bestowed and the candidate becomes eligible for partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

In baptism by water the initiative tests largely upon the candidate. It is out of his own sense of need and willing obedience that he is inducted into the water. This is the preparation for the greater baptism wherein the past is "washed away" and a covenant relationship with God is begun. This is able to be performed by a member of the Aaronic priesthood, the priest, who holds the key of the preparatory gospel.

At the confirmation, when the hands of the Melchisedec priesthood are placed upon his head, though the candidate allows this through his own volition, the way is now prepared whereby God may take the greater initiative and bestow his abiding Spirit upon the recipient, sealing the covenant by the power of his hand.

The hands of the minister become the symbol for the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. It is fitting that this should be so: the hand has been an ancient symbol throughout the Scriptures to show the power of God at work. Some examples of such Scriptures are:

### Bible

Luke 1:65: "And the hand of the Lord was with him." Romans 10:21: "I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

Exodus 3:20: "I will stretch out my hand."

Joshua 4:24: "That all . . . might know the hand of the Lord."

### Book of Mormon

Ether 1:28: "Being directed continually by the hand of the Lord."

Alma 1:85: "Being strengthened by the hand of the Lord, having prayed mightily to him."

### Doctrine and Covenants

62:3: "He shall receive this blessing, if he receive it from the hand of the Lord."

94:5: "For God is there, and the hand of the Lord is there."

If there is to be rebirth, the implanting of the Holy Spirit must occur. This is God's great gift. If it were not so, we would find ourselves in the situation which befell the man from whom the evil spirit was cast: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest and finding none; but when a man speaketh against the Holy Ghost, then he [the unclean spirit] saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth him empty, swept and garnished; for the good spirit leaveth him unto himself. Then goeth the evil spirit, and taketh with himself

seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there; and the last end of that man is worse than the first" (Matthew 12:38-39). There must be an indwelling in us.

In view of the fact that the Spirit of God is bestowed as a confirming power, confirming the pledge made in the waters of baptism, the church has come to refer to the ceremony as "confirmation."

### **BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT FOLLOWS WATER BAPTISM**

The Scriptures are rich in the promise that the baptism of the Spirit shall follow repentance and baptism in water. The following passages are pertinent:

Matthew 3:38-46	Acts 2:38
Acts 8:14-17	Doctrine and Covenants 17:8;
Genesis 6:61-65	34:2; 32:3; 39:6; 49:2;
Acts 19:1-6	53:2;55:1;76:5
II Nephi 13:15-17	Moroni 2:2
III Nephi 9:14, 15	

Some of these quotations clearly indicate that the gift of the Holy Ghost is received as a result of the laying on of hands of the elders of the church. There have been instances where the gift of the Spirit was granted without the ceremony of the laying on of hands having been performed. Such was evidently the case with the righteous Nephites who were baptized at the time of the visit of Christ.<sup>1</sup> This seems to have been an exceptional circumstance. Certainly the preponderance of the Scriptures from the New Testament and the Doctrine and Covenants clearly point to the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Spirit.

### **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONFIRMATION**

"One does not become a member of the church until after hands have been placed on his head at a time subsequent to baptism.

"Laying on of hands by the elders for confirmation serves a threefold purpose:

1. It seals the covenant made by the baptized person to accept Christ as the Son of God and to follow his teachings as the exemplary life leading to perfection.

2. It binds the church to accept the newcomer as a full-fledged member of the body entitled to all the rights and privileges of such fellowship.

3. It is the means through which the Holy Ghost is invoked in fulfillment of the scriptural promises."<sup>2</sup>

"The laying on of hands for the gift or baptism of the Holy Spirit is an ordinance belonging to the Melchisedec priesthood (a priest of the Aaronic order may baptize in water) and advances the baptized man to a still closer relation with God. It confers upon him the right to a greater baptism, even that of the Spirit, which is what the Scriptures speak of as being born again-the baptism of water and baptism of the Spirit both constituting the new birth. This birth makes him a son of God, for by the entering in of the Holy Spirit, the very nature of the divine person is stamped upon him, and for the first time he is able to grow into the likeness of Christ.

"These two ordinances, the baptism of water and the laying on of hands for the baptism of the Holy Ghost, may be termed the initiatory ordinances, for by them men are brought into that proper relation with God and in his church where they may go on unto perfection."<sup>3</sup>

Some further word is appropriate on the matter of becoming a son of God. In popular language, all men are the sons of God because all are created by God. But the Scriptures limit the title "son of God" to those who have been spiritually born as a result of the baptism of the Spirit:

"Adam cried unto the Lord, and he was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and was carried down into the water, and was laid under the water, and was brought forth out of the water; and thus he was baptized. And the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was born of the Spirit, and became quickened in the inner man. And he heard a voice out of heaven, saying, Thou art baptized with fire and the Holy Ghost; this is the record of the Father and the Son, from henceforth and for ever. . Behold, thou art one in me, a son of God; and thus may all become my sons."<sup>4</sup>

"As many as received him [Christ], to them gave he power to become the sons of God."<sup>5</sup>

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."<sup>6</sup>

### WHEN DOES ONE RECEIVE THE SPIRIT OF GOD?

At one time it seemed to be commonly believed that no man received the least degree of the Spirit of God until he had been confirmed a member of the church by the laying on of hands. But if this were so, all men would be depraved beings without inclination to repent or to seek God. Indeed, were there no spark of the divine nature in us there would be nothing in us to respond to the efforts of God to lead us. The Scriptures seem adequately clear on this point. They indicate that a spark of the divine Spirit is given to every person as a part of his birthright:

Christ "was the true light, which lighteth every man who cometh into the world."<sup>7</sup>

"I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world."<sup>8</sup>

"The Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit."<sup>9</sup> This last reference suggests that those who hearken to the leadings of the Spirit come to God, who teaches them of the covenant that he desires they should make with him.

The phrase "those who . . . truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church"<sup>10</sup> plainly says that in some instances a certain measure of the Spirit has already been received prior to baptism. A specific instance of this is recorded in Acts 10:44-48. The Spirit of God was poured out upon Cornelius and his household, and Peter was moved to say, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" There are some church members today who testify that they were led by the Spirit of God to find his church.

Thus it appears that everyone who comes into the world receives a certain measure of the Spirit of God. Those who reject the leadings of that Spirit eventually lose it. Their eyes become blinded to their own sins, their consciences become seared. But those who yield to its leadings are brought nearer to God. They develop a desire to repent and to come into a covenant relationship with him.

But if men have already received of the Spirit of God prior to baptism in water, what then is the purpose of the laying on of hands for the gift or baptism of the Spirit? Simply this: The fact that the person now has by way of baptism made a definite and public commitment to be a servant of Christ qualifies him for a much richer measure of that Spirit than he has ever before received. This point was made by Alma when he said, "What have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit *more abundantly* upon you?"<sup>11</sup>

The question, therefore, is not, "Have you received the Spirit of God?" but "How much of that Spirit have you received?" Perhaps the following illustration will be helpful. A tiny night-light rated at half a watt or less is a feeble light indeed, but is sufficient to be helpful in guiding a person through a dark room. But the same power plant which supplies current to this tiny light may also supply power to fixtures bright enough to illuminate an athletic field for night games. The difference in intensity of illumination is not due to a difference in the source of power, but rather in the difference in the capacity of the two types of bulb to convert electricity into light energy. Even so, the person who has not yet made a covenant with God may nevertheless enjoy a small measure of his power, even though the measure of this power would be small in comparison to that of someone who had received the "gift of the Spirit," the "baptism of fire." This greater gift is referred to by Jesus as an "abiding Spirit." Thus it truly is.

### **HOW MUCH OF THE SPIRIT DOES ONE RECEIVE?**

Those who receive the baptism of the Spirit by the laying on of hands do not necessarily receive the same measure of manifestation of that Spirit. As stated by Dwight Davis, "Reception of the Holy Ghost is dependent upon many factors: the faith of the new member; the quality of his spiritual life; the specific preparation made for it; the capacity of the member to receive; the need for its manifestation."<sup>12</sup> Some persons have had spectacular spiritual experiences at the very moment of the laying on of hands. Others have had no specific experience of which they were aware, aside from the ceremony itself, but have been blessed in quiet ways in the time following as they have endeavored to be faithful and obedient. Still others have not received consciously of the presence of the Spirit until considerable time later. The measure of the Spirit that we receive then and later is determined in large measure by the degree of diligence we exercise in living up to the terms of our covenant. And no one receives immediately the full measure for which he is capable of qualifying: "I am the Spirit of truth. No man receiveth a fullness of truth unless he keepeth [m~ commandments. He that keepeth [my] commandment, receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth, and knoweth all things."<sup>13</sup> "That which is of God is light, and he that receiveth light and continueth in God, receiveth more light, and that light groweth brighter and brighter, until the perfect day."<sup>14</sup> "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven . . . For whosoever receiveth, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever continueth not to receive, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."<sup>15</sup>

### **GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT**

"When a man changes his attitude toward God, he changes the direction of his life and opens many doors which have hitherto been bolted and barred against the coming of the Holy Spirit. In a sense he is the same man, for he has the same name, the same heritage, the same native endowment, and the same possessions. But in another sense, he is entirely different, for he has different purposes, different objectives, and a different point of view, and he is motivated by a different power. The Spirit of God can now search out in his life those abilities and powers which can be developed for his own good and for the good of the kingdom. Such a man is now eager for his best abilities to be discovered and enriched and used, and therefore yields himself willingly, with intelligence and with deep concern regarding what is happening, and opens the gates of his soul so that no impediment shall prevent the full and free influx of the Spirit of God. It is perfectly natural that under these circumstances the Spirit of God shall quicken his normal abilities and shall at times give him insight and understanding which he could not win for

himself."<sup>16</sup>

The foregoing is the essence of what is commonly called the "gifts of the spirit." Some of these gifts are listed by Paul.<sup>17</sup> Others are listed in latter-day revelation.<sup>18</sup> But there are many other aptitudes and native capacities which, when dedicated to and quickened by God, become tools in the hands for the blessing of others as well as ourselves. One of the blessings, then, of being born of the Spirit is the privilege of sharing in these new orders of experience which would be impossible without the indwelling of God's Spirit.

## **PLANNING THE CONFIRMATION SERVICE**

The minister who plans the confirmation service should give careful consideration to each part. The setting, the physical arrangements, the preparation of candidates and ministers, and plans for follow-up ministry should be kept clearly in mind.

### **The Setting**

The setting should contribute to the beauty and meaning of the rite. No part of the setting should call attention to itself, but should complement the purpose of the worship experience. Floral arrangements, worship centers, and musical selections should move the attention toward the rites performed.

Out-of-door settings are necessary only under very unusual circumstances. Such "pioneering" situations as a reunion where the candidate cannot receive this rite in a home congregation because of isolation, or some similar circumstance may dictate such a setting. Even then, the surroundings can be prepared so they remain simple, away from distracting scenes or noises, and with comfort considered. This implies advance preparation and thought.

The nave of the church is the preferred setting. Here the candidate will be associated with the members who will worship with him. The nave has been made holy by their corporate worship. He is seated where everyone is able to observe, in surroundings designed for such experiences.

Confirmation services ordinarily should not be administered in private homes or other buildings if there is a church building available in which the congregation worships regularly. By the same token, the service should not be held in the dining room or in a classroom if there is a nave or chapel.

### **Timing**

The timing of the service is important. It should not be "sandwiched in" between other worship services. It should be treated as a sacrament. It is hard to imagine any service of the church which bestows as much or has such wide implications as the rite of confirmation. It takes second place to none. It should be administered within its own setting and timing, whether this be a Sunday morning, Sunday afternoon, or weekday service. It should not give the appearance of being "rushed" or "cluttered." The number of candidates and the elements of the worship service should complement one another so the experience is neither prolonged beyond a reasonable hour nor shortened to a point of being superficial.

The minister and candidates should have had some time for counsel so that the significance and mechanics of the service can be understood by all concerned. This may be extended over several weeks during which further instruction may be given.

The candidate and ministers should prepare personally for the service. As they approach the day of

the service, all activities should be pointed toward this event. Fasting and prayer on the part of candidate and minister is recommended so they come into this sacramental experience clean of body and clean of heart.

### **Seating of Participants**

The congregation should be seated, little children with their parents so their natural restlessness may be controlled. If late members of the congregation are to be seated after the service begins, the ushers should be instructed as to the proper times.

The officiating ministers who are not given other responsibilities in the service, such as invocation, charge to the candidate, or presiding, may be seated with or near the candidates. The point to keep in mind here, however, is to try to eliminate as much distracting movement as possible so the central point of worship is the administration of this sacrament.

The candidates should be seated together, with their family a close friend. If there are more than two candidates, consideration should be made as to how they are to be called forward so there will be a minimum of confusion. It is best if there is but one candidate before the congregation at a time. This helps eliminate embarrassment on the part of the candidates who have to sit before the congregation as they await their turn, and it tends to keep one center of worship before everyone present. This may have to be modified slightly according to the physical arrangements of the nave, the number seated before the congregation should be kept as small as possible, never more than three.

### **Planning the Order of Worship**

The elements of the worship service are treated in the Appendix. These should be studied carefully so that all four elements will be kept in the service in their proper order.

Special consideration should be given to:

- (a) The Confirmation Prayer: This is a prayer and not a charge to the candidate. It may be addressed unto the Lord in such a manner as to invoke his bestowal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, but should not vacillate between address to the candidate and the Lord. Neither is this a "patriarchal blessing" and the confirmatory aspect should be maintained throughout. It should include the elements of adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, and dedication along with the expression of bestowal of rights, responsibilities, and gifts attendant to the Holy Spirit.
- (b) Welcoming address: This should be given by the one presiding. It need not be lengthy, certainly not maudlin, but should direct those assembled into the worship experience.
- (c) Charge to candidate and congregation: This should fall in the portion of the service devoted toward the affirmation of faith. In this we may expect spiritual insight and inspiration. It should bring the significance of the occasion well into focus. In this statement, admonition and exhortation may reach its greatest height. Since this is not the climax of the service, however, but is preparation of those present for the actual rite of laying on of hands, it should precede the confirming of the candidate.

### **Other Thoughts for Priesthood**

Advance notice should be given all officiating priesthood so they may know their task and prepare

for it. They are the channel through which the Spirit of the Lord moves in this service. Special attention to an individual member of the priesthood should be avoided. Each one, from usher to the one in charge of the service, is an integral part of the rite.

As hands are placed upon the head of the candidate they should rest lightly and steadily (without trembling or wavering) but so they can be felt. They should definitely touch the head. The voice should be firm and clear so everyone in the congregation may hear the words and direct their own prayers and thoughts accordingly.

When the service is over, the responsibility of all is not ended. Follow-up ministry should begin here, moving toward regular ministry in the home. The first visit should be arranged very shortly after the service. If the statistical report is not completed, this is a good time to complete it. It is a time for discussing other matters, affecting attendance, growth, and service. It is a good time to explain and enlist service in the church program. It is an excellent way to introduce the home minister to the new member. Such ministry is greatly appreciated and an asset to the growth of the church.

Suggested Scripture readings:

Matt. 3:38-46; 12:38, 39; 13:9-11

John 1:9,12

Acts 2:38; 8:14-17; 10:44-48; 19:1-6

Rom. 8:14

II Nephi 13:15-27

III Nephi 9:14, 15

D. and C. 10:12; 17:7, 8; 32:3; 34:2; 39:6; 49:2; 50:6; 53:2; 55:1; 83:7; 90:1, 4

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1. III Nephi 9:14, 15; however, see also Moroni 2:2
  2. Dwight DW Davis, *Ministry of the Rider*, page 63
  3. Charles Fry, *Nature Of Priesthood*, page 53
  4. Gen. 6:67-71
  5. John 1:12; D. and C. 10:12
  6. Rom. 8:14
  7. John 1:9
  8. D. and C. 90:1
  9. D. and C. 83:7c

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10. D. and C. 17:7

11. Mosiah 9:41

12. *Ministry Of the Elder*, page 64

13. D. and C. 90:4

14. D. and C. 50:6

15. Matt 13:9-11

16. F. Henry Edwards, *Fundamentals*, 1951 Edition, page 212

17. I Cor. 12:8-10

18. D. and C. 46:4-7