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What Is the Baptism of the Holy Ghost?

REV. L. BUCHHEIMER, St. Louis, Mo.

The phrase "baptize with the Holy Ghost" occurs in each of the gospels and twice in the Acts. Matt. 3, 11: "I [John the Baptist] indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but He [Jesus] 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." Mark 1, 8: "I [John the Baptist] indeed have baptized you with water; but He [Jesus] shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." Luke 3, 16: "John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; He [Jesus] shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." John 1, 26, 33: "John answered them saying, I baptize with water; but there standeth One among you whom ye know not. . . . And I knew Him not; but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." Acts 1, 5: "John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Acts 11, 16: "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that He said, John baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."

It will be seen from these passages that the Lord Jesus appears always as the Baptizer. And it will also be seen that the historical occasions of the baptism are two only: the Day of Pentecost and the closely parallel occasion, when, in the house of Cornelius, Peter, the Apostle of Pentecost, was permitted to "open the door of faith to the Gentiles." Acts 11, 15, 16: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the

Soederblom as a Temptation to the Augustana Synod.*

ADOLF HULT, Professor at Augustana Theological Seminary.

It is needless to say that the late article on Soederblom in the *Bible Banner* has my hearty assent. In fact, I deem it even mild when all the disconcerting teachings of Soederblom are taken into view — *as found in his writings*. The latest evasion is that we must not judge him by his writings, but by what he speaks in verbal addresses! That late connivance confuses my sense of honesty. When a supposed theologian writes, he no doubt is supposed to think with more care than when he speaks. And as to verbal utterances, they cannot be controlled, — perhaps that is the inner point of this late evasion!

Let any one who owns a Bible read Soederblom's recent book *Christian Fellowship*, 1923. Ever since 1910 I have contended that Soederblom has the liberal idea of Scripture. Look at his late work, p. 39. In one single sentence you have his liberal writing, *The Origin of the Idea of God*, 1914, summarized: "The Biblical religion of revelation or prophecy began with Moses [so?], perhaps [so?] with Abraham." Pastors and theologians among us who defend Soederblom, please face that sentence honestly, preach that to our people, and watch the result! That sentence is the exact tone of the whole volume of 1914 named above. If Soederblom is right, then revise our Catechisms, Bible Histories, and all.

Let any pastor or theologian among us who bows to the Word first read Matt. 23, then this sentence from Soederblom in his last book, p. 41: "With regard to later Judaism it seemed at first as if a gap existed between Jesus and His Jewish surroundings [I should think there would be!], which, as a matter of fact, was exaggerated by Christianity too [note now] because of Jesus' demands for ideal truth and resultant polemics against the Pharisees, whose religious earnestness He shared, of course, at bottom." The shame! He who Matt. 23, 13. 15. 16. 23. 25. 27. 29 says, "Ye hypocrites," shared the "religious earnestness" of the Pharisees "at bottom"! What a daring man is he who will write so! Jesus calls "the religious earnestness" of the Pharisees hypocrisy, and that in the most furious and appalling invective that ever left the holy lips of Jesus. Yet Soederblom, like that German Liberal

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Wellhausen and an English scholar, couples up the Son of God with "hypocrites"! We are used to books that do that trick. We did not expect it from even Soederblom.

Let our church-leaders study the spurious and false Luther picture Soederblom gives, which is in full harmony with the type of Luther-pictures delineated by liberal theologians. What say our lovers of Luther to this totally misleading and untrue estimate of the Father of our Reformation, p. 53: "Though Reformation is an apt word for the work of Luther in his early years [Soederblom means, before Luther had come to doctrinal clarity, the so-called "young Luther" of Liberals], it can scarcely be used to describe his creative continuation of Pauline theology and of the positive trend of mysticism." Farewell, then, to Luther's greatest classics, farewell to his *Epistle to the Galatians*, farewell to his postils, farewell to his *distinctively* doctrinal writings from the time he got *clear himself* on the doctrine. Which, then, are reformatory? Soederblom continues: "It is more significant as a name for those Roman [so?] tendencies which during the same century advanced claims for a return to purer life and doctrine—." This is news to fire the hearts of Luther-lovers. It is the rank material many of us know from the pens of liberal church historians, who abominate Luther's doctrine, but like to toy with Luther's early moves—the Theses, 1517, his courageous confession at the Diet of Worms, and so on.

Page 140 Soederblom confesses the delight he found in the "eschatological interpretation of the idea of God," p. 138. This subject is so difficult to present popularly that I refrain. But when I think of the horrors of that idea, brought out by such freethinking souls as Schweitzer and Adolf Wrede, such cruel critics as Johann Weiss, I shudder to read what Soederblom writes, p. 140. And the unexplained "reservation," p. 138, is like his other cautions; he never lets you know what his caution is, but evades and befumbles.

It is this skill at evasion which causes some of our men to imagine that Soederblom teaches the Biblical and Lutheran atonement doctrine: That God sent His Son to take upon Himself the wrath of God against mankind, to bear the guilt of mankind before God, and that a full atonement has been made. Do not our people know that the *modern* Liberals use all the old terms, but with a wholly different meaning? Have we no ears to distinguish *sounds* from clearly stated *doctrine*? Read Hallesby's *The Difference* (1923; 50 cents) to learn how.

Liberals to-day believe that "Jesus is God." But what is "God" to them?

Liberals to-day believe in atonement and vicarious suffering. We heard enough of this faith of theirs during the war. What kind of belief on that point do they have? Certainly not that of the Word of God.

Soederblom's radicalism in other writings I have often written of, that is, until our press was closed against any testimony of critical nature. So I shall not repeat quotations here.

In conclusion: The press of our synod stands alone in praise of Soederblom, well nigh. The editors of the *Lutheran*, of the Norwegian Lutheran papers, of the Ohio Synod papers, of the Iowa Synod papers, of the Missourian papers, all have boldly and repeatedly refuted the liberalism of Soederblom. But our Augustana Synod keeps up a chorus of rapt praise. Shall our synod be the door to rationalism in the American Lutheran Church? I wish I could print the mass of personal letters I have before me from leading Lutherans of other synods as to this question. It would shock our *Christian* laymen.

God waken us in time, — and, in fact, I fear that only a great *spiritual* awakening can rescue us. God grant such a refreshing!

A hopeful visible sign is the fact that the young candidates for the ministry are in most cases alive to the situation. We shall not spare any labor, prayer, teaching to deepen that sense among them.

Hallesby, Soederblom's mightiest opponent in the Scandinavian lands, said during his visit that he deemed Soederblom the most dangerous man in the Lutheran Church. I told Dr. Hallesby personally that for years this has been my own conviction. He is most dangerous because he is *the most skilful evader of the issue in all Protestantism*, as I lately wrote in a letter to Professor Machen of Princeton University, America's perhaps grandest champion for the faith among theologians (see his *Christianity and Liberalism*, 1923).

Oh, what heartaches, what prayer, what searching of the Word before our synod will be cleansed of this stain upon her creedal rectitude and her submission to the saving Word of God! History, alas! never forgets.

Friends, let us not draw back, but "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Jude 3. The

first secret of such "contending" is to creep close to the Atoner at His cross. There the Blessed One writhes atoningly for our pharisaical "religious earnestness." There the Blessed One fulfils the promises given at the gates of Paradise and that greatest promise of "revelation or prophecy," to Abraham, with no "perhaps"; for *God* spoke. There the Savior *does* that which the "Pauline theology," by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has most clearly set forth. There Luther, the matured Reformer, after his indecisive "young Luther" searchings, finds the full form of preaching and teaching because of which, and because of *which alone*, he is known as the Reformer.

God rip off the cobwebs from the eyes of our Augustana Synod that it may "look unto Him whom they have pierced" (Zech. 12, 10), gladly submitting to the clear Word of God! Especially be this so for us pastors!

And when we must suffer bitterly for our confession, let us praise the Lord, for we are unworthy even of that.
