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First published in Food for the Flock / Ministry in Focus (Food for the Flock, Inc., Ontario, Canada).

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The Holy Spirit - His Personality (January–February 1972)

From Ministry in Focus, January–February 1972.

Editor's note: We welcome William Belch to our list of contributors. This is his first article in a series on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit. The material presented in this series is excellent and merits careful study.

Brother Belch has served the Lord for many years in Canada and the United States. He is the founder of Joy Bible Camp, and President of its Board of Directors.

What do we mean when we speak of the Holy Trinity, the Triune God? The Bible states, "There is one God," but the term "Triune God" in the minds of some may suggest three Gods. The Bible reveals one Godhead of three distinct personalities: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. While these three are different personalities, they are one in essence and do all things in perfect unity. Consequently, the Holy Spirit is as much a person as is the Father or the Son. Throughout the centuries there has been considerable confusion on this particular point. For example, Arius, who lived in the middle of the fourth century, taught that the Holy Spirit was only the exerted energy of God. Some time later Socinus contended that the Holy Spirit had no personality but was merely the eternal proceeding power of God. Unfortunately, today there are many who hold one or the other of these errors.

Personality

Three elements constitute personality: intellect, emotion and will. By means of the intellect a person knows, thinks and understands. Through the emotions he loves and feels, and with the will he acts and decides. The Holy Spirit of God possesses all three; He is a true personality. He has intellect: "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." As a result, "The Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (I Cor. 2:10-13). Moreover, He shows His emotions; He can be grieved (Eph. 4:30), resisted (Acts 7:51), quenched (I Thess. 5:19), and even blasphemed (Matt. 12:31). Furthermore, He exercises His will: "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will" (I Cor. 12:11).

Divine Accord

The three persons of the Holy Trinity are seen in harmonious action throughout the Scriptures. In the Old Testament this may be seen in the creation of the earth (Gen. 1:1-2), and of the human race: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26). In Exodus 17:6 we have a splendid picture of this: "Behold, I (God the Father) will stand before thee upon the rock in Horeb (Christ); and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it (the Spirit). All three are clearly seen at the baptism of Jesus: "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo, a voice from Heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well

pleased" (Matt. 3:16-17). All three persons of the Godhead are mentioned in the Great Commission: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). They are also the source of blessing in the great benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen" (II Cor. 13:14). With the Father and the Son the Holy Spirit is coequal, copowerful, and coeternal. He is actually called "the Eternal Spirit." He is omniscient (I Cor. 2:10), omnipresent (Psa. 139:7) and omnipotent (Gen. 1:2).

Symbols of the Holy Spirit

There are many symbols of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. He is likened to the wind (John 3:8), to breath (John 20:22. Acts 2:2), and to a dove (Luke 3:22). Furthermore, oil for ceremonial anointing is used as a symbol of the Spirit of God (Luke 4:18) as also are fire (Acts 2:3), and water (John 7:37). The Holy Spirit is similarly likened to the seal upon a document (Eph. 1:13; 4:30).

The Work of the Holy Spirit

We have noticed that the Holy Spirit was active at the creation of the Universe. See Job 26:13 and 33:4. He also has been active since; He was active in the writing of the Bible: "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:21). He is active in the salvation of the sinner: "Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). The Spirit of God indwells every born-again person (Rom. 8:9), and thus makes

Christ a living reality to the believer. He is the great teacher of the Scriptures (John 16:12). Through His presence in the world, He is wooing a bride for Christ.

Much havoc has been done over the years because many have failed to recognize God's dispensational dealings with man. The false cults of religion which exist today exist on a faulty foundation; they do not rightly divide the Word of Truth. They misconstrue the fact that God works differently with man during the different periods of his history. There was a time when God dealt with man under the Law; today He is dealing with man under grace. The statement, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8), is certainly true of His person, but it has nothing to do with His methods of work. He never changes, but His plans for people do change. A failure to realize God's different means of administrating the affairs of the world only results in confusion in the minds and teachings of such persons.

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

One readily sees a difference in the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament from that of the New. In Old Testament times the Spirit "came upon" men temporarily for a specific task. The cases of Bezaleel, Othniel, Gideon and Samson (Ex. 35:30-35. Jud. 3:9-10; 6:34; 14:5-7) provide us with examples. The Spirit of God even came upon unconverted persons such as Balaam, King Saul and Caiaphas (Num. 23-24. I Sam. 11:6. John 11:50). David, a man of God, in repentance from his grave sin prayed, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me" (Psa. 51:11).

The Holy Spirit in the New Testament

When we turn to the New Testament, the language is quite distinct. We must remember, however, that much in the four Gospels belongs to Old Testament teaching. They portray the life and ministry of Christ before His death and resurrection, and are historically before Pentecost. In John 14:17 we read, "He dwelleth with you" (Old Testament), and shall be in you" (New Testament). The late esteemed Harold P. Barker illustrated this by the use of the ocean-going vessel. In olden days ships were dependent upon outside power, the wind pressure upon the sail; today the power is within the vessel, in the engine.

Pentecost Anticipated

The promise regarding the coming of the Holy Spirit is given five times in the New Testament (Matt. 3:11. Mark 1:8. Luke 3:16. John 1:33. Acts 1:5). These occurrences demonstrate that His presence with us is different from that of Old Testament believers. These references were all fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The Word of God adds an explanatory note to the cry of the Lord Jesus, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, . . . out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:37-39). After His resurrection, "Jesus breathed on them and saith unto them (His disciples), Receive ye the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). This promise was made in view of the Day of Pentecost when the Spirit was to descend in a new and

fuller manner for a new work. Until this was fulfilled, the disciples were instructed to remain at Jerusalem.

A limited interpretation of Acts two has been the cause of confusion among the Lord's people. Some accept it as a pattern to be followed today. Actually the Book of Acts does not give us a pattern but, rather, the movements of the Holy Spirit in the early Church. About 120 believers gathered to await the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Eventually He came as a rushing mighty wind and as cloven tongues of fire. Those who were present were filled with the Spirit and they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Some 17 nations were represented and all these heard in their own language the wonderful works of God. The Lord had been crucified and had arisen from among the dead; He had remained on earth for forty days, but now on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit had come to carry on the work of God during the absence of the Lord Jesus. The tongues and miracles proved that the presence and the power of the Lord were still with His people although He was corporally absent.

The story of the inauguration of the Christian Church is found in Acts two. That day about 12 believers gathered as individuals, but they were united organically together into one Body, thus the Church was formed. That which was then accomplished has never been repeated, and never will. This chapter is fully explained in one verse, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Cor. 12:13). Today every person upon accepting Christ as Saviour is added to the Church which began on the Day of Pentecost. All believers have been baptized into

one Body, the Body of Christ, by proxy or by representation through our fathers. This will continue until the Church is completed when the Lord will return to take His Bride home.

The Holy Spirit — The Individual Believer (March–April 1972)

From Ministry in Focus, March–April 1972.

Editor's note: Brother William Belch, Peterborough, Ontario, continues his helpful series on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Here are articles which will enlighten the mind, stimulate the thinking, and condemn Christian laxity.

Just what does it mean to be saved? There is both a negative and a postitive side to the answer to this question. Because I am saved I will not go to Hell, is the negative side; the positive is more important. In Hebrews 6:9 the writer states, "things that accompany salvation." The Holy Spirit does much for the believer of which he is unaware at the time of his conversion. A careful study of this enlarges his appreciation of what God accomplishes for him.

The New Birth

Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit we could not be saved. First, He convicts of sin. He makes us realize that we are lost and then points us through the Word to Christ as Saviour. Our Lord told Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Salvation is wrought by the Holy Spirit when a man sees his lost condition and trusts the Saviour; he is immediately born of the Spirit.

The Indwelling of the Spirit

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came upon men at times to enable them to do a specific work, but in the New Testament He is to indwell all believers. Our Lord said, "For He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:17). The first clause of this verse would be true of saints in Old Testament times; and the second, of saints in New Testament times. Again, we read, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (I Cor. 6:19). Salvation is accomplished in us by the Holy Spirit, and at that very instant He indwells us (Gal. 3:2). Romans 8:9 teaches that if we have not received the Spirit, we have not received Christ. The Apostle Peter also asserts that the indwelling of the Spirit results in a new or divine nature (II Pet. 1:4).

The late H. P. Barker illustrated this truth by ships. In former times sailing vessels were dependent on the wind, an outside power, but today the power is within the vessel. Similarly, in the Old Testament times the Spirit's power came upon believers, today He resides within them.

The Sealing of the Spirit

The sealing with the Holy Spirit is mentioned three times in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit does not do the sealing; He is the seal. The Apostle Paul states, "Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; He hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (II Cor. 1:21-22). In Ephesians 1:13 we have a series of experiences in proper sequence: "Heard the word of

truth," "Trusted or believed," "Sealed with the Holy Spirit." Note also that the statement, "After that ye believed" is properly changed in the margin to read, "Having believed" or "Upon believing." A person who trusts Christ is saved and immediately sealed. Sealing suggests several interesting matters: (a) A finished transaction (Jer. 32:9-10; John 19:30). Our Lord sealed His work of salvation by His death and resurrection. (b) Security is indicated by the seals on meters, letters, etc. The doors of heavy-loaded freight cars are locked and through the lock a seal is fitted. The car cannot be opened without breaking this seal. (c) The seal is also a mark of ownership. In days gone by lumber companies floated their logs down the rivers to various saw mills. During this process logs sometimes became mixed, but each company was able to identify its own by the mark (seal) of the scaler's hammer in the end of each log. These were all sealed as to ownership. The believer is sealed by the Holy Spirit at conversion proving that His salvation is a finished work, that he now belongs to Christ, and that he is forever secure. According to Ephesians 1:13 he is sealed at conversion to be kept safe until the Lord's return (Eph. 4:30).

The Earnest of the Spirit

The earnest of the Spirit is also mentioned three times in the New Testament (II Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14). An earnest might be likened to a down payment or an engagement ring. It is something that binds until the final settlement. Scripture affords many illustrations of this. At Kadesh Barnea God permitted the people to send into Canaan twelve men to spy out the land. On their return, they brought back with them samples of the

fruit: grapes, figs, and pomegranates. These were a taste or earnest of the fruit which they would enjoy to the full when they entered the land. Today the Holy Spirit lives in the believer to make Christ a living reality. Every little bit we enjoy of Christ now is a sample or an earnest of our full enjoyment in Him when we get home to Heaven. Remember, however, that the Holy Spirit makes Christ real to us through His Word; we must therefore continually read the Book, the Bible.

Anointed by the Holy Spirit

In the Old Testament times three different groups of men were anointed for divine service: prophets, priests and kings. Our Lord was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power at the beginning of His public ministry (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38). Every child in God's family also receives an anointing with the Holy Spirit. II Corinthians 1:22 and I John 2:20 prove that this is true of all believers. The word "unction" in I John 2:20 is the same word rendered elsewhere "anointing." In verse 28 we see what the anointing does; it gives every Christian an enablement to take in and understand God's Word. This is not true of the unsaved person. In sharp contrast, the unbeliever is unable to understand the Scriptures (I Cor. 2:14). How gracious of our Lord to give us the Holy Spirit that we might understand and enjoy both the Living Word and the Written Word!

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit

That which was promised by John the Baptist in the four Gospels and the Lord Jesus in the Book of the Acts (Matt. 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33, Acts 1:5) was literally fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

The Lord had instructed His followers to remain in Jerusalem until this promise was completed: this they did. Forty days after the resurrection of Christ the Holy Spirit descended to indwell all believers and to baptize them "into one Body" (I Cor. 12:13). This was the birth of the Church that the Lord had promised when He said, "Upon this rock I will build My Church" (Matt. 16:18). It is unnecessary to explain here that the Body and the Church are one and the same.

The words of the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 12:13 are a commentary on the whole story of Pentecost: "For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one Body" (R.V.). Every believer of the Church period was included. This, of course, is by proxy or representation.

There is no account of this baptism being repeated either individually or collectively. We read, "The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:42). Today the Lord is still adding to that Church. When one is saved, he is simply added to that group which was baptized by the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; hence every believer has been baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Scripture nowhere suggests that one should seek the baptism with the Spirit. There are twenty-one books of instruction for the believer in the New Testament, but only in one verse of one book is the baptism of the Spirit taught (I Cor. 12:13). It should be noticed that this was written to the carnal Christians at Corinth. This surely proves that it was not a spiritual attainment on their part. No individual is ever mentioned in the New Testament as having received this baptism, since it was a corporal and not an individual act.

To sum up, every believer is born again, indwelt, sealed, given the earnest, anointed, and baptized with the Holy Spirit. With a certainty we must add with Samuel, "Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things He hath done for you" (I Sam. 12:24).

The Holy Spirit — His Filling (May–June 1972)

From Ministry in Focus, May–June 1972.

In a previous article, we were concerned with the Holy Spirit and the individual believer. We noted that all believers were indwelt, sealed, anointed, given the earnest of the Spirit (I Cor. 6:9, II Cor. 1:21-22); and also that every believer has been baptized in the Spirit into one Body, the Church (I Cor. 12:13).

Being Filled with the Spirit

Scripture never teaches that believers should seek to be indwelt, sealed, anointed or baptized by the Holy Spirit, but that they should seek to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Much controversy has arisen by the confusing of the terms "baptism" and "filling." These represent two separate operations of the Holy Spirit and are never interchangeable. Baptism was a corporate act, baptizing all believers "into the one body" (I Cor. 12:13, J.N.D. Trans.). Filling is in the present tense, "Be filled with the Spirit." This verb represents a continuous work. This is difficult to translate into good, smooth English, but the Apostle is saying literally, "You be being kept filled" with the Spirit; a process which is repeated again and again in the experience of a child of God.

In Ephesians 5:18 Paul uses two contradictory experiences to teach us a lesson; he says "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." When one is drunk with wine, this produces a different kind of life and walk. The word translated

"excess" is the word for "riotousness" or "rowdiness." The wine [?] completely controls and changes [?] the person who drinks so that it produces an entirely different kind of life. [When?] sober he may be quiet, when drunken very noisy; when sober he may give very grudgingly, but when drunk very generously. Wine [?] transforms the person. The Apostle uses this illustration [?] to teach that the person who is filled with the Spirit has a transformed life. The Holy Spirit within has now taken over control and He enables the man to do that which he otherwise would not do.

How does one "be filled with the Spirit?" J. Dwight Pentecost, in his excellent book "The Divine Comforter," Moody Press, tells us that "to be filled" means two things. One, filling up a glass of water suggests the indwelling of the Spirit at conversion, but the other suggests the wind filling the sails of a boat, and this produces movement or being controlled. Referring again to the illustration, the man is not controlled by the wine until he drinks it, likewise one who possesses the Spirit cannot be controlled by the Spirit until he submits himself to the Spirit's control. Paul pin-points this in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." This is being submissive to the will of God, to do as He pleases. This allows the Holy Spirit to direct the Christian's life in the channel of God's will.

Walking in the Spirit

Being filled with the Spirit does not bring the believer into a new relationship or position with God; it has to do with his daily walk before the Lord. It is not "a second

work of grace" or "a once for all experience" that believers are to seek, an experience reserved for a special few. It is the privilege of every child of God to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. Christians are divided into two classes in I Corinthians 3:1-4, carnal and spiritual. Carnal believers are called "babes," they feed on milk, and are characterized by "envying, and strife, and divisions, and walk as men [?]." Spiritual Christians are matured and feed on the "meat" of the Word. Spiritual believers are those who have applied themselves to the study of the Bible, and have grown thereby. The Holy Spirit within the believer uses the Word of God to rebuke, exhort and sanctify the exercised Christian, thus enabling him to "walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:18). It is only as the believer walks in the power of the Spirit that he can be a victorious Christian. Should he walk in his own strength, he is sure to fail; but to walk in the Spirit, he may be "more than a conqueror through Him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

The Results of Being Spirit Filled

The filling with the Holy Spirit does not produce emotional experiences, nor ecstatic utterances but rather Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs in the heart. It produces the giving of thanks to the Lord and submission to fellow believers (4:19-21 [?]). The Spirit-filled man is a humble man, as is seen in the Lord Jesus on earth. No author of the Scriptures declares himself to be filled with the Spirit, but several wrote of others who had been filled with the Spirit. It is of interest to compare the portion we have been studying in Ephesians 5, with Colossians 3:16-18. Here we are to be filled with the Word of Christ. This produces the same

results in a believer's life as being Spirit filled. From this we must conclude that the Spirit of God operates through the Word of God in a believer's life.

The work of the indwelling Spirit is to conform the life of the believer to the life of Christ. This is Paul's message in Romans 12:1-2. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, and be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." There are several verses that list the characteristics of the life of the Lord, such as Galatians 5:22: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Also Philippians 4:8, things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. The Holy Spirit desires to mould our lives in those things that were prominent in the life of Christ.

A Bible Example

We have a very interesting example of Spirit filled believers in Acts 4:31-35, "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness" (v. 31). The following verses give us seven results. (I) Great Boldness: "They spake the Word of God with boldness" (v. 31). (II) Great Unity: "They that believed were of one heart and of one soul" (v. 32). (III) Great Fellowship: "Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common" (v. 32). (IV) Great Power: "And with

great power gave the apostles witness" (v. 33). (V) Great Grace: "And great grace was upon them all" (v. 33). (VI) Great Liberality: "And distribution was made unto every man according as he had need" (v. 35). (VII) Great Fear: "And great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things" (5:11). May these things give evidence in our lives that we are Spirit-filled believers.