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The Holy Spirit is a Person

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And now we wish to pass on to works of the Holy Spirit in the twentieth century. Dr. Thomas' pessimistic view of the nineteenth century had been mentioned. One contrary item demands attention. The nineteenth century escapes some of Griffith Thomas' criticism because Kuyper's work was published in 1900. And to the surprise of many people, the twentieth century did not begin until 1901. And the next century is not going to begin at the year 2000. It's going to begin at the year 2001. And if you'll think back to the year 0, why you'll understand that.

Incidentally, are you aware that historians and astronomers do not use the same number for years. The astronomers need a zero year and historians don't. So that if you say 5 B.C. that's not the same thing in history as it is in astronomy. The astronomers need the zero in order to make the arithmetic clear. The historians don't need arithmetic and so A.D. 1 and B.C. 1 are together at their ends. But the astronomers need zero. And if you will look in some philosophy encyclopedias, particularly in early Greek philosophy, you will find two years given for a certain event. And you'll be puzzled by that. It might say 585 and then a slash and 586. That means that this is, the one date is historical, the other astronomical. But you don't find that too much in the twentieth century publications, but you do have to do it if you're doing astronomy.

And so we can't completely say that the nineteenth century was devoid of material on the Holy Spirit because Kuyper's just got under the line. He got it out in 1900 and that was the, still the nineteenth century.

In his volume he listed a number of earlier German publications largely unknown in the U.S.A. The twentieth century has done better. Thomas, that is Griffith Thomas, himself has a bibliography of about three pages. And John F. Walvoord *The Holy Spirit* Van Kampen Press 1954 on page 228 and following, has a much longer list. You probably, I guess, maybe this library has Walvoord's work on the Holy Spirit, you can hunt for it if you will and see. It is a good bibliography in spite of the fact that not all the entries are both pertinent and valuable such as Thayer's Greek-English lexicon and Robert Young's literal translation of the Bible. No use of putting those two books in the bibliography on the Holy Spirit. English lexicon and literal translation. Hence, even though systematic theologies say very little, many special works compensate for their deficiency.

The nineteenth century may have been deficient in publications on the Spirit, but the twentieth century is not. The bibliography is enormous. The following pages will quote a small fraction of them. Unfortunately, a great number of these books confine their interest to Pentecostalism with its speaking in tongues. Of course, this is a legitimate field to study. But it is not at all a

comprehensive discussion of the Holy Spirit. These books assume, they do not substantiate, the doctrine of the Spirit as the third person of the Trinity. But unless the basic confessional statements are established, tongues, and even the Biblical doctrine of sanctification are of no value.

In speaking of bibliography to contemporary students, one much older book deserves special mention. It rivals, indeed outshines Kuyper's large tome. For John Owen's *The Holy Spirit* in its Sovereign Grace edition of 1971, runs to 931 pages. Unfortunately, it is written in the tedious exasperating style of the Puritans. Although Puritan style is just plain awful, Puritan theology is tops. With Kuyper and Owen in mind, one might think that there is no call for any further attempt like this one.

There are, however, a few good reasons for adding to the literature on the Holy Spirit. The ordinary church members, burdened with the cares of the world, need something shorter and less irksome than the verbose prolixity of the Puritan style. Seminary students, not having had Greek or Hebrew in college, find little time for detailed study of theology. As ministers they will find less time. After they retire they can read Owen and prepare for heaven.

This is most unfortunate, for the doctrine of the Spirit has active enemies in this present century. And they must be met now. Attacks on the Spirit are not confined to the early centuries, nor to sixteenth century Socinianism, nor even to nineteenth century Unitarianism. Twentieth century groups are active and many church members, poorly instructed in doctrine, fall for their propaganda. We shall examine two such movements a little later. Their existence and activities are more than enough to justify the publication of more books on the Spirit.

Now that's the end of section 1. I called it bibliography although it really isn't. But it refers you to bibliographies and you can look up either Griffith Thomas, who was not so good as Walvoord, you can Walvoord and, as I say, he has quite an extensive bibliography. And you keep jotting these things down so that when you want to know something about a certain subject you'll have a background to go to. And nobody can think this all out by himself for the first time. Each person adds a little bit. And so you profit by what people have done before.

Audience: ??? title ???

I think it's just *The Holy Spirit*, isn't it? Yeah. The trouble with Owen is he has to recapitulate everything he has said before at the beginning of every new chapter. And oh it gets so boring. I don't think you want to read it through, but if you want some particular thing why you'll find it there and... what were you going to say?

Audience: I was going to ask you if you were going to say today who those two twentieth century enemies of the Holy Spirit were. The two groups.

Oh, I'm going to talk about them in detail.

Audience: Today?

Oh no not in this next hour, no. No, this will come in different parts later when their particular interests come up. Well, look, there is a difference between those errorists who deny the personality of the Spirit and the Pentecostals who are quite strong on the personality of the Spirit but are deficient in other ways. And you don't use the same arguments when you talk to one as when you talk to the other.

Audience: Those are the two groups you were referring to?

Ah, well, they are... this group is maybe two groups itself. I'm going to talk about The Way, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the tongues movement. They will be the three main groups. But before we get to the tongues movement we have to talk about the personality of the Spirit which is I think the first thing we should talk about. And that's why section 2 of this manuscript is the statement "the Holy Ghost is a person."

Are there any other questions you want to raise? Take as much, as many notes as you can. Keep them in good form. And I think you will find them useful, fifteen or thirty-five years from now.

Audience: ??? guarantee on my car. Whichever comes first.

Whichever comes first.

Well, we come to section 2. The Holy Ghost is a person.

Now then, in beginning the study of the Holy Spirit, the first thing that must be said is that he is a person. Isn't that right? How else would you begin? Of course, you have the doctrine of the trinity, but you get the personality of the person there. I think that is the first and logical place to begin. Everything else would be misunderstood if you didn't accept the personality of the spirit.

He is the third person of the Trinity. This fact worries an author if he wishes to discuss only the Holy Spirit rather than write a complete systematic theology. The doctrines of the Bible form such a tight knit logical system that every doctrine is involved in every other doctrine. And I want to try to make that plain and give instances because this is one of my pet ideas, that every doctrine of the Bible is involved with every other doctrine. The Scripture gives us a system. It is not an aggregate of disjointed statements such as I gave you in an example some pages back.

For instance, the doctrine of immediate imputation has implications with the question of traducianism and creationism, and the federal headship of Adam. Our ordination vows, that is in the Reformed tradition, require us to subscribe to the system of doctrine. It's a system. It all fits together. And the more we see that, the better we understand it.

The doctrine of the Bible form such a tight-knit logical system that every doctrine is involved in every other doctrine. Therefore it is hard to confine one's self to just one subject. An unsatisfactory compromise must be made. And here, while it is impossible to ignore the doctrine of the Trinity altogether, only so much will be included as is necessary to give a reasonable background for the main subject. The main subject is that the Spirit is a person. A note on methodology is also necessary.

The basis for asserting the distinct personality of the Spirit includes considerable material from the Old Testament. Owen uses a lot of it. When I say Owen uses a lot of it, I am rather making an insufficient statement. He use a very lot of it. Uses the Old Testament quite considerably. But the passages are obscure. God did not clearly reveal the Trinity in the Old Testament. The Jews never found it there. If we see some of it, it is only because, unlike the ancient Hebrews, we are blessed with a full revelation. Owen makes great use of the Old Testament. And most of what he says is excellent. It seems a shame to omit it. But none of it would have been certain without the New Testament explanation.

Audience: Are we saying that the Old Testament was so fragmented that as far as the Holy Spirit was concerned, that you'd never recognize it?

Don't say fragmented, but so vague or incomplete. It was just a partial revelation. For example, the liberals, the modernists, say that a future life, any idea of a future life is not found in the Old Testament. Well that's an exaggeration. We'll see that too, I think I've mention it here. But at any rate, a future life is not emphasized in the Old Testament. It's much clearer in the New Testament.

You remember the old adage, what is latent in the Old Testament, patent in the new? What is latent in the Old is patent in the New, and what is patent in the New is latent in the Old. But the Jews did not have any notion of a Trinity. It is not clearly revealed. Now, if we have the New Testament explanation of the Old, we can see these anticipations of a Trinitarian doctrine. But if we didn't have the New Testament, we would have been as bad off as the Jews were before Christ.

Audience: Are you talking about progressive revelation?

Yes, the New Testament is much more clear, much clearer, much more detailed, and it explains a lot in the Old Testament.

Audience: So without recognizing the New Testament, we're not going have the full revelation of God.

Well obviously.

J. B. Green in his *Studies of the Holy Spirit*, Revell 1936 on page 18, calculates that “It is more frequently mentioned in Paul’s epistles than in all the books of the Old Testament.” All the books put together. Hence the present discussion will limit itself to the New Testament evidence. This latter is perfectly clear and is therefore more useful in persuading the doubtful. If it explains to us some hidden implications in the Old Testament, so much the better. But the decision arguments all come from the New Testament.

Unlike Owen, I’m not going to refer to the Old Testament much at all. Maybe a little bit here or there, but virtually, very little... whereas Owen uses the Old Testament, he uses it so much you wonder whether he has ever read the New Testament. Well of course he has, he wrote what, 10,000 pages on the book of Hebrews or something.

Audience: That would take what, 6 years?

I don’t know. I wonder how many quarts of ink he used.

Audience: You switched from talking about the Holy Ghost though to the Trinity showing its existence. Doesn’t the, I mean, didn’t you go from the Old Testament, are there, would no one be right in saying there are numerous examples and sites where the Holy Ghost...

There are anticipations of the doctrine of the Trinity. But if we didn’t have the New Testament, we wouldn’t recognize them as anticipations.

Audience: Hermeneutics would say that clearer passages, more clear passages would explain more obscure so that...

That’s always true, but the clearer passages are all in the New Testament.

Now, I agree there are anticipations and the New Testament explains what they mean. The Jews didn’t have those explanations.

Audience: Well I understand that. I agree with what you are saying but it seems like you made a jump from... to the Trinity.

Well, the Holy Spirit is one of the Trinity.

Audience: Right, but that doesn’t mean in the Old Testament the Jews had a poor of God the Father, but just because they didn’t have the New Testament. I mean, the Father is part of the Trinity also.

Yes. But they didn’t know the Godhead consisted of three persons.

Audience: Would you say they had a good idea of two of them?

One of them. Not two. They didn't have a good idea of the messiah.

Audience: They still don't.

That's right.

Audience: It talks about the spirit of the Lord in the Old Testament a few times. Now that may be the Holy Spirit, but to them you're saying it mean the Father is one.

Yeah the Father's activity or something.

Audience: Well, he's talking about the persons and the personalities revealed in the Trinity.

Yeah, of course. I'm simply saying you can't get the Trinity and therefore you can't get the personality of the Holy Spirit simply from the Old Testament. If you could you would have expected some Jews to come across it in a period of 2000 years.

Since heretical attacks on the doctrine of the Spirit do not usually deny His or its deity but rather question his personality, there is no need to spend much time on the former. But, pro forma, one may present two verses and let it go at that. 1st Corinthians 2:10 and 11 assert the Spirit's omniscience. The quotation is, "The Spirit searches all things, yea the deep things of God. The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Then Hebrews 9:4 describes the Spirit as eternal. To these of course may be added everything the New Testament says about the Trinity, but the main question here is the Spirit's personality.

Though I do not particularly discuss the deity of the Spirit because Unitarians will agree to the deity of God, and the Spirit is just God's influence or something like that. The important distinction is that the Spirit is a person, and not that he is God because that's rather admitted.

Audience: Did you say Hebrews 9:4?

Hebrews 9:4. Do you have it? You can read it, I didn't quote it here. 9:14.

Audience: Oh, all right. There we go.

9:14.

Audience: I'm sorry.

No, I'm sorry because I just didn't see it clearly. What does it say in 9:14?

Audience: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience.

Yeah, see that describes the Spirit as eternal. Well, the Unitarians would agree because the Spirit is simply the personality of the Father or his exercise of his power or something like this.

Many verses in the New Testament show clearly that the Holy Spirit is a person. He is not merely a quality of the Father, a different role that the Father assumes, nor a mode of his appearances. The verses to be quoted will make that clear. But many verses say more than one thing. They can be used to establish other points of doctrine also. For the moment the student must ignore these other implications. Right now the question concerns the existence of the Spirit as a person.

Now can any of you from your previous studies in the Scripture quote a few verses which, as distinctly as possible, state that the Spirit is a person?

Audience: Well, in John isn't he referred to as he?

That doesn't prove anything, because...

Audience: Well he is also called the paraclete.

But it's, the Spirit is neuter, not masculine. And the pronouns are neuter. You see, the gender system in Greek, and in I guess every other language except English, is a grammatical distinction. We have natural gender, and although English is one of the hardest and most terrible languages on the face of the Earth, we have the best gender system of any other language that there is. One advantage. But, oh boy, I've been trying to teach English to Cambodians and of course I can't speak Cambodian and they couldn't speak English. Sometimes we use a Chinese dictionary. But you have no idea how impossibly inconsistent and vague English is. You have to be careful about it. And it is awfully hard to explain to Cambodians, particularly if you can't understand Cambodian and they can't understand English.

Now can any of you think of some verses in the New Testament that rather distinctly indicate that the Spirit is a person? Yes.

Audience: Peter ??? ???

Does that show that the Holy Spirit is a person?

Audience: That's not distinct necessarily.

It seems to say it, doesn't it. Yes. You, could you give an argument, could you give some exegesis that would make that verse plausible in defending the person of the Spirit?

Audience: ???

Yes, that's true.

Now, can you think of some other verses that might specify, that might indicate the personality of the Spirit?

Audience: John 15 is the one where the ??? clearly made. It's fairly long. A couple of sections, but the Spirit is spoken of as our advocate and the spirit of truth, and he will guide us into truth, he will not speak with his own authority, but tell will tell you only what he hears. He will make known the other things that are coming.

Yeah, that isn't so bad. Can any of you guess what seem to me, of course you can't always guess what I think because I'm very peculiar in what I think. Can any of you guess the two most important statements, at least those that seem the most important, the two statements that seem to me to be the clearest and most important of all? Well, I didn't expect you could guess, though you might have taken a wild try at it.

Although it is not the first mention of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, Matthew 3:16 to 17, though that's not one of the two main ones I'm going to talk about, but Matthew 3:16, 17 is one of the most indisputable passages in distinguishing the three persons of the Godhead. This is the passage, "The heavens were opened unto him and he saw the spirit of God 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.'"

Matthew, the third chapter, 16 and 17.

As a Trinitarian passage, this is important because it distinguishes the Son from the Father, and the Father from the Spirit. Note that heaven opened and that the voice came from heaven. This indicates that the Father was in heaven. From there he spoke. Therefore the Spirit cannot be the Father for the Spirit descended. Nor obviously can the Spirit be the Son because the Spirit descended on the Son. If now the Father and the Son are persons, it would be most peculiar if the Spirit were not.

I'll read the verse over again. "The heavens were opened unto him and he saw the spirit of God 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.'"

You have three persons pretty well indicated in that verse.

There are also two other well known Trinitarian passages. In fact, they are so well known that congregations and students in this seminary are apt to miss their meaning simply because of their familiarity. None of you mentioned these two.



Audience: Ephesians 1 ??? 12 verses. It seems that there are ministries in our lives now that the Father has called us, the Son has redeemed us, and...

I'm glad you know so much about the New Testament. I don't under-evaluate that. But there are two tremendously important passages. And none of you have guessed them yet.

Audience: 1 John 1

Even if the Bible had nothing else on the subject, these two would be sufficient to prove both the deity of the Spirit and the distinction of the persons. They are so very familiar, that is why people don't think of them. The first of these is the Baptismal formula, Matthew 28:19. Baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. If we wish to press the matter we could point out that although the word *name* occurs only once, the grammatical construction indicates three names. Not the name Father, Son, and Spirit, but the name of the Father and the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Ghost.

Audience: Is name ever found in the plural in the New Testament?

Oh, I don't know.

Audience: The New American Standard just says, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Now is that indicated there?

They've omitted the preposition.

Audience: Is that right?

Yeah. Have you got, anybody got a Greek Testament? See, it's a genitive case, of the.

Audience: So it should be of the Son?

Yeah, that's right.

The three of's indicate three names. If, however, grammar is not one's favorite subject, the major point is that the three names are in one category. If the Father is a person, and if the Son is a person, how could anything impersonal be the third member? No one with any intelligence would write, "in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, and in the name of the Father's power, influence, or mentality."

Before giving the second well-known passage, now can anybody guess what the second one is?

Before giving the second well-known passage, let us insert two or three less familiar verses. Besides their value for the problem at hand, which is the personality of the Spirit, they serve as examples of verses that are read quickly and not digested by most readers. Speed-reading has become popular in recent years. The Bible however should be read slowly and its phrases should be meditated on.

One of these verses is Matthew 12:31 and 32. "Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto man. Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." The matter of an unforgivable sin may be difficult, but the personality of the Spirit is clear because one cannot blaspheme a stone or an animal. Nor can one lie to a stone or an animal, as somebody mentioned about Acts 5:3.

Mark 3:29 corroborates the verse in Matthew 12. As I say, I'll leave here on the desk what I have read. You can look at this and fill out your notes with the Scripture references because you'll need them 12 years from now.

Perhaps Mark 6:12 and John 6:4 do not contain much of importance. Look them up. But many verses have far more than one at first can suppose. At any rate, Acts 2:32, though not often tacked up on a wall plaque, is a great Trinitarian verse.

Audience: Is this the second one now?

Not yet. I sorta delay it you know to get you a little nervous.

This Jesus hath God raised up. Therefore, Jesus, being by the right hand of God exalted and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath... and so on.

The three persons of the Trinity could hardly be more distinctly distinguished.

Now comes the second well-known formula. The apostolic benediction with which many services are closed. It makes the same point. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 2 Corinthians 13:14.

Again, would any minister bless the congregation by saying, "the grace of the second person, the love of the first person, and the fellowship of the first person over again be with you all."

If these two passages were the only ones in the New Testament to assert the personality of the Spirit, and however clearly they did so, some perverse person might argue that they were later textual insertions inconsistent with the original first century Christianity. This is a desperate expedient, for not even the liberal critics, Aland, Black, Metzger, and Windgren find the least evidence for such an irresponsible claim. Tischendorf, whose critical apparatus is more extensive than Aland's, records only a possible "amen" at the end of the benediction.

We were giving some Scriptural references to support the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit as distinct from the personality of the Son and the Father. This distinction is clear also in Galatians 4:6. "God has sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts crying Abba, father." Opponents of Christianity have shown little inclination to identify the Spirit with the Son. Identity with the Father is here ruled out because the Father sends forth the Spirit of His son. Hence the Father cannot himself be the Spirit. When sent out, the Spirit either helps us to pray, and this seems the better interpretation, or he prays for us. In either case, his activity includes the activity of speaking and this is the activity of a person.

The next verse, not precisely the next verse in the New Testament, but the next as we hop, skip, and jump toward Revelation is 1 Timothy 4:1. 1 Timothy 4:1. The Spirit speaketh expresses that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith." This again is an instance of the Spirit speaking. The quote "spirit of the times," that phrase, or the influence of Shakespeare, cannot predict the future. Obviously the Spirit must be a person.

Finally, I'm not giving all the references, you can fill this out, you know add to them. And it is a good idea in your notes to have a list of verses on a certain subject because you may want them sometime. Finally, Revelation 2 says "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." The remainder of the verse may be precisely what the Spirit says to the Churches, but even if it is not, the verse still says that the Spirit speaks.