

The Third Person of the Holy Trinity or The Person and Character of the Holy Spirit.

We can remind ourselves that right views of the Divine character lie at the foundation of all genuine and vital Godliness.

It should be one of our chief concerns to seek a correct knowledge of God in his character and nature.

Without the true knowledge of God in his nature, character and attributes we can neither worship him acceptably, nor rightly serve him, or know his blessing.

We can remind ourselves in this introduction as George Smeaton does in his classic work on the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit that the Reformation gave a new impetus to the study of the work of the Holy Spirit.

For instance John Calvin's emphases on the doctrines of God's sovereignty and man's depravity demanded that at the same time there was a fresh focusing on the life giving and enabling, dynamic, work of the Holy Spirit, in his regenerating work, bringing conviction of sin and pointing us, and drawing us to Christ our Saviour. Moreover the emphasis of the Reformation on *Sola Scriptura* led to a new emphasis on and understanding of the Spirit's work in inspiring and interpreting the Scriptures. Moreover the Reformation saw a turning away from the Medieval misconception of the Church as a hierarchical, man centred organization to a spiritual Communion with Christ at the head and the Holy Spirit as the source of its beauty, strength and vitality.

Let us emphasize the fact that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was one of the great doctrines recovered at the time of the Reformation.

B.B. Warfield in his Selected Shorter Writings comments:

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit was only slowly brought to the explicit consciousness of the Church, To be more specific, we shall need to note that the early Church busied itself with the investigation of the doctrine of the Person of the Holy Spirit - his deity and personality - and of his one function to inspire the prophets and apostles, while the whole doctrine of the work of the Spirit at large is a gift to the Church from the Reformation.

Indeed it is possible to be more precise still. The doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit is a gift from John Calvin to the Church of Christ. He did not, of course, invent it. The whole of it lay spread out on the pages of Scripture with a clearness and fullness which one would think would secure that even he who ran should read it; and doubtless he who ran did read it, and it has fed the soul of true believers in all ages..... But it was Calvin who first gave them anything like systematic, adequate expression and it is through him that they have come to be the assured possession of the Church of Christ.

B.B.Warfield Selected Shorter Writings pp.212-3

Yes, Calvin did speak to us of the sovereignty of God, of predestination, of salvation by grace alone, but we must not forget that he also enabled the church to see clearly the threefold office of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King, as he also gave the church at conception of what we might call and what Warfield calls the science of Christian ethics. And in relation to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit it was Calvin who was able to set out clearly the work of the Holy Spirit in regard to the doctrine of Common Grace, Regeneration, and the Witness of the Spirit.

We also need to emphasize the fact that the correct appreciation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit it is of immense importance for the well-being of the Church. Where we rightly appreciate the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, his Person and work, where he is honoured and revered, the Church knows great strength, effectiveness, harmony, beauty and true dignity in all its worship and activities.

Where the ministry of the Holy Spirit is not rightly appreciated, and where due honour is not given to him, things are just the opposite. To quote George Smeaton again he said: *Wherever Christianity is a living power, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has uniformly been regarded equally with the atonement and justification by faith, as the article of a standing or falling Church. The distinctive feature of Christianity, as it addresses itself to man's experience, is the work of the Spirit, which not only elevates it far above all philosophical speculation, but also above every other form of religion.*

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit page 1

On a similar theme we can quote the words of the famous old time Methodist, Samuel Chadwick, whose name would not have been unknown down here in Cornwall.

"The gift of the Spirit is the crowning mercy of God in Christ Jesus. It was for this all the rest was. The Incarnation and Crucifixion, the Resurrection and Ascension were all preparatory to Pentecost. Without the gift of the Holy Spirit all the rest would be useless. The great thing in Christianity is the gift of the Spirit. The essential, vital, central element in the life of the soul and the work of the Church is the Person of the Holy Spirit."

Interestingly these words of Chadwick's are quoted by Arthur W. Pink on the first page of his work on the Holy Spirit.

We can also add the words of the famous Robert Hawker Plymouth from his lectures on "The Person, Godhead, and Ministry of the Holy Spirit (1817) also quoted by Pink

"I am the more prompted to this service, from contemplating the present awful day of the world. Surely the "last days" and the "perilous times," so expressly spoken of by the Spirit, are come. (! Tim. 4:1). The floodgates of heresy seem to be broken up, and are pouring forth their deadly poison in various streams through the land. In a more daring and open manner the denial of the Person, Godhead, and Ministry of the Holy Spirit, is come forward and indicates the tempest to follow. In such a season it is needful to contend and that, "earnestly, for the faith once delivered unto the saints." Now in a more awakened manner ought the people of God to remember the words of Jesus, and "to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.' "

p.8

These writers from opposite ends of the theological spectrum are both however saying the same thing, they are bringing to our minds how vitally important it is to have right views and a true appreciation of the character work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

There is a remarkable passage in John Owen's famous discourse concerning the Holy Spirit, in his *Pneumatologia*, first published in 1674. Volume 3 of the works of John Owen published by the Banner of Truth.

He traces through the ages and dispensations (in regard to the word dispensations, most reformed theologians speak of two dispensations or two manifestations of the covenant of grace,, the Old Testament dispensation and the New Testament dispensation, some however divide the old dispensation into two parts, that is the administration of the Covenant as it was before Moses, and as it was after the giving of the Law on Sinai at the time of Moses) a certain progress of divine tests of true orthodoxy, relating to each of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

He says before the first Advent the great testing truth was belief in the, oneness of God's nature and his sovereignty over all, with special respect to the Person of the Father.

"From the foundation of the world, the principal revelation God made of himself was in the oneness of his nature and his monarchy over all. And herein the Person of the Father was immediately represented with his power and authority; for he is the fountain and original of the Deity the other Persons as to their subsistence being of him: only, he did withal give out promises concerning the peculiar exhibition of the Son in the flesh and an appointed season, as also of the Holy Spirit, to be given by him in a special manner. Hereby were their Persons to be signally glorified in this world, it being the will of God that all "men should honour the Son as they honoured the Father," and the Holy Spirit in like manner. In this state of things, the only apostasy of the Church could be polytheism and idolatry. Accordingly, so it came to pass. The Church of Israel was continually prone to these abominations, so that scarcely a generation passed, or very few, wherein the body of the people did not more or less defile themselves with them. To wean and recover them from this sin was the principal end of the preaching of those

prophets which God from time to time sent unto them. II Kings 17:13.

And this also was the cause of all the calamities which befell them, and of all the judgments which God inflicted on them, as is testified in all the historical books of the Old Testament, and confirmed by instances innumerable. To put an end hereunto, God at length brought a total desolation upon the whole Church, and caused the people to be carried into captivity out of their own land; and hereby it was so far effected that, upon their return whatever other sins they fell into, yet they kept themselves from idols and idolatry, Ezekiel 16:41 – 43, 23:27, 48.

2. *The time now came wherein they were to be tried with another dispensation of God; that is the Son of God was to be sent unto them in the flesh. To receive and obey him was now to be the principal instance and trial of their faith and obedience. They were no longer to be tried merely by their faith, whether they would own only the God of Israel, in opposition to all false gods and idols, for that ground God had now absolutely won upon them; but now all is to turn on this hinge, whether they would receive the Son of God coming in the flesh, according to the promise. Here the generality of that Church and people fell by their unbelief, apostatized from God, and became thereby neither church nor people, John 8: 24. They being rejected, the Son of God calls and gathers another church, founded it on his own Person with faith, and the profession of it therein, Matt 16: 18,19. In this new church therefore, this foundation is fixed, and this ground made good, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is to be owned and honoured as we honour the Father. I Corinthians 3:11; John 5:23. And in this all those who are truly called Christians do agree, as the Church of Israel did in one God after their return from the captivity of Babylon.*

3. *But now the Lord Jesus Christ being ascended unto his Father, have committed his whole affairs in the Church and in the world unto the Holy Spirit, John 16:7 – 11.*

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and own righteousness, and of, because: of sin, because they believed not made;

Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

Of judgment because the prince of this world is judged.....

And it is on this design of God that the Person of the Holy Spirit may be singularly exalted in the Church; unto whom they were so in the dark before, that some (none of the worst of them) professed they had not so much as heard whether there were any Holy Spirit or no, Acts 19:2,- that is, at least, as unto the peculiar dispensation of Him then introduced in the Church.

Wherefore, the duty of the Church now immediately respects the Spirit of God, who acts towards it in the name of the Father and of the Son and with respect unto him it is that the Church in its present state is capable of an apostasy from God. And whatever is found of this nature amongst

any, here it hath its beginning; for the sin of despising his person and rejecting his work now is of the same nature with idolatry of old and the Jews rejection of the person of the Son. And whereas there was a relief provided against the sins, because there was a new dispensation of the grace of God to ensue, in the evangelical work of the Holy Ghost, if men sin against him and his operations, containing the perfection and complement of God's revelation of himself unto them, their condition is deplorable.

It may be some will say and plead, that whatever is spoken of Holy Spirit, his graces, gifts, and operations, did entirely belong unto the first times of the Gospel, wherein they were manifested by visible and wonderful effects, – to those times they were confined; and consequently, that we have no other interest or concern in them but as a recorded testimony given of old unto the truth of the Gospel. This is so, indeed, as unto his extraordinary and miraculous operations, but to confine his whole work there- unto is plainly to deny the truth of the promise of Christ, and to overthrow his church; for we shall make it undeniably evident that non can believe in Jesus Christ, or yield obedience unto him, or worship God in him, but by the Holy Ghost. And, therefore, if the whole dispensation of him and his communications unto the souls of men do cease, so doth all faith in Christ and Christianity also."

The Works of John Owen volume 3 pp. 43-4.

It may be as some have commented that John Owen puts his case here in to absolute a form to fully to take in all the data of Scripture revelation and experience. But it does highlight the great spiritual truth, that is, that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the work, of the Holy Spirit and the acknowledgment of the true worth and due worship and reverence given to the Holy Spirit is a most vital and central Christian doctrine.

It comes as a warning and caution to us to be careful lest we fail to acknowledge our great need of the blessed Spirit in his humbling and beautifying fullness and ministry.

We can lose sight of the fallenness of human nature and by doing so lose sight of the vital necessity of the regenerating sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

We can attempt to live our Christian lives and order our churches, in such a way that loses sight of the necessity of prayer, divine guidance, quickening and energizing and sustaining power of the Holy Spirit.

We can adopt views of the efficacy of the ordinances of baptism and holy communion which deny the sovereign and the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit through such ordinances.

We may lose sight of the fact that he alone is the inspirer of the Sacred page, and the only true interpreter of its meaning.

We can too much dependent on our church's, organization, our finances, our man power, our ingenuity, our activity, our reputation, our tradition, all important in their way but without him we can do nothing.

If we neglect him and his work we are in the same state as the Old Testament saints who fell into idolatry, the Jews at the time of our Lord who rejected Christ the Son of God.

As we begin to look at what Scripture teaches us as to the nature, Person and the divinity of the Holy Spirit we would do so acknowledging our need of his help in these and in all matters and we trust in a spirit of humble reverence.

One of the most memorable occasions in the story of the German Reformation was that of the dispute between Eck and Martin Luther, which was held in the presence of Duke George of Saxony in the Castle of Pleissenburg.

The discussion only began after the ancient hymn Veni Creator was sent over by the whole assembly three times.

The first two verses are as follows;

*Come Holy Ghost, Creator, come,
And visited all the souls of Thine;
Thou hast inspired our hearts with life,
Inspire them now with life divine.*

*Thou art the Comforter, the Gift
Of God Most High, the Fire of love,
The everlasting Spring of joy,
And holy Unction from above.*

The author was said to have been the Emperor Charlemagne, though many believe its origin is much older.

H.C.G. Moule Veni Creator p.5

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We come now to try and speak of the Personality of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones sets out in his Great Doctrines of the Bible series to enumerate a number of reasons why there is often confusion even amongst believers in regard to the personality of the Holy Spirit. It is not unknown for believers to refer to the Holy Spirit

as "it" or hear believers speaking of "its" influence. This however is quite wrong, the Holy Spirit is a Person, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost.

The reasons for this confusion Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones gives as follows:

1. By and large a forgetfulness of the Person and ministry of the Holy Spirit amongst many of the liberal and modernistic churches.
2. We may add here, that Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones stated he about in the early 1950s long before the modern charismatic movement was heard of. We might say today that some have neglected the ministry of the Holy Spirit because of the excesses, and distorted views of many charismatic teachers. Incidentally C.H. Spurgeon in his day warned of those who were bent on restoring the miraculous gifts of the apostles..... He actually spoke of those, *who were vomiting all manner of absurdities to vex the Church.. and detract her from her true purpose and power.*

Sermons volume 30 p.11

3. The work of the Holy Spirit seems to be impersonal, because it is a kind of mystical and secret work. He produces graces and fruits; he gives us gifts and he gives us various powers. And because of that, we tend to think of him as if he were some influence.
4. Another reason is perhaps because of the very symbols that are used in speaking of him. He descended upon our Lord, as John baptized in the Jordan, in the semblance of a dove (Matthew 3:16).
And again, the symbols that are used to describe him in his work our oil and water and fire.

In particular, there is the phrase in the prophecy of Joel, which was quoted by Peter in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, about the Spirit being poured out (Acts 2:17). That makes us think of liquid, something like water, something that can be handled - certainly not a person.

So unless we are very careful and remember that we are dealing with the symbols only, the symbolic language of the Scripture tends to make us think of him impersonally.

5. Another reason why it is we are frequently in difficulties about the personality of the Holy Spirit is that very often, in the preliminary salutations to the various New Testament epistles, reference is made to the Father and the Son but the Holy Spirit is not mentioned. Our Lord in the great high priestly prayer says:

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom

thou hast sent."

John 17:3.

He makes no specific reference to the Holy Spirit. And then John says the same thing in his First Epistle:

"And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."

1 John 1:3

He does not mention the Spirit specifically at that point.

6. Then also, the word Spirit in the Greek language is a neuter word, and, therefore, we tend to think of him and his work in this impersonal, neutral sense. And for that reason, the King James Version being very faithful to the original in Romans 8:16 reads:

"The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

Romans 8:16

Again in the same chapter we read,

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities : for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us.

Romans 8:26

The A.V. translation, "the Spirit itself" is explained as follows. The Greek word "spirit" (pneuma), is neuter gender; the personal pronoun according to the rules of Greek grammar must agree with its antecedent in gender, therefore, the translation "itself." The translators followed the slavish, idiomatic method of translation instead of translating according to sense. The Holy Spirit is a Person. The pronoun should be rendered "Himself."

Wuest's Word Studies p.135

In other places the same words and grammatical structure is translated, "he". Such as John 14:16, 26; 15:26, 16:7.

These says Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones are the principal reasons why people find it difficult to realize that the Holy Spirit is a Person.

And so though the terms the Spirit of God, or Holy Spirit at first do not suggest to us or help us appreciate that the Holy Spirit is a Person, so much as the terms God the Father and God the Son do; yet nevertheless the Bible clearly teaches us that the Holy Spirit is a Person... An intelligent being who possesses the power of thinking, willing and acting.

1. Personal properties are attributed to him, such as knowledge, and will, and such characteristics and properties must of necessity relate to a person.

An example of this is John 14:26

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

cf. John 15:26 and John 16:3

We can say He performs those offices and works which only a person could perform.

He convinces John 16:8

He guides John 16:13

He leads Romans 8:14

He intercedes Romans 8:26, 27

He loves Romans 15:30

He teaches John 14:26

He gives 1 Corinthians 12:8 - 11

He bears witness 1 John 5:7

He knows 1 Corinthians 2:11

He can be sinned against Matthew 12:32, 33.

Perhaps the best passages of Scripture to turn to in seeking to understand the Personhood of the Holy Spirit are John 14 - 17

This 14th chapter of John is the beginning of our Lord's Paschal discourses. They are the words of our Lord to his disciples on the last night before he died. Pink calls this a

discourse which for tenderness, depth, and comprehensiveness is unsurpassed in all the Scriptures. JC Ryle says, "Our Lord's great object throughout this and the two following chapters seems clear and plain. He desired to comfort, establish, and lift up his down cast disciples." Hengstenberg has a wonderful passage on the seven great encouragements of this chapter. H.C.G Moule describes these chapters as one of the holiest of holies in Scripture. An inner sanctum where we catch a glimpse of the Shekinah glory of God. In these verses we are shown the Holy Spirit not as the Father, not as the Son, but as the "Vicar of Christ (the phrase is Tertullian's), the ample Consolation for the absence of the familiar company of the Saviour. Here we have impressive Greek grammar confirming the personality of the Holy Spirit.

The passage clearly indicates that the Holy Spirit is not merely a power but a Person, just like the Father and the Son. He is another helper, not a different helper. The word another, indicates "one like myself" he will take my place, do my work. Hence, if Jesus is a Person, the Holy Spirit must also be a Person. Personal attributes are ascribed to him 14:26 15:26.

Moule says;

*In this central and decisive passage then we have the Holy Spirit revealed to us in so many words as **Him** not only as it; as the living and conscious exerciser of true personal will and love, as truly and fully as the first "Paraclete," the Lord Jesus Christ himself.*

And now this central passage radiates out its glory upon the whole system and circle of Scripture truth about the Holy Spirit.

From Genesis 1:2 to Revelation 22:17 it sheds the warmth of divine personal life into every mention of the blessed Power. With the Paschal discourse in our hearts and mind, we know that it was He, not It, who "brooded" over the primeval deep. He, not it, "strove with man," or "ruled in man," of old. He, not it, was in Joseph in Egypt, and upon Moses in the wilderness of wandering, and upon judges and Kings of after days. He, not it, "spoke by the prophets," "moving" those "holy men of God." He, not it, drew the plan of the ancient tabernacle and of the first Temple. He, not it, lifted Ezekiel to his feet in the hour of vision. He, not it, came upon the Virgin, and anointed her Son at Jordan and led him to the desert of temptation, and gave utterance to the same since Pentecost, and caught Philip away from the road to Gaza, and guided Paul through Asia Minor to the nearest port for Europe. He, not it, effects the new birth of regenerate man, and is the Breath of his new life, and the Earnest of his coming glory. By him, not it, the believer walks, and mortifies the deeds of the body, filled not with it, but Him. He, not it, is the Spirit of faith, by whom it is "given unto us to believe on Christ." He, not it, speaks to the Churches. He, not it, said his from heaven that they who die in the Lord are blessed, and calls in this life upon the wandering soul of man to come to the living water.

Veni Creator Handly Moule pp.9-10.

We might briefly consider the question, was the personality of the Holy Spirit

known and taught in the Old Testament?

There have been different opinions on this, the highly respected theologian James Montgomery Boice suggests that the Old Testament merely gives intimations of the doctrine of the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit (page 376 Foundations of the Christian faith).

Whereas others such as George Smeaton in his, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, states categorically, *that he who spoke by holy men from the beginning was in every age recognized as a Divine Person.*

p.39

He spends a considerable portion of the first chapter of his book giving evidence for this.

Likewise Charles Hodge his *Systematic Theology* vol. 1 states:

Before considering the direct proof of the Church doctrine that the Holy Spirit is a person, it may be well to remark, that the terms "The Spirit," "The Spirit of God," "The Holy Spirit," and when God speaks, "My Spirit," or, when God is spoken of "His Spirit," occur in all parts of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. These and equivalent terms are evidently to be understood in the same sense throughout the Scriptures. If the Spirit of God which moved on the face of the waters, which strove with the antediluvians, which came upon Moses, which gave skill to artisans, and which inspired the prophets, is the power of God; then the Spirit which came upon the Apostles, which Christ promised to send as a comforter and advocate, and to which the instruction, sanctification, and guidance of the people of God are referred, must also be the power of God. But if the Spirit is clearly revealed to be a person in the latter parts of Scripture, it is plain that the earlier portions must be understood in the same way. One part of the Bible, and much less one or a few passages must not be taken by themselves, and receive any interpretation which the isolated words may bear, but Scripture must interpret Scripture.

p. 522

Likewise, Leon J. Wood in his *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*, states did the Old Testament writers have The Person of the Trinity definitely in mind, or merely a powerful influence of God? Answer: they seem to have been able to make a distinction between the Spirit of God and God himself and this is a way to characterize the Spirit as having qualities of personality.

For instance, the Psalmist writes, *"Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth."* Psalm 104:30. The verb *sendest forth* is hardly applicable to merely a power or influence of God. On that basis, one would simply expect such an expression as, *"thou didst create and renew the face of the earth by thy power."* A Spirit which

could be sent forth must be one that is distinct from the being from whom it is sent forth, and if that spirited in turn could create and renew, then an aspect of personality is implied.

Later still, Ezekiel, who speaks so frequently regarding the Spirit refers to the Spirit either as doing something to or for him in most significant ways.

For instance, in chapter 3:12 he says, "*Then the Spirit took me up*" for the purpose of transporting him to the City of Tel- abib.

Again in 11:1, he states, "*Moreover the Spirit lifted me up and brought me unto to the east gate of the Lord's house.*" Such language once more shows the prophet distinguishing between the Spirit of God and God himself, and since the Spirit thus in reference does these things either to him or for him, personality for the Spirit is again implied.

p.19

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The Holy Spirit is a Divine being, and if we do not recognize Him to be so, we are robbing a Divine being of the honour and adoration which are rightly his.

We are missing out on a full understanding of the love and mercy of God in salvation. Handley Moule, the one- time godly Bishop of Durham said;

A mysterious and living glory is thrown upon the revelation and experience of the New Birth and Life, upon Regeneration, Sanctification, Union with Christ, when the soul remembers that indeed a Person is the Influence at work, that it's Life is the Life Giver, it's Comfort the Comforter; no impersonal force, itself incapable of loving and being loved, but One who is Himself archetypical Kindness and Tenderness.

Outlines of Christian Doctrine p. 124.

In conviction and conversion and all the aspects of the Holy Spirit's work in us He deals with us in a way of understanding and tenderness.

The same writer points out that in our Lord's Paschal discourse of John 14:16 which we have just referred to, when our Lord is passing through a time of great crisis that is the Eve of his crucifixion, he speaks very emphatically of the Holy Spirit as a Person. There is tremendous strength and comfort to be gaining from the relaxation of this Personal nature and personal ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Rubin A. Torrey writing in *The Fundamentals* said:

It is of the highest experimental importance that we know the Holy Spirit as a Person. Many can testify to the blessing that came into their lives when they came to know the Holy Spirit not merely as a gracious influence (emanating, it is true, from God), but as an ever present loving friend and helper.

The denial of the personality of the Holy Spirit is a source of many errors and heresies. It is one of the characteristic marks of the so-called Christian cults.

For example, the Jehovah's Witness teaches that:

The Holy Spirit is the influence of power exercised by the one God.

The Spiritualist teaches that:

There is no such thing as a personal Holy Spirit.

The Christadelphian teaches that:

The Spirit is not a personal God distinct from the Father, but the radiant invisible power or energy of the Father.

Many of the more extreme Charismatics have almost descended into a belief that the Holy Spirit is a supernatural power that can be plugged into and exploited for our own ends much in the same way as Simon Magus sought to buy the power of the Holy Spirit in Acts Ch.8.

The doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit is also of the highest importance from another perspective. If we think of the Holy Spirit only as an impersonal power or influence, then our cry will constantly be, "how can I get hold of and use the Holy Spirit": but if we think of him in the biblical way as a divine First infinitely wise, infinitely holy, infinitely tender, then our cry will constantly be, "how can the Holy Spirit get hold of and use me?" The former concept leads to self-exaltation; the latter to true humility and self-renunciation. If we think of the Holy Spirit merely as a divine power or influence, and then imagine that we have received the Holy Spirit, they will be the temptation to feel as if we belong to a superior order of Christians. But if we think of the Holy Spirit in the biblical way as a divine being of infinite majesty condescending to dwell in our hearts and take possession of our lives, it will put us in the dust, and make us all very softly before God.

R. A. Torrey *The Fundamentals*

It has also been observed that the wrong understanding of the personality of the Holy Spirit can degenerate into an inadequate concept of the authority of Scripture.

I quote Handley Moule again here.

It is observable a lax view of the authority of the Holy Scriptures ordinarily accompanies the denial of the Personality of the Holy Spirit.

Outlines of Christian Doctrine p. 150

Frederick Schleiermacher (1768 - 1834) one of the forerunners of modern theological liberalism, denied the Personality of the Holy Spirit. He said that the Spirit is but the union of God with the Christian church. Or the Holy Spirit is but the Spirit of the whole, the common Spirit of the Christian Church. (Schleiermacher was in effect following the heresy of Sabellianism, which taught that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are just parts or forms or manifestations of an obscure and hidden God. (R.L. Dabney Systematic Theo. p176.) Schleiermacher developed this idea into saying that this so-called Christian consciousness becomes the arbiter and judge of Scripture. In other words, by denying the Personality of the Holy Spirit as the interpreter of Scripture

*The personality of the Holy Spirit is not merely a question of technical theology, but an article of vital faith for the Christian, and one on which momentous issues depend. The Father is God over us, the Son is God for us, the Holy Spirit is God **in** us. If he to whom the administration of redemption is entrusted be not a Person, the very meaning of the phrase is gone. The Unitarian declares that the Trinitarian formula of baptism implies faith in God, a man, and an abstraction. If for the Third Person on the Trinity we substitute, even unconsciously, an abstraction, the living God present in our midst has vanished, we are "orphans" indeed.*

Davison page 209 quoted by W.H. Griffith Thomas, The Holy Spirit p. 137

.....Part II.....

The Divinity of the Holy Spirit

Some, while they believe in the Personality of the Holy Spirit, have gone wrong in that they have considered him to be a created personality and not God himself.

Arius is said to have believed that the Holy Ghost is a Person but a creature – the first creature namely which the Son brought into existence by the Father's instruction, after His own creation. (R.L. Dabney p.193).

However, the Bible attributes to the Holy Spirit, not only personal characteristics but also declares his divinity.

He is clearly called God. Acts 5:3,4; Leviticus 26:11, 12; II Corinthians 6:16; Isaiah 63: 14.etc.

Divine characteristics are attributed to him

He is omnipotent... Almighty Micah 2:7 Isaiah 40:28

E.H Bickersteth says;

The proof of this is transparent from his being associated with the Father and the Son in the creation of the world's and a man, and from that which is more particularly his own office, the creation of the soul in the image of God. He does that which Omnipotence alone can do therefore, he is Omnipotent.

The Holy Spirit His Person and Works p. 53

He is omniscient.... All knowing

Isaiah 40: 13, 14

*Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?
With whom took he council, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment,
and taught to knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?*

He is omnipresent... He is everywhere.

Psalm 139:7

With the shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

Note though the word spirit has a small "s" here we are clearly speaking of God by the context, and the words of the next few verses. W.S. Plumer on the Psalms comments:

*This verse teach us either that God is a Spirit or that he has a Spirit. If the former, it implies his amazing and infinite intelligence as well as incomprehensibility; if the latter, it implies the doctrine of the Trinity, in which the Spirit of God is the third person. **Why should we hesitate to admit that the personality and divinity of the Holy Ghost is taught in the Old Testament?***

p.1162.

The divine quality of eternity is ascribed to him.

Hebrews 9:14

*How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the **eternal Spirit** offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

Other proofs of the deity of the Holy Spirit are:

1.... In the Old Testament, all that is said of Jehovah is said of the Spirit of Jehovah; and therefore, if the latter is not a mere synonym for the former, he must of necessity be - divine.

The expressions, Jehovah said, and, the Spitted said, are constantly interchanged; and the acts of the Spirit said to be acts of God.

Another example would be in the New Testament the language of Jehovah is quoted as the language of the Spirit.

For example, in Isaiah 6:9 it is written, Jehovah said, "go and tell this people," etc. This same passage is quoted by Paul in acts 28:25 as,

"Well the Only Ghost by Esaias the prophet," etc.

Many similar examples could be found, thus constantly the language of God is quoted as the language of the Holy Spirit.

2... The Holy Scriptures present the Holy Spirit to us as a proper object of worship.

Not only in the formula of baptism and in the apostolic benediction, which bring the doctrine of the Trinity into our constant remembrance as the fundamental truth of our religion, but also in the constant requirement that we look to him and depended on him for all spiritual good, and reverence and obey him as our divine teacher and sanctifier.

Charles Hodge Systematic Theology

We could also add the words of the Great Commission Matthew 28:19

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Showing that the Holy Spirit is put on the same level as the other two Persons of the Trinity and is therefore considered to be Divine. It would be totally incongruous to so unite the name of a created being with that of the Godhead in such tightly knit expressions.

Why this doctrine is important?

We should not forget the dignity and Godhood of the Holy Spirit. If we forget his true dignity and divinity, we will lose sight of the excellence and grandeur of his work. He is the one who beautifies creation, who upholds the orders of the world, who inspires the Scriptures, who convicts, converts, and sanctifies the sinner, and glorifies our Lord Jesus Christ.

We owe to him the deepest reverence and adoration.

.....

The Holy Spirit is a divine person, distinct from the Father and the Son.

We must not fall into the error of Sabellianism, as mentioned a few moments ago, which was a First Century heresy, but often recurring; teaching that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are but one and the same Person appearing in different aspects or guises. Scripture teaches that God is three distinct Persons and yet one.

A passage such as Matthew 3:16 - 17 reveals all three Persons of the Godhead existing and acting simultaneously.

"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went out straightaway 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."

.....

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

It is extremely difficult to describe what the theological term, the procession of the Spirit of God precisely means. We are told that the Son is "begotten" (John 3:16, 18) of the Father, but we never read that about the Holy Spirit. We are told in the case of the Holy Spirit that He proceedeth from the Father (John 15: 26).

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me."

We know that the great theologians through the centuries have been trying to grapple with the difference between generation and procession.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones said that he will not even attempt to explain the difference. He says it should never be attempted because it is entirely beyond us. The human mind simply can't grasp it.

Though however this aspect of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is really beyond our comprehension, it is nevertheless important to emphasize that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. It reminds us of a point that is often lost sight by some today, that the work of the Holy Spirit is intimately connected with and only carried on in relationship and harmony with God the Father and God the Son.

1. The procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father is taught in John 15:26 as we have just quoted above.

2. The procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son is taught in John 16:7 and John 20:22.

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.

3. We can also notice that the Holy Spirit is not only called the "Spirit of the Father, but also the "Spirit of the Son." In Galatians 4:6.

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

The question of whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the son was settled in the churches of the West by the Council of Toledo, Spain (589 A.D.).

This resulted in the famous " Filoque Clause" being added to the Nicene Creed.

"We believe in the Holy Ghost who proceeds from the Father and the Son. (Filoque = and the Son).

The importance of realizing that the Holy Spirit proceeds from our Lord Jesus as he proceeds from God the Father.

1. It helps us to see that the Holy Spirit does not do his work in isolation from the other persons of the Trinity, but each Person works in co-operation and harmony with the

other.

2. We must not isolate the work of the Holy Spirit from that of Jesus Christ. Work of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ, to apply his great saving work to our lives. The Holy Spirit's work is to take the historic once- and -for- all salvation wrought on Calvary and bring back home to our hearts and conviction conversion. The danger is we can so emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit that we lose sight of what his chief work is, in separating his ministry from the work of our Saviour.

A denial of the Filioque leads to what Abraham Kuyper called an "unhealthy mysticism". What he meant by "an unhealthy mysticism is that attitude which tends to dispense with, firstly neglect of Christ's great saving work as revealed in the Scriptures, and secondly to seek some union with God through a mystical experience apart from Christ's saving work, as if in some way, through following some inner-light or mystical enabling, the Holy Spirit will bring us into the immediate presence of God.

This can never be, for it bypasses the Bible and Christ's saving work as Mediator. The Holy Spirit does not work in this way.

The Holy Spirit works through the Word. He brings before us and witnesses to us of the redeeming work of Christ that has made salvation possible. At every point the Spirit works in harmony and co-operation with God the Father and the Son.

Edwin Palmer put it like this:

A denial of the Filioque tends to isolate the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives from the work of Jesus Christ. Redemption by Christ is put in the background, while the sanctifying work of the Spirit is brought to the fore. The emphasis is more and more on the work of the Spirit in our lives, which tends to lead to independence from Christ, the Church, and the Bible. Sanctification can loom larger than justification the subjective communion with the Spirit larger than the objective Church life, and illumination by the Spirit larger than the Word. Abraham Kuyper believes that this has actually been the case to some extent in the Eastern Church, as a result of the denial that the Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father.

p. 18

George Smeaton also makes the same point:

So calamitous, indeed, have been the practical results of denying the essential relation of the Spirit as the Spirit of the Son, that we cannot fail to perceive them. The Spirit, economically considered, is largely dispensed from the Son. And the Greek Church has become much of a fossil, untouched by any of the Reformation so revivals that renovated the Western Church.

p. 291

The doctrine of the Filioque also reminds us of the mutual love and harmony which exists between the persons of the Trinity.

We had given by this doctrine of further insight into the truth that "God is love." Not only does God do acts of love, however great. In the innermost heart and secret of his being he "is love".

(Veni Creator p.28)

Historical note on the Filioque Clause

Added to the Nicene Creed by the Third Council of Toledo in 589, when the Visigothic King of Spain finally abjured Arianism.

The doctrine of the double procession had already been clearly taught by Augustine (354 - 430) and they had no reason to suppose that it was not universally accepted by all Orthodox Christians. Augustine expounded his belief that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Son as well as from the Father on the basis of such biblical passages as Galatians 4:6. In his Trinity of love, it was essential that the love of the Father for the Son was reciprocated by the Son's love for the Father. In the Christian scheme of things, this binding love within the Trinity is the Holy Spirit.

There were tensions between the Eastern and Western Churches over this matter through the next few centuries until the patriarch Photius in the Ninth century accuse the Western Church of heresy.

This tension grew until in 1054 the Patriarch of Constantinople excommunicated the Pope of Rome, and the Pope of Rome excommunicated the Patriarch of Constantinople.

These tensions continued and reached an all-time low and 1204 when the Crusaders sacked Constantinople and established a Latin Empire in the city. This Latin Empire however was short-lived and overthrown 1261.

There is a discussion on this subject in Robert L Raymond's New Systematic Theology p. 331...

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Holy Trinity.

1.All the persons of the Trinity are equal in power and Godhead, yet there is among the Three Persons of the Trinity, a definite relationship and order. Though we insist that the three Persons are equally God, yet we must not conclude that they are all the same. Each one has distinctive properties and relationships to the other. Between the first and

second Persons for example, there is the relationship of Father and Son. We believe from all eternity, the Father begat the Son. The Holy Spirit did not beget the Son.. only the Father did.

When we speak of the Trinity we say the Father is mention **first** because he begets the Son.

The Holy Spirit is **third** because he proceeds from both the Father and the Son.

2.It is significant that this same is seen in the order of God's revelation of himself in Scripture.

i.e. From the time of creation to the time of Christ, it is the Father who is more prominently at work in the world. God the Father is the one who received the chief glory in creation, and with whom Israel in the Old Testament chiefly had to do.

3. When Christ came, the Father does not appear as conspicuously.

4. The Holy Spirit, as we have seen was present in the Old Testament, had not yet fully revealed himself.

After Christ's Ascension, the Holy Spirit, makes himself much more conspicuously Known.

Edwin Palmer comments:

Thus, because the three Persons have a definite order in the Trinity, that order reveals itself in history, so that each Person appears in history in the same order that he is found in the Trinity itself.

Palmer p. 17

The Holy Spirit is called the third Person of the Trinity because he brings the work of God to completion and perfection. There is an order of working, a division of labour, amongst the three Persons of the Trinity.

Abraham Kuyper puts this very well.

That in every work affected by Father and Son, and Holy Spirit in common, the power to bring forth proceeds from the Father; the power to arrange from the Son; the power to perfect from the Holy Spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 8:6, St Paul teaches us that: "There is but one God the Father, of whom are all things and one, Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things." Here we have two prepositions: of

whom, and by whom. But in Romans 11:36 he adds another: "for of him and through him and to him are all things"

The operation here spoken of is threefold: first, that by which all things are originated (of him); second, that by which all things consist (through him); third, that by which all things attain their final destiny. (to him). In connection with this clear, apostolic distinction the great teachers of the Church, after the fifth century, used to distinguish the operations of the Persons of the Trinity by saying that the operation whereby all things originated proceeds from the Father; that whereby they receive consistency from the Son; and that whereby they were led to their destiny from the Holy Spirit.

The one who completes and brings to perfection the work and purposes of God is the Holy Spirit.

*To God the Spirit's Name
Immortal worship give,
Whose new creating power
Makes the dead sinner live:
His work completes the great design
And fills the soul with joy divine.*

Isaac Watts

.....

I want us now to turn again to think about the relationship of the Holy Spirit within the Godhead that is the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the other Person's of the Holy Trinity

There is a fine passage in Loraine Boettner's Studies in Theology on this theme.

Instead of the doctrines of the Trinity being contrary to reason as charged by the Unitarians, a little consideration should convince us that a plurality of Persons within the Godhead is eminently agreeable to reason. That there should be specifically three Persons does not necessarily follow, but that God might be more than One seems very probable. We shrink from the thought of an eternal and lonely God, and take refuge in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. This doctrine we find, is of such a nature that on the one hand, it avoids the hard monotheism of the Jews and Mohammedans, and on the other, the crass polytheism of the Greeks and Romans. Through the truth which it presents we are enabled to see that God has always been independent of the entire creation, that within His own nature there is to be found that absolute perfection and self-sufficiency which we instinctively ascribe to Him. Unless there is to be found that plurality of Persons within His own nature, time as well as eternity would seem to be unbearably monotonous to Him. For where among the creatures are there to be found personalities capable of responding fully to his own personality? Men and Angels, while created

in his image, are infinitely below Him; even the nations, Isaiah tells us, are as a drop in a bucket, and as the small dust of the balance. (Isaiah 40: 15). Only within the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is there to be found that full interplay of personality which the nature of God demands. And when once we have conceived of God as Trinity we can never again be satisfied with a modalistic or Unitarian concept of Him.

Studies in Theology p.110

Augustine of Hippo who is sometimes called the patriarch of the Western doctrine of the Trinity, in seeking to better understand the doctrine of the Trinity and indeed to explain that doctrine began to consider Genesis 1:26.

In this text of course we learn that God made man in his own image and likeness. Augustine believed that if a man was made in the image of God, there must be some parallel in man's make up and the nature of the divine Trinity.

Augustine began to consider and identify various threefold aspects of man's personality. He spoke of man's rational soul being made up of, mind, knowledge, and love. Or again of memory, understanding, and will, among other tripartite variations, corresponding to Father, Son, and Spirit.

Others down the centuries have developed these thoughts along similar lines, for example, R. C. Moberly in his *Atonement and Personality*

"A person exists in three ways:(1) as he really is in himself, invisible and inaccessible, the ultimate source and spring of all that can be ascribed to him;

(2) In his self- expression or utterance, his bodily presence, speech and action, through which he becomes directly known to his neighbours and friends;

(3). In his working or operations, the total effective of him as seen in the response of his environment, to his impact upon it, and his way of dealing with it.

Perhaps the most well- known of Augustine's analogies of the Trinity is the one which speaks of – the Lover, the Beloved, and the bond of love the two share, or the love which binds the two together.

It was this picture of the Trinity and this concept of the Trinity which in some way accounts for the emphasis on the double procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son – the famous *filioque* clause added to the Nicene Creed.

Later on Richard of St. Victor the Scottish divine who died in 1173 developed somewhat Augustine's love analogy in seeking to describe the Trinity and the bond between the Three Persons. He argued from 1 John 4:8 "God is love," that the described God as love

logically requires a plurality of divine Persons since love consists in its supreme aspect of persons in a right and close relationship.

Richard of St. Victor contended that for God to be "love" in its noblest expression it required the "shared love" of two for a third.

"The reason that God must be a plurality of Persons, since no one can properly love by simply loving himself or herself: For charity (i.e. true love) to exist, then, it is necessary for love to go out to another; where plurality of persons is lacking, therefore, there simply cannot be love. But could not God simply be one person who is love by loving his created persons? Richard of St. Victor rejected the possibility, because such love would not be the highest kind of love, which is possible only between equals. So only another divine Person could be wholly deserving of the love of God. But Richard of St. Victor then appeals to the shared nature of true love to argue for three Persons. Two cannot share love since that love would be locked up within themselves and could potentially be a selfish kind of love. So there must be a third Person in the divine Trinity for the definition of God as love to make sense of love's highest form and noblest manifestation.

An introduction to Christian Theology. R.J. Plantinga Thomas R. Thompson and Matthew D. Lundberg. p.466 and 127.

We might note here in passing that the influence of Christianity is played a large part in the development of the modern conception of personality. As the Church wrestled to express the doctrine of the Trinity there came also into being new, understandings of God, and of society and the individual life.

The doctrines of Christianity teach us that to find our true selves we must pursue the principle of sacrifice or dying to self. A man needs to transcend the purely self-regarding aspect of personality and find a larger life of fellowship. Part of the meaning of the mystical union between the believer and Christ, is the experience of the self-transcending power of Christ's life, through the Holy Spirit, passing into the soul and bursting through its natural bonds of selfishness into a fulfilled life in the service of God and our fellow men.

This was not, however, by the annihilation of self, nor by the merging of the individuals personality in the community, nor again by the absorption of the personality into the life of God in any pantheistic sense. It is through the union of the individual with Christ through the Holy Spirit that there comes about the transcendence of self which is indeed a transfiguration of self. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," Where life is all grace, all Christ, all death to self, there also it means enlargement and enrichment of self. Now this supernatural experience, as we must call it, carries an unspoken promise of fulfilment to a level beyond the range of natural capacity.

Essays Catholic and Critical Ed. Edward Gordon Selwyn. W.142.

The attractiveness of these concepts lies in the support they give to our belief that the doctrine of the Trinity is no superfluous piece of theologizing, but it is an expression of what is most fundamental in the revelation of God in Christ. If love means a personal relationship, and if love is the very being of God, we cannot think of God as existing in unrelated loneliness, realizing himself only in the acts of creation and redemption. The glory of the love of God is a glory that belongs to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit: As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

The Belief of Christendom, A Commentary on the Nicene Creed.
John Burnaby p.213

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Earlier in our study we looked at the words of John Owen when he reminded us of the seriousness of the neglect of a right apprehension of the nature and character and work of the Holy Spirit. We might remind ourselves that there is scarcely anything more outstanding or more striking in the story of the primitive Church recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, than the association of the Holy Spirit with every part of the life of the disciples and the early Church. We have seen also that at the time of the Reformation once again the Holy Spirit was acknowledged in His vital role in the life of the Church. We would have seen the same if we had looked at the periods of the great revivals. Today's Church in the same way as the medieval Church has looked too much to its structures and hierarchy or wealth or organization and in so doing quenched the Spirit and wandered far from the truth. We may ask if we in our own day have quenched the Spirit of God and have forgotten, *that it is not by might nor by power but by my Spirit saith the Lord.*

The dispensation of the Spirit is the era in which we live. In other words, it is the revelation of Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man. For the Spirit always hides himself and points to Christ. But we must remember that the promise of the Spirit's help is for us and for all time. The assurance of his promises are and can only be the living hope of the Church; and indeed of all human history, and the history of each believing soul. It is the promise of his power that we need, it is the promise of his help in which lies all our strength, it is the promise of his presence alone in which lies all our safety. The vast resources of the Spirit are for each and all within his Church.

Thou Holy Spirit, we pray to Thee,
Strengthen our faith and increase it alway;
Comfort our hearts in adversity

With true belief both night and day.
Kirieleyson.

Thou worthy light, that art so clear,
Teach us Christ Jesus to know alone;
That we might never cause to fear
In Him to have redemption.
Kirieleyson

Thou sweet love, grant us altogether
To be unfeigned in charity;
That we may love one another,
And of one mind always to be.
Kirieleyson

Be thou our Comforter in all need;
Make us to fear neither death nor shame;
But in the truth to the established,
That Satan puts us not to blame.
Kirieleyson

Bishop Miles Coverdale's Prayer, set out in the frontispiece of *Veni Creator* Handley
Moule.