

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

from *Great Doctrines of the Bible* by William Evans

We are living in the Age of the Spirit. The Old Testament period may be called the Age of the Father; the period covered by the Gospels, the Age of the Son; from Pentecost until the second advent of Christ, the Age of the Spirit.

All matters pertaining to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit should, therefore, be of special interest to us who live in this age of special privilege. Yet how ignorant is the average Christian concerning matters pertaining to the Spirit. The Christian church today needs to heed Paul's exhortation: "Now concerning spiritual gifts (or, perhaps better, "matters pertaining to the Spirit"), I would not have you ignorant." May it not be that the reason why the sin against the Holy Spirit is so grievous is because it is a sin committed in the light and with the knowledge of the clearest and fullest revelation of the Godhead. We cannot, therefore, afford to remain in ignorance of this all-important doctrine.

I. THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

It seems strange that it should be necessary to discuss this phase of the subject at all. Indeed, in the light of the last discourse of the Master (John 14-16), it seems superfluous, if not really insulting. During all the ages of the Christian era, however, it has been necessary to emphasize this phase of the doctrine of the Spirit (cf. Arianism, Socinianism, Unitarianism).

1. WHY IS THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT QUESTIONED?

a) Because, as Contrasted with the Other Persons of the Godhead, the Spirit Seems Impersonal.

The visible creation makes the personality of God the Father somewhat easy to conceive; the incarnation makes it almost, if not altogether, impossible to disbelieve in the personality of Jesus Christ; but the acts and workings of the Holy Spirit are so secret and mystical, so much is said of His influence, graces, power and gifts, that we are prone to think of Him as an influence, a power, a manifestation or influence of the Divine nature, an agent rather than a Person.

b) Because of the Names Given to the Holy Spirit.

He is called *breath, wind, power*. The symbols used in speaking of the Spirit are *oil, fire, water*, etc. See John 3:5-8; Acts 2:1-4; John 20:22; 1 John 2:20. It is not strange that in view of all this some students of the Scriptures may have been led to believe, erroneously of course, that the Holy Spirit is an impersonal influence emanating from God the Father.

c) Because the Holy Spirit is not usually Associated with the Father and the Son in the Greetings and Salutation of the New Testament.

For illustration, see 1 Thess. 3:11—"Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you." Yet we must remember, in this connection, that the Apostolic Benediction in 2 Cor. 13:14 does associate the three persons of the Trinity, thereby asserting their personality equally.

d) Because the Word or Name "Spirit" is Neuter.

It is true that the same Greek word is translated *wind* and *Spirit*; also that the Authorized Version uses the neuter pronoun "itself," when speaking of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:16, 26). As we shall see later, the Revised Version substitutes "himself" for "itself."

The importance of the personality of the Spirit, and of our being assured of this fact is forcibly set forth by Dr. R. A. Torrey: "If the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person and we know it not, we are robbing a Divine Being of the love and adoration which are His due. It is of the highest practical importance whether the Holy Spirit is a power that we, in our ignorance and weakness, are somehow to get hold of and use, or whether the Holy Spirit is a personal Being ... who is to get hold of us and use us. It is of the highest experimental importance ... 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 ... but as an ever-present, loving friend and helper."

2. METHOD OF PROOF.

It is difficult to define *personality* when used of the Divine Being. God cannot be measured by human standards. God was not made in the image of man, but man in the image of God. God is not a deified man; man is rather a limited God ("a little ... less than God." Heb. 2:7, R.V.). Only God has a perfect personality. When, however, one possesses the attributes, properties and qualities of personality, then

personality may be unquestionably predicated of such a being. Does the Holy Spirit possess such properties? Let us see.

a) Names that Imply Personality are Given to the Spirit.

The Comforter: John 14:16; 16:7. "Comforter" means one who is called to your side—as a client calls a lawyer. That this name cannot be used of any abstract, impersonal influence is clear from the fact that in 1 John 2:1 the same word is used of Christ. (See Rom. 8:26). Again in John 14:16 the Holy Spirit, as the Paraclete, is to take the place of a person—Christ Himself, and to personally guide the disciples just as Jesus had been doing. No one but a person can take the place of a person; certainly no mere influence could take the place of Jesus Christ, the greatest personality that ever lived. Again, Christ, in speaking of the Spirit as the Comforter, uses the masculine definite article, and thus, by His choice of gender, teaches the personality of the Holy Spirit. There can be no parity between a person and an influence.

b) Personal Pronouns are Used of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:7, 8, 13-15: Twelve times in these verses the Greek masculine pronoun *ekeinos* (that one, He) is used of the Spirit. This same word is used of Christ in 1 John 2:6; 3:3, 5, 7, 16. This is especially remarkable because the Greek word for spirit (*pneuma*) is neuter, and so should have a neuter pronoun; yet, contrary to ordinary usage, a masculine pronoun is here used. This is not a pictorial personification, but a plain, definite, clear-cut statement asserting the personality of the Holy Spirit. Note also that where, in the Authorized Version, the neuter pronoun is used, the same is corrected in the Revised Version: not "itself," but "Himself" (Rom. 8:16,26).

c) The Holy Spirit is Identified with the Father and the Son—and, indeed, with Christians—in Such a Way as to Indicate Personality.

The Baptismal Formula. Matt. 28:19. Suppose we should read, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of *the wind or breath.*" Would that sound right? If the first two names are personal, is not the third? Note also: "In the name" (singular), not names (plural), implying that all three are Persons equally,

The Apostolic Benediction. 2 Cor. 13:14. The same argument may be used as that in connection with the Baptismal Formula, just cited.

Identification with Christians. Acts 15:28. "For it seemeth good to the Holy Ghost, and to us." Shall we say, "It seemeth good to *the*

wind and to us"? It would be absurd. 10:38—"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power." Shall we read, "Anointed ... with *power* and power?" Rom. 15:13—"That ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Shall we read, "That ye may abound in hope, through the power of the *power*"? See also Luke 4:14. Would not these passages rebel against such tautological and meaningless usage? Most assuredly.

d) Personal Characteristics are Ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is represented as searching the deepest and profoundest truths of God, and possessing knowledge of His counsels sufficiently to understand His purposes (1 Cor. 2:10, 11). Could a mere influence do this? See also Isa. 11:3; I Pet. 1:11.

Spiritual gifts are distributed to believers according to the *will* of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12). Here is wisdom, prudence and discretion, all of which are distinguishing marks of personality. The Spirit not only bestows spiritual gifts, but bestows them discreetly, according as He thinks best. See John 3:8 also.

The Spirit is said to have a *mind*, and that implies thought, purpose, determination: Rom. 8:27, cf. v. 7. Mind is an attribute of personality.

e) Personal Acts are Ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit *speaks*: Rev. 2:7 (cf. Matt. 17:5—"Hear ye him.") It is the Spirit who speaks through the apostles (10:20). Speech is an attribute of personality.

The Spirit *maketh intercession*: Rom. 8:26 (R.V.), cf. Heb. 7:25; I John 2:1, 2, where Christ is said to "make intercession."

Acts 13:2; 16:6, 7; 20:28. In these passages the Holy Spirit is seen *calling* missionaries, *overseeing* the church, and *commanding* the life and practice of the apostles and the whole church. Such acts indicate personality.

f) The Holy Spirit is Susceptible to Personal Treatment.

He may be *grieved* (Eph. 4:30); *insulted* (Heb. 10:29); *lied to* (Acts 5:3); blasphemed and sinned against (Matt. 12:31, 32). Indeed, the sin against the Holy Spirit is a much more grievous matter than the sin against the Son of Man. Can such be said of an influence? Can it be said even of any of the sons of men?

II. THE DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

By the Deity of the Holy Spirit is meant that the Holy Spirit is God. This fact is clearly set forth in the Scriptures, in a five-fold way:

1. DIVINE NAMES ARE GIVEN TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

In Acts 5:4, the Spirit is called *God*. And this in opposition to man, to whom, alone, Ananias thought he was talking. Can any statement allege deity more clearly? In 2 Cor. 3:18—"We ... are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit" (R.V.). Here the Spirit is called the *Lord*. For the meaning of "Lord" see under the Deity of Christ, p. 60, *Great Doctrines of the Bible*.

2. THE HOLY SPIRIT POSSESSES DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.

He is *eternal* in his nature (Heb. 9:14, R.V.); *omnipresent* (Psa. 139:7-10); *omnipotent* (Luke 1:35); *omniscient* (1 Cor. 2:10, 11). For the meaning of these attributes, see under the Doctrine of God and Jesus Christ, pp. 28 and 63, *Great Doctrines of the Bible*.

3. DIVINE WORKS ARE ASCRIBED TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Creation (Gen. 1:2; Psa. 104:30, R.V.); Job 33:4—"The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." *Regeneration* (John 3:5-8); *Resurrection* (Rom. 8:11).

4. THE NAME OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS ASSOCIATED WITH THAT OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON.

See under Personality of the Spirit, above. The same arguments which there prove the Personality of the Spirit may be used here to prove the Deity of the Spirit. It would be just as absurd to say, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of *Moses*"—thus putting Moses on an equality with the Father and the Son—as it would be to say, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the *wind*"—thus making the wind as personal as the Father and the Son. The Spirit is on an equality with the Father and the Son in the distribution of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:4-6).

5. PASSAGES WHICH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT REFER TO GOD ARE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT MADE TO REFER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Compare Isa. 6:8-10 with Acts 28:25-27; and Exod. 16:7 with Heb. 3:7-9.

III. THE NAMES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Just as the Father and the Son have certain names ascribed to them, setting forth their nature and work, so also does the Holy Spirit have names which indicate His character and work.

1. THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Luke 11:13—"How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Rom. 1:4—"The Spirit of holiness." In these passages it is the moral character of the Spirit that is set forth. Note the contrast: "Ye, being evil," and "the Holy Spirit." The Spirit is *holy* in Himself and produces holiness in others.

2. THE SPIRIT OF GRACE.

Heb. 10:29—"And hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace." As the executive of the Godhead, the Spirit confers grace. To resist the Spirit, therefore, is to shut off all hope of salvation. To resist His appeal is to insult the Godhead. That is why the punishment mentioned here is so awful.

3. THE SPIRIT OF BURNING.

Matt. 3:11, 12—"He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Isa. 4:4—"When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion.... by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning." This cleansing is done by the blast of the Spirit's burning. Here is the searching, illuminating, refining, dross-consuming character of the Spirit. He burns up the dross in our lives when He enters and takes possession.

4. THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH.

John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; I John 5:6. As God is Love, so the Spirit is Truth. He possesses, reveals, confers, leads into, testifies to, and defends the truth. Thus He is opposed to the "spirit of error" (1 John 4:6).

5. THE SPIRIT OF LIFE.

Rom. 8:2—"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." That which had been the actuating principle of life, namely, the flesh, is now deposed, and its controlling place taken by the Spirit. The Spirit is thus the dynamic of the believer's experience that leads him into a life of liberty and power.

6. THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE.

That the references in Isa. 11:2; 61:1, 2 are to be understood as referring to the Spirit that abode upon the Messiah, is clear from Luke 4:18 where "Spirit" is capitalized. Christ's wisdom and knowledge resulted, in one aspect of the case, from His being filled with the Spirit. "Wisdom and understanding" refer to intellectual and moral apprehension; "Counsel and might," the power to scheme, originate, and carry out; "Knowledge and the fear of the Lord," acquaintance with the true will of God, and the determination to carry it out at all costs. These graces are the result of the Spirit's operations on the heart.

7. THE SPIRIT OF PROMISE.

Eph. 1:13—"Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." The Spirit is the fulfillment of Christ's promise to send the Comforter, and so He is the promised Spirit. The Spirit also confirms and seals the believer, and thus assures him that all the promises made to him shall be completely fulfilled.

8. THE SPIRIT OF GLORY.

1 Pet. 4:14—"The spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." What is glory? Glory as used in the Scripture means character. The Holy Spirit is the One who produces godlike character in the believer (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18).

9. THE SPIRIT OF GOD, AND OF CHRIST.

1 Cor. 3:16—"The Spirit of God dwelleth in you." Rom. 8:9—"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The fact that the Spirit is sent from the Father and the Son, that He represents them, and is their executive, seems to be the thought conveyed here.

10. THE COMFORTER (see above under Names that Imply Personality to the Spirit).

IV. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The Work of the Spirit may be summed up under the following headings: His work in the universe; in humanity as a whole; in the believer; with reference to the Scriptures; and, finally, with reference to Jesus Christ.

1. IN RELATION TO THE WORLD.

a) With Regard to the Universe.

There is a sense in which the creation of the universe may be ascribed to God's Spirit. Indeed Psa. 33:6—"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath (Spirit) of his mouth," attributes the work of creation to the Trinity, the Lord, the Word of the Lord, and the Spirit of the Lord. The creation of man is attributed to the Spirit. Job 33:4—"The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." It would be proper, doubtless, to say that the Father created all things through the agency of the Word and the Spirit. In the Genesis account of creation (1:3) the Spirit is seen actively engaged in the work of creation.

Not only is it true that the Spirit's agency is seen in the act of creation, but His power is seen also in the preservation of nature. Isa. 40:7—"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it." A staggering declaration.

The Spirit comes in the fierce east wind with its keen, biting blast of death. He comes also in the summer zephyr, which brings life and beauty.

b) With Regard to Humanity as a Whole.

John 16:8-11—"And when He is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go unto my Father and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." Here are three great facts of which the Spirit bears witness to the world: the sin of unbelief in Christ; the fact that Christ was righteous and absolutely true in all that He claimed to be; the fact that the power of Satan has been broken. Of sin: the sin in which all other sins are embraced; of righteousness: the righteousness in which all other righteousness is manifested and fulfilled; of judgment: the judgment in which all other judgments are decided and grounded. Of sin, belonging to man; of righteousness, belonging to Christ; of judgment, belonging to Satan.

John 15:26—"The Spirit of truth ... shall testify of me." Acts 5:32—"And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost." It is the work of the Holy Spirit to constantly bear witness of Christ and His finished work to the world of sinful and sinning men. This He does largely, although hardly exclusively, through the testimony of believers to the saving power and work of Christ: "Ye also shall bear witness" (John 15:27).

2. THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN RELATION TO THE BELIEVER.

a) He Regenerates the Believer.

John 3:3-5—"Born of ... the Spirit." Tit. 3:5—"The ... renewing of the Holy Ghost." Sonship, and membership in the kingdom of God, come only through the regenerating of the Holy Spirit. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." Just as Jesus was begotten of the Holy Ghost, so must every child of God who is to be an heir to the kingdom.

b) The Spirit Indwells the Believer.

1 Cor. 6:19—"Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you." Also 3:16; Rom. 8:9. Every believer, no matter how weak and imperfect he may be, or how immature his Christian experience, still has the indwelling of the Spirit. Acts 19:2 does not contradict this statement. Evidently some miraculous outpouring of the Spirit is intended there, the which followed the prayer and laying on of the hands of the apostles. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:3).

c) The Spirit Seals the Believer with Assurance of Salvation.

Eph. 1:13, 14—"In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise; which is the earnest of our inheritance." Also 4:30—"Sealed unto the day of redemption." This sealing stands for two things: ownership and likeness (2 Tim. 2:19-21). The Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of adoption" which God puts into our hearts, by which we know that we are His children. The Spirit bears witness to this great truth (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:14, 16). This sealing has to do with the heart and the conscience—satisfying both as to the settlement of the sin and sonship question.

d) The Holy Spirit Infills the Believer.

Acts 2:4—"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Eph. 5:18—"Be filled with the Spirit." The filling differs somewhat from the indwelling. We may speak of the baptism of the Spirit as that initial act of the Spirit by which, at the moment of our regeneration, we are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ; the Spirit then comes and takes up His dwelling within the believer. The filling with the Spirit, however, is not confined to one experience, or to any one point of time exclusively; it may be repeated times without number. There is one baptism, but many infillings with the Spirit. The experience of the apostles in the Acts bears witness to the fact that they were repeatedly filled with the Spirit. Whenever a new emergency arose they sought a fresh infilling with the Spirit (cf. Acts 2:4 with 4:31 showing that the

apostles who were filled on the day of Pentecost were again filled a few days after).

There is a difference between possessing the Spirit, and being filled with the Spirit. All Christians have the first; not all have the second, although all may have. Eph. 4:30 speaks of believers as being "sealed," whereas 5:18 commands those same believers to "be filled (to be being filled again and again) with the Spirit."

Both the baptism and the infilling may take place at once. There need be no long wilderness experience in the life of the believer. It is the will of God that we should be filled (or, if you prefer the expression, "be baptized") with the Spirit at the moment of conversion, and remain filled all the time. Whenever we are called upon for any special service, or for any new emergency, we should seek a fresh infilling of the Spirit, either for life or service, as the case may be.

The Holy Spirit seeks—so we learn from the story of the Acts—for men who are not merely possessed by but also filled with the Spirit, for service (6:3, 5; 9:17; 11:24). Possession touches assurance; infilling, service.

e) The Holy Spirit Empowers the Believer for Life and Service.

Rom. 8:2—"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (also v. 9-11). There are two natures in the believer: the flesh and the Spirit (Gal. 5:17). But while the believer is still in the flesh, he does not live after the flesh (Rom. 8:12, 13). The Holy Spirit enables the believer to get constant and continual victory over sin. A single act of sin a believer may commit; to live in a state of sin is impossible for him, for the Spirit which is within him gives him victory, so that sin does not *reign* over him. If sinless perfection is not a Scriptural doctrine, sinful imperfection is certainly less Scriptural. The eighth chapter of Romans exhibits a victorious life for the believer; a life so different from that depicted in the seventh chapter. And the difference lies in the fact that the Holy Spirit is hardly, if at all, mentioned in the seventh chapter, while in the eighth He is mentioned over twelve times. The Spirit in the heart is the secret of victory over sin.

Then note how the Holy Spirit produces the blessed fruit of the Christian life (Gal. 5:22, 23). What a beautiful cluster of graces! How different from the awful catalogue of the works of the flesh (v. 19-21). Look at this cluster of fruit. There are three groups: the first, in relation to God—love, joy, peace; the second, in relation to our fellowman—longsuffering, gentleness, goodness; the third, for our individual

Christian life—faith, meekness, self-control.

f) The Holy Spirit is the Guide of the Believer's Life.

He guides him as to the details of his daily life, Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:16, 25—"Walk in the Spirit." There is no detail of the believer's life that may not be under the control and direction of the Spirit. "The steps (and, as one has well said, 'the stops') of a good man are ordered by the Lord."

The Holy Spirit guides the believer as to the field in which he should labor. How definitely this truth is taught in the Acts 8:27-29; 16:6, 7; 13:2-4. What a prominent part the Spirit played in selecting the fields of labor for the apostles! Every step in the missionary activity of the early church seemed to be under the direct guidance of the Spirit.

g) The Holy Spirit Anoints the Believer.

This anointing stands for three things:

First, for *knowledge and teaching*. 1 John 2:27—"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth . . . ye shall abide in him." Also 2:20. It is not enough to learn the truth from human teachers, we must listen to the teaching of the Spirit. 1 Cor. 2:9-14 teaches us that there are some great truths that are spiritually discerned; they cannot be understood saving by the Spirit-filled man, for they are "spiritually discerned." See also John 14:26; 16:13.

Second, for *service*. How dependent Christ was upon the Holy Spirit for power in which to perform the duties of life is clear from such passages as Luke 4:18—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach," etc. Also Acts 10:38—"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good." Ezekiel teaches a lesson by his vivid picture of the activity of God portrayed in the wheels within wheels. The moving power within those wheels was the Spirit of God. So in all our activity for God we must have the Spirit of power.

Third, for *consecration*. Three classes of persons in the Old Testament were anointed: the prophet, the priest, and the king. The result of anointing was consecration—"Thy vows are upon me, O God"; knowledge of God and His will—"Ye know all things"; influence—fragrance from the ointment. Just as the incense at Mecca clings to the pilgrim when he passes through the streets, so it is with him who has

the anointing of the Spirit. All his garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. He has about him the sweet odor and scent of the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley.

3. THE RELATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THE SCRIPTURES.

a) He is the Author of the Scriptures.

Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. 2 Pet. 1:20, 21. The Scriptures came by the inbreathing of God, 2 Tim. 3:16. "Hear what the Spirit saith to the churches," Rev. 2 and 3. It was the Spirit who was to guide the apostles into all the truth, and show them things to come (John 16:13).

b) The Spirit is also the Interpreter of the Scriptures.

1 Cor. 2:9-14. He is "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation," Eph. 1:17. "He shall receive of mine and show it unto you," John 16:14, 15. (See under the Inspiration of the Bible, p. 194.)

4. THE RELATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO JESUS CHRIST.

How dependent Jesus Christ was, in His state of humiliation, on the Holy Spirit! If He needed to depend solely upon the Spirit can we afford to do less?

a) He was Conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Spirit, Luke 1:35.

b) He was led by the Spirit, Matt. 4:1.

c) He was Anointed by the Spirit for Service, Acts 10:38.

d) He was Crucified in the Power of the Spirit, Heb. 9:14.

e) He was Raised by the Power of the Spirit, Rom. 1:4; 8:11.

f) He gave Commandment to His Disciples and Church Through the Spirit, Acts 1:2.

g) He is the Bestower of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:33.

V. OFFENCES AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Scarcely any phase of the doctrine of the Spirit is more solemn than this. It behooves us all, believer and unbeliever alike, to be careful as to how we treat the Holy Spirit. Sinning against the Spirit is fraught

with terrific consequences.

For convenience sake we are classifying the offences against the Spirit under two general divisions, namely, those committed by the unbeliever, and those committed by the believer. Not that there is absolutely no overlapping in either case. For, doubtless, in the very nature of the case there must be. This thought will be kept in mind in the study of the offences against the Spirit.

1. OFFENCES COMMITTED BY THE UNBELIEVER.

a) Resisting the Holy Ghost.

Acts 7:51—"Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." Here the picture is that of the Holy Spirit attacking the citadel of the soul of man, who violently resists the gracious attempts of the Spirit to win him. In spite of the plainest arguments, and the most incontestable facts this man wilfully rejects the evidence and refuses to accept the Christ so convincingly presented. Thus is the Holy Ghost resisted. (See Acts 6:10.) That this is a true picture of resistance to the Holy Spirit is clearly seen from Stephen's recital of the facts in Acts 7:51-57.

b) Insulting, or Doing Despite unto the Holy Spirit.

Heb. 10:29 (cf. Luke 18:32). It is the work of the Spirit to present the atoning work of Christ to the sinner as the ground of his pardon. When the sinner refuses to believe or accept the testimony of the Spirit, he thereby insults the Spirit by esteeming the whole work of Christ as a deception and a lie, or accounts the death of Christ as the death of an ordinary or common man, and not as God's provision for the sinner.

c) Blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

Matt. 12:31,32. This seems to be the most grievous sin of all, for the Master asserts that there is no forgiveness for this sin. Sins against the Son of Man may be forgiven because it was easily possible, by reason of His humble birth, lowly parentage, etc., to question the claims He put forth to deity. But when, after Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came, and presented to every man's conscience evidence sufficient to prove the truth of these claims, the man who then refused to yield to Christ's claims was guilty of resisting, insulting, and that amounts to blaspheming the testimony of the whole Godhead, of which the Spirit is the executive.

2. OFFENCES COMMITTED BY THE BELIEVER.

a) Grieving the Spirit.

Eph. 4:30, 31; Isa. 63:10 (R.V.). To grieve means to make sad or sorrowful. It is the word used to describe the experience of Christ in Gethsemane; and so the sorrow of Gethsemane may be endured by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the most sensitive person of the Godhead. He is called the "Mother-heart" of God. The context of this passage (v.31) tells us how the Spirit may be grieved: by "foolish talking and jesting." Whenever the believer allows any of the things mentioned in this verse (and those stated also in Gal. 5:17-19) to find place in his heart and expression in his words and life; when these things abide in his heart and actively manifest themselves, then the Spirit is sad and grieved. Indeed to refuse any part of our moral nature to the full sway of the Spirit is to grieve Him. If we continue to grieve the Spirit, then the grief turns into vexation (Isa. 63:10).

b) Lying to the Holy Spirit.

Acts 5:3, 4. The sin of lying to the Spirit is very prominent when consecration is most popular. We stand up and say, "I surrender all" when in our hearts we know that we have not surrendered *all*. Yet, like Ananias, we like to have others believe that we have consecrated our all. We do not wish to be one whit behind others in our profession. Read carefully in this connection the story of Achan (Joshua 7), and that of Gehazi (2 Kings 5:20-27).

c) Quenching the Spirit.

1 Thess. 5:19—"Quench not the Spirit." The thought of quenching the Spirit seems to be used in connection with fire: "Smoking flax shall he not quench" (Matt. 12:20); "Quench the fiery darts" (Eph. 6:16). It is therefore related more to the thought of service than to that of life. The context of 1 Thess. 5:19 shows this. The manifestation of the Spirit in prophesying was not to be quenched. The Holy Spirit is seen as coming down upon this gathered assembly for praise, prayer, and testimony. This manifestation of the Spirit must not be quenched. Thus we may quench the Spirit not only in our hearts, but also in the hearts of others. How? By disloyalty to the voice and call of the Spirit; by disobedience to His voice whether it be to testify, praise, to do any bit of service for God, or to refuse to go where He sends us to labor—the foreign field, for example. Let us be careful also lest in criticizing the manifestation of the Spirit in the testimony of some believer, or the sermon of some preacher, we be found guilty of quenching the Spirit. Let us see to it that the gift of the Holy Ghost for service be not lost by any unfaithfulness, or by the cultivation of a critical spirit on our part, so that the fire in our hearts dies out and nothing but ashes remain—ashes, a sign that fire was once there, but has been extinguished.

From what has been said the following may be summarily stated:

Resisting has to do with the regenerating work of the Spirit;

Grieving has to do with the indwelling Holy Spirit;

Quenching has to do with the enduement of the Spirit for service.

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