

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE SONS OF GOD

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It is evident from many tracts and treatises on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit that due importance has not been given to the peculiar characteristic of the Pentecost gift in its relation to the sonship of believers.

Before considering this theme a few brief statements may be made concerning the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit and His relation to the people of God in the dispensations and times preceding the Day of Pentecost.

1. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, another Person, but not a different Being.

In general it may be said, He is not an "influence" or a sum and series of "influences," but a personal Being with names and affections, words and acts, interchanged with those of God.

He is God as Creator (<Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:30; Job 26:13; Luke 1:35>). He is one with God as Jehovah ([Yahweh (heb 3068)] ("LORD")) in providential leading and care, and susceptible of grief on account of the unholiness of His chosen people. We cannot grieve an "influence," but only a person, and a person, too, who loves us (<Ps. 78:40; Eph. 4:30>). He is one with God as ['Adonay (heb 136)] ("Lord"), whose glory Isaiah beheld and John rehearses, who commissioned the prophet and sent forth the apostle (<Isa. 6:1-10; John 12:37-41; Acts 13:2; 20:15-18>). In these Scriptures one and the same act is that of Jehovah and of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit.

Besides the clear evidence of personality and equality in the baptismal words and in the benediction (<Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14>), the promise of Jesus affirms the presence and the abiding of the Spirit to be one with His own and with the Father's in this Word. "If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him" (<John 16:23>). Above all, the name "another Comforter" ([Parakleetos (grk 3875)]) suggests a Person who would do for the disciples what Jesus the other Comforter (<Luke 2:25>) had been doing for them. He speaks, testifies, teaches, reminds, reproves, convicts, warns, commands, loves, consoles, beseeches, prays, intercedes, (often the word is [Parakleetees]); in brief, all these and other acts and dealings are not those of an impersonal medium or influence, but of a person, and One who in the nature of the case cannot be less than God in wisdom, love and power, and who is one with the Father and the Son; another Person indeed, but not a different Being.

2. The spiritual, divine life in the people of God is the same in kind in every age and dispensation, but the relation to God in which the life was developed of old was different from that which now exists between believers as sons and God as Father, and in accordance with that relationship the Holy Spirit acted.

He was of old the Author and Nourisher of all spiritual life and power in righteous men and women of past ages, in patriarch and friend of God, in Israelites as minors and servants, in pious kings and adoring psalmists, in consecrated priests and faithful prophets; and whatever truth had been revealed, He employed to develop the divine life He had imparted. From the beginning, He used promise and precept, law and type, Psalm and ritual to instruct, quicken, convince, teach, lead, warn, comfort and to do all for the growth and establishment of the people of God.

The Psalms run through the gamut of the spiritual experience possible for those, who while waiting for the consolation of Israel and the future out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, were "apart from us" not to be "made perfect" as sons and as "worshippers." More than one prayed, "Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art

my God; let Thy good Spirit lead me into the land of uprightness" (<Ps. 143:10>). But there was then still lacking among men the consummate Reality and perfect Illustration of a Son of God.

When at last, all righteousness and holy virtues appeared in a Life of filial love and obedience, even in Christ "the first-born of many brethren," then the Mold and Image of the spiritual life of the saints of the old covenant, who were waiting for sonship, was seen perfect and complete.

It was pre-eminently the life of a Son of God and not only of a righteous man; of a Son ever rejoicing before the Father, His whole being filled with filial love and obedience, peace and joy. In ways Godward and manward, in self-denial and in full surrender to His Father's will, in hatred of sin and in grace to sinners, in purity of heart and forgiveness of injuries, in gentleness and all condescension, in restful yet ceaseless service, in unity of purpose and faultless obedience-- in a word, in all excellencies and graces, in all virtues and beauties of the Spirit, in light and in love, the Lord Jesus set forth the mold and substance of the life spiritual, divine, eternal.

3. Redemption must precede both the sonship and the gift of the Spirit.

This is very clearly seen in the Apostle's argument on the great subject: "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (<Gal. 4:4-6>). The word "adoption" signifies the placing in the state and relation of a son. It is found in <Romans 9:4; 13:15,23; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5>.

In the writings of John believers are never called sons, but "children" ("born ones"), a word indicating nature, kinship. Sonship relates not to nature, but to legal standing; it comes not through regeneration, but by redemption. The disciples of Jesus had to wait until the Son of God had redeemed them; and then on the redeemed disciples the Spirit of God was poured at Pentecost, not to make believers sons, but because they had become sons through redemption. In brief, sonship, though ever since redemption inseparable from justification, does in the order of salvation succeed justification. Justification in <Rom. 5:1> precedes the "grace" of sonship in <5:2>. This "access" or "introduction" is of the justified into the presence of God as Father; and it is through Christ and by the Spirit. (<Eph. 2:18; 3:12>).

We were "predestined" to be sons of God, and to be "conformed to the image of His Son" (<Eph. 1:5; Rom. 8:29>). In <Eph. 1:5> the "sonship" is rather corporate; all believers are viewed as one "son," one "body," just as Jehovah said of Israel, "My son," "My first born." This corporateness is really to be understood in <Gal. 3:28>, which may read, "Ye are all one son in Christ Jesus," instead of "one man." (See also <Eph. 4:13; 1 Cor. 12:12>).

And this image is His as glorified, so that until we have been conformed to His body of glory, our "adoption" or sonship is not complete nor our experience of redemption finished (<Rom. 8:23>).

And special emphasis should be laid upon the truth that sins were before God only pretermitted until the atonement was made; "propitiation for the pretermission (passing over) of sins that are past" (<Rom. 3:25>); "for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament" (<Heb. 9:15>).

Remission came through the great offering for sin, just as sonship came through this redemption; and as the Spirit was given because believers had become sons, so also He could be given because believers had received the remission of their sins. This is the invariable order; faith in Christ, remission of sins, gift of the Holy Spirit.

Yea, more, as without the gracious power of the Spirit of God the new birth would be impossible, so without the redeeming blood of Christ the estate of sonship would have been unattainable; the Spirit and the blood are equally necessary to the full accomplishment of the eternal purpose of God.

In brief, through redemption the new dignity of sonship was conferred, the new name "sons" was given to them as a new name "Father" had been declared of Him; a new name was given to the life in this new relation, "the life eternal," and a new name, "Spirit of His Son," was given to the Holy Spirit, who

henceforth, with new truth and a new commandment, would nourish and develop this life and illumine and lead believers into all the privileges and duties of the sons of God.

These facts are then all related to and dependent upon each other; Jesus must first lay the ground of the forgiveness of sins of past and future times in His work of redemption and reconciliation; as risen and glorified, not before, He is "the firstborn of many brethren," to whose image they are predestined to be conformed; as the Son, He declared to them the name of God as Father, the crowning name of God corresponding to their highest name, sons of God. As His "brethren" in this high and peculiar sense, He did not call them until He had first suffered, died, and risen again from the dead, but that name is the first word He spoke of them on the morning of resurrection, as if it were the chiefest joy of His soul to name and greet them as His brethren, and sons of God, being in and with Him "sons of the resurrection;" and because they were sons, the Father, through the Son, sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, "Abba, Father!"

It is the marvelous dignity of a sonship in glory, like that of our Lord Jesus, with all its attendant blessings and privileges, service and rewards, suffering and glories, to which the gift of the Holy Spirit is related in this present dispensation.

Accordingly, when the disciples were baptized with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost they were not only endued with ministering power, but they also then entered into the experience of sonship. Then they knew as they could not have known before, though the Book of the Acts records but little of their inner life, that through the heaven-descended Spirit the sons of God are forever united with the heaven-ascended, glorified Son of God. Whether they at first fully realized this fact or not, it is seen as in the Gospel of John, they were in Him and He in them. Was Jesus begotten of the Spirit, so were they; was He not of the world as to origin and nature, neither were they; was He loved of the Father, so were they, and with the same love; was He sanctified and sent into the world to bear witness to the truth, so likewise He sent them; did He receive the Spirit as the seal of God to His Sonship, so were they sealed; was He anointed with power and light to serve, so they received the unction from Him; did He begin to serve when there came the attesting Spirit and confirming word of the Father, so they began to serve when the Spirit of the Son, the Witness, was sent forth into their hearts, saying Abba, Father; was He, after service and suffering, received up in glory, so shall they obtain His glory when He comes again to receive them unto Himself. Verily, "we are as He is in this world" (<1 John 4:17; John 10:36; 17:1-26; Rom. 5:5>).

In view of these truths of divine revelation how foolish the wisdom of the natural man and how sadly misleading the doctrine which makes the "fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man," which are by nature and creation, identical and co-extensive with that which is by grace and redemption; for not only does the imperative word, "Ye must be born again," sweep away all the merit and glory of man as he is by the first birth, but also, the predestination to a sonship like that of the Son of God in glory lifts the "twice-born" to a height and dignity never conceived of by the natural man.

4. In the gift of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost all gifts, for believers in Christ were contained and were related to them as Sons of God both individually and corporatively as the Church the Body of Christ.

In kind, as can be seen on comparison, there was no difference in His gifts and acts before and after that day, but the new Gift was now to dwell in the hearts of men as sons of God and with more abundant life and varied manifestations of power and wisdom.

But by the Spirit the one Body was formed and all gifts are due to His perpetual presence (<1 Cor. 12:14>). Also, it is to be understood that such a word of Jesus, "If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him" (<Mt 7:11; Lk 11:13>), could not have been fulfilled until a later hour, for repeating His promise at another time it is said of Jesus, "But this spake He of the Spirit which they that believed on Him should receive, for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (<John 3:7-39>). These are some of the anticipative sayings of our Lord, not to be made good until He had died and

risen again. The good things could not be given until "transgression had been forgiven and sin covered." The water could not pour forth until the Rock had been smitten. And as to the use of the words, "baptize" and "pour," they afterwards, in later Scriptures, imply the original incorporating act.

It is significant that after Pentecost only the words, "filled with the Spirit" (<Eph 5:18>), are used. Nothing is said of an individual receiving a new or fresh "baptism of the Spirit." It would imply that the baptism is one for the whole Body until all the members are incorporated; one the outpouring, many the fillings; one fountain, many the hearts to drink, to have in turn a well of water springing up within them.

The disciples were indeed endued with power for service according to promise; on that especially their eyes and hearts had been fixed; that was the chief thing for them; but in the light of later Scriptures it is seen that the chief thing with God was not only to attest the glory of Jesus by the gift of the Spirit, but also "in one Spirit to baptize into one body" the "children of God," who until then were looked upon as "scattered abroad," as unincorporated members (<1 Cor. 12:13; John 11:52; Gal. 3:27-28>). And the Gift, whether to the Body or to the individual member, is once for all. As the Christian is Once for all in Christ, so the Holy Spirit is once for all in the Christian; but the intent of the presence of the Spirit is often but feebly met by the believer, just as his knowledge of what it is to be "in Christ" is often most defective.

5. The Holy Spirit is given at once on the remission of sins to them that believe in Christ Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

It is, however, to be observed that as the Spirit acts according to the truth known, or believed and obeyed, an interval unspiritual or unfruitful may come between the remission of sins and the marked manifestation of the Spirit, either in relation to holiness of life, or to power for service, or to patience in trials. It certainly is the divine ideal of a holy life, that the presence of the Spirit should at once be made manifest on the forgiveness of sins, and continue in increasing light and power to the end. (<Rom. 5:1-5; Titus 3:4-7>).

And this steady onward progress more and more unto the perfect day has been and is true of many, who from early childhood, or from the day of conversion, in the case of adults, were led continuously by the Spirit and never came to one great crisis. With others it is not so, for it is the confession of a large number of men and women, afterward eminent for holiness, devotion, endurance, that their life previous to such crisis had been hardly worth the name of Christian. Whatever explanation or "philosophy" of such experience may be given, the following is true of the majority.

The full truth of the sonship and salvation of believers may not have been taught them when they first believed; the life may have begun under a yoke of legal bondage; the freedom of filial access may have been doubted, even though their hearts often burned within them because of the presence of the unknown Spirit; and thus weary, ineffective years passed, attended with but little growth in grace or fruitful service, or patient resignation, until a point was reached in various ways, and through providences often unexpected and most marvelous, when at last the Holy Spirit made Himself manifest in the fullness of His love and power.

That there is with God an interval between justification and the giving of the Spirit (an interval such as certain theories contend for), cannot be proved. The unsatisfactory experience of the ignorant Christian may lead him to think he never had the Spirit.

There are, however, certain intervals recorded in the New Testament which should be considered. The one between the ascension and Pentecost Was for a peculiar preparation through prayer and waiting on the Lord; that of the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension was a continuation of the presence of Jesus the other Comforter, and of whom it is written, "He opened their understanding that they understand the Scriptures" (<Lk 24:45>), so doing what His Holy Spirit was to do when He came; and during the previous days of His public ministry not only did Jesus teach, but as attested at the confession of Peter, also the Father was revealing truth to men: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father who is in heaven" (<Mt 16:17>).

In the light of this word to Peter it may be said that up to Pentecost the Spirit of God was at work in the world in the modes of the old dispensation, but that when the Day of Pentecost came His peculiar work began in relation to believers as sons of God. Even the breathing of Christ upon the disciples on the evening of the day of His resurrection was, in accordance with the many symbolic acts and sayings recorded in the Gospel of John, symbolic of the Mighty Breath of Pentecost, for both the symbol and the reality were associated with the enduement of power for the service which began at Pentecost. Besides, they were told forty days later to tarry in Jerusalem for such enduement. They could not already have received it and yet be told to wait for it. And Thomas was not present on the evening of that breathing.

As to other intervals; that in case of the converts on the Day of Pentecost was doubtless for the confirmation of the apostolic authority; that of the Samaritans when Philip preached may be accounted for by remembering the religious feud between Jew and Samaritan which now must be settled for all time and the unity of the Church established. Also seeing "salvation is from the Jews," the authority of Jewish apostles must be affirmed, for to them Christ had committed the founding of the Church. (<Acts 8:14-17>).

In regard to Paul, it is evident from the narrative, he knew not the full import of the appearing of Jesus, until Ananias came. The recovery of sight, the forgiveness of sins, the filling of the Holy Spirit, all took place during this interview. He received the Spirit, as was befitting the Apostle to the Gentiles, in a Gentile city, far away from the other apostles, for his apostleship was to be "not from men, neither through a man" (<Acts 9:10-19; 22:6-16>).

But the case of Cornelius proves that no interval at all need exist, for the moment Peter spoke this word, received by faith by Cornelius and those present, the Holy Spirit who knew their hearts fell on them: "To Him give all the prophets witness that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive the remission of sins" (<Acts 10:43>). Peter intended to say more, but God showed by the sudden outpouring of the Spirit that Peter had said enough, for from Peter's report to the church in Jerusalem we learn that he intended to say more, and not only say more but probably do more, so making an interval even as in the case of the Samaritans through baptism, prayer and laying on of his hands that they might receive the Holy Spirit (<Acts 8:14-17; 10:43-44; 11:15-16>).

It is especially to be noted in this connection that the text of <Eph. 1:13>, so often quoted as proving a long interval between faith in Christ and "the sealing of the Spirit," "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise," lends no authority for such long interval of time, for the word "after" implies more than the Greek participle warrants, and accordingly the Revision reads, "In whom having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise;" but the very same participle, "having believed," used by Paul in Ephesians, is used by Peter in the Acts in rehearsing the interview with Cornelius, who received the Spirit immediately (<Acts 2:17>).

Neither does the remaining instance of the twelve disciples of John the Baptist whom Paul found in Ephesus, prove that such an interval is necessary or inevitable today; for they had not even heard that Jesus had come, and that redemption had been accomplished, and the Spirit given; but as soon as remission of sins in the name of Jesus was preached to them, they believed, were baptized, and through prayer and the laying on of Paul's hands, received the Holy Spirit (<Acts 19:1-6>).

The question Paul addressed to them, "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?" (<Acts 19:2>). (or in the Revision, "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?") has been most strangely applied in these days to Christians, whereas it was pertinent to these disciples of John only. To address it to Christians now is to deny a finished redemption, the sonship of believers and the once-for-all outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

And it is implied in the case of Cornelius (<Acts 10>) with which the Apostle Peter had nothing to do except to preach the word, that when the apostles had passed away the mold of experience common for all succeeding centuries would be that of these Gentile converts wherever in Christendom or pagandom the Gospel of Christ might be preached.

6. The conditions of the manifestation of the presence and power of the Spirit are the same, at conversion or at any later, deeper experience of the believer, whether in relation to fuller knowledge of Christ, or to more effective service, or to more patient endurance of ill, or to growth in likeness to Christ.

The experience, in each case, is run in the same mold; each part, each word or fact of Christ, must be received in the same attitude and condition of mind as the first, when He was seen as the Bearer of our sins, even by faith alone.

Negatively, it may be said that the conditions are confessed weakness and inability to help oneself; the end of nature's wisdom, power, righteousness has been reached; utter despair of there being any good thing "in the flesh" settles over the soul, a willingness to look to God alone for help begins to stir in the heart. Convictions of unfaithfulness and self-seeking mingle with a hunger and thirst for righteousness and a life worthy of the name of Christian.

It is not, however, as consciously sinless in themselves that the Spirit is given to them who "seek the blessing," but to them as sinless "in Christ." Believers in Christ begin their life in the very standing of the Son of God Himself. Neither do the Scriptures teach, as implied or expressed in certain theories, that there is an interval between the remission of sins and "the sealing of the Spirit," and that "justified" believers may die during such interval having never been "sealed," and so never been "in Christ," and never been attested sons of God.

Such belief contradicts the very grace of God and implies that sonship depends upon the gift of the Spirit and not upon redemption and the remission of sins, and would read, "Because ye have the Spirit ye are sons," instead of, "And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (<Gal 4:6>). It also follows that such justified ones devoid of the Spirit are not Christ's nor Christians, for it is plainly written, "But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (<Rom 8:9>); and also, "No man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit." And as to the proof of the presence of the Spirit at such times, whatever emotions or high raptures may attend the discoveries of the love and power of God in the case of some, they are not to be the tests and measures for all. Conversions are not alike in all, neither are the manifestations of the Spirit. He may come like the sun at high noon through rifted clouds or like a slowly deepening dawn; like a shower or like the dew; like a great tide of air or like a gentle breathing; but "all these worketh the one and self-same Spirit." But more than all, the proof is seen in growth in holiness, in self-denials for Christ's sake, in the manifold graces and abiding fruit of the Spirit.

As in the apostolic day so now the desire exists for the manifestation of the Spirit in marvelous ways; but a life sober, righteous, holy, lived in the hope of the glory to come, is the more excellent way of the Spirit's manifestation and undeniable proof of His indwelling.

Positively, the requirements or inseparable accompaniments of the manifestation of the indwelling Spirit, whether for holy living or faithful service, must be drawn from the example of the Son of God our Lord Jesus. And they are prayer, obedience, faith, and above all a desire and purpose to glorify Christ. All, indeed, may be summed up in one condition, and that is, to let God have His own will and way with us.

If then, it is to believers as sons of God, to whom and in whom and through whom the Holy Spirit manifests His presence and power, it would follow that whatever Jesus did in order to fulfill His mission in the power of the Spirit, believers must do; and we find His life to have been a life of prayer for all the gifts and helps of God, a life of obedience, always doing the things that pleased the Father; and so, never left alone, a life of faith in the present power of God, a life of devotion to the glory of God, so that at its close He, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without blemish unto God.

But the chief and all-including condition and proof is the desire and purpose to glorify Christ.

The prayer should not be so much for this or that gift, or this or that result, as for Christ Himself to be made manifest to us and through us. The Apostle who was most filled with the Spirit sums all up in that one great word, "For me to live is Christ." As Jesus the Son of God glorified the Father, so the sons of God are to glorify Christ.

The Spirit cannot be where Christ is denied as Redeemer, Life and Lord of all. Christ is "the Truth," and the Spirit is "the Spirit of the Truth;" all is personal, not ideal, for the sum and substance of material wherewith the Spirit works is Christ. The Spirit cannot be teaching if Christ is not seen in "the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms" (<Lk 24:44>), as well as in the Gospels, or if Christ is not acknowledged to have continued "to do and to teach" in the Acts and in the Epistles what He began in the Gospels.

If Christ is indeed the wisdom of God unto salvation, the Holy Spirit alone can demonstrate it unto the minds and hearts of men; and He has no mission in the world separable from Christ and His work of redemption. The outer work of Christ and the inner work of the Spirit go together. The work for us by Christ is through the blood, the work in us by the Spirit is through the truth; the latter rests upon the former; and without the Spirit, substitutes for the Spirit and His work will be accompanied by substitutes for Christ and His work. The importance, therefore, of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit should be estimated according to that far-reaching and all-touching word of Christ, "He shall glorify Me" (<John 16:13-15>).

To glorify Christ is to manifest Him as supremely excellent; to blind the eyes of men to that glory is the purpose of the god of this world; therefore, which spirit is at work in a man or in a church can easily be told.

7. In conclusion, the sum of all His mission is to perfect in saints the good work He began, and He molds it all according to this reality of a high and holy sonship: He establishes the saints in and for Christ (<2 Cor. 1:21>). According to this reality their life and walk partake of thoughts and desires, hopes and objects, unworldly and heavenly. Born of God and from above, knowing whence they came and whither they are going, they live and move and have their being in a world not realized by flesh and blood.

Their life is hid with Christ in God; their work of faith is wrought out in the unseen abode of the Spirit; their labor of love is prompted by a loyal obedience to their Lord, who is absent in "a far country" to which both He and they belong; their sufferings are not their own but His, who, from out of the Glory could ask, "Why persecutest thou Me?" Their worship is of the Father "in spirit and in truth" before the mercy seat, "in the light which no man can approach unto" (<1 Tim 6:16>); their peace is "the peace of God," which can never be disturbed by any fear or trouble which eternal ages might disclose; their joy is "joy in the Lord," its spring is in God and ever deepening in its perpetual flow; their hope is the coming of the Son of God from heaven and the vision of the King in His beauty amidst the unspeakable splendors of His Father's house; and through all the way, "thorn and flower," by which they are journeying to the heavenly country; it is the good Spirit who is leading them (<Isa. 63:7-14>).

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