



Conducted by
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“I am not sure how the Holy Spirit works in my life. Does it take over my life and lead me in the right way in spite of myself, or is there something expected of me? Could you please help?”

This question was asked of me by a young Christian after one of our mid-week meetings. There had been some discussion during the meeting about the Holy Spirit, but what had been said seemed quite confusing to me, let alone to someone young

in the faith. As a matter of fact, I personally am amazed at the paucity of teaching given in the Church concerning the subject of the Holy Spirit, so if the few comments I can make will lead to better understanding in some minds about this vitally important subject, then I am willing to take up the question and see where it leads us.

The Godhead

The 'Godhead' is a perfectly scriptural expression. In Colossians 2:9 Paul says, **"For in him (Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"** (A.V.). The N.I.V. renders this, **"For in Christ all the fulness of the Deity lives in bodily form"**. The R.S.V. states, **"For in him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily"**. J.B. Phillips renders this verse, **"Yet it is in him that God gives a full and complete expression of himself in bodily form"**. Therefore, I believe we can safely conclude that God and His Christ (Jesus) would be essential components of the Godhead. But that is not all. It is a well known fact that the Spirit of God was active operationally in O.T. times, for Peter says, **"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"**. Furthermore, when Jesus gave what we call The Great Commission to His disciples, He said, **"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"** (Matt. 28:19). So it seems that the Holy Spirit is conjoined with the Father and the Son in the Godhead. We now need to ask briefly if these 'components' of the Godhead have personality in their own right.

The nature of God was revealed by Jesus to the Samaritan woman during His discourse with her at the Well of Sychar, when He said, **"God is Spirit (not 'a' spirit, as in A.V.): and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"** (John 4:24). Therefore, if God was to be known to created man in the flesh, and if He had to deal with the guilt of sin in the flesh, then it seems reasonable to assume that He would need to manifest Himself in the flesh: this, of course, He accomplished in Christ Jesus, His Son. It is interesting to note what Paul says in his Philippian letter about Jesus, **"Who, being in the form (morphen) of God ... took upon him the form of a servant (morphen doulou)"** (Phil. 2:6,7). It is important to note that the construction of the words in this section of the scripture would indicate 'an eternal existence in the form of God, and a becoming, in time, in the likeness of flesh' (form of a servant). The eternal existence in the 'form' of God was real, and the temporary existence in the 'form' of a servant (flesh) was equally real; this was no 'phantom' humanity as the Gnostics claimed. We are now led to the inescapable conclusion that Jesus was a Person in the 'form' of God eternally (no matter what we may conceive that 'form' to be), and that even though Spirit, God has 'form', and is therefore also a Person. But what about the Holy Spirit?

There is a feeling abroad among many Christians that the Holy Spirit is some kind of impersonal force, the origin of which they do not understand. This feeling is perhaps bolstered by the words in Rom.8:16 as recorded in the A.V., where it is said, **"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God"**. Now even though the words in the original text would appear to be in the neuter gender, I believe these should be contrasted with the words used by Jesus and as recorded in John 16:13. Jesus is speaking to His Disciples, later to be His Apostles, and He says, **"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come"**. Now here, you will notice, the reference by James to the Holy Spirit is in the **masculine gender; it is a grave error, I believe, to refer to the Holy Spirit as 'it'; He is a Person of the Godhead, as are God and Jesus.** It is necessary to understand the importance of this so that we should fully realise the grandeur of God's scheme of redemption and final consummation. I think I should also mention that we should not be led astray into the avenues of trinitarian

teaching; we mention God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit as they appear before us in the pages of God's word.

The Function of the Holy Spirit

The Scheme of Redemption, if we can use the phrase, belongs to God; it was in His determinate counsel and foreknowledge. The 'executive arms', if you will, of God's plan are Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit is the Sustainer of the new life in Christ. It is important for the Christian to understand that his salvation rests not just on obedience to textual exactness and ethical directives — vitally important though these are — but more essentially on an intimate relationship with the Godhead; we have, as Peter says, '**become partakers of the Divine nature**' (2 Pet. 1:4). It is this fact which marks out the Christian as a 'child of God' as distinct from the mass of God's created children. It is the Holy Spirit which makes the 'child of adoption' cry, "Abba, Father".

The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) tell us little more about the Holy Scriptures than we can read in the O.T. scriptures; it is to John's Gospel to which we must turn in order to learn more. Space does not allow me to quote the scriptures verbatim, so the reader will have to look them up. God was to send the Holy Spirit in the name of Christ (14:26,15:26). Here again we see the intimacy of the (Godhead). Jesus had to leave the earth in order for this to happen (16:7). Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would be given to those who believed on Him, but would only be given after He, Jesus, was glorified (7:37-39). When the Holy Spirit came, He came to reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement to come (16:8-11). He was to guide the Apostles into all truth, and was given miraculously to them on the Day of Pentecost (Read Acts 2). Peter then preached the inspired Gospel message, and told his listeners precisely what they had to do in order to be saved (Acts 2:37-40). During that message, Peter confirmed that those who obeyed should receive the 'gift' of the Holy Spirit (This was not a promise of any miraculous endowments, such as given to the Apostles. This pertained to the gracious indwelling of the Spirit, as a comforter). Thus we reach the crucial point of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian, and hence in the life of the Church.

He In Us

Many Christians are confused by the Holy Spirit being able to indwell individuals in any part of the world at the same time. The fact is, we are too accustomed to space and time. I suppose its like the old psychological question, "How many fairies can dance on a pin-head"? The answer given being an infinite number, because a fairy doesn't occupy space. Seeing that we are partakers of the Divine nature, it would seem to be no difficult matter for the Holy Spirit to bear witness with our **individual** spirits that we are the children of God in the saved sense; as a matter of fact, Paul asserts this in Rom. 8:16. But there must be an understandable way of doing this. If the Holy Spirit operates through the word of God, which He does, and if the word is a true revelation of God, which it is, then our conscious understanding will tell our spirits whether or not we have complied with the Divine requirements, and as these requirements are what the Holy Spirit expressly teaches through the word, then we know if we are following the Spirit's promptings. This is why the Bible is so important to the Christian and should never denigrated.

According to Paul, the chief manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian lies in the life of faith and love, which is the **supreme** life of the Christian. The fruits of that Spirit-led life are "**love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, etc,**" and these qualities should be common to all Christians, because if they are Spirit-led they will also be word-led, if I can coin that word. The body is also **sanctified** by the Holy Spirit because we are taught that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16). This is why I personally cannot

accept, as some Christians seem to do, that because we are 'in the flesh' that we must inevitably go on sinning; I find this to be degrading to our 'Divine Guest' who is seeking, through the word, to drive us ever upward to our Father. Christians today do not need the 'extraordinary powers' that many claim, such as speaking in tongues and healing; we have seen too often that such 'powers' would only tend to glorify **individuals**, when, in fact, the praise and the glory belong to God. He has used what 'extraordinary power' was needed in the establishment of the Church; such power will not be repeated.

What a joy it is to know that the Holy Spirit guides us and assists us in the 'upward call' by our Father through Christ, His Son. But the effort **must come from us**. God has never forced anyone into anything: He needs a positive response to His call. The comfort, joy, peace, He affords, He has revealed to us in His word, and He has also revealed that the resources of Heaven are at the disposal of the faithful Christian. Just reflect on it for a moment. The grace and mercy of the Father in making possible our salvation; the love and sacrifice of Jesus in dying for us; the comfort and guidance of the Holy Spirit in His attempts to mould and hone our lives to perfection. Such blessings!

But can we throw these blessings away? We certainly can. We can, by our obstinate and impenitent hearts and minds, grieve and quench the Holy Spirit. (See Eph. 4:30-32). There are grave consequences for us if this happens. We can even go so far as to quench the Holy Spirit. This is tantamount to 'putting out the fire'. What cold and helpless Christians we would then be. God has given us eternal life through His Eternal Spirit. What sane Christian would want to return to the weak and beggarly elements from which he was saved?

Dear Reader, the indwelling Holy Spirit can enrich and ennoble your life. You, by your perversity and carelessness, can make all the grace, love and sacrifice of none effect **in your own life**. As always, the choice is ours.

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