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## ARTICLE II.

## THE AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

BY THE REVEREND ARCHIBALD EUGENE THOMSON.

It is hard to see how any one can read 1 Cor. xii. 7-11 and John xiv.-xvi., and not be convinced that all things which we need for our own growth in grace and for the progress of the Kingdom are to be obtained from the Holy Spirit. The conviction and conversion of the ungodly, and, for the godly, wisdom, knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, tongues and their interpretation, these all are the gift or the direct working of the Spirit. Probably most Christians will agree on this. Yet a step farther should be taken. A soldier needs not only to study the manual of arms, and interest himself in the general campaign; he needs also to acquaint himself, so far as possible, with his commanding officer, the one who has been appointed by the central government to conduct the campaign. The student needs not only to peruse the text-book: he needs also to form the acquaintance and recognize the authority of the teacher who has been appointed to guide into the mysteries of that book, and this relation will have added value if the teacher is at the same time the author of the book. We have great cause for rejoicing in the fact that, while Bible study is increasing, there is also a growing number who are coming to recognize and accept the authority of the one who gave the book,—the Holy Spirit. It is worth while to give time to a study of the Holy Spirit, with special attention to his authority. We cannot, however, ascribe authority to what has not personality. We speak of the authority of the Bible; yet, strictly, the Bible has no more

authority, in itself, than the printed words of any law can have. The authority lies back, in the personal government that gave the laws. It is, therefore, necessary to devote some time to briefly reviewing a part of the argument for the personality of the Spirit, although it may be familiar ground. We shall thereby gain a platform for further discussion.

Many an argument for the personality of the Spirit is not well founded and weakens the case instead of strengthening it. Such are some of the arguments drawn from the use of the personal pronoun in our English versions. This use of the pronoun merely shows the opinion of the translators, who thought that personality should be ascribed to the Spirit. They may be entirely correct in their judgment, but the proof of that correctness must come from other sources. There are a few passages which seem to me legitimately to prove personality by the Greek use of the pronoun, but we will defer the examination of these till a later stage in the discussion.

It would be expected that, if personality is to be ascribed to the Holy Spirit, such fact would appear in the statements made concerning the office of the Spirit, and his relation to the Godhead. A few such passages will now be noticed.

1 Cor. ii. 10: "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."<sup>1</sup> This is a very strange statement, to say the least, if the Spirit is only an influence exerted by God, or if the Spirit is only a faculty of the divine being. Had the statement been, "The Spirit *knows* the deep things of God," it would have been intelligible, on the supposition that the Spirit is only a faculty of God, as it might be said that the spirit of a man knows the deep things of his will. But the one word "searcheth" marks an independence, and at the same time a limitation, which it is hard to ascribe to a mere

<sup>1</sup>All scriptural quotations in this article are from the Standard Edition of the American Revision.

faculty of the divine mind in its relation to the other faculties. The Greek word used here means "to seek out," "to search into," "to look for," "to search for," "to examine."

A similar argument, but from the other side, comes from Rom. viii. 27: "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Here the same Greek word for searching is used, but it is God who does the work, and the reason for his knowing the mind of the Spirit is said to be the fact that the Spirit makes his intercession according to the will of God. This would be an inconceivably crude statement, if it were given as a reason for a person's knowing his own mind.

When the first recorded council of the Christian Church was in session, in the letter written to Antioch, the apostles and church members said (Acts xv. 28): "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us," etc. Had they written, "It seemed good to us, and in harmony with God's disposition," their words would have been intelligible; but to take a faculty of God, or God's influence, and make it a partner with themselves in deciding a difficult question, would make us distrust the sanity of the church, and the inspiration of the apostles.

Heb. ix. 14: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God," etc. This seems to clearly point to a certain separateness on the part of the Holy Spirit. There was no question with the Jews as to the eternity of God. Had the writer, by "Spirit," meant God's disposition, or God's spiritual influence or power, there would have been no need to speak of its eternity. All would have understood it to be as eternal as God. The writer, however, is here contrasting the temporary nature of the former sacrifices with the permanent character

of Christ, and it was a part of the argument to show that the power by which Christ offered his sacrifice was eternal.

1 Peter iii. 18: "Being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit." If it were only meant here that Christ was made alive, raised up, in a spiritual manner by God, this would be a very strange way of expressing it. The natural inference is that here is a somewhat independent power.

The statements which Jesus made concerning the Spirit in his final interviews with his disciples before his death point unmistakably to a separateness of the Spirit greater than exists between the different faculties of any being of whom it could be said that man was made in his likeness.

John xiv. 26: "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom *the Father will send in my name.*" John xv. 26: "But when the Comforter is come, whom *I will send* unto you from the Father." The Comforter is to be sent from both the Father and the Son, and the inference seems properly drawn that here is an agent who can act in the official absence of the others.

John xvi. 13: "He shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall *hear*, these shall he speak." This cannot be Christ; for he says that he is to go away. It cannot be the Father; for he is nowhere described as speaking with imputed authority what he hears. Yet it is some one who can both hear and speak what he hears. To say that Jesus adapted himself to the comprehension of his hearers, and represented as a person that which was not a person at all, is to charge him with doing on the Godward side the same thing which some are fond of foisting on him from the side of the demons. It would also seem as though he had tried to make a mystery more simple by giving us a greater one still. We must believe that Christ meant what he said. It could not be said of God that he would not speak from himself. It could not be said

of a mere faculty or influence that it would both hear and speak. We seem shut up to the conclusion that the Spirit possesses a certain independence.

Note, again, the baptismal formula given in Matt. xxviii. 19: "Baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." To say that the Holy Spirit is only an influence of God, or a faculty of God, or is only the mind of Christ, makes Christ guilty of tautology while making a very solemn statement. If the Holy Spirit have not some kind of personality which puts him on a par with God and Christ, this baptismal formula is a remarkable instance of crudity of language.

To revert for a moment to the argument from the use of the pronoun in the Greek text. Without discussing the usage in the Epistles, we may note that in the record of our Lord's last discourse (John xiv.-xvi.), the nominative masculine *ekeinos* (he) is used five times, and the accusative *auton* (him) once. Objection is made by some to inferring personality from this use of the masculine pronoun. It has been said that the masculine is used when reference is made to *parakleetos*, and the neuter when referring to *pneuma*. This is true in part, but in John xvi. 12-14 Jesus said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he (*ekeinos*) the Spirit (*pneuma*) of truth is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He (*ekeinos*) shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine and shall declare it unto you." In this somewhat extended passage, the only noun which is used to represent the Holy Spirit is the neuter *pneuma*. The verbal form carries its own subject in most cases; but in two instances a pronoun is used, and in both of

these instances, though the noun is neuter, the pronoun is masculine (*ekeinos*). Either John did not know how to use the Greek language, or the use of the masculine pronoun shows clearly his view of the subject, and so the view of Christ, and thus destroys the argument against inferring the personality of the Spirit from the similar usage in other cases, and the argument at once becomes cumulative.

Space cannot be taken for an exhaustive examination of the argument for the Holy Spirit's personality. From what has been given, it seems to rest on solid ground, and from numerous other sources it could be buttressed. President Fairchild well said, "Much of the language of the Scriptures can only be applied to a person."<sup>1</sup> Dr. A. J. Gordon says of the disciples in the last interview with the Saviour before his death: "Did they begin to ask whether the mysterious comer would be a 'person'? Impossible to imagine. For he was to take the place of that greatest of persons; to do for them even greater things than he had done; and to lead them into even larger knowledge than he had imparted. The discussion of the personality of the Holy Ghost is so unnatural in the light of Christ's last discourse that we studiously avoid it."<sup>2</sup> J. Elder Cumming says: "The Holy Spirit is not a mere influence of the Father, nor a description of the Father's mind, but as real a Person as the Father himself."<sup>3</sup>

Were we to attempt to define the relation between the Holy Spirit and the other members of the Godhead, we would speedily find ourselves in water too deep for us. Some years since, a lecturer of world-wide reputation, giving a question-box lecture, was asked to define the Trinity. His definition was as follows: "Three subsistences, with one existence; each pos-

<sup>1</sup> *Elements of Theology*, p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> *The Ministry of the Spirit*, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> *Through the Eternal Spirit*, p. 64; see also pp. 183 and 187.

sessed of qualities incommunicable to the others, yet no one God without the others." This definition puts us between the two horns of a dilemma. (1) These three subsistences are, severally, will-less, in which case there must be a central will, and the three subsistences are no more than different members, or faculties, under control and direction of the will. But this is contrary to the biblical statements, for, as we have seen, there are many expressions which could not be used of mere members or faculties. Indeed, this is inconsistent with the definition itself, for that says "no one God without the others," and no one would speak so of mere members. The words assume a larger independence than the faculties of a single mind, so far as known to us, possess. All together would not be God without the controlling will, no place for which seems to be left in the definition quoted. (2) Each has a separate will, and there are, therefore, three gods. But this too contradicts the Scriptures, and the definition. The reply of President Fairchild to a similar question on a similar occasion was wiser. When, on the chapel platform, taking questions from a box, he came upon one which asked, "What is the Trinity?" he replied simply, "I do not know."

Still, we have seen that there are many statements in the Bible concerning the Holy Spirit which can apply only to a person. But a person, as we use the term, has intellect, sensibility, and will. All these faculties we find ascribed to the Spirit. In the letter to the church at Antioch it was said, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." Here ability to form a judgment is affirmed. It is said of him that he inspired holy men to write the sacred word, thus displaying intelligence of the highest order. He can be, and is, grieved and vexed; therefore he has sensibility. He chooses whom he will have to make an evangelistic tour of Asia Minor, and forbids



their going into Asia and Bithynia ; therefore he has will. Also it is said of the different gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 11) : " But all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally as he will." It is not for us to explain this mystery. It has been well said of the revelation which God makes in his word that he does not argue ; he states with authority. We cannot know all the mystery of the incarnation. No one with finite limitations can comprehend the fact of God's eternal past existence, although we know on logical and scriptural grounds that such is the fact. The mystery of the Trinity, and the relation of the Spirit to the other members of the Godhead, are alike beyond us, and will be until we reach the land where we shall know even as also we are known. But to deny personality to the Holy Spirit, in view of the biblical statements, seems to be as presumptuous as to affirm too great knowledge of his qualities. While man is made in the image of God, it is not safe to make the analogy between the human and divine personalities too exact. A writer in a recent number of a theological magazine, while seeking to show a strict analogy between the human and divine natures, unconsciously, but really, as it seems to me, destroys Christ's independence of will. The lesson for us is that we are under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. He is a person. He has divine authority. God has chosen to put the work of the Kingdom for a time under his direction. Therefore our work, as servants of God, must be placed under his authority and guidance. In pre-Christian times the Jews frequently forsook Jehovah for idols. When Christ was on earth, and since then, the Jews, as a nation, have forsaken Christ for Jehovah. In our days, many who are called Christians are forsaking the Spirit for Jehovah and Christ. It is worth while to note that the great soul-

winner, from Peter and Paul down to our time, have held firmly to their belief in the personality of the Spirit.

We have seen the personality of the Spirit. He comes with a definite, yet a many-sided, work to accomplish. Some important lessons will come to us in connection with the fact of his authority and mission, lessons that have a bearing on some modern speculations, and on our modern church life and work. Some of these lessons come from the Spirit's relation to Christ. Before Jesus was ready for his work he received the baptism with the Spirit as a necessary equipment. He was then, as Matthew says, led, or as Mark says driven, to the wilderness to be tempted, thus showing how completely he put himself under the control of the Spirit. After the temptation, Luke says that he "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee." If the question of authority in those days should be raised, we would have to say that the Saviour was distinctly subject to the Spirit. When he began to preach in Nazareth, he quoted the words of Isaiah, and applied them to himself, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," etc., saying later, "To-day hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears." He thus distinctly ascribed the power and authority with which he spoke to the Holy Spirit. When he was charged with casting out demons through Beelzebub, he made the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit greater than any other sin which men could commit. He thus seemed, at least, to put the sanctity of the work which the Spirit comes to do above that of his own. Further, he told his disciples that his teachings were incomplete. He gave them all that they could bear. There were other truths for which they must wait till the Holy Spirit had come to them. It would be fair to assume that the truths which the disciples were unable to bear were quite as weighty as those they could receive, and therefore that the part of Christ's revelation

which he left for the Spirit to impart would require as truly divine authority as that which he gave himself. In view of this statement of our Lord it is hard to see where the basis is found for the common assertion that the Gospels possess an authority higher than the Epistles. Further, Jesus told his disciples that when the Spirit should come, it would be, in a real sense, his own coming to them again. "I will not leave you desolate: I will come unto you." Of his own presence, thus promised, he said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The presence of the Holy Spirit with us is therefore, in a mysterious but real sense, the presence of Christ himself.

We reach an important truth here in connection with the call, so often heard, "Back to Christ," meaning thereby, that Christ is the supreme authority in the Scriptures, and all statements, other than those which fell from his lips, are to be tested by what he said. But, to put the words written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in their Gospels, over against those written by Paul, Peter, Jude, or John in his Epistles and Revelation, is to put Christ against Christ, and affirm that when he spoke through bodily lips the truths which the Spirit gave him, he was more authoritative than when, present by that Spirit which, while on earth, he put in authority above himself, he delivered to his apostles the truths which before they could not bear. It is to affirm that he was not able, by the Spirit, to make the apostles know what he meant to say as well as when he spoke by means of flesh and blood, despite the fact that, after Pentecost, those apostles were immeasurably better qualified to understand them than before.

It should be remembered, also, that on the inspiration of the gospel writers we depend for an accurate account of what Jesus did and said. He told them that the Spirit should bring

all things to their remembrance. We are therefore thrown back, and compelled to depend, on the Holy Spirit for a chance to depend on Christ through the gospel record, and surely the Spirit is as reliable in one case as in another. Further, there had to be a selection from the words and works of Christ. We have only the tiniest fragment of all that Jesus said and did. The record of that incomparably busy three-year period could not have been contained within the entire Bible, and John, with pardonable exaggeration, declares that the world could not contain it. The disciples cannot be supposed to have written all that they could remember of the Lord's earthly career. Here was a work that none but divine authority can be admitted as having the right to direct. What man could determine which were the most important of the words and mighty works of Christ, and so most necessary to go on record? In Jesus' message to John the Baptist (Matt. xi. 5-6; Luke vii. 22-23) he speaks of the dead being raised as though that were as common an occurrence as making the deaf to hear. Probably that was not the case; yet we cannot think that the three cases recorded were all. What man would be capable of choosing from the entire list the ones to go on record? It was as truly a case of revealing the mind of God as when Jesus taught his disciples or confuted the Pharisees. Therefore, for the selection of the words and works to be put on the page of history we are thrown back on the authority of the Holy Spirit, and I am unable to see wherein this exercise of authority falls short of the authority of Christ himself. At the close of each of the messages sent to the churches in Asia Minor, as given in the second and third chapters of Revelation, Christ, the speaker, gives the injunction, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches," as though, in glory, he was but continuing the work begun on earth, that of communi-

cating to men the mind of the Spirit. As in the upper chamber before his crucifixion, so here, he is the mouthpiece of the Spirit.

Let us note again, that the Spirit gave the Old Testament; the Spirit filled Christ and inspired him to speak; the Spirit enabled the gospel writers to recall and select from the words of Christ which he had given him to speak, and from the works of Christ which he had empowered him to do, those words and works which he chose to have put on record; the Spirit filled the apostles, and enabled them not only to write the Gospels, but the book of Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation as well; hence to say that the authority of Christ in the Gospels is greater than the divine authority in the Epistles is to put Christ over against the Spirit. Or, since we depend on the Spirit for the words of Christ, as shown, and Christ spoke by authority of the Spirit, to thus magnify the authority of Christ is in reality to put the Spirit against the Spirit.

The Spirit is the authority that lies behind the Holy Scriptures. Whatever view we may take of inspiration, we must admit that "No prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter i. 21). This gives to the Scriptures a unity which they would not otherwise possess. The truth, coming from different men, at different times, may not always be of equal importance; but, once those truths are proved to have been given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they must be of equal authority.

Once these facts are established, of the personality and authority of the Holy Spirit, we find that they have an immediate, constant, and important bearing on all our life and work. It will not do to ignore him, and to say that, if we recognize God and Christ, it will bring the same result. In Christ's day,

those who neglected him, but recognized Jehovah, though, like Saul, they sought to live in good conscience toward God, found it a matter of immense importance. Were any to concern themselves only with the Son and neglect the Father, the effect of the error would certainly become apparent. Some say that they have no use for the Old Testament, that they live in the New. Such always show a dwarfed and one-sided Christian character. In like manner, when God has appointed the Holy Spirit as the convictor, converter, regenerator, and sanctifier of the soul, the builder, guide, and ruler of the church, we can no more expect success if we ignore his plan, than a farmer can while ignoring the laws of the harvest. It becomes us, as servants of God, devoted to his Kingdom, to search with all earnestness and humility that we may know what the office of the Spirit is. We find that it is he who is to guide us into all the truth. It becomes us, therefore, to reject instantly, and for all time, the notion that the unaided mind of man, no matter how well trained, can fathom the mysteries revealed in the sacred word. Like Count Zinzendorf and George Whitefield, we shall wait on our knees, asking and trusting for the Spirit's teaching, and receiving thus knowledge such as human lips and pen could never give us, unless the owners of the lips and pen had sought the truth in similar fashion. We shall settle it that mere human scholarship, whether in a theological seminary or out of it, can no more explain the truths of the word of God than a man born blind can criticise the paintings of Titian.

We shall find that the Spirit is the one appointed to use the word as a sword for the piercing of the impenitent heart, and we shall abandon the notion that man can of himself wield that mighty weapon. He may only be the hilt by which the Spirit grasps it. I have seen people convicted by a single presenta-

tion of truth, fighting it three years, and yielding at last. It was the work of the Holy Spirit. I have known a man, intemperate and a gambler, who was not accustomed to set foot inside a church, broken down when alone in his office, compelled to face God, and made to realize that his eternal destiny must be settled in one way or the other at once. He closed his office in the middle of the forenoon, went two miles to the home of a pastor, who found that the man did not need conviction, but was almost crazed by what he had, and only needed to be shown the shortest way to the cross. It was the work of the Holy Spirit. In Japan, a few years since, the Spirit used Mr. Torrey, as nearly one hundred and sixty years ago he used David Brainerd, to convert souls when the word had to be spoken through an interpreter. When we discover this truth we are led to yield ourselves to the authoritative grasp of the Spirit as the only way in which we can receive the empowering which makes ready for service. The two baptisms which we believe in look in opposite directions. The baptism with water looks backward, and that with the Holy Spirit looks forward. If a rebel wished to return to loyalty, and enlist in the army of the United States, two processes would be necessary. He must have his record of rebellion blotted out, and he must put himself under the authority of an officer who will arm him and direct his future movements. So the returning rebel in the Kingdom of God must have two works of grace wrought in and for him before he is ready for service. The baptism with water represents the cleansing by the blood of Christ, whereby the handwriting of ordinances which was against him is blotted out. Many stop there, but the work is incomplete. He is now to be consciously under the authority of the Spirit, who will endue him with power for the conquest of the world. I have read of a theological teacher who would set before his

pupils the truth concerning the enduement of power by the Holy Spirit, and then invite such of them as were willing to go with him into another room, where they would wait before God for the full empowering.

We shall find, further, that the same Spirit has been commissioned to guide the Church and each member of it along the lines laid down in the secret council of the Godhead. He who said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them," is saying the same to-day, but this authority is too often ignored. When it is recognized, mighty results are sure to follow. The great work of the Clarendon Street Baptist Church, Boston, dates from the time when Dr. A. J. Gordon learned to turn over all the work of the Church to the direction of the Holy Spirit. There was once a missionary in South Africa whose work for the blacks was broken up by the Boers. Led by the Spirit, he bought a yoke of oxen, put his family and his few household goods into a wagon, and started northward, not knowing, like Abram, whither he was going, but believing that he was guided from above. After a month of such traveling, as one night he was about to make his camp, he saw at a distance a company of natives traveling in a direction diagonal to his own. Going to them, he found them to be a delegation from a tribe of Hottentots, sent to see if a missionary could be induced to come to them. An hour's difference in the arrival of either party at that point, and they would have missed each other. The Spirit who sent Philip along the road to Gaza is still directing those who will accept his authority.

This will give unity to the work of the kingdom, as the Spirit's authorship and authority gives unity to the Scriptures. With guerrilla warfare, different bands on the same side easily come to fighting each other instead of the common enemy.



When all are under one commander, such wasteful warfare is prevented. Denominational lines may not be blotted out, but the conflict of denominational interests will certainly cease. There will be no more over-crowding towns with churches. There will be no more rivalry on mission fields. It will be a long step toward the time when the prayer of our Lord will be fulfilled, and we shall all be one, even as the Father and the Son are one.

As a concluding word, let me say that, as in my judgment the great need of the church to-day is more divine power, more of the Spirit within the wheels; not merely more of truth for the direction of human effort, but more of the presence of him to whom the direction of the work of the Kingdom has at present been committed; thus, it seems to me, we shall make the desired advance in winning souls, in pushing the work of missions, only as, with all other forward movements, we make a decided advance in exalting to his rightful place in our thought and work the Holy Spirit, and pray, with all the earnestness of which we are capable,

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,  
With all thy quickening powers."