

"And grieve not the HOLY SPIRIT." Eph. 4. 30

"THE DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"

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Booklet VII

"And now the LORD GOD, and HIS SPIRIT, hath send ME." Isaiah 48. 16

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The DEITY of the HOLY SPIRIT.

In John, chapters 13—16.

GOD has not been pleased to give us a series of formal treatises, but His Word is none the less perfect and exact. Yet it is so arranged that the less mentally equipped ones may, when born again, find its treasures, without being repelled, and, moreover, the comparison of Scripture with Scripture is encouraged, that there may be a fuller view of the teaching of the LORD. The Personality and DEITY of the HOLY SPIRIT are before us in such passages as Isa. 48. 16, Matt. 28. 19, Acts 5. 3, 4, Eph. 4. 30. And it is always well to know, and to be able to repeat, decisive words of GOD, in connexion with this oft-disputed certainty. Let GOD be true, though men's theories and wishes collapse. But it is well to be acquainted with the Scripture not only that truth may be asserted, but that it may be humbly enjoyed. We cannot rightly overlook Him through Whose quickening we are children of GOD, by Whose leading we both pray and progress, as Rom. 8 shows, to the praise of the glory of the grace of GOD. The present-day emphasis on the HOLY SPIRIT'S guidance, or rather on the counterfeit thereof, to avoid dependence on the written Word and to omit godly order,

must never be misused to make us, on the other hand, unmindful of Him. Some almost forget the work of CHRIST while *speaking* of the work of the SPIRIT, but we must *not* tend to the other extreme. Nevertheless we should be peculiarly cautious when there is so much false teaching in this direction. The HOLY SPIRIT does not cause a *disproportionate* stress on Himself, and we have a wondrous lesson, and rebuke of our self-esteem, in the way He glorifies *CHRIST*, even as CHRIST glorified the *FATHER*.

Our beloved LORD'S nigh-closing address to His disciples is oft quoted, but more with reference to "comfort" than "instruction" and "exhortation." Yet He never separated these things. We find a wealth of teaching as to the HOLY SPIRIT. *He* is before us in 14. 16, not as a bare influence, but as a Person, and a Person like unto the LORD JESUS. The word "COMFORTER" rather signifies "an ADVOCATE," literally "ONE CALLED ALONGSIDE," the name applied to the LORD in 1 John 2. 1. To make this promise and prophecy into a declaration of the mere granting of certain feelings, or of certain influences, is to rob it of its grandeur, and also of its dispensational bearing, in connexion with that descent of the HOLY SPIRIT, which was as real as the ascent of CHRIST.

And when we come to 14. 26 this ADVOCATE is again mentioned, and His representation of the LORD is again enforced. The witness

is quite clear—"He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance." Have we an influence here? And the word "He" is emphatic, and put in the masculine,* though the nearest noun "SPIRIT" is neuter. The reader who may not know Greek should not be misled by a show of learning in connexion with Rom. 8. 16, 26, † or John 14. 17. § The word here for "SPIRIT" is always *neuter* in Greek, but so is the word "Light" in John 1. 4, 8. 12, 1 John 1. 5 other names of the LORD "Way," "Truth," "Life," "Door" are *feminine*, and yet are used figuratively of *Him*. "SPIRIT" signifies "Breath," and affords a contrast with that which we understand as "material," and is thus used to explain to us something of Him Who is so glorious. It is *equally* neuter in John 4. 24, where *none* wish to deny DEITY: is it fair then to confuse any by referring to the word "itself?" If one were to take John 1. 9 and say "which *thing* lighteth," the absurdity, and sinfulness, would be evident yet there is the same *neuter* ||. This is

no difficulty in the Greek, and the humble child of GOD need not be concerned by parade of a little knowledge. In fact, we speak of GOD by the name of a thing when calling Him the ROCK: but there is no irreverence: we adopt the descriptive language He has condescendingly used, to teach us concerning Himself.

The remarkable fact is not the neuter of the pronoun in "agreement," but the introduction of the *masculine pronoun* in John 14. 26, to lay stress on the reality and DEITY of GOD the HOLY GHOST. And the believing heart will rejoice to know in John 16. 13 we have *again*, and yet more definitely, a *contrast* to that which might be expected; for the word rendered "He" is here *again* expressly and prominently masculine, though the figurative word "SPIRIT," with which it is joined is, as ever, in the neuter. One Word of GOD is sufficient, and the *twofold testimony* rings out and must *not* be put aside. Ah, it is more than twofold, for the same emphatic "He" occurs in verse 14. Thus the whole language of CHRIST—whether viewed grammatically, or in relation to the parallel with Himself—is not only clear but arranged to anticipate and answer mistakes and opposition. The child of GOD can only worship, and admire the Scriptures yet more and more!

* ἐκεῖνος.

† The numbers of the verses in both chapters are a coincidence, helping the memory.

§ ὁ, αὐτο.

|| Here, with verse 4, we have a parallel with John 14. 26: the neuter changes to the masculine to emphasize Personality.

"Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

Acts 13. 2.

THESE impressive words bring before us the personality of the Holy Spirit, and also His authority. In days when He is explained away as an "influence," this Scriptural teaching is deeply important. The Holy Spirit **commanded**, and He viewed the separation as for Himself, that He might use in the work. His possession and direction of the missionary labour is our refreshment.

There is a little word untranslated after "Separate." We might almost render it "then," i.e., "Separate Me then,"—in answer to their prayer and fasting. Thus the Deity of the Holy Spirit is before us, as He acts in executive, responding to prayer to God the Father. We have access in one Spirit (Eph. 2. 18), and it was appropriate that the reply should be given thus.

"Barnabas and Saul." Mark the personal choice, and observe that the first and the last in the list of verse 1 were taken. Appropriately there were two, even as the Lord Jesus sent forth by twos. Fellowship in service is very important. And three were to remain. The Scriptural stress on "two or three" comes to mind.

"For the work whereunto I have called them." **Work** is beautiful, if it is appointed work. The heart that loves God hates laziness. Abraham, when called, went out, "Lot went with him," but drew back from the pilgrim path. In like manner, John Mark accompanied (Acts 13. 5), but he "went not with them **to the work.**" How precious is a call from God: how real is relationship to Him, and how needful is dependence on Him with love's glad obedience.

"I **have** called them," evidently **before**. Thus the Holy Spirit worked in their hearts first, yet there was also a blessed arrangement to cause and show fellowship with other brethren in the step. How important are the principles underlying these words, keeping us from self-will, and from ignoring others, yet urging an inward and personal waiting on God. May this be our experience.

“ **Into** the work to which I have called them ” is impressive. The call was “ toward ”: the response was “ into ” (Heb. 11. 8 is partly similar). We should not stop half way. In contrast with Genesis 11. 31, 12. 5 reads, “ They went forth to go into the land of Canaan: and into the land of Canaan they came.” May our holy obedience be of this simple character.

We have been reminded that Abraham when he was called obeyed, and God says, “ I called him alone ” (Isa. 51. 2). “ Lot went with him ”: we do not read of any call. A mixed multitude went with Israel (Ex. 12. 38), and the murmuring in Numbers 11. 4 started with them. We do not mean that Acts 13. 5 is a parallel with regard to John Mark. It is evidently God’s will that younger ones should be trained in fellowship with older ones (Phil. 2. 22). But we see in the record of Mark 3. 13, 14 with Luke 6. 12 how deeply important a choice is, and how prayerful “ everything ” should be. The young helper should experience God’s call, even though

it be not to prominence. We cannot but feel impressed that when “ Barnabas took Mark ” (Acts 15. 39) on a subsequent occasion, the added words of verse 40 regarding “ the grace of God ” are not found. Surely the Holy Spirit would lead us, without criticizing Barnabas and Saul in Acts 13. 5, to be prayerfully concerned as to each step we take. Many have been encouraged and helped into parts of “ Christian work,” and have proved unfit. The records afterwards are brief, but searching. “ John departing from them returned to Jerusalem ” (Acts 13. 13). “ Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them (in)to the work ” (Acts 15. 38). Thus we have the exact words of Acts 13. 2, “ **for** (into) the work ”; but there we read, “ I have **called.**” How important is fellowship with God in all. And there must be a sense of deep responsibility, and thereby **continuance**, in God’s gracious power (Luke 9. 62).

IT is beyond *man* to explain the nature of GOD. The question may still be asked "Canst thou by searching find out GOD?" It is true that the heavens declare His glory, and that we see the parts of His ways, but He Who is from everlasting to everlasting, dwelling in the light unapproachable, has made clear our ignorance, that we may be humbled, and that we may reverently worship Him in view of His own wonderful declaration "I AM THAT I AM."

Hence it is not surprising that the *TRI-UNITY* of our GOD should be an object of scorn to the infidel, a stumbling-block to the Jew, and a difficulty even to the believer *whenever* he leaves the *terra firma* of "Thus saith the LORD." But when, by grace, he leans *not* to his own understanding, but acknowledges the revelation of GOD, he can see that the *absence* of mystery would be the greatest mystery, and that He, Who is great in counsel, has wondrously condescended to tell saved sinners something concerning Himself. Hence we read "GOD (plural) created (singular)" in Gen. 1. 1, and the words become more striking "Let *US* make man," and "Let *US* go down," and again "Whom shall *I* send, and who will go for *US*?" That GOD anointed GOD is wondrously declared in Ps. 45. 7, and in Isa. 48. 16 we have the LORD as the SENT ONE of the LORD.

Moreover in that verse we have the inspired statement "AND *His SPIRIT*." Note, too, the parallelism of Ps. 51. 11. Even as life and incorruption are brought to *light*, and made more evident, through the gospel, so is it with the SPIRIT of GOD Who definitely came upon such as Joshua and Gideon in olden days. Hence baptism "into *the Name*" i.e. "LORD", is said to be "into the Name (not names) of the FATHER and of the SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT." No believer from Israel could imagine that the reference was merely to an *influence*, in such a connexion. "THAT ONE" (He, *ἐκεῖνος*) as John 16. 13 describes Him, is *Another* like unto the Son of GOD (John 14. 16), Who may be grieved (Eph. 4. 30), and Who is expressly distinguished from, though blessedly working through, the spirit which is *born* of Him (John 3. 6, Rom. 8. 16, 26). — Moreover, not only did the SPIRIT of God speak by David, but he knew something of the fellowship of the HOLY SPIRIT (Ps. 51. 11). It is not surprising that we find not only the personality and DEITY of the HOLY SPIRIT, but also His Divine working. For His operations are *many*—all the host of heaven were made by the SPIRIT of the LORD, the SPIRIT of His mouth. And again "The SPIRIT of GOD moved upon the face of the waters," and again "the HOLY GHOST also is a witness to us"—in the Scriptures, even by the types "the HOLY SPIRIT signifying" precious teaching, that we often ungratefully and unwisely overlook.

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