

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE VICTORIOUSLY

PART 5 – DO WE WORSHIP A GOD OF DUALITY OR TRINITY?

Most of us here accept the doctrine of the Trinity, unlike our liberal counterparts who actually deny the deity of Jesus. This is a colossal blunder on their part as it leaves them with an imperfect Messiah whose death can only be considered a useless martyrdom, and whose resurrection myth.

Thus, this human Messiah is no savior at all but only an ideal, an ideal that is powerless to provide aid and comfort to those who turn to him.

Yet we, who are inclined to wear our orthodoxy on our sleeves and be prideful that we maintained our orthodoxy regardless of the cost, must not let our indignation blind us to our own shortcomings.

Over the years, we too have committed a blunder that parallels that of the liberals, for we have focused our worship on a God of Duality as opposed to a God of Trinity. Our worship in the past few decades has neglected the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to the point that, in substance of worship, He is no longer part of the Godhead.

This neglect comes not in the form of doctrinal statements, for we have clung to the orthodox doctrines of the creeds. Our neglect has come not from the formal documented creeds that we recite; it comes from the creed to which we adhere in our life, our working creed.

Some may believe that this is a trivial distinction, IT IS NOT! Doctrines have value only to the extent that they influence our thoughts, our words, and our deeds and make a difference in our lives.

If we apply this test of influencing our thoughts, words, and deeds, and making a difference in our lives to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, can we see in our lives any practical results, any practical value of this doctrine? Sadly, for most of us the answer is NO. And even more sadly, for the rest I would venture that the answer for 80 to 90 per cent of the time is still NO.

But what else should we expect, how and when do we spend time in our worship calling on the Holy Spirit and yielding our spirits to His?

If we look at our liturgy, we can say that we make only brief mention of Him in our doxology, the benediction, and in passing in some of our prayers.

We so ignore the Holy Spirit that we are all but committing fraud by claiming to be Trinitarian in practice. “Why?” you ask, “Because the doctrine of the Trinity boldly proclaims equality of the Three Persons, Father Son, and Holy Spirit.” They each deserve to be worshipped and glorified. I like to think of it as being similar to the equality that our laws provide to politicians; they are to be granted equal access to the networks to publicize their campaigns. So too should we grant equal time to the worship, praise, and glorification of the Father, Son, **and Holy Spirit**.

Our neglect of the Holy Spirit over the decades has had and continues to have a profound effect on our churches. You may recall that the word in the Greek that is used for the Spirit is *dounamis*. It literally means power, but not the power that is displayed by a weight lifter, *dounamis* power is instantaneous and dramatic power as well as extreme continual power. It is literally like dynamite! In fact *dounamis* is the root word for dynamite and *dynamos*. It is explosive and it is ongoing. A human dynamo is one that will arrive on site with the power to blast through an obstacle and then go on to the next obstacle; overcoming it.

But there is a similarity between releasing the power of a stick of dynamite and the power of the Holy Spirit. Dynamite will remain inert until you put a blasting cap on it and send an electrical charge through it.

This is true of the Holy Spirit. Regardless of how many times we state our belief in the Holy Spirit in our Creeds, how many times He is mentioned in the indices of our Hymnals, how often we bury Him in the backs of our minds, He cannot and will not manifest Himself until we release that power. We have to provide the electrical charge through the blasting cap for Him to come on the scene in power to empower us to do God's will.

Unfortunately for all of us, our pulpits and Bible studies over the years have been devoid of emphasis of the power that can be manifested in us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The result has been that most of us know of the Holy Spirit, while many do not know Him. There is a vast chasm between knowing of the Holy Spirit and knowing Him personally. One can die of starvation knowing all about food, diet, and the various nutrient levels of different foods just as one can remain spiritually dead while knowing all the facets of Christianity and the lives of the Christian Martyrs.

Let's turn to John, Chapter 17, Verse 3. You'll find it on page ____.

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

If we insert the two letter word "of" after the word "know" we see that we have a totally different construct. Jesus did not want us to just know about God and His three persons, He wanted us to know them personally.

Introducing that little word, "of" is the difference between life eternal and death, for if we eat not of the fruit of the true vine, we will surely die.

Certainly it is important to know about the Holy Spirit, but it is important only if that knowledge spurs us on to seek a personal relationship with Him, to seek His indwelling power that we might discover our spiritual gifts and begin to exercise them.

It is for this reason that in the future we will be hearing more and more of the Holy Spirit and His power and how we can avail ourselves of that *dounamis* power. It is my hope that, as our teaching and our expectations of the Holy Spirit moving in us becomes fundamental instead of incidental; we will begin to see a greater manifestation of His gifts.

But before we can avail ourselves of the power of the Holy Spirit, perhaps we should ask, how should we think of the Holy Spirit? The Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit as having every element of personality;

1. The Holy Spirit has emotions; He feels affection, compassion, and empathy;
2. The Holy Spirit has intellect; He hears, thinks, sees, and speaks;
3. The Holy Spirit has a will just as you and I, and He performs acts that are capable of beings who have personalities.
4. The Holy Spirit is capable of penetrating our minds, our spirits, and our very hearts.

This aspect of penetrability is a quality that we mortals do not possess, And while the Holy Spirit is capable of penetrating our minds, hearts, and spirits, we would be remiss if we thought that in this process our minds, hearts, and spirits were replaced by His.

The penetration process has been considered by writers of old as being analogous to what happens when we place an iron poker in the coals and then, using a bellows, we heat up the coals.

The poker, being enveloped by the coals takes on their heat until finally it is glowing the same cherry red as the coals. The two, coals and poker, are still separate and distinct substances, however the poker has taken on the characteristics of the coals and thus the two are unified. Picking either up with bare hands will yield the same result.

So it is when the Holy Spirit penetrates our spirits, we take on the characteristics of the Holy Spirit and it is through our taking on this mantle of His that we are capable of defeating the Devil and all of his wily ways.

The Bible also stresses that we are to think of the Holy Spirit as being God, thus He is co-equal with God. Every quality that is part and parcel of God is also in the Holy Spirit.

And so it is that all three of the creeds that we as Anglicans declare to be our beliefs, includes the understanding that the Holy Spirit is indeed God.

The Athanasian Creed, the creed with which we are least familiar, has the most succinct statements of the three creeds regarding the Holy Spirit.

...we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity;

Neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the Substance.

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son and another of the Holy Ghost.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.

...

And in this Trinity none is afore or after other: none is greater or less than another;

But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal.

So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.

And the church in its hymns and songs of worship and praise, has long celebrated the Godhead of the Spirit. Our Gradual Hymn this morning is one such song. The lyrics combined with the music come together to create in us a worshipful state, creating in us a longing,

to love what He loves,
to do what He does

to have a heart that is pure,
to have a will that is as His will

to have a soul that is blended with His
to glow with His divine fire

to live the perfect life with Him in His eternity.

Yet while we sing an occasional hymn glorifying the Holy Spirit, we seem to neglect Him throughout the rest of our worship. It has been said that “song can never bring the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit can bring song.”

I would suggest that while this statement is indeed true, I would add that songs of worship and praise can alter our state of mind, alter the desires of our heart, and alter our spirit’s longing so that we willingly seek and invite the Holy Spirit to fill us that we indeed can be made anew.

And so, getting back to our question, “how should we think of the Holy Spirit?” We might rephrase our question and ask, what is the Holy Spirit like? Since the Holy Spirit is one with God, and one with Jesus, we can respond that, “The Holy Spirit is like God AND the Holy Spirit is like Jesus. And so as we worship our Father who art in heaven, and just as we celebrate the life death and resurrection of Jesus and worship him with adoration, so should we worship the Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son.

We have all been taught that God is love, we have learned that Jesus loved all mankind just as did His Father; the Holy Spirit is also love and loves each of us just as does Jesus and our Father. He will always act towards sinners just as Jesus does, with compassion; towards those who are suffering and in pain, whether physical or spiritual, with empathy and love.

And it is through God’s Holy Spirit working in us that we too can take on the likeness of Jesus, it is through God’s Holy Spirit working in us that we too can go among those who are in the world “to preach good tidings to the poor; to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound.” For Jesus promised that when He went to His Father He would send the parakletos, the Holy Spirit, who would dwell in His disciples. And so it is that Jesus also promised that, “he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.”

Jesus promises were valid when He walked on the earth and they are valid today. If you believe in Jesus and have turned away from the sin in your life, and you invite the Holy Spirit to fill you

anew, He will respond and you will be empowered to do all that Jesus did... and more. That is the promise of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

It is truly time for us to repent of the neglect of the blessed Third Person of our God. Neglect and in many instances, transgression against God's Blessed Holy Spirit in our worship and in our lives.

And our repentance is not to harbor remorse over our transgressions for the rest of our lives, rather the truest act of repentance in this instance would be to turn away from our neglect of Him and open wide the doors of our hearts and invite Him in, into our hearts, into our worship, into our every activity.

Let us invite Him to be Lord and Master of every corner of our hearts, of our wills, of our every desire. And let us always remember that the Holy Spirit is drawn to the sweet name of Jesus just as bees are drawn to the sweet fragrance of roses. Where ever Jesus is honored the Holy Spirit will be drawn, where ever Jesus is glorified, the Holy Spirit will move freely and know that He is welcomed. We need only then to invite Him in.

And so we extend this invitation to each of you to consider anew the Holy Spirit, and in your prayer of confession today, invite Him to take up residence in your heart and fill you so that you know that He is present and imparting His power to you. This is my prayer for each of us; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.