

# Emblems and Aspects of the Holy Spirit

by A.B. Simpson

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*The Holy Spirit is the fullness of God, manifesting Himself in various ways, including as the Spirit of peace, the Giver of rest, and the Comforter.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:2, John 3:8, John 7:38, Ephesians 1:3, Revelation 1:4

**Topics:** "The Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Emblems"

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## Description

A.B. Simpson explores the seven emblems of the Holy Spirit, emphasizing their significance in understanding the fullness and diverse roles of the Spirit in the believer's life. He illustrates how each emblem--such as the dove, air, water, oil, fire, seal, and earnest--reveals different aspects of the Spirit's character and work, from peace and gentleness to power and love. Simpson encourages believers to recognize and embrace these symbols as they experience the Holy Spirit's presence and influence in their lives, ultimately leading to a deeper relationship with God. He concludes by affirming the blessings that come from the Holy Spirit, urging the congregation to seek and receive these divine gifts.

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## Transcript

The Seven Spirits which are before His Throne.- Rev. i:4.

This expression denotes the fullness of the Holy Spirit. The number seven is expressive of divine completeness, and the benediction of the seven spirits is equivalent to the ascription of Paul in the first chapter of Ephesians: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

In keeping with this seven-fold expression of the Spirit's fullness, is the fact that we have seven special emblems of the Holy Spirit given us in the Scriptures, each fitted to emphasize some special phase of His character and work. As the Holy Ghost has no personal and incarnate form like Christ, He has clothed Himself in the robes of symbol, and thus becomes to us more real and vivid in the figures of human speech and earthly imagery.

I

The Dove

1. The earliest symbol of the Holy Spirit is the dove. Not in express terms is this figure introduced in the Old Testament, but the allusion in the opening verses of Genesis is sufficiently clear to be recognized.

"The Spirit of God moved upon the deep;" literally this is translated, "The Spirit of God fluttered or brooded upon the face of the deep." It is the picture of the mother-bird spreading her wing over the stormy elements, and incubating, as it were, her brood through the dark night of chaos.

It is the same typical figure that we meet again as the emblem of peace and gentleness, and the herald of the morning of the new world in the dark and stormy night of the deluge. It is the same blessed person, who, on the banks of the Jordan, descended in visible form like a dove, and abode upon the Lord Jesus, the herald of peace and love to a sinful world, and the emblem of the Spirit of Christ's ministry. As the dove, the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of peace, the Giver of rest.

This is also a figure of motherhood, which is constantly associated with the picture of the blessed Paraclete. In the Divine Trinity there is found the substance of all relationships, and that which is expressed in human motherhood must always have been in the bosom of God.

Of this the Holy Ghost is the personal expression. From that material breast our new life is born; by that gentle Spirit our spiritual childhood is nurtured, comforted, educated, developed, and matured. "As one who his mother comforteth," so doth the Comforter love and cheer our sorrowing hearts. As the brooding dove, so does this blessed One hide us beneath the wings of God, and cover us with the feathers of the divine sympathy and tenderness.

It is almost difficult to use the masculine form in speaking of this blessed person, so womanlike is the sweetness and softness of His touch.

His is that gentle voice we hear,

Soft as the breath of even,

That stills each doubt, and calms each tear,

And speaks to us of heaven.

II.

Air is the next symbol of the Spirit.

This also appears in the opening chapter of Genesis. "The Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." And this we know was the Holy Spirit, for, we are told, "The inspiration of the Almighty giveth life." "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created."

The same figure is used by the prophet Ezekiel in describing the resurrection of the dry bones. It was the Spirit that came from the four winds and breathed upon the slain, and they lived. Our Lord has used this figure in two very striking connections. The first is in relation to the regeneration of a soul. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whither it cometh or whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

It is like the voiceless wind, known not by visible perception, but by its effects.

Again he uses it in connection with the personal imparting of the Holy Ghost to His own disciples. "He breathed on them and said, receive ye the Holy Ghost."

In keeping with this figure the Hebrew and Greek word is the same as that used for the wind, or the breath. The Holy Ghost is the breath of God. This emblem expresses at once the gentleness and the strength of the Holy Ghost. His coming may be as quiet as the evening zephyr, or mighty as the tempest's power. When He descended on Pentecost, there was a sound as of a mighty rushing wind; when He came afterwards to the assembled disciples, the place was shaken where they were assembled; when He answered the prayer of Paul and Silas the prison rocked to its foundation, and the bolts and bars were loosed.

But above all the manifestations of His tremendous power the most blessed is His quickening breath. This figure especially expresses the idea of life, the Spirit that breathes the new life in conversion, that imparts the very life of Christ to the soul, and quickens the mortal body into His resurrection power.

III.

The water.

This emblem runs through the whole typology of the Old Testament, and the figurative language of the New.

This was the significance of the stream that flowed from Horeb's riven rock, and the diverse washings of the Levitical system. It was of this that Jesus spake when He said, "He that believeth on me, out of him shall flow rivers of living water." It was of this that the prophet said, "I will pour water upon the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground, and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses." This is the rain that comes upon the new-mown grass, and the dew which revives the earth. It is the fulness of the Holy Spirit in His cleansing, refreshing, and comforting influences. This is He who comes to us in the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost which He sheds upon us abundantly. This is He who sends the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. This is He who baptizes us in the ocean of divine light and love, and fills us with all the fullness of God.

IV.

The Oil.

The oil is another Old Testament figure of the Holy Ghost, appearing in all the anointings of the priesthood and tabernacle, and reappearing in the very name of Christ, which means the anointed One. It was of this that He said, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me; for He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the opening of the eyes to them that are blind, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

This figure describes the Holy Ghost as the figure of light, consecration, and healing.

In the ancient ritual, the head, hands, and feet of the cleansed leper and the consecrated priest were touched with oil as a symbol of their dedication to God. Thus Aaron was set apart, thus David was consecrated, and thus we are dedicated to Christ, and divinely qualified for service by the anointing of the Holy Ghost.

But the oil was also the figure of light in the vision of Zechariah. The temple is lighted by seven lamps that are fed by two living olive trees, teaching us that the Holy Ghost is the constant and living source of His people's life and light.

It is in this connection that John says, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him."

And so, also, the oil speaks of His healing touch. Oil and wine are used in the parable of the good Samaritan as figures of physical restoration.

And so the disciples anointed the sick and commissioned the elders to continue the same rite in the command, James v: 14, as a token of the touch of the Holy Ghost upon the suffering form, and communicating to each the love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oil might also be used as a symbol of gladness. The Psalmist speaks of oil which makes our face to shine, and describes Jesus Christ as anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Isaiah speaks of the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. The Holy Ghost anoints us with the spirit of joy, and He radiates the face with the reflected glory of the indwelling God.

Have we received the divine anointing as our light and healing, our joy and consecration? The oil that fell on Aaron's head descended to the skirts of his garments; and from our Great High Priest the divine anointing descends to His lowliest member.

Let us consecrate our hands and feet, our head and heart to be touched and dedicated from this holy chrism, and go forth as the Lord's anointed.

V.

The Fire.

The mightiest of human forces is the last figure implied to represent the Holy Spirit up to the time of His descent at Pentecost. It had appeared in the very beginning in the Shekinah which hovered at Eden's gate; the pillar of fire that led the camp of Israel, the descending flame that consumed the sacrifices in the tabernacle, the blaze of the burning bush in Horeb, the coals of fire in Isaiah's vision, the glowing symbols of Ezekiel's imagery, the figurative language of John the Baptist prophesying of Him who should baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire; and at length it was revealed in all its manifested meaning in the cloven tongues of Pentecost, and the fiery baptism of the assembled disciples.

It is the figure of destruction, reminding us of the Spirit which consumes not only the sin, but also the life of nature, and leaves the soul an empty vessel for the divine filling. It represents also, more emphatically than any other figure, the idea of cleansing; penetrating every fibre of our being, purifying with intrinsic power the inmost soul, and eliminating every particle of dross and evil.

This is also the figure of power, reminding us of the mightiest forces of human mechanics, electricity and steam, which are forms of fire, and the great dynamic center of our system, and fiery sun which holds up the planets in their orbits by his power; so the Holy Ghost is the source of omnipotent power; impelling all the machinery of Christianity, moving all the forces of the soul, and enduing us with all we can ever know of power for service.

The fire is also the image of love; it is the force that melts, dissolves barriers, fuses hard substances, and welds the pieces into one.

And so the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of love, melting the stony heart, dissolving the prejudices of men, and uniting the people of God as one heart. It is His to give the glow of enthusiasm and the fire of holy zeal; it was He who clothed Elijah with his fervor, John with his love, Paul with his tremendous energy, Whitfield with his love of souls, and Fenelon, Rutherford and McCheyne with their seraphic piety.

Have we received the baptism of fire? It is the still unexhausted promise of the New Testament, waiting its mightiest manifestations just before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

VI.

The Seal.

Another symbol has been added in the epistles, following with peculiar propriety the complexion of redemption, and the ratifying of the covenant by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the descent of the Holy Ghost.

It is the figure of the seal in the epistles of Paul. This figure is used respecting the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of the believer, "In whom after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise."

And so again He says, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit by whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption." The covenant completed, the will made effectual; it is fitting that the seal should be added. And this the Holy Spirit becomes, putting upon the heart the distinct stamp of Christ, touching and making divine things real and tangible as the impression upon the seal and the wax. This figure represents the idea of certainty and reality in connection with the work of the Spirit. There is such an experience in the Holy Ghost. It is not enough that we merely believe the truth, we may also know it and experience it. "We have known and believed," John says, "the love that God hath to us," and so the Holy Ghost becomes to us the witness to our consciousness of the reality of Divine things; enabling us to say, "I know Him whom I have believed;" "We know that He abideth in us by the Spirit that He hath given to us;" "We know that we have eternal life;" "We know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him."

It is very important that we do not reverse the order of this experience; it does not come before faith, but after it. "After ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." we should not rest short of this blessed reality, and if we yield ourselves unto God in the surrender of consecration, and the simplicity of trust, we shall receive the touch of His blessed hand, and the stamp of His own personal presence, and the very image of His blessed face impressed upon our hearts, and be able to say, "He who hath sealed us and anointed us is God, who hath also stablished us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

This leads us to the last symbol of the Spirit, namely:

VII.

The Earnest.

This also is added in the epistles along with the seal, and after the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. These two last symbols seem especially appropriate as added ones, in view of their special significance with respect to the finished redemption of Christ, and His approaching advent. All the other aspects of the Spirit's work have been expressed by former emblems, but there is still one more, namely, the prophetic. "He shall show you things to come;" so Christ promised regarding the Comforter. He was to be the

foretaste of all the yet unrevealed and unrealized hopes of the glorious future, and one more term was needed to express this; this is afforded in the word earnest.

An earnest in ancient legal customs was a handful of soil bestowed upon the purchaser of a piece of real estate, containing a portion of the very ground that he had bought, as a solemn pledge of the whole estate which was to be delivered in due time. It was not a handful of soil from any estate, but it was from the very ground that he had bought, and it guaranteed the identity, certainty, and completeness of the transfer in due time.

In this sense the Holy Spirit is to show a simple and pledge of our future inheritance. All that we are to be and to enjoy He brings us now in foretaste and in limited measure, as a pledge that it shall be all delivered in the fullness of time, in all its completeness.

The term is used in a two-fold connection in the epistles; first, of our spiritual inheritance, which the Holy Ghost foreshadows in our hearts by the experience of His sanctifying, comforting, and quickening life; giving us the measure in which we are able to receive amid the limitations of our mortal life, a real foretaste of the felicities and glories of heaven.

But there is a second sense in which He is also an earnest, namely: in our mortal bodies, into which he brings the physical life of Christ as an earnest and foretaste of the physical resurrection. Thus we have the first-fruits of the Spirit as the pledge that we shall yet have the full redemption of the body. "He that hath wrought us for this self-same thing," that is, for the future resurrection, "is God, who hath also given us the earnest of the Spirit."

Have we received this blessed token, and do we have in our measure all its meaning, in anticipation of the things which "eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, and it hath not entered into the heart of man what God hath prepared for them that love Him," but of which it is added, "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God?"

Can we claim the benediction of the seven Spirits which are before the throne, and say with the apostle, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all the blessings of the Spirit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus?"

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