

2B: *The Holy Spirit & Inanimate Objects*

The Holy Spirit is Associated with Impersonal/Inanimate Objects or Qualities

As noted in prior sections, we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit instead of wine.¹ We are to be filled with the Holy Spirit as well as joy, wisdom and other qualities. Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit, whereas anointing was done with oil in the Old Testament. The WTBS also asserts that a parallel of water baptism and baptism of the Holy Spirit demands impersonality of the Holy Spirit.²

Oil. Wine. Water³ and blood.⁴ Joy. Wisdom. The rushing wind at Pentecost. Descending like a dove at Jesus' baptism. These are all inanimate objects or abstract qualities and the Holy Spirit is sometimes compared, contrasted or otherwise associated with them.

Does being associated with or said to be impersonal objects/qualities, however, demand that the Holy Spirit is an impersonal force?

No.

In regards to the Holy Spirit being listed among qualities we should seek to be filled with, one need only look to 1 John 4:8:

He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. (KJV)

The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (NASB)

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. (NIV)

He that does not love has not come to know God, because God is love. (NWT)

God is love and one certainly wouldn't argue, simply because God is said to be an abstract emotion, that God isn't a person. God was often associated with impersonal objects/qualities, etc. He revealed himself in smoke at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:18), the pillar of smoke and fire in the Wilderness (Exodus 13:21 above), a burning bush to Moses (Exodus 3:2), thunder (2 Samuel 22:14), the Shekinah glory in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 8:10-12). Yet, Yahweh is definitely a person.

[1] In regards to the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 5:18, I refer the reader to "What Does it Mean to be Filled with the Spirit? A Biblical Investigation" by Andreas J. Köstenberger (*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40/2, June 1997, pp. 229-240. Available at http://www.etsjets.org/jets/journal/40/40-2/40-2-pp229-240_JETS.pdf). (Accessed January 2007.) While the aforementioned article was written to answer specific issues related to a pamphlet published and distributed by the Campus Crusade for Christ, the discussion of the filling of the Holy Spirit is well worth any student's attention: "In summary, Paul's use of the expression 'Be filled with the Spirit' in Eph 5:18 in contrast to being drunk with wine enjoins believers to exhibit a wise, maturing lifestyle which is to be expressed in corporate praise and worship as well as in proper Christian relationships." (ibid p.235). See article for more information.

[2] A careful reading of the cited verses indicates that John the Baptist **contrasts** water baptism and baptism with the Holy Spirit.

[3] For a more in-depth treatment, see: "The Meaning of 'Born of Water and the Spirit' in John 3:5" by Robert V. McCabe (*Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 4 (Fall 1999), pp. 85-107. Available at <http://www.dbts.edu/dbts/journals/1999/McCabe.pdf>) (Accessed January 2007.)

[4] For a more detailed study of 1 John 5:6-8, the Holy Spirit, and "water and blood," see: "The Holy Spirit in 1 John" by Donald W. Mills. (*Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 4 (Fall 1999), pp 33-50. Available at <http://www.dbts.edu/dbts/journals/1999/Mills.pdf>) (Accessed January 2007.)

Jesus was also frequently associated with impersonal objects in the Gospels: bread (John 6:35), a rock (1 Corinthians 10:4), a vine (John 15:1), a door (John 10:7), and light (John 8:12), just to name a few. Jesus is certainly a person.

The fact that a subject is associated with impersonal objects or qualities does not demand that the subject is an impersonal force rather than a personal being.