

The Spirit of God

His Person and Work

Those who deny the teaching of the Word of God concerning the nature of the Godhead as a Plurality in Unity, a Three in One, are thereby bound to deny the Divine Personality of both the Son and the Holy Spirit. In general, the practice is to deny the DIVINE Personality of the Son, i.e. to acknowledge that the Son is a person, but to deny His Divinity or Godhood; and to deny the Divine PERSONALITY of the Holy Spirit, i.e. to acknowledge that the Spirit is Divine, but to deny His Personality. Such false teachers would declare that the Spirit is a divine attribute, influence, power or emanation etc.

We might remark that the first Person of the Godhead distinguished in Scripture is the Holy Spirit, as early as Genesis 1:2. Although it is indicated in the Old Testament, yet, the revelation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit was brought into fuller light with the incarnation (partaking of literal manhood) of the Son as Jesus the Christ. Consequently, the concept of the Holy Spirit as a

Divine Person is pre-eminently, though not exclusively, a Christian doctrine.

The practical implications of the truth are vast, as we might expect: for the more fundamental a truth is doctrinally, the more fundamental it is likely to be practically. Apart from the duty of rendering to the Holy Spirit that reverent appreciation and submission that is His Divine right, the recognition of His Divine Personality will affect the whole tenor of our lives both individually and collectively. As another has so pointedly said:

“If we think of the Holy Spirit only as an impersonal power or influence, then our thought will constantly be ‘How can I get hold of and use the Holy Spirit?’; but if we think of Him in the Biblical way as a Divine Person, infinitely wise, infinitely holy, infinitely tender, then our thought will constantly be, ‘How can the Holy Spirit get hold of and use me?’ Is there no difference between the thought of the worm using God to thrash the mountain, or God using the worm to thrash the mountain? The former conception is low and heathenish, not differing essentially from the thought of the African fetish worshipper who uses his god to do his will. The latter conception is lofty and Christian... The former conception leads to self-exaltation; the latter conception to self-humiliation, self-emptying and self-renunciation... If we think of the Holy Spirit in the Biblical way as a Divine Being of infinite majesty, condescending to dwell in our hearts and take possession of our lives, it will put us in the dust, and make us walk very softly before God.”

There are many truths in Scripture which provide us with avenues of proof to establish that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person.

Firstly we might examine **His TITLES**. We shall note just two of them. In Acts Ch. 5, the Holy Spirit is

given the title **“God”**. Compare verses 3 and 4, and note also v9. The same title is attributed to Him in 1Corinthians 3:16. In 2Corinthians 3:16-18, the Spirit is entitled **“Lord”**, in relation to Israel, obviously in the Old Testament sense of “Jehovah”, the God of Israel. No two titles could more emphatically assert His Godhood, and both passages clearly indicate His Personality. He can be lied to, tempted, turned to in repentance, and is also the source of spiritual transformation. Spiritual progress, conformity to the image of Christ, depends upon our recognition of and submission to the Divine Person, **“the Lord the Spirit”**.

Secondly let us observe just two of **His RELATIONSHIPS**. In Matthew 28:19 we read, **“baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”**. Here we have the relationship to the Father and to the Son in the possession of the one Divine name. While we use such expressions as ‘in the name of Queen and country’, we must ever remember God’s jealous regard for the honour of His own unique and incommunicable name, which must prevent all such associations (Isa. 42:8). He could not associate with Himself within the scope of His own name a mere creature and an influence that is not even personal. It is more than evident that Father, Son, and Spirit share the one name of God.

Thirdly we notice two of **His OFFICES**. In John 14:16,17 the Lord Jesus refers to the Spirit as **“another Comforter”** i.e. ‘another of the same sort (Gk. *allos*) called alongside to help’. This expression confutes the inconsistent teaching concerning the Son and the Spirit previously referred to. They are Comforters of the same sort; not a created being and an impersonal power, but both Divine Persons able to comfort and to succour in the same way and to the same extent. Yet the Lord Jesus said in relation to the

coming of the Spirit, **“It is expedient for you that I go away”** (John 16:7), for the Spirit who came as a consequence is not merely “with” us, as was Christ, but is “in” us (John 14:17) if we are Christ’s. No mere influence could be better as a Comforter than the living, present Lord Jesus. This One more than takes His place as a Comforter. All that Christ was to His own, and more, the Spirit is to us now, a Divine Person with us and in us, a Divine Friend and Helper, all wise, all-powerful and all loving. Now we have one Comforter on earth and another in heaven, for the word translated “Advocate” in 1John 2:1 is the same as “Comforter”. Intimately connected with the office of Comforter is that of Interpreter. Such verses as John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-15 speak of the Spirit in this capacity as **“the Spirit of truth”**, a sentient Being who passes on revelation, communicated to Him. He “hears”, “receives (takes)”, “speaks”, “shows”, “teaches”, “brings to remembrance”, “testifies” and also “reproves (convicts)”; clearly He is a Person and inasmuch as He comprehends “all truth”, a Divine Person.

Fourthly observe two of **His ACTIVITIES**. In Romans 8:14 we read of the leading of the Spirit. He is the Christian’s Guide, as Galatians 5:18 also states. He draws alongside us, instructing and governing our thoughts, taking us by the hand and drawing us in the path of the will of God, making us both willing and able to do His good pleasure. This is characteristic of the believer’s whole life and of his service for God in particular. In Acts 13:2 and 20:28 we find Him calling men to service and in Acts 16:6,7 directing them in their service: **“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not”**. Indeed throughout the whole of the book of

Acts we are given a strikingly clear picture of the Spirit as a Divine Person at work in the world.

Another of His activities which evidence His true glory is that of inspiring the Scriptures. That His is the Divine power by which the prophets were “*moved*” (lit. “borne along” 2Pet. 1:21) is undoubtedly true, but that is not all. The Spirit as a Divine Person spoke (or wrote) through the prophets. See 2Samuel 23:2; Acts 1:16; 28:25. In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is written that He “*saith*” (Ch. 3:7); “*this signifying*” (9:8); “*is a witness*” (10:15): the reference in Ch. 9:8 indicates that the Spirit is not only the Author of the Scriptures, but also the Divine Architect of the types of the tabernacle, revealed in the Old Testament and explained in the New.

Fifthly notice two of **His PRONOUNCEMENTS**. In Acts 10:20 the Holy Spirit addresses Peter, in Acts 13:2 He addresses the assembly at Antioch. On both occasions He uses the personal pronoun “I” of Himself. Only a person could do this; it is a Divine Person who is speaking to His servants.

Sixthly observe two of **His FACULTIES**. In Romans 8:26,27 the Spirit is said to make intercession for the saints. Only an intelligent Being could do this and we read there of “*the mind of the Spirit*”. He intercedes from within the saints; Christ intercedes for the saints in heaven. The same word is used in vs. 27 and 34. Only a person has a mind (cf. v7), and it is interesting to note the superiority of “*the mind of the Spirit*” to the human mind, for it is able to communicate by “unutterable” means, i.e. speech is not necessary. Then in 1Corinthians 12:11 we read of His “*will*”. The Spirit of God is not a Divine power which we can use as we will in the assembly (local autonomous church), but a Divine Person who presides in absolute sovereignty. It is for us to be subject to HIS will. Only a person has a will. Let us note that, right order in the assembly depends upon

the recognition of the Personality of the Holy Spirit and the granting to that Person of His rights in the midst of His sanctuary. It is not what He CAN do that matters, but rather what He WILLS to do.

Seventhly consider two **TREATMENTS** of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:30 says, “*And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God*”. The Spirit thus possesses feelings. He is capable of being grieved or vexed (See Isa. 63:10). Only a person can be grieved: only a person possesses feelings. What a powerful stimulus to spirituality it is, to think that the indwelling Holy Spirit, that Divine Person to whom true believers are so indebted, is grieved by their carnality! Then in Matthew 12:31,32 we read of “*blasphemy against the Holy Spirit*”. How can one blaspheme an influence? The Holy Spirit must be a Person. And since we are told that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a sin more crucial, more damning even than blasphemy against the Son of Man, the Saviour Himself, how obvious it is that the Holy Spirit must be a Divine Person.

Let it be noted that in all these lines of study we have selected only two examples. Space limits the amount of consideration that can be given, but even the limited amount of Scripture which can be noted here is surely more than enough to convince us that the Holy Spirit of God is no mere influence but in very truth a Divine Person.

In conclusion we might just notice that the distinctive mode of Being peculiar to God Himself is shared by the Spirit. He is **Eternal** (Heb. 9:14), **Omniscient** (1Cor. 2:10-14; Isa. 40:13,14), **Omnipresent** (Psa. 139:7), **Omnipotent** (John 6:63; 1Cor. 2:4,5; 12:11 [cf. v6]; 2Cor. 3:6). He has not become incarnate as the Son did, but He is here in the world in “Spirit” mode, the true and natural mode of Divine Being (John 4:24), no less a Person despite being invisible to mortal sight.