

Pneumatology

H. Graham Wilson Jr.

The Holy Spirit is the point at which the Trinity becomes personal to a believer. The Holy Spirit is active within our lives as believers in the Church age (I Cor. 12:13). The Holy Spirit is the particular Person of the Trinity through whom the entire Trinity works in us. In this Church age the Holy Spirit is more prominent than the other members of the Trinity. The current culture stresses experience, and it is primarily through the Holy Spirit that we experience God. Consequently it is important to understand who the Holy Spirit is.

First we will look at the nature of the Holy Spirit, His Deity. References to the Holy Spirit are interchangeable with references to God. In Acts 5 Peter is rebuking Ananias, Peter asked, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land?” In the next verses he states, “You have not lied to men but to God.” To Peter’s mind, a monotheistic Jew, now regenerated, “lying to the Holy Spirit” and “lying to God” were interchangeable expressions.

In I Cor. 3:16-17 Paul states, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple, and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are.”

In I Cor. 6:19-20 Paul states, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

It is clear from Paul that to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit is to be inhabited by God. This is true of every believer in the Church age. Equating “God’s temple” with “a temple of the Holy Spirit” makes it clear that to Paul the Holy Spirit is God.

The Holy Spirit possesses the attributes of God. One of these is Omniscience. “For the Spirit searches everything even the depths of God for what person knows a man’s thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God” (I Cor. 2:10-11).

That the Holy Spirit is omniscient is also clear from Jesus’ statement, “When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come” (Jn. 16:13).

The power of the Holy Spirit is prominent in the NT. Paul states that his work in the ministry was achieved “by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:19). In Luke 1:35 the phrases “the Holy Spirit” and “the power of the Most High” are parallel or synonymous construction. Jesus attributes the Spirit’s work in conviction (Jn. 16:8-11) and regeneration (Jn. 3:5-8) with God’s ability to change hearts (Matt. 19:26).

Another attribute of the Spirit which equates Him with God is His eternity. In Hebrews 9:14 the Holy Spirit is spoken of as “the eternal Spirit” through whom Jesus offered Himself up. However, only God is eternal (Heb. 1:10-12), all creatures are temporal. So the Holy Spirit must be God.

In Theology Proper works are not ordinarily offered supporting Deity, but in the case of the Third Person of the Trinity certain works will be viewed. The Holy Spirit does His spiritual work upon and within humans depending upon the dispensation He is working in. Jesus in John 3:5-8 attributes regeneration to the Holy Spirit. Paul comments in Titus 3:5, “[God our savior] saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of His own mercy, by the washing

of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” Also, the Spirit raised Christ from the dead and will also raise us, that is God will raise us through the Spirit: “If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through His Spirit which dwells in you” (Rom. 8:11).

Giving the Scriptures is another divine work of the Holy Spirit. Paul writes, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (II Tim. 3:16). Peter confirms with, “no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (II Pet. 1:21).

The Holy Spirit is associated with the Father and the Son on a basis of equality in the Godhead. One of the best known evidences is the baptismal formula, “go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).

When Paul discussed the spiritual gifts, he coordinates the three members of the Godhead: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them in every one” (II Cor. 13:4-6). It appears that the Holy Spirit is treated as being equal with God the Father and the Son in the Bible. The Holy Spirit is a Person, and having all the characteristics of a Person, (intellect, emotion, and will).

Of the various notations of the Spirit’s intelligence and knowledge one will be cited, where Jesus makes a promise to His followers. In John 14:26 it is stated, “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” The will of the Spirit is attested to in I Cor. 12:11, which states that

the recipients of the various spiritual gifts are “inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he will.”

That the Spirit has emotions is evident in Ephesians 4:30, where Paul warns against grieving the Spirit. The Holy Spirit can be affected as is a person, thus displaying personality passively. It is possible to lie to the Holy Spirit, as Ananias and Sapphira did in Acts 5:3-4. Paul speaks of the sins of grieving the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30) and quenching the Spirit (I Thess. 5:19). Stephen accuses his foes of always resisting the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51). While it is possible to resist a mere force, one cannot lie to or grieve something which is impersonal.

While Jesus was alive in the flesh, before His crucifixion, the Jewish leaders of Israel committed the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:31; Mk. 3:29). Additionally the Holy Spirit engages in moral actions and ministries which can only be performed by a person. Among these are teaching, regenerating, searching, speaking, interceding, commanding, testifying, guiding, illuminating, and revealing.

Another line of evidence of the Holy Spirit’s personality is in a number of passages where He and His work are closely related. The term *paracletos* is applied to the Holy Spirit in John 14:26; 15:26; and 16:7. In each of these texts it is obvious that what is described is not some abstract influence but a person. Jesus is also expressly spoken of as a *paracletos* in I John 2:1. Most significant are His words in John 14:16, where He says that He will pray to the Father, who will give the disciples another *paracletos*. The word for “another” here is *allos*, meaning “another” of the same kind. In view of Jesus’ statement linking the Holy Spirit’s coming with His own departure (John 16:7), it is clear that the Spirit is a replacement for Jesus and will carry on the

same role. The similarity in their function is an indication that the Holy Spirit, like Jesus, must be a Person.

Another function which both Jesus and the Holy Spirit perform, and which, accordingly, serves as an indication of the Spirit's personality, is that of glorifying another member of the Trinity. In John 16:14 Jesus says that the Spirit "will glorify Me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you." A parallel is found in John 17:4, where in His high priestly prayer Jesus states that during His ministry on earth He glorified the father. The Holy Spirit is also linked with the Father and the Son in various events of Jesus' ministry. One such occurrence is the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:16-17), where all three Persons of the Trinity were present. As the Son was baptized, the Father spoke from heaven in commendation of the Son, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in visible form. Another such occurrence is Jesus' casting out demons, which He stated was related to the Father and the Spirit: "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28). The conjunction of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son in these events is an indication that He is personal, just as they are.

The Holy Spirit's personality can also be seen in passages which group Him with humans. The letter from the apostles and elders at Jerusalem to the Church at Antioch contained an unusual expression: "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things" (Acts 15:28). It would be hard to dispute that this coordinated working of the Spirit and Christian leaders is an indication that the Spirit possesses some of the very qualities found in human personality. The Holy Spirit engages in moral actions and ministries which can be performed only by a person. Paul says, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for

word.” Surely Paul has a Person in view. And so does Jesus whenever He speaks of the Holy Spirit, “And when He comes, He will convince the World of sin and of righteousness and of judgment” (Jn. 16:8).

A correct Biblical understanding of who the Holy Spirit is carries certain implications. The Holy Spirit is a Person, not a vague force. The Holy Spirit, being fully divine, is to be accorded the same honor and respect we give to the Father and to the Son. The Holy Spirit is one with the Father and the Son. There is no tension among their Persons and activities. God is not far off. In the Holy Spirit, the Triune God comes close, so close as to actually enter in to each believer in the Church age. He is even more intimate with us now than in the Incarnation. Through the operation of the Holy Spirit He has truly become *Immanuel*, “God with us.”