

Pneumatology
The Doctrine of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

I. The Personality of the Holy Spirit

A. Introduction

1. **Orthodox Position:** The position of the historic Christian Church has been that the Holy Spirit is a real person. *“The Holy Spirit is presented in Scripture as having the same essential deity as the Father and the Son and is to be worshipped and adored, loved and obeyed in the same way as God.”* (J. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 5).
2. **History:** The personality of the Spirit has been abused throughout the history of the church. Arius denied the personality of the Spirit and said He was the *“exerted energy of God”* manifested in the created world. Arianism was condemned as heretical at the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325). Sabellious denied the personality of the Spirit and said that the Trinity was simply three modes of manifestation. Socinius in the sixteenth century held that the Holy Spirit was merely the eternally preceding energy of God. This laid the foundation for modern Unitarianism. Even in the twentieth century there are great bodies of professing Christians who do not accept the personality of the Spirit. This is most clearly seen in modern day liberalism and neo-orthodoxy.
3. **Problem:** Those who say that the Holy Spirit is an impersonal influence, power or energy and not a person. They do this on the basis that the word “Spirit” (*pneuma*) is neuter and should be thought of as an “it” or “thing.” They turn to verses such as Romans 8:26 which says, “The Spirit himself intercedes for us. . .” to prove that He is not a person. Also the Spirit is called the “Holy Ghost” in the King James and people want to know how one can have fellowship with a ghost. NOTE: The proper translation in every case is “Spirit” not “Ghost.”

B. The Holy Spirit’s Attributes Affirm Personality

1. **Note:** A personality is commonly thought of as consisting of will, intellect and sensibility (emotion). If it can be shown that the Holy Spirit has these three capacities then it must be concluded that he is a person.
2. **Will** (I Cor. 12:11)
3. **Intellect** (I Cor. 2:10-11; Isa. 11:2; Eph. 1:17) -
4. **Emotions** (Eph. 4:30; Rom. 15:30) -

C. The Holy Spirit’s Works Affirm Personality

1. Note: Works are ascribed to the Holy Spirit that only a person could do.
2. Teaches (John 14:26) -

3. Testifies (John 15:26) -
4. Guides (Rom. 8:14) -
5. Convinces (John 16:7-8) -
6. Restrains (Gen. 6:3) -
7. Commands (Acts 8:29) -
8. Comforts (John 14:26) -
9. Prays (Rom. 8:26) -
10. Sends for service (Acts 13:4) -

D. The Holy Spirit's Ascriptions Affirm Personality

1. Note: Certain acts are performed toward the Holy Spirit which would be ridiculous unless He is a real person.
2. Spirit can be obeyed (Acts 10:19, 21a) -
3. Spirit can be lied to (Acts 4:3) -
4. Spirit can be resisted (Acts 7:51) -
5. Spirit can be grieved (Eph. 4:30) -
6. Spirit can be blasphemed (Matt. 12:31) -
7. Spirit can be outraged (Heb. 10:29) -

E. Use of Personal Pronouns Affirms Personality

1. Personal pronouns are used of the Holy Spirit in such a way that personality is affirmed.
2. In the Greek the word *pneuma* is neuter and would normally take a neuter pronoun. In some instances, however, the masculine pronouns are found (John 15:26; 16:8, 13, 14). The only explanation for the masculine pronouns is that they refer to a person.
3. Relative pronouns are used in the same way (Eph. 1:13-14).

- F. Conclusion: If God possesses personality, and the Holy Spirit is a person of the Trinity, it follows that He has personality. A denial of His personality is a denial of the doctrine of the Trinity. If you deny the Trinity you have made a god in your own image who is not the God of the Bible.

II. The Deity of the Holy Spirit

A. Introduction

1. Orthodox position: The deity of the Holy Spirit has been a cardinal doctrine of the historic church from the beginning. The Christian faith asserts that the Holy Spirit is God and is the third member of the Trinity.
2. History: The earliest heresy on the Holy Spirit was Arianism. Arius held that the Holy Spirit was a created being. Though he originally adhered to the personality of the Spirit later denied both His personality and His deity. Arius, at the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) was branded a heretic. Later Sebellianism, which saw the Holy Spirit merely as a mode of manifestation, and Socinianism, which saw the Spirit as a mere influence or energy, were branded by the church as heretical. Today Unitarians, liberals and generally neo-orthodoxy denies the full deity of

the Holy Spirit. It may be said that orthodox Christianity since the Council of Nicea to this very day has never denied the deity of the Holy Spirit.

B. Names of the Holy Spirit Prove His Deity

1. Names Revealing His Relationships:

- a. Spirit of God (Gen. 1:2; Matt. 3:16)
- b. Spirit of the Lord (Luke 4:18)
- c. Spirit of Our God (1 Cor. 6:11)
- d. His Spirit (Num. 11:29)
- e. Spirit of Jehovah (Judges. 3:10)
- f. Thy Spirit (Psa. 139:7)
- g. Spirit of the Lord God (Isa. 61:1)
- h. Spirit of your Father (Matt. 10:20)
- i. Spirit of the Living God (2 Cor. 3:3)
- j. My Spirit (Gen. 6:3)
- k. Spirit of Him (Rom. 8:11)

2. Names Relating the Spirit to the Son:

- a. Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9; 1 Pet. 1:11)
- b. Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:19)
- c. Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7)
- d. Spirit of His Son (Gal. 4:6)
- e. Spirit of the Lord (Acts 5:9; 8:39)

3. Names Revealing the Spirit's Attributes:

- a. One Spirit (Eph. 4:4)
- b. The Lord the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18)
- c. Eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14)
- d. Spirit of Glory (1 Pet. 4:14)
- e. Spirit of Life (Rom. 8:2)
- f. Spirit of Holiness (Rom. 1:4)
- g. Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost (Psa. 51:11; Matt. 1:20; Luke 11:13)
- h. Holy One (1 John 2:20)

4. Names Revealing the Spirit's Works:

- a. Spirit of Wisdom (Ex. 28:3; Eph. 1:17)
- b. Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding (Isa. 11:2)
- c. Spirit of Counsel and Might (Isa. 11:2)
- d. Spirit of Truth (John 14:17)
- e. Free Spirit (Psa. 51:12)
- f. Spirit of Grace (Heb. 10:29)
- g. Spirit of Grace and Supplication (Zech. 12:10)
- h. Spirit of Glory (1 Pet. 4:14)
- i. Spirit of Life (Rom. 8:2)
- j. Spirit of Holiness (Rom. 1:4)
- k. Spirit of Truth (John 14:17)
- l. Spirit of Adoption (Rom. 8:15)
- m. Comforter (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7)

C. Association With the Trinity Proves the Spirit's Deity

1. With Jehovah: The Holy Spirit is identified with Jehovah of the Old Testament (Acts 28:25 cf. Isa. 6:10-13; Acts 28:26-27 cf. Isa. 6:9-10; Heb. 10:15-17 cf. Jer. 31:31-34). The title of Jehovah, reserved in Scripture for the true God, is therefore used of the Holy Spirit.

2. With God: (1) The Spirit of Jehovah and the God of Israel are identified together - 2 Sam. 23:2-3; (2) The Spirit is spoken of as God - Gen. 1:2; (3) The Christian indwelt by the Spirit is said to be indwelt by God - 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Eph. 2:22; (4) Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is said to be an act against God - Matt. 12:31-32; (5) The sin of Ananias is declared to be a sin against the Spirit and God - Acts 5:1-4.
3. With the Father and the Son: The Spirit is given equality with other members of the Trinity (Matt. 28:10; 2 Cor. 13:14)

D. His Works Prove the Spirit's Deity:

1. Creation (Gen. 1:2).
2. Inspiration (2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16).
3. Begetting Christ (Luke 1:35).
4. Convicting (John 16:8).
5. Regenerating (John 3:6).
6. Comforting (John 14:16).
7. Interceding (Rom. 8:26).
8. Sanctifying (2 Thess. 2:13).

E. His Attributes Prove the Spirit's Deity:

1. Omniscience (1 Cor. 2:11-12).
2. Omnipresence (Psa. 139:7).
3. Omnipotence (Job 33:4; Zech. 4:6)
4. Truth (1 John 5:6).
5. Holiness (Luke 11:13).
6. Life (Rom. 8:2).
7. Wisdom (Isa. 40:13).

F. Theological Problems

1. The Procession of the Spirit: Procession of the Spirit deals with the problem of how the Holy Spirit in His being and eternity relates to the Trinity. The orthodox position has been that the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son.
 - a. History: The Nicene Creed states, "And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and Son together, is worshipped and glorified." The Athanasian Creed says, "The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created, not begotten, but proceeding." The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England states, "The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God." The Westminster Confession of Faith says, "In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."

The procession of the Spirit has been a great area of controversy between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Western section of the church believed that the Holy Spirit proceeded from both the Father and the Son but the Eastern section of the church believed that He proceeded only from the Father. At the Council of Toledo (A.D. 589) it was

stated by the western theologians that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (This was known as the *filioque* clause which means “and from the Son.”) The Eastern section was not consulted on the matter of the *filioque* and have opposed it ever since that time. This doctrine has had wide effects.

- b. Biblical Position: In John 15:26 it states, “the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father.” The verb “goes out from” is in the present tense in the Greek and could be translated “continually proceeds,” indicating eternity. The other verse is Psalm 104:30 which says, “When you send your spirit.” That the Spirit proceeds from the Son as well is supported by such texts as Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:9 John 16:7.

*It must be remembered, however, that although the Spirit proceeds from or is spirited by the Father and the Son, he is still full God. His procession does not mean that he is inferior to the Father or the Son any more than the generation of the Son means that he is not on an equality with the Father. The secret lies in the fact that the Spirit was eternally spirated, just as the Son was eternally begotten. There never was a time when the Spirit was not being spirated. He was eternally co-existent with the Father and the Son. To say that he proceeded from or was breathed out by the Father and the Son does not imply that he is less God, but it only indicates the relation that he eternally sustains to the other two Persons of the Trinity (Palmer, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 16).*

c. Importance of the Procession of the Spirit

- (1) As Christ became an obedient Son in doing the Father’s will, so the Holy Spirit in procession became obedient to the Father and the Son. The ministry of the Third Person is performed in His own power and gives testimony to His eternal deity and glory, but it is accomplished on behalf of the Father and the Son. Hence, the Spirit is sent into the world to reveal truth on behalf of Christ (John 16:13-15), with a special mission of making the things of Christ known and magnifying the Father and the Son. NOTE: While the Father sends the Son and the Spirit, the Son never sends the Father, but does send the Spirit. The Spirit neither sends the Father nor the Son, but is subordinate to Their will which at all times is His own will, and accomplishes His work in the earth.
- (2) A denial of the *filioque* leads to an unhealthy mysticism. It tends to isolate the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives from the work of Jesus. Redemption by Christ is put in the background, while the sanctifying work of the Spirit is brought to the fore. The emphasis is more and more on the work of the Spirit in our lives which tends to lead to an independence from Christ, the church and the Bible.

2. Is There a Difference Between the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jesus? The terms “Spirit of Jesus” and “Spirit of Christ” (Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9) are simply other names for the Holy Spirit. There is only one Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:11, 13).