

The Holy Spirit

The Personality of the Spirit

Modified from Hodge's Systematic Theology Vol I – Scriptural citations, translations of Greek or Hebrew, and other relevant material has been added. In some instances wording has been changed to make it easier for the lay person to understand. The NAS instead of the KJV is quoted for ease of reading. The original document can be found at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/hodge/theology1.iv.viii.i.html>.

Proof of his Personality.

The Bible clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit is a person. By “person” we don’t mean “human” rather we mean that he has attributes of personality including intelligence, will, and individual existence. If, therefore, it can be proved that all these are attributed to the Spirit, it is thereby proved that He is a person.

1. **“The first argument for the personality of the Holy Spirit is derived from the use of the personal pronouns in relation to Him.**

A person is that which, when speaking, says I; when addressed, is called you; and when spoken of, is called he, or him. It is indeed admitted that there is such a rhetorical figure as personification; that inanimate or irrational beings, or sentiments, or attributes, may be introduced as speaking, or addressed as persons. But this creates no difficulty. The cases of personification are such as do not, except in rare instances, admit of any doubt.” (524)

The Holy Spirit is introduced as a person so often, and not just in poetic sections, but also in simple narrative and didactic passages that to explain the use of personal pronouns as personifications is to do violence to the passages in which they are found.

“ Thus in Acts 13:2, “the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Our Lord says (John 15:26), “When the Helper (ὁ παράκλητος) comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth (τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας) who (ὃ) proceeds from the Father, He (ἐκεῖνος) will testify about Me” The use of the masculine pronoun **He** instead of **it**, shows that the Spirit is a person.”

NOTE: “It may indeed be said that as παράκλητος (Helper) is masculine, the pronoun referring to it must of course be in the same gender. But as the explanatory words τὸ πνεῦμα (the Spirit) intervene, to which the neuter ὃ refers, the following pronoun would naturally be in the neuter, if the subject spoken of, the πνεῦμα, (Spirit) were not a person. In the following chapter (John 16:13, 14) there is no ground for this objection. It is there said, “When He (ἐκεῖνος), the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me (ἐκεῖνος ἐμὲ δοξάσει): for He shall receive of mine, and

shall show it unto you.” Here there is no possibility of accounting for the use of the personal pronoun “He” (ἐκεῖνος) on any other ground than the personality of the Spirit.” (525)

2. We stand in relations to the Holy Spirit that can only be said of a person.

The Holy Spirit is the object of our faith that we profess at baptism. “We are baptized not only in the name of the Father and of the Son, but also of the Holy Spirit. The very association of the Spirit in such a connection, with the Father and the Son, as they are admitted to be distinct persons, proves that the Spirit also is a person.” (525)

Being baptized in the name of someone signifies identification with that person. Baptism among the Jews was a rite of initiation identifying oneself with a particular leader. When Paul heard that certain people in Corinth were claiming to be his followers, he protested that he had not baptized any in his name (I Cor. 1:10-17)” (GTJ Vol. 2/2; 1981, p. 288).

According to Matthew 28:19-20 we are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We stand in the same relation to the Holy Spirit as we do to the Father and to the Son; “we acknowledge Him to be a person as distinctly as we acknowledge the personality of the Son, or of the Father” (525)

3. The Spirit also sustains relations to us, and performs offices which none but a person can sustain or perform.

He is our teacher (John 14:26), sanctifier (Ro. 15:16; Heb 10:29), comforter (John 14:16), and guide (John 16:13). He governs every believer who is led by the Spirit (Ro. 8:14; Gal. 5:18), and the whole Church. He calls as He called Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:2), to the work of the ministry, or to some special field of labor. Pastors or bishops are made overseers by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). (526)

We are exhorted not “to sin against,” (Mk. 3:19) “not to resist,” (Acts 7:51) not “to grieve” the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30). He is represented, therefore, as a person who can be the object of our acts; whom we may please or offend; with whom we may have communion, i.e., personal intercourse; who can love and be loved; who can say “you” to us; and whom we can invoke in every time of need.” (525)

4. “In the exercise of these and other functions, personal acts are constantly attributed to the Spirit in the Bible; that is, such acts as imply intelligence, will, and activity or power.

The Spirit searches (I Cor 2:10), selects (Acts 13:2), reveals (Mk 13:11; Lk 12:12), and reproves. We often read that “The Spirit said.” (Acts 13:2; 21:11; 1 Tim. 4:1, etc., etc.) This is so constantly done, that the Spirit appears as a personal agent from one end of the Scriptures to the other, so that his personality is beyond dispute.

5. All the elements of personality, namely, intelligence, will, and individual existence, are not only involved in all that is thus revealed concerning the relation in which the Spirit stands to us and that which we sustain to Him, but they are all distinctly attributed to Him.

The Spirit is said to know, to will, and to act. He searches, or knows all things, even the deep things of God. No man knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2: 10, 12.) He distributes “to every man severally as he will” (1 Cor. 12:11.) His individual subsistence is involved in his being an agent, and in his being the object on which the activity of others terminates. If He can be loved, revered, and obeyed, or offended and sinned against, He must be a person.

6. The personal manifestations of the Spirit, when He descended on Christ after his baptism, and upon the Apostles at the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), of necessity involve his personal subsistence.

It was not any attribute of God, nor his mere efficiency, but God Himself, that was manifested in the burning bush, in the fire and clouds on Mount Sinai, in the pillar which guided the Israelites through the wilderness, and in the glory which dwelt in the Tabernacle and in the Temple.

7. The people of God have always regarded the Holy Spirit as a person.

They have looked to Him for instruction, sanctification, direction, and comfort. This is part of their religion. Christianity (subjectively considered) would not be what it is without this sense of dependence on the Spirit, and this love and reverence for his person. All the liturgies, prayers, and praises of the Church, are filled with appeals and addresses to the Holy Ghost. (527) This is a fact which admits of no rational solution if the Scriptures do not really teach that the Spirit is a distinct person.