

Wednesday Bible Study

Fall, 2008

Pneumatology: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Section 2

The Deity of the Holy Spirit

Proofs for the Deity of the Holy Spirit

The fact that the Holy Spirit is a person does not prove that He is God, but the reverse of that is true. If He is God, then He must be a person as God is. However, the denial of His deity and personality usually go together. Erickson writes:

The deity of the Holy Spirit is not as easily established as is that of the Father and the Son. It might well be said that the deity of the Father is simply assumed in Scripture, that of the Son is affirmed and argued, while that of the Holy Spirit must be inferred from various indirect statements found in Scripture. There are, however, several bases on which one may conclude that the Holy Spirit is God in the same fashion and to the same degree as are the Father and the Son.

Proven by His Titles

The title “the Holy Spirit” is in itself an affirmation that He is God in keeping with the emphasis of God’s holiness found throughout the Bible. His deity, however, is further borne out by the various references to the Spirit which are clearly interchangeable with references to God, and in essence speak of Him as God. Two prominent illustrations show this.

The first illustration is Ananias and Sapphira in [Acts 5:1-4](#). Concerning this Erickson writes:

Bringing a portion of the proceeds to the apostles, they represented it as the whole of what they had received. Peter spoke harsh words of condemnation to each of them, and both were struck dead. In 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?” (v. 3). In the next verse he asserts, “You have not lied to men but to God.” It seems that in Peter’s mind “lying to the Holy Spirit” and “lying to God” were interchangeable expressions. It could, of course, be argued that two different referents were in view, so that Peter was actually saying, “You have lied both to the Holy Spirit and to God.” The statement in verse 4, however, was apparently intended to make it clear that the lie was

told not to humans, to someone less than God, but to God Himself. Thus, we are led to the conclusion that the second statement is an elaboration of the first, emphasizing that the Spirit to whom Ananias had lied was God.

A second illustration is found in [1 Corinthians 3:16-17](#) where again the titles “Holy Spirit” and “God” are used interchangeably in the apostle’s discussion of the body of Christ and believers as individuals.

[1 Corinthians 3:16-17](#) Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? 17 If someone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, which is what you are.

It is also significant that the word for temple is the Greek *naos* which was used of the Holy of Holies portion of the temple, the place where the Ark was and where God dwelt in the Old Testament before the parting of His glory. Today, the believer’s body is the *naos*—the dwelling place of God through the Spirit.

[Ephesians 2:21-22](#) In him the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

This was apparently in the apostle’s mind when he chose the word *naos*.

Proven by His Attributes

(1) Omniscience.

[1 Corinthians 2:10-11](#) God has revealed these to us by the Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who among men knows the things of a man except the man’s spirit within him? So too, no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

[1 Corinthians 2:10-11](#) combines both the personality of the Spirit as one who knows and thinks, and His omniscience. The Spirit could not possibly know the thoughts of God who is omniscient and omnipresent unless He too possessed these attributes. This shows the Spirit fully comprehends the depth of God’s thoughts and plans of grace. Who but God could comprehend the thoughts of God?

(2) Omnipotence.

Regarding this attribute of the Holy Spirit, Erickson writes:

In [Luke 1:35](#) the phrases “the Holy Spirit” and “the power of the Most High” are in parallel or synonymous construction. This is, of course, a reference to the virgin conception, which must certainly be considered a miracle of the first magnitude. Paul acknowledged that the accomplishments of his ministry were achieved “by the power of

signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit” ([Rom. 15:19](#)). Moreover, Jesus attributed to the Holy Spirit the ability to change human hearts and personalities: it is the Spirit who works conviction ([John 16:8-11](#)) and regeneration ([John 3:5-8](#)) within us. It should be borne in mind that Jesus had elsewhere said with respect to this ability to change human hearts: “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” ([Matt. 19:26](#); see vv. 16-25). While these texts do not specifically affirm that the Spirit is omnipotent, they certainly indicate that he has power which presumably only God has.

(3) Omnipresence.

[Psalm 139:7-10](#) Where can I go to escape your spirit?
Where can I flee to escape your presence?
8 If I were to ascend to heaven, you would be there.
If I were to sprawl out in Sheol, there you would be.
9 If I were to fly away on the wings of the dawn,
and settle down on the other side of the sea,
10 even there your hand would guide me,
your right hand would grab hold of me.

(4) Eternality.

[Hebrews 9:14](#) how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our consciences from dead works to worship the living God.

[Matthew 4:1](#) Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

The eternity of the Holy Spirit is affirmed in [Hebrews 9:14](#) which states that Christ offered Himself “through the eternal Spirit.” Some have suggested that this is a reference to the human spirit of Christ, but it is more consistent to see this as a reference to the Holy Spirit since, from the standpoint of His humanity, Jesus Christ always lived His earthly life under the control and leading of the Holy Spirit (cf. [Matt. 12:18-28](#)).

Proven by His Works

(1) Creation.

[Genesis 1:2](#) Now the earth was without shape and empty, and darkness was over the surface of the watery deep, but the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the water.

[Psalm 104:30](#) When you send your life-giving breath, they are created,
and you replenish the surface of the ground.

Erickson writes:

He was and continues to be involved with the creation, both in the origination of it and in the providential keeping and directing of it. In [Genesis 1:2](#) we read that the Spirit of God was brooding over the face of the waters. [Job 26:13](#) notes that the heavens were made fair by the Spirit of God. The Psalmist says, “When thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they [all the parts of the creation previously enumerated] are created; and thou renewest the face of the ground” ([Ps. 104:30](#)).

(2) Inspiration of Scripture.

[2 Timothy 3:16](#) Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

[2 Peter 1:21](#) for no prophecy was ever borne of human impulse; rather, men carried along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

In [2 Timothy 3:16](#) we are told all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable (literally, “God-breathed”). This verse declares the fact and value of the inspiration of the Bible. In [2 Peter 1:21](#) we are given the how of inspiration: men were moved by the Holy Spirit, borne along like wind in the sail of a ship. Here again the titles *God* and *Holy Spirit* seem to be used interchangeably of the person of the Spirit.

(3) Regeneration, Illumination, and Sanctification.

Considering the nature and condition of man, these are things which are miraculous and which only God can do as stressed by the Lord in [Matthew 19:26](#).

[John 3:5-8](#) Jesus answered, “I tell you the solemn truth, unless a person is born of water and spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must all be born from above.’ 8 The wind blows wherever it will, and you hear the sound it makes, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

[Titus 3:5](#) he saved us not by works of righteousness that we have done but on the basis of his mercy, through the washing of the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit,

[Romans 8:11](#) Moreover if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive through his Spirit who lives in you.

[Ephesians 3:16-19](#) I pray that according to the wealth of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, so that, because you have been rooted and grounded in love, 18 you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and thus to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

Proven by Equal Association

Concerning this evidence, Ryrie writes:

One of the strongest proofs of the deity of the Spirit is the identification of the Spirit with Yahweh of the Old Testament. This is seen in passages where the Old Testament records that Yahweh said something and the New Testament quotation of that same passage is attributed to the Spirit as the Speaker. That would seem to say clearly that the Spirit, like Yahweh, is fully divine (Is. 6:1-13 and [Ac 28:25](#); [Jer 31:31-34](#) and [Heb. 10:15-17](#)).

Along these same lines, we find another line of evidence in the New Testament where the Holy Spirit is associated equally with the Father and the Son.

(1) The Great Commission.

[Matthew 28:19](#) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

Interestingly, the word “name” which refers to all three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is singular. There is one God, and yet, in some mysterious way, three distinct persons who are equal.

(2) The Pauline Benediction.

[2 Corinthians 13:13](#) The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

(3) Declaration Regarding Spiritual Gifts.

As Paul discusses spiritual gifts In [1 Corinthians 12](#), he equally associates and coordinates the three members of the Godhead:

[1 Corinthians 12:4-6](#) Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are different ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are different results, but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.

(4) Peter’s Salutation in [1 Peter 1:2](#).

In the salutation of his first epistle, Peter links all three persons of the trinity together, pointing to their respective roles in the process of salvation.

[1 Peter 1:2](#) according to the foreknowledge of God the Father by being set apart by the Spirit for obedience and for sprinkling with Jesus Christ’s blood. May grace and peace be yours in full measure!

Clearly, all of these instances argue that the Holy Spirit is not only a person, but God, the third member of the Trinity. Now that we have some idea of who the Spirit is, we need to consider what the Spirit does for and in believers since He is God's special gift and resource for living the Christian life.