

The Harvester



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THE HOLY SPIRIT

By Brian R. Kenyon

Studying the Holy Spirit is often neglected due to a number of reasons. Perhaps the top reason is that there is so much controversy over this subject, not just in the religious world in general but also among brethren! However, the Holy Spirit is certainly a Biblical subject and is thus worthy of our attention (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). The best way to approach a study of the Holy Spirit, like any other subject, is for a person to just simply take what the Bible says and formulate his or her view accordingly, realizing that some things may never be understood by human minds (Deut. 29:29). One reason why there is so much controversy and disagreement about the Holy Spirit is because the subject, parts of which are difficult to understand, has been so neglected in the religious world that it is easily “twisted” (cf. 2 Pet. 3:15-16).

In the attempt to make the subject less difficult, this article will examine aspects about the Holy Spirit that will help readers understand His nature and person. This will help guard against being led astray by non-Biblical views of the Holy Spirit. Although it can logically be proven, space will not be devoted here to prove that the Bible is the inspired word of God. Rather, it will be assumed.

THE GODHEAD

A study of the Holy Spirit must involve a study of the nature of God. A more detailed study of the nature of God can be found in the July and August 2012 issues of the *Harvester*. For the purpose of this study, though, consider briefly the term “Godhead,” which is found three times in the KJV. Each time, it is from a different but closely related Greek word. The first of these occurrences is in Acts 17:29, where Paul said that “we ought not to think that the Godhead [Divine Nature, NKJ; divine being, ESV] is

like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.” The word “Godhead” here comes from the Greek word *theion* (θειον), which means “divine being, divinity;” also “of the godhead and everything that belongs to it” (cf. 2 Pet. 1:3-4) (Bauer 353). This word seems to emphasize the quality of the divine nature.

The second occurrence of “Godhead” (KJV) is in Romans 1:20, where Paul taught that through creation people can know the Creator’s “eternal power and Godhead [divinity, ASV; divine nature, ESV]; so that they are without excuse.” Here, “Godhead” is from the Greek word *theiotes* (θειότης), which means “divinity, divine nature” (Bauer 354). This word emphasizes the attributes of deity that are perceived through the things that are made.

The third occurrence of the word “Godhead” (KJV) is in Colossians 2:9, “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead [Divinity, ESV] bodily.” Here, the word “Godhead” is from the Greek word *theotes* (θεότης), which means “Deity, divinity; the fullness of Deity; power of Deity” (Bauer 358). This word emphasizes the totality of all that enters into the concept of the Divine nature, which, incidentally, was a reality in the incarnate Son of God. All that God is was embodied in Christ!

These three Greek words and their English translations show that the Godhead is something more than just the Father, just the Son, or just the Holy Spirit. Rather, the Godhead consists of one divine nature, yet three persons sharing that same nature. This fact can also be proven by the logical argument below.

If the Bible teaches there is one God; and if the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each said to be God and yet are distinct persons; then the Bible teaches that there are three distinct persons in the one Godhead.

DEITY

By “Deity” it is meant that the Holy Spirit is Divine. The Holy Spirit is just as much “God” as is the Father and the Son. The Godhead, sometimes referred to as the “Trinity,” or the “Triune God,” consists of three personalities making up the Divine essence of one God. Some difficulties in understanding the Godhead remain in the fact that “the idea of one Essence subsisting after a three-fold manner . . . finds nothing in the phenomena of nature upon which it can fasten as a sufficient symbol” (Morgan 31). There is no perfect analogy found in the empirical world that can provide a perfect explanation of this eternal principle for mortal minds. However, some things about the Godhead can be understood without having to understand everything about the Godhead.

New Testament passages point to three personalities in the Godhead (Mt. 28:19; Acts 17:29; Col. 2:9; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:2). In each of these passages, it is clear that the Holy Spirit is not merely an “illusory, emotional, and mystical influence” (Turner 330). The Holy Spirit is just as much a personality as the Father and the Son. No personality in the Godhead is dispensable to the divine unity, but each is inseparably linked to the unity of the whole. In every divine activity each personality of the Godhead is involved. Although too much can be made of the individuality among the personalities of the Godhead, it is valuable to note that each member of the Godhead has a distinct role in the plan salvation (as worded by Bancroft 161). The power to bring forth may be attributed to God the Father

(i.e., “authorship power” cf. Ps. 33:6; Rom. 11:36). The power to arrange may be attributed to God the Son (i.e., “executive power” cf. Jn. 1:1-13; 1 Cor. 8:6). The power to bring to a completion, or perfection, may be attributed to God the Spirit (i.e., “energizing power” cf. Job 33:4; Jn. 14:26; 16:13). Although one might label these roles differently, the Bible teaches that each personality of the Godhead has particular roles, some of which are distinct from other members of the Godhead.

Before going any further, it is essential to note that these distinct roles of the Godhead in no way impose limitations on the eternal God. These roles are not inherent in each member of the Godhead, for that would limit God. Rather, these roles are assumed by each member of the Godhead for instrumental purposes. For example, God the Son assumed the instrumental role of Messiah, which necessitated some limitations (i.e., those associated with existence in the flesh) (cf. Phil. 2:5-8). This, however, does not make the Son any less God. It must also be noted that there has never been (nor will there ever be) a time when all three personalities of the Godhead were not active in conjunction with each other.

PROOFS OF DEITY

The Holy Spirit’s Divinity is evident by the characteristics ascribed to Him. There are certain qualities that only Deity possesses, and these qualities are ascribed to

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the Holy Spirit. First, consider the following attributes of Deity ascribed to the Holy Spirit: (1) the Holy Spirit is eternal (Heb. 9:14); (2) the Holy Spirit is omniscient, knowing the mind of God (1 Cor. 2:10-11); (3) the Holy Spirit is omnipresent (Ps. 139:7-10); and the Holy Spirit is omnipotent (Lk. 1:35). Since only Deity is eternal, all-knowing, all-present, and all-powerful, the Holy Spirit must necessarily be Divine!

Second, consider the following works of Deity ascribed to the Holy Spirit: (1) the Holy Spirit “created,” a word that is used elsewhere for what only God can accomplish (Gen. 1:1-2; Job 33:4; Ps. 104:30); (2) the Holy Spirit gives life (Jn. 6:63; Rom. 8:11); and (3) the Holy Spirit inspired people to prophesy (2 Sam. 23:2-3; 2 Pet. 1:21). Since only Deity can create, give life, and supernaturally inspire people to prophesy, the Holy Spirit must necessarily be Divine!

Third, consider some of the associations ascribed to the Holy Spirit: (1) the Holy Spirit is intimately associated with both the Father and the Son (Mt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:2); (2) the Holy Spirit’s words are the words of God (Acts 28:25-27 [cf. Isa. 6:8-10]; Heb. 3:7-9 [cf. Ex. 16:7; Ps. 95:8-11]); and (3) the Holy Spirit is explicitly called “God” (Acts 5:3-4 cf. 2 Cor. 3:17-18).

PERSONALITY

The personality of the Holy Spirit has often been questioned or misunderstood. Some even go so far as to say that the “traditional” concept of the Holy Spirit in Christian thought is “no longer a useful doctrine and now severely hinders a contemporary understanding of God and God’s activities” (Killough 140). This attitude may be regarded as somewhat radical, but it does demonstrate the extent to which the Holy Spirit is misunderstood. While the creation makes evident the personality of the Father (cf. Rom. 1:20), and the Incarnation makes evident the personality of the Son (cf. Mt. 1:21), the “acts and workings” of the Holy Spirit are not often manifested empirically; therefore, many are prone to think that the Holy Spirit is merely an influence, power, or agent, rather than a divine person (Evans 107-108). The Holy Spirit is a divine personality of the Godhead.

The Holy Spirit’s personality is evident. From the start, note that personal pronouns are used of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:17; 15:26; 16:7, 13-14; et al.). This fact explicitly emphasizes the personality of the Holy Spirit.

The use of these pronouns is the more remarkable from the fact that in the Greek language the word for Spirit [πνεῦμα] is a neuter noun, and, according to Greek usage, the pronouns that refer to it should be neuter, and yet

in numerous instances a masculine pronoun is used, thus bringing out very strikingly how the Bible idea of the personality of the Holy Spirit dominates grammatical construction. There are instances, of course, where the natural grammatical usage is followed and a neuter pronoun used (Rom. 8:16, 26). But in many instances this construction is set aside and the masculine personal pronoun is used to refer to the neuter noun. (Torrey 226)

Next, consider some personality traits that are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. First, the Holy Spirit is referred to as a “Comforter [Helper NKJ].” The Greek word (*parakletos*, παράκλητος) behind the translation refers to a “person who is called to the side of another.” The reason for this calling to the side of the another could be for the purpose of helping, mediating, and/or defending. The only other person this Greek word is used for is Jesus. John informed his readers that “we have an advocate [from *parakletos*] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 Jn. 2:1). Only a person can be called to the side another to help, mediate, and/or defend.

Second, the Holy Spirit is ascribed with the following characteristics unique to persons: (1) intellect (1 Cor. 2:10-11); (2) will (1 Cor. 12:11); (3) love (Rom. 15:30); and (4) grief (Eph. 4:30). Since only persons can be intellectual, willful, loving, and capable of grief, the Holy Spirit must necessarily be a person.

Third, the Holy Spirit is ascribed with the following personal acts: (1) the Holy Spirit searches (1 Cor. 2:10); (2) the Holy Spirit teaches (Neh. 9:20; Jn. 14:26); (3) the Holy Spirit gives testimony (Jn. 15:26); and (4) the Holy Spirit leads and directs people (Rom. 8:14; Acts 16:6-7; 13:2; 20:28), always in accordance with God’s word. Since only persons can search, verbally teach, give verbal testimony, and verbally lead and/or direct people, the Holy Spirit must necessarily be a person.

Fourth, the Holy Spirit is ascribed with being susceptible of the following personal treatment: (1) the Holy Spirit can be lied to (Acts 5:3); (2) the Holy Spirit can be tempted (Acts 5:9); and (3) the Holy Spirit can be grieved (Eph. 4:30). Since only persons can be lied to, tempted, and grieved, the Holy Spirit must necessarily be a person.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The primary assumed role of the Holy Spirit is not to originate truth, but to communicate and advocate truth to all humanity through the means of inspired people (Turner 336). This inspired revelation occurred in various forms during Biblical times. The Holy Spirit inspired people to prophesy, speak in languages they had not studied, teach on subjects of which they were unlearned, and record divine teaching that could be passed down through the

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generations. The Holy Spirit, as the “seat of the Divine consciousness,” knows and communicates the mind of God to humanity (Morgan 40). The Holy Spirit continues to communicate the mind of God through the written words of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17). When people are led by that word, they are led by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14)!

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