

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit’, says the Lord of hosts.” (Zech 4:6)

✠ Lecture I: The Person of the Holy Spirit ✠

The Traditional Christian faith states that we worship One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons (Gr. *Hypostasis*) nor dividing the Substance (Gr. *Ousia*). For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit; but the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one, the Glory Equal, and the Majesty co-Eternal. The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten; the Son is of the Father not made, nor created, but Begotten; the Holy Spirit is of the Father, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but Proceeding.

In what follows we shall, by the grace of God, examine Scriptural evidence of the Person of the Holy Spirit:

✠ The Holy Spirit is Distinguished From the Father & the Son:

- At our Lord’s Baptism, it is written that “the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, ‘You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased’” (Lk 3:21,22). We are compelled to say, that the descending Spirit is distinct from the baptized Saviour, and from the approving Father.
- When our Lord Jesus says, “I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:16) and when this promise being fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, we find the Holy Spirit appearing as cloven tongues of fire (Acts 2:3). Therefore, we are constrained to acknowledge that the appearing Spirit is distinct from the mediating Saviour, and the Father who decreed the gift.
- When we read of “the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19), and again of “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor 8:14) it is impossible to deny the necessary distinction here affirmed.
- When the saints are called “elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 1:2). Holy Scripture leads us to conclude that as the bleeding Saviour is distinct from the predestinating Father, so the sanctifying Holy Spirit is Himself distinct.

→ In the cases cited above, could you say it was the Father or the Son who descended on Lord Jesus Christ at His baptism, or on the apostles at Pentecost? Could you assert that we are baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of one who likewise is the Father or the Son? Or that grace and peace are bestowed from the Eternal Father and from one who under another name is also the Father, and from Lord Jesus Christ? No one could maintain this for a moment. The Holy Spirit, therefore, cannot be identified or confounded either with the Eternal Father or with the Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

✠ The Holy Spirit Possesses Independent & Intelligent Personality:

- We read in Holy Scripture of:

1. The mind of The Spirit: “He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is” (Rom 8:27)
2. The Infinite knowledge of The Spirit: “no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Cor 2:11)
3. The foreknowledge of The Spirit: “He [The Spirit] will tell you things to come” (Jn 16:13)
4. The power of The Spirit: “that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:13)
5. The love of The Spirit: “I beg you ... through the love of the Spirit” (Rom 15:30) – a plea exactly corresponding with one used shortly before, “I beseech you ... by the mercies of God” (Rom 12:1)
6. The Self-determining will of The Spirit: “one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills” (1 Cor 12:11)

- **We also find:**

1. He creates and gives life: “The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (**Job 33:4**) – “By the word of the Lord the heaven were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” (**Ps 33:6**) – “You send forth Your Spirit, they are created” (**Ps 104:30**)
2. He strives with the ungodly: “My Spirit shall not strive with man” (**Gen 6:3**)
3. He convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment: (**Jn 16:8**)
4. He new-creates the soul: “born of water and the Spirit” (**Jn 3:5**)
5. He commands and forbids: “They were forbidden by the Spirit to preach the word in Asia ... they tried to go into Bithynia but the Spirit did not permit them” (**Acts 16:6,7**)
6. He appoints ministers in the Church: “The flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers” (**Acts 20:28**)
7. He inspired the sacred writers: “Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (**1 Pet 1:21**)
8. He speaks: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith” (**1 Tim 4:1**) – “It is not you who speak but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you” (**Mt 10:20**) – “As the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts’” (**Heb 3:7,8**) – “The Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go near and overtake this chariot’” (**Acts 8:29**) – “The Spirit told me to go with them doubting nothing” (**Acts 11:12**) – “The Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul’” (**Acts 13:2**)
9. He says to the Churches the messages of Lord Jesus Christ: (**Rev 2:7; etc.**)
10. He performs miracles: “Then the Spirit took me up and I heard behind me a great thunderous voice” (**Ezek 3:12**) – “the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven” (**Ezek 8:3**) – “the Spirit gave them utterance” (**Acts 2:4**) – “the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away” (**Acts 8:39**) – “it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from you, that the Spirit of the Lord will carry you to a place I do not know” (**1 Kgs 18:11**) – “mighty signs and wonders [were performed] by the power of the Spirit of God” (**Rom 15:19**)
11. He caused The Virgin to conceive: (**Lk 1:35**)
12. He works in all saints: dispensing divers gifts with independent spontaneity of choice (**1 Cor 12:4-11**)
13. He regenerates and seals His people: “He saved us, through the washing and regeneration of the Holy Spirit” (**Titus 3:5**) – “the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (**Eph 4:30**)
14. He intercedes for us in prayer: “we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us” (**Rom 8:26**)
15. He teaches and comforts and guides us into all truth: (**Jn 14:26; 16:13,14**)
16. He can be grieved: “they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit” (**Is 63:10**) – “do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God” (**Eph 4:30**)
17. He is designated by the use of masculine pronouns, though the noun itself, Spirit, is neuter: (**Jn 16:13**)
18. He testifies with personal witnesses: “we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit” (**Acts 5:32**) – “He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness” (**Jn 15:26,27**)
19. He approves with personal counselors: “it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us” (**Acts 15:28**)
20. He invites with personal messengers: “the Spirit and the bride say, come” (**Rev 22:17**)
21. He is personally present in a sense in which Lord Jesus Christ is personally absent: “It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you” (**Jn 16:7**)
22. He can be personally blasphemed: (**Mt 12:32**)
23. He cries in our hearts: “Abba, Father” (**Gal 4:6**)
24. He repeats the beatitude pronounced on those who sleep in the Lord: “Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors” (**Rev 14:13**)
25. He leads and guides: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.” (**Rom 8:14**)

→ Surely from a calm and comprehensive study of the above testimony, we must conclude that if these qualities and actions do not prove personality, there are none, however explicit and exact, which can do so. Unitarians (those who do not believe in the Holy Trinity) speak of the Holy Spirit as an effusion or emanation separate from God or an influence or power exercised by God.

→ Can you speak of the mind of an effusion? – Of an emanation, knowing the depths of him from whom it distils? – Of an influence, or power, or anything impersonal, revealing future events; possessing a power and love and a will of its own; creating, striving, convicting, recreating; enjoining, prohibiting, commissioning; inspiring, speaking expressly, addressing the Church; performing miracles, transporting, giving utterance; energizing, regenerating, sealing; interceding, teaching, comforting, guiding; being grieved; testifying, approving, inviting; being present as a personal Comforter who may be personally blasphemed, crying in us until he teaches us to cry, Abba, Father, and repeating on earth the heaven-sent benediction on departed saints?

Q: Do we not read of the Spirit of God being “poured out,” and “given in greater or less degree?” If He were a Person, how could He be thus effused or divided?

A: Here we fully admit that the terms “Spirit” and “Holy Spirit,” do *sometimes* denote not the Person, but the operations, the gifts, the influences of the Holy Ghost: as for example, when it is said, “I will take of the Spirit which is upon you and will put the same upon them” (**Num 11:17**) – “God does not give the Spirit by measure” (**Jn 3:34**)

But the question is not whether some passages may not be brought forward which denote the operations and influences of the Spirit, and therefore do *not* establish the point (of His Personality); but whether besides these there are not very numerous portions of Holy Scripture which *do* positively and unanswerably establish His Personality.

Just as if I were studying a work on horticulture (the art & science of growing flowers), and because the writer here and there used the term “sun” to denote the influences of the sun, directing me to place certain plants “in” the “sun”, or that “*more or less sun*” should be admitted, I were to contend, that the author could not believe there was actually such a globe of light in the heavens, although in many other parts he had spoken in strictly astronomical language of our planetary system. You would justly assure me, that occasional recurrence of such familiar phrases as “*more or less sun, etc.*” was no valid argument against his conviction of the sun’s real existence, stated elsewhere in the volume plainly and positively.

Now, we admit, that by “the Spirit,” are sometimes intended the gifts and graces of the Spirit. These graces may be poured out – these gifts distributed. But “one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” (**1 Cor 12:11**)

Now if, altogether apart from this investigation, you had been asked to name those qualities which evidence personal existence, you would have been quite content to answer: **Show me that which has mind, affection, and will, which can act, speak, and direct. That sentient, loving, determining agent, speaker, and ruler, must possess personality or personality cannot exist.**

* This lecture is adapted from “*The Trinity*” by Edward Henry Bickersteth.