

[A BRIEF DISCOURSE ON]
THE HOLY SPIRIT

by Charles Hodge

Prophecy Insights Ministries
www.prophecyinsights.org
Lawton, OK © 2022

THE HOLY SPIRIT

BY

CHARLES HODGE

The two points to be considered in reference to this subject, are, first the nature, and second the office or work of the Holy Spirit. With regard to his nature, is He a person or a mere power? and if a person, is He created or divine, finite or infinite? The personality of the Spirit has been the faith of the Church from the beginning. It had few opponents even in the chaotic period of theology; and in modern times has been denied by none but Socinians, Arians, and Sabellians. Before considering the direct proof of the Church doctrine that the Holy Spirit is a person, it may be well to remark, that the terms “The Spirit,” “The Spirit of God,” “The Holy Spirit,” and when God speaks, “My Spirit,” or, when God is spoken of “His Spirit,” occur in all parts of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation; These and equivalent terms are evidently to be understood in the same sense throughout the Scriptures.

If the Spirit of God which moved on the face of the waters, which strove with the antediluvians, which came upon Moses, which gave skill to artisans, and which inspired the prophets, is the power of God; then the Spirit which came upon the Apostles, which Christ promised to send as a comforter and advocate, and to which the instruction, sanctification, and guidance of the people of God are referred, must also be the power of God. But if the Spirit is clearly revealed to be a person in the later parts of Scripture, it is plain that the earlier portions must be understood in the same way. One part of the Bible, and much less one or a few passages must not be taken by themselves, and receive any interpretation which the isolated words may bear, but Scripture must interpret Scripture. Another

obvious remark on this subject is, that the Spirit of God is equally prominent in all parts of the word of God. His intervention does not occur on rare occasions, as the appearance of angels, or the Theophanies, of which mention is made here and there in the sacred volume; but He is represented as everywhere present and everywhere operative. We might as well strike from the Bible the name and doctrine of God, as the name and office of the Spirit.

In the New Testament alone He is mentioned not far from three hundred times. It is not only, however, merely the frequency with which the Spirit is mentioned, and the prominence given to his person and work, but the multiplied and interesting relations in which He is represented as standing to the people of God, the importance and number of his gifts, and the absolute dependence of the believer and of the Church upon Him for spiritual and eternal life, which render the doctrine of the Holy Ghost absolutely fundamental to the gospel. The work of the Spirit in applying the redemption of Christ is represented to be as essential as that redemption itself. It is therefore indispensable that we should know what the Bible teaches concerning the Holy Ghost, both as to his nature and office.

I. PROOF OF HIS PERSONALITY.

The Scriptures clearly teach that He is a person. Personality includes intelligence, will, and individual subsistence. If, therefore, it can be proved that all these are attributed to the Spirit, it is thereby proved that He is a person. It will not be necessary or advisable to separate the proofs of these several points, and cite passages which ascribe to Him intelligence; and then others, which attribute to Him will; and still others to prove his individual subsistence, because all these are often included in one and the same passage; and arguments which prove the one, in many cases prove also the others.

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 thou; 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. The fact that men sometimes apostrophize the heavens, or the elements, gives no pretext for explaining as personification all the passages in which God or Christ is introduced as a person. So also with regard to the Holy Spirit. He is introduced as a person so often, not merely in poetic or excited discourse, but in simple narrative, and in didactic instructions; and his personality is sustained by so many collateral proofs, that to explain the use of the personal pronouns in relation to Him on the principle of personification, is to do violence to all the rules of interpretation. Thus in Acts 13:2,

“The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul,
for the work whereunto I have called them.”

Our Lord says (John 15:26),

“When the Comforter is come whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me.”

The use of the masculine pronoun He instead of it, shows that the Spirit is a person. In the following chapter (John 16:13, 14) It is there said,

“When He the Spirit of truth, is come, 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. Be shall glorify me 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 on any other ground than the personality of the Spirit.

2. We stand in relations to the Holy Spirit which we can sustain only to a person. He is the object of our faith. We believe on the Holy Ghost. This faith we profess in baptism. We are baptized not only in the name of the Father and of the Son, but also of the Holy Ghost. 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. Besides the use of the words *eis to onoma*, unto the name, admits of no other explanation. By baptism we profess to acknowledge the Spirit as we acknowledge the Father and the Son, and we bind ourselves to the one as well as to the others. If when the Apostle tells the Corinthians that they were not baptized “in the name of Paul,” and when he says that the Hebrews were baptized unto Moses, he means that the Corinthians were not, and that the Hebrews were made the disciples, the one of Paul and the others of Moses; then when we are baptized unto the name of the Spirit, the meaning is that in baptism we profess to be his disciples; we bind ourselves to receive his instructions, and to submit to his control. We stand in the same relation to Him as 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. Christians not only profess to believe on the Holy Ghost, but they are also the recipients of his gifts.

He is to them an object of prayer. In the apostolic benediction, the grace of Christ, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, are

solemnly invoked. We pray to the Spirit for the communication of Himself to us, that He may, according to the promise of our Lord, dwell in us, as we pray to Christ that we may be the objects of his unmerited love. Accordingly we are exhorted not “to sin against,” “not to resist,” not “to grieve” the Holy Spirit. 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 “thou” to us; and whom we can invoke in every time of need.

3. The Spirit also sustains relations to us, and performs offices which none but a person can sustain or perform. He is our teacher, sanctifier, comforter, and guide. He governs every believer who is led by the Spirit, and the whole Church. He calls, as He called Barnabas and Saul, to the work of the ministry, or to some special field of labor. Pastors or bishops are made overseers by the Holy Ghost.

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, selects, reveals, and reproves. We often read that “The Spirit said.” (Acts 13:2; 21:11; 1 Timothy 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. The only possible question is whether He is a distinct person from the Father. But of this there can be no reasonable doubt, as He is said to be the Spirit of God and the Spirit which is of God; as He is distinguished from the Father in the forms of baptism and benediction; as He proceeds from the Father; and as He is promised, sent, and given by the Father. So that to confound the Holy Spirit with God would be to render the Scriptures unintelligible.

5. All the elements of personality, namely, intelligence, will, and individual subsistence, 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 knoweth the things of God, but the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:10, 12.) He distributes “to every man severally as he

will.” (1 Corinthians 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, 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. This is a fact which admits of no rational solution if the Scriptures do not really teach that the Spirit is a distinct person. The rule: *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, is held by Protestants as well as by Romanists. It is not to the authority of general consent as an evidence of truth, that Protestants object, but to the applications made of it by the Papal Church, and to the principle on which that authority is made to rest. All Protestants admit that true believers in every age and country have one faith, as well as one God and one Lord.

DIVINITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

On this subject there has been little dispute in the Church. The Spirit is so prominently presented in the Bible as possessing divine attributes, and exercising divine prerogatives, that since the fourth century his true divinity has never been denied by those who admit his personality.

1. In the Old Testament, all that is said of Jehovah is said of the Spirit of Jehovah; and therefore, if the latter is not a mere periphrase for the former, he must of necessity be divine. The expressions, Jehovah said, and, the

Spirit said, are constantly interchanged; and the acts of the Spirit are said to be acts of God.

2. In the New Testament, the language of Jehovah is quoted as the language of the Spirit. In Isaiah 6:9, it is written, Jehovah said, “Go and tell this people,” etc. This passage is thus quoted by Paul, Acts 28:25, “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet,” etc. In Jeremiah 31:31, 33, 34, it is said,

“Behold the days come, saith Jehovah,
that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel;”

which is quoted by the Apostle in Hebrews 10:15, saying,

“Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts,” etc.

Thus constantly the language of God is quoted as the language of the Holy Ghost. The prophets were the messengers of God; they uttered his words, delivered his commands, pronounced his threatenings, and announced his promises, because they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. They were the organs of God, because they were the organs of the Spirit. The Spirit, therefore, must be God.

3. In the New Testament the same mode of representation is continued. Believers are the temple of God, because the Spirit dwells in them. Ephesians 2:22: Ye are “a habitation of God through the Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 6:19:

“Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost
which is in you, which ye have of God?”

In Romans 8:9, 10, the indwelling of Christ is said to be the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ, and that is said to be the indwelling of the Spirit of God. In Acts 5:1--4, Ananias is said to have lied unto God because he lied against the Holy Ghost.

4. Our Lord and his Apostles constantly speak of the Holy Spirit as possessing all divine perfections. Christ says,

“All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.” (Matthew 12:31.)

The unpardonable sin, then, is speaking against the Holy Ghost. This could not be unless the Holy Ghost were God. The Apostle, in 1 Corinthians 2:10, 11, says that the Spirit knows all things, even the deep things (the most secret purposes) of God. His knowledge is commensurate with the knowledge of God. He knows the things of God as the spirit of a man knows the things of a man. The consciousness of God is the consciousness of the Spirit. The Psalmist teaches us that the Spirit is omnipresent and everywhere efficient. “Whither,” he asks, “shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?” (Psalm 139:7.) The presence of the Spirit is the presence of God. The same idea is expressed by the prophet when he says,

“Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him?
saith Jehovah. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith Jehovah.”
(Jeremiah 23:24.)

5. The works of the Spirit are the works of God. He fashioned the world. (Genesis 1:2.) He regenerates the soul: to be born of the Spirit is to be born of God. He is the source of all knowledge; the giver of inspiration; the teacher, the guide, the sanctifier, and the comforter of the Church in all ages. He fashions our bodies; He formed the body of Christ, as a fit habitation for the fullness of the Godhead; and He is to quicken our mortal bodies. (Romans 8:11.)

6. He is therefore presented in the Scriptures as the proper object of worship, not only in the formula of baptism and in the apostolic benediction, which bring the doctrine of the Trinity into constant remembrance as the fundamental truth of our religion, but also-- in the constant requirement that we look to Him and depend upon Him for all spiritual good, and reverence and obey Him as our divine teacher and sanctifier.

RELATION OF THE SPIRIT TO THE FATHER AND TO THE SON

The relation of the Spirit to the other persons of the Trinity has been stated before.

- (1.)** He is the same in substance and equal in power and glory.
- (2.)** He is subordinate to the Father and Son, as to his mode of subsistence and operation, as He is said to be of the Father and of the Son; He is sent by them, and they operate through Him.
- (3.)** He bears the same relation to the Father as to the Son; as He is said to be of the one as well as of the other, and He is given by the Son as well as by the Father.
- (4.)** His eternal relation to the other persons of the Trinity is indicated by the word Spirit, and by its being said that he is out of God, i.e., God is the source whence the Spirit is said to proceed.

II. THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

IN NATURE

The general doctrine of the Scriptures on this subject is that the Spirit is the executive of the Godhead. Whatever God does, He does by the Spirit. He is the immediate source of all life. Even in the external world the Spirit is everywhere present and everywhere active. Matter is not intelligent. It has its peculiar properties, which act blindly according to established laws. The intelligence, therefore, manifested in vegetable and animal structures, is not to be referred to matter, but to the omnipresent Spirit of God. It was He who brooded over the waters and reduced chaos into order. It was He who garnished the heavens. It is He that causes the grass to grow. The Psalmist says of all living creatures,

“Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.”
(Psalm 104:29, 30.)

Compare Isaiah 32:14, 15. Job, speaking of his corporeal frame, says, “The Spirit of God hath made me.” (Job 33:4.) And the Psalmist, after describing the omnipresence of the Spirit, refers to his agency the wonderful mechanism of the human body.

“I am fearfully and wonderfully made.... my substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowliest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.” (Psalm 139:14-16.)

THE SPIRIT THE SOURCE OF ALL INTELLECTUAL LIFE

The Spirit is also represented as the source of all intellectual life. When man was created it is said God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” (Genesis 2:7.) Job 32:8, says, The

inspiration of the Almighty giveth men understanding, i.e., a rational nature, for it is explained by saying, He

“teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth,
and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven.” (Job 35:11.)

The Scriptures ascribe in like manner to Him all special or extraordinary gifts. Thus it is said of Bezaleel,

“I have called” him, “and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass.” (Exodus 31:2, 3, 4.)

By his Spirit God gave Moses the wisdom requisite for his high duties, and when he was commanded to devolve part of his burden upon the seventy elders, it was said,

“I will take of the Spirit which is upon thee,
and will put it upon them.” (Numbers 11: 17.)

Joshua was appointed to succeed Moses, because in him was the Spirit. (Numbers 27:18.) In like manner the Judges, who from time to time were raised up, as emergency demanded, were qualified by the Spirit for their peculiar work, whether as rulers or as warriors. Of Othniel it is said,

“The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged
Israel and went out to war.” (Judges 3: 10.)

So the Spirit of the Lord is said to have come upon Gideon and on Jephthah and on Samson. When Saul offended God, the Spirit of the Lord is said to have departed from him. (1 Samuel 16: 14.) When Samuel anointed David, “The Spirit of the Lord came upon him “from that day forward.” (1 Samuel 16:13.)

In like manner under the new dispensation the Spirit is represented as not only the author of miraculous gifts, but also as the giver of the qualifications to teach and rule in the Church. All these operations are independent of the sanctifying influences of the Spirit. When the Spirit came on Samson or upon Saul, it was not to render them holy, but to endue them with extraordinary physical and intellectual power; and when

He is said to have departed from them, it means that those extraordinary endowments were withdrawn.

THE SPIRIT'S OFFICE IN THE WORK OF REDEMPTION

With regard to the office of the Spirit in the work of redemption, the Scriptures teach, --

1. That He fashioned the body, and endued the human soul of Christ with every qualification for his work. To the Virgin Mary it was said,

“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:35.)

The prophet Isaiah predicted that the Messiah should be replenished with all spiritual gifts.

“Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” (Isaiah 42:1.)

“There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: and the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” (Isaiah 11:1, 2.)

When our Lord appeared on earth, it is said that the Spirit without measure was given unto Him. (John 3:34.)

“And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.” (John 1:32.)

He was, therefore, said to have been full of the Holy Ghost.

2. That the Spirit is the revealer of all divine truth. The doctrines of the Bible are called the things of the Spirit. With regard to the writers of the Old Testament, it is said they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The language of Micah is applicable to all the prophets,

“Truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the LORD and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.” (Micah 3:8.)

What David said, the Holy Ghost is declared to have said. The New Testament writers were in like manner the organs of the Spirit. The doctrines which Paul preached he did not receive from men, “but God,” he says, “hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 2:10.) The Spirit also guided the utterance of those truths; for he adds, “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; communicating the things of the Spirit in the words of the Spirit”, The whole Bible, therefore, is to be referred to the Spirit as its author.

3. The Spirit not only thus reveals divine truth, having guided infallibly holy men of old in recording it, but He everywhere attends it by his power. All truth is enforced on the heart and conscience with more or less power by the Holy Spirit, wherever that truth is known. To this all-pervading influence we are indebted for all there is of morality and order in the world. But besides this general influence, which is usually called common grace, the Spirit specially illuminates the minds of the children of God, that they may know the things freely given (or revealed to them) by God. The natural man does not receive them, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. All believers are therefore called spiritual, because thus enlightened and guided by the Spirit.

4. It is the special office of the Spirit to convince the world of sin; to reveal Christ, to regenerate the soul, to lead men to the exercise of faith and repentance; to dwell in those whom He thus renews, as a principle of a new and divine life. By this indwelling of the Spirit, believers are united to Christ, and to one another, so that they form one body. This is the foundation of the communion of saints, making them one in faith, one in love, one in their inward life, and one in their hopes and final destiny.

5. The Spirit also calls men to office in the Church, and endows them with the qualifications necessary for the successful discharge of its duties. The office of the Church, in this matter, is simply to ascertain and authenticate the call of the Spirit. Thus the Holy Ghost is the immediate author of all truth, of all holiness, of all consolation, of all authority, and of all

efficiency in the children of God individually, and in the Church collectively.