

## INTRODUCING THE HOLY SPIRIT

### The Holy Spirit

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is a most important subject. Because there are so many vague and unscriptural ideas concerning the Holy Spirit, the subject needs to be dealt with carefully. In this section we are only concerned with the relationship and character of the Holy Spirit in connection with the Godhead; we are not concerned with His work. This subject will be dealt with under subjective soteriology or the experience of salvation, which is the administration of the Holy Spirit.

The two important questions which need to be answered in this section are (1) Do the scriptures represent the Holy Spirit as being a person? (2) Do they represent him as being the same nature and substance as God, and thus part of the Godhead? An answer to these questions is essential to the understanding of the Trinity.

### 1 The Personality of the Holy Spirit

There is only one possible source from which to argue this point and that is the scriptures. These present three lines of proof.

- (a) References to the Holy Spirit are those suitable to a person. The title given to him by Christ i.e. Paraclete (παράκλητος) Paraclete, Comforter is one that is definitely personal in its idea. It is used on a person in connection with a court of law and in other ways. It means "one called alongside to help", "an advocate". It is translated thus and used of Christ in 1 John 2:1. The translation "Comforter" comes from the original meaning of the word "comfort" which was "to strengthen" rather than "to sympathise". This in turn came from the Latin word with which it originated i.e. "confortare" which implies "to strengthen with or much". It is significant also that in speaking of the Holy Spirit there is a complete disregard of the normal rules of Greek Syntax in these chapters in John's Gospel. Especially is this so in one particular instance. The Greek word for "spirit" is neuter and the pronoun used instead of a neuter noun is always, in Greek, the neuter gender also. In John 16:13, however, the pronoun is masculine, which is a clear indication that the writer's conception of the Holy Spirit was a person. The masculine pronoun is used on several other occasions in these chapters to refer to the Holy Spirit, though the above instance is the only one where disregard of syntax is so blatant. In his book on the Holy Spirit, "Veni Creator", Hendley Moule in writing of these chapters in John, says "Let me ask that the Greek be once more opened, and this divine grammatical anomaly once more studied the neuter πνεῦμα (pneuma) associated repeatedly and markedly with the masculine Παρακλητος (Parakletos), the masculines ὃς, εκείνος, αὐτός (hos, ekeinos, autos). And let this be read in the light of the wonderful context in which this blessed Paraclete, this 'Advocatus', 'called in' to the aid of the otherwise 'orphaned' Church, is seen to be such, and to act so, as to be indeed the Substitute, the more than substitute, the unspeakably real personality of the Saviour in His seen presence. The passage sets the Holy Spirit before us as not the Father, as not the Son, and yet as the 'Vicar of Christ' (the phrase is Tertullian's), the Ample Consolation for the absence of the familiar company of the beloved Saviour. It scarcely needs the impressive testimony of the Greek grammar of the sentences to assure us with deep and restful certainty that the mind of the Saviour that night the Spirit was indeed present as a Person." (pp. 7/8).

One other important point that is hardly logical or sensible to imagine that our Lord would refer, on the eve of His leaving His disciples, to the Holy Spirit as "another Comforter", and say "I will not leave you orphans", unless He was thinking of the Holy Spirit as a person.

- (b) Personal Acts and Feelings are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. In John 13-16 the Holy Spirit is said to teach, to reprove of sin, to come, to hear, to guide, to speak, to show, to take and to receive, and, as we have shown above, the whole discourse is given on the basis of the Holy Spirit being a person. He is likewise said to inspire men to utter the oracles of God (1 Pet.1:11; 2 Pet.1:21); He is said to teach and command (John 15:26; Acts 8:29; 10:19). It is likewise recorded that He bears witness (John 15:26; Rom.8:16), directs the affairs of the Church (Acts13:2; 16:6,7) and helps the believer in prayer (Rom.8:26). We also read that the child of God is born of the Spirit (John 3:7).

- (c) Personal Relationships are likewise ascribed to him. The Holy Spirit is spoke of as being rebelled against (Matt. 12:31), grieved (Eph.4:30), resisted (Acts 7:51) and pleased (Acts 15:28). Further proof along this line is provided by the fact that the Holy Spirit is spoken of as a Person distinct from the Father and Son. This is found in the passage mentioned above about His being blasphemed in the account of Christ's baptism, in the baptismal formula in the closing verses of Matthew's Gospel, and also in other places.

The question of the personality of the Holy Spirit can be well summed up in the words of Dr John Owen quoted by Wiley. "If a wise and honest man should come and tell you thast in a certain country where he has been there is an excellent governor, who wisely discharges the duties of his office who hears causes, discerns rights, distributes justice, relieves the poor and comforts the distressed – would you not believe that he intended by this description a righteous, wise, diligent, intelligent person? Could you imagine him to mean that the sun or wind by their benign influences rendered the country fruitful and temperate, and disposed the inhabitants to mutual kindness and benignity; and that the governor is a mere figure of speech? It is exactly thus with the case before us. The scriptures tell us that the Holy Spirit governs and disposes all things according to the counsel of His own will. Can any man credit this testimony and conceive otherwise of the Spirit than as a holy, wise, intelligent Person?" (Quoted from Wiley intro. P.119).

## 2 The Deity of the Holy Spirit.

When we turn to the question of the deity of the Holy Spirit, the fact can be substantiated in the following ways:-

- (a) The Attributes of Deity are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The following are mentioned in Scripture, Eternity – Heb.9:14; omnipotence – Rom.15:13,19; omniscience – 1 Cor.2:10 (in this connection He is spoken of as the source of all wisdom – Isa.11:2; John 16:13); omnipresence – Ps139:7 (the omnipresence of the Sprit also seems to be implied by the fact that our Lord stated that it was better for Him to go away so that the Spirit could come – John 16:7).
- (b) The Works of the Deity are spoken of as belonging to the Holy Spirit. Among those mentioned in Scripture are creation and preservation Gen.1:2,3; Ps.104:29,30; Job 33:4. He is the source of prophetic inspiration and thus must divine omniscience (Cf.2 Pet.1.21; Acts 1:16). He is also the One Who executes the provisions of redemption e.g. regeneration, sanctification and the strengthening of the devotional life etc.. (Cf.1 Cor.6:11; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor.12:8-11).
- (c) The Baptismal Formula and the Benediction. His name is coupled with that of the Father and the Son, thus implying full and complete equality of status (Matt.28:19; 2 Cor.13:14).
- (d) The Holy Spirit's name is used interchangeably with that of God in Certain passages. This is so in Acts 5:3,4, and also if we compare John 1:13 and John 3:6-7 we see that people who are clearly identical in the thought of the apostle are one moment said to be born of God and then born of the Spirit. We can likewise compare Isa.6:8-10 with Acts 28:25-27 where the same Person is spoken of in the Old Testament as the Lord and in Acts as the Holy Spirit. The same fact is found if we compare Exodus 16:4 and Heb.3:7-9.

Thus it seems clear from the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit is thought of as both a Person and also as God.

### **Questions for further reflection**

1. What are the principal grounds for believing in the Deity of the Holy Spirit?
2. How would you summarise the Personality of the Holy Spirit?
3. Are there any additions to, or differences from, what Jesus taught about the Holy Spirit with what we read in the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline Epistles?