

Of the Distinct Personality, and Deity of the Holy Spirit.

by John Gill

The Holy Spirit is a person, a distinct person from the Father and the Son, and a divine person, or truly and properly God.

Scripture: John 14:16

Topics: "The Holy Spirit", "The Trinity"

Description

John Gill emphasizes the distinct personality and deity of the Holy Spirit, arguing that He is not merely an attribute of God but a true Person with will, understanding, and personal actions. He highlights the Holy Spirit's role in creation, regeneration, and as a Comforter, asserting that His divine nature is evidenced by His omniscience, omnipresence, and the works attributed to Him. Gill also discusses the Holy Spirit's distinct relationship with the Father and the Son, affirming His position within the Trinity and the worship due to Him as God.

Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 1--Chapter 31

OF THE DISTINCT PERSONALITY,

AND DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

What only remains now to be considered, under the article of the Trinity, are the personality and divinity of the Holy Ghost; to prove that he is a Person, a distinct Person, from the Father and Son; and a divine Person, or truly and properly God. 1. First, That he is a Person, and not a mere name and character, power or attribute of God; which will appear by observing, 1a. That the description of a Person agrees with him; that it subsists and lives of itself, is endowed with will and understanding, or is a willing and intelligent agent.

Such is the Spirit of God; as the Father has life in himself, and the Son has life in himself, so has the Holy Spirit; since he is the author of natural and spiritual life in men; which he preserves unto eternal life; and therefore called, the Spirit of life; which he could not be, unless he had life in himself; and if he has life in

himself, he must subsist of himself: he has a power of willing whatever he pleases: the apostle, speaking of his influences, administrations, and operations, says, "All these worketh the one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will", (1 Cor. 12:11) and that he is an intelligent agent, is clear from his knowing the things of God which none can know but him; and from his teaching men all things, and guiding them into all truth, and giving the spirit of wisdom and knowledge to one and another; now "he that teacheth men knowledge, shall not he know?" (1 Cor. 2:11, 12:8; John 14:26 16:13; Ps. 94:10). 1b.

Personal actions are ascribed unto him; he is said to be a reprover and convincer of men; to reprove or convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). Now he that convinces another of his mistakes, brings him to a sense and acknowledgment of them, and to repentance for them, must be a Person, and not a mere name and character. He is spoken of as a teacher, that teaches all things, all doctrines necessary to salvation, and all the duties of religion: an human teacher is a person, and much more a divine one, (John 14:26; 1 John 2:27) he is promised as a Comforter, (John 16:7) and which he answers to, by shedding abroad the love of God in the hearts of the Lord's people; by taking the things of Christ, and showing them to them; by applying to them exceeding great and precious promises; by declaring to them the pardon of their sins; by pronouncing the sentence of justification in their consciences; and by being the earnest and seal of their future happiness; all which are personal actions: he is one of the three witnesses in heaven, (1 John 5:7) who particularly testifies of Christ, of his Deity, sonship, offices, and grace, (John 15:26) and bears witness to the spirits of saints, that they are the children of God, (Rom. 8:16) which a mere name and character could not do; but a person.

He is represented not only as a Spirit of grace and supplication, and an helper of the infirmities of the saints in prayer, but as making intercession for them, according to the will of God (Zech. 12:10; Rom. 8:26, 27). Now as the advocacy and intercession of Christ, prove him to be a Person, and a distinct one from the Father, with whom he intercedes; so the intercession of the Spirit, equally proves his personality, even his distinct personality also: to which may be added, that the Spirit is the giver of gifts to men, whereby they are qualified for the work of the ministry, (1 Cor. 12:8-11) and he calls them to that work, and appoints and sets them as overseers of particular churches, to feed them with knowledge and understanding, (Acts 13:2, 20:28) and, to observe no more, he is often described as an inhabitant in the saints, that dwells in their bodies, and in their souls, and will always abide in them, until he has wrought them up for that self-same thing, eternal glory and happiness; now to dwell with any person, or in any place, is a personal action, and describes a person, (John 14:16, 17; 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; Rom. 8:9, 11). 1c.

Personal affections are ascribed to the Spirit; as love, grief, &c. we read of the love of the Spirit, as well as of the Father, and of the Son; and which appears in the regeneration and sanctification of men, and in the application of grace unto them, (Rom. 15:30) and of the Spirit's being grieved with the sins of God's people, and their unbecoming behavior towards God and one another, (Eph. 4:30) and of his being rebelled against, vexed, and provoked; as he was by the Israelites (Isa. 63:10).

All which could not be said of him, was he not a person. He is, moreover, said to be lied unto; as by Ananias and Sapphira, (Acts 5:3) and to be blasphemed, and sinned against with an unpardonable sin, (Matthew 12:32, 33) which could never be, nor with propriety be said, was he not a Person, and a divine Person too. 2. Secondly, The Holy Spirit is not only a Person, but a distinct Person from the Father and the Son; and besides his distinctive relative property, spiration, or being the breath of them both, and so distinct from each; the following things may be observed: 2a.

His procession from the Father and the Son: of his procession from the Father express mention is made in (John 15:26) and therefore must be distinct from the Father, from whom he proceeds; which, whether it respects his nature or his office, proves the same: it was once a warm controversy between the Greek and Latin churches, whether the Spirit proceeded from the Son or from the Father; which was denied by the former, and asserted by the latter; and which seems most correct; since he is called the Spirit of the Son, (Gal. 4:6) however, since he is the Spirit of the Son, he must be distinct from him whose Spirit he is. 2b.

The mission of the Holy Spirit, by the Father and the Son, clearly evinces his distinct personality from them; of his being sent by the Father, see (John 14:16, 26) and of his being sent by the Son (see John 15:26, 16:7). Now as a mere name and character, quality, power, and attribute, could not be said to be sent, but a Person; so the Spirit that is sent, must be a distinct Person from the Father and Son, said to send him. 2c. The Holy Spirit is called another Comforter, (John 14:16) the Father of Christ is one; he is the God of all comfort; that comforts his people in all their tribulations, (2 Cor. 1:3, 4) and Jesus Christ is also a Comforter; one of his names with the Jews is Menachem, a Comforter[1]; a name well known with the Jews: hence good old Simeon is said to be waiting for the "Consolation of Israel", (Luke 2:25) that is, for the Messiah; whom the Jews expected as a Comforter: and now the Holy Ghost is another Comforter, distinct from both; from the Son, who prayed for him as such; and from the Father, prayed unto on that account. 2d.

The Holy Spirit is represented as doing some things distinct from the Father and the Son; particularly, as directing into the love of God, that is, the Father; and into a patient waiting for Christ; and so is distinguished from them both, (2 Thess. 3:5) and also as taking of the things of Christ, called likewise the things of the Father, and showing them to them that are Christ's; in which also he is distinguished from the Father, and from Christ, whose things he takes and shows (John 16:14, 15).

Song regeneration, renovation, sanctification, and conversion, are distinct things, and very peculiar to the Spirit. 2e. There are some distinct appearances of the Spirit, which show his distinct personality; as at the baptism of Christ, when he descended as a dove and lighted on him; and thereby was distinguished from the Father, whose voice was heard from heaven; and from the Son, who was baptized in Jordan, and on whom the Spirit lighted, (Matthew 3:16,17) and on the day of Pentecost the Spirit descended on the apostles, in the form of cloven tongues, as of fire; and with respect to this the apostle Peter says, that Christ "being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear"; meaning the effusion of the Holy Ghost, and his extraordinary gifts; and who is plainly distinguished from the Father, who made promise of him, and from the Son, who received this promise, and shed his gifts in the manner he did. 2f.

The Holy Spirit is represented as a distinct person in the ordinance of baptism; and the form of it being to be administered in his name, as distinct from the name of the Father and of the Son, in whose name also it was to be administered, (Matthew 28:19) and so he is mentioned as a distinct witness from the Father and the Word, in the record bore in heaven; for if he is not a distinct person from them, there could not be three testifiers, or three that bore record in heaven (1 John 5:7). 3.

Thirdly, The Holy Ghost is not only a person, and a distinct person from the Father and Son, but a divine person, or truly and properly God; which was denied by the Macedonians of old[2], and by the Socinians of late[3]; and generally by all that oppose the divinity of Christ: but the Deity of the Spirit is to be proved by the same mediums and arguments which are to be fetched from the same sources as the Deity of the Son. And, 3a. From the names which are given unto him; as particularly the name Jehovah, peculiar to the

most High; it was Jehovah, the Lord God of Israel, that spake by the mouth of all the holy prophets from the beginning of the world; and it is certain that they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, (Luke 1:68, 70; 2 Peter 1:21) it was Jehovah, the Rock and God of Israel, that spake by David; and it is clear that it was the Holy Ghost that spake by him; for so Peter says, "This scripture must needs be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spoke before concerning Judas", (2 Sam. 23:2, 3; Acts 1:16) it was Jehovah, the Lord God, whom the Israelites tempted, proved, and provoked in the wilderness; and this the Holy Ghost speaks of as done to himself; "Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted me, proved me", me, the Holy Ghost, (Ps. 95:6, 7; Heb. 3:7-9; see Isa. 63:10) it was Jehovah that said to Isaiah, "Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed", &c. and according to the apostle Paul, the same was the Holy Ghost; for to the Jews he says, "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Go unto this people, and say, hearing ye shall hear", &c. (Isa. 6:8, 9; Acts 28:25, 26).

The Greek word *kuriöv*, used in the New Testament, answers to Jehovah and Adonai in the Old; and this is said of the Holy Spirit, he is that Spirit which is the Lord, and is called the Lord the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17, 18; see also 2 Thess. 3:5). Moreover the Holy Spirit is very plainly called God in scripture: when Ananias lied to the Holy Ghost, he is said to lie not unto men but unto God; wherefore if lying to the Holy Ghost is lying to God, it follows that the Holy Ghost must be God (Acts 5:3, 4).

The saints of God are called the temple of God, and the reason proving it is, because the Spirit of God dwells in them, and because their bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, they are exhorted to glorify God in their bodies: Now if the Holy Ghost is not called God, or meant by God in these passages, there is no force of reasoning in them (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19, 20). Moreover the apostle gives to the Holy Ghost the divine names of Spirit, Lord, and God, when he is speaking of the diversities of his gifts, administrations, and operations; for of him only is he speaking by whom all these are (1 Cor. 12:4-6). 3b.

The Deity of the Spirit may be proved from the perfections of God, which are manifestly in him, as eternity; hence, as some think, he is called the eternal Spirit, (Heb. 9:14) however he was present at the creation of the heavens and the earth, and was concerned therein, (Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13) and therefore must be before any creature was, before time was, and so from eternity; as God the Father never was without his Son, so never without his Spirit; when it is said in some places that the Spirit was not yet, and that there were some that had not heard that there was any Holy Ghost; this is to be understood of the wonderful effusion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit on the apostles at Pentecost, which was not to be until after the glorification of Christ; and of which dispensation the disciples at Ephesus had not then heard (John 7:39; Acts 19:2).

Omnipresence, or immensity, another divine perfection, is ascribed to the Spirit; says David, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? and whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (Ps. 139:7) he is not to be shunned and avoided; there is no going any where from him, for he is every where, otherwise he might be avoided; and if every where, he must be the omnipresent God: the saints are his temples in which he dwells, and he dwells in them all, at all times, in all places; which he could not do if he was not immense and omnipresent.

Omniscience is another divine perfection to be observed in the Spirit of God; he knows all things, even the deep things of God, the thoughts, counsels, and purposes of his heart; which he could not know, if he was not the omniscient God (1 Cor. 2:10, 11) nor could he teach the saints all things, nor guide them into all truth, and much less show things to come, (John 14:26, 16:13) as he did under the Old Testament, when

he testified beforehand, by the prophets, the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, (1 Peter 1:11) and under the New Testament, witnessing to the apostle Paul that bonds and afflictions should abide him in every city, which he found to be true; and foretelling, by Agabus, that there would be a great dearth throughout the world, which came to pass in the times of Claudius Caesar (Acts 20:23, 11:28).

Omnipotence is predicated of him; he is called the power of the Highest, and the finger of God; his concern in creation, and in the formation of the human nature of Christ, the miraculous signs and wonders wrought by his power, the gifts that he bestows, and the grace that he works in the hearts of men, loudly proclaim his omnipotence; and if such perfections, which are peculiar to Deity, are to be found in him, he must be truly and properly God. 3c. The works which are ascribed unto him are a clear and full proof of his divinity: creation, a work of divine power, is attributed to him; he not only moved upon the face of the waters that covered the earth, at the first creation, and brought the rude and unformed chaos into a beautiful order, and garnished the heavens, and bespangled them with the luminaries and stars of light; but by him, the Breath, or Spirit of the Lord, the heavens and the host thereof were made and established, (Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; Ps. 33:6) yea man, the most excellent and curious part of the creation, is made by him, as Elihu owns, "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (Job 33:4).

The work of providence he is jointly concerned in with the Father and the Son; "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? with whom took he counsel (the Spirit of the Lord) and taught him in the path of judgment? and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?" (Isa. 40:13, 14) that is, how to govern the world, and manage and direct all affairs in it. The editing of the scripture is of him; "All scripture is given by inspiration of God"; by the Breath or Spirit of God, (2 Tim. 3:16) this is a work purely divine, and is of the Spirit; "holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21).

It was the Holy Spirit that formed the human nature of Christ; what was conceived in the Virgin was of the Holy Ghost; that was fearfully and wonderfully made by him, and curiously wrought by him, in the lowest parts of the earth, (Matthew 1:20; Ps. 139:14, 15) and was richly anointed by him with his gifts and graces; even above his fellows, and without measure, (Ps. 45:7; Isa. 61:1; John 3:34) and the miracles of Christ were by him, the finger of God; and those which the apostles wrought for the confirmation of the gospel, were by the power of the Holy Ghost, (Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20; Rom. 15:19; Heb. 2:3, 4) the work of grace in the heart is his work; regeneration and renovation are of the Holy Ghost; sanctification is called the sanctification of the Spirit; this is not by might nor power of man, but by the Spirit of God; and in which there is such a display of the exceeding greatness of divine power, as is equal to that which was exerted in raising Christ from the dead, (Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:2; Zech. 4:6; Eph. 1:19) yea, the resurrection of Christ himself from the dead, is attributed to the Spirit of holiness; and it is by him the Spirit which dwells in the saints, that God will quicken their mortal bodies (Rom. 1:4, 8:11). 3d.

The worship which is due to the Spirit of God, and is given unto him, proves him to be God; for were he not, such worship would never be paid him; not only temples are erected by him, but for him, in which he is worshipped and glorified (Eph. 2:22; 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19, 20). Baptism, a solemn act of religious worship, is administered in his name, as in the name of the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19). Swearing, which is another act of worship, a solemn appeal to the omniscient God, and is mentioned as a branch of serving him, (Deut. 6:13) is made by the Spirit, and he is called upon as a witness to facts (Rom. 9:1).

And prayer, a very principal part of worship, is directed to him, sometimes singly, as in (2 Thess. 3:5; Song 4:16) and sometimes, in conjunction with the other divine Persons (Rev. 1:4, 5). All which prove him to be truly and properly God; and therefore we should be careful to give him the honour and glory due unto him, as to the Father and the Son; and as we trust the Son with the whole affair of our salvation, and trust in him for it; so we should trust the Spirit of God with the work of grace upon our souls; and be confident that he that has begun it, will perform it; since "it is God that works in us, to will and to do, of his good pleasure".

My Treatise on the Trinity, was written near forty years ago, and when I was a young man; and had I now departed from some words and phrases then used by me, it need not, at such a distance of time, be wondered at: but so far from it, that upon a late revisal of it, I see no reason to retract anything I have written, either as to sense or expression; save only, in a passage or two of scripture, before observed, which then did not stand so clear in my mind, as proofs of the eternal generation of the Son of God; but, upon a more mature consideration of them, I am inclined to think otherwise, and have accordingly altered my sense of them; which alteration, as it is no ways inconsistent with the doctrine as before held by me, so it serves but the more strongly to confirm it. ENDNOTES:

[1] Talmud Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 98. 2.

[2] Vid. Aug. de Haeres. c. 52. & Danaeum in ibid.

[3] Cateches. Racov. c. 1. p. 35. & c. 6. p. 214.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-gill/of-the-distinct-personality-and-deity-of-the-holy-spirit/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net