



## The Church and the Holy Trinity

The Holy Spirit is a divine Person. The fact that he is a person is obvious from such sayings as, *"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God"* (Eph 4:30), and, *"the Spirit intercedes for us"* (Rom 8:26). His eternal deity is seen in the fact that the Bible puts him in the same class as the Father and the Son, eg, in the baptismal formula (Mat 28:19) and the benediction (2 Cor 13:14); and Jesus equates the Spirit with himself when he promises the disciples *"another Comforter"* (John 16).

Jesus also refers to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit as a more serious sin than others. That can only refer to a person who is God. We should remember these things when we meet sects that deny the deity or personality of the Holy Spirit.

How do the Spirit of God and the people of God relate?

### Immediate presence

He is the Person through whom God is in contact in creation and providence. *"The Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters"* (Gen 1:2). *"When you send forth your Spirit ... you renew the face of the ground"* (Ps 104:30).

Both the Father and the Son send him. *"I will pray the Father and he will send another Comforter"* (John 14:16). *"Having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit he has poured this out..."* (Acts 2:33).

He brings with him the very presence of God, the Father and the Son. *"If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him"* (John 14:23).

There is a special closeness between the Spirit and the believer. *"I will put my Spirit within you"* (Ezek 36:27). *"He who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him"* (1 Cor 6:17).

### Initial work

The Holy Spirit works in society to bring God's loved ones to him. It was he who led the writers of the Bible to record what they did (2 Pet 1:21). He also equips people to take the gospel of God to their fellow men so they may be saved (Eph. 4:11).

Jesus said the Spirit would *"convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgement"* (John 16:8). He will *"take what is mine and declare it to you"* (John 16:14). As a result of that people come to faith in Christ. Saving faith does *"not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God"* (1 Cor 2:5).

### Continuing commitment

He brings comfort to believers from the Father of Mercies. He shows Christ, and enables them to receive him. They are *"born of the Spirit"* (John 3:5). He shows the privileges they have in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:17-18), and as the Spirit of the Son he enables them to call on God as their Father also – the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15). Thus they have boldness to present themselves before the throne of grace – knowing the access a sinner has in Christ, and having confidence to pray, *"Our Father..."*

Jesus spoke about the effect his Spirit would have in a believer's life. *"As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself ... neither can you unless you remain in me"* (John 15:4), indicating that spiritual life comes from him through his Spirit. The *"fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control"* (Gal. 5:22-23). There are two sides to this – putting sin to death and learning to follow Jesus (Col 3:9-10).

As God's children come under the Spirit's influence in these ways he will use them to build up one another and to shine the light of truth into society (Eph 4:12; Mat 5:14).

### **Relating to the Holy Spirit**

Believers relate to him indirectly. He does not draw attention to himself, but to Jesus the incarnate Son. *"He shall take of mine and declare it to you"* (John 16:14). His work is to throw a spotlight onto the person and work of Jesus, and lead people to the Father through faith in Jesus (Eph 2:18). It would be a mistake to focus on the Spirit instead of them. He is alongside, not face-to-face.

Believers should relate lovingly. The great command is to *"love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul and strength and mind."* That applies to the Spirit as much as to the Father and the Son. *"Honour where honour is due"* is a Biblical principle, and we ought to show appreciation for the person and work of the Holy Spirit even though he operates in the background. That includes gratitude for what he has done and what he has promised to do in the future. Love is in the heart, but we are called to show our love for God by obeying him heartily.

Believers should relate attentively.

The Holy Spirit has given us God's revelation so we may have fellowship with him. We should be sensitive to what the Spirit is saying in the Bible.

That takes careful reading, and thoughtful application of his Word to our lives. Since he has given us God's Word we may expect his help to understand it and use it well. *"Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law"* (Ps 119:18).

Believers should relate sensitively. He is holy. The matters he speaks of are the most important and valuable there could possibly be. He has revealed the Father's love. It is so great that he handed over his Son so that sinners would become his sons (Rom 8:32).

The Spirit has revealed the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. *"Though he was rich, yet he became poor, so that you, by his poverty might become rich"* (2 Cor 8:9).

It is he who persuades and enables us to receive Jesus Christ. And it is he who applies the blood of Jesus to a person's conscience. We dare not treat such things lightly – how great a sin that would be! Instead, we should receive his witness with gratitude and unquestioning faith, turning from our sins and loving the One who makes us new. *"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God"* (Eph 4:30).

Archie McPhail

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