

The Holy Spirit

I. Is the Holy Spirit really a person

A. He has the characteristics of a person

Three things make up that which we call personality - intelligence, emotions and will.

1. The Spirit is said to know the things of God, (1 Corinthians 2:10-11) that takes intelligence. Also note "the mind of the Spirit" in Romans 8:27.
2. It is possible to grieve the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). This shows emotion.
3. It is the Spirit who distributes spiritual gifts "as He wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11). This phrase might even be translated "as He purposes," because it shows a definite act of the will.

B. He acts like a person

The Holy Spirit does things only people can do: He teaches (John 14:26), prays for us (Romans 8:26) and performs miracles (Acts 8:39).

C. He is designated a person

The Greek word for spirit is "pneuma" which is a neuter gender word. Proper Greek grammar requires a pronoun to be the same gender as the noun it replaces. However, this is not the case when a masculine pronoun is substituted for the Spirit. It is "He," "Him" or the masculine pronoun "Who" (John 16:13-14; Ephesians 1:14). The Spirit is not an "it" or a neuter thing, but a definite person!

D. He is related to others as a person

Could we reasonably interpret the baptismal formula ("in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit", Matthew 28:19) as referring to two persons (Father and Son) and one thing (Holy Spirit)?

In John 16:14 He is related to Jesus in such a way as to conclude that both are persons.

In Acts 15:28 He is related to human beings in such a way that it would be very unnatural to conclude that He is anything other than a person.

E. Those who have said the Holy Spirit is not a person

1. Sabellianism (A.D. 215) taught that God is a unity and that He revealed Himself in three different modes of forms (Modalism). God is one person Who has three roles.
2. Socinianism (1539-1604) defined the Spirit as "virtue or energy flowing from God to man." Most liberal theology today agrees with this by holding the Spirit is not a person, only a power or influence.
3. Barthianism or Neoorthodoxy sometimes accepts the Modalist view of the Trinity.

II. Is the Holy Spirit completely God?

A. He has characteristics possessed only by God

1. He is eternal (Hebrews 9:14)
2. He is omniscient (1 Corinthians 2:10-11)
3. He is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7)
4. He is called God (Acts 5:3-4)

B. He did things which only God can do

1. Regeneration (causing a person to be born again, John 3:5-6)
2. Begetting the humanity of Christ (Luke 1:35)
3. Creation of the world (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 104:30)

C. He is associated on an equal plane with the other persons of the Trinity

1. The Spirit is identified with Yahweh when the Old Testament records that Yahweh said something and the New Testament quotation of that passage is attributed to the Spirit as the speaker. This shows very clearly that the Spirit, like Yahweh, is fully divine (Isaiah 6:1-13 and Acts 28-25; Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 10:15-17).
2. In the New Testament, blasphemy of and lying to the Holy Spirit are the same as if done to God (Matthew 12:31-32; Acts 5:3-4).
3. The Spirit is associated equally with the other members of the Godhead in the baptismal formula (Matthew 28:19) and in the benediction of 2 Corinthians 13:14.

D. Procession of the Holy Spirit John 15:26; 14:16, 26

Procession is a term used by theologians to try to describe the relationship between the Spirit and the other Persons of the Trinity. It does not imply any sort of inequality, as if the Spirit were less in deity than the Father and the Son, but it is supposed to express a subordination of relationship. The Filioque ("and the Son") Clause was added in 589 AD at the Synod of Toledo and adopted by the Roman Catholic Church, but not the Eastern Orthodox Church. This led to the Great Schism of 1054 AD.