

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Evangelical Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_evangelical_quarterly.php

THE HOLY SPIRIT

by R. G. CRAWFORD

DR. CRAWFORD, who has given us the following biblical survey of the person and work of the Holy Spirit, was minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Newry, when he wrote it, but shortly afterwards he was appointed Senior Lecturer in the Department of Religion and Philosophy in the University of Ife, Western Nigeria.

IT is becoming increasingly recognized that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is very important and must be given proper attention in the life and work of the Church. The story is told of the class that was being instructed by the teacher in the Apostles' Creed. Each boy had been given a clause to repeat. All went well until they came to the one on the Holy Spirit, when a silence ensued. "What is wrong?" asked the teacher. One boy replied: "Please miss, the boy who believes in the Holy Spirit isn't here today!" A recovery of belief and knowledge of the Spirit's working is essential if Church members are to be made aware that the Holy Spirit is *here* today taking the things of Christ and revealing them unto us.

Karl Barth has pointed out that one of the reasons people are quiet about the work of the Spirit is the mystery of His nature and the fact that He has often been regarded as an irrational force leading to emotional extremes. This is very true. Immediately we begin to think of the Spirit, certain questions arise: Is the Spirit only a power or influence of God? Is He really a Person or (as the Authorized Version of the Bible at times indicates) must we refer to Him as "it"? What is his relation to God? Can He be called God?

It is the purpose of this article to seek to answer these questions. Let us begin with a consideration of the nature of the Spirit. With regard to the Old Testament teaching some scholars think that the Spirit is regarded as an impersonal force¹; while others believe that in Jewish thought the highest conception of the Spirit is of a transcendent being endowed with power and wisdom but with none of those intimate relations of love and communion which are of the essence of a fully developed personality.²

¹ Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, p. 250.

² T. Rees, *The Holy Spirit* (1915), p. 37. Some scholars think of the Spirit as a pictorial term. G. A. F. Knight speaks of "God's Name, Word, Face" in this connection as similar to the idea of "Spirit". Other scholars make passing reference to the Spirit in the Old Testament; e.g. W. O. E. Oosterley and T. H. Robinson, *Hebrew Religion* (1930).

A study of the Old Testament, however, seems to indicate that the idea of the personal nature of the Spirit cannot be altogether ruled out. Passages such as Gen. 1: 2 and Job 34: 14, 15, speak of the Spirit as the giver and taker of life. In Gen. 1: 2 the Holy Spirit "broods": the image is of the incubation of a bird.³ Other passages which teach that the Holy Spirit gives life are Job 33: 4; Ezek. 37: 1-14. Personal activities are attributed to the Spirit: He can be grieved,⁴ He guides,⁵ and instructs,⁶ He rushes upon men and causes them to rest.⁷ N. H. Snaith believes that the earliest records of the Spirit's activity are hardly to be differentiated from demoniac possession.⁸ Even so, K. E. Kirk points out that, since evil spirits are personally conceived, it can therefore be supposed that the Spirit is personal.⁹

There is a development of thought in the conception of the Spirit in the Old Testament. In the early records the Spirit causes men to behave in an ecstatic manner¹⁰ and is an intermittent gift. In later thought the Spirit is an abiding gift for judgment, counsel and supplication. J. S. Candlish claims that latterly at least the Spirit of God was recognized as the source not only of power, wisdom and prophecy, but also of moral goodness.¹¹

There are direct references to the ethical character of the Spirit. He is the Spirit of holiness (Ps. 51: 11; Isa. 63: 10, 11) and at least twice he is called "good" (Neh. 9: 20; Ps. 143: 10). He creates a moral change in man which is described in memorable words by Ezekiel: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. . . . And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes. . . ." (36: 25-27; cf. Isa. 32: 15-18).¹²

Examination of these Old Testament passages does show that there are grounds for believing that the Spirit was regarded as a

³ R.V. Margin.

⁴ Isa. 63: 10.

⁵ Ps. 143: 10.

⁶ Neh. 9: 20.

⁷ Judg. 14: 6; Isa. 63: 4, 10.

⁸ *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (1937), p. 14.

⁹ *Essay on the Trinity and the Incarnation*, p. 187.

¹⁰ Judg. 14: 9; 1 Sam. 11: 6ff.

¹¹ *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, p. 15.

¹² The term *ruah* does not help much with regard to the personality of the Spirit. It means 'wind' or 'breath'. This was not mere physical force. "It may have been thought of as wind, but as wind with a life and will of its own" (T. Rees, *op. cit.*, p. 15). See H. W. Robinson on *ruah* in *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament* (1913), pp. 81 f.

conscious agent but His distinct personality is not affirmed. The matter is different with the New Testament. Here there is considerable evidence that the Spirit has personality. In the Synoptics, Christ refers to the direction of the Spirit: "But whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit" (Mark 13: 11). They were to be directed by a conscious agent not a mindless force.

It has been noticed that bad spirits were thought of as personal in the Old Testament and the same is true of the New. L. Hodgson comments on Mark 3: 20-30: "Angels and demons had names, and conversations could be carried on with them . . . in the crucial passage St. Mark 3: 20-30, the Holy Spirit is opposed to Baalzeboul, the prince of evil spirits. Baalzeboul was undoubtedly a 'he' spirit, and the implication is that his Opponent was equally a 'he'. The question, 'Can Satan cast out Satan?' implies this as does also the statement that the Holy Spirit can be the object of blasphemy."¹³

In the Acts of the Apostles the Spirit is often conceived impersonally as a divine energy (2: 2ff.; 15: 29; 18: 25), but elsewhere personal activities are recognized. The Spirit is lied to (5: 3), tempted (5: 9), resisted (6: 10); sends (10: 19, 20; 13: 4), forbids (16: 6), and speaks (18: 25). It is instructive to note R. Bultmann's distinction between the dynamic and animistic interpretations of the Spirit. The dynamic occurs when the Spirit fills a man like a fluid, the animistic is a personal power falling on a man. The first would be naturally impersonal.¹⁴

The Apostle Paul also speaks of the Spirit as personal. There are almost one hundred and twenty references to the Spirit in his writings. In the first group of Epistles, the two to the Thessalonians, he goes very little beyond Acts. Still he speaks about the danger of quenching the Spirit (1 Thess. 5: 19). In the second group there is more teaching on the activity of the Spirit. The latter grants gifts to men (Rom. 12: 6) and miracles are worked through his power (Gal. 3: 5). The Spirit creates a sense of sonship (Rom. 8: 14-17; Gal. 4: 5-6) and bestows a character corresponding to this relationship. The Spirit is grieved (Eph. 4: 30), bears witness (Rom. 8: 16), cries (Gal. 4: 6), leads (Rom. 8: 14) and makes intercession (Rom. 8: 26). Indeed the whole tenor of the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans makes it impos-

¹³ *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, p. 81. (C. K. Barrett questions the authenticity of this passage, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition*, pp. 103f.)

¹⁴ *Theology of the New Testament*, I, pp. 155-7.

sible to describe the Spirit in Paul as an impersonal influence.¹⁵

In other parts of the New Testament the Spirit is regarded as personal. He speaks (1 Tim. 4: 1) and he testifies (1 Pet. 1: 11; Rev. 2: 7; 3: 6; 14: 13). But it is in the Johannine writings that the Spirit as personal is most prominently displayed. This is particularly so in John 14-16.

It is true that passages such as 14: 16f.; 15: 26; 16: 7-15 (all of which are characterized by the use of the terms παράκλητος and "Spirit of truth") have been regarded by some as insertions, on the grounds that they interrupt the contexts in which they are placed, and introduce matter which in form and expression is out of place in the last discourses.

C. K. Barrett, however, argues convincingly for their genuineness, thus:¹⁶

1. A simple consecutiveness of thought is not to be looked for in John's writing. His habit is to consider a subject successively from a number of different standpoints.

2. If the Paraclete passages were removed there would remain not one reference to the Holy Spirit in the last discourses.

3. The Paraclete passages stand where they do without the smallest evidence of textual dislocation, and no convincing hypothesis of their origin, and of the reason and method of their insertion, is forthcoming.

Accepting, then, these passages a number of significant facts are found which indicate that the Spirit is personal. While πνεῦμα is neuter and thus the neuter relative pronoun is used, yet one finds also the masculine ἐκεῖνος, the masculine relative pronoun ὃν, and the masculine pronoun αὐτόν. Moreover παράκλητος, which can be translated 'Comforter' or 'Advocate', is masculine. Barrett comments: ". . . thus in its grammatical form alone it [Paraclete] tends to remove the Spirit from the sphere of abstract, impersonal force into that of personality."¹⁷

The teaching of these chapters in John on the Spirit shows clearly His personality. The Spirit is given a personal title, ascribed personal actions (He witnesses, speaks, teaches, conducts as guide).¹⁸ Another interesting fact is that Jesus is παράκλητος as well as the Spirit. Hence the personality of the One presupposes the personality of the other. As A. W. Wainwright says: "When Jesus calls the Spirit ἄλλος παράκλητος (John 14: 16) he is referring to

¹⁵ J. Burnaby, *The Belief of Christendom*, p. 131.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 76.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*; cf. J. H. Bernard, *John (ICC)*, p. 497.

¹⁸ See in particular 14: 26; 15: 26; 16: 13; also 1 John 5: 6.

the Spirit, and implies that he himself is παράκλητος (cf. 1 John 2: 1).¹⁹

In these chapters our Lord tells His disciples that they are not to be left orphans. Another Paraclete is coming. It is as if one Person, a loved One, is going, but His other Self is coming. And this latter One will carry out the same functions as Jesus: teaching, bearing witness, convincing the world of sin.

Let us now consider the relation of the Spirit to Christ. The New Testament as a whole witnesses to a close relationship between the Spirit and Christ. In the Synoptics the Spirit is directly connected with the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1: 20) and throughout His ministry the Spirit is in control (Mark 1: 10, 12; Luke 4: 18). It has been pointed out, that Christ uses a different formula from the prophets: "Thus saith the Lord," because He was conscious of a unity with the Spirit which they did not know. Thus Christ can say, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" (Luke 4: 18).²⁰ Besides, His miracles were done by the Spirit (Matt. 12: 28).

In the Acts of the Apostles the exalted Christ pours out His Spirit upon the apostles (2: 33), and in Acts 16: 7 the "Spirit of Jesus" is mentioned. Paul indifferently uses the names, "the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 3: 16) and the "Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8: 9); and alternatively speaks of the indwelling Christ and the indwelling Spirit (Rom. 8: 9ff.). Again, the presence of Christ can be recognized in no other way but by the Spirit (1 Cor. 12: 3). To have the Spirit was to have Christ and to have Christ was to have God. Moreover, as R. S. Franks points out, the Spirit reproduces the teaching of Jesus: "Jesus called God Father (Abba); the Spirit repeats the name. Jesus demanded righteousness: the Spirit promotes righteousness. Jesus proclaimed the present and future Kingdom of God: the Spirit is not only the spirit of present sonship and present righteousness, but is also an earnest of immortality."²¹

In one passage Paul identifies the Spirit with the Lord (2 Cor. 3: 17-18). The main question here is whether Paul in saying "the

¹⁹ A. W. Wainwright, *The Trinity in the New Testament* (1962), p. 201, footnote. Vincent Taylor says that though with St. John we are still in the pre-dogmatic stage of the Trinitarian teaching, the sayings about the Paraclete carry us a degree further than any other writing in the development of the N.T. doctrine of the Godhead (*Person of Christ*, p. 119). Taylor is here endorsing the opinion of W. F. Howard, *Christianity acc. to St. John*, p. 80.

²⁰ *Essays in Christology for Karl Barth* (1957), p. 138.

²¹ *Doc. of Trinity* (1958), p. 38.

Lord is the Spirit" means by Lord, Christ or Yahweh.²² Since Paul often transfers Old Testament passages which were originally referred to Yahweh to Christ (Rom. 10: 13; Phil. 2: 9-11; Eph. 4: 8), and since everywhere else in this Epistle Christ is called Lord, it would appear correct to accept this passage as also speaking of Christ as Lord.²³

In the Fourth Gospel the relation is very close. Although it is evident that the Spirit is a distinct being from Jesus (John 14: 16-17), nevertheless He is sent by Jesus (15: 26), and His function is to glorify Christ (16: 14). The Spirit leads men to a knowledge of Christ (16: 13). R. Bultmann says: "The Spirit as the other Counsellor is Jesus' Substitute"²⁴; and R. V. G. Tasker writes: "It has often been pointed out that *another* [Paraclete or Comforter] implies that the Spirit is a different person from the Son, while *Comforter* indicates similarity of nature."²⁵

Consideration must now be given to the important question of the deity of the Holy Spirit. It should be admitted at the outset that the Spirit does not appear to be called God in the New Testament. Augustine claimed that 1 Cor. 6: 19-20 indicated this but it is generally recognized that he was wrong, due to the absence of the definite article in Latin. Nor can it be maintained that either 2 Cor. 3: 17-18 or John 4: 24 call the Spirit God.

Nevertheless, there are pointers to the deity of the Spirit in scripture. He is pre-existent and eternal (Gen. 1: 2; Heb. 9: 14); omnipresent (Job 26: 13; Ps. 104: 30); Creator (Gen. 1: 2; Ps.

²² C. H. Dodd (*Apostolic Preaching*) and Bousset (*Kyrios Christos*) identify Christ with the Spirit; but Rawlinson (*N.T. Doctrine of the Christ*) and E. F. Scott (*The Spirit in the New Testament*) think that the Lord is Yahweh.

²³ It can be argued, however, that the context favours the identification with Yahweh instead of Christ.

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, II, p. 69.

²⁵ *Gospel according to John*, p. 172. It is a matter of history that the Eastern and Western Churches divided over the vexed question of the procession of the Spirit. The Eastern Church fought against the *filioque* clause because they were "confronted with those who tended to regard the Spirit as inferior to the Son, and in order to protect the full Deity of the Spirit it was regarded as essential to represent Him as proceeding solely from the Father as the Fountain (πηγή) of the Godhead. The Western Church, on the other hand, starting with the essential unity of the Son and the Father, desired to protect the truth that the Spirit is as much the Spirit of the Son as He is of the Father. Otherwise there could be no equality." Karl Barth defends the *filioque* in his *Kirchliche Dogmatik* I, 1, pp. 500-511. Cf. W. H. G. Thomas, *The Principles of Theology*, 3rd ed. (1945), p. 95.

33: 6; Job 26: 13; Ps. 104: 30). The Spirit in the creation narrative hovers over chaos and moves over the face of the waters (Gen. 1: 2) like a bird over its young causing life to come forth. Thus the Spirit summoned the life forth from the primitive chaos. It has been seen that the heavens were created by the Word; but the Holy Spirit calls forth the host of created things (Ps. 33: 6; cf. Job 26: 13). Hence it may be said that he created the host of the heavens and of the earth. The Spirit gives life to the animals, fowls and fishes—as the Psalmist says: “Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created” (Ps. 104: 30). Elihu says: “The Spirit of God hath made me and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life” (Job 33: 4; cf. Isa. 40: 13; Gen. 2: 7). In Judaism the Spirit was God’s agent in creation (Judith 16: 14; 2 Bar. 21: 4).

The Spirit is instrumental in the moral creation. This is the “new creation” described in Ezekiel 37 (cf. Isa. 44: 3; Joel 2: 28), and taught by our Lord in his interview with Nicodemus (John 3: 5). In Paul the work of regeneration has a dual aspect: the objective fact of Christ and the subjective gift of the Holy Spirit by which men recognize and respond to the gift of God in Christ. “Our adoption as sons of God, effected objectively in the mission and work of Christ is consummated when God sends ‘the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying, Abba Father’ ” (Gal. 4: 4-6).²⁶

The Spirit is infinite in knowledge. It is true that the Spirit is sent by God (Gal. 4: 6): but, on the other hand, the Spirit is said to be the repository of all divine knowledge and to be in God, as the Spirit of man is in man (1 Cor. 2: 10-11). This is the one approach to a metaphysic of the Divine Being that is found in the Pauline Epistles.²⁷

The Spirit is holy. Commenting on John 14: 26 William Temple says: “Here first the Comforter is spoken of as the Holy Spirit and that solemn title is given in its most formal and emphatic form. It was not an unknown title for the Divine Being in His intercourse with man (Ps. 51: 11; Isa. 63: 10), but it was not frequent. Thus it became appropriate as the name of this element within the Godhead which became known through the distinctive Christian experience of relationship to God”.²⁸

A comparison of 1 Cor. 3: 16 and 2 Cor. 6: 16 looks like a Pauline identification of the Spirit with God. In the first passage the Apostle speaks of those in whom the Spirit dwells as a temple of

²⁶ G. S. Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology* (1956), p. 35.

²⁷ R. S. Franks, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

²⁸ *Readings in St. John's Gospel* (1950), p. 247.

God, and in the second, believers are still a temple but God dwells in them. In Rom. 8: 9 the Spirit is the Spirit of God; and in the apostolic benediction the Spirit has a place with the Father and Son (2 Cor. 13: 14; cf. Matt. 28: 19). In the New Testament, lying to the Spirit is lying to God (Acts 5: 3f.), and blasphemy against the Spirit is a sin (Mark 3: 29).

There are grounds then for the personal nature and activity of the Spirit in the New Testament. He is closely associated with the work of Christ and God in creation and redemption and it is very hard at times to distinguish between God and His Spirit. Probably Jewish monotheism prevented a more explicit declaration of deity. The only answer that the Church could find was the doctrine of the Trinity.

University of Ife.