

## The Person of the Spirit

### I. The Holy Spirit is God<sup>1</sup>

- WLC 11 “How doth it appear that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father? A. The scriptures manifest that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father, ascribing unto them such names, attributes, works, and worship, as are proper to God only.”
- The Spirit has the divine name: “the Spirit of God” (Exod 31:3; 1 Cor 3:16; 26x total); “the Spirit of YHWH” (Judg 3:10; Isa 40:13; 27x total); “the Spirit of Christ/Jesus/the Son/the Lord” (Acts 16:7; Rom 8:9 [note in this text how “the Spirit of Christ” is interchangeable with “the Spirit of God”]; 2 Cor 3:17; Gal 4:6; Phil 1:19; 1 Pet 1:11)
  - Ananias lied to the “Holy Spirit” (Acts 5:3). In the next breath, Peter says that Ananias has “not lied to men but to God” (Acts 5:4).
  - We are to baptize into the name of Father, Son and Spirit (Matt 28:19).
  - The Spirit is equal to Father and Son in 1 Cor 12:4–6; 2 Cor 13:14.
  - “The Spirit says” and “Jesus says” are interchangeable in Revelation.
  - He is the “Holy” Spirit (see Isa 6:3; 57:15).
- The Spirit has divine attributes (characteristics only God has):
  - Omnipresence: Ps 139:7–10 (“Where shall I go from your Spirit?”).
  - Omniscience: Isa 40:13–14; 1 Cor 2:10–11 (only God can exhaustively know God).
  - Omnipotence: Mic 3:8; Zech 4:6; Luke 1:35; Rom 1:4; 15:19.
  - Eternity: Heb 9:14.
- The Spirit does divine works: creation, revelation, redemption, judgment (whole classes will be devoted to these).
- The Spirit receives worship:
  - See above under the divine name; note how we must not blaspheme him (Matt 12:31–32).
  - Nicene creed: “we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified”
- The Spirit is a person, like the Father and Son:
  - He loves (Rom 15:30); he searches (1 Cor 2:10–11); he judges (Acts 15:28); he hears (John 16:13); he speaks (Acts 13:2; Rev 2:7); he wills (1 Cor 12:11); he teaches (John 14:26); he witnesses (John 15:26); he intercedes (Rom 8:27) and cries “Abba! Father!” in our hearts (Gal 4:6).
  - He builds the church (Eph 2:22); he strengthens us (Eph 3:16). He is grieved by our sin (Isa 63:10; Eph 4:30).
  - Although the word “Spirit” in Greek is neuter, Scripture uses the masculine singular pronoun (=“he/him/his”) to refer to him (John 14:26; 15:26; etc.). The Spirit is not an “it”!

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<sup>1</sup> Note: on this handout and all that follow, I am deeply indebted to Herman Bavinck’s *Reformed Dogmatics*, Sinclair Ferguson’s *The Holy Spirit*, Michael Horton’s *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit*, and a host of others. I don’t cite everyone all the time.

## II. The Spirit eternally proceeds from Father and Son

- WCF 2.3: “In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.”
- The work of God in the world reflects who God is in his being.
- In redemption, the Spirit comes:
  - From the Father: John 15:26 "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.
  - And from the Son: Acts 2:33: the Son pouring out the Spirit on us.
  - But not from them separately; the Spirit proceeds *from the unity of Father and Son*: Galatians 4:6 “God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’”
- In the being of God, the Son is eternally being begotten of the Father, and the Spirit is eternally proceeding from Father and Son. All three persons partake of one divine nature.
  - They are deeply unified with each other. (John 5:19; 10:30; 14:9).
  - Perichoresis: the idea that each member of the Trinity mutually indwells the other (John 10:38; 14:11), showing the oneness amid the threeness.

## III. Why all this matters

- God gets all the honor for the work of redemption:
  - Horton: “No royal minister of a secular kingdom can cause the people to acquiesce with joy to the king’s decree, but the Spirit can accomplish this because he is the king himself who opens us up to the Father’s word and the reconciling work of the Son.”
  - The Spirit is not a mere servant of God. He is God and so he can make the Father’s will come about.
  - Hence a deeper meaning of the sentence, “God saves.”
- Expanding our understanding of the Spirit:
  - Everything that God does, the Spirit does. Wherever one person is, the other is there too (1 John 3:24; John 14:23; 2 Cor 5:19).
  - Ancient church maxim: “the works of God outside of God are undivided.”
  - Hence the Spirit is the Spirit of judgment (Gen 3:8; Exod 15:10; Lev 9:24). The Spirit is the Spirit of divine war (Judg 3:10; 1 Sam 11:6). Etc.
- Love is the ultimate reality of the universe. In the inner life of God, there is eternal love and unity and self-giving between Father, Son, and Spirit.

## IV. Goals for this course

1. To know who the Holy Spirit is, and in so doing to enjoy eternal life (John 17:3).
2. To understand how the Spirit works to bring about our redemption.
3. To learn how to relate well to the Spirit as we strive to grow as Christians.
4. To correct false understandings of the Spirit that are prevalent today.