

Divinity of the Holy Spirit

Objective

To understand who the Holy Spirit is.

To learn about the divinity of the Holy Spirit and His divine characteristics.

To understand the Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit.

To learn about the proceeding of the Holy Spirit.

Reference

The Holy Spirit And His Work In Us by HH Pope Shenouda III

Scriptural Verse

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me” (John 15:26)

Introduction

- ✠ The topic of the Holy Spirit is a very important topic in the Church because all the work of the Church depends on the Holy Spirit who works in all her sacraments.
- ✠ The Church celebrates every year the Pentecost Feast during which the Holy Spirit came upon the saintly apostles, which is considered the beginning of the Christian Church history as well as her preaching and her state of becoming widespread.
- ✠ We need to have knowledge about the Holy Spirit, who He is and what His work in us and for us is to be able to have a relationship with Him.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

- ✠ The Holy Spirit is the “Holy Spirit of God” (Ephesians 4:30), (2 Corinthians 3:3).
- ✠ He is the “Spirit of God” (Genesis 1:2), (Romans 15:19), (1 Corinthians 12:3).
- ✠ But actually the Holy Spirit is God because “God is Spirit” (John 4:24)

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- ✠ St. Peter said that lying to the Holy Spirit means lying to God (Acts 5:4). And since He is the Spirit of God (Job 33:4) (2 Corinthians 3:3), and He is the Spirit of the Lord God (Isaiah 61:1), then He is God.
- ✠ This Comforter, the Spirit of God, came upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). And He is what God promised in the book of Joel saying “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions” (Joel 2:28). St. Peter mentioned that that prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-17).
- ✠ He is the Spirit of truth (John 14:17). The Lord said about Him “Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father” (John 15:26); and also said “when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13).

1. The divinity of the Holy Spirit is proved by His presence in the Holy Trinity

- ✠ He is one with the Father and the Son: The Lord God says to His saintly apostles “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). Notice here that He says in the “Name”, and not “Names”.
- ✠ “For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one” (1 John 5:7)

2. The divinity of the Holy Spirit is proved by Him being the creator and the giver of life

- ✠ That is why He is called “the Spirit of life” (Romans 8:2) and it is mentioned in the book of Ezekiel that He is the one who gives life to the dead (Ezekiel 37:9-10). Who else can give life to the dead except only God?
- ✠ The Holy Spirit is the Hypostasis of life. He is the source of life in the whole world, whether life means existence, survival or life with God. The Orthodox Creed describes Him as “The Lord the giver of life”.

3. The divinity of the Holy Spirit is proved by Him being the source of inspiration

- ✠ The Orthodox Creed describes the Holy Spirit as “Who spoke by the prophets”. “for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21)
- ✠ Since inspiration is from the Holy Spirit, then it is from God because it is from the Spirit of God: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16), “As for Me,” says the Lord, “this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants...from this time and forevermore” (Isaiah 59:21)

Divine Characteristics of the Holy Spirit

Added to all what precedes:

1. The Holy Spirit participated with the Father and the Son in the creation process, which proves His divinity (Psalm 104:30), (Job 33:4).
2. The Bible mentions some divine characteristics of the Holy Spirit, one of which is the existence without beginning (Hebrews 9:14)
3. Among the divine characteristics of the Holy Spirit is that He is everywhere (Psalm 139:7). One of the proofs that He is everywhere is His work in us (1 Corinthians 3:16) (1 Corinthians 6:19)
4. He knows everything (1 Corinthians 2:10-11), (John 16:13), (John 14:26)
5. He is able of doing everything (Isaiah 11:2), (Romans 15:19), (1 Corinthians 2:4), (Zechariah 4:6)
6. He is the giver of extraordinary talents (James 1:17), (1 Corinthians 12:4,11)

The Lord Christ described the Holy Spirit to His disciples as “the Helper” (John 16:7) and described Him with divine characteristics, so He said:

- a. “abide with you forever” (John 14:16)
- b. “He dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:17)
- c. “whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him” (John 14:17)

The Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit

Jehovah’s witnesses do not believe that the Holy Spirit is a Hypostasis (person). They consider Him as just a power! To answer that, we say that what is mentioned in the Bible about the Holy Spirit proves that He is a person:

- ✠ He talks (Matthew 10:20), (Hebrews 3:7-9), (Acts 13:3)
- ✠ He teaches, reminds, guides, tells, convicts (John 14:26), (John 16:12,13), (John 16:8)
- ✠ He leads the believers as groups and individuals (Romans 8:14)
- ✠ He appoints the shepherds (Acts 20:28)
- ✠ He controls the servants’ movements (Acts 16: 6,7)
- ✠ He comforts the believers and makes intercessions for them (John 15:26), (Romans 8:26)
- ✠ So all those actions prove that the Holy Spirit is a person. The power is one of the results of His coming upon the believers (Acts 1:8)

The Proceeding of the Holy Spirit

- ✠ We believe that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father (John 15:26)
- ✠ This is the same as mentioned in the Orthodox Creed “Yes we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord the giver of life who proceeds from the Father”, and this is what was decided at the holy ecumenical council of Constantinople at 381 A.D.
- ✠ The Catholic, however, say “who proceeds from the Father and the Son”. So they add the sentence “and the Son” (Filioque), which never existed in the origin of the Creed and was not known during the first Christian centuries. It is said that it started to appear in Spain in the sixth century and then it moved to Rome.
- ✠ This addition faced an objection from the Catholic in the first centuries and Pope Leo the Third refused in the ninth century to “change the faith of his fathers”. The Catholics who use the Greek language do not accept this addition.
- ✠ The addition of “and the Son” was established for the Latin Catholics in the eleventh century; and it caused many divisions without a reason. It is also against our definition for the Holy Trinity. It makes in the Trinity two sons and two fathers since it considers the Holy Spirit as a son to the Son (if the Spirit proceeds from the Son), and makes the Son a Father to the Spirit too!
- ✠ The Catholics try to establish this belief from the verses that talk about the Son sending the Holy Spirit as in (John 15:26), which is clear in showing that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father although is sent by the Son.
- ✠ There is a big difference between sending and proceeding. Proceeding is without beginning while sending is limited by time.

- ✠ The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father without a beginning, according to our understanding of the Trinity. However, the Son sent the Holy Spirit to His disciples on the day of Pentecost.
- ✠ This is like when we say that the Son is begotten from the Father without a beginning, and the Father sent Him to the world born of a woman in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4).

Conclusions:

- ✠ The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and He is actually God because “God is Spirit” (John 4:24)
- ✠ He is the creator, the giver of life and the source of inspiration.
- ✠ The Holy Spirit is everywhere, knows everything and is capable of doing all things.
- ✠ The Holy Spirit dwells in us. He talks, guides, convicts, teaches, leads the believers and controls the servants’ movements.
- ✠ The Holy Spirit is the Comforter who comforts the believers and makes intercessions for them.
- ✠ The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. He was sent by the Son to the disciples on the Pentecost day.