

August 1995

Frank W. Nelte

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT GOD!

Recently the Worldwide Church of God has published a booklet which claims that "the Holy Spirit is God". To support this claim 19 different Scriptures are presented or referred to. Those 19 Scriptures are:

Acts 5:3-4

1 Corinthians 2:10

1 Corinthians 6:19

John 3:5-6,8

1 Timothy 4:1

Matthew 28:19

Psalm 104:30

Hebrews 9:14

John 14:16-17

John 14:26

1 Corinthians 2:13

Acts 13:2

2 Corinthians 3:17-18, 6

John 14:23

Romans 8:9-11

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

John 16:13

Romans 8:26

2 Corinthians 13:14.

In this article I will examine every one of the above-listed Scriptures. That should ensure that no supposed "evidence" for this claim is overlooked.

With these 19 Scriptures that are presented in that booklet we find the following situation:

- In 6 cases only the reference is given and a deduction is inferred, but the Scripture itself is not even quoted (i.e. Psalm 104:30; Hebrews 9:14; John 14:23; Romans 8:9-11; John 16:13 and Romans 8:26).
- In 3 more cases only a partial quotation is given, consisting of the phrase that is considered to be proof (i.e. Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11). The rest of the Scripture is glossed over in these cases.
- The remaining 10 Scriptures are quoted in full, but not the slightest bit of explanation is offered. We are expected to simply accept that these verses really mean what it is claimed they mean.

To summarize: What the booklet has in effect done is throw 19 different Scriptures at us in a very superficial way. None of these Scriptures are carefully examined. None of them are explained. Rather, the Scriptures are "MADE TO SAY CERTAIN THINGS", which they in fact don't say at all. This means they are twisted and presented in a wrong context. We are expected to be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the supposed "evidence" that is presented.

The quotations that are given are all quoted from the New International Version. While this version seems to use more modern language, what many people do not know is that this translation uses as its text-base the ALEXANDRIAN manuscripts, which have many differences when compared to the MAJORITY text-base, originating from ANTIOCH (where the word "Christian" was first coined, and which was a major centre for the Church in the first century A.D.).

The Alexandrian MSS are very much in the minority and they are simply not as reliable as the "Majority Text" (or "Received Text" or "Antiochian Text"). So we cannot attach any significance to the wording found in the NIV, in those cases where it differs from the KJV, unless the Greek text itself supports the wording of the NIV.

Now let's look at all the Scriptures that are presented to us.

ACTS 5:3-4

Here is this Scripture:

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back [part] of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. (Acts 5:3-4)

Notice carefully: in Acts 5:3 Peter tells Ananias that he has lied to the Holy Spirit. In Acts 5:4 Peter says that Ananias has not lied to men but to God.

So note the following:

- These two verses do NOT say that the Holy Spirit "is" God.
- To equate the expressions "lying to the Holy Spirit" in verse 3 and "lying to God" in verse 4 with "therefore the Holy Spirit IS God", is very shallow reasoning; it is a deduction made from two different statements and it is not really logical.

EXAMINING ACTS 5:3-4 :

Let's look at this situation carefully. In his own mind Ananias was trying to deceive the apostles, i.e. human beings. He did not say to himself: "I will now deceive God or the Holy Spirit". He wanted to look better and more generous than he really was before men. Peter obviously realized this. So then WHY did Peter say that Ananias had "... lied to the Holy Spirit"?

The answer is that Peter knew very well that he and the other apostles were being LED by God's Spirit. Thus the lie was told to human beings that were EMPOWERED by and LED by the Holy Spirit. The lie was not told to a specific entity or "hypostasis" of God. The lie was told to PEOPLE who had God's Spirit dwelling within them.

In Acts 5:4 Peter simply rephrased this statement slightly differently by saying that Ananias had lied "to God". Peter and the apostles represented the leadership that God had established in His Church. Thus telling a lie to Peter in a Church-context amounted to lying to God, who had given His Spirit to these leaders.

The slight rephrasing of a subject with a slightly different focus is a very common occurrence in the Bible. Peter was very familiar with this Jewish custom, being a Jew himself. To use these two verses like a mathematical equation and draw the conclusion : "Therefore it is proved that the Holy Spirit is God ... QED" is totally misrepresenting the intent of Peter's words.

Whether we refer to God or whether we refer to the Holy Spirit, the fact still remains that Ananias was in fact SPEAKING TO A HUMAN BEING! He was speaking to the Apostle Peter. He was not speaking TO God or TO the Holy Spirit. But the person he spoke to was a servant of God, who had God's Spirit within him.

Let's look at a very similar example of this type of terminology:

What Peter meant in Acts 5:3-4 is made VERY PLAIN by the apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:8. There he wrote about those in the Church who would transgress in sexual matters:

He therefore that despises, despises not man, but GOD, who has also given UNTO US His HOLY SPIRIT. (1 Thessalonians 4:8)

This is precisely what Peter meant in Acts 5:3-4. The parallel of this verse to Acts 5 should be very obvious. To despise the leadership God had appointed amounts to despising God, who had given these leaders His Holy Spirit. It is not talking about the Holy Spirit "being" God.

The New Testament very clearly refers to both, God the Father and to Jesus Christ as being God. However, NOWHERE IS THE HOLY SPIRIT CALLED GOD! A statement to that effect is simply not found in the Bible. And it is certainly not found in these verses in Acts 5.

The claim that "Acts 5:3-4 calls the Holy Spirit God" is simply not true!

Note! This Scripture is presented first because it is supposed to be the strongest and clearest "proof" that the Holy Spirit "is" God.

The other Scriptures are all even less convincing. NONE of them make a clear statement that the Holy Spirit "IS" God. They ALL involve nothing more than reasoning incorrectly in the absence of clear, unequivocal biblical statements.

Conclusion: this Scripture does not prove the claim that the Holy Spirit is supposed to be God!

1 CORINTHIANS 2:10

But God hath revealed [them] unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (1 Corinthians 2:10)

The original transliterated Greek text reads:

hemin de ho theos apekalupsen dia tou pneumatou autou to gar pneuma panta ereuna kai ta bathe tou theou (1 Corinthians 2:10 TR)

The expression "...hath revealed unto us by his Spirit" comes from "... apekalupsen dia tou pneumatou autou". The verb "apekalupsen" is in the first aorist tense. This tense is totally independent of past, present and future; it really has no equivalent in English. All the translators can do is select a tense THEY feel is appropriate. Its meaning of this verb includes the following possibilities:

God has revealed; God is revealing; God will reveal in the future.

Next, the word "dia" does NOT really mean "BY" His Spirit ... it really means "THROUGH His Spirit". In other words, God reveals His truth to us THROUGH the medium of the Holy Spirit, WHICH IS EXACTLY WHAT PAUL EXPLAINS IN THE NEXT VERSE! When we receive God's Spirit, it opens our minds to an understanding of God's truth. Here is the next verse:

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but [by] the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:11)

It is not as if one of the three "hypostases" of God has to hang around every believer and continually reveal truth. Once a person has received God's Spirit, that is all that is needed! That indwelling spirit-essence will continue to open our minds, as we yield to and submit to God's leadership. That is how that source of power affects human minds!

The expression "indeed the Spirit searcheth all things" comes from "to gar pneuma panta ereuna" and this verb "ereuna" is also used in Romans 8:27:

ho de ereunon tas kardias oiden ti to phronema tou pneumatou hoti kata theon entugchanei huper hagion (Romans 8:27 TR)

And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what [is] the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to [the will of] God. (Romans 8:27)

Here the form is "ereunon", the participle of the present active. In 1 Corinthians 2:10 it is the indicative of the present active. But it is the same word "ereunao" in both places.

Now notice: in Romans 8:27 it is GOD who searches the hearts, NOT the Spirit. When we put these two verses together as well as 1 Corinthians 2:11, then it becomes very plain that GOD does the searching and the revealing, and He does so by using the "power" of the Holy Spirit.

The claim that this verse proves that the Holy Spirit is "omniscient" is nonsense! That statement ascribes some kind of individual identity to the Holy Spirit. What this verse REALLY proves is that GOD is all-knowing. And God utilizes the medium of this power called "Holy Spirit" to know all things. That's the same as we are told in Hebrews 4:13.

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things [are] naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. (Hebrews 4:13)

Reasoning from "attributes" is illogical! God is not just a collection of attributes! "ELECTRICITY" for example, has the ability to make thousands of different things work and perform in ways that are far superior to what we human beings can do. Yet those attributes don't make "electricity" human! Yes, certainly, God's POWER is just as eternal as God is, but that does not make that POWER equal to God; i.e. it does not make that power "God".

In summary: there is nothing in 1 Corinthians 2:10 that in any way conflicts with the previous understanding the Church has had regarding the Holy Spirit, i.e. that the Holy Spirit is the power that both, God the Father and Jesus Christ use to do the things They do!

Conclusion: this Scripture also does not prove that the Holy Spirit is God!

1 CORINTHIANS 6:19

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost [which is] in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19)

This Scripture is used to claim that the Holy Spirit is "omnipresent". First of all: whether God's Spirit is EVERYWHERE or not does not prove that the Holy Spirit "is God". This is once again reasoning from attributes, because there simply are no clear statements that the Holy Spirit "is" God! Attributes don't really prove anything! What if scientists create a machine that exhibits a number of HUMAN attributes ... would that make the machine "human"? Of course not!

This verse does not in any way conflict with the Church's old understanding that the Holy Spirit is THE POWER which flows out from God, and which God utilizes to do His work of creating. And it is "given" to all those who are truly repentant believers who obey God, something Peter also explained.

And we are his witnesses of these things; and [so is] also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. (Acts 5:32)

Next, this verse (1 Corinthians 6:19) doesn't speak about the Spirit being "OMNIpresent" ... it only speaks about the Spirit being IN BELIEVERS (as Acts 5:32 also shows). God's Spirit is NOT present in the millions of human beings who are rebellious towards God. There are very clearly huge multitudes who do NOT have the Holy Spirit, as the last half of Romans 8:9 also shows.

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now IF ANY MAN HAVE NOT THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, he is none of his. (Romans 8:9)

To summarize: the fact that this power of the Holy Spirit is "... not limited to any one place" does not make it "God"!

Conclusion: this Scripture also does not prove that the Holy Spirit is God!

JOHN 3:5-6, 8

This reads:

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT IS SPIRIT. (John 3:5-6)

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one THAT IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT. (John 3:8)

First of all, there is nothing in these verses that conflicts with our old understanding of the Holy Spirit; i.e. God USES the power of the Holy Spirit to achieve these things.

Next, the expression "that which is born" in verse 6 is the Greek word "GEGENNEMENON", which is the perfect, passive participle of the verb "born". The participle means that this is basically like a verbal noun. The perfect tense in Greek is used for an action that HAS BEEN COMPLETED!

In plain English: "that which is born" talks about a process that has been finished, completed!

The expression "of the spirit is spirit" is the Greek "EK TOU PNEUMATOS PNEUMA ESTIN". Here "estin" is the present indicative of the third person singular of the verb "to be". The indicative mood is used to express a statement of fact, and this is present tense! This verse thus very clearly says, when we understand the Greek:

"that which has been born (with the birth completed!) IS RIGHT NOW spirit, and that is a fact!"

With this description here in verse 6 the Greek text makes clear that anyone who is not spirit right now cannot yet be "born of the spirit".

Now let's look at John 3:8 more closely:

The last expression in this verse, "that is born of the Spirit" comes from the Greek "PAS HO GEGENNEMENOS" and here the verb is in the perfect, passive participle. Again remember: the perfect tense refers to an action that has been completed in the past. So in plain language, this verse says: when the process of being born of the Spirit is COMPLETELY FINISHED, we will in some regards be like the wind. We are evidently NOT at all like that right now.

To summarize: this passage of Scripture first of all shows that the new teaching about "born again" is biblically incorrect; and it does not in any way imply that the Holy Spirit is one "Person" of the Godhead.

Again, there is nothing in these verses that in any way conflicts with the Church's old understanding about the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion: these verses also do not prove that the Holy Spirit is God!

1 TIMOTHY 4:1

This verse reads:

NOW THE SPIRIT SPEAKETH EXPRESSLY, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; (1 Timothy 4:1)

The booklet quotes this as "THE SPIRIT CLEARLY SAYS ...", implying that the Holy Spirit "spoke" to someone. This would give it one more "ATTRIBUTE" in our collection towards divine status.

The Greek words for "now the Spirit speaketh expressly" are "TO DE PNEUMA RHETOS LEGEI". Here "rhetos" (translated as "expressly") is the interesting word. "Rhetos" means: IN STATED TERMS, from "rhema" meaning "a word".

Now notice carefully how meanings get changed:

- "rhetos" means "in stated terms";
- "express" means "to represent in words", thus originally a fairly accurate translation;
- "clearly", used in the booklet, is far less precise and far more general; it is non-specific.

THIS HIDES THE MEANING OF THE GREEK TEXT!

What Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 4:1 really means:

"Now the Spirit IN EXPRESSED TERMS speaks, that in the latter times ..."

In other words, Paul was referring to something that had PREVIOUSLY been stated under inspiration. He was referring either to certain O.T. prophecies or else to Matthew 24:10-12,24.

And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. (Matthew 24:10-12)

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if [it were] possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (Matthew 24:24)

Paul is NOT saying that the Spirit spoke to him personally, telling him these things. It is simply his way of referring to previous prophecies that had been given under inspiration.

So once again we see that this is not a Scripture about a "talking" spirit. Thus again, there is nothing in this verse that in any way conflicts with the Church's old understanding about the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion: this verse also does not prove that the Holy Spirit is God!

MATTHEW 28:19

This verse reads:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (Matthew 28:19)

The booklet claims that the Holy Spirit ... "is equated with the Father and the Son in the baptismal ceremony". Again, in the absence of any clear statement that the Holy Spirit "is" God, this is one more way of "reasoning out" God. If the Holy Spirit really were God, it would be terribly unfair for God not to tell us so in plain terms.

In this verse the expression "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" is translated from the Greek "eis to onoma tou patros kai tou huiou kai tou hagiou pneumatos".

"Eis" with the accusative used here means "INTO". There is a different word for "in". The use of "onoma" (i.e. "name") here is a very common one; it is frequently found in the Greek LXX and also in the papyri to mean: "POWER" or "AUTHORITY". This common LXX and papyri use certainly applies also to Matthew 28:19. To be immersed into "the name" had to have some significance to people ... and it did, picturing POWER AND AUTHORITY.

In plain language, at baptism we become immersed INTO the power that is shared by God the Father and by Jesus Christ ... and that power IS the Holy Spirit! That power is available ONLY to the Father and to Christ and to those to whom God gives it upon repentance and baptism.

Put another way, the baptism formula shows us what we receive (we receive what we are "immersed into"). We "receive" the name of God and of Christ ... we become begotten children of God, with His name upon us. And we also "receive" the gift of the Holy Spirit, the very power-source of God Himself.

Never forget the meaning of the word "baptize"! What we are "immersed INTO", we become a part of. We become a part of God's Family, with God's name upon us. And we can tap into the very power of God, the Holy Spirit.

Think for a moment: to be baptized into "the power and authority of the Father and of the Son" only is incomplete! It is the access to God's powerbase, the Holy Spirit, that actually immerses us into the power of the Father and the Son. Without access to the Holy Spirit IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to become associated with God! Can we grasp WHY ... "and of the Holy Spirit" simply HAD TO BE INCLUDED in the baptismal formula?!

Once again this verse does not conflict with our old understanding of the Holy Spirit. It is not trying to "equate" the Spirit with the Father and with Jesus Christ at all!

Conclusion: this verse also does not prove that the Holy Spirit is God!

PSALM 104:30

This verse reads:

Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth. (Psalm 104:30)

The booklet states in regard to this reference: "the Spirit creates out of nothing. Only God can create like that".

This is one more attempt at trying to notch up another godly attribute for the Holy Spirit. We must keep in

mind that "an attribute" does not make God, any more than a dog is human just because it has the attribute of needing to breathe air to sustain its life, like human beings do.

The verb "you send forth" is a translation of the Hebrew verb "SHALACH", with the piel root and in the imperfect mood. The piel root expresses "intensive" or "intentional" action. The imperfect mood expresses an action or process which is incomplete.

Thus: In this verse GOD is shown as purposefully sending forth His Spirit, and continuing to do so.

The verb "they are created" in Hebrew is "BARA", with the niph'al root and also the imperfect mood. The niph'al root expresses the passive voice of simple or casual action.

Note that it is the "passive" voice. It does not say that the Spirit, as an entity with a mind of its own, does the creating. What this verse says in plain words is: GOD creates by utilizing the power of the Holy Spirit, which He has sent out!

The next part of this verse makes this clear. It says: "YOU renew ..." and not "IT (i.e. the Spirit) renews ..."! It is GOD who sends out, creates and renews ... and He does this by utilizing the power of the Holy Spirit.

When you plug a television set into an electric power point, then you are sending forth electricity into the TV and through the electricity it gives out pictures and sounds. But that does not give electricity human status because the electricity created pictures and sounds "out of nothing". That would be a ridiculous conclusion!

Again, there is nothing in this verse that conflicts with the Church's old understanding about the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion: this verse also does not prove that the Holy Spirit is God!

HEBREWS 9:14

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:14)

The booklet claims: "Hebrews 9:14 says the Holy Spirit is eternal. Only God is eternal."

First of all, that argument is wrong! We human beings are human irrespective of whether we are weak or strong, tall or small, intelligent or dull, black or white, etc.. But with God there is a condition: With God, God is eternal and HIS POWER is also eternal ... i.e. He has an ETERNAL power-source. Without a power-source that is eternal, God simply would not be "God". God's source of power MUST be eternal! And it is! That power proceeds out --- FOR EVER --- from the Father and from Jesus Christ. That's what Revelation 22:1 shows.

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. (Revelation 22:1)

The supply is endless! So to deduce that the Spirit must be God just because it is endless, ALWAYS a part of God's existence, does not make sense. There is no reason to suppose that this "pure river of water of life" IS God!

Next, the expression "through the eternal Spirit" in Hebrews 9:14 is translated from the Greek "dia pneumatos aioniou". The word "dia" means: "through" or "proceeding from" or "by means of". It can in this context have four possible applications:

- 1) of PLACE;
- 2) of TIME;
- 3) of MEANS;
- 4) GROUND or REASON by which something is done.

When we try to apply all four of these options, it becomes obvious that here it must mean: "by means of". Thus the verse reads in English:

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who BY MEANS OF the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God ..."

We've already seen why the power the eternal God uses must also obviously be eternal; so that is not the issue here. Rather we should clearly understand what Paul actually DOES mean in this verse.

Now exactly HOW does the Holy Spirit tie in here? Clearly it was Christ, and not the Holy Spirit that was sacrificed.

The answer is that it was "by means of" the Holy Spirit, to which Christ had constant access, that Christ was able to offer Himself "WITHOUT SPOT TO GOD". Without constant and unlimited access to God's Spirit, Christ would not have remained "without spot". That is why Christ's sacrifice was "by means of" the eternal Spirit.

Anyway, this verse once again does not say anything that conflicts with the Church's old understanding about the Holy Spirit. Of course, God's power is eternal. Anything else would not make sense.

Conclusion: this verse also does not prove that the Holy Spirit is God!

JOHN 14:16-17

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; [Even] the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (John 14:16-17)

The booklet states: "Jesus specifically identified the Counselor as the Holy Spirit." The insinuation is that therefore the Holy Spirit must be a separate individual thinking "being" or "person".

What this does is lift these verses out of their context. If we carry on reading, it becomes very clear that Jesus Christ was using a figure of speech, personification. The pronoun "he" is purely a grammatical requirement of the Greek language, and proves nothing by itself.

Here is the next verse:

I will not leave you comfortless: I WILL COME TO YOU. (John 14:18)

And verse 20 states:

At that day ye shall know that I [am] in my Father, and YE IN ME, and I IN YOU. (John 14:20)

By sending the Holy Spirit, here by personification referred to as "Comforter" or "Counselor", Jesus Christ Himself would in fact come into a believer's mind. "Comforting" and "counseling" involves influencing how THE MIND thinks. It is not a matter of sending some "person" to talk to us, but of sending a spirit that influences HOW we think. And in that way Christ Himself comes to us; He influences our minds "by means of" this spirit power.

There is nothing in these verses either that conflicts with our old understanding of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion: these verses also don't prove that the Holy Spirit is God!

JOHN 14:26

But the Comforter, [which is] the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:26)

The booklet continues here from the previous verses and quotes this verse as further "proof" that Jesus ... "specifically identified the Counselor as the Holy Spirit".

Again, this clearly is a case of personification, a very common figure of speech. The previous comments apply here also.

A careful examination of THE WHOLE CONTEXT shows precisely what Christ meant. We saw verse 20 earlier. Let's continue with verse 21.

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. (John 14:21)

Christ said that HE would "manifest" HIMSELF to believers, not a different "person" manifesting to them. Judas didn't understand this, and so he asked:

Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, HOW is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? (John 14:22)

Christ's answer explains this! Was it going to be by sending "the third hypostasis"? Would "three in one" start to live within a believer? Notice:

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, AND WE WILL COME UNTO HIM, AND MAKE OUR ABODE WITH HIM. (John 14:23)

"WE", the Father and Christ, would come and be within the believer ... and they would do this "by means

of" the Holy Spirit. Notice verse 25:

These things have I spoken unto you, being [yet] present with you. (John 14:25)

Verse 26 shows that the Holy Spirit would HELP THEM TO REMEMBER everything that Christ had told them, a spirit power that would influence their minds.

There is nothing here in all of chapter 14 of the Gospel of John that implies the Holy Spirit is "co-equal" with the Father and with Jesus Christ, or that it is a "person".

1 CORINTHIANS 2:13

This verse reads:

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but WHICH THE HOLY GHOST TEACHETH; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (1 Corinthians 2:13)

It is claimed that this also shows the Holy Spirit accomplishing things that ... "can rightly be ascribed only to God".

The expression "which the Holy Spirit teacheth" is translated from the Greek "en didaktois pneumatous hagiou". Note that the words for "Holy Spirit" (i.e. "pneumatous hagiou") are in the genitive case, meaning "OF the Holy Spirit". Next, the word translated "teaches" is not really a verb at all! Rather, the word "didaktois" is an ADJECTIVE, preceded by the preposition "en", which means "in". In plain terms:

NO DOING OR ACTION IS REALLY STATED HERE! THERE IS NO VERB, ONLY AN ADJECTIVE!

This verse is certainly not speaking about some "hypostasis" actively teaching the truth to people like Paul! By translating a Greek adjective into an English verb, the real meaning becomes somewhat obscured!

Let's also look at the first part of this verse. In this verse Paul is making a comparison. By finding out exactly HOW man's wisdom teaches, we can find out HOW the Holy Spirit teaches. Read the whole verse carefully again.

So HOW does man's wisdom teach us? The answer is: WE USE REASON! There is no "person" or "being" or "hypostasis" called "man's wisdom", right?! So therefore we are obviously once again faced with the figure of speech called "personification". In the second part of this verse Paul is using exactly the same approach. Remember that the expression we are examining does not contain a verb! So HOW does the Holy Spirit teach us? WE USE GODLY REASONING! And the Holy Spirit is not the subject in this expression ... it is in the GENITIVE case, remember?

In this verse Paul is speaking about HIS OWN EPISTLES, the things which he spoke. He is saying that the things that he wrote and spoke were not the product of human reason, but of a mind that was guided and directed by God's Holy Spirit. It is really quite simple; the possible confusion arises from the translators making two changes:

a) They made the Holy Spirit to THE SUBJECT in this phrase;

b) They changed the adjective "didaktos" into the VERB "teach".

Moffatt recognized that this expression does not contain a verb, and so he translated this verse as follows:

"And this is what we discuss, USING LANGUAGE taught by no human wisdom but by the Spirit. We interpret what is spiritual in spiritual language." (1 Cor. 2:13, Moffatt)

He put the emphasis on "using language", not on the "teaching", which is only expressed in adjectives in the Greek in this verse.

Further, the NIV quotation (which is given in the booklet) is totally unreliable. The booklet quotes the NIV as saying:

"... but IN WORDS taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words."

The NIV is translated from the Alexandrian text-base. Now the Alexandrian text for this verse omits the word "hagiu" (i.e. holy). That is why the NIV omits the word "Holy" in front of "Spirit". That's not necessarily a problem. I mention this merely to illustrate that this is in fact the text-base of the NIV.

But here is the unreliability of the NIV:

THE GREEK TEXT ON WHICH THE NIV IS BASED SIMPLY DOES NOT SAY: "IN WORDS ..."!!

"In words" is NOT a part of the Greek text! The NIV translators ADDED that phrase out of their own imaginations! The Greek text used by the NIV translators reads: "... alla didaktois pneumatatos pneumatikois pneumatika sugkrinontes", and this simply does not say: "IN WORDS ..."!

Can we see what an unreliable translation the NIV is, when the translators simply add words as they see fit?

God's Word simply does not say "IN WORDS taught by the Spirit". So the whole argument in the booklet is once again disproved!

Conclusion: this verse also doesn't prove that the Holy Spirit is God!

ACTS 13:2

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. (Acts 13:2)

Note carefully:

We have thus far examined all 11 Scriptures that have been presented in the booklet as "proof" that the Holy Spirit "is" God. We have seen that EVERY ONE OF THESE SCRIPTURES does not really say what the booklet claims it says! NONE of these Scriptures have in fact "proved" that the Holy Spirit is God! We are still totally without even a shred of proof for this claim!

NOW the booklet makes an assumption! It assumes that it has been established as A FACT that the Holy Spirit "is" God. Trying to force acceptance of this assumption, it is stated:

"WHEN WE UNDERSTAND that God is one (the proof for this claim is also notoriously lacking!), and that the Holy Spirit is God (then) we have no problem understanding a passage like Acts 13:2 ...".

In other words: IF we approach Acts 13:2 with the preconceived idea that the Holy Spirit is one of the three persons in the Godhead, THEN we'll have no problem explaining Acts 13:2 in the same terms! Not exactly a very open approach, is it?

Anyway, since these assumptions have NOT been proved, we need to examine Acts 13:2 on its own merits, in its own context and WITHOUT accepting these assumptions!

Before looking at the Greek text, let's ask some questions:

The verse says: "... for the work whereunto I HAVE CALLED THEM". Who is this "I"?

Did the Holy Spirit "call" them to this work?? Who does "the calling" to the work of God ... the Holy Spirit or God the Father? What did Jesus Christ tell us? Is that "calling" something that has to be "given by the Father"?

And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were GIVEN UNTO HIM OF MY FATHER. (John 6:65)

Jesus Christ didn't claim to do the calling. He acknowledged that this was done by God the Father. Why would another "person" of the Godhead now all of a sudden state: "... whereunto I HAVE CALLED THEM"? If the Holy Spirit was also God "just as the Son is God", how could the Holy Spirit possibly make such a claim? Is the Holy Spirit shown anywhere else as making the decision "to call" people to specific jobs in God's work?

Let's also look at the next verse:

AND WHEN THEY HAD FASTED and prayed, and laid [their] hands on them, they sent [them] away. (Acts 13:3)

Now IF they really had received a VERBAL, AUDIBLE instruction from one of the "persons" in the Godhead, WHY would they thereafter have "fasted", BEFORE carrying out the instruction they had been given? Let's compare this to Abraham: AFTER God had told him to sacrifice his son, would God have expected Abraham to first fast a few days and then carry out God's instruction ... or did God expect Abraham to carry out the clear instruction without delay? The answer is obvious. Abraham was to carry out God's instruction without delay!

The instruction "separate me Barnabas and Saul ..." is very clear, if given in audible words. WHY did they not obey immediately? After all, they had ALREADY been fasting BEFORE this instruction was supposedly "spoken" (see first part of the verse). These are things to think about.

Now let's look at the transliterated Greek text of this verse:

"leitourgounton de auton to kurio kai nesteuonton eipen to pneuma to hagion aphorise de moi ton te Barnaban kai ton Saulon eis to ergon ho proskeklemai autous". (Acts 13:2 TR)

The expression "the Holy Spirit said" is in Greek "eipen to pneuma to hagion". The verb "eipen" is the SECOND AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE of the obsolete present form of the verb "epo", to say. It is important to note that this is NOT THE PRESENT TENSE! The previous verbs ("they ministered" = "leitourgounton" and "fasted" = "nesteuonton") are both in the present tense ... but "the Holy Spirit said ..." is NOT in the present tense; it is in the aorist tense. This tense does not tell you a specific point in time WHEN this was (or had been?) said.

The expression "aphorise de moi" means: "separate now therefore TO ME (or FOR ME)" ... "moi" being the dative case.

"Proskelamai" is a middle voice form of the verb "proskaleo" and the middle voice forms express reflexive actions. Also, this verb is in the perfect tense, which describes an action as HAVING BEEN COMPLETED IN THE PAST. Thus:

"Eis to ergon ho proskeklemai autous" really means: "for the work whereunto I have called them unto myself", this "calling" having been COMPLETED at some time in the past ... i.e. when GOD first called them into His Church. Remember Paul's calling:

But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: (Acts 9:15)

Now, in Acts 13:2, was the Holy Spirit somehow calling Paul AGAIN, after Jesus Christ had earlier, in a vision, already revealed Paul's calling to Ananias? Obviously not.

Notice one other point: in verse 3 we are told that the Church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas out. But verse 4 says that the Holy Spirit sent them out. Here are verses 3-4:

And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid [their] hands on them, THEY sent [them] away. So they, being sent forth BY THE HOLY GHOST, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. (Acts 13:3-4)

So WHO actually sent them out ... the Church or the Holy Spirit? And WHO separated them "unto Himself" ... God or the Holy Spirit? And WHO had "called" them to this work ... God or the Holy Spirit? And WHEN were they "called" to this work ... then or earlier? And WHY did they fast "after" the Holy Spirit had "spoken"? And WHY is the aorist tense used and not the present tense for "said"?

So far NONE of the Scriptures presented have in any way "proved" that the Holy Spirit "is" God. The above questions can readily be answered by the Church's old understanding about the Holy Spirit. Nothing in this passage really conflicts with that understanding.

Acts 13:2 most certainly does NOT say: the Holy Spirit IS God!

Conclusion: this verse also does not prove the point!

2 CORINTHIANS 3:17-18,6

These verses state:

Now THE LORD IS THAT SPIRIT: and where the Spirit of the Lord [is], there [is] liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, [even] as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

Verse 6 reads:

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but THE SPIRIT GIVETH LIFE. (2 Corinthians 3:6)

The booklet then states:

"Paul says that 'the Lord is the Spirit', and he speaks of 'the Lord, who is the Spirit'."

THIS IS BASED ON QUOTING THE NIV-TRANSLATION! It is incorrect! The insinuation apparently seems to be that Paul also referred to the Holy Spirit as "the Lord". If that is what is implied, then it can only be described as "weird"!

The NIV reads as follows:

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, WHICH COMES FROM THE LORD, WHO IS THE SPIRIT. (2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV)

THIS IS ANOTHER MISTRANSLATION IN THE NIV !!

Here is the transliterated Greek text:

hemeis de pantes anakekalummeno prosopo ten doxan kuriou katoptrizomenoi ten auten eikona metamorphoumetha apo doxes eis doxan kathaper apo kuriou pneumatatos (2 Corinthians 3:18)

The last part of this verse reads: "kathaper apo kuriou pneumatatos".

"Kathaper" is an adverbial conjunction from "katha" + "per" and is best rendered in English as: "even as", "just as", etc.. "Kuriou" and "pneumatatos" are both in the genitive singular case.

The words in the NIV "comes" and "who is" are NOT found in the Greek text! Not even in the Alexandrian text! Once again the NIV-translators decided to add a few words of their own. And they certainly don't reflect the original meaning!

The correct meaning of that last expression in verse 18 is:

- "altogether OF the Spirit OF the Lord"; or
- "indeed OF the Spirit OF the Lord; or
- "even as OF the Spirit Of the Lord", etc..

To get the meaning of this verse, read it for the thought-flow:

"But we all ... are changed into the same image ... even as OF (or "by") the Spirit OF the Lord." That is the main thought of this verse. Read the whole verse. It is quite clear, even though the NIV does its best to obscure this.

The reference to the NIV does not prove anything at all. It is a lousy translation, and that's all it proves!

Furthermore, the expression "the Lord is THAT Spirit" in verse 17 is a clear reference to the preceding verses. Paul had been discussing the events of Exodus chapter 34, where Moses had put a veil over his face after having been in the presence of God.

Comparing this with the account in Exodus 34:33-35 and with the preceding part of 2 Corinthians 3, shows that Paul is showing that Jesus Christ, "the Lord" is that Spirit who dealt with Israel in the days of Moses. In fact, a careful reading of these verses makes quite clear that the Holy Spirit CANNOT have a separate individual identity!

Now let's briefly look at verse 6 again:

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit:
FOR THE LETTER KILLETH, BUT THE SPIRIT GIVETH LIFE. (2 Corinthians 3:6)

This is an obvious case of personification, where Paul contrasts "the letter" with "the spirit". "The letter" doesn't literally kill; and there is no third "hypostasis" which literally gives life! Obviously GOD is the One who gives life, and Paul was not detracting from that in any way.

Once again there is nothing in these verses that conflicts with the Church's old understanding about the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion: these verses also do not prove that the Holy Spirit is God!

JOHN 14:23

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and WE WILL COME UNTO HIM, AND MAKE OUR ABODE WITH HIM. (John 14:23)

The booklet states:

"Jesus dwells in us and the Father dwells in us, but that is only because the Spirit dwells in us."

That is correct ... but that does NOT warrant the assumption that the Holy Spirit therefore is a co-equal member of the Godhead. Both, God the Father and Jesus Christ, are the sources of the power of the Holy Spirit (we already saw that earlier, when we discussed Revelation 22:1), and thus it is at various times also called "the Spirit of God" and "the Spirit of Christ".

There is nothing in this verse that conflicts with our old understanding about the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion: this verse also does not prove that the Holy Spirit is God!

ROMANS 8:9-11

These verses are merely listed with John 14:23 in the booklet as supposed "proof" for the previous argument. They are not quoted.

Here are these verses:

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ [be] in you, the body [is] dead because of sin; but the Spirit [is] life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. (Romans 8:9-11)

There is nothing here in these verses that in any way conflicts with the way we have always understood the Holy Spirit. The booklet presents these verses with the unproven and wrong assumption that "God is one".

It says: "SINCE God is one ..." and proceeds to make a statement. Well, "SINCE" the premise is wrong, THEREFORE the statement is meaningless!

Conclusion: these verses also do not prove that the Holy Spirit is God!

1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-11

This whole section is referred to, although only a brief portion of two verses is actually quoted, verse 6 and verse 11. The claim is made that the Spirit "wills" because the Spirit "is" God.

Here is verse 6:

And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. (1 Corinthians 12:6)

And here is verse 11:

But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. (1 Corinthians 12:11)

These two verses are treated like a mathematical equation, without the slightest consideration for what they actually say and for what is being discussed in the intervening verses.

A correct understanding of these verses must take the whole context of Paul's statements into account, which context is a discussion of spiritual gifts.

Notice:

1 Corinthians 12:4 shows that ALL spiritual gifts are manifestations of that one and same power, the Holy Spirit of God.

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:4)

1 Corinthians 12:5 shows that Jesus Christ is the One who administers these gifts.

And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. (1 Corinthians 12:5)

1 Corinthians 12:6 shows that it is the same God that works in all those doing the work of God, some more zealously than others.

And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. (1 Corinthians 12:6)

1 Corinthians 12:7-10 then elaborates on specific ways that the power of the Holy Spirit is used in doing the work of God.

1 Corinthians 12:11 carries on the thought from verse 6 and tells us that these things are all achieved through the power of the same Spirit, which GOD controls.

But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. (1 Corinthians 12:11)

This verse is talking about God the Father "willing" these things, not about the Holy Spirit somehow expressing a will. "As HE wills" refers to the Father, not to the Spirit, which would, in any case, be "as IT wills". The God who works everything out (verse 6) is the One who wills and controls these things (verse 11). Verses 6 and 11 are linked by the same verb, that verb being "works".

It is God the Father who wills, not the Spirit! The Spirit is a power and does not have a will.

Once again, these verses don't really conflict with our old understanding about the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion: these verses also don't prove that the Holy Spirit is God!

JOHN 16:13

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, [that] shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. (John 16:13)

The booklet states: "the Comforter (like the Son) will not speak on his own."

This is just a way of personifying the power of the Holy Spirit, to explain this to the disciples. As we've already seen, this figure of speech is used many times. The Greek word for "Spirit" is neuter and the pronouns in this verse should really be rendered as "it" and not as "he".

This also is not in conflict with our old understanding of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion: this verse also does not prove that the Holy Spirit is God!

ROMANS 8:26

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but THE SPIRIT ITSELF maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. (Romans 8:26)

The booklet states: "it is the Spirit in us that helps us in our prayers, and, in fact, intercedes for us."

Notice that here the translators correctly rendered it as ... "the Spirit ITSELF ...".

Let's look at the transliterated Greek text:

"hosautos de kai to pneuma sunantilambanetai tais astheneiais hemon to gar ti proseuchometha katho dei ouk oidamen all auto to pneuma huperentugchanei huper hemon stenagmois alaletois" (Romans 8:26 TR)

The expression "helps our infirmities" is translated from: "sunantilambanetai tais astheneiais hemon". The middle or passive deponent voice here expresses a reflexive action. It means :

- "to lend a hand together with"; or
- "at the same time with one".

"Huperentugchanei" means: to make intercession ("entugchano") with above ("huper").

This verse tells us that the Holy Spirit enables us TO COMMUNICATE WITH GOD ABOVE, by helping us to formulate our thoughts and feelings into words in our prayers.

This reflects exactly the understanding that the Church has always had about the Holy Spirit.

The next verse shows clearly that it is Jesus Christ who intercedes for us.

And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what [is] the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to [the will of] God. (Romans 8:27)

Jesus Christ, the Word of God, searches our hearts (see also Hebrews 4:12) and He knows what is in our minds, and therefore He makes intercession for us, as our High Priest, before God the Father. Christ is our "advocate" with the Father (1 John 2:1). He makes this intercession only according to the will of God, i.e. if we are in a repentant frame of mind.

Jesus Christ, not the Holy Spirit, is the One who intercedes for us. He can do so BECAUSE He paid for our sins and transgressions; the Holy Spirit (IF it were a co-equal member of the Godhead) is not in a position to intercede for us, since it has not brought any sacrifice on our behalf!

The Holy Spirit enables us to communicate with God above, expressing our repentance and reverence and worship, and then Christ can intercede as our advocate because of the sacrifice He has brought for us.

This verse does not in any way imply that the Holy Spirit "is" God. It is readily explained by our old

understanding.

Conclusion: this verse also does not prove the point!

So now let's look at the last scripture, quoted in this section, which is supposed to prove that the Holy Spirit "is" God.

2 CORINTHIANS 13:14

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, [be] with you all. Amen. [The second [epistle] to the Corinthians was written from Philippi, [a city] of Macedonia, by Titus and Lucas.] (2 Corinthians 13:14)

The booklet states: "Paul highlights ... the unified fellowship with himself and one another he gives us through the Holy Spirit."

The fact that we can have fellowship with God through the power of the Holy Spirit, does not in any way imply that therefore the Holy Spirit "is" God! That is all that needs to be said.

The relevant phrase in the Greek text reads: "kai he koinonia tou hagiou pneumatos meta panton humon". This means: "and the having in common of the Holy Spirit with all of you". Certainly, the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit is what all true believers have in common; and you can call that power "the Spirit of God" or you can call it "the Spirit of Christ" (see Romans 8:9). It is the same power, the same Spirit.

There is nothing in this closing verse of Second Corinthians that indicates that the Holy Spirit "is" God.

We have now examined every single reference that is presented in the booklet under the subheading "The Holy Spirit Is God". This includes those references where not even a single word is actually quoted. The idea that the Holy Spirit "is" God is contrary to the Bible. It is in fact nothing more than the view of Athanasius, which the Catholic Church Council of Nicea accepted in 325 A.D.. But that does not mean that it is what GOD actually teaches us in the Bible.

Clearly the Holy Spirit is not "God". It is THE POWER which God the Father and Jesus Christ both use, and which power flows out from them.

Frank W. Nelte