

Holy Spirit

Holy means set apart. When God is the referent, it means that God is set apart to Himself. In Exodus 3:14, when asked by Moses for His Name, God replied, "I am that I am." This means that there is no one like Him, not in one's farthest imaginations, and that is the essence of His holiness. The New Testament reveals what the essence of God is: *God is love* (I John 4:8). Therefore, to speak of God's holiness is to speak of the beautiful and wonderful interpenetrating reality of the self-giving love between the three persons of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit. Each person of the Godhead is set apart to each other in the delight of self-giving love, truly a wonder beyond the farthest limits of finite contemplation. To speak of Holy is to contemplate the eternal wellspring of love that flings Himself away, first within Himself and, second, in His action to give Himself in totality to His creation. Holiness is the warmth of immeasurable and eternal affection. Holiness is the embrace of a God who will not be God without you. Holy is a father who runs to a son that smells like a pig and flings His arms around him kissing that filthy flesh all over saying, "My son, you were dead but now you are alive." Holy is the out-radiance of the undivided light of the love of God. **Spirit** means invisible person, who a person essentially is. Spirit is the essential being of God who is love. In both Hebrew and Greek, spirit carries the image of breath or wind. This wind is revealed sometimes as a gentle breeze, bringing nourishment and refreshment. At other times this breath is revealed as a violent, rushing whirlwind, purging, like fire, everything in its path. The God-wind is love that will not let me go and not let me remain in the pig sty of my fallenness. Spirit is the out-breathing, the out-reaching of the love that God is. Spirit is love-breath, love in action changing me, baby step by baby step, from glory to glory, as a participant in His holiness. The essence of the grace of the self-giving love of the Father as revealed by the Son is being breathed into me by the Spirit. "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

James D. Nickel

The Holy Spirit does not dispense His gifts to His people like Santa Claus distributing individual presents. The Holy Spirit does not come with gifts; He comes with Himself and He manifests Himself in a multitude of ways (I Corinthians 12).

James Nickel

God did not give us Scripture to convey to us mere, brute facts. Yes, facts are given in Scripture, but given as instruments to motivate us, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to change our lives. Never merely forage Scripture for information ... if you do, the life of a Pharisee lies within your immediate grasp.

James Nickel

The illuminating work, yes, even the revealing and inspiring work of the Holy Spirit did not terminate with the "drying of the ink on the last page of the book of Revelation." God the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of Scripture, but He is also active in our reading of Scripture. Are our eyes focused and ears attuned?

James Nickel

The Holy Spirit is the face of God turned toward the believer with the shining light of His abiding presence. In this context, ponder Numbers 6:24-26.

James Nickel

Knowing the third person of the trinity, God the Spirit, necessitates both knowledge and experience, truth and transformation.

James Nickel

"The letter kills, the Spirit gives life." To study the Bible without reliance upon both the illumination and correction of the Holy Spirit is deadly and it will produce deadly people.

James Nickel

Holy Spirit

Far too many people (including theologians, pastors, and congregations) pay “lip service” to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. If we merely state the creed, “I believe in the Holy Spirit,” without experiencing the Holy Spirit in life, love, blessing, gifts, knowledge, power, and authority, our creed, instead of an expression of the dynamics of the Living God, will become nothing but empty words voiced from spiritual corpses.

James Nickel

What is the signature proof or evidence of the gift of the Holy Spirit? One who has received the Holy Spirit confesses with the entirety of his or her being, “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Acts 2).

James Nickel

Extracts from Clark Pinnock’s book *Flame of Love*:

The Holy Spirit epitomizes the nearness of the power and presence of God (p. 9).

Experience needs good theology the way a traveler needs a reliable map. A traveler with lots of enthusiasm but no map for the journey is a dangerous person to travel with. Together, you can get hopelessly lost. (p. 12)

Trinity and the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is God’s face turned toward us and God’s presence abiding with us (p. 14)

The Holy Spirit is the loving, self-communicating, out-fanning, and out-pouring presence of the eternal divine life of the triune God. (p. 15)

When one speaks about God it is only meaningful if there is an encounter of God to back it up. (p. 18)

There is a mystery to the revelation to the Triune God, but this revelation is not irrational. This mystery, the One and the Many, both epitomizes and justifies every aspect of the human experience. (p. 29)

Creation is not a necessity in God for God is in the fullness of Trinitarian fellowship from eternity past to eternity future. He is the living communion of persons. (p. 35)

The Holy Spirit choreographs the dance of God in creation and calls man made in His image to dance in step with Him. Mankind is destined for this dance! (p. 37)

The Holy Spirit both embodies and triggers the infinite overflow of God’s holy love. He truly is the bond of love. (p. 38)

The Holy Spirit is a true gentleman; He does not call attention to Himself for He wishes to remain anonymous. (p. 39)

God is beautiful and supremely loveable. Atheism is partly the result of bad theology, an unpaid bill resulting from failures in depicting God. (p. 42)

Holy Spirit

God delights in social existence, ecstatic dance, creativity and spontaneity. This is why we humans love to play in the midst of the seriousness of ordinary life - play bespeaks eternity. (p. 43)

In creating all things, God is like an artist who makes things because He delights in self-expression. His rest on the 7th day was a rest of satisfaction in a job well done. (pp. 44-45)

Professional theologians tend to be biased toward human reason (systematics); they need a good dose of the artistry of music in their theological constructions. It should not surprise us that music thrills us so much, because it draws us to the celestial sounds of the Spirit within us. (p. 46)

Works of art flow freely and overflow out of a rich inner life. They arise from celebration and sheer delight in existence (p. 55)

Let God not be defined so much by holiness and sovereignty in which loving relatedness is incidental, but by the dance of Trinitarian life. (P. 47)

Spirit and the Creation

The Spirit energizes and sustains the world through the sweep of history. (p. 61)

All existence, from the motion of atoms to the motion of galaxies, manifest the power of the Holy Spirit. Hence, there can be no “sacred-secular” split and everything in the universe is a sacrament (p. 62)

The world reflects God’s glory; therefore anything can mediate the sacred, where there are eyes to see and ears to hear. (p. 120)

We encounter the Holy Spirit in the life of creation itself, in the vitality, the joy, the radiance, the music, the honey, the flowers, the embrace. (p. 50)

The doctrine of creation undergirds the doctrine of salvation. To associate the Holy Spirit only with the work of redemption is a limiting factor and downgrades God’s active role in the totality of life. (p. 50)

The importance of Scriptural truth cannot be measuring by quantification. (p. 52)

The Holy Spirit is present and active in creation ... in its inception, continuation, and perfection. (p. 53)

God the Spirit implements God’s decrees as His “playful wisdom” sent into the world to bring God’s plans into effect. (p. 53)

God is not like Aristotle’s God, thinking only about thinking. (p. 55)

God is just as present in the craftsmanship of Bezalel and in the prophecies of Jeremiah. (p. 53)

Providence refers to God’s sustaining and governing all things and therefore indirectly to the moving of the Holy Spirit in creation and history. (p. 53)

Holy Spirit

It is the Holy Spirit who bestows gifts and talents on all human beings (from Abraham Kuyper). (p. 54)

As the logos of God, the Son is the source of rationality and order in the universe. The Holy Spirit, as a skillful artisan, is the One who sees to it that creation's forms unfold into the perfection of beauty. (p. 60)

Spirit and Christology

It is the anointing of the Spirit that made Jesus the Christ. (p. 80)

By the finished work of Christ (outpouring of the Spirit as evidence) a door (Revelation 4:1) has been opened for humanity to enter God's presence. (p. 81)

400 years of silence (*bat qol*) ... "echo of His voice." In the birth narratives of Luke, the scenes are alive with the activity of the Holy Spirit. God's logos wisdom (the Son) is pitching a tent in history, and God's presence (the Spirit) has come to dwell in new and unexpected ways (p. 85)

God's wrath is revealed on Calvary; it blazed against sinners in the person of their representative. (p. 108)

In wrath is a revelation of God's grace. (p. 109)

There *is* a legal dimension to the atonement, but it should not dominate and eclipse every other dimension. Human guilt is a problem, but mere acquittal was never the goal of the cross. (p. 110)

Spirit and Church

The church rides the wind of God's Spirit like a hawk endlessly and effortlessly circling and gliding in the summer sky. (p. 114)

Jesus poured out the Spirit on all flesh to effect the hope for world transformation. (p. 114)

At Pentecost (Act 2), the conversion of people from many nations foreshadowed the evangelization of the world. (p. 118)

More than churches full of people, God wants (and the world needs) people full of the Spirit. (p. 119)

There is a physical side to being spiritual. (p. 119)

The physical and the spiritual are not antithetical but cooperative and synergistic. (p. 122)

In the early centuries, the churches were sacramental and charismatic. In the Middle Ages the tendency was to favor sacramental over charismatic, and at the Reformation the sacramental principle itself suffered. (p. 119)

Holy Spirit

Worship can too easily be a cognitive affair (reciting of creeds, singing hymns without the experience to back up the reciting and singing). (p. 121)

The Incarnation is the fundamental sacrament of God. (p. 121)

The sacramental principle (knowing the presence of God), along with other beliefs of the church, such as the possibility of signs and wonders, has suffered from modernity, which leaves little room for the activity of God. (p. 128)

The sacraments ought to be viewed as means of grace and not reduced to mere ordinances. (p. 129)

The Spirit is present beyond liturgy in a wider circle. There is a flowing that manifests itself as power to bear witness, heal the sick, prophesy, praise God enthusiastically, perform miracles and more. There is a liberty to celebrate, an ability to dream and see visions, a release of Easter life. (p. 129)

It is a false dichotomy to split the charisms that flow from liturgical actions from charisms that flow free of institutional structures. (p. 130).

When Paul called for order in the church in Corinth (I Corinthians 14), he was instructing in the order that should accompany prophecy and tongues (i.e., the flow of revelation ... a word optimal for the moment ... and knowledge that upbuilds, encourages, and consoles); he did not instruct in the order of "clamping down on such things." (pp. 131,134)

The cessationist mindset becomes self-fulfilling. (p. 133)

Jack Deere, "A deficit in experience best explains the cessationist position." (p. 266)

The Holy Spirit was not so much a creedal issue for the early church as a fact of their experience. (p. 133)

Humanity was made for resurrection, and healing is at most a temporary stop-gap. (p. 135)

Nietzsche's Zarathustra taunts the church: "They would have to sing better songs to make me believe in their Redeemer." (p. 138)

Limited expectation results in an experiential deficit. (p. 139)

Gifts are like a pipe down which love is to flow. (p. 143)

We look not only for the salvation of souls but for the redemption of creation. (p. 143)

History belongs to intercessors because history belongs to God. (p. 146)

Spirit and Union

Spirit leads to union with God, His person and His purposes. (p. 149)

Holy Spirit

Removal of condemnation (the emphasis of Luther) is part of a much larger scenario. Acquittal before God is only the beginning, not the end of salvation. (pp. 150-151)

The goal of salvation is the glory of God as seen in a people who participate in the divine nature (Christ formed in us ... Galatians 4:19) in a way that preserves distinctions proper to Creator and creature without losing sight of their union. This union is not peripheral to salvation; it is the goal. (pp. 150-151)

Atonement (at-one-ment) ... unity, a divine dance, between God and man where man is an adopted partner. (pp. 153-154)

Salvation is not cheap grace, based upon bare assent to propositions, or merely a change in status: Romans 6 (union) follows Romans 5 (justification). Never conceive of justification without conceiving of the goal ... a body of people walking with God in the power of the Spirit. (p. 156)

Union with God leads the believer into a familiarity with God's heart ... who He is, what He is doing, and what He plans to do. (p. 166)

Christianity is not a religion of intellectual reflection with little affective impact. We proclaim the presence of the kingdom in the power of the Spirit. (p. 166)

The major cause of the thirst for a second blessing or Spirit baptism today is the earlier neglect of baptism and confirmation as charismatic events. The second-blessing doctrine is fallout from much bad teaching and bad practice in the church. If the power dimension is overlooked (as it often is), the deficit will have to be made up later. (pp. 167-168)

Those of scholarly orientation need to emphasize their need to grow in the ability to rejoice and celebrate. (p. 168)

Western culture favors rational and scientific knowledge and downplays the capacity for religious affections. This is what makes so many Western churches spiritless. It is natural for us, culturally speaking, to quench the Spirit. In our culture it is OK to shout in praise of a home-run hitter at a baseball game, but not acceptable to make a joyful noise to the Lord in church. (p. 169)

Pentecostal reality is much more important than correct terminology. (p. 169)

Euphoria is not the goal (as in some Pentecostal denominations); the goal is vocation and mission. (p. 171)

Speaking in tongues is normal, not normative. (p. 172)

Tongues is prayer without concepts, prayer at a deep, noncognitive level. (p. 173)

We do not like mysteries (like tongues) very much; we want theology to be as rational as possible. (p. 173)

Unloving persons are not born of God, whatever creed they profess. (p. 180)

Holy Spirit

We have inherited from Adam guilt (in this case, our guilt is our own when we replicate Adam's commitment to independence), corruption, and death. Therefore, what we need from Christ is acquittal and resurrection; we need to be saved by His life (Romans 5:10). (p. 181)

The Pauline phrase "in Christ" supports the idea of salvation as union and communion. (p. 269)

Spirit and Universality

The good news is for the world, for all sinners without discrimination, for all the hopeless, the lost, the forgotten, the marginalized. (p. 189)

In Scripture, there is a tension between particularly (Christ dying for His people) and universality (Christ saving the world). (p. 192)

Christ is the Savior of His people (particularity) and the Spirit woos the world of sinners (universality) into the sheepfold. (p. 192)

The Spirit prepares the world for the gospel by building redemptive bridges (e.g., Don Richardson). (p. 201)

Luke's genealogy traces Christ's lineage all the way back to Adam, showing that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's dealing with humanity. (p. 202)

Good works do not merit grace, but they may signal a response to grace. (p. 210)

Blessed are the meek, not the meek who sign on the dotted theological line. (p. 210)

There is a voice in us, isn't there, that says no one ought to gain entry to the kingdom who doesn't really belong and is not wearing the proper badges. (p. 213)

Spirit and Truth

Truth by itself can be heartless and cruel. It can shrivel up and harden and be used to crush others. But God's truth is full of grace, soft and tender. (p. 186)

Doctrinal fidelity must be connected to the imperative of timeliness. (p. 215)

A theology that does not inquire after God's will for the present may be orthodox but is not really listening to God. (p. 215)

Doctrines are to be timely witnesses, not timeless abstractions. (p. 215)

To do this, we must engage in strenuous theological reflection. (p. 216)

Changing circumstances require timely applications. (p. 218)

The truth of profound matters is not easily grasped and the implications not quickly apparent. (p. 219)

Holy Spirit

Mature knowledge does not come quickly or easily. (p. 219)

Let us cast aside rigidity and that know-it-all attitude and open ourselves to more light that God can shed on his Word and the human situation. (p. 219)

The evangelical emphasis on the propositional nature of truth has directed attention almost entirely toward biblical exegesis, to the neglect of other dynamics involved in interpretation. (p. 220)

The words of Jesus are quantitatively complete, not needing additions, but they are not qualitatively grasped—they need pondering. They need to become fresh and alive for each generation. Revelation is not a closed system of propositional truths but a divine self-disclosure that continues to open up and challenge. (p. 221)

Humility is foundational for growing as listeners to the Spirit in Scripture. (p. 222)

Though it is the final truth for all time, we also seek the concrete truth of it for this time. It is God's living Word, powerful for the occasion when first spoken and significant for all other times and places as well. It is never surpassed but always richly interpreted. (p. 223)

The Word of Jesus needs to be made effective in concrete situations by the Spirit. (p. 223)

Revelation is an act of interpersonal communication and it is conveyed in the story of the mighty acts of God. (pp. 224-225)

Liberalism places too much emphasis on experience and too little on cognitivity. (p. 224)

Evangelical theology errs on the other extreme: too much emphasis on cognitivity (systems) and too little on experiencing the transforming power of God that the system is supposed to reveal.

If our goal is to synthesize the facts of revelation, then there will be little room for revelation to be opened up by the Spirit and little room for timeliness. (p. 225)

Revelation is neither contentless experience (liberalism) nor timeless propositions (conservatism). It is the dynamic self-disclosure of God, who makes his goodness known in the history of salvation, in a process of disclosure culminating in Jesus Christ. Revelation is not primarily existential impact or infallible truths but divine self-revelation that both impacts and instructs. Revelation is neither human transformation alone nor a set of propositions on a variety of topics. It is our introduction to a Person. Revelation is addressed not only to the intellect but to the whole person. There are truths implicit and explicit in it, but they point to the personal center. Revelation is more than propositional, more than experiential. It informs and shapes us, it transforms and instructs us. (pp. 226-227)

Illumination is meant to enable readers to recognize Scripture's timely meaning. (p. 229)

Past inspiration secures Scripture, and present inspiration empowers readers. We need illumination if we are to be transformed by the text. The Scriptures would remain a dead letter apart from the power of God. (p. 230)

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit puts us in touch with the very subject matter of revelation. (p. 230)

To ignore past inspiration would be to risk heresy by straying outside the field of play. To ignore present inspiration would be to risk dead orthodoxy by neglecting what is crucial and timely. (p. 230)

Revelation must not be increased or changed by subsequent illumination. (p. 231)

The development of Christian doctrine is to be viewed as the achievement of Christian thinking directed by the Spirit. (p. 232)

Christology was not the product of human thought alone but arose from the worship of the community and its liturgy. (p. 232)

The spiritual vitality so evident in Scripture is unfortunately rare and thin in many religious circles that are devoted to the study of theology! Why? The atmosphere of this study is often restrained and the style highly cognitive; expectations are rather low regarding the presence of the kingdom in power. (p. 247)