

2G

The Holy Spirit & The Definite Article

Holy Spirit or THE Holy Spirit?¹

Insight on the Scriptures, Vol. 2 states:

Since God himself is a Spirit and is holy and since all his faithful angelic sons are spirits and are holy, it is evident that if the "holy spirit" were a person, there should reasonably be given some means in the Scriptures to distinguish and identify such spirit *person* from all these other 'holy spirits.' It would be expected that, at the very least, the definite article would be used with it in all cases where it is not called "God's holy spirit" or is not modified by some similar expression. This would at least distinguish it as THE Holy Spirit. But, on the contrary, in a large number of cases the expression, "holy spirit" appears in the original Greek without the article, thus indicating its lack of personality. – Compare Ac 6:3, 5; 7:55; 8:15, 17, 19; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9, 52; 19:2; Ro 9:1; 14:17; 15:13, 16, 19; 1Co 12:3; Heb 2:4; 6:4; 2Pe 1:21; Jude 20, *Int* and other interlinear translations.²

The WTBS contends that the lack of a definite article ("the") in all references to the Holy Spirit in Scripture demands impersonality.

At best, the WTBS is disgracefully ignorant of Greek grammar.

Commenting on the lack of a definite article in John 1:1c, which is generally translated as "*the Word was God*" (KJV), Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words states:

Moreover, that "the Word" is the subject of the sentence, exemplifies the rule that the subject is to be determined by its having the article when the predicate is anarthrous (without the article).³

So, in Greek, the definite article sometimes identifies the subject in sentences that include a direct object. Needless to say, in John 1:1 (*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* KJV), where the definite article is absent when referring to *theos*, both the Word (Jesus) and God refer to personal beings.

Again, according to Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words:

Sometimes the absence [of the definite article] is to be accounted for by the fact that *Pneuma* (like *Theos*) is substantially a proper name, e.g., in John 7:39.⁴

So a definite article isn't required when a noun is used as a proper name, much as *Theos* ("God") is used as a proper name for Yahweh, Jehovah God.

And yet again, Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words states:

[1] For a discussion on the use of the definite article in Greek, I refer the reader to <http://www.ibiblio.org/koine/greek/lessons/eimi.html> (Accessed February 2007).

[2] Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc. "Entry for "SPIRIT."" Insight on the Scriptures, Volume 2, 1989. P. 1019.

[3] Vine, W.E. "Entry for 'Spirit.'" Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words. 1966.

[4] Vine, W.E. "Entry for 'Spirit.'" Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words. 1966.

In Rom. 7:22, in the phrase "the law of God," both nouns have the [definite] article; in v. 25 neither has the [definite] article. This is in accordance with a general rule that if two nouns are united by the genitive case (the "of" case), either both have the [definite] article, or both are without.⁵

The reference to God lacks a definite article in Romans 7:25 and God is certainly a personal being.

Again:

Where two or more epithets are applied to the same person or thing, one [definite] article usually serves for both...⁶

The above examples were found with only a cursory glance through a basic Bible dictionary. I shudder to think of the rules a proper Greek grammar text would provide to refute the WTBS position demanding a definite article for every reference of the Holy Spirit in the Bible, but the simple fact remains that using a definite article in every reference to the Holy Spirit is not grammatically proper or correct.⁷

Furthermore, the WTBS contends that unclean spirits are personal beings. According to WTBS logic, any and all references to unclean spirits that do not specifically describe them as unclean must include a definite article in order to differentiate them from other spirits. This, however, is not the case.

References to unclean spirits that do not describe them as unclean lack a definite article in the Scriptures.⁸ Yet, the WTBS asserts that unclean spirits are personal beings.

According to the WTBS, there is also only one true God (with an uppercase 'G'), but Jesus is a god (with a lowercase 'g'). According to the WTBS, men can be called gods⁹ as well, which says nothing of false gods named in the Bible (for example: Baal, Judges 6:31, 8:33).

That's quite a few gods.

Since the New Testament manuscripts were written with no distinction between upper- and lowercase letters, we cannot distinguish "God" from "god" by grammar alone. According to WTBS logic then, since we must differentiate Jehovah "God" from "god" grammatically as well as contextually, *theos* **must** include a definite article in every instance in which *theos* refers to Jehovah God. This, however, is not the case. *Theos* refers to Jehovah God and lacks the definite article 4 times in the first chapter of the Gospel of John alone. That's four times in **one chapter**. There are many, many instances in the Bible in which God is referred to as *theos* without a definite article.¹⁰ Obviously, we can (and do)

[5] Vine, W.E. "Entry for 'Spirit.'" Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words. 1966.

[6] Vine, W.E. "Entry for 'Spirit.'" Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words. 1966.

[7] See <http://www.ibiblio.org/bgreek/test-archives/html4/2000-07/1343.html> (Accessed February 2007) for a brief, archived post on the B-GREEK list of 10 constructions in which a noun can be definite, though anarthrous (lacking the definite article, also referred to as inarticular). The post also, again very briefly, discusses anarthrous pneuma in Paul's writings.

[8] Matthew 12:45; Luke 9:39, 11:26, 13:11; 1 Corinthians 12:10; 2 Corinthians 11:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 1 John 4:1, 4:3; Revelation 16:13, 16:14.

[9] The WTBS contends that the judges of Israel were called real, genuine gods in Psalm 82:6. This is quite beyond the scope of this article and will be covered later, but careful examination of Psalm 82:6, in context with Psalm 82:2-7, shows that the judges were called gods in an ironic sense and were not real, genuine gods at all. Regardless, the WTBS asserts that there are legitimate gods that are lesser than (perhaps the proper and more accurate phrase would be 'derived from') the true God, Jehovah.

[10] "To name but a few: Matthew 3:9, 6:24; Luke 1:35, 1:78; John 1:6, 1:12, 1:13, 1:18, 3:2, 3:21, 9:16, 9:33; Romans 1:7, 1:17, 1:18; 1 Corinthians 1:30, 15:10; Philippians 2:11-13; Titus 1:1. (Martin, Kingdom of the Cults.)

determine if the text is referring to Yahweh, the true God, or some other false god by the surrounding context, but that is precisely my point. The definite article alone does **not** identify Yahweh.

Since Jehovah God is repeatedly referred to without a definite article, the fact that the Holy Spirit is referred to without a definite article does not demand that the Holy Spirit is an active force rather than a personal being.

Furthermore, there are many, many instances in which the Holy Spirit **is** referred to with definite articles – not just one definite article, but two, such as in the construct THE Spirit THE Holy. Once again, Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words refers to this, stating:

The full title with the article before both *pneuma* and *haigos* (the "resumptive" use of the article), lit., "the Spirit the Holy," **stresses the character of the Person**, e.g., Matt. 12:32; Mark 3:29; 12:36; 13:11; Luke 2:26; 10:21 (RV); John 14:26; Acts 1:16; 5:3; 7:51; 10:44, 47; 13:2; 15:28; 19:6; 20:23, 28; 21:11; 28:25; Eph. 4:30; Heb. 3:7; 9:8; 10:15.¹¹ (Emphasis mine.)

Daniel Wallace also speaks of definite articles in his Basics of New Testament Syntax:

It is not necessary for a noun to have the article in order for it to be definite. But conversely, a noun cannot be indefinite when it has the article. Thus it **may** be definite without the article, and it **must** be definite with the article.¹²

So when *pneuma haigos* has the definite article, *pneuma haigos* **must** be definite. Definite, meaning that *ho pneuma ho haigos* identifies a specific member of the *pneuma haigos*/holy spirit class. THE Spirit THE Holy, the articular *pneuma haigos* narrows the focus from this class of holy spirits to one particular Holy Spirit, to ensure the reader understands that a specific holy spirit is being identified – a unique, individual member of this class. Who are the other members of this holy spirit class? The WTBS indicates in the quotation above that Yahweh God – who is a person – and angels – who are people – are holy spirits. The other members of this class are personal beings. To belong to this class, the Holy Spirit must also be a personal being.

Two definite articles specifically and emphatically distinguish and identify the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. While I don't propose this as a sole means of identifying personality per se, since grammatical considerations very much come into play, neither does the lack of definite articles in some cases indicate a lack of personality. The lack simply displays an adherence to simple grammatical rules and conventions.

Therefore, the WTBS assertion that the lack of a definite article is an indication of the alleged impersonality of the Holy Spirit is fallacious and completely without merit. The inclusion of the definite article, in many cases two definite articles (the resumptive use), however, indicates that the Holy Spirit belongs to a holy spirit class which is made up of personal beings, and that the Holy Spirit is, in fact, a personal being as well.

[11] Vine, W.E. "Entry for 'Spirit.'" Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words. 1966.

[12] Wallace, Daniel. Basics of New Testament Syntax. 2001. P. 108