

PROOFTEXTING THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE MASCULINE DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS IN JOHN 14:26, 15:26, AND 16:13–14

by
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Sometimes well-intentioned people argue for the right thing the wrong way. Their position may be right even though at least one of their arguments is not. This seems to be the case with a popular exegetical and theological argument for the personality of the Holy Spirit. The right position is that the Holy Spirit is a person, and the fallacious argument is that the masculine demonstrative pronoun ἐκεῖνος in John 14:26, 15:26, and 16:13–14 proves it. Trinitarian theologians through church history have rightly defended the personality of the Spirit, and an astonishing number of defenders appeal to this argument for support.

THE ARGUMENT

The argument goes like this: John 14:26, 15:26, and 16:13–14² prove (or at least suggest) that the Holy Spirit is a person because the antecedent of the masculine ἐκεῖνος is the neuter πνεῦμα. (Table 1 highlights those words.) The masculine ἐκεῖνος is significant because we would expect the neuter ἐκεῖνο instead since that would agree grammatically with the neuter πνεῦμα, but these three passages (or at least one of them) break a grammatical rule to emphasize that the Holy Spirit is a person and not a thing.

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²Some Trinitarian theologians include a fourth text, John 14:17, but we do not consider that here because it has weak textual support.

Table 1. Πνεῦμα and Ἐκεῖνος in John 14:26, 15:26, and 16:13–14

	NA ²⁷	ESV
John 14:26	ὁ δὲ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ὃ πέμψει ὁ πατήρ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου, ἐκεῖνος ὑμᾶς διδάξει πάντα καὶ ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ εἶπον ὑμῖν [ἐγώ].	But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.
John 15:26	Ὅταν ἔλθῃ ὁ παράκλητος ὃν ἐγὼ πέμψω ὑμῖν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας ὃ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται, ἐκεῖνος μαρτυρήσει περὶ ἐμοῦ.	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.
John 16:13–14	ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ἐκεῖνος, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὀδηγήσει ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πάσῃ· οὐ γὰρ λαλήσει ἑαυτοῦ, ἀλλ' ὅσα ἀκούσει λαλήσει καὶ τὰ ἐρχόμενα ἀναγγελεῖ ὑμῖν. ¹⁴ ἐκεῖνος ἐμὲ δοξάσει, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ λήμψεται καὶ ἀναγγελεῖ ὑμῖν.	When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Most of the adherents of this view (see below) simply assert the argument but do not provide reasons for it. The most common reason that πνεῦμα is the antecedent of ἐκεῖνος—assumed if not explicitly stated—is proximity. That is, ἐκεῖνος occurs closer to πνεῦμα than it does to any other possible antecedents. Some adherents boldly state that their argument is unambiguous, obvious, and the only possibility.

ADHERENTS OF THE ARGUMENT

An impressive number of Greek grammarians, exegetes, commentators, and theologians have made this argument from at least the 1500s to the present.³ They span all the main branches and denominations of the church (e.g., Reformed, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic), many languages (e.g., English, French,

³We found many of these adherents using Logos Bible Software 4 and variations of the search query (<Bible = John 14:26>,<Bible = John 15:26>,<Bible = John 16:13>,<Bible = John 16:14>) + (Spirit, pneuma, πνεῦμα) + (person, personality, personhood, personal) + (gender, masculine, neuter, ekeinos, ἐκεῖνος).

German, Dutch), and several continents (e.g., North America, Europe, Australia). Here is a chronological sampling of about 110 notable adherents—some more nuanced than others:⁴

ca. 1591—Martin Chemnitz (1522–86):

John 15:26, when Christ speaks of the Holy Spirit in the neuter gender, “The Spirit (*to pneuma*) of truth which proceeds from the Father,” He then changes the gender and adds “He (*ekeinos*) will bear witness of Me,” signifying that He is not speaking of some created emotion which occurs in the believers, but of a person. For it is frequent and common in the sacred writings that when there is mention of persons, a term may vary in respect to the related and antecedent words by the change of the genders, for example, in Matt. 28:19, “Teach all nations (*ta ethnē—neuter*), baptizing them (*autous—masc.*).”⁵

1610—John Gerhard (1582–1637):

This fact can be brought out by consulting a parallel passage, John 14:26: “The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit whom the Father sends in My name, He will teach you all things.” In this verse...the neuter τὸ πνεῦμα is later rendered by the masculine ἐκεῖνος, and this change of gender used in reference to personal actions always indicates a person (cf. Gen. 3:15; Eph. 1:14; Col. 2:19)... [This is brought out also in] John 15:26: “When the Comforter comes whom I will send you from the Father, namely the Spirit of truth, He (ἐκεῖνος) will witness concerning Me.”

In this passage...there is a change of gender....⁶

1676—Leonard van Rijssen (ca. 1636–ca. 1700)⁷

1679—Francis Turretin (1623–87):

The exchange of gender teaches this, joining to *pneumati* (which is of the neuter gender) the masculine pronoun better adapted to denote a person: *hotan elthē ekeinos to pneuma tēs alētheias* (Jn. 16:13). In Eph. 1:13, 14, we are said to be sealed with “the Holy Spirit of promise” (*tō pneumati hagiō hos estin arrabōn*). For no reason can be given why such a change should be made in Scripture except that thus the person of the

⁴We have abridged this essay by including only a sampling of direct quotations. If a work has multiple editions, we try to quote the most updated edition while ordering the quotation chronologically based on when the first edition was published.

⁵Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, trans. Jacob A. O. Preus, 2 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1989), 1:138.

⁶Robert D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 2 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1999), 2:131. Preus is quoting John Gerhard, *Loci Theologici*, III, 280 (1610–25). Gerhard was Chemnitz’s successor and probably inherited the argument from him. They were both Lutheran.

⁷Leonardo Rijssenio, *Summa Theologiae Elencticae* (Bernae, 1676), IV.xii, cont. I, arg. 2. Richard Muller cites Rijssen as saying, “The name ‘Paraclete’ or ‘Comforter,’ moreover, is an indication of a personal work (*officium personale*), and the word *pneuma*, a negative noun, is joined with a masculine pronoun in John 16:13” (*The Trinity of God*, vol. 4 of *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003], p. 351).

Holy Spirit may be more clearly designated.⁸

1693—John Owen (1616–83):

The Scripture, speaking of the Holy Ghost, though Πνεῦμα be of the neuter gender, yet having respect unto the thing,—that is, the person of the Spirit,—it subjoins the pronoun of the masculine gender unto it, as John 14:26.⁹

1782—John Brown of Haddington (1722–87)¹⁰

1814—Ethan Smith¹¹

1816—Reginald Heber (1783–1826)¹²

1863–1865—Frédéric L. Godet (1812–1900)¹³

1867—Daniel Gans¹⁴

1870—R. L. Dabney (1820–98)¹⁵

1871—A. R. Fausset (1821–1910)¹⁶

1871—Philip Schaff (1819–93)¹⁷

1882—William Hamilton¹⁸

⁸Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr., trans. George M. Giger, 3 vols. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992), 1:304. Charles Hodge (below) likely learned this argument from Turretin.

⁹John Owen, “A Discourse on the Holy Spirit as Comforter,” *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, 16 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1852), 4:408.

¹⁰John Brown, *The Systematic Theology of John Brown of Haddington* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2002), p. 140. First published in 1782 as *A Compendious View of Natural and Revealed Religion*.

¹¹Ethan Smith, *A Treatise on the Character of Jesus Christ, and on the Trinity in Unity of the Godhead; with Quotations from the Primitive Fathers* (Boston: R. P. & C. Williams, 1814), p. 173.

¹²Reginald Heber, *The Personality and Office of the Christian Comforter Asserted and Explained, in a Course of Sermons on John XVI. 7. Preached before the University of Oxford, in the Year MDCCCXV, at the Lecture Founded by the Late Rev. John Bampton, M. A.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1816), pp. 58–59.

¹³L. Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 3 vols. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1893), 2:287.

¹⁴Daniel Gans, “The Personality and Divinity of the Holy Ghost,” *The Mercerburg Review* 14 (1867): 466–67. Cited by Robert A. Morey, *The Trinity: Evidence and Issues* (Iowa Falls, IA: World, 1996), p. 411.

¹⁵R. L. Dabney, *Syllabus and Notes of the Course of Systematic and Polemic Theology Taught in Union Theological Seminary, Virginia*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Presbyterian, 1878), p. 195.

¹⁶A. R. Fausset, “The Book of Proverbs,” in Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Whole Bible* (n.p., 1871), n.p.

¹⁷Editorial note in John Peter Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures—Critical, Doctrinal and Homiletical: John* (1871; trans. Philip Schaff; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1950), p. 469.

¹⁸William Hamilton, *A Compend of Baptism* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1882), p. 153.

1882—George Smeaton (1814–89):

Nor ought we to omit a noteworthy peculiarity in the three passages which refer to the Comforter. A change of gender in the use of the masculine demonstrative pronoun (ἐκεῖνος) forestalls the possibility of putting any other sense than a personal reference upon the words. Thus it is said: “The Comforter, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He (ἐκεῖνος) shall teach you all things” (John xiv. 26); “When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceedeth from the Father, He (ἐκεῖνος) shall testify of me;” “Howbeit when He (ἐκεῖνος), the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of [better: from] Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come. He (ἐκεῖνος) shall glorify me” (xvi. 13, 14).¹⁹

1882—B. F. Westcott (1825–1901)²⁰

1886—Augustus H. Strong (1836–1921):

3. The Holy Spirit is a person.

A. Designations proper to personality are given him.

(a) The masculine pronoun ἐκεῖνος, though πνεῦμα is neuter....²¹

1887—James P. Boyce (1827–88)²²

1887—Charles Hodge (1797–1878):

The first argument for the personality of the Holy Spirit is derived from the use of the personal pronouns in relation to Him.... Our Lord says (John xv. 26), “When the Comforter (ὁ παράκλητος) is come whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth (τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας) which (ὁ) proceedeth from the Father, He (ἐκεῖνος) shall testify of me.” The use of the masculine pronoun *He* instead of *it*, shows that the Spirit is a person. It may indeed be said that as παράκλητος is masculine, the pronoun referring to it must of course be in the same gender. But as the explanatory words τὸ πνεῦμα intervene, to which the neuter ὁ refers, the following pronoun would naturally be in the neuter, if the subject spoken of, the πνεῦμα, were not a person. In the following chapter (John xvi. 13, 14) there is no ground for this objection. It is there said, “When *He* (ἐκεῖνος), 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 show you things to come. *He* shall glorify me (ἐκεῖνος ἐμὲ δοξάσει): for He shall

¹⁹George Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1882), p. 102.

²⁰B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: Murray, 1882), p. 209.

²¹Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology: A Compendium and Commonplace Book Designed for the Use of Theological Students* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), p. 323. Strong goes on to say, “But in John 14:16–18, παράκλητος is followed by the neuters ὁ and αὐτό, because πνεῦμα had intervened. Grammatical and not theological considerations controlled the writer.”

²²James P. Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887), p. 132.

receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.” Here there is no possibility of accounting for the use of the personal pronoun *He* (ἐκεῖνος) on any other ground than the personality of the Spirit.²³

1888–94—William G. T. Shedd (1820–94)²⁴

1889—J. E. Wolfe²⁵

1890—H. C. G. Moule (1841–1920):

Let me ask that the Greek be once more opened, and this divine grammatical anomaly once more studied—the neuter Πνεῦμα associated repeatedly and markedly with the masculine Παράκλητος, the masculines ὅς, ἐκεῖνος, αὐτός [in John 14:16–17; 15:26; 16:7–8]. And let this be read in the light of the wonderful context, in which this blessed *Paraclete*, this *Advocatus*, “called in” to the aid of the otherwise “orphaned” Church, is seen to be such, and to act so, as to be indeed the Substitute, the more than substitute, for the unspeakably real personality of the Saviour in His seen presence.... It scarcely needs the impressive testimony of the Greek grammar of the sentences to assure us with deep and restful certainty that to the mind of the Saviour that night the Spirit was indeed present as a Person.²⁶

1894—George B. Stevens²⁷

1895–99—Herman Bavinck (1854–1921)²⁸

1898—E. W. Bullinger (1837–1913)²⁹

1898—Henry B. Swete (1835–1917)³⁰

1898—R. A. Torrey (1856–1928)³¹

1905—Alfred G. Mortimer (1848–1924)³²

1906—Archibald E. Thomson³³

²³Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (1887 reprint; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 1:524.

²⁴William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, ed. Alan W. Gomes, 3rd ed. (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003), p. 268.

²⁵J. E. Wolfe, *Gold from Ophir: A New Book of Bible Readings, Original and Selected* (New York: Jewett, 1889), p. 165.

²⁶H. C. G. Moule, *Veni Creator: Thoughts on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit of Promise* (New York: Whittaker, 1890), pp. 7–8.

²⁷George B. Stevens, *The Johannine Theology: A Study of the Doctrinal Contents of the Gospel and Epistles of the Apostle John* (New York: Scribner's, 1894), pp. 195–96.

²⁸Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Volume 2: God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), pp. 277–78

²⁹E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1898), p. 701.

³⁰Henry B. Swete, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London; New York: MacMillan, 1898), p. 198.

³¹R. A. Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches* (New York: Revell, 1898), p. 226.

³²Alfred G. Mortimer, *The Last Discourses of Our Lord: Arranged as Readings for the Forty Days of Lent* (New York: Whittaker, 1905), p. 226.

³³Archibald E. Thomson, “The Authority of the Holy Spirit,” *BSac* 63 (1906):

1912—William Evans (1870–1950)³⁴

1915—E. Y. Mullins (1860–1928)³⁵

1919—A. T. Robertson (1863–1934):

Gender and Number. Little remains to be said about variations in gender and number. Two passages in John call for remark, inasmuch as they bear on the personality of the Holy Spirit. In 14:26, ὁ δὲ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ὃ πέμψει ὁ πατὴρ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου, ἐκεῖνος ὑμᾶς διδάξει, the relative ὃ follows the grammatical gender of πνεῦμα. Ἐκεῖνος, however, skips over πνεῦμα and reverts to the gender of παράκλητος. In 16:13 a more striking example occurs, ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ἐκεῖνος, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας. Here one has to go back six lines to ἐκεῖνος again and seven to παράκλητος. It is more evident therefore in this passage that John is insisting on the personality of the Holy Spirit, when the grammatical gender so easily called for ἐκεῖνο. Cf. ὃ in Jo. 14:17, 26 and αὐτό in 14:17.³⁶

1923–45—Arthur W. Pink (1886–1952)³⁷

1926—Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871–1952)³⁸

1929—J. H. Bernard (1860–1927)³⁹

1938—Louis Berkhof (1873–1957)⁴⁰

1940—John F. Walvoord (1910–2002):

It is customary when speaking of persons to use the personal pronouns, *I, thou, he, they*. While personification of things material and immaterial is common, such uses of the personal pronouns are quite obvious and do not cause confusion. The use of personal pronouns in relation to the Holy Spirit in Scripture is sufficiently frequent to justify a conclusion that He is a person.... The Greek of the New Testament is quite explicit in confirming the personality of the Holy Spirit by use of the pronouns. As πνεῦμα is neuter, it would naturally take neuter pronouns to have grammatical agreement. In several instances, however, the

431–32.

³⁴William Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible*, ed. S. Maxwell Coder, 4th ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), p. 109.

³⁵*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Holy Spirit,” by E. Y. Mullins, 3:1413.

³⁶A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 3rd ed. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1919), pp. 708–9. Cf. John 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:13 in *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 6 vols. (Nashville: Broadman, 1932), 5:252–53, 255, 263, 268.

³⁷Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of the Gospel John*, 3 vols. (reprint of 1945 ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), 2:385.

³⁸Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Major Bible Themes: 52 Vital Doctrines of the Scriptures Simplified and Explained* (1926; ed. John F. Walvoord; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), p. 89.

³⁹J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1929), 2:500.

⁴⁰Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), p. 96.

masculine pronouns are found (John 15:26; 16:13, 14). The use of the masculine form, ἐκεῖνος, makes the personality of the Holy Spirit clearly the intent of the passage. It is inconceivable that the Scriptures should turn from the normal neuter to the masculine unless a person is in view.⁴¹

1947—Geoffrey F. Nuttall (1911–2007)⁴²

1947—René Pache (1904–79)⁴³

1949—Walter T. Conner (1877–1952)⁴⁴

1949—Henry C. Thiessen (1883–1947)⁴⁵

1952–55—David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981):

The personal pronoun *is* used of Him. Take John 16:7–8 and 13–15 where the masculine pronoun ‘He’ is used twelve times with reference to the Holy Spirit. Now that is a very striking thing. Jesus says, ‘Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth’ (v. 13)—and so on. And this, of course, is of particular importance when we remember that the noun itself is a neuter noun, so the pronoun attached to it should be in the neuter. Now this is not always the case but it is in the vast majority of instances. It is most interesting and it shows how important it is to realise that the inspiration of Scripture goes down even to words like pronouns! So that is the first argument, and those who do not believe in the person of the Spirit will have to explain why almost the whole Scripture uses the masculine pronoun.⁴⁶

1952—W. H. Rigg⁴⁷

1953—William Hendriksen (1900–82)⁴⁸

1955—W. H. Griffith Thomas (1861–1924)⁴⁹

⁴¹John F. Walvoord, “The Person of the Holy Spirit, Part 1: The Person of the Holy Spirit,” *BSac* 97 (1940): 169. Cf. idem, *The Holy Spirit: A Comprehensive Study of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), pp. 6–7.

⁴²Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), p. 3.

⁴³René Pache, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, trans. J. D. Emerson (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954), p. 13. French edition: *La personne et l'œuvre du Saint-Esprit* (Vevey: Suisse, 1947).

⁴⁴Walter T. Conner, *The Work of the Holy Spirit: A Treatment of the Biblical Doctrine of the Divine Spirit* (Nashville: Broadman, 1949), p. 177.

⁴⁵Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, ed. Vernon D. Doerksen, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 96.

⁴⁶David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Great Doctrines of the Bible*, Volume 2: *God the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1997), p. 10. Lloyd-Jones preached these sermons from 1952 to 1955.

⁴⁷W. H. Rigg, *The Fourth Gospel and Its Message for To-Day* (London: Lutterworth, 1952), p. 148.

⁴⁸William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953), 2:286, n. 171.

⁴⁹W. H. Griffith Thomas, *The Holy Spirit of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), p. 64.

1963—Anthony A. Hoekema (1913–88)⁵⁰

1963—J. Dwight Pentecost (1915–)⁵¹

1965—Charles C. Ryrie (1925–):

The Holy Spirit Contradicts the Accidence of Personality

Here *accidence* refers to the rudiments of grammar. The Greek word for “spirit” is *pneuma* (from which we derive English words that have to do with air, such as *pneumatic* and *pneumonia*) and is a neuter gender word. According to every normal rule of grammar, any pronoun that would be substituted for this neuter noun would itself have to be neuter. However, in several places the biblical writers did not follow this normal rule of grammar, and instead of using a neuter pronoun when referring to the neuter noun *pneuma*, they deliberately contradicted the grammatical rule and used masculine pronouns. Indeed, they used two different kinds of pronouns, all in the masculine gender. This shows that they considered the Spirit to be a person and not merely a thing.

John 16:13–14. In this passage the masculine demonstrative pronoun is used for *pneuma*. (Demonstrative pronouns are the words *this* and *that*.) The same demonstrative pronoun is found twice in these verses: once in verse 13 (“But when He”) and once in verse 14 (“He will glorify Me”). In these last two instances, instead of the translation “He,” the better translation would be “that one.”

John 15:26. Here the masculine demonstrative pronoun occurs referring to the Spirit. Some explain the gender of the pronoun as referring back to the masculine word *Helper*. However, this is less likely, since *Spirit* is the nearer antecedent....

These departures from the normal rules of grammar in connection with the use of several kinds of pronouns are evidences that for John and Paul the Holy Spirit was more than a mere influence—He was a person.⁵²

1967—Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–88)⁵³

1970—Raymond E. Brown (1928–98)⁵⁴

1971—Leon Morris (1914–2006)⁵⁵

⁵⁰Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-Day Adventism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), p. 241.

⁵¹J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter: The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1963), p. 13.

⁵²Charles C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), p. 17. See also idem, *Ryrie Study Bible: New International Version*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 1996; idem, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), pp. 396–97; idem, *First and Second Thessalonians*, *Everyman's Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001), p. 115; idem, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Dubuque, IA: ECS Ministries, 2005), p. 301.

⁵³Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Creator Spirit*, vol. 3 of *Explorations in Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), p. 128. Originally published in German in 1967 under the title *Spiritus Creator*.

⁵⁴Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John: XIII–XXI* (Anchor Yale Bible; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 639; cf. pp. 650, 689.

⁵⁵Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids:

1972—C. Haas, M. de Jonge, and J. L. Swellengrebel⁵⁶

1972—Gilles Quispel (1916–2006)⁵⁷

1974—George E. Ladd (1911–82)⁵⁸

1975—Gordon H. Clark (1902–85), Stanley N. Gundry, and R. Allan Killen (1941–)⁵⁹

1975—Michael Green (1930–)⁶⁰

1975—John Painter⁶¹

1977—Michael Ramsey (1904–1988)⁶²

1978—C. K. Barrett (1917–)⁶³

1978–80—Yves Congar (1904–95)⁶⁴

1980—Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida (1914–)⁶⁵

1980—John Williams⁶⁶

1981—Donald Guthrie (1915–92):

The fact that Jesus spoke of another Paraclete shows that the Paraclete must be as personal as Jesus himself. These considerations completely override the neuter gender of the noun *pneuma* in Greek. Moreover, they are in full agreement with the striking use of the masculine pronoun (*ekeinos*) of the Spirit in John 16:13 (placed immediately before *pneuma*) which underlines the personal characteristic of the Spirit. By no stretch of imagination can the teaching in these Paraclete sayings

Eerdmans, 1995), p. 583, n. 73, p. 606, n. 64, p. 621, n. 27; idem, *Spirit of the Living God* (London: IVP, 1960), pp. 35–36.

⁵⁶C. Haas, M. De Jonge, and J. L. Swellengrebel, *1 John: A Translator's Handbook on the Letters of John* (n.p.: United Bible Societies, 1972), p. 120.

⁵⁷Gilles Quispel, "Qumran, John and Jewish Christianity," in *John and Qumran*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1972), p. 147.

⁵⁸George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Donald A. Hagner, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 331.

⁵⁹*The Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Trinity," by Gordon H. Clark, Stanley N. Gundry, and R. Allan Killen, 2:1746–47

⁶⁰Michael Green, *I Believe in The Holy Spirit*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 52.

⁶¹John Painter, *Reading John's Gospel Today*, 3rd ed. (Mitcham: Beacon Hill, 1986), p. 67.

⁶²Michael Ramsey, *Holy Spirit: A Biblical Study* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 102.

⁶³C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1978), p. 482.

⁶⁴Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith, 3 vols. in 1 (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 1:56, 61, n. 20.

⁶⁵Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *John: A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of John* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1980), p. 497.

⁶⁶John Williams, *The Holy Spirit, Lord and Life-Giver: A Biblical Introduction to the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1980), p. 25.

be made to refer to [an] impersonal force.⁶⁷

1981—Robert L. Thomas (1928–)⁶⁸

1983—Guy P. Duffield (1909–2000) and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave (1907–2002)⁶⁹

1983–85—Millard J. Erickson (1932–):

The first evidence of the Spirit's personality is the use of the masculine pronoun in representing him. Since the word πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) is neuter and since pronouns are to agree with their antecedents in person, number, and gender, we would expect the neuter pronoun to be used to represent the Holy Spirit. Yet in John 16:13–14 we find an unusual phenomenon. As Jesus describes the Holy Spirit's ministry, he uses a masculine pronoun (ἐκεῖνος—*ekeionos* [sic]) where we would expect a neuter pronoun. The only possible antecedent in the immediate context is "Spirit of truth" (v. 13). [Footnote: It has been suggested that a possible antecedent is the masculine noun παράκλητος (*parakletos*) in verse 7. Its distance from the pronoun makes this a rather unlikely possibility, however.] Either John in reporting Jesus' discourse made a grammatical error at this point (this is unlikely since we do not find any similar error elsewhere in the Gospel), or he deliberately chose to use the masculine to convey to us the fact that Jesus is referring to a person, not a thing.⁷⁰

1983—Robert Hanna⁷¹

1983—Bruce Milne⁷²

1987—David F. Wells (1939–)⁷³

1987—J. I. Packer (1926–)⁷⁴

⁶⁷Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981), p. 531. Cf. idem, "John," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), p. 1058; idem, *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "Johannine Theology," 3:716.

⁶⁸Robert L. Thomas, "2 Thessalonians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Volume 11: *Ephesians Through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), p. 324.

⁶⁹Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983), pp. 107–8.

⁷⁰Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), p. 876. Cf. idem, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, ed. L. Arnold Hustad, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), p. 273.

⁷¹Robert Hanna, *A Grammatical Aid to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), p. 178.

⁷²Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief*, 2nd ed. (Leicester: IVP, 1998), p. 222.

⁷³David F. Wells, *God the Evangelist: How the Holy Spirit Works to Bring Men and Women to Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 4.

⁷⁴J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit: Finding Fullness in Our Walk with God*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), p. 54; *ibid.*, "The Holy Spirit and His Work," in *Applying the Scriptures*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), p. 60.

1988—J. R. Michaels⁷⁵

1988–92—J. Rodman Williams (1918–2008)⁷⁶

1989—Paul Enns (1937–)⁷⁷

1990—R. C. Sproul (1939–):

Here [John 15:26] Jesus refers to the Spirit as *whom* and as *He*. Some scholars may reply that in this text the Greek word for Helper is not the masculine gender and that, according to the rules of grammar, the pronoun must agree with the noun in gender. However, there is an intervening clause (“the Spirit of truth who...”) that uses the neuter gender for Spirit. It is followed immediately by the word *He*. If the writer meant for the Spirit to be thought of as an impersonal neuter force there would be no reason to use the masculine pronoun *He* in such close conjunction with a neuter noun.

If the matter is unclear in John 15, it is crystal clear in John 16:13.... Here there is no grammatical reason whatsoever to use the masculine pronoun *He* unless Jesus intends in this didactic passage to declare that the Holy Spirit is a person.⁷⁸

1991—D. A. Carson (1946–):

It is no accident that in 15:26, when Jesus goes on to say “*he will testify about me,*” John uses the masculine pronoun *ekinos*, even though it breaks concord with the (formally) neuter status of the preceding relative pronoun: i.e., “the Spirit is thought of in personal terms” (Barrett, p. 482).⁷⁹

1992—Jerome H. Smith⁸⁰

1993—Gordon H. Clark (1902–85)⁸¹

1993—Donald D. Hook and Alvin F. Kimel Jr. (1952–)⁸²

⁷⁵*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Paraclete,” by J. R. Michaels, 3:660.

⁷⁶J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988–92), 2:150–51.

⁷⁷Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), pp. 248–49.

⁷⁸R. C. Sproul, *The Mystery of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1990), pp. 17–18.

⁷⁹D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 529. Cf. also idem, *For the Love of God: A Daily Companion for Discovering the Riches of God’s Word*, vol. 1 (Wheaton: Crossway, 1998), entry for March 24: “In Greek, every noun is grammatically designated masculine, feminine, or neuter. The word for ‘spirit’ is neuter. When a pronoun referring to ‘spirit’ is used, it too should be neuter. In this chapter, however, the pronoun is sometimes masculine, breaking grammatical form, a way of gently affirming that the Holy Spirit is personal.”

⁸⁰Jerome H. Smith, ed., *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* (Nashville: Nelson, 1992), p. 1219.

⁸¹Gordon H. Clark, *The Holy Spirit* (Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, 1993), p. 16.

⁸²Donald D. Hook and Alvin F. Kimel Jr., “The Pronouns of Deity,” *SJT* 46 (1993): 301. Reprinted in *This Is My Name Forever: The Trinity and Gender Language*

- 1994—Wayne Grudem (1948–)⁸³
 1994—Richard A. Young (1944–)⁸⁴
 1996—Sinclair B. Ferguson (1948–)⁸⁵
 1996—Robert A. Morey (1946–)⁸⁶
 1996—Peter Toon (1939–)⁸⁷
 1996—Thomas F. Torrance (1913–2007)⁸⁸
 1996—W. E. Vine (1873–1949)⁸⁹
 1997—S. Lewis Johnson (1915–2004)⁹⁰
 1998—James R. White (1962–)⁹¹
 1999—David Coffey⁹²
 2000—Donald G. Bloesch (1928–2010)⁹³
 2000—Gary M. Burge (1952–)⁹⁴
 2000—Raoul Dederen⁹⁵
 2001—Harold F. Carl⁹⁶
 2001—Don Garlington⁹⁷

for God, ed. A. F. Kimel Jr. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), p. 66.

⁸³Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), p. 232.

⁸⁴Richard A. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek: A Linguistic and Exegetical Approach* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), p. 78.

⁸⁵Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), p. 31.

⁸⁶Robert A. Morey, *The Trinity: Evidence and Issues* (Iowa Falls, IA: World, 1996), pp. 411, 423.

⁸⁷Peter Toon, *Our Triune God: A Biblical Portrayal of the Trinity* (Wheaton: BridgePoint, 1996), p. 182.

⁸⁸Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), p. 63.

⁸⁹W. E. Vine *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, ed. Merrill F. Unger and William White (Nashville: Nelson, 1996), 2:594.

⁹⁰S. Lewis Johnson, "The Spirit and Believers: His Teaching Ministry: An Exposition of John 16:12–15," *Emmaus Journal* 6 (1997): 99.

⁹¹James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity: Recovering the Heart of Christian Belief* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1998), p. 216. n. 3.

⁹²David Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 11.

⁹³Donald G. Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit: Works and Gifts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 67.

⁹⁴Gary M. Burge, *John*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), p. 398, n. 19.

⁹⁵Raoul Dederen, *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology*, 12 vols. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 12:134.

⁹⁶Harold F. Carl, "Relational Language in John 14–16: Implications for the Doctrine of the Trinity," *Global Journal* 2 (2001): n.p.

⁹⁷Don Garlington, "Biblical Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity," *Reformation and Revival* 10 (2001): 25.

2002—Gerald L. Borchert⁹⁸

2002—Jack Cottrell⁹⁹

2002—Larry Dixon¹⁰⁰

2002—John M. Frame (1939–):

Pneuma (“spirit”) is a neuter word in Greek (although the corresponding Hebrew term, *ruah*, is feminine). However, the biblical writers sometimes use masculine pronouns with it, emphasizing the personality of the Spirit. In John 14:17, Jesus speaks of “the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.” (Cf. John 14:26; 16:14; 1 Cor. 12:11.)¹⁰¹

2002—John F. MacArthur (1939–)¹⁰²

2002—Woodrow Whidden (1944–), Jerry Moon, and John W. Reeve¹⁰³

2003—Norman L. Geisler (1932–)¹⁰⁴

2003—Colin G. Kruse¹⁰⁵

2004—M. Eugene Boring and Fred B. Craddock¹⁰⁶

2004—Mary A. Fatula¹⁰⁷

2005—Andrew T. Lincoln¹⁰⁸

⁹⁸Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), p. 159.

⁹⁹Jack Cottrell, *The Faith Once for All: Bible Doctrine for Today* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2002), p. 286.

¹⁰⁰Larry Dixon, “The ‘Shy’ Member of the Trinity: The Holy Spirit,” *Emmaus Journal* 11 (2002): 292.

¹⁰¹John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2002), p. 691. John 14:17, however, is a poor example because all of its pronominal references are neuter: τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὃ ὁ κόσμος οὐ δύναται λαβεῖν, ὅτι οὐ θεωρεῖ αὐτὸ οὐδὲ γινώσκει: ὑμεῖς γινώσχετε αὐτό, ὅτι παρ’ ὑμῖν μένει καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν ἔσται. See also idem, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord: An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2006), p. 161; idem, *The Collected Shorter Theological Writings* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 2007).

¹⁰²John MacArthur, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2002), pp. 278–79.

¹⁰³Woodrow Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John W. Reeve, *The Trinity: Understanding God’s Love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian Relationships* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), p. 72.

¹⁰⁴Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, 4 vols. (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2003), 2:676.

¹⁰⁵Colin G. Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), pp. 322, 327.

¹⁰⁶M. Eugene Boring and Fred B. Craddock, *The People’s New Testament Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), p. 342.

¹⁰⁷*The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Holy Spirit,” by Mary A. Fatula, p. 394.

¹⁰⁸Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, BNTC (London: Con-

2007—Chad O. Brand¹⁰⁹

2007—Grant R. Osborne¹¹⁰

2009—John Piper (1946–)¹¹¹

2009—Rolland D. McCune (1934–)¹¹²

A COUNTERARGUMENT

An impressive number of exegetes and theologians have advanced the argument we are challenging, so we present this simple counterargument respectfully and corrigibly. We reached this conclusion independently of others, and we were pleased to discover later that a few others have likewise challenged the argument (see below). So we are encouraged that we are not alone in our dissent.

Our counterargument is simple: The common argument is invalid because the antecedent of the masculine ἐκεῖνος is not the neuter πνεῦμα but the masculine παράκλητος. (See the propositional displays in tables 2–4, which highlight the masculine pronouns that agree with παράκλητος and underline the two neuter pronouns that agree with πνεῦμα.) Of course, we agree that the Holy Spirit is a person, and the three passages in John 14–16 are good places to advance that argument. But the basis of that argument is *not* a grammatical-theological connection between ἐκεῖνος and πνεῦμα. Rather, its basis is contextual, including the nature of a παράκλητος and how Jesus speaks about the personal function of the πνεῦμα.

Table 2 displays ἐκεῖνος ὑμᾶς διδάξει πάντα as the main clause with either ὁ παράκλητος functioning as the pendent nominative or ἐκεῖνος functioning as a pleonastic pronoun—the difference is inconsequential.¹¹³

tinuum, 2005), pp. 411–12.

¹⁰⁹Chad O. Brand, “Is God a Male?” in *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith*, ed. Ted Cabal (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007), p. 1209.

¹¹⁰Grant R. Osborne, “The Gospel of John,” in *The Gospel of John and 1–3 John*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2007), p. 222. Osborne was present when Naselli presented this paper at ETS in November 2010, and after the presentation, Osborne humbly remarked that the view we are advocating is more persuasive. Jim Hamilton recounts the story on his blog (<http://jimhamilton.info/2010/12/15/congrats-to-grant-osborne-on-his-zecnt-matthew/>).

¹¹¹John Piper, “The Free Will of the Wind,” in *Sermons from John Piper (2000–2009)* (Minneapolis: Desiring God, 2009).

¹¹²Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity*, Volume 2: *The Doctrines of Man, Sin, Christ, and the Holy Spirit* (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), pp. 248–49.

¹¹³Daniel B. Wallace, “Greek Grammar and the Personality of the Holy Spirit,” *BBR* 13 (2003): 105–6, n. 23.

Table 2. The Antecedent of Ἐκεῖνος in John 14:26

NA ²⁷	ESV
ὁ δὲ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ὃ πέμψει ὁ πατήρ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου, ἐκεῖνος ὑμᾶς διδάξει πάντα καὶ ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ εἶπον ὑμῖν [ἐγώ].	But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Here is how Wallace describes the pendent nominative and pleonastic pronoun:

This nominative substantive is *the logical rather than syntactical subject* at the beginning of a sentence, followed by a sentence in which this subject is now replaced by a pronoun in the case required by the syntax....

The pendent nominative carries one of two semantic forces: *emotion* or *emphasis*. The second usage, which is far more common, could be labeled *nominative of reference*. (In fact, a helpful key to testing whether a certain nom. is pendent is the question, Can I translate the nom. at the beginning of the clause, “With reference to...”?)

Occasionally a demonstrative is used when no ambiguity would result if it had been deleted. This especially occurs in the nominative case: The demonstrative repeats a subject just mentioned (usually a substantival participle), even though the verb is not introduced until *after* the pronoun. In effect, the pronoun resumes the subject that is now separated from the verb by the participial construction. The pronoun is called pleonastic, redundant, or resumptive. In such cases, the pronoun is usually best left untranslated. However, at times, it has great rhetorical power and the English should reflect this.¹¹⁴

Τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον is appositional to ὁ παράκλητος, and the antecedent of ὃ is τὸ πνεῦμα. “The appositional clause here can therefore be regarded as parenthetical: ‘The Counselor (the Holy Spirit whom [ὃ] the Father will send in my name) will teach you all things....’”¹¹⁵ Taking the antecedent of ἐκεῖνος as ὁ παράκλητος thus is most plausible from a grammatical standpoint.

¹¹⁴Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), pp. 51–52.

¹¹⁵Wallace, “Greek Grammar and the Personality of the Holy Spirit,” p. 107.

Table 3. *The Antecedent of Ἐκεῖνος in John 15:26*

NA ²⁷	ESV
<p>Ὅταν ἔλθῃ ὁ παράκλητος ὄν ἐγὼ πέμψω ὑμῖν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας ὃ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται, ἐκεῖνος μαρτυρήσει περὶ ἐμοῦ.</p>	<p>But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, <u>the Spirit</u> of truth, <u>who</u> proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.</p>

Table 3 displays ἐκεῖνος μαρτυρήσει περὶ ἐμοῦ, and the next subordinate clause is the opening words: Ὅταν ἔλθῃ ὁ παράκλητος. Again, “the appositional clause headed by τὸ πνεῦμα is parenthetical: ‘Whenever the Counselor comes (the Spirit of truth who is coming from the Father), he will testify concerning me.’”¹¹⁶ So taking the antecedent of ἐκεῖνος as ὁ παράκλητος is most plausible grammatically.

Had the evangelist wanted to show the Spirit’s personality, he would in fact have written something like Ὅταν ἔλθῃ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὁ παράκλητος, ἐκεῖνος μαρτυρήσει περὶ ἐμοῦ. The fact that πνεῦμα and not παράκλητος is the appositive renders the philological argument in these two texts void.¹¹⁷

Table 4. *The Antecedent of Ἐκεῖνος in John 16:7–14*

NA ²⁷	ESV
<p>ἀλλ’ ἐγὼ τὴν ἀλήθειαν λέγω ὑμῖν, συμφέρει ὑμῖν ἵνα ἐγὼ ἀπέλθω. ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ ἀπέλθω, ὁ παράκλητος οὐκ ἐλεύσεται πρὸς ὑμᾶς· ἐὰν δὲ πορευθῶ, πέμψω αὐτὸν πρὸς ὑμᾶς.</p>	<p>Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.</p>

¹¹⁶Ibid.¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 108.

καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐκεῖνος
 ἐλέγξει τὸν κόσμον
 περὶ ἁμαρτίας
 καὶ περὶ δικαιοσύνης
 καὶ περὶ κρίσεως·
 περὶ ἁμαρτίας μὲν,
 ὅτι οὐ πιστεύουσιν
 εἰς ἐμέ·
 περὶ δικαιοσύνης δέ,
 ὅτι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα
 ὑπάγω
 καὶ οὐκέτι θεωρεῖτέ
 με·
 περὶ δὲ κρίσεως,
 ὅτι ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ
 κόσμου τούτου
 κέκριται.

Ἔτι πολλὰ ἔχω ὑμῖν λέγειν,
 ἀλλ' οὐ δύνασθε βαστάζειν
 ἄρτι·

ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ἐκεῖνος,
 τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας,

ὁδηγήσει ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ
 πάση·

οὐ γὰρ λαλήσει ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ,

ἀλλ' ὅσα ἀκούσει λαλήσει

καὶ τὰ ἐρχόμενα ἀναγγελεῖ
 ὑμῖν.

ἐκεῖνος ἐμὲ δοξάσει,

ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ λήμψεται

καὶ ἀναγγελεῖ ὑμῖν.

And when he comes,
 he will convict the world
 concerning sin
 and righteousness
 and judgment:
 concerning sin,
 because they do not be-
 lieve in me;
 concerning righteousness,
 because I go to the Father,
 and you will see me no
 longer;
 concerning judgment,
 because the ruler of this
 world is judged.

I still have many things to say to you,
 but you cannot bear them now.

When [he,]

the Spirit of truth comes,

he will guide you into all the truth,

for he will not speak on his own
 authority,

but whatever he hears he will
 speak,

and he will declare to you the
 things that are to come.

He will glorify me,

for he will take what is mine

and declare it to you.

Table 4 is larger than tables 2–3 because the larger context is more important in this passage. Looking only at John 16:13–14 leads many to accept the argument that the antecedent of ἐκεῖνος is τὸ πνεῦμα. But once again, taking the antecedent of ἐκεῖνος as ὁ παράκλητος is the only grammatical possibility, and it is not a stretch at all given the structure of the sentence. There are more words in between the latter two occurrences of ἐκεῖνος and ὁ παράκλητος, but the proximity is not sufficiently insurmountable to discard normal grammatical rules that the author himself has already employed twice previously in chapters 14 and 15.

ADHERENTS OF THE COUNTERARGUMENT

While many have used the prevailing argument over at least the last 500 years, some have challenged it and offered a much more plausible reading. The earliest dissenter we have found is Leonard Woods.¹¹⁸ Several others have followed, but few seem to be aware of their position.

1851—Leonard Woods (1774–1854):

Some Trinitarian writers have argued from the use of the pronoun ἐκεῖνος here applied to the Spirit. But the argument is plainly inconclusive. This word, which is of the masculine gender, relates to the masculine noun παράκλητος. If the Spirit is called παράκλητος, it is a matter of course that the masculine pronoun should be used in reference to him. It does indeed appear rather favorable to the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit, that he is called ὁ παράκλητος, the Comforter, or Advocate; because this, in its common use, is a personal appellation. But here the argument stops. There is no reason to think that the masculine pronoun would have been used in reference to πνεῦμα, the Spirit, had not a masculine noun been first introduced, with which the pronoun could agree in gender. Considering the genius of the Greek language, which applies words of different genders so indiscriminately, we must look upon any argument derived merely from the gender of the noun, or pronoun, as unsatisfactory. Indeed if the use of the masculine gender is here made an argument for the personality of the Holy Spirit; the use of the neuter gender in the word πνεῦμα, and in the pronouns and adjectives agreeing with it, may with equal reason be made an argument against it.¹¹⁹

1942—Kenneth Wuest (1893–1962):

Nouns in Greek are in either one of three genders. They are either masculine, feminine, or neuter. They have certain endings which indicate to what gender they belong. The word “spirit” happens to be in the neuter gender. But that does not mean that the Greeks considered that which

¹¹⁸Thanks to Roque Albuquerque for pointing us to this source.

¹¹⁹Leonard Woods, “Divinity and Personality of the Holy Spirit,” lecture 31 in *The Works of Leonard Woods, D. D.*, 2nd ed., 5 vols. (Andover: n.p., 1850), 1:415.

is designated by the word “spirit” as being an inanimate object and therefore impersonal....

Because the Greek word for “spirit” is neuter, Greek grammar requires that the pronoun used when referring to that which is designated by this Greek word, must be neuter....

The same procedure applies in the case where the word “which” is used. In John 14:17, 26, the pronoun is in the neuter gender, and yet the translators use the word “whom.” Why did they not follow the same procedure in the cases where they used “which?” In all these instances the pronoun is neuter in the Greek text. They also offer “Him” as the translation of the neuter pronoun of the third person (John 14:17). In every instance the pronoun should be “whom” not “which.”

But again, in John 14:26, the word “he” is from a masculine pronoun in Greek. But the pronoun here is masculine because its antecedent “Comforter” is masculine. The masculine gender of this pronoun does not teach the personality of the Spirit any more than the pronoun in the neuter gender speaks of the Spirit as an impersonal force. The genders of the pronouns in the Greek text which refer to the Holy Spirit are determined by the genders of their antecedents.... Thus, the masculine gender of the Greek text does not teach the personality of the Spirit, nor can one therefore erroneously infer that the Spirit is not a Person but only an impersonal force just because the word “spirit” is neuter and its pronoun is therefore neuter.¹²⁰

1978—Francis D. Nichol (1897–1966):

16. The Spirit itself. Or, “the Spirit Himself,” as in many versions (see RSV). The grammatical gender of the word for “Spirit,” Gr. *pneuma*, is neuter. Consequently, the pronoun “itself” must likewise be neuter in the Greek. When the Holy Spirit is referred to by the masculine name *paraklētos*, “Comforter,” the masculine pronoun is used (see John 15:26; 16:7, 13). It is obvious that the personality of the Holy Spirit cannot be argued by the gender of the pronouns that may be used (cf. AA [*Acts of the Apostles*, E. G. White, 1911] 53; TM [*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, E. G. White, 1911] 64).¹²¹

1980—Curt S. Mayes argues in his ThM thesis on the subject that the common argument is “indefensible”:¹²²

The general rule—always the starting point—states that a pronoun agrees with its reference in gender and number.... What justification can be given for choosing the *construction ad sensum* over the general rule in this case [John 14:26]? ...πνεῦμα is preferred to παράκλητος on the basis of proximity. This, in the writer’s mind, is incredible. That a referent which is not in concord, but a few words nearer in the text, should be chosen over a noun which agrees strictly and gives just as good a sense is

¹²⁰Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 2:118–20.

¹²¹Francis D. Nichol, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7 vols. (n.p.: Review and Herald, 1978), 6:568.

¹²²Curt S. Mayes, “Pronominal Referents and the Personality of the Holy Spirit” (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1980), p. 26.

nearly indefensible. Pronominal referents by no means have to be the nearest noun....

The fact that John often uses ἐκεῖνος as the equivalent of a personal pronoun (= he or they) may be significant for the Spirit's personality. But the question is, how is the masculine form in this passage to be explained? Is it meant to teach theology or agree with παράκλητος? Surely the latter is a grammatically sound conclusion.¹²³

1996 and 2003—Daniel B. Wallace briefly refutes the common argument in his grammar and more fully in his journal article cited previously:

The use of ἐκεῖνος here is frequently regarded by students of the NT to be an affirmation of the personality of the Spirit. Such an approach is based on the assumption that the antecedent of ἐκεῖνος is πνεῦμα: “the masculine pronoun ἐκεῖνος is used in John 14:26 and 16:13–14 to refer to the neuter noun πνεῦμα to emphasize the personality of the Holy Spirit.”

But this is erroneous. In all these Johannine passages, πνεῦμα is appositional to a masculine noun. The gender of ἐκεῖνος thus has nothing to do with the natural gender of πνεῦμα. The antecedent of ἐκεῖνος, in each case, is παράκλητος, not πνεῦμα. John 14:26 reads ὁ δὲ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ὃ πέμψει ὁ πατὴρ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου, ἐκεῖνος ὑμᾶς διδάξει πάντα (“the Comforter, the Holy Spirit whom the Father sends in my name, **that one** will teach you all things”). πνεῦμα not only is appositional to παράκλητος, but the relative pronoun that follows it is neuter! This hardly assists the grammatical argument for the Spirit's personality. In John 16:13–14 the immediate context is deceptive: ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ἐκεῖνος, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὁδηγήσει ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πάση. ...ἐκεῖνος ἐμὲ δοξάσει (“whenever **that one** comes—the Spirit of truth—he will guide you in all truth.... **He** will glorify me”). The ἐκεῖνος reaches back to v 7, where παράκλητος is mentioned. Thus, since παράκλητος is masculine, so is the pronoun. Although one might argue that the Spirit's personality is in view in these passages, the view must be based on the nature of a παράκλητος and the things said about the Comforter, not on any supposed grammatical subtleties. Indeed, it is difficult to find *any* text in which πνεῦμα is grammatically referred to with the masculine gender.¹²⁴

There is no text in the NT that clearly or even probably affirms the personality of the Holy Spirit through the route of Greek grammar. The basis for this doctrine must be on other grounds....

In sum, I have sought to demonstrate in this paper that the *grammatical* basis for the Holy Spirit's personality is lacking in the NT, yet this is frequently, if not usually, the first line of defense of that doctrine by many evangelical writers.¹²⁵

¹²³Ibid., pp. 27, 33.

¹²⁴Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, pp. 331–32.

¹²⁵Wallace, “Greek Grammar and the Personality of the Holy Spirit,” pp. 122, 125.

1999—Rodney A. Whitacre:

The word *Spirit* in Greek (*pneuma*) is in the neuter gender, whereas the word *Paraclete* (*paraklētos*) is in the masculine. It is often said that in this verse John observes the neuter gender of the word *Spirit* in his use of pronouns (*ho, auto*), but in later passages he will use masculine pronouns with the word *Spirit* (14:26; 15:26; 16:8, 13–14), suggesting that this *Spirit* is not simply an impersonal force or atmosphere. However, in each case the antecedent is the masculine word *paraklētos* (*Paraclete*), so no such significance is attached to the masculine pronouns (Wallace 1996: 331–32). The personhood of the *Spirit* is conveyed in these texts by what is said about the *Paraclete*, not by the grammar.¹²⁶

2003—Charles R. Swindoll (1934–) and Roy B. Zuck (1932–) present a grammatically sound explanation of the passage, though they do not mention the prevailing view.¹²⁷

2004—Andreas J. Köstenberger (1957–):

It is often argued that the use of the Greek masculine pronoun ἐκεῖνος (*ekeinōs*, he) for the *Spirit* in passages such as John 14:26; 15:26; and 16:13–14 affirms the personality of the Holy *Spirit* (Barrett 1978: 482; Borchert 2002: 159; Morris 1995: 583 n. 73 [citing Westcott]; 606 n. 64; 621 n. 27; and others cited in Wallace 1996: 331 n. 42). However, the most likely reason for John's use of the masculine pronoun in these passages is that the antecedent is the masculine noun ὁ παράκλητος (*ho paraklētos*, the helping presence). If so, John's use of a masculine pronoun to refer to the *Spirit* is best explained as a function of grammar rather than theology, and arguments for the personality of the Holy *Spirit* must be made on other grounds (so rightly Wallace 1996: 331–32, who points out that it is difficult to find any text where the neuter noun πνεῦμα [*pneuma*, spirit/*Spirit*] is grammatically referred to by the masculine).¹²⁹

2005—Andrew Malone:

A closer study, however, shows that Jesus isn't breaking the conventions of Greek grammar. The masculine pronoun is never applied to the neuter *pneuma*. Rather, in every instance, it refers back to the title *Paraclete* (*paraklētos*). As this is a masculine noun, there is nothing at all noteworthy about the pronouns. (The word *pneuma* just happens to be in the vicinity, as a further description of the *Paraclete*.)

Not everyone is guilty of the pronominal argument. A number of works, past and present, rightly identify the referent. But this, of course, merely obeys the rules of gender agreement and so attracts no comment. It is only recently that the mistake has been overtly flagged by Daniel Wallace....

¹²⁶Rodney A. Whitacre, *John*, IVPNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), p. 359.

¹²⁷Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck, *Understanding Christian Theology* (Nashville: Nelson, 2003), p. 396.

¹²⁹Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), p. 442, n. 91.

As we have seen, the pronominal argument has gained a wide hearing over the past century. Because of its popularity and its impeccable pedigree, scholars and preachers are slow—perhaps even reluctant?—to note Wallace’s corrective. So, for example, the various commentaries and theologies which have been published since 1996 which continue to repeat the fallacy.¹³⁰

2007—Graham Cole:

[W]e should also note one argument for the personhood of the Spirit—common in evangelical circles—which must not be embraced too facily. The argument contends that in John’s account of Jesus’ teaching about the Holy Spirit, although “Spirit” (*pneuma*) is neuter, the masculine pronoun *ekeinōs* (translated “he” e.g., ESV) rather than the neuter one *ekeino* (which would be translated “it”) is used repeatedly (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:8, 13–14)....

However, David [*sic*] Wallace argues in his *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* that the antecedent of the masculine pronoun in the key passages is not the neuter “Spirit” (*to pneuma*) but the masculine “the Paraclete” (*ho paraklētos*) and thus the pronominal argument is a fallacious one in this instance. If Wallace is right, then the pronominal argument for the personhood of the Spirit is far less compelling than Packer and many others seem to think.¹³¹

OBJECTIONS TO THE COUNTERARGUMENT

While some of the proponents of the argument seem unaware of other possible interpretations,¹³² others offer two related objections to the counterargument: (1) the nearest possible antecedent is πνεῦμα and therefore must be the right one, and (2) in the case of John 16:13–14, παράκλητος is too far away from ἐκεῖνος to be its antecedent.¹³³

Does the nearness of ἐκεῖνος to πνεῦμα indicate that it is its antecedent? No. Function rather than proximity is the determiner. In 14:26 the logical subject of the sentence is παράκλητος, and τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον is an appositive followed by a neuter adjectival

¹³⁰Andrew Malone, “Essential Theology: The Personhood of the Holy Spirit and Masculine Pronouns in John’s Gospel,” *Essentials* (Autumn 2005): 7–8.

¹³¹Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), pp. 67–68.

¹³²Francis Turretin: “For no reason can be given why such a change should be made in Scripture except that thus the person of the Holy Spirit may be more clearly designated.” Charles Hodge: “Here there is no possibility of accounting for the use of the personal pronoun He (ἐκεῖνος) on any other ground than the personality of the Spirit.” R. C. Sproul: “Here there is no grammatical reason whatsoever to use the masculine pronoun *He* unless Jesus intends in this didactic passage to declare that the Holy Spirit is a person.”

¹³³A. T. Robertson exemplifies this objection: “In 16:13 a more striking example occurs, ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ἐκεῖνος, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας. Here one has to go back six lines to ἐκεῖνος again and seven to παράκλητος. It is more evident therefore in this passage that John is insisting on the personality of the Holy Spirit, when the grammatical gender so easily called for ἐκεῖνο.”

relative clause: ὁ πέμψει ὁ πατήρ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου. To resume his flow of thought, Jesus uses the masculine ἐκεῖνος indicating that it is the παράκλητος he is talking about. In 15:26 we find nearly the same syntactical structure. Jesus is discussing the παράκλητος. But this time there is also a masculine adjectival relative clause modifying παράκλητος: ὃν ἐγὼ πέμψω ὑμῖν παρὰ τοῦ πατρός. This is significant, because it shows that John knows how to match the gender of his pronouns with their antecedents. The masculine pronoun ὃν agrees in gender with its antecedent, παράκλητος, and the neuter pronoun ὃ agrees in gender with its antecedent, πνεῦμα. It is to be expected, then, that ἐκεῖνος points back to παράκλητος rather than πνεῦμα.

Does the distance of ἐκεῖνος to παράκλητος in John 16:7–14 make it impossible or even unlikely that they stand in a pronoun–antecedent relationship to one another? On first glance, it might seem so. But upon closer investigation, it is clear that there is no other option. First, the distance (6 verses or 69 words) is not as far as it may seem. Though παράκλητος occurs in v. 7 and ἐκεῖνος in v. 13, there is only one sentence (vv. 8–11) between the two. And that sentence, whose subject is the παράκλητος, is an aside that interrupts the flow of thought. Verse 7 flows seamlessly right into vv. 12–14.

⁷Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you....¹²¹I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.¹⁴He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

⁷ἀλλ' ἐγὼ τὴν ἀλήθειαν λέγω ὑμῖν, συμφέρεи ὑμῖν ἵνα ἐγὼ ἀπέλθω. ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ ἀπέλθω, ὁ παράκλητος οὐκ ἐλεύσεται πρὸς ὑμᾶς· ἐὰν δὲ πορευθῶ, πέμψω αὐτὸν πρὸς ὑμᾶς....^{12v}Ἐτι πολλὰ ἔχω ὑμῖν λέγειν, ἀλλ' οὐ δύνασθε βαστάζειν ἅρτι.¹³ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ἐκεῖνος, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὀδηγήσει ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πάσῃ· οὐ γὰρ λαλήσει ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ, ἀλλ' ὅσα ἀκούσει λαλήσει καὶ τὰ ἐρχόμενα ἀναγγελεῖ ὑμῖν.¹⁴ἐκεῖνος ἐμὲ δοξάσει, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ λήμψεται καὶ ἀναγγελεῖ ὑμῖν.

Second, John uses masculine pronouns between παράκλητος in v. 7 and ἐκεῖνος in v. 13 to point back to παράκλητος, demonstrating that the Helper is the subject all the way through. At the end of v. 7 he uses αὐτὸν and at the beginning of v. 8 he uses ἐκεῖνος. Third, he uses the masculine again after its occurrence at the beginning of v. 13. Verse 14 continues the flow of thought by beginning with ἐκεῖνος.¹³⁴ From the beginning to the end, the one under discussion is the παράκλητος, which perfectly accounts for the repeated use of

¹³⁴In v. 13 he uses ἑαυτοῦ, which, though it could be neuter, everyone rightly parses as masculine.

masculine pronouns.

CONCLUSION

The consistent testimony of Scripture is that the Holy Spirit is a person, but John's use of ἐκεῖνος in John 14:26, 15:26, and 16:13–14 has absolutely no bearing on the subject. A careful analysis of the texts in their contexts with sound principles of grammatical gender firmly in place demonstrates unequivocally that the antecedent of ἐκεῖνος is the masculine παράκλητος. The gender of the nouns and pronouns in these chapters neither supports nor challenges the doctrine of the Spirit's personality. It is time to put this erroneous argument to rest once and for all.