

Answering Questions about The Holy Spirit

W
M
1
3
9
6

A friend of mine, deeply upset because I believe that the Holy Spirit is a literal Being who is the Third Person of the Godhead, has written me several irate letters over the last year or so. I have no doubt that he means well.

There are many very fine Advent believers, on both sides of this question, who love God with all their hearts. As you may know, last year I published a complete 208 pp. book on the subject, *Defending the Godhead*.

However, recently, I also published an additional tract on the subject (*In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit WM-1390*). When my friend read that, it shook him deeply. In that tract, I pointed out that Christ used "the" three times in that phrase (Matthew 28:19), thus conclusively proving that the three are separate Divine Persons.

So he wrote me another letter, in which he said, "Please, Vance, help me!" He seemed to have begun to question whether he might be wrong about his belief, that there is no literal Holy Spirit (but only something that flows from God). In his letter, he enclosed a number of questions for me to answer (to which I will add a few additional clarifying questions to fill out the picture).

This good friend is deeply sincere and wants to know the truth. We both do, and I believe you do also. So I sat down and prepared the following information which I will send to him. I believe you will also appreciate reading it.

But there is no reason to provide Bible and Spirit of Prophecy statements in this present overview. That is all in my book, *Defending the Godhead*. So, in this present study, you will be presented with foundation facts and their implications. For a wealth of Inspired support, I refer you to my book. —v/

DATE OF PUBLICATION: September 2007

"Why is the Holy Spirit so mysterious?"—It is, indeed, a mysterious subject. But that need not be surprising,—for there are profound mysteries about all Three: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Should we not expect this? Deep-thinking individuals will recognize that *there is absolutely nothing about the Godhead, and its individual Members, that we can really understand*, with the

exception of their attributes of love and patience, law and justice. —But even those attributes at times seem opposed to one another. Yet, in reality, those important qualities are part of the entire spectrum of traits which are good and necessary in the character of God. Without both the wonderful love of God and His strict upholding of standards, the order of the universe and all its inhabitants would fall apart.

Here are two examples which show the utter impossibility of our understanding the nature or activities of Divinity: It is totally impossible to know everything past, present, and future. It is impossible to be somewhere and everywhere at the same time. Yet these are attributes of God.

Since the members of the Godhead are completely ungraspable by our tiny minds, why should we expect to be able to understand hardly any specific thing about any of them? Can the earthworms in the garden understand the gardener? (By the way, would a gardener suffer and die for an earthworm? Another incredible insight about Divinity.)

"Why does the Spirit not have a name, as do the Father and the Son?"—When one stops to thoughtfully consider the matter, we discover that, first, *none of Them* have definitive names! One is called God, the Father, and the Ancient of Days. Another is called God, the Son, Christ, and Jesus. The third is called the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, and the Paraclete. (The Greek word, translated "Comforter in John 14-16, actually means "a person called to one's side to help him)." —God sends a Divine Person to our side to help us!

Second, the primary name that we use for each of Them is only descriptive of Their relationship to one another and to us: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Notice that not only "the Spirit," but the names of all Three, show a relationship to one another and to us. (It is of interest that, of the approximately 190 times in which "holy" is used in the New Testament, over 80% of the time it is applied exclusively to the Holy Spirit. So He is a very important topic in the New Testament!)

Third, there is a tendency, at times, for some of these names to be interchangeable. For example, in Isaiah 9:6, Jesus is "the everlasting Father." There

2 are a number of sentences in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy which, if taken alone, give the impression that Jesus is the only God. But, of course, in order to understand all this more accurately, we compare all the Inspired passages. (Because all Three are eternal, past through future, all Three are equally ancient in days and the beginning and end.)

Someone may reply that only the Father is God or Jehovah. But, upon careful checking, we find that those names are applied to more than one of the Deity. So we cannot say that the Hebrew word, YHWH, is the specific name of either one of them.

Actually, most of the names of the members of the Godhead are attribute names; they explain qualities. For example, the Hebrew name for Jehovah ("LORD" in the KJV) describes His attribute of being the "eternal, self-existing One."

Someone will say, "Well, that word only applies to the Father, not to Christ." Yet we are told that it is Christ which has communicated with mankind since the Fall. Therefore, the greater majority of the usages of "God" and "Lord" in the Old and New Testaments are referring to Christ! Always keep in mind that we can only begin to touch the outer perimeter of Divinity when we discuss this reverent subject. Humble your heart, remove the shoes from your feet, and bow on your knees when you approach this topic. I pray that I have the proper attitude as I write this brief survey.

"How can they all be equal and eternal?"—Yet, in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, all three are said to be fully divine, totally equal, and completely eternal. (Once again, read my book on the subject. *Defending the Godhead* has 511 Bible quotations or references and 120 Spirit of Prophecy quotations—over 631 in all. The Scripture proof is in that book!)

The more we try to penetrate the mystery, the more mysterious it becomes. —*Yet we can know each of Them by personal experience and have Them in our hearts and lives! And what a precious experience it is!*

"How can three equal members of the Godhead have different positions?"—The positions of the members of the Godhead is another mystery. One appears to be the superior leader. Yet, in the Bible and in the Spirit of Prophecy, we are told that all Three are totally equal in divinity, eternity, etc. All Three are fully God; three divine Personages. (I will not take the space here to quote all the supporting passages; they are in my in-depth book.)

"Why is one of them—the Holy Spirit—always invisible?"—It is true that the Holy Spirit appears to have taken a position in which He does not appear to view. But, if we fully understood all that He does in our world—and throughout the universe—we would find that this quality is a great asset, not a liability. Many statements explain that He works within us more than do the other Two. This makes His role very im-

portant! His work is different, just as the work of each of the other Two is different.

We know from various passages that, in the past, the other Two have at times been invisible also.

"Jesus told His disciples that He would send them His Spirit, so it must be something belonging to Him."—We cannot know anything about Divinity, except as They reveal it to us in the Inspired Writings. It is well known that we must compare Scripture with Scripture in order to obtain a more complete understanding of a subject.

In some passages in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, we are told that Jesus sends His Spirit, or that it is the Spirit of God. In other passages, we find that this Spirit has a distinct name, the Holy Spirit, and a separate identity. Our book covers all of this in great depth. *Putting all the passages together* explains that, while Jesus sends us "His Spirit,"—that Spirit is the Third Member of the Godhead.

"Why do we not talk to the Holy Spirit?"—According to the Bible, a man in the book of Acts lied to Him. How can a person lie to the Holy Spirit if he is not talking to Him?

"Why does the Holy Spirit have no substance?"—This question was dealt with earlier. But it should be noted that the others can, when they wish to do so, have no apparent substance either. If God had to retain a literal substance, as we have,—He could not be present everywhere. Think it through. Everything is a mystery; everything about Divinity is beyond our ability to conceive of.

"If He has no substance, how can He be a real personage?"—Turn to pp. 126-129 in my book, and you will find Bible texts supporting the facts that the Holy Spirit has intellect, knowledge, a mind, emotions, and a will. He testifies, helps, teaches, guides, convinces, convicts, regenerates, intercedes, commands, sends out, forbids, and prohibits. He can be obeyed, resisted, grieved, blasphemed, and lied to. He is an actual, literal, separate Personage!

"Why is the Spirit also called Ghost?"—First, those two words are both represented by the same word in the Greek. The KJV happens to vary between two different words. Second, as mentioned earlier, both the Father and the Son are also called by various names. Does that make them nonexistent because they have several names?

There are several other questions which my friend asked me to answer for him. But most of them are essentially answered elsewhere in this brief overview of basic principles. Here are three additional questions he asked:

"Why does the Holy Spirit never take a definite form or appearance?"—The fact that He never takes a definite form answers several questions, such as why we never see Him; why He does not seem to have a definite substance; why He is symbolized by breath,

w wind, water, and oil; why He is spoken of as "infilling"
M or "falling upon" people; and several other descriptions of Him.

1 We have definite Inspired statements that the Holy
9 Spirit is the separate, distinct, Third Person of the
6 Godhead. We are to accept Them.—But, having done so,
are we to presume to say what They must look like? We are to accept what we are told and be content with it. The Holy Spirit never takes a solid form—never. *This fact helps explain many things we might otherwise wonder about*,—including why He is not included in a couple statements as being among the visible beings in the universe. He is not a visible being.

Each member of the Godhead is immaterial substance; that is, each One is not composed of any type of substance you and I—or any creature in the universe—are familiar with or have ever seen. One exception is that Christ took human form at the Incarnation and has chosen to forever retain it. That was partly done to enable men and angels, throughout eternity, to draw closer to God; for He is now Immanuel, "God with us."

"Why is the Holy Spirit sometimes referred to as 'it' and not 'him'?"—This is covered in great detail in Chapter 14 of my book (*pp. 161-165*). First, the Greek word for "spirit" is in the neuter, just as the word for "son" is always in the masculine. But Greek gender does not determine doctrine.

The word, "pneuma" (Spirit), is a naturally occurring Greek neuter; yet the masculine pronoun (*ekeinos*; that, or that one) is used of the Holy Spirit in a number of passages—when it could be rendered in the neuter form.

Second, every major passage about the Holy Spirit in *Desire of Ages* (64 of them, not counting DA 668-672)—always speaks of the Holy Spirit using "He." You will find them listed in Chapter 14 in my book.

Third, that key chapter in *Desire of Ages* on the Holy Spirit (the one concerning John 14-16) always refers to Him as "He" (*pp. 668-672*; an additional 23 times, "He" is applied to the Holy Spirit). Also read John 14:16 and 16:7.

"Why is the Spirit not Christ's Father, since the Holy Ghost came upon Mary?"—This, another question sent by my friend, is the kind that we need not ask. We are to accept what God's Word tells us, and not inquire why it does not tell us something else.

But I will mention this: The question is how the Incarnation took place. That is a total mystery. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary; and then Christ in all His divine fullness entered that ovum and One, fully God and fully man, was the result. I do not believe we should try to say more about this.

But two facts should be noted: First, because the Holy Spirit is not Christ's Father does not make the Holy Spirit any less divine. Second, the fact that the

Holy Spirit—rather than a created angelic being—came 3 upon Mary only establishes all the more fully that the Holy Spirit is a member of the Godhead!

"The word, "spirit," is also used in Scripture to refer to other things."—But the fact that "spirit" is so used does not lessen the importance or divinity of the Holy Spirit. The word, "god," is also used for things other than God. Not only is there a "Christ," but there is also an "antichrist."

This fact, that the word "spirit" is also used for other things, is the answer to two other questions asked by my friend:

The first is "Why are there seven spirits in Revelation, but never seven Fathers or seven Sons?" The "seven spirits" are also called "seven lamps of fire" (Rev 4:5). The phrase, "seven angels," appears far more often. Revelation is filled with symbols. I do not believe we can prove the nonexistence of the Holy Spirit from a symbolic phrase.

The second is "Why is the spirit said in the Bible to be in Job's nostrils?" The breath in Job's lungs might be air (translated "spirit" in the Old Testament) or it might refer to the Holy Spirit dwelling within him. The word, "spirit," in the Bible can refer to several different things.

"Why are there no hymns of adoration to the Spirit, as to the Father and the Son?"—Actually, there are a few. We are told to direct our adoration to God. But we have already found that all Three are fully divine, and therefore fully God. Yet, to my understanding, Scripture does not tell us to praise and adore the Holy Spirit. He helps us pray to God (Rom 8:26-27). Each member of the Godhead appears to have a different "work assignment." But it is because each One does different things, so that everyone in the universe is able to better understand God. In the divine wisdom, this separation of duties also helps the functioning of the universe and the continued existence of every created being, as well as the orderly revolution of the stars and galaxies. Much of it probably involves the Holy Spirit, which appears to work at a distance from the throne of God. Some may wish to guess at what all these activities involve, but why should we? Both Lucifer and Eve got in trouble because they probed into matters which had not been revealed to them. Regarding the nature and work of the Holy Spirit, we should take what we are told and be content with it.

The question, above, was why we are not to adore the Holy Spirit. Although we are not told to adore Him,—*in the strongest terms, we are also told not to belittle Him, deny Him, or reject Him!* **Some of us could be in danger of committing the Great Sin against Him—by saying He does not exist!** The words of Christ cannot be stronger or more threatening! (Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10).

To say that there is no Holy Spirit—is to say

4 that there is no Holy Spirit! Some say, "I am not rejecting the Holy Spirit or saying He does not exist. I am just saying that the phrase only refers to an outward emanation, or something outflowing from God Himself!"

Think it through. *Your words are actually saying that there is no Holy Spirit*, period. There is only an outflowing from God, a part of God Himself. The Holy Spirit has no separate existence.—Therefore He does not exist! *Wake up to your peril*. God did not give you the work of downgrading the existence of the Holy Spirit!

In my view, this is the most dangerous aspect of this "no Holy Spirit" teaching. At the very least, it is teaching others to underrate the Holy Spirit—in spite of clear statements that He is the Third Person of the Godhead. Can such a viewpoint be considered safe? Read pp. 126-175 in my book. Those 50 pages are filled with Bible/Spirit of Prophecy facts about the divinity, eternity, separate identity, and work of the Holy Spirit.

The concept of "no Holy Spirit" is more than a belittling of His reality; it is a subtle denial.

As far as I am concerned, it takes a brave man to say, "There is no actual Holy Spirit, as such; it is just an outflowing of something that is in God."

By the way, if this spirit is just something which flows out, from whom does it flow out of? Let me explain:

It is consistent to say that the Holy Spirit is a separate Personage. This is because such a position agrees with definite passages in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy.

But it is inconsistent, for two reasons, to say that the Holy Spirit is not a Personage, but only something in God. First, the statement denies definite Inspired passages to the contrary. Second, who does it flow out of?—the Father or the Son—for both are named in Scripture as sending and imparting the Spirit. This can lead to confusion as to the Spirit's origin.

In contrast, when we say that the Holy Spirit is a definite Personage, all the texts are able to nicely agree. They dovetail together. Not only is He a definite Divine Person, having a separate existence from the Father and Son, but either or both are able to send the Third Person.

We know there is a definite difference in, what could be called, the work assignments for each of the Three. The Father is to receive supreme worship. The Son is in charge of the entire working out of the plan of salvation. Because of the Son's continual intercession, the Holy Spirit is sent to us from Them. The Holy Spirit works on our hearts to draw us to Christ (and we dare not belittle, deny, or reject His existence

or work!). He draws from us prayers which He sends on up to Christ in the Sanctuary in heaven. As our Mediator, Christ covers our prayers with the merits of His own righteousness and sends them on to the Father. This is a perfect, orderly pattern.

Yet this pattern is shattered if we say that something flowing from God, or Christ, exudes down to mankind. Where in such an altered pattern do we find agreement with repeated Inspired passages that—not just a divine essence but—an actual Holy Spirit is pleading with us to return to God and pray to Him? Where do we find the Spirit sending our prayers up to Christ—if it is just God sending something back to Himself?

In that case, John 14-16 does not make sense. Why, in those chapters, does Christ talk about sending the Holy Spirit to us? Why did He not, instead, say that God Himself would work in our hearts, and teach us all things, and bring all things to our remembrance? —But He did not say that!

Why, in Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:29; and Luke 12:10, did Christ utter the urgent warning against rejecting the Holy Spirit,—unless the Holy Spirit was a definite entity which existed separately from the Father and the Son? If it is a spirit flowing from God, Christ would have warned us against rejecting God! Many Spirit of Prophecy passages give this warning also.

Conclusion—We cannot explain anything about how God is—exists (nature) or how He does things (function).

Indeed, we cannot explain anything He has done! This includes everything that has been created!

We can invent labels to describe something in part, while actually understanding essentially nothing about it. Consider the human eye or the existence of a hummingbird.

How can a liver perform hundreds of different vital functions, and in such a small area? How can a globular cluster, composed of hundreds of thousands of stars close together, be placed there and kept from collapsing into itself? The list goes on and on.

Everything Divinity is and does is astounding. Why then deny plain statements about the Holy Spirit and, because we cannot understand Him,—dare to deny His existence!

Defending the Godhead, 208 pp., boxful quantities: 35 cents in the box, 16 case, \$5.60 + \$6.00 = \$11.60 / U.S. prices; more for foreign shipping).

If you are searching for light on this subject, send me \$2.50—and I will send you a copy, postpaid. The 631 quotations and references in that book will help you.