

Who, on Earth, Is the Holy Spirit?

A Preacher's Workshop

by Charles B. Hodge, Jr.

INTRODUCTION

In Acts 17 we read about the unknown God; in the U.S.A. we practice the half-known God, the Holy Spirit. It is benign neglect. The Holy Spirit has not been studied; ignorance has spawned superstition. Superstition has created a religious monster. Most wish that the Holy Spirit would "quietly go away." But He will not.

Some are more afraid of the Holy Spirit than Satan! Someone said we know much about Jesus, a little about God, and nothing about the Holy Spirit. In a Bible class three boys said daily, "I believe in God the Father"; "... the Son"; "... the Spirit." One day there was silence about the Holy Spirit. One boy explained, "The boy who believes in the Holy Spirit ain't here today!" Tragically, those who do not know are content not to know. The world wants

religion without the Holy Spirit,
Christianity without Christ,
forgiveness without repentance,
heaven without hell.

There is no fear of studying baptism; why is there fear over the Holy Spirit? *Remember:* Ignorance devastates.

I. MISCONCEPTS EXIST.

- A. The Holy Spirit is not an "it." The Holy Spirit is in the Bible as a person, not a thing. God and Jesus are not "its." You do not get "it." Read 1 Peter 1:11.
- B. The Holy Spirit is not a ghost. In our criticism of translations why is nothing said about the KJV and its translation of "Holy Spirit" as "Holy Ghost"?
 1. A ghost is the spirit of the deceased, an apparition, a remotest likelihood. If the Holy Spirit is holy He is not a ghost; if He is a ghost He is not holy.
 2. The KJV was influenced by the Shakespearean era of ghosts and superstition.
- C. The Holy Spirit is not merely the Word. This is mechanical religion. Read Ephesians 6:17. The Holy Spirit uses the Word as a sword, but

there is a difference between the soldier and the sword.

1. This must shock us. This can create "Bibliolatry." The Bible is the inspired Word of God, but it is not God! Some pray, "I am here to worship Thy Word." The Bible is an instrument, not God.
 2. Some deny a personal indwelling of Christians because the Holy Spirit would be fragmented. Yet they have no problem putting the Holy Spirit into a zillion Bibles!
 3. Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17. God did not find words and then add "spirit." God "breathed out words." The words are spiritual. This eliminates "thought inspiration."
 4. The Holy Spirit is not carried around in pockets.
 5. If any is the Word (of the Trinity) then Jesus is! He is the *logos* (word). Read John 1.
- D. The Holy Spirit is not merely an influence. Some would reduce both Satan and the Holy Spirit to an influence. Both are persons. There is a real Satan and there is a real Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit must be given all the rights and privileges of a person.
1. It is true the Holy Spirit is not commanded to be loved like God. We are not to have a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit.
 2. He has no first name, middle initial, or last name like Jesus.
 3. Again the Holy Spirit did not retire to the sidelines at Pentecost. This was when He came. Ours is the last dispensation—the Holy Spirit dispensation. Acts 1 finds the apostles in Jerusalem awaiting the power (the Holy Spirit).
 4. The Holy Spirit operated differently than God and Jesus. The Holy Spirit has been sent by God (Christ) to promote, reveal, and glorify Christ! Anything that promotes and glorifies the Holy Spirit is not of the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit is always in the background. He never occupies the stage.
 5. Without the Holy Spirit Christianity degenerates into another humanistic "bootstrap" philosophy.

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A MEMBER OF THE TRINITY (GODHEAD).

- A. Research the Trinity. This is unique and fundamental with Christianity. Our study in this area has been shallow also. Christianity is Trinitarian. It is not three in one and one in three. This violates math and truth. God is not one in the way He is three. Husbands and wives are one but not in the way they are two. We need sensible Scriptural study about the Trinity.
1. Tritheism says there are three gods.
 2. Arianism says Jesus was a created being.
 3. Sabellianism says there is but one God represented in three ways.
- B. Read Genesis 1:26, 27; Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and 1 John 5:7.
- C. The Holy Spirit is a Divine Person.
1. He is eternal (Hebrews 9:14).
 2. He is omnipotent (Genesis 1; Micah 3:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11).
 3. He is omniscient (1 Corinthians 2:10, 11; 1 Timothy 4:1-3).
 4. He is omnipresent (Psalms 139:7-10; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).
- D. God and the Holy Spirit are interchangeable (Acts 5:1-4; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16).

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON.

- A. There are *four* facets in a personality.
1. It has intelligence (1 Corinthians 2:10, 11; Romans 8:27; 1 Timothy 4:2).
 2. It has emotion (Isaiah 63:10; Romans 15:30; Ephesians 4:30).
 3. It has will (1 Corinthians 12:11; 1 Timothy 4:1; Romans 8:26; John 16:13).
 4. It has power (Acts 1; 2; John 15:26; Acts 8:29; 10:19; Revelation 22:17).
- B. He can be grieved, despised, lied to and about, resisted, and blasphemed (Acts 7:51; 5:1-4; Ephesians 4:30; Matthew 12:32; 1 Thessalonians 5:19).

IV. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS TO GLORIFY CHRIST.

- A. When the Holy Spirit is at work Christ is glorified. The ultimate work of the Holy Spirit is to plant the confession Jesus is Lord at the

center of every man's being. The more one is led by the Holy Spirit the more Christ one has.

- B. The Holy Spirit is another *paraclete* (John 14-16). This is a legal term meaning to call, summon alongside of. It refers to a barrister, an advocate, a comforter, or an aid.
1. Paul said, "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5).
 2. All spiritual blessings come by the blesser (Ephesians 1:3). A spiritual blessing is one sent by the Holy Spirit. To have spiritual blessings is to have the Holy Spirit first. To have the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5), one must have the Holy Spirit.
 3. The Holy Spirit will never *compete* with Christ; He will *complete* Christ. All the promises of Christ are delivered in and by the Holy Spirit (John 15:16; 16:14). The Holy Spirit never, never, never points to Himself.

ILLUSTRATION

The Stern Realities

Nathan Ausubel, in his *Treasury of Jewish Folklore*, reminds us of the young Talmudic scholar who had just completed a learned work and come to the rabbi begging him for a testimonial. The rabbi regarded his visitor with gentle compassion.

"My son," he said, "you must face the stern realities. If you wish to be a writer of scholarly books you must be resigned to peddle your work from house to house like a vendor of pots and pans, and suffer hunger until you are forty."

"And what will happen after I am forty?" asked the young writer hopefully.

The rabbi smiled encouragingly. "By the time you are forty, you will be used to it."