

The Holy Spirit – Foundational Principles

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Main Point: Discussing the doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Objective: Is the Holy Spirit a “He” or an “It”? What does the Bible say? Gain from Scripture a clear understanding of foundational topics such as the triune nature of God, the person-hood of the Spirit, and the divinity of Jesus Christ.

I. Definitions

- a. Need to be clear with our definitions to prevent confusion and misunderstanding due to pre-conceived ideas and understandings of certain words/terms.
- b. Trinity
 - i. Objection – does not occur in Scripture
 - ii. Incarnation, “God becoming flesh” also not in scripture
 - iii. Words are not found but concepts are in Scripture.
- c. Glyn Parfitt, Australian, “The Trinity”:
 - i. I would be happy not to use the word “trinity” at all, as it does not occur in the Bible. Moreover, the word “Trinity” means different things to different people and there are some statements made by Trinitarians with which I could not agree. I could therefore give the wrong impression by saying, “I am a Trinitarian.” On the other hand, because my beliefs fall within the range of beliefs generally regarded as Trinitarian, I would certainly give the wrong impression if I were to say, I am not a Trinitarian. For this reason when I a asked, I have to confess that Yes I am a Trinitarian and then do any explaining necessary.
- d. SDA Foundational Belief #2 – One God, unite of 3 co-eternal Persons
 - i. Rosario and Asscherick use “Trinity” in this sense.
 - ii. We believe in “1 God, 3 Persons”
 1. 1 *what*, 3 *whos*
 2. “Essentially impossible to fully grasp the idea of the nature of God” (Rosario).
 3. “Even if we had the perfect language, who God actually is an infinite beyond.” (Asscherick)
 4. Monotheistic Non-Trinitarians
 - a. “Many have said I don’t understand it, therefore, I don’t believe it.” (Asscherick)
 - iii. Church history
 1. Wavered between two extremes:
 - a. Modalism – Rigid monotheism – God is only one (taking the mode of various personas/positions)

- b. Tritheism – The three persons of the Godhead are three completely separate, distinct gods
- e. The Mystery of God
 - i. Dt. 29:29
 - ii. Job 11:7-9
 - iii. Ps 145:3
 - iv. Isaiah 55:8-9 – Dimension of God beyond human comprehension
 - v. 1 Tm 3:16
- f. Trinity concept analogies
 - i. Some philosophical analogies:
 - 1. Egg – three parts: shell, whites, yolk
 - 2. Water – liquid, solid, gas
 - ii. EGW, Evangelism 614
 - 1. “I am instructed to say, The sentiments of those who are searching for advanced scientific ideas are not to be trusted. Such representations as the following are made: “The Father is as the light invisible: the Son is as the light embodied; the Spirit is the light shed abroad.” “The Father is like the dew, invisible vapor; the Son is like the dew gathered in beauteous form; the Spirit is like the dew fallen to the seat of life.” Another representation: “The Father is like the invisible vapor; the Son is like the leaden cloud; the Spirit is rain fallen and working in refreshing power. All these spiritualistic representations are simply nothingness. They are imperfect, untrue. They weaken and diminish the Majesty which no earthly likeness can be compared to. God cannot be compared with the things His hands have made. These are mere earthly things, suffering under the curse of God because of the sins of man. The Father cannot be described by the things of earth. The Father is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and is invisible to mortal sight.”
 - 2. God has sanctioned some analogies in the Scriptures:
 - a. God the *Father*, God the *Son*

II. Old Testament

- a. “Passages that clearly suggest the plurality of God” (Rosario)
 - i. Gn. 1:26
 - 1. English, incongruent. Singular “God” and plural “us” and “our”
 - 2. Hebrew, the word for God is Elohim (plural), means “unity”
 - ii. Gn. 3:22
 - 1. God makes a family in His image: male, female, and first command was to “multiple”

2. "Only a 'them' can adequately represent an 'us' and an 'our'" (Asscherick)
- iii. Gn. 11:1-8
 1. 2 elements:
 - a. "Come, let us" – like in Genesis.
 - b. Complex unity defined as one – "the people are one"
 2. Hebrew mindset: it is possible to have a singular plurality
- iv. Gn. 18-19
 1. Abraham entertains 3 individuals (2 angels, 1 Jehovah [Jesus])
 2. God (Jehovah) tells Abraham that He will investigate Sodom & Gomorrah; the 2 angels visit Lot in Sodom and just as the angels convince Lot to leave, Jehovah arrives to judge the cities
 - a. Gn. 19:20-24 – two Jehovahs (LORD) in that verse, one Jehovah (Jesus) is on the earth (ate with Abraham) and other Jehovah (God the Father) in heaven
 - b. Plurality of God
- v. Numbers 6:22-27
 1. Official priestly benediction, threefold blessing
- vi. Isaiah 6:1-8; 9:6
 1. The Son identified as "the mighty God, everlasting Father"
 2. One God in two Persons
 3. Angels say "holy, holy, holy", suggests plurality of God
- b. The Shema, Dt. 6:4 (most sacred verse for Jews)
 - i. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord"
 1. Reference: Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord alone
 - ii. "Hear Israel: Yahweh, Elohim, Yahweh 'echad"
 1. yachad – *Heb.* Means one in the literal sense
 2. 'echad – *Heb.* Means not just oneness, more precisely unity. Ie: The people are 'echad.
 3. The Trinity, Whidden, Moon, Reeve, 34
 - a. "What is striking about this important word translated as "one" in capital English ... Moses, however, employed the plural 'echad (one among others in a joined or shared oneness)."
- c. If we are not reading these texts correctly, why do people subscribing to rigid monotheism, like Judaism, find it necessary to explain this away?
 - i. Judaism wrestles with:
 1. Book of Jubilees

2. Jerusalem Talmud
 3. Papias, 1st Cent. Rabbi
 4. Targum
 5. Philo
 - ii. For example, when text reads “us” and “our”, they literally change the reading of that text to remove the plurality.
 - d. Hints of the plurality in the nature of God in the Old Testament, clarified by Christ. Judaism rejects the revelation of Christ (Messiah).
- III. New Testament
- a. “What is suggested in the Old Testament is expressed explicitly in the New” (Asscherick)
 - b. Scriptures: Plurality References
 - i. Matthew 3:16-17
 1. The baptism of Jesus is so significant all three are present: the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. “All at the same scene at the same time.” (Rosario) Three Persons of the Godhead are present together.
 - a. Adventist pioneers rejected Trinitarian modalism (how Jesus can be the Father and the Father is Jesus at same time).
 - ii. Matthew 28:18-20
 1. Baptism text again & all three presence.
 2. ...in the name (*singular*) of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit...
 3. This is the formula the apostles were sent out with as they introduced people to the Gospel
 - a. One God, 3 Persons
 - b. In Genesis, God introduces Himself in plurality and now He commands His follows to introduce Him to others as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
 - i. Greek – *and the* (definite article), qualitative similarity between the listed things, a connection, three Persons
 - iii. John 1:1-3; 5:17-18
 1. “Word was with God and the Word was God”
 - a. Two persons, one God
 - b. Jesus never rebukes Jews when they accuse Him of blasphemy (claiming to be God) nor the people who refer to Him as God. Jesus accepts worship.
 - i. However, angels and prophets refuse worship.
 - iv. John 8:56-58
 1. “Before Abraham was, I am”
 - a. Jesus was making a direct reference to Exodus 3, where God is speaking to Moses through the burning bush

- b. Jesus is claiming to be I AM (Jehovah, God, divinity)
 - i. “Claims that would make no sense if the Old Testament did not already lay the groundwork for the plurality of God” (Asscherick)
- v. Acts 20:28
 - 1. Three present here: Spirit, Son, Father
- vi. Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:29
- c. Why it is so powerful
 - i. Making Sense of the Trinity, 37
 - 1. “The force of these triadic references... is that each person of the Trinity is related to the experience of salvation, to the church and its leadership, and to the living of the Christian life, as well as to apostasy from the faith... unique, specific ministry of each.”
 - 2. All three have a role in salvation, blessings on believers, and in the church
- d. Plurality References
 - i. 2 Th 2:13-14
 - 1. All three are there: God, Spirit, and Jesus
 - ii. 2 Cor 13:14
 - 1. Very clear: Jesus Christ, God, and Holy Spirit
 - iii. 1 Cor 12:4-6
 - 1. Triadic reference: Spirit, Jesus (Lord), God (Father)
 - iv. Heb 1:1-9
 - 1. God the Father comfortable calling Jesus God
 - v. Rv 1:4-5
 - 1. God the Father, the seven Spirits symbolic of Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ
- e. The greatest of all for us is the simple, insane statement that is impossible to fully grasp... **God is love**. The powerful thing here is what it does not say. It does not say “loving”. Does not say God “loves” but God “is”. (Rosario)
 - i. The inspired commentary of Scripture is sandwiched between “God is love” (Patriarchs and Prophets) and “God is love” (Great Controversy)
 - ii. Love is putting others before self. 1 Cor. 13; John 3:16 To love is to give yourself for others.
 - 1. “In order to have love, what must you have? Others. You cannot have love in a vacuum.” (David Asscherick) “God in His very nature, in his very essence, what makes God God is His love. There must be others.”
- f. Ty Gibson
 - i. “Three is the essential numeric value of love. Where there is only one person, love cannot occur. Where there are two, each

is the sole recipient of the other's attention, giving place for self-absorption. But the moment there are three, each recipient of any one's love must also humbly defer attention to the third party, and each one is the third party to the other two. Pure selflessness can now occur by virtue of the fact that each one must love and be loved with both an exclusive and a divided interest. If God's essential identity is traceable to a solitary selfhood – which would be the case if Jesus in any sense had a point of beginning and if the Holy Spirit does not eternally exist... Said more simply, if Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not eternally co-existed, it cannot be said with any coherence that "God is Love". [...] the one and only true God whose essential nature is love."

IV. Spirit of Prophecy

- a. Special Testimonies, B, No. 7, 62,63
 - i. "The Comforter that Christ promised to send after He ascended to heaven, is the Spirit in all the fullness of the Godhead, making manifest the power of divine grace to all who receive and believe in Christ as a personal Saviour. There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ."
- b. 1 6MR 204
 - i. "The angelic host coming as ministers of God would be in that battle. Also there would be the eternal heavenly dignitaries—God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit—arming them with more than mortal energy, and would advance with them to the work, and convince the world of sin."
- c. Signs of the Times, June 19, 1901
 - i. "Our sanctification is the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is the fulfilment of the covenant that God has made with those who bind themselves up with Him, to stand with Him, with His Son, and with His Spirit in holy fellowship. Have you been born again? Have you become a new being in Christ Jesus? Then co-operate with the three great powers of heaven who are working in your behalf. Doing this you will reveal to the world the principles of righteousness."
- d. RH, May 2, 1912
 - i. "The Godhead was stirred with pity for the race, and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit gave themselves to the working out of the plan of redemption. In order fully to carry out his plan, it was decided that Christ, the only begotten Son of God, should give himself an offering for sin. And in giving Christ, God gave all the resources of heaven, that nothing might

be wanting for the work of man's uplifting. What line can measure the depth of this love? God would make it impossible for man to say that he could have done more."

- e. Desire of Ages, 530
 - i. "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. "He that hath the Son hath life." 1 John 5:12. The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life."
- f. Desire of Ages, 671
 - i. "Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer."

Does it even matter?

ARISE questions: What, so what, now what?

- I. Theological Implications
 - a. "Error is never harmless"
 - i. B/c error in doctrine compromises other beliefs, Biblical doctrine, and view of God
 - b. Salvation is built around the trinity of God
 - i. Most important is how we understand salvation
 - 1. For Adventists: salvation is built around the trinity of God
 - ii. DA 530 (repeated)
 - 1. "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. "He that hath the Son hath life." 1 John 5:12. The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life."
 - iii. Satan's charge is that God the Father is self-serving, unfair, unjust, etc. so how could God send someone else? "What if the One who comes is Himself God against whom those very charges were given?" (Asscherick)
 - iv. EW 150 – "The angels prostrated themselves before Him. They offered their lives. Jesus said to them that He would by His death save many, that the life of an angel could not pay the debt. His life alone could be accepted of His Father as a ransom for man."
 - 1. Angels could not take away sin because they are created (like lambs and bulls). Only a non-created being, God Himself, could pay the atonement of the transgression.
 - 2. Angels' lives are not their own to give, only Christ's life was His to give.
 - c. Enormity and reality of Divine risk in salvation

- i. "If Jesus would have failed... given in to temptation and actually sinned... what would have happened to God?" (Rosario)
 - ii. DA 49 – "Yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion God permitted His Son to come, a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted Him to meet life's peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss"
 - 1. Eternal loss – no one knows what that means
 - 2. COL 196 – "For our redemption, heaven itself was imperiled"
 - 3. ST 2.2.93 – "Christ took the infinite risk of consenting to war with the enemy"
 - 4. 5BC 1129 – "Though Christ humbled Himself to become man, the Godhead was still His own. His deity could not be lost while He stood faithful and true to His loyalty."
 - a. God, Son, and Spirit in counsel made the decision to imperil themselves, heaven, etc. to save humanity
 - b. EGW – "Never again will there be a sundering of the divine powers such as happened here."
 - i. If Godhead was sundered with Jesus was *faithful*, what would have happen if Jesus failed?
 - ii. The nature of God is a God of love, mercy, grace. Our salvation is a byproduct of who God is.
- d. Humility of God
- i. Glyn Parfitt – bottomline:
 - 1. "The humility of God."
 - 2. God the Father says it is all about My Son, shows humility by deferring to His Son.
 - 3. God the Son shows humility by submitting to death on the cross
 - 4. God the Spirit shows humility by deferring to God the Father
 - ii. Asscherick
 - 1. "Among true equals, one is not better, one is not worse. Totally devoid of pride. Total unity, total equity, it takes just as much humility to lead a true equal as it does to defer to a true equal."
 - iii. Humility of God continually deferring to each Person
 - 1. Phil. 2 – "Every knee will bow... to the glory of the Father."
- e. Nature of God
- i. Making Sense of the Trinity, Erickson, 72

1. "In a sense, the question is not whether this doctrine of the Trinity is relevant to me; it is whether I am relevant to it and to God. If God truly is almighty, then his purposes in the world will be accomplished, and it is I who must decide whether I want to be a part of that. [...] The question is not, What does this doctrine do for me as I am? But rather, how should I be and how should I conduct myself in light of this doctrine."
- f. Personal implications
 - i. Worship is enhanced and better grasped
 - ii. Prayer is enhanced and better grasped (triune experience)
 - iii. Love is found to be a fundamental value in life
 1. "If reality is fundamentally physical... If reality is fundamentally, social... binds persons together, namely, love" Erickson, 58
 2. Our highest ideal is love, the very nature of God
 - iv. Unity is found to be a fundamental value in life
 1. How the Godhead interact with One Another gives us a model for how we should interact with one another. "Unity within a diversity" (Asscherick)
 2. "Your life is largely shaped by your view of yourself and the world (media's) view of you. We are often driven to fulfill others' expectations for what we should be." (Asscherick)
 3. When we understand the unity within the diversity in the Godhead, "You can be comfortable with who you are." Man, woman, black, white, etc. Different functions in life as well. (aka Spirit Gifts)
 - v. Diversity is found to be a fundamental value in life
 1. "Deferring to others, being humble, is the way the universe operates best, is the way our life operates the best." (Asscherick)
 2. "If we are not humble, we are not working in harmony with the universe' (Rosario)
 3. "If we adopt this understanding of the relationship among the persons of the Trinity... It should be apparent that any situation where one member dominates or coerces another is improper" (Rosario)
- g. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead?
 - i. Living in continual awareness of, worship of, and obedience to the Father [**God**]
 1. Obedience is an essential ingredient to being filled with the HS
 2. Worship is also essential ingredient... living in continual worship

- ii. Living in continual awareness of, service to, and ministry to those around us. [**Others**]
 - 1. To be filled with HS, our aim and intent must be to serve others, to pass on the blessings to other people (Luke 11; Luke 4)
- iii. Living in continual view of the big picture of God's plan for my life [**Me**]
 - 1. Luke 13
 - 2. Christ's life was oriented in terms of the big picture. It is not the end of the world if we have troubles in this life (lose job, broken relationships, etc.). He was able, thru the HS, to keep in view God's plan for His life. So to should we.
 - a. Being a spirit-filled person is saying that God made me, created me, and I will be the best [me] for God.
 - b. Spirit will teach us how to make God number 1 in our lives, to not esteem ourselves too highly nor too lowly.
- h. If Holy Spirit is an essence, we might seek to *use* the Holy Spirit. But if He is a Person, then He will use us. It effects how we view the Holy Spirit.