

IS THE HOLY SPIRIT A PERSON?

written in 1970 by Bill McDowell †

Millions believe it fervently. Some of the world's greatest minds have pondered and written about it. So why shouldn't you *also* believe and accept the doctrine of the trinity --- that the Holy Spirit is a *person*, just like God the Father and Jesus Christ?

But wait! *What* did they believe and *what* have they pondered? Did these "great minds" really *prove* the doctrine of the trinity to themselves, not to mention others? Let the record speak for itself.

"We cannot doubt the existence among orthodox Fathers of *different opinions* on this *mysterious* subject until its final definition by the Church" ("Trinity," *Dictionary of Doctrinal and Historical Theology*).

It has always been a *mystery*, filled with controversy and difficult for everybody to comprehend. All scholarly attempts at understanding have only added misunderstanding! All theological attempts at clarity have only added confusion.

See if *you* can understand this:

"Some said that there was but one substance in the God-head, others, three. Some allowed, some rejected the terms according as they were guided by the prevailing heresy of the day and their own judgment concerning the mode of meeting it....Some declare that God is numerically three; others numerically one; while to others it might appear more philosophical to *exclude* the idea of number altogether in the discussion of that *mysterious* Nature which is beyond comparison, whether viewed as One or Three, and neither falls under nor forms any conceivable species" (*The Arians of the Fourth Century*, p. 127, ed. 1854).

Such ecclesiastical confusion reigned supreme until the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. It was a hotly divided issue that had to be decided by a special meeting of that church almost 300 years after the crucifixion!

Why?

Because all scholars admit that there is *no reference* to the trinity in the Bible, but it is only, as they say, "*implied*." And even though the church had theoretically "decided" the issue in 325 A.D., scholars have still held different opinions throughout the ages ever since that time!

Why?

Because this doctrine cannot be proven! "A fruitful cause of error in ancient and also in modern times is owing to an attempt to explain or illustrate this doctrine, forgetting that it is a MYSTERY to be received on faith, which CANNOT, from its own nature, be *rendered intelligible* to man's intellect" ("Trinity," *Dictionary of Doctrinal and Historical Theology*).

Admittedly then, the trinity can be neither explained nor understood. Yet much is still written -- and a topical Bible will give as many as sixty-five scriptures --- to "imply" that the trinity exists and that the Holy Spirit is a distinct person! Many Bible dictionaries, on the other hand, do

not even mention the subject. The ones that comment on the “trinity” do so historically, *not* Biblically. Now that’s *very* interesting. *Think* about why. Why? Because the trinity is *not* in the Bible.

Why such confusion? Because of the age-old practice of attempting to interpret *clear* scripture by *UNclear* scriptures! Who would think to do it the other way around --- to analyze and understand unclear scriptures on the basis of what can be easily *understood* from *clear* ones!?!

Let’s examine some of those *clear*, understandable scriptures to see what God’s Holy Spirit actually IS.

First, it is the POWER of God! Not by might, nor by power [of humans], but *by my spirit*, saith the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 4:6). “I am full of POWER by the Spirit of the Lord, and of *judgment*, and of MIGHT....”declared the prophet Micah (Micah 3:8).

Second, it is the Spirit of WISDOM and UNDERSTANDING, the Spirit of COUNSEL and MIGHT, the Spirit of KNOWLEDGE and of the FEAR (deep reverence and respect --- not craven fear) of the Lord (Isa. 11:2).

Third, it is a GIFT. After baptism, you are to receive “the GIFT of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). It is POURED out. “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will POUR out Of my Spirit upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17). “...On the Gentiles also was POURED out the *gift* of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 10:45).

Fourth, to be effective the Holy Spirit must be STIRRED up. “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou STIR UP the gift of God,” Paul reminded the young evangelist, Timothy (II Tim. 1:7).

Five, the Spirit of God can be QUENCHED (I Thes. 5:19).

Six, it is the *begetting* power of God (Matt. 1:18; Rom. 8:9).

Seven, it is God’s guarantee to us that He will fulfill His promise to us (Eph. 1:14).

Eight, it sheds the love of God abroad IN our hearts (Rom. 5:5).

Nine, it must be RENEWED (Titus 3:5-6).

And on and on. With *not one* characteristic even “implying” a “person.”

Read these *very clear* scriptures describing the Holy Spirit again. Does a *person* do any of these things? Is a person POURED, QUENCHED, RENEWED? Does a person live IN someone else or live IN people’s *hearts*?

Hardly!

Some are *confused by such scriptures* as John 14:16-17; 16:7-8, 13. They ask why does the Bible use the pronoun “he” to describe the Holy Spirit if it is not a separate entity? In the above

passages the Holy Spirit is referred to as the “Comforter.” “Comforter” is masculine in the Greek --- just like the many other *inanimate* objects, like stone, which are also masculine. According to Greek rules of Grammar you must use a masculine pronoun to refer to a masculine noun. Since “comforter” is masculine in Greek, a masculine pronoun is used. That is why “he” is used in many cases where it refers to the antecedent “comforter”.

In some cases “he” is used in the King James Version where the original Greek uses “it.” The reason is that the translators believed in the Trinity themselves and *interpreted* rather than translated. John 14:17 is a good example. The pronouns “he” and “him” should have been rendered “it” as they are in the Greek. They refer to the word “spirit,” which is neuter in the Greek. Therefore, the pronouns which refer to them must also be neuter. Notice Romans 8:16: “The Spirit *itself* beareth witness...” Here the King James translators have correctly translated the Greek pronoun in the neuter gender.

For further evidence proving that the Holy Spirit is not a person, see Matthew 1:20. Here we read that Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Yet Christ calls *God* His Father, not the Holy Spirit (John 14:16). If the Holy Spirit were a person, it would be Christ’s Father. Proof positive that the Holy Spirit is not a person but the power God the Father uses --- much as a man uses electricity.

Consider further! If the Holy Spirit were a person, Jesus Christ prayed to the wrong individual. Throughout the four Gospels, we find Christ speaking to God --- *not* the Holy Spirit --- as His Father.