



FEED MY SHEEP

PUBLISHED BY JAMES W. BRUGGEMAN
STONE KINGDOM MINISTRIES
P. O. Box 6388
ASHEVILLE, NC 28816 U.S.A.

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The Holy Spirit: God? ...or just energy?

Recent issues of FMS have focused on proving the deity of Jesus Christ. Christians bend the knee to Christ Jesus as Lord and as God in the flesh. We worship him as very God. But who or what is the Holy Spirit? Does the Holy Spirit deserve the same worship as Jesus Christ? Is the Holy Spirit really God as well?

“May the Force be with you!”

A grave danger is extant among believers today. It consists in reversing the role or function of the Holy Spirit. This reversal was greatly assisted by the phenomenally successful series of movies called “Star Wars.” This year’s release of a “prequel” has served to re-ignite interest among people to view again the original trilogy of films, from whence sprang many current cultural icons and aphorisms—from Darth Vader to hero, Luke Skywalker’s mentor’s advice to him on the eve of battle: “May the Force be with you.”

After the release of the first *Star Wars* movie about twenty years ago, some Christians noticed what they believed were Christian themes in the movie. Books were rushed into print giving a Christian interpretation to the trilogy. Christians more strictly fundamentalist in their theology screamed that the movies were “occult” and “out of the pits of hell,” etc. We do not doubt that a Christian interpretation can be seen in the *Star Wars* stories. The great themes of salvation (from the bad guys) and redemption (of Darth Vader) and the epic struggle between good and evil are woven throughout.

However, as filmmaker George Lucas openly admits, some (much?) of the inspiration and ideas and philosophy underlying his films came from Oriental religions. Therein lies the danger for Christians. While all religions have *some* truths (God’s “common grace,” as it is known

in Reformed circles), the vast majority of Christians today are so ignorant of the precepts of their own faith (except the very basics) that they are easily seduced into “another Gospel.”

Hinduism, for example, teaches a “universalism” in the sense that “all paths lead to God,” which comes out: all religions are equally valid and lead to God. This is in marked contrast to the true Christian doctrine of universal reconciliation (a.k.a., “the restoration of all things”), which adheres completely to and is in complete harmony with the revealed truth that there is only one way to the Father and that is through his Son, Jesus Christ! Any association of the Hindu or other non-Christian concepts of “universalism” with the restoration of all things is simply in error.¹

The idea that the Holy Spirit is a “force” is true! But it is not the whole truth, and therein lies the danger of reversal of roles. (We will explain this reversal later; first, a foundation.) With the honest and good intentions of avoiding any involvement with the forbidden areas of the occult, many Christians bolt like vampires avoiding a cross whenever any one labels any thing “occult.” The gift of discernment seems to be seriously lacking among most Christians today. The word “occult,” by the way, does not mean “wicked,” or “evil.” It merely means “hidden.” Occult or hidden knowledge may be either good or evil.

Simply because there may have been Oriental and/or occult philosophies behind the creation of *Star Wars*, that does not by itself constitute a reason to reject the notion of the Holy Spirit as a force. The common grace shone on the world may have led the Orientals to that concept. But how is it true? What do the Scriptures say? The Bible shows that the Holy Spirit can be described as a force, power, energy, vital force and other similar, descriptive words and attributes.

But that is too limiting. The Holy Spirit is a *person*,

not merely an impersonal force or energy or power. But that also is too limiting, for the Holy Spirit is not merely a person, but is equally God with the Father and the Son. However, this truth was not always understood by all believers in the Old and New Testaments. The followers of Arius (early fourth century A.D.) who had concluded that Jesus Christ was a created being and not divine, also taught therefore, that the Holy Spirit was created by the Son; and hence, neither was the Holy Spirit divine in their view.

Progressive understanding of the Spirit

Hermeneutics is “the art of interpreting words and explaining them to others.” (—Webster.) There is a hermeneutical principle which is summarized: “The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed; the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.” A derivative of this is that many major Bible doctrines are seen only in hazy form in the Book of Genesis but are gradually developed in the Old Testament (OT) and reach full bloom in the New Testament (NT). For example, the doctrine of salvation is seen in embryonic form first in Genesis 3:15. By Isaiah 53, we have much more detail about the Messiah and salvation, and by the end of Paul’s writings, we have a high-definition snapshot of salvation.

This same principle applies to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. We have only hazy glimpses of the personality and deity of the Spirit in the OT. These do not get fully illuminated until the completion of the canon of the Bible. Then we can go back and see clearly that both the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit were there in the OT, but are only brought into sharp focus with the lens of the NT Scriptures. On the other hand, other attributes and operations of the Holy Spirit were developed clearly in the OT, such as that the Holy Spirit was God’s living energy.

Holy Spirit as force, energy and power

The Hebrew word for “spirit” is *ruach* or *ruwach* and it means “breath, wind, breeze” or “air.” Because *ruach* is used of the vital force and life-giving energy (breath) of man, the Scripture writers were led to use the same word in their anthropomorphosized word-pictures of God. It was the *ruach* of God which came upon men (e.g., Samson, Jephthah, etc.) which enabled them to perform mighty exploits. Thus the Spirit (*ruach*) of God was synonymous with the manifested power of God. It was the *ruach* of God which is the energizing and vital force of all living things. In this regard, consider the words of the Psalmist:

KJV Psalm 104: 29 Thou [Yahweh-God] hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their

breath, they die, and return to their dust.

30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit [*ruach*], they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

Psalm 33:6 By the word of *YHWH* were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath [*ruach*] of his mouth.

There are many more examples which could be given from the OT, but notice that these same attributes (power and vital energy) of the Holy Spirit are also found in the NT. So that it is not “occult” or false doctrine to speak of the Holy Spirit as a force or power, and Christians may speak in code by saying “May the Force be with you.” Here are just a few examples out of a multitude which exist in the NT which speak of the power of the Holy Spirit:

Luke 4: 14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee:...

Romans 15:13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 1: 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: ...

The personality of the Holy Spirit

Thus far we have shown the Holy Spirit to be a power, force, etc. — something which even those of Oriental religions or the New Age movement adherents can agree with. This does not yet set Christians apart. But is the Holy Spirit *only* an influence, power or force? Or is the Holy Spirit a person? And if a person, then a created being or uncreated; divine or finite? Before answering the question of deity, we must prove personality. Some think that to be a person, a being must have hands, feet, etc. But these are attributes of corporeity (a physical body) not of personality. Personality (personhood) is characterized by mind (intelligence), will (decision-making capability), communication abilities and individual existence. Without a doubt the Holy Spirit possesses all of these characteristics. Consider the aspect of mind, or knowledge and intelligence:

Romans 8:27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.

Exodus 31:3 And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,

Ephesians 3:5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

1 Corinthians 2:10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit...

11 ... even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

The attribute of will, decision-making, and control and direction of people is the function of a person, not some inanimate, impersonal force; and these attributes describe the Holy Spirit:

1 Corinthians 12: 11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Notice also that the Spirit is referred to as a person having individuality by the use of the pronoun "he." It could be argued that in the Greek the personal pronoun is often not a separate word but is included in the verb form, as is the case in this verse. Therefore, it could have been translated "as it will," or even "as she² will." In fact, in some literal translations, the Holy Spirit is often referred to by the pronoun "it." However, the reason for such a grammatical construction is due to the need in Greek for the pronoun to agree with its related noun. The noun for "spirit" in Greek is *pneuma*, which is of the neuter gender; hence, the use of "it." For example, compare the following verse spoken by our Lord concerning the Holy Spirit, as it was rendered by the King James Version and the Concordant Literal New Testament.

KJV John 14:17 *Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

CLNT John 14:17 — the spirit of truth, which the world can not get, for it is not beholding it, neither is knowing it. Yet you know it, for it is remaining with you and will be in you.

Technically, the CLNT is correct because the forms of the Greek pronoun *auto* (translated "it") are neuter because they must agree with the neuter noun *pneuma* (spirit). So were the KJV translators taking liberties by changing "it" to "he" or "him" when referring to the Spirit? Are they trying to make a person out of the Spirit when it is not warranted or defensible? Or, as modern feminists charge, is this the male bias of the translators showing through? The answer is no on each count. You see, just a few verses later, we are given the proof and the warrant for the personality of the Holy Spirit — and a person in the masculine gender at that. Follow this:

KJV John 14:26 But the Comforter, *which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, ...*

The word "he" is not literally correct here either. But the word "it" is out of the question. The Greek word

is *ekeinos* which is literally "that one" and it is the masculine form, referring back to the Holy Ghost. But the KJV translators did what any knowledgeable student of the Greek would do when trying to put it into proper and understandable English. They wouldn't say: "that one—a masculine one," or "that masculine one;" but simply "he." There are other instances in the NT where the same masculine gender is used to refer to the Holy Spirit, thus demonstrating the individual personality of the Spirit (and the fact that the Holy Spirit is not *per se* the "feminine side" of God).

As for the communication ability of the Holy Spirit, the examples again are myriad and of three types, since the Spirit speaks *to* men and the Spirit speaks *through* men and the Spirit speaks *for* men³.

Acts 13: 2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

In v. 2 the Spirit communicates directly to believers. This is characteristic of a person, not merely of some mysterious influence or force. In v. 4, "being sent forth by the Holy Ghost" implies that (1) the Spirit has intelligence, and (2) he has a will and has made a decision. He directs and controls the activities of believers, all the marks of personality. In contrast to speaking to believers, we view the following where the Spirit speaks through human persons:

Mark 13: 11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, ... for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

We believe that this verse applies not just to the disciples to whom Jesus was speaking at the time, but also to believers in all times and in diverse circumstances. I know because I have experienced it in my own life. Finally, an example where the Holy Spirit speaks for us:

Romans 8:26 ... for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Then there were the numerous times when the Holy Spirit spoke both *to* and *through* men as the Holy Scriptures were written. More on this later. Furthermore, there are other characteristics of personality which are attributed to the Holy Spirit. Like the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit has emotions. He gives and receives love and can be grieved.

Romans 15: 30 Now I beseech you, brethren,

for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, ...

Ephesians 4:30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God,...

As resident within the believer, the Holy Spirit is a witness to all our thoughts, words and deeds. Indeed, a supreme motivation to live godly lives.

Isaiah 63: 10 But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.

The Holy Spirit loves, leads, comforts, rebukes, convicts, searches, reveals, teaches and guides — all the actions of a being invested with personality, not a mere force or vague influence. Thus the personality of the Holy Spirit is established. But is he God, one with and co-equal to the Father and the Son?

The deity of the Holy Spirit

The Hebrew word *ruach*, as noted above, has a multitude of meanings, including “breath,” “wind,” and “air,” as well as “spirit.” And when used as “spirit,” it can refer to angels, or to the spirits of men or animals or of God. The adjective “holy” is therefore frequently attached to the spirit of God. The Hebrew word for “holy” is *qodesh* (*kodesh*) which has the sense of separateness or set-apartness, a logical way to help distinguish God's spirit from an angel or from man's spirit. By definition, God's spirit is holy. However, there are also numerous instances in the Bible where the spirit of God is also clearly understood, although the adjective “holy” is absent. Thus immediately, we can see the statement of Jesus in the gospel of John as averring the truth of the deity of the Holy Spirit when our Lord makes the simple statement:

John 4:24 God is a Spirit...

Here, though, the King James translators were in error as they inserted the article “a” which is not in the Greek text. It should read “God is Spirit...” By definition, his spirit is holy; therefore, God is Holy Spirit. The oneness is evident. There are not two gods, nor three. Nor does the term “trinity” mean that there are three gods. It is a “tri-unity.” In such a manner the great Trinitarian texts must be understood.

Mat. 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ⁴

1 John 5:7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

We underlined “theWord” above because it is obvious that it is a reference to the Son, Jesus Christ. This then leads us to an example of how the NT reveals the Old.

How the greater light given by the revelation of the NT Scriptures allows us to illuminate the shadows and bring into focus those doctrines which were only dimly understood in OT times. For when the apostle John wrote his gospel, he declares the identity of the Son with the Word. (John 1:1, 14). So Jesus is the Word and the Word is God, and now notice how that revelation illuminates the deity of the Holy Spirit in the OT.

Psalm 33:6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath [*ruach*: Spirit] of his mouth.

In the natural sense, people form words by the breath (air) of their mouths. That would be the natural and literal view of this verse, which may have been the only way in which OT believers could have understood it. And this understanding is not wrong. But there is a higher level to be discerned. By the light of John's equating Christ with the Word and with the Father, we can see that this verse states that Yahweh made the heavens by (the agency of) the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, which by parallelism is equated with the (Holy) Spirit. Therefore, since the Word is equated to the Spirit and the “Word was God,” this verse from the OT is now seen to harmonize perfectly with 1 John 5:7 noted above. “These three are one!” (*To be continued.*)

ENDNOTES

1. Hear our ten-tape series *Universal Reconciliation*. Ten audio tapes in an album. \$33 ppd.
2. There are some (particularly, so-called “Christian feminists”) who assert that the Holy Spirit is the feminine side of God. This is not correct. It is beyond the scope and space of this monograph to deal with this topic fully, but we shall address it in a future FMS.
3. We are using “men” generically here, of course.
4. Some higher critics insist that this verse and 1 John 5:7 were not in the originals since they are not found in the two “oldest and best” manuscripts. We believe there is greater and more compelling evidence that they *were*. We especially take exception that the Vatican and Sinai manuscripts are either the oldest and they certainly are not the best. The Vatican's name on the one is a dead giveaway, and the Sinaitic manuscript was found in the trash can ready for the incinerator of a monastery when it was “rescued” by higher critic Constantin Tischendorf in the mid-1800's. Our case, and much more, is set forth in our 20-tape cassette series entitled “Which Bible? Which Version.” It comes in two albums with charts and other visual aids. \$55 ppd.

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