

Dear all, greetings once again.

We now turn to a discussion of the Personhood of the Holy Spirit, based on a response to new voices echoing ancient heresies within our communion of faith.

Modern voices within Adventism are arguing for the following definition of the Spirit: if one cross references Isa. 40.13 (Who has directed the spirit of the LORD, or as his counselor has instructed him?) with Romans 11.34 ("For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"), then Spirit is best understood as being "spirit = mind." They support this thesis with the story of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, following which Nebuchadnezzar's 'spirit' was troubled, i.e. Nebuchadnezzar's mind = Nebuchadnezzar's spirit.

This definition of 'spirit = mind' is the foundational thesis upon which such false teachers base all further discussion of the Holy Spirit. Even at this early stage of the discussion, we must ask ourselves whether this foundational concept of 'spirit = mind' is Scriptural. Jesus proclaims in John 4.24 that 'God is spirit', and so we must therefore conclude using NM's foundational thesis that God = spirit = mind. Is God merely a mind? If God were merely a mind, most of God's self-revelation in Scripture is nonsensical.

These false teachers go on to cross reference 1 Cor. 2.11, 15.45, Ps. 139.7, John 4.24 and Romans 8.9-10 to argue for the following thesis:

- 1) A man's spirit is his personality / mind / presence / character.
- 2) God the Father and God the Son share a common spirit, which is the alternately known as the 'Spirit of Christ,' 'Spirit of God,' and 'Holy Spirit'.
- 3) In reality therefore, the Holy Spirit is nothing more than the personality / mind / presence / character of God the Father and God the Son.

Yet, the evidence of Scripture is overwhelmingly against NM's proposed understanding of the Holy Spirit, and it is to the Scripture that we now turn.

- 2 Corinthians 13.14 states as follows, 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.' In this apostolic blessing from Paul to the church of Corinth, we find all 3 members of the Godhead, distinct persons within the Godhead, with distinct divine offices. God the Father brings love, God the Son brings grace, and God the Holy Spirit brings communion or fellowship.
- 1 Corinthians 12.4-6 refers successively to the divine economy within the Godhead, and to the members of the Godhead, operating with unity of purpose. 'Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.'
- At the baptism of Jesus we find all 3 members of the Godhead referred to. Luke 3.21-22 reads as follows, 'now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, ²² And the Holy Ghost descended in

a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.' In this crucial moment of the incarnation, when Jesus Christ began His earthly ministry, we find all 3 members of the Godhead referred to. Their physical locations are as follows:

- a) God the Father in heaven.
- b) God the Son in the waters of the river Jordan.
- c) God the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, hovering in mid-air over the head of Jesus.

If 'the spirit = the mind of God = the mind of God the Son' as they argue, how are we to understand the baptism scene? Are we to understand that Jesus Christ has a split mind, part in His physical head as He stood in the waters of the Jordan, and part also hovering over His head in the form of a dove? Or are we to understand Jesus Christ as having two minds: one physically present in His body, and another ethereal mind that hovers outside of His physical body? In human terms, this would lead to the conclusion that God the Son is either schizophrenic, or has multiple personality disorder. Alternately, and much more simply, we may simply accept the text as referring to the 3 members of the Godhead, acting in loving common purpose for the salvation of humanity.

- Peter refers to the Holy Spirit as being 'God'. We read as follows in Acts 5:3-4, "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." Peter does not say 'you have lied to the mind of God the Father' or 'you have lied to the personality of God the Son' as the false teachers would have us believe. No, Peter simply identifies the Holy Spirit as 'God'.
- Paul teaches that the Holy Spirit intercedes on behalf of sinners with God. Romans 8:26-27 states that 'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: 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. 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*.' According to Paul, the Holy Spirit intercedes with God on behalf of the saints who 'do not know how to pray as we ought'. If we are to understand this from the false teachers' perspective, we would interpret this verse as meaning 'the mind of God (Holy Spirit) intercedes with God (who is a spirit, and therefore is to be understood as being a mind) on behalf of the saints. As with the baptism narrative of Jesus Christ in Luke 3, we are forced to ask ourselves how this can be. If the Holy Spirit really is the mind of God, this implies that Paul is telling us that part of the mind of God intercedes with another part of the mind of God. Is God the Father, like the Son, also schizophrenic? Does God have a multiple personality disorder? A mind interceding with itself is a troubled mind. Alternately, much more simply, and Biblically, we may understand the Holy Spirit as being the 3rd member of the Godhead, interceding on behalf of humanity with God the Father.
- Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit is sent by God the Father and God the Son (Isa. 48:16, Lk. 1:31-35, and John 15:26). However, whilst Jesus refers to Himself in the 1st person

singular (e.g. ‘and behold, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age’ Matt. 28.20), Jesus never refers to the Holy Spirit in the same 1st person singular, but rather in the 3rd person singular, i.e. He, not I. This is unexpected within this new theology, for if we are really to understand that the Holy Spirit = the mind / presence / personality of God the Son, why would Jesus switch persons in His references to Himself?

For example (and there are many such examples in John 14-16), we read in John 16.13-16 as follows, ‘Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. ¹⁴ He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you. ¹⁶ A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.’

- How was Jesus raised from the dead? If the Holy Spirit = the mind of Jesus, as per these ancient heretical teachings, was it then the mind of Jesus that raised Jesus from the dead? And if the mind of Jesus raised Jesus from the dead, how can the apostles tell us that Jesus really died? Paul tells us in Romans 8.11 that ‘But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you’ and Peter states in 1 Peter 3.18 that ‘For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.’
- When Jesus discusses the ‘unforgivable sin’, He states the following, ‘Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. ³² And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come’ (Matt. 12.31-32). Mark records this passage as follows, ‘Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: ²⁹ But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.’ Luke 12.10 contains the final synoptic parallel, ‘And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.’

These sayings of Jesus raise an impossible theological conundrum for this errant theology: how is it possible (according to Matt. 12) to speak a word against the Holy Ghost / Holy Spirit and not thereby intrinsically speak a word against the Son of Man, whom these false teachers wish us to believe is nothing more than the mind / presence / personality / character of God the Son? It is difficult to conceive of a single sentence that would speak against the Holy Spirit and not against Jesus Christ if the Holy Spirit is really nothing more than the mind / personality / presence / character of Jesus Christ. These texts however only make sense and are only understandable when one accepts the Biblical revelation of the Godhead consisting of three persons sharing the same divine substance.

Now there is no Bible text which plainly states in these words: “The Holy Spirit is a person”, but

neither are there texts which state plainly state in this words: “The Father is a person”. Yet we can clearly see that the Bible declares that the Father can think, decide, act, and can speak for Himself. Thus we know that the Father has a distinct personality all his own and that He must indeed be a Person and Being. So if the Bible reveals that the Holy Spirit can think, decide, act and speak for Himself, then this would prove that He has a distinct personality all his own, and that the Holy Spirit must indeed be a Person and Being other than the Father and the Son.

A brief overview of the actions of the Holy Spirit leads us to the conclusion that just as God the Father is a person, so also is the Holy Spirit.

- Can the Holy Spirit think for Himself and make His own decisions? The Holy Spirit has a mind (Romans 8:27), the Holy Spirit helped to settle questions during the Church Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15:28), the Holy Spirit dispenses gifts to different individuals according as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:8-11), and the Holy Spirit forbade some from going to preach in certain places (Acts 16:6-7). It is clear in Scripture that the Holy Spirit has a mind, can think for Himself, and can make decisions.
- Can the Holy Spirit act for Himself? The Holy Spirit anointed Jesus and sent Him out to preach the gospel (Luke 4:18-19); In fact, both the Father and the Holy Spirit sent Jesus (Isaiah 48:16), the Holy Spirit testifies or witnesses of Jesus (John 15:26), the Holy Spirit leads God’s people (Romans 8:14), the Holy Spirit teaches and causes us to remember the truth (John 14:26), the Holy Spirit comforts us as does Christ (John 14:16), the Holy Spirit strives with us (see Genesis 6:3), the Holy Spirit reproves us of sin, righteousness, and judgment (see John 16:8-11), and the Holy Spirit instructs us (see Nehemiah 9:20).
- Can the Holy Spirit speak for Himself? The Holy Spirit speaks, guides, hears and shows (John 16:13-15), the Holy Spirit speaks, chooses, calls and sends forth (Acts 13:1-4), the Holy Spirit gives messages to prophets and they declare: “Thus saith the Holy Ghost” (Acts 21:11). It is clear in Scripture that the Holy Spirit can indeed speak for Himself. Besides this, He can hear, He can guide, show, choose, calls and sends forth others.

Are there any other characteristics does the Bible reveal about the Holy Spirit which shows Him to be a Person and Being other than God the Father and God the Son?

- The Holy Spirit has knowledge, and searches all things (1 Corinthians 2:10-11).
- The Holy Spirit sanctifies us (Romans 15:16).
- The Holy Spirit holds communion with us (2 Corinthians 13:14); and so does Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9).
- The Holy Spirit is the source of regeneration and renewal for salvation (John 3:5-8; Titus 3:5).
- The Holy Spirit is the author of the Bible and moved upon the prophets to speak (2 Peter 1:21).
- The Holy Spirit is another Comforter other than Christ (John 14:16).
- The Holy Spirit helps our infirmities (Romans 8:26).
- The Holy Spirit can be tempted and lied to (Acts 5:3, 9).

- The Holy Spirit can be blasphemed and sinned against (Mark 3:28-29; Luke 12:10; Matthew 12:31).

All of the above texts things show that the Holy Spirit is indeed a Person and Being, and that He has His own work to perform in the plan of redemption, together with the Father and the Son.

What then are we to conclude about this strange theology that begins with the definition ‘spirit = mind’, and concludes that the Holy Spirit = the mind / personality / presence / character of both God the Father and God the Son?

Once we understand the false foundational concept with regards to the Holy Spirit is that ‘spirit = mind’ we realize that such theology is built on an unsustainable foundation. For if ‘God is spirit’ as Jesus Himself said to woman at the well (John 4), then the equation ‘God = spirit = mind’ would hold. However, if God were merely a mind, most of God’s self-revelation in Scripture is nonsensical. Because this foundational thesis is Biblically unsustainable, the following arguments against the Personhood of the Holy Spirit fall like a house of cards.

When we consider the evidence of Scripture about the person of the Holy Spirit, the only tenable conclusion we may reach is not that the Holy Spirit is the presence / mind / personality / character of God, but that the Holy Spirit is verily God, the 3rd person within the Godhead.

Conclusion.

The false teachings spreading among Adventists have the following theological arguments:

- a) We are to honor only God the Father and God the Son.
- b) God the Son is begotten of the Father from some point in eternity past.
- c) There was therefore a time when God the Son was not with God the Father, and by implication a time when God the Father was not God the Father.
- d) The Holy Spirit is not the 3rd member of the Godhead, but is merely the mind / personality / presence / character of God the Father and God the Son.

Furthermore, intimations are made by such teachers that a) portions of Scripture that clearly portray the 3 members of Godhead, e.g. Matt. 28.19, and b) writings of Ellen G. White that also clearly portray the 3 members of the Godhead are all to be understood as later interpolations by pro-Trinitarians promoting a satanic doctrine as part of a conspiracy.

If one is to believe those who promote such ideas, one must conclude and argue that the conspiracy covers individuals from every corner of the globe, from the 2nd – 20th centuries, who never met or shared ideas, had profoundly different theological understandings and agendas, served in different denominations and supported different creedal statements, and who in many cases had a healthy disregard for each other, e.g. Dr John H. Kellogg and Sis. Ellen G. White. Whether such a conspiracy is credible is left to the judgment of you, the reader.

When we review ecclesiastical history, it is clear that from the 2nd – 5th centuries AD there were protracted and profound debates on the nature of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity. Under the

leadership of the Holy Spirit, many ideas were promoted, debated and rejected, with the Body of Christ finally settling on its foundational understanding of the nature of Christ in the Nicene Creed.

We have seen that Scripture reveals a systematic series of end-time deceptions from Satan to 'deceive the very elect'. Scripture reveals a counterfeit 2nd Coming, a counterfeit ministry of Jesus Christ, a counterfeit trinity, a counterfeit last message to the nations of the world through 3 fallen angels, and a counterfeit Pentecost. Satan can only counterfeit when there is a true original, so the existence of a counterfeit trinity in Revelation 13 points clearly to a true Triune God.

The arguments presented that the phrase 'mystery' (Rev. 17.5) on the whore of Babylon's head are based on the foundational concept that 'mystery' in Scripture = the 'mystery' of the doctrine of the Trinity in a recent Roman Catholic publication. On this unscriptural nexus and central foundation the entire concept that the doctrine of the Trinity is a satanic deception, that the Trinity is a denial of the One True God, and that we are called to worship God as One in Rev. 14.6-7 rather than the Triune Creator God is based.

We have seen that if we are to interpret 'mystery' from Scripture alone, there is no single instance of 'mystery' referring to the doctrine of the Trinity / Triune God, rather 'mystery' refers either to God's salvific purposes for humanity or the 'mystery of iniquity' alone. To interpret 'mystery' from a non-inspired source over and against the clear teaching of the inspired Word of God is a reckless hermeneutic that can only be rejected. Once this central foundation is exposed, the conclusions presented that the doctrine of the Triune God is to be rejected is of itself to be rejected as having no Scriptural foundation.

The arguments presented for the 'begotten' nature of the Son of God, who is repeatedly stated as being both 'begotten' and 'born' neither withstand close scrutiny nor relate to the overwhelming and repeated testimony of Scripture concerning the deity and immortality of Jesus Christ. The Scriptural foundation for such an assertion is based on triangulating John 3.16 in the KJV with Proverbs 8.22-30 and 1 Corinthians 1.24b. We have discovered that these texts are entirely unrelated in subject matter, that Proverbs 8.22-30 was never referred to again in Scripture, much less to refer to the person or being of Jesus Christ, and that the use of 1 Corinthians 24b is both disingenuous and makes the natural reading of 1 Corinthians 1.18-24 nonsensical.

Furthermore, the argument that at some point in eternity past the Son was begotten of the Father is taken from the underlying pagan theology of the Arians in the early church, i.e. that deity did not imply immortality, but that gods came and went, were born and could pass from the scene. The assertions by NM that the true God is One, that '*elohim*' is to be understood as meaning 'God is great', and that Jesus Christ was both born / begotten of God lead one towards Muslim theology, and invites the reader to question whether NM, who grew up in Egypt, is actually Christian or Muslim.

The arguments presented for the Holy Spirit being nothing more than the shared mind / personality / presence / character of God the Father and God the Son are also seen to be both unscriptural and illogical. The ideas presented ignore the overwhelming Scriptural evidence for the person and activity of the Holy Spirit, the 3rd member of the Godhead.

When all Scripture is humbly, prayerfully and faithfully considered, we come to the SDA Statement of Belief concerning the One, True, Triune, Creator God whom we worship and serve: 'There is one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation.' Amen and Amen!

May the Holy Spirit appear to you during these Sabbath hours as the Comforter, the Guide into all Truth, the Teacher of Righteousness, the One who Convicts of Sin, and may He bring to your remembrance the teachings of Jesus at just the right moment when needed. Praise God for the Holy Spirit!

Have a blessed Sabbath!

Conrad.