

A Power or Person: The Nature of the Holy Spirit

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The biblical canon is the primary source for any knowledge of the God of heaven. Within its pages God reveals Himself with a triune identity. His divine nature cannot be fully understood without God the Holy Spirit, along with Jesus and the Father. When the Bible is studied attentively and listened to carefully this becomes apparent. This paper surveys and reviews the broad biblical testimony of one member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit.

God's personal plurality revealed in Scripture, presents one of the three persons within the divine Godhead as the Holy Spirit. When God incarnate, Jesus, came to earth people could walk with Him, hear His voice, touch Him, and see His footprints when He walked along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. However, the Holy Spirit doesn't leave footprints. Because He has never been incarnated as Jesus was, the Spirit is more inscrutable, making misunderstandings possible when trying to understand Him. For example, even after his baptism, Simon had to be sharply rebuked by Peter for his wrong thinking about the Holy Spirit (Acts 8). Ellen White is instructive:

The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery. Men cannot explain it, because the Lord has not revealed it to them. Men having fanciful views may bring together passages of Scripture and put a human construction on them, but the acceptance of these views will not strengthen the church. Regarding such mysteries, which are too deep for human understanding, silence is golden.¹

¹ Ellen White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 52.

DAVIDSON: POWER OR PERSON: THE NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Yet, there is much that can be known about the Holy Spirit in the canon. It is critical knowledge because it affects our understanding of God along with any study of inspiration, revelation, sanctification, and even the church—for the Holy Spirit is clearly involved with all of these. Paul also counsels to “test the spirits” for not every spiritual power is guaranteed to be the Holy Spirit. That there are false spirits implies, however, there must be a true one. Christians must not let the “depersonalized, nonregenerative pneumatology”² of liberal theology throttle their thinking.³

Jesus compares the Holy Spirit to the wind: “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes” (Jn 3:8). Wind cannot be captured or restrained. Though elusive and invisible it is nonetheless real. Trees swaying, flags fluttering, and dangerous storms make it manifest. So with the Holy Spirit. He is intangible and invisible but more real and powerful than the most ferocious wind. Dorothy Sayers suggests:

why books about the Holy Ghost are apt to be curiously difficult and unsatisfactory—we cannot really look at the movement of the Spirit, just because *It* is the Power by which we do the looking.⁴

² David F. Wells, *God the Evangelist: How the Holy Spirit Works to Bring Men and Women to Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), xii.

³ The deity and personality of the Holy Spirit are generally denied by liberal, critical theology. Process theology tends to be vague and abstract with respect to the Spirit. Neo-orthodoxy and existential theology either ignore the Holy Spirit or freely expresses doubt and uncertainty about Him.

⁴ The quote in its entirety reads thus: “We cannot follow the movement of our own eyes in a mirror. We can, by turning our head, observe them in this position and in that position with respect to our body, but never in the act of moving themselves from one position to the other, and never in the act of gazing at anything but the mirror. Thus our idea of ourself is bound to be falsified, since what to others appears the most lively and mobile part of ourself, appears to us unnaturally fixed. The eye is the instrument by which we see everything, and for that reason it is the one thing we cannot see with truth. The same thing is true of our Power of response to a book, or to anything else. . . **this is why books about the Holy Ghost are apt to be curiously difficult and unsatisfactory—we cannot really look at the movement of the Spirit, just because *It* is the Power by which we do the looking.**” *The Mind of the Maker* by Dorothy Sayers, quoted by Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, *In His Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan: 1987), 180 (emphasis added; “*It*” is Sayers’ emphasis).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Holy Spirit is referred to in the Bible as “He,” an evidence of His personal nature. Pronouns such as *I*, *you*, *he*, and *she* are used when speaking about persons. Such pronouns are also ascribed to the Holy Spirit. For example, Jesus speaks of the Spirit this way:

When **He**, the Spirit of truth, has come, **He** will guide you into all truth; for **He** will not speak on **His** own authority, but whatever **He** hears **He** will speak; and **He** will tell you things to come. . . when the Helper comes, **whom** I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, **He** will testify of Me (Jn 16:13, emphasis added).⁵

Jesus’ earthly mission is also described as Spirit-initiated and Spirit-oriented. The Holy Spirit was the agent of Jesus’ birth for Jesus was “conceived. . . of the Holy Spirit”; the incarnation of the Son involves the Spirit (Matt 1:20; Luke 1:35). Later, Jesus’ public ministry is inaugurated by the Holy Spirit at his baptism (Matt 3:16). Afterwards He was driven into the desert by the same Spirit (Mark 1:12). Following that, Jesus returns to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14). The Holy Spirit, through whom He was conceived, baptized and anointed is the divine agent in exorcisms (Matt 12:18, 24-32; Mark 3:22-30). It is by the “eternal Spirit” that Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice for sin (Heb 9:14), and by the same Spirit that He rose from His grave (Rom 8:11). Later Peter instructs Cornelius that God “anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power” (Acts 10:38). Because the Holy Spirit was so intimately associated with the entire earthly life of Christ, He obviously is the one who can correctly interpret and inspire the record of it in Scripture (2 Tim 3:16).

Jesus never abandoned His human nature and remains truly God and truly human. He is presently absent from the earth, yet He is with us according to His promise (Matt 28:20). Followers of Jesus live by faith in His words through the vicarious work of the Spirit, who mediates the presence of both Father and Son (Eph 1:13-14). Jesus calls the Holy Spirit “another Paraclete,” who will continue His ministry (Jn 14:16). This second Paraclete gave intelligible directives to the fledgling New Testament

⁵ Some have suggested that in this text the Greek word for Helper is not the masculine gender and that, according to the rules of grammar, the pronoun must agree with the noun in gender. However, there is an intervening clause (“the Spirit of truth who. . .”) that uses the neuter gender for Spirit. It is followed immediately by the word “He.” The writer deliberately uses a masculine pronoun “He” in close conjunction with a neuter noun. This is again noted in the paper below.

DAVIDSON: POWER OR PERSON: THE NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Church just as Jesus had done. Jesus portrays the Spirit as a person like He is.

John underscores this point by using the personal pronoun *ekeinos* (“he”) to render Jesus’ references to the Spirit—whereas Greek grammar normally would use the neuter *ekeino* (“it”) to agree with the neuter noun *pneuma* (“Spirit,” the Greek equivalent of *ruach*). This personal pronoun, used in the great Trinitarian address given by Jesus (John 14-16), and is all the more striking because in 14:17, where the Spirit is first introduced, John uses the grammatically appropriate neuter pronouns (*ho* and *auto*). The subsequent shift to the masculine pronoun conveys John’s theology—which the Holy Spirit inspired! The Spirit affirms His personhood with personal pronouns.

In addition to personal pronouns being ascribed to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit also speaks and gives instructions. Only a person can act with intentionality. Intentions are limited to personal beings. Abstract forces never “intend” to do anything. Biblical writers present the Holy Spirit with other characteristics of a personal nature, giving Him intelligence and knowledge. For example, “He will teach you” (Jn 14:26). Hebrews 3:7 presents the Holy Spirit saying what is written in Psalm 95:7-11; and again in Hebrews 10:16-17 quoting Jeremiah (32:33-34). In Hebrews 9:8, the Holy Spirit explains a function of the heavenly sanctuary, implying His knowledge of it. The Holy Spirit is also the Author of Scripture: “prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:21). He engaged human writers to record the revelation of God in human language. The Holy Spirit then subsequently speaks and interprets these inspired words to each generation of believers as the canon’s paramount interpreter.⁶

An intimate relationship between the Holy Spirit and Jesus is portrayed in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit is referred to as “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8:9; 1 Pet 1:11), “the Spirit of Jesus” (Acts 16:7), “the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:19), and “the Spirit of his Son” (Gal 4:6)—and is a source of divine power. Many New Testament passages speak of the Son and the Spirit side by side, aligning them in an obvious way: churches walk in “fear of the Lord and comfort of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 9:31); the “Holy

⁶ Emil Brunner rightly observes: “the Scripture without the Spirit produces false legalism. . . so the Spirit without the Scriptures produces false Antinomianism, and fanaticism.” Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1947), 85.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Spirit dwells in you. . . Christ in you” (Rom 8); the “Holy Spirit loves. . . Jesus loves” (John 14:21); both can be rejected: “trampled the Son of God . . . insulted the Spirit of grace” (Heb 10:29); “consolation in Christ. . . fellowship of the Spirit” (Phil 2:1). Divine directives are given by both: Jesus–“I say” (Matt 5); Holy Spirit:–“the Spirit says to the churches”; both bring justification–“you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11). In the book of Acts, Pentecost is about both the coming of the Spirit and the Lordship of Christ who sends the Spirit: “Exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of Holy Spirit, He has poured out that which you now see and hear” (Acts 2:33).

Many times the Father, Son and Spirit are linked as collaborators in their work of grace (see John 14:16-16:15; Rom 8; 1 Cor 12:4-6; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 1:3-13; 2:18; 3:14-19; 4:4-6; 2 Thes 2:13-14; 1 Pet 1:2). The Spirit-inspired Word of God is the source and norm of the gospel. His revealing work assures of the love of Christ. The Spirit also enables the human heart to see the truth of the gospel and respond. Even more, He molds a believer into the likeness of Christ, bringing sanctification (2 Thes 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2).

In the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit is promised to those who repent and are baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins” (Acts 2:38). John’s Gospel speaks similarly, for Jesus declares that the Spirit would come “in My name” (14:26); “the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father in order to testify about Me” (15:26); “I will send Him to you” (16:7); and–“He breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (20:22).

The book of Acts includes many reminders that the Holy Spirit is more than an abstract force. He is portrayed as the personal agent who instructs the disciples, granting them the power needed to fulfill the gospel commission given to them by Christ. Lesslie Newbigin insightfully recounts one example:

The events recounted with great care in Acts 10 and 11 are often summarized as “the conversion of Cornelius,” but they were equally the conversion of Peter and of the Church. It was no missionary zeal, and no native liberalism of Peter, which took him to the house of an uncircumcised Roman soldier and placed him in the position of having to tell the story of Jesus in that pagan household. It was the Spirit who put him there, and it was the Spirit who shattered all of Peter’s strongest religious certainties by giving to Cornelius and his household exactly the

DAVIDSON: POWER OR PERSON: THE NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

same experience of deliverance and joy as the Apostles themselves had received. In the presence of the *fait accompli* Peter, and—later—the whole Church had simply to follow where they were led.⁷

When Peter and Cornelius are brought together by the Holy Spirit, more than the conversion of Cornelius occurs. It is also Peter's "conversion" to the inclusive gospel which breaks down all barriers, even those between Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, slave and free, male and female.⁸ Salvation is accomplished on the cross of Christ, but is applied to each person by His Spirit. The salvific role of the Third Person of the Godhead is crucial. If it wasn't for the work of the Holy Spirit, no one would ever be converted. The curse of sin with its resulting alienation from God is a fundamental assumption all through Scripture. Thus, the active ministry of the Holy Spirit in convicting of sin (John 16:8-11) is critical. According to Paul, a person doesn't naturally seek God: "none is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God" (Rom 3:10-11). Because there are people who are searching for God and to receive salvation is evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work, convicting of sin and righteousness, and drawing to Christ.⁹ In the final analysis, no one rejects Christ because of

⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 216.

⁸ Cultural divisions always exist. In the ancient world, the division of Jew and Gentile was a fact. The alienation of Gentiles from Israel left the Gentiles, in Paul's words, "Separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the World" (Eph. 2:12). The wonder of Christ's work is that he abolished that wall, bringing to an end the hostile division—and preached peace, so that "through Him we both [Jews and Gentiles] have access to the Father by one Spirit" (2:18). It was the outworking of God's mission: "to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8; cf. Gal. 3:15; 1 Tm 2:7; Rm 15:15-22). It is a mystery now made known:

The mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit of God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus (Eph 3:4-6).

See also Galatians 3:27-29.

⁹ See also: "The office of the Holy Spirit is distinctly specified in the words of Christ: 'When He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.' John 16:8. It is the Holy Spirit that convicts of sin. If the sinner responds to the quickening influence of the Spirit, he will be brought to repentance and aroused to the importance of obeying the divine requirements.

To the repentant sinner, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, the Holy Spirit

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

lack of information and argumentation, but because the ministry of the Holy Spirit has been rejected. Ellen White is clear:

Christ declares that the divine influence of the Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. But by some this promise is not appreciated as it should be; its fulfillment is not realized as it might be. Learning, talents, eloquence, every natural or acquired endowment, may be possessed; but without the presence of the Spirit of God, no heart will be touched, no sinner won to Christ. When His disciples are connected with Christ, when the gifts of the Spirit are theirs, even the poorest and most ignorant of them will have a power that will tell upon hearts. God makes them the channel for the outworking of the highest influence in the universe.¹⁰

A dramatic example of the convicting work of the Holy Spirit is seen as Peter preaches on the Day of Pentecost: “when the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles: ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’” (Acts 2:37) The word “cut” [to the heart] used of the Spirit in Acts 2:37 is the same word used to describe the soldier piercing the body of Jesus on the cross.¹¹ “Peter’s Pentecost speech not only interprets what has happened, it causes something to happen.”¹²

The Holy Spirit also exhibits emotions: He can be grieved—(Israel “grieved the Holy Spirit”; “do not grieve the Holy Spirit,” Eph 4:30). He can be resisted (“you always resist the Holy Spirit,” Acts 7:51); and lied to (Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:3-4, 9)—thus indicating a Person who can be spoken to. He can even be blasphemed—a grave sin done to God (Matt 12:31; Mark 3:29). He speaks (“the Spirit said to Philip. . . Go,” Acts 8:29); teaches (“Holy Spirit will teach you,” Luke 12:12); reveals the future (to Simeon, Luke 2:26; to Paul—“the Holy Spirit testifies in every city what awaits,” Acts 20:23); searches (“the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God,” 1 Cr 2:10, 11); calls to ministry (Paul and Barnabas, Acts 13:2); gives precise instructions (Peter insists, “the Spirit told me to go with

reveals the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. ‘He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you,’ Christ said. ‘He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you,’ John 16:14; 14:26.” Ellen White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 51.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, March 15, 1910.

¹¹ The Holy Spirit is often described in the book of Acts as “piercing” men’s hearts (the same verb used to describe what the Roman centurion did to the body of Jesus on the cross) which brought them to repentance and contrition.

¹² Robert Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*. . . , vol 2, 26.

DAVIDSON: POWER OR PERSON: THE NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

them,” Acts 11); and bears witness (“the Spirit bears witness that we are the children of God,” Rom 8:15, 16). It is possible to quench Him (“Do not quench the Spirit,” 1 Thes 5:19); to be assured by Him (“in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance,” 1 Thes 1:5); and insult Him (“insulted the Spirit of grace,” Heb 10:29).

Significantly, the Holy Spirit also “makes intercession for us . . . with groanings” (Rom 8:26). Paul stresses that both Christ and the Holy Spirit intercede for us (Rom 8:26-34). Intercession can only be done by a personal being. In Acts 9:31 the church is described as living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, suggesting that the Spirit is comforting believers. The Holy Spirit is portrayed as something far more than divine energy or power without personhood.

In both the Old and New Testaments, God insists that He can foretell the future, and that this is a mark of His divinity (Isa 41; Rev 1). The Holy Spirit also declares things to come. In one of Peter’s speeches, he describes the Spirit foretelling what would happen to Judas (Acts 1:16). The prophet Agabus also tells Paul, “Thus says the Holy Spirit: ‘This is the way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man’” (Acts 21:11). The Spirit is plainly portrayed as divine here with the use of the prophetic formula “thus says the Holy Spirit.” In Miletus Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit telling him that imprisonment and persecution await him in Jerusalem (Acts 20:23). There are also various references to the Holy Spirit in Revelation, many of them having to do with the Spirit as the source of John’s prophecy (especially Rev 2-3). Abstract power is not conscious of time.

Martin Luther asserts that the Holy Spirit is the guarantor of truth: “The Holy Spirit is no Skeptic, and it is not doubts or mere opinions that he has written on our hearts, but assertions more sure and certain than life itself and all experience.”¹³ A mere abstract power has no intelligence let alone any understanding of truth. This attribute of the Holy Spirit is vital as Glenn Tinder notes:

Christians who are very anxious about the fate of God’s truth must have forgotten the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which implies that God does not send his truth into history like a ship that is launched and then forgotten. He is the source at once of the truth human beings face and of the inspiration that enables them to recognize it as the truth and, in a measure, to understand it. If God were not the Holy Spirit, who provides

¹³ LW 33:24.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

understanding, his Word would be inaudible and the life of Christ without significance. It was not his intent that revelation should be inconsequential. His Word, he assures us, “shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose.”¹⁴

In the Bible believers are taught to believe in the Holy Spirit. We are baptized into His name as well as the name of the Father and the Son. Benedictions in the New Testament include reference to fellowship and communion with the Holy Spirit: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor 13:14). The Spirit is Someone our prayers come to. Believers are not to pray to “things.” This would be praying to idols which is forbidden in Scripture.

The gifts of the Spirit are proof that God’s grace has been extended and accepted. It is one of the chief themes in the New Testament. Robert Tannehill is insightful: “The emphasis on the Spirit as gift indicates that the Spirit’s presence is a powerful experience of God’s grace. Thus the Spirit is not merely a means to an end, but part of the blessings of salvation and is presented as such.”¹⁵ The coming of the Spirit marks the expansion of the gospel at Pentecost (chap. 2); among the Samaritans (chap. 8); to the Gentiles (chaps 10-11); and to the disciples of John the Baptist (chap 19). It is the evidence Peter appeals to at the Council of Jerusalem: “God who knows the heart acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:8-9).

At these dramatic events, God brought men and women, slave and free, Jews and Gentiles, together in fellowship. Jesus had promised to do it—and He did it through the Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. 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

¹⁴ Glenn Tinder, *The Political Meaning of Christianity: An Interpretation* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 131.

¹⁵ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*. . . , vol. 2, 13.

DAVIDSON: POWER OR PERSON: THE NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies of evil, and to impress His own character upon His church.¹⁶

The Holy Spirit enables the ethical life. It is only those who have the Spirit, who have the mind of the Spirit, who are in the Spirit, who are indwelt by the Spirit of God and have the Spirit of Christ, who are able to do that which is well-pleasing to God (Rom 8:5-13). Newness of life, described as the "newness of the Spirit" (Rom 7:6), is compared to Jesus' resurrection, for it is the Spirit who makes alive (2 Cor 3:4-6). Believers are led of the Spirit (Rom 8:14) having been freed from the works of the flesh (Gal 5:17)—and now they walk by the Spirit (Gal 5:16, 25).

The virtues which develop in the new life in Christ are the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-24). The love which is the fulfilling of the law is the love of the Spirit (Rom 15:30; Gal 5:22; cf. Col 1:8; Gal 5:14-16; Rom 13:8-14). It is the regenerating of the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5) that brings newness of life which defines the life well-pleasing to God. The true believer is indwelt, governed, and directed by the powerful Person of the Holy Spirit. Such a Spirit-filled life will be no mere white-washing of the present, but a brand new life!¹⁷ When Paul describes the distribution of spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit he presents the Spirit as a rational being making personal choices.

The Old Testament holds out the promise that all God's people will share in the gift of the presence and power of the Spirit (Joel 2). In Ephesians, Paul speaks of the access both Jews and Gentiles have to the Father "by one Spirit" (2:18). Addressing Gentiles he specifically refers to their reception of the Spirit: "Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of His glory" (1:13-14).

¹⁶ Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 671, emphasis added.

¹⁷ "Those who consecrate body, soul, and spirit to God, will constantly receive a new endowment of physical, mental, and spiritual power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own Spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth His highest energies to work in heart and mind." Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 113.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The ministry of the Spirit is completely centered in and shaped by the gospel. Redemption is His project.¹⁸ He convicts the world of the truth, brings new birth, helps Christians to be like Christ, and energizes the church as the body of Christ: Jesus promises “When He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. . . . He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.” (Jn 16:13-14).

To be possessed by the Spirit is to be empowered by God. To flee from the Spirit is to flee from God. Encountering the Spirit, we encounter God. The Holy Spirit is the very presence of God taught in both Testaments, with Jesus specifically instructing:

I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans (Jn 14:16-20).

The Holy Spirit is not an nonpersonal power at our disposal. Rather, He is sovereign. We are His auxiliary. Jesus doesn’t promise that the Spirit will help the disciples to bear witness. Rather He states that the Spirit will bear witness and that, secondarily, we testify:

Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak: for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you (Matt 10:16-20).

¹⁸ Ellen White: “The Spirit is given as a regenerating agency, to make effectual the salvation wrought by the death of our Redeemer. The Spirit is constantly seeking to draw the attention of men to the great offering that was made on the cross of Calvary, to unfold to the world the love of God, and to open to the convicted soul the precious things of the Scriptures.

Having brought conviction of sin, and presented before the mind the standard of righteousness, the Holy Spirit withdraws the affections from the things of this earth and fills the soul with a desire for holiness. ‘He will guide you into all truth’ (John 16:13), the Saviour declared. If men are willing to be molded, there will be brought about a sanctification of the whole being. The Spirit will take the things of God and stamp them on the soul. By His power the way of life will be made so plain that none need err therein.” *Acts of the Apostles*, 52.

DAVIDSON: POWER OR PERSON: THE NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Spirit, the Father and the Son are all revealed as Persons in Scripture, and all three are presented as divine. For example, 2 Corinthians 13:14 includes a Trinitarian benediction: “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” Each Person of the Godhead brings blessings of grace, love and fellowship to believers:

I will pour out My Spirit on all people. . . And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls (Joel 2:28, 32).

New Testament writers refer to the deity of the Holy Spirit in a notable manner. Only God is holy, yet biblical writers call the Spirit holy no less than 89 times—the only member of the Godhead with this title regularly attached. “Glory” is also a divine attribute. Yahweh being “the God of glory” (Ps 29:3); the Father is “the glorious Father” (Eph 1:17); Jesus is “the Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:8; James 2:1); and the Spirit is “the Spirit of glory” (1 Pet 4:14). Similarly, as the Father and the Son give “life,” so the Spirit gives “life” (John 5:21, 26; 6:32-33, 63; Rom 8:2; 2 Cor 3:6). Jesus also calls God “Spirit” (Jn 4:24). In the Old Testament David prays for the Holy Spirit (Ps 51:11), equating this to the presence of God.

The Old Testament is clear that when encountering the Spirit, one is encountering God. Equally strong is the New Testament testimony that when one encounters the Spirit one is encountering a Person. The Holy Spirit is included the New Testament references to the threefold God (Matt 28:19; Rom 1:3-4; 1 Pet 1:12). He is divine, and a divine person. Dealing with the Spirit, we encounter the awesome presence of God Himself.¹⁹ One of the final invitations in Scripture is given by the Spirit: “the Spirit and the Bride say ‘come’” (Rev 22:17). A Christianity neglectful of the Spirit is hardly biblical Christianity at all. No wonder Ellen White urges:

Pray that the **mighty energies of the Holy Spirit, with all their quickening, recuperative, and transforming power, may fall like an electric shock on the palsy-stricken soul, causing every nerve to thrill with new life**, restoring the whole man from his dead, earthly, sensual state to spiritual soundness. You will thus become partakers of the divine

¹⁹ How vastly different is this than the description of Christianity given by Kant and Freud.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust; and in your souls will be reflected the image of Him by whose stripes you are healed.²⁰

Amen and amen.

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²⁰ Ellen White, *Amazing Grace*, 312, emphasis added.