

### Whose Child Are You?

Claims of being a “born again Christian” are commonly heard. Although I hear few explanations as to the process of this birth, the ones I hear attribute it to the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, some even indicating that this is the heart in their chest cavity. In this new birth of the Spirit one supposedly becomes a child of God or a son of God. Yet I have never heard anyone claim to be a son of the Holy Spirit or a child of the Holy Spirit! Why not? Whose child are you -- God or the Holy Spirit?

It is written of Mary that “*she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit,*” and also “*that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.*” (Matt. 1:18-19). It is clear from these words that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit and Mary. But is he ever referred to as the Son of the Holy Spirit or the Child of the Holy Spirit? Why not?

If Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and was the Son of God and we likewise are born of the Holy Spirit thus becoming sons or children of God, how can we explain that? It seems evident that the only logical conclusion that we can reach is that the Holy Spirit and God are the same personage else we are denying that one or the other was involved in our spiritual birth. If that be true, then we are forced to conclude that the doctrine of “The Trinity” is incorrect. It would reduce our “godhead” to the “Father (who is also) the Holy Spirit, and his Son” leaving us with only two personages as the One God.

That is no more confusing than the “doctrine of the trinity” itself which terminology is not in the Bible. The first six Ecumenical Councils of developing Catholicism, meeting from 325 AD to 680 AD, debated this matter. Finally, they declared that Jesus was “born of the Father before all ages” and declared that the one God is actually three-Gods-in-one -- the trinity. Arius, who contended that Jesus became the Son of God in time, was denounced and excommunicated.

In recent years someone forwarded to me some insightful and courageous notes from Wanda Shirk who was living in Pennsylvania. I have tried to contact her to see if she has made them in treatise form and for permission to use her undeveloped material. I was unable to contact her but was told by one who knew of her that she had sort of withdrawn from the fray and no longer wished to communicate about these things. She made valid points that we need to deal with for better understanding. I am taking the liberty to borrow heavily from her notes with my own adaptations in this essay. I will not pretend to be speaking for her on this matter but I do want to acknowledge my indebtedness to her.

The Spirit or Spirit of God is mentioned many times in old covenant writings. In new covenant writings those terms are used, and many times mention is made of the Holy Spirit. Original writings had no capitalization or punctuation; so translators have put in those distinctions according to their judgment. Is the adjective “holy” meant to be simply descriptive “holy” or “Holy” as a proper name? We, too, are spirit and we, too, are to be holy, as Peter urged, “*.. as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’*” (1 Peter 1:16). Can we not be described as holy spirits? In 46 of the 83 uses of the term “pneuma hagian” (holy

spirit) in the Greek scriptures, there is no definite article “a” or “the” but almost all translations render all 83 uses as “the Holy Spirit,” adding “the” and the capitalization, all of which is a matter of interpretation. May not a person be filled with a holy spirit? This opens an area of interpretation worth exploring later.

Adding to the tedious nature of translation is the fact that the word “spirit” is also the word meaning “breath” and “wind.” As an example of alternate translation, in Genesis 1:2, where it is usually indicated that the Spirit of God was over the waters of the earth, the RSV gives an alternate reading of a wind of God. This seems more plausible in that the water of the forming planet was still vaporized and the heat caused terrific winds.

No personal name like those given to Jesus and God is attributed to the Holy Spirit so as to identify a person. Jesus is presented in scripture as a person, not as “the Jesus.” There is no record of anyone calling on the Spirit, speaking to him, singing to him, or praying to him as a person even though some believers do that today. There were manifestations of the Spirit to accommodate man’s physical senses such as those demonstrated on Pentecost but those did not reveal a person. In spite of this we hear people speak of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Godhead.

Wanda writes, “All the epistles of the scriptures open with reference to ‘God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.’ No separate mention is made of the Holy Spirit. This would be a great slight to the Holy Spirit if the Spirit were indeed a separate and distinct ‘person’ of the ‘trinity’.”

A man and his spirit are inseparable. They are not two persons but one and the same. God is Spirit (John 4:24). God does not have a Spirit but is Spirit, the one holy Spirit. Wanda quotes, “*Who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God*” (1 Cor. 2:11 NASB). She rightly concludes, “It is evident that as the spirit of a man is the man himself, so the Spirit of God is God Himself, not a separate person.”

When confronting Ananias for his deception, “*Peter said, ‘Ananias why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?’*” Then, “*You have not lied to men but to God*” (Acts 5:3-4). Thus the Holy Spirit is identified with God. Peter further identifies their working as the same in Acts 10:38, “*.. God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.*”

The angel Gabriel also associated the Holy Spirit with the power of God: “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God*” (Lk 1:35). Jesus made a similar association also. He instructed the twelve, “*Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high*” {Luke 24:49}. After his resurrection he further clarified this point saying, “*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you*” (Acts 1:8). This was fulfilled on Pentecost when God empowered the apostles with his own power and Spirit. These brief notations indicate that the Spirit is God himself manifested. This was true through old covenant history also. Maybe these thoughts will give you incentive to study the matter in more detail than my eyesight and concentration allow for me.

But what about the part of the Son in the trinity? Some months ago a local friend gave me a copy of *“THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY - Christianity’s Self-Inflicted Wound”* by Anthony F. Buzzard and Charles F. Hunting published by International Scholars Publications. In this 375 page book they challenge every apparent Trinitarian or preexistence passage in the Scriptures. It is a detailed study of words and expressions which translators in general have rendered in favor of Trinitarianism. I have struggled about one-third of the way through the book and find their presentation compelling. You who are younger and more alert (which includes most all of you!) will find this a rewarding study whether it confirms or challenges your present beliefs. The authors uphold the divinity and role of Christ but do not present him as God, either in preexistence or after his birth.

I will mention just one example that struck me. In Genesis 1:26 it is recorded, *“Then God said, ‘Let US make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness... ’”*. We have been schooled from earliest Bible studies that this indicates the Trinity because of its plural pronouns. But we did not read the next sentence: *“So GOD created man in HIS (not their) own image; male and female HE (not they) created them.”* And, *“I (not we) have given every green plant for food”* (v. 30). Also, *“God saw everything HE (not they) had made...”* (v. 31). And, *“On the seventh day God finished HIS work which HE had done, and HE rested on the seventh day from all HIS work which HE had done”* (2:2). This one example indicates how we may profit from a restudy (in case we have ever studied it before) of this matter.

Then, last week I received Leroy Garrett’s “Occasional Essay” Number 16. Wow! I hope you have gotten on his list. In his masterfully clear and concise way, he set forth the “one God” concept of the Hebrew Shema with which the Trinitarian concept collides.

On a plane flight, I took the book mentioned above for reading. A stewardess saw it and really got on my case in all earnestness. When I protested that our salvation was not dependent on our understanding of the “Trinity,” she declared that it is, and that I was endangering my soul. So I want to make it clear to you that I am studying this without making dogmatic declarations and making it a “salvation issue.” Belief in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is basic to salvation but understanding the full nature of them is not.

Whose child are you? Why do we call ourselves sons, or children, of God? Because inspired writers do. Why did they never call us sons, or children, of the Holy Spirit? I do not know! Maybe you do. If you do, please send me your explanation on a post card!

This has been fragmentary, disjointed, and inconclusive. I want to continue with related thoughts next time. So I will ask you a question for the next study: Can an unbeliever bear fruits of the Spirit? See Galatians 5:16-26. []

(Cecil Hook; January 2004)