

THE PERSON AND SAVING WORK OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD

I. The Person of the Spirit of God

A. The Personhood of the Spirit

The moment we speak of the personhood of the Spirit of God, we are faced with the question, "What is a person?" What do we mean when we speak of persons?

The American College Dictionary (New York: Random House, 1961) defines a "person" as "a human being as distinguished from an animal or a thing." This is good as far as it goes, but does it go far enough? If animals and plants and rocks are not persons, does this mean that human beings are the only persons in the world?

This forces us to define what a person is, rather than simply to identify persons.

Persons are distinct beings characterized by conceptual thought, the use of some form of language, emotions, deliberate choice and purposive action toward pre-selected goals, self-consciousness, and moral and religious attitudes and actions.

Put another way, persons are moral and spiritual beings who have a distinct existence and the faculties of intellect, emotion, will, and self-consciousness.

When we look into scriptures, we discover that persons are spirits. A person is a spirit.

When applied to human beings, we discover that man is a spirit in union with a body. According to the Bible, human beings who become disembodied spirits in the experience of death are still persons. A person is still a person when he or she is without his or her body. In one sense, disembodied persons are not complete persons, but they are nonetheless persons.

Upon reflection, we recall that the Bible teaches that there are spirits other than human beings in the world.

For example, Satan is a spirit. Ephesians 2:2 speaks of "the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient."

The demons are spirits. Luke 8:29 tells us that "Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man."

Angels are spirits. Hebrews 1:13-14 asks, "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"

And God is a Spirit (or, is spirit). John 4:24 states that "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

Thus there are other kinds of spirits in the world besides human beings. And these spirits are all personal beings. They all have the characteristics and faculties and powers of persons. They are persons.