



The Holy Spirit

The Voice *for* God or the Voice *of* God?

by Robert Perry

A Course in Miracles is very clear that the Holy Spirit is the Voice *for* God, not the Voice *of* God. The Course routinely calls Him the “Voice for” and not once calls Him the “Voice of.” The message this sends is pretty clear. It tells us that God Himself does not speak within the dream of this world. God as God has no voice, for a “voice”—along with “speaking” and “words”—is a thing of form, and as such only makes sense within a *realm* of form. Instead, God stands outside the universe of form, in the secure knowledge that it is not real.

God, therefore, needs some way to reach us in the world of form. The Course says, “Yet God created One Who has the power to translate in form the wholly formless” (W-pI.192.3:5). This “One,” of course, is the Holy Spirit. God created the Holy Spirit to speak *for* Him. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the One with Whom we interact when in this world. He is the Mediator, the go-between. This perhaps explains why Course students tend to talk more about (and *to*) the Holy Spirit than God. After all, the Holy Spirit is the one we deal with.

This is all part of the basic framework that I think most Course students carry around in their heads. Indeed, I think this overall idea—God outside the dream/the Holy Spirit speaking for Him in the dream—is one of the few perspectives that most Course students share. Within our kaleidoscope of differences, here is an island of unity.

You may be surprised, then, to discover that to some degree this is a product of editing. In Helen Schucman’s original dictation, the Holy Spirit is *both* the “Voice for” *and* the “Voice of”—and in equal measure. In her original notes, there are twenty-three occurrences of “Voice for” God and twenty-four occurrences of “Voice of” God. So in the beginning the two terms were clearly equal in significance. Yet by the time the Course reached publication, every single one of the occurrences of “Voice of” had been changed to “Voice for.” (I have included a table of these twenty-four references after this article, along with their edited versions.) The result was that not a single occurrence of “Voice of” remained in *A Course in Miracles*.

When and why did it happen?

Why was this done? It appears that a decision was made to make the terminology for the Holy Spirit consistent, and in the direction of “Voice for.” This decision was probably made in the final editing process undertaken by Helen Schucman and Ken Wapnick, the one that turned the Hugh Lynn Cayce version into the FIP First Edition—the familiar blue book.

In that final edit, we can see a concern for consistent terminology, as well as a concern for terminology that honors the Course’s distinction between reality and illusion. Thus, for instance, the word “create” and its cognates were often changed in the early chapters of the Text, to reflect the fact that we only create in Heaven (as the Course itself later explains; see T-17.IV.2:1). For instance, “Man believes in what he creates. If he creates a miracle...” became “You believe in what you make. If you offer miracles...” (T-1.VII.3:8-9). Also, the word “will” was changed scores of times to avoid the impression that we can will in this world (which is also arguably in accord with the Course; see C-1.7:2). For instance, “Before you will to do anything, ask me if your will is in accord with mine” became “Before you choose to do anything, ask me if your choice is in accord with mine” (T-2.VI.4:9). And the word “behavior” was often changed or removed, apparently to underscore the importance of thought as opposed to behavior. For example, “Changed behavior had become mandatory. Men can learn to improve their behavior...” became “You can learn to improve your perceptions” (T-2.II.5:6).

Changing all the occurrences of “Voice of” to “Voice for” appears to have been part of this same program. It certainly

seems to fit the pattern. Avoiding the impression that we can “create” or “will” in this world is not so different from avoiding the impression that God can speak in this world. To speak of there being a Voice *for* God creates more of a neat distinction between reality and illusion, while talking about the Voice *of* God tends to blur the lines. Now the reality side (God) is directly spilling over into the illusion side.

In the case of the Text, we can be certain that the four changes to “Voice of” were done in this final editing pass, the one performed by Helen and Ken. We know this because we have the Hugh Lynn Cayce version of the Text—the document Helen and Ken worked from to produce the FIP Text—which still retains the original “Voice of.”

In the case of the Workbook, we can’t be entirely sure when “Voice of” was changed. This is because we don’t have the Hugh Lynn Cayce version of the Workbook. So conceivably the changes to “Voice of” in the Workbook could have been made earlier: after the Urtext (which retains “Voice of,” except in one case) and before the Hugh Lynn Cayce version. But I consider that unlikely. The removal of “Voice of” is so in keeping with the observable patterns of the final edit that what we see in the Text is probably what also happened in the Workbook: “Voice of” was taken out as part of Helen and Ken’s decision to make terminology more consistent and more reflective of the Course’s distinction between reality and illusion.

Yet even now, the footprints of the original “Voice of God” are there to see. Several of the changes away from “Voice of,” for example, make better sense in the original wording. Look at this sentence: “And thus we come to hear the Voice for God, Who speaks to us as we relate His Word” (W-pII.245.2:3). The One “Who speaks to us” seems to be the Voice for God, the Holy Spirit. So it sounds like the Holy Spirit “speaks to us as we relate His Word.” But that’s not right, because “His Word” is definitely *God’s* Word, not the Holy Spirit’s. Now, we could interpret “Who” and “His” to make “Voice for God” work, but the sentence clearly reads better as originally dictated: “And thus we come to hear the Voice of God, Who speaks to us as we relate His Word.” We can see these same kinds of issues in several other cases in which “Voice of” was taken out.

Further, most of the references to the Holy Spirit as “Voice” refer to Him simply as “God’s Voice” (thirty-six occurrences), or “His Voice” (fifty-four), or (in prayers to God) “Your Voice” (nineteen). While these can be taken as “Voice *for* God” (and in a few cases their context dictates that they *should* be taken that way), they read more naturally as “Voice *of* God.” Any English speaker would read “God’s Voice” as simply another way of saying “the Voice of God.”

Finally, while the term “Voice of God” was systematically removed, references to God speaking were not. There are, in fact, quite a number of places in the Course where God is said to “speak” to us (as well as “call” to us and “answer” us). For example:

Hear, holy Son of God, your Father speak. (W-pI.125.4:1)

Speak to us, Father, that we may be healed. (W-pI.140.12:3)

My Father, speak to me today. (W-pII.221.1:4)

So even though the term “Voice of God” got erased from the Course, the concept most certainly did not.

What we see here, then, is a term—“Voice of God”—that was present throughout the original dictation, and that survived until probably the final editing process. Yet even now, some of the sentences in which it occurred make better sense with it still in. Further, it is still naturally implied by the many references to “God’s Voice.” And most importantly, it is directly supported by the many references to God speaking to us. Because of all this, I have to assume that “Voice of” was indeed reflective of Jesus’ intent. I have to assume, in other words, that the systematic removal of “Voice of” was a product of merely human editing. On the simplest level, if the Course repeatedly tells us that God speaks to us, then He clearly does have a Voice. So what is wrong with *saying* He has a Voice? Obviously, nothing, which is why Jesus spoke that way so frequently.

How, then, do we conceptualize the Holy Spirit?

We now have two very different terms—“Voice for God” and “Voice of God”—that both describe the Holy Spirit. “Voice for” implies that He is a Being distinct from God, Who speaks on behalf of God. An analogous image is that of a spokesperson, who speaks on behalf of a leader. “Voice of” implies something very different—that He is merely a faculty through which God communicates to us. Here, the analogous image is that of your vocal chords, which, of course, are entirely under your control. They don’t speak *for* you; they are the organ through which *you* speak.

The difference, then, can be boiled down to this: In “Voice for,” the Holy Spirit is the Speaker, speaking on behalf of

God. In “Voice of,” *God* is the Speaker, speaking to us through His Voice.

So which is it? Is the Holy Spirit speaking to us, or is God Himself speaking to us? Well, obviously, it is both. This presents a real difficulty for our minds. How can the same communication be both the Holy Spirit speaking on God’s behalf *and* God speaking to us through the Holy Spirit? Our brain can get so fatigued at this point that it simply collapses in exhaustion.

Yet I think it is crucial that we continue to stretch our minds to include both perspectives, for this is not a situation that is unique to the Holy Spirit. *Everything* that God created—including ourselves—has roughly these same two aspects.

On the one hand, a creation of God is its own identity, its own piece of existence, so to speak, and therefore has its own mind and will. With its mind, it can share in God’s knowing or it can elect to have a different awareness. With its will, it can move in unison with God’s Will or it can choose to move in its own direction. In this sense, it is a being distinguishable from God, with control of its own experience and expression. This is why we can speak of the Holy Spirit as the “Voice for God,” as a Being distinct from God Who voluntarily *elects* to pass on God’s communication to us (though it is inconceivable that He would ever elect otherwise).

But on the other hand, everything God creates is also nothing more than an extension of Him. As such, it is made of His Being, is one with Him, and is part of Him. It is even held in existence by Him, which is the obvious implication of it being called a “Thought” of God (as the Course calls us many times). If you are a Thought of God, then He is holding your nature and your very existence in Mind by the act of *thinking* you. If He were to change how He thought of you, your nature would change accordingly. If He were to stop thinking you, you would cease to be. So everything created by God is simply a case of His Will stretching forward. You could say that it is simply the “tip” of God extending Himself. This is why we can speak of the Holy Spirit as the “Voice of God,” as something under God’s control, as simply a faculty through which God speaks. Indeed, this explains one passage that flatly says God *is* the Holy Spirit: “He [God] is... the Spirit which directs my actions, offers me Its Thoughts, and guarantees my safety from all pain” (W-pII.222.1:3).

If we have difficulty in combining these two sides of the Holy Spirit, we will also have difficulty in conceptualizing our own two sides. We will not understand that each of us is both a *Son* of God and a *part* of God, a *child* of God and a *Thought* of God. We will not understand how the Course can characterize us as an *effect* of God’s Will but then also have us say to Him, “Yet what I am in truth is but Your Will” (W-pII.329.1:2). We will not understand how our experience and expression are up to *us*, while our nature and existence are entirely up to *God*.

So what we need is a concept of identity in Heaven that is different from how identity seems to work in this world. In this world, we think in terms of minds that are separate and autonomous. For Heaven, we need to think in terms of minds that are distinct from God yet also part of God, that have their own thoughts yet are themselves Thoughts of God, that are in control of their experience but not their being. If we can have this general concept, then we can have a basic grasp of who we are *and* of what the Holy Spirit is. At that point, it will seem perfectly natural to us that He is both the Voice *for* God and the Voice *of* God.

Indeed, the two terms are in the end not so far apart. Imagine, for instance, that your own vocal chords are sentient, that they actually have a conscious mind. They are still an instrument through which you speak, but rather than being a passive instrument, this instrument actively wills to pass on your communication. It unites perfectly and seamlessly with your will to speak, so that both your will *and* its will are controlling it. This union can occur because, in some sense, this other mind (the one in your vocal chords) is actually an extension of your mind. At that point, would not this voice be both *your voice* and the voice *for* you? I think something analogous is going on with God and the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

Metaphysical considerations aside, the net effect of discovering that the Holy Spirit was originally also the Voice *of* God is perfectly obvious: It immediately lessens the sense of distance between us and God. The exclusive usage of “Voice for God” in the FIP edition naturally produces a certain buffer between us and God. We never get to hear from God Himself, only from His Emissary. God sits outside the dream, immovable, while Someone Else does all the talking. And there is a sense in which that is still true—a sense in which, when we call to God, the Holy Spirit answers for Him. Yet there is an equally important sense in which “God Himself will answer you” (T-10.IV.8:7), in which “God my Father speaks to me” (W-pII.237.1:3). As Course students, we are all familiar with that first sense—“Voice for.” But in light of the original dictation, we can also embrace the second sense—“Voice of.” Rather than seeing ourselves on an island that is so remote from God that He cannot be heard, let us take comfort in the fact that He is speaking to us all the time, that when we hear guidance, we are indeed hearing the Voice of God.

The Original References to the Holy Spirit as the “Voice of” God

Here are the twenty-four references to the “Voice of” God in Helen’s original handwritten notes. These are shown in the left column. The right column then shows how they appear in the FIP Second Edition. By reading across from left to right, you can see how “Voice of” was changed to “Voice for” in every single instance.

To get the full effect of these original references, however, I recommend reading very slowly down the left column *alone*, ignoring for the time being the right column. Use this slow reading as a chance to really take in the fact that God *does* have a Voice and *is* speaking to you.

It is interesting to note, by the way, that on two occasions after writing down “Voice of,” Helen tried to insert “for” instead, which would have turned the phrase into the familiar “Voice for God.” Yet both times she ended up crossing out “for” and either leaving in or reinserting the original “of.” This implies that in those cases “of” was indeed what Jesus wanted. Those references to “Voice of God,” in other words, were apparently meant to stay as they were, rather than be changed by editing.

Helen's Notes	FIP Second Edition
If you cannot hear the voice of God, it is because you do not choose to listen.	If you cannot hear the Voice for God, it is because you do not choose to listen. (T-4.IV.1:1)
The voice they put in their minds was <i>not</i> the voice of His Will.	The voice they put in their minds was not the Voice for His Will. (T-5.II.6:9)
This is the natural response of every son of God to the Voice of His Creator	This is the natural response of every Son of God to the Voice for his Creator. (T-8.II.8:6)
When His Son lifts his voice in praise of His Creator, he <i>will</i> hear the Voice of his Father.	When His Son lifts his voice in praise of his Creator, he will hear the Voice for his Father. (T-11.IV.5:7)
There is peace within you to be called upon today, to help make ready your most holy mind to hear the Voice of its Creator speak.	There is peace within you to be called upon today, to help make ready your most holy mind to hear the Voice for its Creator speak. (W-pI.125.6:4)
What little plans or magical beliefs can still have value, when you have received your function from the Voice of God Himself?	What little plans or magical beliefs can still have value, when you have received your function from the Voice for God Himself? (W-pI.135.25:6)
All things are echoes of the Voice of God.	All things are echoes of the Voice for God. (W-pI.151. Heading)
This is awareness which you understand, and think more real than what is witnessed to by the eternal Voice of God Himself.	This is awareness that you understand, and think more real than what is witnessed to by the eternal Voice for God Himself. (W-pI.151.3:7)
The Voice of for God can only honor Him, rejoicing in His perfect, everlasting sinlessness.	The Voice for God can only honor Him, rejoicing in His perfect, everlasting sinlessness. (W-pI.151.8:3)
No one can fail to listen when you hear the Voice of God give honor to God’s Son.	No one can fail to listen, when you hear the Voice for God give honor to God’s Son. (W-pI.151.15:4)
It is this joining through the Voice of God, of Father and of Son, that sets apart salvation from the world.	It is this joining, through the Voice for God, of Father and of Son, that sets apart salvation from the world. (W-pI.154.4:1)
Here is the answer of the Voice of God.	Here is the answer of the Voice for God. (W-pI.161.1:5)

Helen's Notes	FIP Second Edition
<p>For He will hear the Voice of God in you, and answer in your own.</p> <p>For beyond them all He hears the song of Heaven and the Voice of God more clear, more meaningful, more near.</p> <p><i>Christ is my eyes today, and His the ears which listen to the Voice of God today.</i></p> <p>And thus we come to hear the Voice of God, Who speaks to us as we relate His Word.</p> <p>Let us today attend the Voice of God, Which speaks an ancient lesson, no more true today than any other day.</p> <p>For the Voice of God tells us of things we cannot understand alone, nor learn apart.</p> <p>And in this the healing of the Voice of God is found.</p> <p>What seems to be the second place is first, for all things we perceive are upside down, until we listen to the Voice of God.</p> <p>Be very still, and hear the gentle Voice of God assuring you that He has judged you as the Son He loves.</p> <p>Ours are the ears which hear the Voice of God proclaim the world as sinless.</p> <p>His is the Voice of God, and also yours.</p> <p>For healing tells him, in the Voice of God, that all his sins have been forgiven him.</p>	<p>For He will hear the Voice for God in you, and answer in your own. (W-pI.161.12:2)</p> <p>For beyond them all He hears the song of Heaven, and the Voice for God more clear, more meaningful, more near. (W-pI.164.1:5)</p> <p><i>Christ is my eyes today, and He the ears that listen to the Voice for God today. (W-pII.237.2:1)</i></p> <p>And thus we come to hear the Voice for God, Who speaks to us as we relate His Word. (W-pII.245.2:3)</p> <p>Let us today attend the Voice for God, which speaks an ancient lesson, no more true today than any other day. (W-pII.275.1:1)</p> <p>For the Voice for God tells us of things we cannot understand alone, nor learn apart. (W-pII.275.1:5)</p> <p>And in this the healing of the Voice for God is found. (W-pII.275.1:6)</p> <p>What seems to be the second place is first, for all things we perceive are upside down until we listen to the Voice for God. (W-pII.328.1:1)</p> <p>Be very still, and hear the gentle Voice for God assuring you that He has judged you as the Son He loves. (W-pII.347.2:2)</p> <p>Ours are the ears that hear the Voice for God proclaim the world as sinless. (W-pII.14.4:2)</p> <p>His is the Voice for God and also yours. (W-Ep.2:5)</p> <p>For healing tells him, in the Voice for God, that all his sins have been forgiven him. (P-2.V.8:10)</p>



E-mail your comments to the author at: robert@circleofa.org

Robert Perry. *He is the author or co-author of over twenty books and booklets, including Path of Light: Stepping into Peace with 'A Course in Miracles'.*