

Comparing the Holy Spirit in the Gospels with the Being of Light in Near–Death Experiences

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ABSTRACT

The Holy Spirit is still one of the biggest mysteries within the Christian belief in God. This mystery is controversially discussed between the different confessions. Neither a commonly accepted general understanding of the nature nor an exact knowledge about the origin is achieved. This article gives a new interpretation of the Holy Spirit by comparing this personification of God as told by Jesus Christ in the Gospels with the Being of Light, which is reported by many people after their Near-Death Experiences. Very clear similarities in several aspects are found. These include the encounters with the Holy Spirit and the Being of Light, the radiated divine love, the communication of God's knowledge to people, the help and guidance to people, and the rebirth in the spirit. This investigation sees clear indications that the Holy Spirit and the Being of Light are different descriptions of the same Divine Being.

Keywords: Being of light, holy spirit, near-death experience, pneumatology.

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1. INTRODUCTION

There are numerous passages in the Old Testament where the Spirit of God is described in its nature. The Spirit of God interacts with the world, like in Genesis 1:2 where the spirit hovered over the face of the waters. God gave the Spirit to people to enlighten them with God's will as it is reported several times in the Pentateuch and the books of the prophets. But in the Old Testament, the Spirit of God is never described as an own person like the Holy Spirit within the Trinity of God in the New Testament. Jewish faith sees God as one spiritual Being without different personifications. From the Old Testament to the New Testament, a disruptive shift in the understanding of the Spirit of God is seen toward the Trinity of God. God Father as the creator and preserver of the world has a continuous tradition throughout the complete Holy Bible. Jesus Christ as God's Son is the second person of God in the New Testament. Together with God Father and Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity is described in the New Testament. What is the reason for this disruptive theological development to introduce the Trinity with the Holy Spirit as the third person of God?

The description of God Father is clear throughout the Holy Bible and no significant differences are taught in different Christian confessions. Jesus Christ as the Son of God is a historic person and detailed reports of his life are written in the Gospels. His sayings, teachings, and parables are interpreted in different ways, but the core of his teaching is not disputed between Christian confessions. The most controversially interpreted person of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. Already in the New Testament, the authors had similarities but also differences in their views on the nature of the Holy Spirit, as [Bruce \(1973\)](#) writes. Differences in the interpretation of the Holy Spirit within the authors of the New Testament books are described that “unlike Paul and John, the Spirit for Luke is not the power of salvation, but the charismatic/prophetic Spirit given to those *who have already entered* the community of salvation” ([Turner, 2003](#)). The Holy Spirit in Christian theology has a controversial history within Trinitarian theology with different interpretations regarding its characteristics, the interaction with the other two persons of the Trinity, and the importance for the Christian life. A detailed review of the historic development of the views on the Holy Spirit is written by [Hilberath \(1994\)](#), pp. 103–161 which shows many controversial beliefs.



The development of an understanding of the Holy Spirit was slow and diverse in the Church: “It is deeply rooted in the matter itself that Christian knowledge about the Holy Spirit permeated the Church so slowly and with such difficulty” (Barth, 2009a, p. 177). The Holy Spirit is still seen as a mystery with difficulties to speak about: “There is a certain difficulty in speaking about the Holy Spirit, even a certain danger. He withdraws from us into mystery even more than Christ” (Ratzinger, 1998). There is still an unclear understanding of the Holy Spirit within the Christian churches and the world: “However, more than looking at the Spirit as the dispenser of gifts, there has not really been a clear understanding of his role in the Church and the world” (Williams, 2014). The Holy Spirit is full of contradictory interpretations that lead to the conclusion that the nature of the Holy Spirit is still only vaguely understood: “The Holy Spirit is perhaps the most difficult person of the Trinity to conceive. It is hard even to say what one is talking about when one speaks of the Holy Spirit. The identity of the Holy Spirit is elusive, to say the least” (Welker, 1989). Until today, there are no clear insights about the origin of the Holy Spirit. The reason for the disruptive change in the understanding of God from the Old Testament to the New Testament with the introduction of the Trinitarian God is still unknown.

On the other hand, Near-Death Experiences (NDEs) have been known for thousands of years. The earliest known report was written by Plato (2008) and many ancient cultures reflected on afterlife experiences in their myths which show many similarities around the world (Shushan, 2009, p. 165). The reason for NDEs is unclear until today. However it is generally accepted that NDEs exist. There are reports from a large number of people with different cultural and religious backgrounds in different personal situations. “More than 95% of the respondents feel their NDE was ‘definitely real’, while virtually all of the remaining respondents feel it was ‘probably real’” (Long & Perry, 2010, p. 2). Many of these people report from an unearthly light or Being of Light with endless love, like a woman who said: “It was warm; it was radiant; it was peaceful; it was accepting; it was forgiving; it was completely nonjudgmental; and it gave me a sense of total security the likes of which I had never known, I loved it. It was perfection; it was total, unconditional love.” (Ring & Valarino, 2006, p. 189). Another person reported about this experience: “It is a light of perfect understanding and perfect love” (Moody, 2015, p. 56). A three-year-old girl had the following experience: “I went toward this presence, which was within a brilliant sun[lit], bright, space—not a tunnel, but an area. The presence was unbelievable peace, love, acceptance, calm and joy” (Long & Perry, 2010, p. 146).

The goal of this article is to compare the descriptions of this Being of Light with the descriptions of the Holy Spirit in the Gospels. Similarities for a better understanding of the Holy Spirit are analyzed.

The following Section describes the research question and the applied methodology. Section 3 shows different encounters with the Holy Spirit and the Being of Light. Divine Love is described in Section 4. Revealing knowledge and truth is explained in Section 5. Section 6 shows the role of the Holy Spirit and the Being of Light in guiding and helping people. Christians are reborn in the Holy Spirit, Section 7 describes the connections with the Being of Light. The results are discussed and a conclusion is given in the last Section.

2. RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

The research question is, which similarities exist between the Holy Spirit in the Gospels and the Being of Light in Near Death Experiences? By using solely texts from the Gospels that can be traced with high certainty back to Jesus, the Holy Spirit is traced to its origin. Later interpretations and further developments are excluded. The goal is to discover the nature of the Holy Spirit by analyzing the Gospels and comparing them with NDErs’ reports about the Being of Light.

The research methodology is fully based on literature. The Gospels are analyzed regarding speeches and acts from Jesus with a link to the Holy Spirit. These texts are used to find similarities with descriptions of the Being of Light. NDEs from the literature are the main information source for the characterization of the Being of Light. Also, key findings from NDE surveys with high numbers of participants are used as information sources about the nature of the Being of Light.

3. ENCOUNTERS WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BEING OF LIGHT

The information about the Holy Spirit that Jesus gave is very limited. Direct speeches from him about the Holy Spirit are very seldom. Jesus mostly used metaphors when speaking about the Holy Spirit. He often talked about a light, a fire, a breeze of wind, or about living water. Jesus talks about the other Paraclete that is sent, like in John 14:26 where he said that an advocate will be sent by the Holy Father to teach and remind people about Jesus’ words. This advocate is the Holy Spirit. This saying is interpreted as: “In that sense, too, he [the Spirit] is the ‘other Paraclete’ besides Jesus. This proves

that Jesus does not equate himself with the Spirit. Even with respect to his heavenly existence and his future, Jesus is not the Spirit, and what is said elsewhere of the Spirit is not all true of Jesus" (Ridderbos, 1997, p. 504). Jesus and the Holy Spirit had contact with each other, they exchanged information, and they closely interacted with each other. Jesus gave several statements that were influenced by the Holy Spirit, like when he talked about God's love, the divine knowledge that he was handed over to him, and he was sent by God. One of these sayings is in Matthew 10:40 (parallel verses in Luke 10:16 and John 13:20), where Jesus stated that a welcome to him is also a welcome to the person who has sent him. He told his disciples that they are sent in the name of God, and he also said that he is sent by God. "In a mission charge such a statement offers great confidence of empowerment and assurance of the significance of the task undertaken" (Nolland, 2005, p. 444). The parallel verse in John 13:20 is interpreted as: "The mission of Jesus is here assigned the highest theological significance, the most absolutely binding authority—the authority of God himself" (Carson, 1991, p. 471). These verses together with the interpretations lead to the conclusion that there is close contact between Jesus, God Father, and the Holy Spirit, as Jesus is sent by God. Summarized, these statements of Jesus show that he is from the other world, is in close contact with God Father and the Holy Spirit; received knowledge and experienced love, and has been sent to this world (Fuhrmann, 2020).

Reports of NDEs show significant differences in their depths and course but there is a set of similar experiences that are part of many NDEs. One of these is meeting with a Being of Light. Many of these encounters are very similar: "By comparing these accounts, we begin to see a coherent picture of this other world. . . . Those who report meeting a divine being generally portray God as someone who radiated incredible love, light, grace, and acceptance. . . . The fact that they describe these encounters so similarly gives us confidence that they have, indeed, met the same Being" (Long & Perry, 2016, pp. 3–4). A high number of people encountered a Being of Light: "Despite the light's unusual manifestation, however, not one person has expressed any doubt whatsoever that it was a being, a being of light. Not only that, it is a personal being. It has a very definite personality. The love and the warmth which emanate from this being to the dying person are utterly beyond words, and he feels completely surrounded by it and taken up in it, completely at ease and accepted in the presence of this being." (Moody, 2015, pp. 51–52). There is a connectedness of all souls to the Being of Light: "There was a large majestic center light and then the individual yet connected pod lights exactly like the center light only smaller. I think now the pod lights, like mine, were other souls connected to the center light, God" (Long & Perry, 2010, p. 10). In one NDE, the Being of Light was seen to be the Holy Spirit: "God's love was drawing me back to His core, where I had belonged all along. I allowed myself to move closer and closer to His center. Then suddenly, it was no longer external, it was internal, the bright light's source dwelling at the deepest part of my being. The Holy Spirit living inside me, residing in my heart, my spirit, my soul!" (Sartori & Walsh, 2017, p. 89).

Jesus had an encounter with a spiritual being that he called the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a distinct person and not only a feeling or imagination. Reports from a large number of people during their NDEs show encounters with a Being of Light. These encounters were with a personal being, not only a general feeling. The connections were very intimate with endless divine love. These similarities in reported encounters with a being in the other world are indications that the Holy Spirit and the Being of Light are closely connected or even different interpretations of the same being.

4. THE EXPERIENCE OF DIVINE LOVE

Jesus teaches love in The Greatest Commandment, Mark 12:29–31 (parallel verses in Matthew 22:37–39 and Luke 10:27), as the most important topics in life are to love God and to love other people as yourself. This saying of Jesus is interpreted as "His is a call to repentance, a call that will require undistracted and unrivalled love of God and a genuine love and concern for one's fellow" (Evans, 2018, p. 267). A further interpretation is: "Jesus explains that there is no other commandment 'greater' or more important than these two, which assert the fundamental attitude of love towards God and neighbor necessary to do all that God commands" (Heil, 2001, p. 246). It shows the great importance of universal love to God and all humans. Jesus also commands to love in the Gospel of John, like in John 15:12 where he tells to love other people like Jesus loves. He repeated this in v. 17 with more insistence as a clear command to his disciples to love each other. This is interpreted as human love coming from divine love: "When a person accepts the realm of divine love, the result is joy, love for others, and divine friendship" (Brodie, 1993, p. 482). Jesus gives his love not only to his disciples, but also the enemies, like in Luke 6:27–28 (with similar meaning but different wording in Matthew 5:44) where he tells not to hate but also to love the enemies. This love not only for friends and the own family but also for enemies is a completely new concept that is directly inspired by God, as it is interpreted: "Jesus' words, 'Love your enemies', lack any commonly held ethical base and can only be understood as an admonition to conduct inspired by God's own graciousness (vv. 35d–36)" (Green, 1997, p. 272),

and with a different interpretation: “There is, however, a power in these principles that is not rationally apparent, for they correspond to the nature of God, whose rule over this world is sovereign” (Edwards, 2015, p. 198).

Many theologians see the Holy Spirit as the source of God’s love. Hilberath (1994, pp. 220–223) wrote in the final chapter of his *Pneumatology* “Liebe: Worauf es letztlich ankommt” which can be translated as ‘Love: What matters in the end’ by citing a meditation from Karl Rahner and a prayer from Huub Oosterhuis; the love is the quintessence of the Holy-Healing Spirit. Coffey (1990, p. 204) sees the Holy Spirit as the communication of God’s love: “God’s Spirit, seen in O[ld] T[estament] terms only as creative and empowering, is seen in the N[ew] T[estament], in the actual event of Christ, as the communication of God’s love”. Levering (2014, p. 130) analyzes the exegetical steps where Augustinus connects the Holy Spirit with the Love of God and he “concludes that the Holy Spirit is therefore God’s gift of love”. He summarizes that “Augustine is right: the Holy Spirit, in the Trinity, is personal ‘Love’ and ‘Gift’” (Levering, 2014, p. 142).

Many times, Jesus talked about the importance of God’s Love and he pointed out that love is the core of God’s Essence. There is a strong evidence that the Holy Spirit is the source of God’s Love that is poured out to the world.

People report in their NDEs about a Being of Light that gives overwhelming love. Two typical reports are cited here: “I continued to see some other amazing truths ... One was when the light told me everything was Love, and I mean everything! I had always felt love was just a human emotion people felt from time to time, never in my wildest dreams thinking it was literally EVERYTHING! I was shown how much all people are loved. It was overwhelmingly evident that the light loved everyone equally without any conditions!” (Ring & Valarino, 2006, pp. 45–46), “I was going towards a very bright light. And as I was travelling along I could see different coloured lights and then I got stopped, just stopped before I got to the light. And I felt this extreme presence of love, just absolute love” (Sutherland, 1992, p. 10). There are many more similar descriptions of the Being of Light and the absolute love that is flowing out of this being. This love is described as the most overwhelming feeling during an NDE: “In the narrative accounts of people’s encounters with God during an NDE, the most overwhelming feeling and description of this being is one of love. God in near-death experiences is often described as profoundly loving. God’s love may be described as enormous, unconditional, and totally accepting” (Long & Perry, 2016, p. 49).

The quintessence of these experiences is that all humans are loved by God: “The evidence from near-death experiences is that God loves us all. Again and again, one reads in NDE accounts how God loves us regardless of who we are, what we look like, how young or old we are, or what our shortcomings may be. We are loved by God for exactly who we are and what we are” (Long & Perry, 2016, p. 73). It is summarized that all NDErs experience an unearthly love: “One factor that has been felt by every contributor to this book is love. Their experience opened them up to the depths of love that, in many cases, had never been experienced before” (Sartori & Walsh, 2017, p. 227). “All of the people who go through this come away believing that the most important thing in their life is love” (Moody, 1989, p. 14). People should learn “that love is there for all of us, and, once you open to it, it will inevitably lead you to yourself—your real self” (Ring & Valarino, 2006, p. 53).

In sum, looking at the Holy Spirit and the Being of Light, Divine Love is the most important aspect that humans are taught. God loves all humans and people should love each other. These messages are told by the Holy Spirit and by the Being of Light. Therefore, this parallism is indicating that different traditions describe the same being.

5. REVEALING KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH

God Father and the Holy Spirit have full knowledge about peoples’ thoughts and their emotions. These will be revealed to uncover the whole truth. In Luke 12:2 (see also Matthew 10:26–27) it is said that all hidden information will be disclosed. This logion is interpreted in different ways regarding personal secrets or the secrets of the Gospels, but all interpretations have in common that God knows all secrets and reveals these: “The picture of God’s omniscience and omnipresence informs the passagee. Nothing that is done escapes his eye and mind” (Bock, 1996, p. 1134). The Holy Spirit is the Person who reveals knowledge and truth: “God himself sends the Spirit to illuminate darkened minds with the knowledge of salvation in Christ” (Just, 1997, p. 500).

The Gospel of John shows the most detailed information about the Holy Spirit, like in John 7:16 where Jesus says that he got his authority of teaching from God who has sent him. This is interpreted that “His authority as teacher was not rooted in study and human learning, still less in presumption, but in being sent by God” (Ridderbos, 1997, p. 263), and that “Jesus puts it positively by saying that his teaching comes not from himself but from the one who sent him. He is pictured therefore as someone whose teaching is set in its true ultimate context, as someone whose teaching does not depend

exclusively on mere intellect” (Brodie, 1993, p. 315). John 14:16–17 describes the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Truth who will be an advocate to help the disciples. This is interpreted that “The Spirit whose special mission is to guide them into all truth, to call to their remembrance all things that Jesus had taught them, and to enable them to record and teach all truth to the world” (Lipscomb, 1976, p. 227).

It is pointed out that the Holy Spirit reveals Divine truth to humans: “The testimony of the Holy Spirit, as will be pointed out, is in the completed revelation of truth” (Hailey, 1973, pp. 167–168). A further interpretation of the Gospel of John is that doing ethically right things is equal moving to the light: “But, Jesus says, anyone who ‘does the truth’—probably language for doing what is ethically right—moves towards the light” (Porter, 2015, p. 189). Barth (2009b, p. 1) writes in §16 of his “Church Dogmatics” about the Holy Spirit: “According to Holy Scripture God’s revelation occurs in our enlightenment by the Holy Spirit of God to a knowledge of His Word. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is God’s revelation”. It is interpreted that the teaching of the Holy Spirit changes people’s lives: “Perhaps the most constant element of the inherited tradition on the gifts of the Holy Spirit is that they involve something other than intellectual or rational knowledge. They are rooted in something that is variously described as connatural, intuitive, or instinctive knowing” (Bouchard, 2002). The power of the Holy Spirit communicates God’s truth: “We may add at once that the functions ascribed to the Paraclete are precisely those which might be expected from the Spirit who is and communicates the truth.” (Barrett, 1950). Jesus’ teachings show that the Holy Spirit reveals secrets and communicates God’s universal truth to people.

There are many detailed descriptions where the Being of Light knows and tells the truth to people, two of these are cited here: “I met this being filled with love, joy, patience, compassion who knew my thoughts and knew everything I’ve ever done in this life and beyond! He also knew and remembered who I am!” (Long & Perry, 2010, p. 131). “God knew me better than I knew myself. I experienced my true nature. I felt as though this review of my life was meant to help me grow and evolve” (Sartori & Walsh, 2017, p. 74).

The life review that is done by the Being of Light is the ultimate teacher by showing the consequences of own actions for other people. This leads to higher self-knowledge of people who have this experience: “The being, all seem to agree, does not direct the question to them to accuse or to threaten them, for they still feel the total love and acceptance coming from the light, no matter what their answer may be. Rather, the point of the question seems to be to make them think about their lives, to draw them out. It is, if you will, a Socratic question, one asked not to acquire information but to help the person who is being asked to proceed along the path to the truth by himself” (Moody, 2015, p. 54). The judgement during the life review is done by the person self: “So there is a kind of judgement in the life review after all, but the only one making it in the end is you. It is another instance of the perfect justice meted out by the life review, but always carried out under the loving and wise aegis of beings whose only goal seems to be our own understanding and self-acceptance” (Ring & Valarino, 2006, p. 168).

The life review leads to a better understanding of the important aspects of life: “They teach us, unmistakably in my judgement, how we are to live. It is as simple as that. There are certain values—universal values—we are meant to live by, and life review episodes contain vivid and incredibly powerful reminders of these values” (Ring & Valarino, 2006, p. 155). It is summarized that the life review is the greatest catalyst for a life change: “Many NDErs say that the life review, of all the elements of the NDE, was by far the greatest catalyst for change. A life review allows NDErs to relive their own lives, mistakes and all. It also gives them a chance to evaluate themselves on their life performance” (Long & Perry, 2010, pp. 110–111).

The Being of Light not only gives self-knowledge or teaches about the meaning of life, but also tells about the world, as exemplary stated: “One NDEr summed the effect of the life review up as follows: ‘I wish everyone could have one [life review] – it would change the world! Everyone would understand each other, and there wouldn’t be conflict, and there wouldn’t be chaos, and there wouldn’t be greed and war... The life review is the ultimate teaching tool’” (Ring & Valarino, 2006, p. 177). God gives knowledge and revelation: “One of the more common things shared by near-death experiencers who encounter God is receiving some insight, special knowledge (or even all knowledge), or revelation” (Long & Perry, 2016, p. 117).

The Holy Spirit and the Being of Light know the full truth about people. No thought is hidden and everything will be revealed. There are obvious parallel descriptions regarding teaching about God and the world between the Holy Spirit and the Being of Light. Divine Truth about life and the world is communicated to people. Universal Love is the center of this communication. These similarities give more evidence that the Holy Spirit and the Being of Light are different descriptions of the same being.

6. GUIDING AND HELPING PEOPLE

The Holy Spirit acts as a guide and helps people through their lives. Barth (2009a, p. 163) writes in his *Church Dogmatics*: “The Spirit gives man instruction and guidance he cannot give himself”. In the Johannine tradition, the Holy Spirit is designated as Paraclete; a simple translation is not possible: “Paraclete—we may conclude—here has a specific meaning that can hardly be conveyed in one word in our language (and many others) but of which the dominant idea is someone who offers assistance in a situation in which help is needed” (Ridderbos, 1997, p. 503). The knowledge and wisdom of the Holy Spirit are far beyond human abilities so the latter guides people in a divine way. Bouchard writes that “It is precisely at this point—when logic cannot take us any further—that the gifts of the Spirit take over. They do not replace our own moral due diligence. We should always try to go as far as logic will take us. But in complicated cases where there is disagreement, the Spirit’s gift of counsel can help us sort through the complexity and arrive at a confident, free decision. Rather than replacing our own efforts, the gifts of the Spirit perfect them” (Bouchard, 2002, p. 554).

There are several passages in the Gospels where this guidance is described by Jesus. In the final passage of The Lord’s Prayer, Jesus confirms in Luke 11:9–13 (see also Mt. 7:11) that God gives good gifts to his children and therefore gives the Holy Spirit. He compares in Luke 11:13 the relationship of parents with their children to the relationship of God who gives to Holy Spirit to humans. This is interpreted as: “God grants the Spirit. By this indirect route, we come to perceive that the fatherhood of God is realized in a graciousness and faithfulness that includes his determination and communication of what is best for those who come to him in prayer” (Green, 1997, p. 450). It is seen that Luke refers to the Holy Spirit when writing about God’s guidance: “The specific good gift Luke has in mind is the Holy Spirit. Since the prayer comes from a disciple, the request is for God’s presence, guidance and intimacy. Good will provide a specific good thing for his disciple. . . . It seems clear that Jesus teaches that the Spirit is a guide, at least the promise of the Spirit’s coming is attributed to him (Luke 24:49; John 14–16)” (Bock, 1996, pp. 1062–1063). The guide that God sends to people is the Holy Spirit. This gift is above all gifts that human parents can give to their children.

Mark 13:11 (see also Matthew 10:19–20 and Luke 12:11–12) confirms that the Holy Spirit will help people, for example during an arrest or in front of an trial. This is interpreted that the Holy Spirit is a counselor: “The servant of God would not have to be concerned over Roman judicial procedure or the lack of adequate counsel. He may rely upon the presence of the Holy Spirit, who will inform his word with the power of truth” (Lane, 1974, p. 463). The Holy Spirit will inspire people who are in existential need. “Those on trial, as they go through their own ‘hour’, will be inspired by the Holy Spirit” (Moloney, 2002, p. 257). The Holy Spirit helps people, giving them wise words to say when they are prosecuted and have to defend themselves in human court trials.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus announces that a guide will be sent: “This Paraclete will take Jesus’ place after Jesus’ departure (cf. John 16:7) and in his activity as Paraclete will do nothing other than what Jesus has been doing, except that in doing it he will continue and advance Jesus’ work” (Ridderbos, 1997, p. 500). It is written in John 14:26 that the Holy Spirit is the advocate who is sent by God Father in Jesus’ name to teach and remind people. The Holy Spirit guides and teaches the disciples: “The Spirit is to be the guide and the teacher of the church.” (Morris, 1995, p. 583). The Paraclete explains the meanings of Jesus’ words: “Thus, Jesus had told them everything [John 14] (v. 25) while he was with them but the Paraclete will explain the meaning of what Jesus said” (von Wahlde, 2010, p. 653).

All these passages explain that the Holy Spirit works as an advocate to help people in critical situations and to teach and explain God’s truth that Jesus already did.

Several NDEs report that the Being of Life guides them through their lives, as an exemplary experience explains: “I sensed a presence beside me and realized I was accompanied by a beautiful Being of Light, whom I sensed was my guardian angel. I instantly knew this loving being had been with me all my human lifetimes” (Sartori & Walsh, 2017, p. 120). The role of the Being of Light is described more generally as a guide: “The unceasing love of the Light will guide your way, unfailingly, and give you everything you require” (Ring & Valarino, 2006, p. 196). There are many reports of similar events that are summed up as: “What each was trying to get across was that they took the being to be an emissary, or a guide” (Moody, 2015, p. 52).

People are healed from severe diseases that are not explainable by conventional medical theories. Several unexplainable healings after NDEs are explained. One report is from a woman who “had the most advanced stage of a highly aggressive malignancy called Burkitt’s lymphoma” (Long & Perry, 2010, p. 185) at the age of 13. She described: “During the surgery I died. . . . I don’t say it was a cloud, but it was bright, white, and soft. I felt the total embrace of love. . . . Then I heard a voice that seemed soft yet authoritative tell me, ‘My child, go back, for you have much work left to do!’ I was instantly back in my body. . . . I knew that I was healed. The doctors were awestruck to find that after only one chemo treatment the tumors were gone” (Long & Perry, 2010, pp. 185–186). The authors summarize:

“Many such examples of apparent unexplained healings associated with near-death experiences have been shared with NDERF [Near Death Experience Research Foundation]. Time and again the people who write these case studies use words like miracle or I was healed” (Long & Perry, 2010, p. 188).

A very detailed description of the healing power of the Being of Light is given: “Here, we can see plainly quite a different aspect of the Light’s capacity to heal, and by healing, to make the person whole again. Whereas in cases involving a physical healing, it is as if we are seeing the Light in its role as Master Physician, here, it is more akin to Master Therapist” (Ring & Valarino, 2006, p. 227). The authors summarize the guidance and help that the Being of Light gives: “When we nearly die, then, we find that we are not alone and presumably have never been alone. We have someone or something that appears to guide us benevolently, albeit invisibly, in our life on this earth, but that can intervene at critical moments and, even, as in the near-death state, manifest clearly into our awareness” (Ring & Valarino, 2006, p. 50).

There are clear similarities between the Holy Spirit and the Being of Light; people are guided through their lives and experience help in critical situations. This is done in a mental and in a physical way. Guidance and healing are done in a divine way that is far beyond humans’ capabilities.

7. REBORN IN THE SPIRIT

The idea that the children of God are reborn in the Holy Spirit is rooted in several discussions that Jesus had where he explained the Kingdom of God and the way toward God. One example is where Jesus taught Nicodemus in John 3:3 to have been born again for seeing the kingdom of God. This rebirth must be the work of the Holy Spirit: “But Jesus also insists that this new birth, this new begetting, this new regeneration, must be the work of the Spirit, who comes from the realm of the ‘above’” (Carson, 1991, p. 189). Jesus’ teaching to Nicodemus is seen that “Nicodemus would have to be brought to life spiritually by God” (Boice, 1975, p. 243). “Anyone who would enter the kingdom of God must be born in a radically new fashion, and this second birth is from heaven” emphasizes the radical new birth from heaven (Morris, 1995, p. 189).

Jesus speaks in his sermon on the plain about the Kingdom of God. This speech starts with the blessings in Luke 6:20–23 and woes in vv. 24–26. Afterward, Jesus talks about love and judgment in vv. 27–38. This is interpreted as “Jesus’ ‘wisdom teaching’, based as it is on an unconventionalized understanding of the world, is designed to jolt his audience into new perceptions of God’s redemptive aim. Because the old ways carry with them alleged divine sanctions, Jesus is calling for a paradigm shift of colossal proportions” (Green, 1997, pp. 265–266). Jesus talks about Treasures in Heaven which each person should collect in Matthew 6:19–21. These treasures are not earthly and can’t be stolen or destroyed. This is interpreted as “if he seeks to accumulate treasures in heaven, his heart is fixed on heavenly things” (Beare, 1981, p. 181). Connected to that, Jesus says in Matthew 6:24 that it is not possible to be rooted in this world and the other in the parable about the servant of two masters. “God will not accept a half-obedience; we must choose which master we will serve and devote ourselves whole-heartedly to him” (Beare, 1981, p. 183). From all these sayings of Jesus, it is clear that he describes a totally different understanding of the world compared to the usual view of this side of life. This view implies that children of God are reborn in the Holy Spirit. The quintessence says Jesus in John 6:63 where he teaches that the Holy Spirit gives life. “Jesus imparts the Spirit, and thus imparts life, to the world by his words. τὸ πνεῦμα ἐστὶν τὸ ζωοποιοῦν [John 6:63]; it would be hard to find a more succinct summary of the biblical teaching regarding the Spirit of God” (Barrett, 1950, p. 7). The Holy Spirit gives life: “There is unquestionably a reference to the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver” (Morris, 1995, p. 340) or as Carson (1991, p. 301) summarizes it very precisely: “So here: *The Spirit gives life*”.

Jesus sees and explains in several sayings that the Holy Spirit gives life and it is necessary to be born again in the Holy Spirit. This is a spiritual rebirth for a full understanding of the divine truth that leads to the Kingdom of God.

Here are some exemplary experiences that people reported after their NDEs where they encountered the Being of Light: “By experiencing my life review with love and non-judgement, I knew who I was. I could accept that I had faults and strengths. I was able to start working on myself to make myself a better human. I no longer needed to beat myself up over my failures. Instead I could learn from a mistake, accept it and move on” (Sartori & Walsh, 2017, p. 77). “Later, I realized how transforming this encounter was, and could understand the biblical phrase, ‘of being reborn in spirit’, as it would have come from that source of ‘Eternal Light’. I felt brand new, and the world was a beautiful place to return to” (Ring & Valarino, 2006, p. 228). “Following this experience, it almost seemed as if I were filled with a new spirit” (Moody, 2015, p. 88).

These experiences give a new view on life: “So, in most cases, the reward-punishment model of the afterlife is abandoned and disavowed, even by many who had accustomed to thinking in those terms. They found, much to their amazement, that even when their most apparently awful and sinful deeds

were manifest before the being of light, the being responded not with anger and rage, but rather only with understanding, and even with humor.... In place of this old model, many seemed to have returned with a new model and a new understanding of the world beyond a vision which features not unilateral judgement, but rather cooperative development towards the ultimate end of self-realization" (Moody, 2015, pp. 94–95). The author also emphasizes that knowledge and love are the two really important things in life: "All of the people who go through this come away believing that the most important thing in their life is love. For most of them, the second most important thing in life is knowledge" (Moody, 1989, pp. 14–15). It is analyzed that: "Many near-death-experience researchers have noted that one of the life review's main lessons is that knowledge and love are two elements that we take with us when we die. As a result, life reviews are often one of the most transformative elements of the NDE" (Long & Perry, 2010, p. 110). This knowledge that is provided by the being of light transforms people to become the human beings that are originally meant to be: "The knowledge provided by the Light, however, is enough to help the individual see the false self and how it came into being... It is as if the Light wants everyone to become the self he or she was originally meant to be" (Ring & Valarino, 2006, p. 52).

Summarized, the experience of an NDE and the discussion with the Being of Light has a tremendous impact on peoples' future lives, they readjust their values and become the human beings that are meant to be. These are all clear similarities to the teachings of Jesus about life goals that are summarized in the saying that people must be reborn in the Holy Spirit.

8. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

It is the goal of this article to contribute to the clarification of the mystery of the Holy Spirit. While in former times, reports about NDEs have been very rare, there has been much research about this phenomenon in the last decades. It is therefore possible to analyse numerous reports regarding their spiritual content.

Five aspects of similarities are described in this article: Encounters with the Holy Spirit and the Being of Light, the experience of divine love, revealing knowledge and truth, guiding and helping people, and being reborn in the spirit. In all of these aspects, obvious similarities between Jesus' teachings in the Gospels about the Holy Spirit and reports from people experienced interactions with the Being of Light during NDEs are seen. It is therefore highly evidential that the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Light is the same being seen from different perspectives. This article therefore contributes to the clarification of the origin and nature of the Holy Spirit. This proof is particularly convincing as it compares Christian texts with medical reports that are independent of any confession.

NDEs where people encounter the Being of Light are not limited to Christians but people with different religious beliefs and also atheists report these experiences. This is an evidence that the Holy Spirit is universal to all people and not only relevant to Christians as an exclusive concept of Christianity.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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