## The Person and Deity of the Holy Spirit

The Third Person of the Holy Trinity is known to us as the Holy Spirit. Along with the Father and the Son, He is worshiped as God. We devote this chapter to the study of the Person of the Holy Spirit in light of biblical revelation and reflection by Christian thinkers.

### А. Biblical Analysis and the Intertestamental Period

**1. Old Testament**

“The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters” (Gen 1:2). With these words, the Word of God introduces the topic of the Holy Spirit. He was a full participant in the world’s creation. We get the impression that the Spirit “was moving over the surface of the waters” in anticipation of the issuing of the creative word, “Let there be…,” so that He could accomplish it. Later, the Old Testament speaks of the Spirit’s participation in creating humans (Job 33:4) and of His power in preserving the created order (Ps 104:29-30; Job 34:14-15).[[1]](#footnote-1)

The Hebrew word translated “Spirit” is רוּחַ (*ruach*). Its primary meaning is “air in movement” and can therefore be rendered “breath” or “wind.” Speaking of the human spirit, it can refer to “mood,” “relationship,” “disposition,” or “tendency,” or more concretely as the “seat of the Emotions, Intellect, and Will,” synonymous with the “heart.”[[2]](#footnote-2) The concept of רוּחַ (*ruach*) also applies to the life force of humans (Gen 7:22), without which a person is dead (Ps 104:29).[[3]](#footnote-3)

In relation to the Holy Spirit, we encounter various designations: the Spirit of God (11 times), the Spirit of the Lord (25 times), and the Holy Spirit (3 times – Isa 63:10-11; Ps 51:11).[[4]](#footnote-4) Yet, in the Old Testament the designation “Holy Spirit” is not so much a name as it is a description of God’s nature in contrast to sinful people. A similar expression would be “good Spirit,” found in Psalm 143:10 and Nehemiah 9:20.

We must acknowledge that the Old Testament, in general, does not distinguish the Holy Spirit as a separate Divine Person. He is usually characterized more as a manifestation of God’s presence. Horton writes that in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit “is equated with God’s power or personal presence in action.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Besides the creation account, God’s Spirit is mentioned in several other instances in the Torah.[[6]](#footnote-6) In Genesis 6:3, we read, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever.” This verse is difficult to translate.[[7]](#footnote-7) The Hebrew original reads, לֹא־יָדוֹן רוּחִי בָאָדָם לְעֹלָם. The verb יָדוֹן (*yadon*), “strive,” is unusual. Some feel that, since there is no Hebrew verb דון (*don*), we must emend the verse, employing the common verb דין (*din*), i.е., “judge.” The translation becomes, «My Spirit shall not judge man forever». Others employ the verb דור (*dur*), i.е., “dwell,” and translate, “My Spirit shall not dwell with man forever.” In summary, it seems that this verse is dealing either with the Spirit’s sanctifying work in the world, or His direction of it.[[8]](#footnote-8)

In addition, God endowed the elders of Israel (Num 11:17) and Joshua (Num 27:18; Deut 34:9) with the Spirit that rested on Moses. The Spirit gave wisdom and ability to Bezalel in constructing the tabernacle (Ex 31:2-3; 35:30-31). Balaam prophesied in the power of God’s Spirit (Num 24:2).

Some see allusions to the Spirit’s activity in the following cases. God’s presence in the form of a “pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night” accompanied Israel in the wilderness (Num 9:16-23). Isaiah confirms that God’s Spirit was among God’s people when they exited Egypt (Isa 63:10-14). Additionally, all the articles used in worship were anointed with oil, symbolizing the anointing of the Spirit (e.g. Num 7:1; Lev 8:12).

In the Old Testament historical books, we read that the Holy Spirit strengthened individuals for God’s service.[[9]](#footnote-9) When Yahweh chose deliverers (judges) for Israel, He filled them with His Spirit: Othniel (Judg 3:10); Gideon (Judg 6:34); Jephthah (Judg 11:29); and Samson (Judg 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14).[[10]](#footnote-10)

Through the Holy Spirit, God gave Saul ability both to battle (1 Sam 11:6), and to prophecy (1 Sam 10:10). Before actually experiencing the Spirit’s power in his life, Saul received the symbol of His presence – the anointing with oil (1 Sam 10:1). Because of his disobedience, though, he lost this Spirit-anointing (1 Sam 16:14). David received the Spirit at the time of his anointing (1 Sam 16:13) and implored the Lord not to remove His Spirit after he sinned (Ps 51:11).

David’s experience with the Spirit extended beyond just ability in war. The Spirit, under the rubric “the hand of the Lord,” gave David instruction on how to build the temple (1 Chr 28:19). David prayed to be always led by the Spirit (Ps 143:10). Isaiah, by the way, contrasts those who are led by the Spirit with those who reject God’s instruction (Isa 30:1).[[11]](#footnote-11) David also recognized that one cannot hide from God’s Spirit (Ps 139:7). He also functioned as a prophet – the Spirit spoke through him (2 Sam 23:2).

The Old Testament gives special attention to the Spirit’s activity in prophecy.[[12]](#footnote-12) He inspired the prophets and spoke through them (2 Chr 15:1; 2 Chr 20:14, 20).[[13]](#footnote-13) The Spirit would not only inspire, but also strengthen God’s prophets, both physically (Ezek 2:2) and morally (Mic 3:8). Ezekiel 3:14 records that the Spirit would sometimes create strong emotions in the prophets: “So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away; and I went embittered in the rage of my spirit, and the hand of Yahweh was strong on me.” Unlike pagan prophets, the prophets of Yahweh did not have ecstatic experiences.[[14]](#footnote-14) Yet, by the Spirit the prophets were sometimes granted access to the heavenly realms (Ezek 8:3; 11:24; 37:1).

We encounter a remarkable phenomenon of prophetic activity in 2 Kings 2:9, where Elisha requested a “double portion” of the Spirit, as if one could “measure” the Spirit. This idea of a “measure” corresponds to the figurative “pouring out” of the Spirit, mentioned in the prophets (Joel 2:28; Isa 32:15; Ezek 39:29). The Wisdom of God, which at times symbolically represents God, also “pours out” its spirit (Prov 1:23).

Although in the Old Testament only select individuals (in general, the prophets) experienced the move of the Spirit and fellowship with Him, nevertheless, God foretold a time when all God’s people would experience the sanctifying and empowering activity of His Spirit.[[15]](#footnote-15) According to Isaiah 4:4, this spiritual renewal is accomplished via “the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning.” The following verses also speak of this time:

- For I will pour out water on the thirsty {land} and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring and My blessing on your descendants; and they will spring up among the grass Like poplars by streams of water (Isa 44:3-4).

- “I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,” declares the Lord Yahweh (Ezek 39:29).

This future outpouring of the Spirit will result in an inner transformation of God’s people: “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances” (Ezek 36:27; сf. Ezek 11:19; 37:4-6). It will also bring Israel to repentance (Zech 12:10), be accompanied by signs and wonders, and spread to all people (Joel 2:28). God’s Spirit will never abandon the task of renewing the Lord’s people (Isa 59:21).

A special recipient of God’s “anointing” is the Messiah, who is anointed for ministry (Isa 11:2; 42:1; 61:1). The Hebrew term מָשִׁיחַ (*mashiach*), i.e., “anointed,” is the source for the title “Messiah” (see Dan 9:25), or, in Greek, “Christ.” Psalm 2 celebrates the Messiah’s anointing and His appointment over the people of God.

The Old Testament records the anointing of only some prophets (e.g. 1 Kin 19:16). Yet, 1 Chronicles 16:22 calls the prophets “anointed ones.” Other individuals also received an anointing to accomplish a special commission from Yahweh. Jehu was anointed to execute judgment on the house of Ahab (2 Chr 22:7), and Cyrus for success in war (Isa 45:1).

Finally, we will highlight several other special features of the Holy Spirit touched on in the prophetic and final historical books of the Old Testament.[[16]](#footnote-16) Isaiah 11:2 describes the Holy Spirit’s nature. He is “the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh” (Isa 40:13). He is sometimes associated with the Word of God (Isa 34:16; 40:7-8; 2 Sam 23:2). Yahweh taught His people by the Spirit (Neh 9:20), yet they did not listen to Him (Neh 9:30; Zech 7:12).

Zechariah stressed the need for the Spirit for success in any undertaking: “’Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says Yahweh of hosts” (Zech 4:6). God assured Israel through Haggai, “As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!” (Hag 2:5).

It is curious to note that in Isaiah 48:16, the Spirit is distinguished from God: “And now the Lord Yahweh has sent Me, and His Spirit.” We also note that these words were spoken by the “Suffering Servant” of Yahweh, whom we know as the Son of God. Consequently, many see in this verse a foretaste of the New Testament doctrine of the Trinity.

The Scriptures also teach that one can reject (Isa 30:1) or grieve the Spirit (Isa 63:10), which can again imply that He is an individual Person. We also observe the Spirit’s relationship of submission to God (i.e., the Father): He is sent by God (Ps 104:30) to communicate His Word (Zech 7:12) and execute His will (Isa 34:16).

A metaphorical designation for the Spirit is the “hand of Yahweh.” This designation is more characteristic of the Old Testament than the New Testament. We may derive some truths from this depiction of the Spirit. Just as a human hand can lift things up, the Spirit can impart to people blessing and empowerment. Just as a human hand can lower things, the Spirit executes the Lord’s judgments. We can cite examples of both activities of God’s Spirit.

On the one hand, in Ezra 7:6, 28 the hand of the Yahweh “lifts up,” that is, supports Ezra and grants him favor before the Persian king. In Isaiah 25:10 and 66:14, we see that the hand of Yahweh will bless Jerusalem. Isaiah 59:1 relates that the hand of Yahweh is able to save. In the book of Ezekiel, the hand of Yahweh directs Ezekiel in his prophetic ministry (Ezek 3:22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1) and directs Elisha in his as well (2 Kin 3:15).

On the other hand, the hand of Yahweh can “lower” people, that is, execute the Lord’s judgments. For example, in 1 Samuel 5:9 the hand of Yahweh punishes the Philistines for capturing the ark of the covenant. In 1 Samuel 12:15, God warns that the hand of Yahweh will be against Israel because of their disobedience. Exodus 9:3 ascribes the plagues of Egypt to the hand of Yahweh. Job attributes his sufferings to the same.

The above-cited examples provide a powerful metaphorical depiction of the Spirit’s activity. The hand of Yahweh will accomplish God’s purposes. The “hand of Yahweh is mighty” (Josh 4:24).[[17]](#footnote-17)

**2. Intertestamental Period**

What did people living in the intertestamental period think about the Holy Spirit?[[18]](#footnote-18) They assigned to Him the conventional Old Testament names: “the Spirit,” “the Spirit of God,” and sometimes “the Holy Spirit.” He can appear in the form of light or sound. He is especially active in the ministry of the coming Messiah. It is written of Messiah, “For God will make him mighty by means of (His) holy spirit, and wise by means of the spirit of understanding, with strength and righteousness” (*Ps. of Sol.,* 17.37), and, “The glory of the Most High shall be uttered over him, and the spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him [in the water]” (*Test. of Levi,* 18.7).

The work of the Spirit is sometime connected with wisdom and knowledge. In the book *The Wisdom of Solomon*, the Spirit is ever-present and knows all things: “The spirit of the Lord filleth the world, and that which holdeth all things together hath knowledge of every voice” (*Wis. of Sol.,* 1.7). God gives the spirit of wisdom to all who ask Him: “I called upon God, and there came to me a spirit of wisdom” (*Wis. of Sol.,* 7.7). True wisdom comes only by the Spirit: “Who ever gained knowledge of thy counsel, except thou gavest wisdom, and sentest thy holy spirit from on high?” (*Wis. of Sol.,* 9.17).

Other features of the Spirit noted during this period are as follows. In the *Book of Judith*, the Spirit participated in the world’s creation: “Let all thy creation serve thee: for thou spakest, and they were made, Thou didst send forth thy spirit, and it builded them” (*Judith,* 16.14). Furthermore, writers of that period ascribed personal qualities to the Spirit: He is active “speaking, warning, grieving, weeping, rejoicing, consoling.”[[19]](#footnote-19) The Dead Sea Scrolls contrast the spirit of light with the spirit of darkness,

Philo has a unique understanding of πνεῦμα (*pneuma*), i.e., “spirit.” He believes that the human spirit differs from God’s Spirit, yet the former proceeds from the latter. The human spirit is part of the rational human soul and enables people to think. In addition, with the Spirit’s aid, people can rise to higher levels of insight, even to the level of the prophetic, if God so wills.

**3. New Testament**

**а. Terminology**

The New Testament writers also employ the Greek term πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) to designate the Holy Spirit.[[20]](#footnote-20) In many ways, πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) corresponds to the Hebrew רוּחַ (*ruach*). Its basic meaning is the same: “movement of air,” or, more precisely, the power that causes the motion of air. Thus, it has the corresponding meanings “wind” and “breath.” In a metaphorical sense, it can describe “movement” between people (relationship) or within a person (inspiration). It is “the cause and source of ecstatic speech… the ‘divine voice.’”[[21]](#footnote-21)

The Greeks had no conception of a personal divine spirit. In general, πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) is an impersonal, all-encompassing power (in Greek, it is in the neuter gender). It comprises one of the four elements from which all things consist. The Greeks also consider πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) to be the great divine Reason, which interpenetrates all things and enables human thought. It directs the entire universe. Yet, due to its connection with matter, πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) cannot be the highest principle. Above πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) is the ψυχή (*psuche*), “soul,” which directs it. So then, πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) is the mediator between the body and soul, between the physical and non-physical worlds.

**b. Synoptic Gospels**

We will begin our study of the New Testament teaching on the Holy Spirit with the testimony of the Synoptic Gospels.[[22]](#footnote-22) We will discover that they contain relatively little material on this topic. Schweizer proposes that Jesus’ disciples could not “understand such things until his (i.e., Jesus’) work is complete.”[[23]](#footnote-23) Ramsey concurs that the revelation of the Spirit’s work was consigned to the future.[[24]](#footnote-24) On the other hand, if we include John’s narrative, we discover that Jesus spoke quite extensively of the nature and activity of the Spirit (see below). Therefore, the paucity of information on the Spirit in the Synoptics reflects that the doctrine of the Spirit was not as central to their message as it was for John.

The Synoptic Gospels give greatest attention to the manifestation of the Spirit’s power. Jesus conducted His ministry in the power of the Spirit. He began His miracle ministry only after the Holy Spirit descended on Him at the time of His water baptism (Lk 3:21-22). Jesus returned from His temptation in the wilderness “in the power of the Spirit” (Lk 4:14). He attributed His supernatural ministry to the power of God’s Spirit: “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt 12:28).[[25]](#footnote-25) He even “rejoiced in the Holy Spirit” (Lk 10:21).

However, commentators correctly note that the Synoptic authors did not intend to merely present Jesus as a man filled with the Spirit. The presence of the Spirit in Jesus was a sign of His Messiahship. At the inauguration of His ministry, Jesus announced that He was anointed by the Spirit for ministry in fulfillment of the messianic promise of Isaiah 61 (see Lk 4:18-21). Similarly, Matthew testifies that the Spirit’s activity in the life of Christ fulfills the messianic prophecy of Isaiah 42 (see Matt 12:18).

Even before the beginning of His ministry, Jesus received from the Spirit supernatural confirmation of His messianic οffice. This occurred when various individuals, filled with the Spirit, declared His messianic status: Elizabeth (Lk 1:41-43), Zachariah (Lk 1:67-69), and Simeon (2:25-26). The Spirit even “overshadowed” Mary to enable her to supernaturally conceive the Messiah, the Son of God (Lk 1:35).

Jesus not only received the Spirit, but also endowed others with Him. John the Baptist declared, “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Lk 3:16). In Luke 24:49, He repeats this promise of power to His disciples.

Schweizer summarizes the goal of the Synoptic writers in their teaching on the Spirit:

The real point is that God meets his people in Jesus. The Spirit-statements stress his uniqueness, his eschatological status, the direct presence of God in him… the realization that the messianic age has dawned.[[26]](#footnote-26)

The Spirit is God’s gift to His people, whom He gives to those who ask Him (Matt 7:11; Lk 11:9-13). He inspired the Old Testament writers (Mk 12:36). He supports those undergoing persecution, teaching them what to say during trial (Mk 13:11; Lk 12:11-12). The Spirit is mentioned along with the Father and the Son in the formula for water baptism (Matt 28:19), which confirms His full deity and at the same time distinguishes Him from the Father and the Son as a Divine Person. A person who blasphemes the Spirit is guilty of an unpardonable sin (Matt 12:31-32).

Finally, we can inquire as to why the Spirit appeared “bodily” in the form of a dove. Horton associates this with the Old Testament practice where poor people brought a dove for sacrifice (Lev 5:7).[[27]](#footnote-27) Ramsey cites a rabbinic tradition that in Genesis 1:2 the Spirit hovered over the waters as a dove.[[28]](#footnote-28) In Schweizer’s opinion, the Spirit’s appearance as a dove “stresses the objectivity of the event.”[[29]](#footnote-29) Another explanation is that the Spirit is gentle as a dove. He does not force people to obey, but invites and directs. He is easily grieved. When He encounters resistance or disrespect, He “flies away,” that is, will not manifest His power.

**c. Acts of the Apostles**

The book of Acts is so saturated with the works of the Spirit that some entitle the book *The Acts of the Holy Spirit*. What can we learn about the Spirit from this remarkable book?[[30]](#footnote-30)

In Acts, the work of the Spirit begins the same way that it began in the earthly career of Jesus – with a special outpouring of the Spirit (on the Day of Pentecost). Luke, who wrote both Acts and a Gospel account, describes the continuation of the Lord’s work through the Spirit in the first verse of Acts: “The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach…” (Acts 1:1).

Here, Luke implies that what Jesus began to do when He was on the earth, He continued to do by the Holy Spirit’s work through His disciples. Ramsey comments, “There is the constant belief that as Jesus did the work of God in his mission in history, so the Spirit continues the work of Jesus which is also the work of God.”[[31]](#footnote-31) In addition, prior to His ascension, Jesus had “by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen” (Acts 1:2).

In Acts chapter 1, Jesus reiterated His promise of the Spirit’s outpouring for power in witnessing (1:5-8). Later, in Acts 1:16 Peter quoted words from the Spirit uttered by David. In chapter 2, the disciples spoke in tongues after being baptized in the Spirit, and Peter was empowered to preach (2:1ff). The prophet Joel had previously predicted this event (2:17-33). Peter went on to promise the gift of the Spirit to those turning to Christ (2:38).

Peter was again filled with the Spirit in chapter 4 and rebuked the Jewish religious leaders for their unbelief and rejection of Messiah (4:8). To these same leaders, Peter announced that God gives His Spirit to those “who obey Him” (5:32). In Acts 4:25, Peter again quoted the Spirit-inspired speech of David. In Acts 4:31, the Spirit fell on saints in prayer and they “{began} to speak the word of God with boldness” (4:31).

In chapter 5, Ananias and Sapphira dared to lie to the Spirit and received punishment (5:1-10). Chapter 6 records that the Church appointed deacons who were filled with the Spirit (6:3, 5). One of them was Stephen, who, by the Spirit, convincingly reproved his opponents (6:10) who were resisting the Spirit (7:51). Furthermore, chapter 7 relates that Stephen, being full of the Spirit before his martyrdom, saw heaven opened and a vision of Jesus (7:55). In chapter 8, the newly converted Samaritans received the baptism in the Spirit (8:15-17), and Simon Magus painfully learned that the Holy Spirit was the *free* gift of God (8:18-20).

Later, the Spirit commanded Phillip, “Go up and join this chariot (of the Ethiopian eunuch).” After this encounter, the Spirit “snatched Philip away” (8:39). In chapter 9, Paul received Spirit-baptism (9:17), and the Church grew in the comfort of the Spirit (9:31). Chapter 10 narrates how the Spirit led Peter to visit Cornelius (10:19-20), who, in turn, received the baptism in the Spirit along with his household (10:45-47). Peter later related this account in Acts 11:15-16 and 15:8. In addition, in Acts 10:38 Peter declared that God anointed Christ with the Spirit.

Chapter 11 begins the narrative of Barnabas, a man “filled with the Holy Spirit and faith” (11:24), and records Agabus’ prophesy of a great coming famine, given through the Spirit (11:28). A prophetic word from the Spirit launched Barnabas and Saul on their mission (13:1-4), and the Spirit filled Paul to confront Elymas the magician (13:9-10). Chapter 13 ends with the words, “The disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit” (13:52). In chapter 15, the Spirit confirmed the decision of the Jerusalem Council (15:28).

Moreover, in chapter 16, the Spirit forbade Paul and Silas from preaching in Asia Minor (16:6-7). Chapter 19 records how some disciples of John the Baptist were Spirit-baptized (19:1-6). Chapter 20 reveals that the Spirit appointed the leaders of the Ephesian Church (20:28). In addition, Paul left for Jerusalem “bound by the Spirit” (сf. 19:21), who warned Paul of his future sufferings (20:22-23). Paul received another warning from the Spirit in chapter 21 (21:4, 11). Finally, in Acts 28:25, Paul quoted Spirit-inspired words from Isaiah.

So then, in nearly every chapter of this book we read of the activity of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, this list does not include those instances where the Spirit was active, but His name was not mentioned. From beginning to end, the Acts of the Apostles in reality narrates the Acts of God’s Spirit.

In summary, we recognize that the work of the Spirit in this book is, in general, connected with the preaching of the gospel. He gives believers power for ministry especially in this context. The Spirit manifests supernatural power and performs incredible miracles. He also endues believers with courage when facing danger and opposition. He guides the Church, strengthens it, and disciplines it. He gives revelation and prophetic words. The Spirit continues the ministry Christ began. One can summarize the work of the Spirit in one word – “movement,” which corresponds to the basic meaning of the Greek term πνεῦμα (*pneuma*).

**d. General Epistles**

In the General Epistles, we witness a variety of descriptions of the Spirit’s work.[[32]](#footnote-32) James comments that God “jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us” (Jam 4:5). Jude relates that unbelievers, “who cause divisions,” are void of the Spirit. Yet, true believers, praying in the Holy Spirit, can keep themselves in the love of God (19-20).

Peter teaches that the Spirit sets people apart for salvation (1 Pet 1:2) and was sent from heaven to advance the preaching of the gospel (1 Pet 1:12). Those who endure persecution can expect a special manifestation of “the Spirit of glory and of God” (1 Pet 4:14). In both of his letters, Peter speaks of the activity of God’s Spirit in the lives of Old Testament prophets. The Spirit dwelt in them (1 Pet 1:11) and inspired their prophetic utterances (2 Pet 1:21).

The book of Hebrews devotes much attention to the Spirit’s role in inspiring Old Testament Scripture and serving as its author (Heb 3:7; 9:8; 10:15).The manifestation of supernatural power for confirming the gospel is also emphasized (Heb 2:4). In Hebrews 6:4-5, we read that believers, who are partakers of the Holy Spirit, may nonetheless fall away. They thus insult the Spirit (Heb 10:29). Finally, Hebrews 9:14 relates that the Spirit of God participates in the work of redemption accomplished by Christ.

**e. Paul’s Epistles**

What does the apostle Paul contribute to our discussion?[[33]](#footnote-33) He touches on nearly every aspect of the Spirit’s work. For example, he writes of His close connection with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of God” (Rom 8:14; 1 Cor 2:14) and knows the depths of God (1 Cor 2:11). Through the Spirit, we have access to the Father (Eph 2:18). The Father sends the Spirit into our hearts (Gal 4:6). In Romans 8:9, the title “Spirit of God” is paralleled with the title “Spirit of Christ,” underscoring the intimate connection between the Son and Spirit (сf. Gal 2:20). In addition, Christ was “justified” in the Spirit (1 Tim 3:16). Finally, we observe instances where the Spirit is listed along with the Father and Son as a third Divine Person:

- Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all {persons} (1 Cor 12:4-6).

- The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all (2 Cor 13:14).

Paul speaks of the Spirit as God even in distinction from the Father and the Son. In 2 Corinthians 3:17, he assigns the Spirit the title “Lord,” affirming His divine status.[[34]](#footnote-34) Garland notes that 2 Corinthians 3 relates Moses’ experience on Sinai. This implies that the same God, i.e., Yahweh, who was with Moses in the wilderness, is the self-same Holy Spirit.[[35]](#footnote-35)

Paul affirms that the reception of the Spirit by believers today fulfills the Old Testament expectation of the Spirit’s future coming. The blessing of Abraham is the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:14). The Spirit introduces the life of the long-awaited Kingdom of God (Rom 14:17). The new covenant which God promised through Jeremiah (see Jer 31) is actualized through life in the Spirit (2 Cor 3).

People receive the Spirit by faith alone. He is an undeserved gift from God (Gal 3:2). All true believers in Jesus Christ, without exception, have the indwelling Spirit of God (Rom 8:9). Their bodies are His temple (1 Cor 6:19). The Spirit’s presence in the believer’s heart provides personal fellowship with God (2 Cor 13:13; Phil 2:1). When the Spirit enters a person’s heart, He gives assurance of adoption into God’s family, creating an intimate, familial relationship with the Father (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15-16). The Holy Spirit also enables a person to confess Jesus as Lord (1 Cor 12:3). He fills the believer with joy, hope, and strength (Rom 15:13; 1 Thes 1:6; Phil 1:19). Although the Spirit already lives in every believer, Paul urges the Church to enjoy the fullness of the Spirit (Eph 5:18).

Of all the activities of the Holy Spirit, Paul devotes the most attention to His sanctifying work. He is the Spirit of holiness (Rom 1:4), who sanctifies believers (1 Cor 6:9-11; Rom 15:16) and strengthens them to battle the flesh (Gal 5:16-17; Eph 3:16-17). He performs the true circumcision, removing the sinful nature (Phil 3:3; Rom 2:26). Paul frequently contrasts life in the flesh with life in the Spirit (Gal 5:16-24; Rom 8:1-13).

Life in the Spirit is also contrasted with life under the Law (Rom 7; 2 Cor 3; Gal 5:18). Only the former can lead to success in spiritual life. The believer lives by “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:2), which is “a principle, something that guides and governs our actions.”[[36]](#footnote-36) The Spirit renews our lives (Tit 3:5). Living in the Spirit results in bearing the fruit of the Spirit, the main component of which is love (Gal 5:22-23; Rom 5:5; 15:30; 1 Tim 1:5).

In light of the importance of the Spirit’s sanctifying work, the believer must not reject Him (1 Thes 4:7-8) or grieve Him (Eph 4:30), but rather “sow” to Him (Gal 6:8) and be led by Him (Rom 8:14). In the process of sanctification, it is vital not to rely on personal ability, but on the power of God’s Spirit (Rom 8:4-6). The Spirit empowers for obedience when the believer lives in an atmosphere of faith and expectation of victory (Eph 3:16-17). Therefore, Paul lives “by faith in the Son of God” who lives in him by the Holy Spirit (Gal 2:20).

Finally, Paul teaches that the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit begins even before a person’s conversion to the Lord – He separates a person for God: “God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth” (2 Thes 2:13).

The Holy Spirit also fills the role of Teacher in a believer’s life. He is the Spirit of “discipline” (2 Tim 1:7). He gives spiritual insight into God’s mysteries (Eph 1:17; 1 Cor 2:12-14), reveals the secrets of hearts (1 Cor 14:24-25), and foretells the future (1 Tim 4:1). Paul was led by the Spirit in his teaching ministry (1 Cor 7:40) and urged Timothy to guard “through the Holy Spirit” sound doctrine (2 Tim 1:13-14).

The Spirit of God is also active in the prayer life of God’s people. Believers can pray “in the Spirit” (Eph 6:18), which may involve praying in other tongues (1 Cor 14:14). His intercession may sometimes be expressed without words, when the Spirit prays “with groanings too deep for words” (Rom 8:26).

In surveying Paul’s teaching on the Spirit, we must not neglect to mention the operation of spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of “power” (2 Tim 1:7). Paul Himself preached in the power of the Spirit with confirming signs and miracles (1 Thes 1:5; 1 Cor 2:4; Rom 15:17-19). He recounts similar manifestations in the Church (Gal 3:5). Paul affords us a concrete list of spiritual gifts active in the Church (Rom 12:6-7; 1 Cor 12:7-11, 28-30; Eph 4:11). In 1 Corinthians 12-14, he gives specific instruction on how to properly operate in the gifts. Although the gifts may sometimes be improperly exercised, the Church must nonetheless not “quench the Spirit” (1 Thes 5:19), but rather test the spirits (1 Thes 5:20-21).

According to Paul’s teaching, the Holy Spirit works not only in the lives of individual Christians, but in the Church in general. The Church is also His temple (1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:21-22). He unites the Church (Eph 4:3). The operation of His gifts takes place in the context of the Church (1 Cor 12:12ff) for its edification (Eph 4:11-16; 1 Cor 14:26).

Finally, the work of the Spirit has an important future application. Through Him, we await “the hope of righteousness” (Gal 5:5), i.е., our completion in Christ. The Spirit is also the “pledge” of our future inheritance (Eph 1:13-14; Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 1:22), which includes our physical resurrection accomplished by the self-same Spirit (Rom 8:11).

**f. John’s Writings**

Of all the New Testament writers, the apostle John presents us with the most developed picture of the Holy Spirit.[[37]](#footnote-37) He focuses especially on the relationship between the Spirit and the Son. On the one hand, the Son of God possesses the Spirit “without measure” (Jn 3:34).[[38]](#footnote-38) John the Baptist witnessed the Spirit’s descent on Christ, which was a sign to him that Jesus is the Son of God (Jn 1:32-34). It is curious to note that, unlike the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus does not attribute His miracles to the Holy Spirit in the Fourth Gospel.

Jesus assigns to the Spirit the role of παράκλητος (*parakletos*), i.e., “Helper.” The Greek term consists of two parts: παρα (*para*), “along side,” and καλέω (*kaleo*), “call.” The combination yields, “called along side” in the sense of a Helper. During New Testament times, παράκλητος (*parakletos*) carried the meanings “mediator, intercessor, helper.“[[39]](#footnote-39)

The title “Helper” is limited only to the Fourth Gospel and is found four times. The Helper abides forever (Jn 14:16), teaches (Jn 14:26), convicts the world of sin (Jn 16:7-11), testifies of Jesus (Jn 15:26, сf. 1 Jn 5:6-8), and fills Jesus’ place in the latter’s absence (Jn 16:7). Horton writes, “As Jesus came to declare… the Father, so the Holy Spirit comes to explain, reveal, interpret, make known, and unfold the nature and will of Jesus.”[[40]](#footnote-40)

John paints the picture of a close “working relationship” between the Spirit and the Son. The Holy Spirit is “another Helper” (Jn 14:16), Christ filling the role as the “first Helper.” The words that Jesus utters are “spirit and life” from the life giving Spirit (Jn 6:63). Jesus (along with the Father) “come” to the disciples in the Person of the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:16-31). Jesus exhaled, imparting thereby the Holy Spirit to His disciples (Jn 20:22). Finally, in the book of Revelation, the Spirit invites the Son to return (Rev 22:17).[[41]](#footnote-41)

In relation to God the Father, the Spirit occupies a place of submission (Jn 14:16, 26) and in some sense “proceeds” from Him (Jn 15:26).

The Holy Spirit has a special relationship not only with the Christ, but also with His disciples. They receive the “gift” of the Spirit (Jn 4:10) through the “new birth.”[[42]](#footnote-42) They received this experience after Jesus’ resurrection, when the Lord “breathed” on them (Jn 20:22), which reminds us of the creation of Adam in the Garden.[[43]](#footnote-43) So begins the new creation of God in Christ.

Moreover, the Spirit dwells in believers (Jn 14:17) and will be with them forever (Jn 14:16), enabling them to live victoriously (1 Jn 4:4). His presence in their hearts serves as evidence of a genuine personal relationship with the Lord (1 Jn 3:24; 4:13). The Spirit not only dwells in believers, but also is their source of life, expressed in the figure of “living water” (Jn 4:14; 7:38). He empowers true worship of God (Jn 4:24).

The giving of the Spirit became possible only after Jesus’ departure (Jn 16:7) in connection with His glorification (Jn 7:39). This is why the Spirit was given only after Christ’s resurrection (Jn 20:22). The new birth that the apostles received at that time was their initial and “spiritual” experience of their co-resurrection with Christ (see 1 Pet 1:3; Eph 2:5-6).

We also encounter in Scripture the designation “Spirit of truth.” The Spirit of truth: comes to those who recognize truth (Jn 14:17; 1 Jn 4:6), testifies of Jesus (Jn 15:26), and teaches God’s truth (Jn 16:13). He is that “anointing” that teaches believers all things (1 Jn 2:20, 27). It is important to note that in John’s thought, the idea of “truth” concerns not only what one knows, but also how one lives. Therefore, one may expect the help of the Spirit in both respects. He directs the believer both in true doctrine and in righteous living.

Finally, what does the book of Revelation teach us about the Holy Spirit? Again, we see a close connection between Spirit and Son. Although Jesus Himself is giving instruction to the churches in Asia Minor, He calls the congregations to “hear what the *Spirit* is saying” to them (Rev 2-3). Moreover, in the book of Revelation the Spirit of God is active in the prophetic. John is “in the Spirit” when he receives his revelation (Rev 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). In addition, the Spirit personally gives a prophetic word to John (Rev 14:13).

A very curious passage is Revelation 1:4-5, where we read of the “seven Spirits of God” (cf. 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). Some reason that seven archangels are meant here,[[44]](#footnote-44) or the seven churches mentioned in chapters 2 and 3.[[45]](#footnote-45) Yet, in light of the fact that Revelation 1:4-5 lists all three Persons of the Trinity, we must recognize that the Person of Holy Spirit is in view here.

The same expression is found in Revelation 3:1, where Jesus claims that He has the “seven Spirits of God.” Most likely, then, the expression “seven Spirits of God” concerns the relationship between the Son and the Spirit. Furthermore, the seven Spirits are associated with the seven lampstands, which indicate the light that the Holy Spirit gives to the world. In Revelation 5:6, we observe that the expression “seven Spirits of God” is again associated with the Son of God, and that they are sent throughout the earth. Therefore, the idea of “seven Spirits” in connected with sight or knowledge as well.

Although it is difficult to supply a precise definition for this expression, since it is associated with light and sight, we can connect it with the idea of the Holy Spirit’s omnipresence. The fact that these “seven Spirits” are frequently linked to the Son may explain how the Son preserves His omnipresence while being in a human body. Possibly, He preserves that divine quality with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Still another explanation of this curious phrase is that it echoes Isaiah 11:2, which enumerates seven qualities of the Spirit of Yahweh: The Spirit of Yahweh, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh.

**4. Conclusions**

We will attempt to summarize the biblical teaching on the Holy Spirit. First, we concede that the material presented above is not all-inclusive. All of God’s acts were done with the participation of the Holy Spirit. A full listing of all His activities would be as voluminous as the Bible itself.

However, even with limitations of our research – where Scripture specifically speaks of the Spirit – we can reach some fair conclusions. First, God’s Word unequivocally supports the doctrine of the Spirit’s full deity. The New Testament plainly advances this teaching, and, looking back on the Old Testament, one can see hints of it there as well.

According to Scripture, the Spirit has all of God’s attributes.[[46]](#footnote-46) He exists eternally (Heb 9:14), He possesses the power of God (Lk 1:35), He knows all things (1 Cor 2:10-11), He is ever-present (Ps 139:7), He is the Spirit of truth (1 Jn 5:6; Jn 15:26). He not only possesses the divine attributes, but He also does the works of God. In particular, the Spirit participated in the world’s creation (Gen 1:2; Ps 104:30), inspired the writing of Scripture (2 Pet 1:21), sanctifies believers in Jesus (1 Cor 6:11), and gives them life (Tit 3:5; Rom 8:11).

We discover three Scripture passages that specifically identify the Spirit as God.[[47]](#footnote-47) According to Acts 5:3-4, to lie to the Holy Spirit is tantamount to lying to God. According to 1 Corinthians 3:16, the Spirit of God, that is, the Holy Spirit, lives in the temple of God. In 2 Corinthians 3:17, it directly states that “the Lord is the Spirit.” Moreover, we can cite passages where the Holy Spirit is listed along with the Father and the Son as equal members of the Holy Trinity: Matt 3:16-17; Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:13; 1 Cor 12:4-6; Eph 4:4-6; 1 Pet 1:2; Jude 20-21; Rom 15:16.[[48]](#footnote-48)

Although the Bible affirms the full deity of the Holy Spirit, we also learn that He occupies a position of submission to both the Father and the Son. Both the Father and the Son send Him on mission (Jn 14:26; 16:7). The Bible also speaks of a procession of the Spirit from the Father (Jn 15:26). The Son pours out the Spirit on the Church (Lk 24:49; Acts 2:33), where He serves as Christ’s representative (Jn 14:16-18). On the other hand, Christ, during His earthly ministry, submitted to the Spirit, who performed miracles and wonders through the Son (Matt 4:1). Possibly, the Spirit provides the incarnate Son with the quality of omnipresence.

Second, the Bible affirms the personality of the Spirit. He is not some impersonal force, but a Person with all the qualities of personhood.[[49]](#footnote-49) He speaks (Acts 4:25), teaches (Jn 14:26), intercedes (Rom 8:26), and distributes spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:11). He leads (Rom 8:14), testifies (Jn 15:26), and expresses His opinion (Acts 15:28). One can please Him (Acts 15:28), test Him (Acts 5:9), grieve Him (Eph 4:30), insult Him (Heb 10:29), or resist Him (Acts 7:51).[[50]](#footnote-50) None of these qualities characterize an impersonal force, but only a personal Being, the Holy Spirit of God.

In addition, we can draw a distinction between the Spirit and His power. We encounter such phrases as “the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:13), “Spirit and power” (1 Cor 2:4), and “the Holy Spirit and power” (Acts 10:38). This indicates that the Spirit is not power *itself*, but *has* power. He is a Person.[[51]](#footnote-51)

It is also useful to contrast the two parts of the designation “Holy Spirit.” The word “Spirit,” as we know, comes from a term meaning “breath” or “wind.” This emphasizes to the Spirit’s “immanence,” or nearness to us. On the other hand, the term “Holy” places stress on His transcendence, that is, He is higher and greater than we are in all respects. Such a designation as “Holy Spirit” provides us with a healthy balance in our relationship with Him. On the one hand, He is the “Spirit,” closer than our breath and always with us, ready to assist and give support. He is our closest friend. On the other hand, He is “Holy,” higher and greater than we are. He is our Lord, deserving of respect and obedience. He is the “Holy Spirit,” the immanent and transcendent God.

In the Old Testament, the main activity of the Holy Spirit was providing strength and power for ministry, victory in battle, and a revelation of God’s plan including prophetic rebukes and words of comfort for God’s people. The Holy Spirit was also active in creation and accompanied Israel in the wilderness. As the “hand of Yahweh,” he sometime blessed God’s people, and sometimes chastised them.

Not everyone could receive the Spirit in Old Testament times. In general, He was given only to prophets. Yet, God promised a future outpouring of the Spirit on all people and a future renewal of Israel that would render them obedient to the Lord. A promised “Anointed One” was also to come, who would serve in the power of God’s Spirit.

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit continues to manifest supernatural power, not only through specially chosen vessels, but through the entire Church. He distributes to all believers in Christ gifts that enable them to serve the Lord with power. We witness clear demonstrations of the miraculous work of God’s Spirit in the book of Acts, which one may also name the “Acts of the Holy Spirit.” This book also records instances of people receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit leads the Church and empowers it to fulfill the Great Commission.

The Holy Spirit is also the teacher of the Church. He is the “Spirit of truth” and the “Anointing.” He teaches God’s people God’s truths. He gives revelation of God’s plan and insight into it. In addition, He is the believer’s “Helper,” providing all that is needed for successful Christian living.

Moreover, the Spirit is the one who regenerates new converts and introduces them into new life in Christ. Even before conversion, He is active is drawing unbelievers to faith. The presence of the Spirit in our hearts serves to confirm our status as true Christians. He creates intimate fellowship with the Father. He sanctifies believers, providing victory over the flesh and liberation from the Law. He supports us in our prayer life. The Spirit is God’s pledge of our future inheritance in Christ.

The New Testament, in its entirely, repeatedly speaks of the Holy Spirit as the gift of God (Jn 4:10; Gal 3:2). He is the promise of the Father (Lk 24:49), given freely to those who ask (Lk 11:13). This is why Peter sternly rebuked Simon of Samaria for trying to purchase the right to impart the Spirit to others (Acts 8:18-20).

We should clarify one item from Scripture, when it says that the Spirit “descends” or “comes.” If the Spirit enjoys omnipresence, how can he “descend” or “come” to the earth. Sergey Podnyuk comments,

When Christ commanded His apostles to wait in Jerusalem the coming of the Holy Spirit, we can understand this to mean a command to await a special manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit – a manifestation that would inspire and initiate their missionary ministry…. Such an understanding of the word “come” also aids us in reconciling the passage where the disciples received the Holy Spirit in John 20:22, yet they had to still await His coming. They were to await a special manifestation of His presence, which would transform them from weak and confused disciples into brave apostles, although the Holy Spirit was already present in their lives.[[52]](#footnote-52)

Our description of the Holy Spirit in this chapter fully coincides with the basic meanings of the terms רוּחַ (*ruach*) and πνεῦμα (*pneuma*), both meaning “movement (of air).” The Holy Spirit is a mighty, active Person, who was totally engaged in God’s first creation and is now totally engaged in God’s new creation in Christ.

### B. Theological Considerations

**1. History of the Doctrine’s Development**

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit experienced a long period of development in Church history before it matured into a faithful account of the revelation in Scripture. Let us investigate that process.[[53]](#footnote-53)

First, we must affirm that in many respects the teachings of early Christian writers on the Holy Spirit concur with one another and coincide with the biblical view. For example, they taught that the Spirit is active in the Church, participated in the creation of the world and in the incarnation of God’s Son, and inspired the Old Testament writers. Moreover, they taught that the Holy Spirit regenerates the new convert, supports and sanctifies believers, distributes spiritual gifts, teaches the Scriptures, motivates to evangelize, and inspires prayer.[[54]](#footnote-54)

The first of the non-canonical Christian writers, Clement of Rome (35-99), includes the Holy Spirit in a listing with the Father and the Son, which resembles similar enumerations in the New Testament: “Have we not [all] one God and one Christ? Is there not one Spirit of grace poured out upon us?” (chp. 46).[[55]](#footnote-55) Polycarp’s (69-155) final words echoes the theme of the Triune God as well:

Wherefore also I praise Thee for all things, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, with whom, to Thee, and the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen (*Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 14).

On two occasions, Ignatius (2nd c.) also lists all three Divine Persons together:

…being stones of the temple of the Father, prepared for the building of God the Father, and drawn up on high by the instrument of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, making use of the Holy Spirit as a rope (*Ephesians,* 9).

Be ye subject to the bishop, and to one another, as Jesus Christ to the Father, according to the flesh, and the apostles to Christ, and to the Father, and to the Spirit (*Magnesians,* 13).

However, in the non-canonical *Shepherd of Hermas* (2nd c.), we encounter a deviation from biblical truth – the Persons of the Son and the Spirit become confused: “I wish to explain to you what the Holy Spirit that spake with you in the form of the Church showed you, for that Spirit is the Son of God” (*Similitudes,* 9.1). In addition, the Epistle of Barnabas speaks of the physical body of Jesus as the “vessel of the Spirit” (7:3; 11:8).

It was not uncommon among the Church Fathers to subordinate the Spirit to the Father and the Son. Justin Martyr (100-165) wrote, “He is the Son of the true God Himself, and holding Him in the second place, and the prophetic Spirit in the third” (*1 Apology,* 13). He also lists the Trinity in this order in *1 Apology* 61 and 65. Burgess makes the comment, “Here Justin is attempting to represent Christian teaching on the Trinity as in accord with best Greek philosophy which frequently presented levels of deity, resulting from the Neoplatonic belief in emanation.”[[56]](#footnote-56)

Origen’s (185-253) view of the Spirit presents a marked inconsistency. On the one hand, he speaks in his *Commentary on John* of the creation of the Spirit: “…all things were made by the Logos, and that the Holy Spirit is the most excellent and the first in order of all that was made by the Father through Christ” (2.6). On the other hand, in his work *De Prinicpiis*, he rejects this position and equates all Persons of the Trinity in divine nature:

We have been able to find no statement in holy Scripture in which the Holy Spirit could be said to be made or created (1.3.3).

Moreover, nothing in the Trinity can be called greater or less, since the fountain of divinity alone contains all things… This is most clearly pointed out by the Apostle Paul, when demonstrating that the power of the Trinity is one and the same… (1 Cor 12.4-7). From which it most clearly follows that there is no difference in the Trinity” (1.3.7).

Another defender of subordination was Novation (200-258), who wrote,

Christ is greater than the Paraclete, because the Paraclete would not receive from Christ unless He were less than Christ… the Paraclete being found to be *in this economy* less than Christ (*On the Trinity*, 16).

In order to defend the doctrine of God’s unity, Theodotus of Byzantium (2nd c.) and Paul of Samosata (3rd c.) went to the extreme of creating the system “dynamic monarchianism” (see chapter 8), which denies the divinity of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, Athenagoras of Athens (133-190) acknowledged the full deity of the Spirit, but minimized His personhood: “For, as we acknowledge a God, and a Son his Logos, and a Holy Spirit, united in essence, – the Father, the Son, the Spirit, because the Son is the Intelligence, Reason, Wisdom of the Father, and the Spirit an effluence, as light from fire” (*A Plea for the Christians*, 24).

Thus, we observe a tendency in the Early Church to view the Holy Spirit as some sort of emanation from the Father. Theophilus of Antioch (2nd c.), who actually coined the term “Trinity,” apparently felt the same. He spoke of God, His “Word,” and His “Wisdom.”[[57]](#footnote-57) The Spirit is an emanation from God the Father: “God, then, having His own Word internal within His own bowels, begat Him, emitting Him along with His own wisdom before all things” (*To Autolycus*, 2.10). On the other hand, Irenaeus (130-202), rather than speaking of “emanations” from the Father, affirmed that the Son and the Spirit are “inherent in the very life of God.”[[58]](#footnote-58)

In the fourth century, the Council of Nicaea resolved several fundamental questions of Christian teaching. Decisions from this Council are expressed in the Nicene Creed, which states about the Holy Spirit only this: “We believe in the Holy Spirit.” In the course of time, though, other thinkers developed the doctrine of the Third Person of the Trinity more fully.

Athanasius (296-373) devoted special attention to the doctrine of the Spirit. In 359-360, he was forced into a debate concerning the teaching of the so-called “Pneumatomachi,” who believed that the Spirit was a created being. A bishop of that region appealed to Athanasius, who, in turn, refuted this teaching in several of his letters. According to Athanasius, the Spirit is of the same divine nature as the Father and the Son. He takes from the Son in a way similar to how the Son takes from the Father. He comes in the name of the Son, just as the Son comes in the name of the Father. The Father does all things through the Son by the Spirit.

Cyril of Jerusalem (310–386) also advanced sound teaching on the Holy Spirit. He wrote, “Believe thou also in the Holy Ghost, and hold the same opinion concerning Him, which thou hast *received to hold* concerning the Father and the Son” (*Catechetical Letters*, 4:16). We may also cite Didymus the Blind (4th c.), who recognized that the Father, Son, and Spirit share the same divine nature and taught that the Spirit was a Person, possessing all the divine attributes.

Along with Tertullian and Athanasius, the fourth century “Cappadocians” (Basil the Great – named the “Doctor of the Holy Spirit” – Gregory Nazianzen, and Gregory of Nyssa) considered the Holy Spirit to be the Third Person of the Trinity. In Basil’s words, “They ought to confess that the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God” (*Letters*, 8.2). Gregory Nazianzen added, ”What then? Is the Spirit God? Most certainly. Well then, is He Consubstantial? Yes, if He is God” (*Orations*, 31.10).

In their famous definition of the Trinity, the Cappadocians spoke of three Hypostases in the Godhead, all possessing the same divine nature. In defense of their claim, they asserted: (1) The Spirit of God is given divine titles, (2) the Spirit performs all the functions of Deity, and (3) He is mentioned along with the Father and the Son in the baptismal formula.[[59]](#footnote-59)

Why was a clearer definition of the Spirit not arrived at earlier? Gregory Nazianzen attempts to explain:

The Old Testament preached the Father openly and the Son more obscurely. The New Testament revealed the Son, and hinted at the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Now the Spirit dwells in us, and is revealed more clearly to us. It was not proper to preach the Son openly, while the divinity of the Father had not yet been admitted. Nor was it proper to accept the Holy Spirit before [the divinity of] the Son had been acknowledged. […] Instead, but gradual advances and partial ascents, we should move forward and increase in clarity, so that the light of the Trinity should shine.[[60]](#footnote-60)

At the finish of the fourth century, the First Council of Constantinople produced a more substantial definition of the Holy Spirit: “And [we believe] in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver-of-Life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets.”[[61]](#footnote-61) From that time, the entire Church in unison acknowledges the full deity of the Holy Spirit.

The Western Church boasted some champions of this doctrine as well. Hilary of Poitiers (310-367), for example, taught that the Holy Trinity, including the Holy Spirit, was one in nature and dignity. Ambrose of Milan (339-397) reasoned that the Spirit possesses the qualities of the Godhead and works in cooperation with other Persons of the Trinity. The three Hypostases have one divine nature.

Augustine (354-430) insisted on a double procession of the Spirit – from the Father and the Son. His views on the Trinity influenced the Western Church to the degree that throughout the West, the Spirit was identified with the love that exists between the Father and the Son, thereby compromising His personhood.

Some early teachers introduced distortions regarding the *activity* of the Spirit. In the second century, the Montanists, led by Montanus, claimed to having a special connection with the Spirit and to receiving special revelation from Him. These revelations, however, were not endorsed by the Church in general. However, some Fathers, Tertullian in particular, supported the movement.

Tertullian (155-220) held to another false view – water baptism was a necessary requirement to receive the new birth of the Spirit (*Оn Baptism*, 6). Other early thinkers claimed the same, and this became the accepted teaching in the Early Church.

Furthermore, Cyprian (210-258) limited the prophetic work of the Spirit in the Church to the office of the bishop. Similarly, Hippolytus of Rome (170-235) taught that the Roman bishop received a special endowment of the Spirit that gave him authority to forgive sins (*Apostolic Tradition,* 3.1-7). As time went on, the supernatural gifts of the Spirit waned in the Church. Instead, the Church embraced the manifestations of the Spirit listed in Isaiah 11:2: “The Spirit of Yahweh, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh.”

Still other misguided notions about the Spirit arose, which lacked biblical sanction. Some medieval thinkers, such as Peter Abelard and Richard of Saint Victor, associated the Father with power, the Son with wisdom, and the Spirit with goodness. However, do not all the Persons of the Trinity equally possess all these qualities?

Mystics in the Church understood the Spirit as the means to obtain ecstatic experiences with the Lord. Famous mystics in the West included Ignatius Loyola, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Richard of Saint Victor. Possibly, the most celebrated mystic in the East was Simon the New Theologian, who insisted that our relationship with the Spirit should be so real that we would constantly feel His presence with us.

The Eastern Fathers also assigned a new role to the Spirit, foreign to biblical revelation – the agent of the “deification” of believers. Deification, which we discussed in detail in the third volume of this series, is the transformation of Christians into gods. The Spirit allegedly communicates to believers God’s “uncreated energies,” which enable them to attain this status. The culmination of this process is seeing the “Tabor Light” and fully participating in God’s uncreated energies.

Mantzaridis recounts the teaching of Gregory Palamas (1296-1359) on deification.[[62]](#footnote-62) The participation of the Divine Spirit is vital because only a Divine Person can communicate the “uncreated grace” necessary for deification. Palamas opposed the Western teaching of the double procession of the Spirit for this very reason – if the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, then the Spirit’s procession occurs not on the level of God’s essence, but on the level of created beings. Thus, the Spirit would be incapable of communicating God’s energies.

Our survey of the Church’s teaching on the Spirit must include mention of Joachim of Fiore (1130-1202). He claimed to receive revelation that human history is divided into three epochs: the age of the Father, the age of the Son, and the age of the Spirit. The final age began in 1260 A.D., during which we can expect a special move of the Holy Spirit. Correspondingly, we anticipate greater manifestations of God’s kingdom, world evangelization, and advancement of the monastic lifestyle. However, it is plain that Joachim’s teaching does not correspond with historical fact. The Middle Ages were a time of great spiritual degradation.

The Reformers’ views on the Spirit differed little from the biblical teaching, except that they embraced the double procession of the Spirit, which the Eastern Church rejects. In addition, the Reformers assumed that the action of the Spirit was closely associated with the sacraments.

Finally, the 20th century witnessed a worldwide Holy Spirit revival beginning with Pentecostal Movement in the early 1900’s and continuing on with the Charismatic Movement in mid-century. The distinctive of this movement was the recovery of the experience of receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit subsequent to the new birth. Pentecostals assert that this experience is accompanied by the initial physical evidence of speaking in other tongues, while Charismatics vary on this view. Both groups, however, affirm the presence and activity of all the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament in the Church today.

The Pentecostal Movement led to the formation of specific Pentecostal denominations, such as the Assemblies of God, the Church of God in Christ, the Foursquare Church, and others. The Charismatic Movement was characterized by believers in their traditional denominations embracing the experience of Spirit-baptism. It also gave birth to numerous dynamic parachurch ministries as well as independent congregations.

These movements together have revitalized the Church’s spiritual life and have grown to estimates of 500 million participants worldwide. The chapters in volume 5 of this series on the gifts of the Holy Spirit will delineate the Pentecostal-Charismatic teaching in more detail.

**2. Jehovah’s Witnesses View on the Holy Spirit**

Another assault on the doctrine of the full deity of the Holy Spirit is waged by the Jehovah’s Witnesses. In their view, Jehovah is the only Person in the Godhead. The Son was created by Jehovah, and the Spirit is an impersonal, but active force. In Charles Russell’s words, “The Holy Spirit is not a person in the Godhead, or Trinity.”[[63]](#footnote-63)

The Jehovah’s Witnesses support their position as follows.[[64]](#footnote-64) First, if the Holy Spirit is God, then why is the Father the only one who knows the time of Jesus return (Matt 24:36)? Second, the fact that people can be filled with the Spirit shows that He is an impersonal force. When the Bible ascribes to the Spirit personality traits, it is speaking figuratively. God’s Word, in fact, employs personification for other impersonal objects or concepts, like sin, death, or wisdom, which are also often personified in Scripture.

Additionally, if the Spirit is a Person, then why does He not have a personal name? Furthermore, when Stephen saw the Son standing at the Father’s right hand (Acts 7:56), he did not see the Spirit with Him. In 1 John 5:8, the Holy Spirit is listed together with other inanimate objects, namely “blood” and “water.” Consequently, followers of the Watchtower conclude, “It is not a person but is a powerful force that God causes to emanate from himself to accomplish his holy will.”[[65]](#footnote-65)

How do true believers respond to these claims? First, in our survey of the biblical data above, we have already compiled a great number of proofs of both the Spirit’s deity and of His personhood. The Jehovah’s Witnesses’ objections fall far short of overthrowing the biblical testimony.

As far as the claim that the Bible uses figurative speech to describe the Spirit’s personhood, we note that the personification of other impersonal items, like sin, death, and wisdom, occurs only in certain contexts.[[66]](#footnote-66) Yet, the Spirit is depicted as a Person throughout the entire Bible, especially in the New Testament, which sheds even more light on this truth.

In 1 John 5:8, the mention of water and blood do not link the Spirit with other inanimate objects. This passage is written to refute the false teaching of the first century heretic Cerinthus, who taught that the Spirit “Christ” came upon the man Jesus at His water baptism and departed from Him at His crucifixion. In refutation, John writes that Jesus was already the Christ both at the time of His water baptism (the “testimony” of the water) and at the time of His death (the “testimony” of the blood). The Holy Spirit, then, personally bears witness to this truth to those in whom He dwells.

Concerning the name “Holy Spirit,” it is not proper to compare it to titles “Son of God” or “God the Father” as if the first is simply a title, while the other two are proper names. All three are titles. God has only one proper name – יהוה (*Yahweh*), which applies to all Persons of the Holy Trinity. We recognize, of course, that when the Son became incarnate He took on the name “Jesus.”

Why Stephen did not see the Spirit in His vision of Jesus is not known. Yet, it was not absolutely necessary that he should have seen Him. The Bible often speaks of the Father and the Son together in one context without mention of the Spirit,[[67]](#footnote-67) or of the Spirit and Son together without mention of the Father.[[68]](#footnote-68) In addition, the argument that Stephen should have seen the Spirit along with the Son and Father only has strength if one considers the Son to be God along with the Father, which the Jehovah’s Witnesses deny. Additionally, it was the Holy Spirit who enabled Stephen to see the Son at the Fathers’ right hand: “But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55).

Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that a spiritual being could fill a material being. We know that demons can inhabit people. Finally, when interpreting Matthew 24:36, one must keep in mind that those excluded from knowing the time of Christ’s Second Coming are Christ and the angels. It is not stated that the Holy Spirit is also excluded. On the other hand, it is concretely stated, “The Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God” (1 Cor 2:10). So then, the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ position as a whole is unsubstantial and unconvincing.

**3. Feminist View on the Holy Spirit**

Another distorted view of the Holy Spirit is that He is the feminine aspect of the Godhead. The feminist theologian S. McFague, though, refrains from assigning to the Holy Spirit alone feminine characteristics. She feels that the Godhead as a whole exhibits both characteristically masculine and feminine qualities. Some feminist theologians speak of God as the “Sophia-Spirit,” or “the source of both creative and transformative energy among all creatures, including non-human ones.” Others see the Spirit as an impersonal force or energy that interpenetrates all things.[[69]](#footnote-69) However, except for the claim that the Godhead does indeed display all honorable qualities, both typically masculine or feminine, we see no value in or biblical support for the other feminist views.

1. Baumgärtel F. Spirit in the OT // Kittel G., Friedrich G., Bromiley G. W. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985. – P. 879-880. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Baumgärtel lists concrete characteristics of the human spirit: emotional (disquiet, unhappiness, despondency, lack of spirit, impatience, irritation, bad temper, terror, jealousy, arrogance), intellectual (cleverness, insight into divine mysteries, artistic sense, and planning; negatively to lack of perception, error, and lack of religious or moral insight), and volitional (readiness for things, attitudes of will, courage, forbearance, freedom, longing for God, renewal, and, negatively, unfaithfulness and ungodliness). See Baumgärtel, p. 879. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Van Pelt M. V., Kaiser W. C. Jr., Block D. I. *Ruach* // VanGemeren W. A. New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. – V. 3. – P. 1075. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Horton S. What the Bible Says about the Holy Spirit. – Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1976. – P. 19. Also see Ramsey M. Holy Spirit: A Biblical Study. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977. – P 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Horton, p. 23-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Brown F., Driver S. R., Briggs C. A. Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (electronic ed.). – Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000. – P. 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Horton, p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See Horton, p. 35-54; Van Pelt, v. 3, p. 1075-1076. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. A special term is used for Gideon’s experience of the Spirit’s fullness – לבשׁ (*lavash*), that is, ”embraced” or ”clothed.” [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Baumgärtel, p. 880. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See Horton, p. 51-54; Van Pelt, v. 3, p. 1076-1077; Ramsey, p. 13-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Instances occurred where the Spirit spoke through those not named as prophets (1 Chr 12:18; 2 Chr 24:20). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Horton, p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See Horton, p. 55-76; Van Pelt, v. 3, p. 1076-1077; Ramsey, p. 13-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See Horton, p. 61-76; Van Pelt, v. 3, p. 1076-1077; Ramsey, p. 13-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The New Testament has some examples as well of the Spirit’s depiction as the “hand of the Lord,” both for blessing (Lk 1:66; Acts 11:21), and for punishment (Acts 13:11). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See Sjöberg E. Rû(a)ḥ in Palestinian Judaism // Kittel G., Friedrich G., Bromiley G. W. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985. – P. 884; Ramsey, p. 15-17; Beider W. Spirit in Judaism // Kittel G., Friedrich G., Bromiley G. W. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985. – P. 881-883. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ramsey, p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. See Schweizer E. πνεῦμα, πνευματικός // Gerhard F., Bromiley G. W. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament / trans. Bromiley G. W. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968. – V. 6. – P. 333-451; Kleinknecht H. *Pneúma* in the Greek World // Kittel G., Friedrich G., Bromiley G. W. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985. – P. 876-878. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Schweizer, v. 6, p. 345. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See Horton, p. 81-127; Schweizer, p. 886-887; Ramsey, p. 19-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Schweizer, p. 886-887. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Ramsey, p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. During the Christological debates, Nestorius held the position that the Spirit did miracles through the Son, while his opponents believed that Jesus drew on His own power (see Burgess, p. 97). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Schweizer, p. 886-887. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Horton, p. 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Ramsey, p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Schweizer, p. 887. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Horton, p. 135-167; Schweizer, p. 887; Ramsey, p. 37-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Ramsey, p. 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. See Horton, p. 252-253; Schweizer, p. 893; Ramsey, p. 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. See Horton, p. 167-252; Schweizer, p. 889-893; Ramsey, p. 45-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. We must clarify the phrase “the Lord is the Spirit.” In John 4:24, Jesus used a similar phrase to describe God’s spiritual nature. However, in 2 Corinthians 3:17, Paul is referring not to God’s spiritual nature, but to the Person of the Holy Spirit. In John 4:24, the word πνεῦμα (*пнеума*), i.е., “spirit,” lacks the Greek article, which usually means the quality of a person or thing is in view. In 2 Corinthians 3:17, though, πνεῦμα (*пнеума*) has the article. Therefore, a concreate entity is in view – the Holy Spirit. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Garland D. E. 2 Corinthians //The New American Commentary. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999. – P. 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Horton, p. 185. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Horton, p. 92-127, 254; Schweizer, p. 892-894; Ramsey, p. 90-116. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. This interpretation fits better in the context than the other possible variant, that Christ gives the Spirit “without measure” (see Carson D. A. The Gospel according to John // The Pillar New Testament Commentary. – Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W. B. Eerdmans, 1991. – P. 213; Beasley-Murray G. R. John // Word Biblical Commentary. – Dallas, TX: Word, 2002. – P. 53). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. In early Latin translations, this word was rendered “advocate,” which poorly corresponds to the first century usage (see Arndt W., Danker F. W., Bauer W. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. – 3rd ed. – Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000. – P. 766) [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Horton, p. 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Although we recognize a tight cooperation between the Spirit and the Son, we must not consider them to be the same Divine Person. They are separate and distinct from one another. Smedes approaches the errant position that the Spirit is not a Person in His own right. Smedes also claims that the Spirit is Christ in an expanded version of His creative power. Yet, he qualifies his position by affirming that the Spirit is indeed a Person, but He is made known to us and experienced by us only as Christ (see Smedes L. B. Union with Christ. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983. – P. 43-53). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. To see a discussion of the correct interpretation for the phrase γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν (*gennethe anothen*), see the chapter on “Regeneration” in volume 4 of this series. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Ramsey, p. 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Schweizer, p. 893-894. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Ramsey, p. 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. McRoberts K. D. The Holy Trinity // Horton S. Systematic Theology. – Rev. ed. – Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2007. – P. 169-170; Erickson M. J. Christian Theology. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983. – V. 1. – P. 326-327. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Erickson, Christian Theology, v. 1, p. 326-327. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Ibid., p. 329-330. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Ibid., v. 3, p. 859-860. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Thiessen H. C. Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949. – P. 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Поднюк С. Методы изучения Библии. – P. 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. See Burgess S. M. The Holy Spirit: Ancient Christian Traditions. – Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 1984; Burgess S. M. The Holy Spirit: Medieval Roman Catholic and Reformation Traditions. – Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 1997; Lane T. A Concise History of Christian Thought. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006. – P. 34; McGrath A. E. Christian Theology: An Introduction. – 4th ed. – Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007. – P. 237-240; Burgess S. M. The Holy Spirit: Eastern Christian Traditions. – Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 1989. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. The question of the procession of the Spirit, which has sparked much debate in Christian history, is discussed in chapter 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. In another letter, mistakenly attributed to Clement of Rome, the Spirit is identified with the Word of God (2 Clem 14). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Burgess, Ancient Christian Traditions, p. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. In the words of Theophilus: “In like manner also the three days which were before the luminaries, are types of the Trinity, of God, and His Word, and His wisdom” (*To Autolycus*, 2.15). Other Fathers, such Irenaeus and Origen, also spoke of the Spirit as “Wisdom.” [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Burgess, Ancient Christian Traditions, p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. McGrath, p. 238. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Ibid., p. 239. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene\_Creed [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Mantzaridis, G. I. The Deification of Man: Saint Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition. – Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984. – P. 34-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. From Studies in the Scriptures, v. 5, p. 139. Cited in Martin W. R., Klann N. H. Jehovah of the Watch Tower. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1953. – P. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. See Reasoning from the Scriptures. Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1989. – P. 380-381, 406-407, 426; What does the Bible really teach?, p. 204 [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 381. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. In general, wisdom is personified in Proverbs chp. 8, sin – in Romans chp. 7, and death in some apocalyptic passages. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Acts 2:17; 5:32; 15:8; Rom 2:29; 5:5 and others. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Matt 12:32; Rom 1:4; Heb 10:29 and others. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. See McFague S. Holy Spirit // Russell L. M., Clarkson J. S. Dictionary of Feminist Theology. – Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996. – P. 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)