**Appendix 7. What is the Holy Spirit?**

**Introduction**

It is a great blessing to properly understand the Bible. It is comforting and exciting, and it fosters conviction, enthusiasm, and power in a Christian’s life. In contrast, when we are confused about the Bible and do not understand it, we have less enthusiasm and conviction, and tend to walk with less power in our Christian life. Sadly, there is much confusion in Christianity concerning “the Holy Spirit,” and the goal of this appendix is to clear up some of that confusion.

In the Bible, “HOLY SPIRIT” is primarily used in two very different ways: One way is to refer to God Himself, and the other way is referring to God’s nature that He gives to people. God is holy and is spirit, and “the Holy Spirit” (capital “H” and “S”) is one of the many “names,” or designations, for God (the one God, known as “Yahweh”). Also, however, God gives His holy spirit nature to people as a gift to spiritually empower them, and when HOLY SPIRIT is used that way it should be translated as “holy spirit” (lowercase “h” and “s”). Also, in showing that “HOLY SPIRIT” is either a way of speaking about God, or the gift of God’s nature, this appendix will also present evidence that leads to the conclusion that there is no such “Person” as “the Holy Spirit” who is said to be “the third Person of the Trinity.”

The Bible says that there is one God, whose proper name is Yahweh; one Lord, who is the man Jesus Christ; and one gift of holy spirit, which God, via the Lord Jesus, gives to people to empower them. Before we start into our study, however, there is an important historical fact that we must understand. Most Christians are aware that the original manuscripts of the Bible were written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. However, it is not well-known that Hebrew and Aramaic do not have uppercase and lowercase letters, they just have one form for their letters. Furthermore, although Greek does have upper and lowercase letters, the early Greek manuscripts of the Bible were all written with only uppercase letters. Thus, in the early manuscripts of the Bible there was no such thing as “Holy Spirit” and “holy spirit,” what was always written was HOLY SPIRIT (this is why, in this appendix we will sometimes write HOLY SPIRIT instead of using upper and lowercase letters). The English words HOLY SPIRIT are translations of *ruach qodesh* in Hebrew, and *pneuma hagion* in Greek.

So, whenever we read “Holy Spirit” or “holy spirit,” or “Spirit” or “spirit” in the English Bible, the capital or lowercase letters are always a translator’s interpretation. Furthermore, sometimes the translators do not agree, and sometimes they err. For example, in Matthew 12:18, speaking about the SPIRIT that would be upon Jesus, some versions read, “I will put my spirit upon him” (KJV, LEW, NAB, MRD, Tyndale, WEB), while other versions capitalize the “S” and read “Spirit” (CJB, HCSB, ESV, NIV, NLT). The difference is usually due to the theology of the translator. The bottom line is that we cannot know from the Hebrew or Greek texts whether the Author meant “Holy Spirit” or “holy spirit.” The reader must decide based on the context and scope of Scripture whether the reference being made is to God or God’s gift.

Also, although this appendix uses the Trinitarian designation of “Person” in discussing this topic, there is no universally agreed-upon orthodox definition of what “Person” means when it comes to the members of the Trinity. How can there be three “persons” but only one God? Also, it is not the purpose of this short appendix to explain the few verses that are generally used to support the existence of “the Holy Spirit” as a separate “Person” in the Trinity. Those verses are explained in their respective commentaries. For example, see the commentaries on Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 12:4; and 2 Thess. 2:13.

Also, it will help us in this study if we correctly understand the doctrine of the Trinity. The orthodox doctrine of the Trinity is that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and the three of them are co-equal, co-eternal, and share the same essence, and together those three individual “Persons” make up the one God; also, Jesus is both 100% God and 100% man, and both Jesus’ divine nature and his human nature live together in his flesh body.

The doctrine of the Trinity, though widely believed, is never stated in the Bible. For example, the Bible never uses the terms “Trinity” or “triune God.” It never refers to any of the “three members of the Godhead” as “Persons.” It never says Jesus or the Person the Holy Spirit are co-equal with God. Thus, a biblically sound case for or against the existence of a separate being known as “the Holy Spirit” has to be built from the entire scope of Scripture, using the tools of exegesis and logic, and avoiding the pitfalls of assumptions, philosophies, and false arguments.

[For more information about Jesus and the Trinity, see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.”]

There is great value in correctly understanding HOLY SPIRIT. When HOLY SPIRIT is being used as a designation for God, we see His power and presence actively working in the world, and we can honor Him as God alone—the true God. When HOLY SPIRIT refers to God’s gift of holy spirit, we can see God’s love and grace in His giving us His very nature so that we become spiritually empowered and qualify to be God’s fellow workers (1 Cor. 3:9), even doing signs and miracles here on earth and wrestling against evil spirit powers (Eph. 6:12).

**1) The “Holy Spirit” (capital “H” and “S”) is another way of describing God**

There are many descriptions, titles, and names for God in the Bible. God’s proper name is “Yahweh” (Exod. 6:3), which occurs more than 6,000 times in the Hebrew Old Testament and is generally translated as “LORD.” But God is also referred to as *Elohim*, *Adonai*, *El Shaddai*, the Ancient of Days, the Holy One of Israel, Father, Shield, and by many more designations. Furthermore, God is holy (Lev. 11:44; Isa. 6:3; John 17:11), which is why He was called “the Holy One” (the Hebrew text uses the singular adjective “holy” to designate “the Holy One,” cf. 2 Kings 19:22; Job 6:10; Ps. 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Isa. 1:4; 29:23; Luke 1:49; John 17:11). He is also spirit (John 4:24). Given that God is holy and God is spirit, it makes sense that “Holy” and “Spirit” are sometimes combined and used as one of the many designations of God: “the Holy Spirit.” Thus, when the subject of a verse is God, the Hebrew or Greek words HOLY SPIRIT should be brought into English as “the Holy Spirit.”

Every name or description of God emphasizes a different aspect of His character. For example, “the Ancient of Days” magnifies His timelessness, while calling Him “Rock” emphasizes His strength, stability, and protection. Since the Hebrew and Greek words for “spirit” (*ruach* and *pneuma*) refer to something invisible that exerts a force or power, when God is referred to as “the Holy Spirit” it emphasizes His power at work and/or His special holiness. God is referred to as “the Holy Spirit” in verses such as Matthew 1:20; 12:32; Luke 1:35; Acts 5:3-4; 15:28; and Hebrews 9:8.

One example that shows how helpful it is to know that “the Holy Spirit” is actually God is in the record of the birth of Jesus. Once we understand that “the Holy Spirit” is a designation for God that emphasizes His power and holiness, we can understand why Mary became pregnant by “the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35), and also why Jesus is never called, “the Son of the Holy Spirit.” Jesus is called “the Son of God” because Mary conceived by “God,” but since it was His holy power at work, He is described as “the Holy Spirit” in that context.

None of the dozens of descriptions, titles, or names of God is believed to be a separate, co-equal “Person” in a triune God except for “HOLY SPIRIT,” and there is no solid biblical reason to make “the Holy Spirit” into a separate “Person” either. As stated above, referring to God as “the Holy Spirit” emphasizes His power in action and His holiness.

**2) The “holy spirit” (lowercase “h” and “s”) is the gift of God’s nature**

We have just seen that in some contexts “HOLY SPIRIT” is one of the names of God and should be translated into English as “the Holy Spirit.” However, in other contexts “HOLY SPIRIT” refers to the gift of God’s nature that He placed on people to spiritually empower them, and in those contexts, it should be translated as “holy spirit.”

Our natural fleshly human bodies do not have spirit power, so when God wanted to spiritually empower people He placed a form of His nature, “holy spirit,” upon them (e.g., Num. 11:17-29; Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 16:13; 1 Chron. 12:18; 2 Chron. 15:1; Mic. 3:8; Luke 1:41-42, 67; 2:25-27). This holy spirit nature of God was a gift from God to humankind, so the Bible specifically calls it a “gift” (Acts 2:38; 10:45; cf. Acts 8:20; 11:17).

This information about the gift of holy spirit cannot be overstressed, because we need God’s power to do His work, and He provides it to us in the form of the gift of His nature. Knowing that helps us understand why Jesus said to the apostles, “But you will receive power when the HOLY SPIRIT has come upon you” (Acts 1:8). The gift of holy spirit is why the judges and prophets of the Old Testament, and Christians today, have spiritual power. It is why Jesus called the gift of holy spirit the “helper” (John 14:26) and “the finger of God” (Luke 11:20). Properly understanding God’s gift of holy spirit clarifies dozens of otherwise confusing Bible verses, and can give Christians great confidence in acting as God’s ambassadors and fellow workers.

Jesus himself needed God’s gift of holy spirit to have supernatural power, just as the leaders and prophets of the Old Testament did; which is why God put holy spirit upon Jesus. God put holy spirit upon Jesus immediately after he was baptized by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:9-10; Luke 3:21-22). This fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies that God would put holy spirit upon the Messiah, enabling him in his ministry (Isa. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1).

After the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the gift of holy spirit was born “in” believers (John 14:17), rather than resting “upon” them, and this is one reason why Christians are said to be “born again” of God’s spirit (1 Pet. 1:3, 23). Christians have spiritual power when they receive the gift of holy spirit (Acts 1:8). Furthermore, because holy spirit is born in them and becomes part of their very nature (2 Pet. 1:4), Christians are called God’s “holy ones” (this is usually translated as “saints” in the New Testament, e.g., Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:2; see commentary on Phil. 1:1).

**3) The holy spirit as distributable**

In the Old Testament, God put His gift of “holy spirit” (or “spirit”) on as many people as He deemed necessary. At the time of Moses, for example, God took of the spirit that was upon Moses and put it upon the 70 elders of Israel (Num. 11:17-25). In contrast, today everyone who makes Jesus Christ their Lord receives the indwelling gift of holy spirit. That is why on the Day of Pentecost, Peter quoted the prophecy in Joel and said that God would “pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17 KJV). The idea that Peter set forth before the Jewish crowd was one that they were familiar with from the Old Testament: that God would give part of His spirit to believers. That God gave a part of His spirit is reflected in a number of English translations (“pour out of my Spirit,” DBY, KJV, NKJV, YLT; “pour out a portion of my Spirit,” NAB).

However, a number of English translations only have, “I will pour out my Spirit” (HCSB, ESV, NIV). Although that is a grammatically acceptable translation, it does not communicate well to the average reader that each believer receives a portion of God’s spirit. Verses such as Acts 2:17-18 and 1 John 4:13 are showing that God can take some of His nature and give it to different people to spiritually empower them. The verses that speak of the HOLY SPIRIT being distributed in portions to different people show us that it is not a “Person” in a triune God, because a “Person” cannot be divided or distributed. In contrast, God’s gift of His nature to people can be distributed to people.

**4) The “holy spirit” as “the finger of God”**

Jesus referred to the “holy spirit” as the “spirit of God” in Matthew 12:28, but in the parallel record in Luke he called it “the finger of God” (Luke 11:20). The holy spirit that God gives to people is called “the finger of God” because it gives believers the power to do God’s work on earth (and also because when it comes to doing God’s work on earth, God is so powerful that only His “finger” is necessary to do the task at hand). The spirit of God is referred to as the finger of God because it is making reference to God’s power in action and His active presence. That Jesus cast out demons by “the finger of God” (the holy spirit) shows us the power that we have because we have the gift of holy spirit born in us (cf. Acts 1:8). In contrast, there is no compelling reason to make the “spirit” in these verses in Matthew and Luke a third “Person” in a triune God who is being referred to as “the finger of God.”

**5) The “Holy Spirit” is never introduced as a separate “Person” in the Bible**

Many scholars admit that the concept of the Trinity, including reference to “the Holy Spirit” as an independent “Person,” cannot be found in the Old Testament. Furthermore, the Jews, to whom the Old Testament was given, did not recognize any such being. It is a well-known historical fact that “Hear, O Israel! Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone,” was the cry of Israel (Deut. 6:4; for the translation “alone,” cf. NAB, NRSV, and see commentary on Deut. 6:4).

If there is no separate “Person” called the Holy Spirit, and no triune God revealed in the Old Testament, then the triune God must be revealed in the New Testament. But the New Testament never explicitly sets forth the doctrine of the Trinity, and every occurrence of the terms “the Holy Spirit” or “the holy spirit” can be understood as either another way of speaking about God, or as the gift of God’s nature that He gives to believers to spiritually empower them. No verse or context openly states, or even directly infers, that there is a separate “Person” called “the Holy Spirit.”

**6) People in the Bible never argued about a “Person,” “the Holy Spirit”**

Although it is an argument from silence, the fact that the Bible does not have even one recorded dispute over the Holy Spirit being a separate “Person” in the Trinity is actually good evidence that no such “Person” exists. The book of Acts, the Pauline Epistles, and the General Epistles show that in the early church there were continual disputes between the believers, and also between the believers and unbelievers. These disputes included arguments about whether or not Jesus was the Messiah, circumcision, baptism, food regulations, Sabbath regulations, clothing, authority, sexual issues, and more. Yet there is not one single recorded dispute about any “Person” called “the Holy Spirit.” This is highly unlikely if there really was such a “Person,” because in the centuries after the apostles died, when the doctrine of the Trinity was being defined and “the Holy Spirit” was being introduced as a separate “Person,” there were huge fights about it, anathemas, and excommunications. Thus, it seems that the logical reason there are no arguments in the New Testament about a newly introduced “Person” called “the Holy Spirit” is that no such “Person” was introduced to the early church. We learn from church history that the doctrine of “the Holy Spirit” as a separate “Person” in a triune God was developed later; primarily in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries.

**7) Getting the pronouns “He” and “it” correct**

In the English language, the only way to tell if the pronoun that goes with a noun should be masculine, feminine, or impersonal (neuter) is to understand the subject under discussion—whether the subject itself is male, female, or neuter (as in the case of an inanimate object like a wastebasket or a bookcase). This also applies in English Bibles. When “the Holy Spirit” is used as a designation for God, it should take a masculine pronoun, such as “he,” but when the subject is the gift of “holy spirit,” the correct pronouns to use are “it,” “which,” etc. However, in English Bibles, translators almost always assume that HOLY SPIRIT refers to a “Person” in a triune God (and most of them are unaware there even is such a thing as “the gift of holy spirit”), so HOLY SPIRIT, and terms that relate to it such as “Helper” (or “Comforter”), are capitalized and are paired with personal pronouns such as “he” and “whom.”

The fact that the term “Holy Spirit” is almost always capitalized and then referred to as “he” is certainly one of the reasons that most Christians believe that it refers to a third “Person” in a triune God. For example, almost every English version translates John 14:17 similarly to the ESV: “even the Spirit of truth, **whom** the world cannot receive, because it neither sees **him** nor knows **him**.” The ESV translators capitalize “Spirit” and use “he” and “him” because of their theology. The Greek word “spirit” is neuter and the text could also be translated as “the spirit of truth” and paired with “which” and “it.” For example, the New American Bible reads, “**which** the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows **it**.”

When God is being referred to as “the Holy Spirit,” capitalizing the “H” and “S” and using the English pronoun “He” is appropriate. However, when the subject under discussion is the gift of God’s nature, “the holy spirit,” the “h” and “s” should be lowercase, and all the pronouns referring to that spirit should be impersonal, such as “it” and “which.” We remind the reader of what was covered above, that the only way to tell if our English Bible should read “the Holy Spirit” and be paired with pronouns such as “he” and “whom,” or read “the holy spirit” and be paired with pronouns such as “it” and “which,” is knowing the subject and the context, the Greek text cannot tell us that.

There is great value in properly translating and understanding the pronouns that relate to HOLY SPIRIT, because then the English reader is able to more clearly see things such as that the “helper,” the holy spirit, is in them to empower and help them, or that the gift of holy spirit does not come and go but is sealed inside them and guarantees them a future inheritance in the Kingdom (Eph. 1:13-14).

[For more on the gift of holy spirit being translated “it,” see commentary on John 14:17.]

**8) The gift of holy spirit belongs to God**

One of the ways we know that “*pneuma hagion*” often refers to the gift of God’s nature is that it “belongs” to God, who calls it “my” spirit. The spirit is called “God’s” spirit in many verses (e.g., Num. 11:29; Isa. 30:1; 44:3; 59:21; Ezek. 36:27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28, 29; Zech. 4:6; Matt. 12:18; and Acts 2:17-18). King David understood that the holy spirit belonged to God, and after he sinned with Uriah and Bathsheba, he wrote: “…do not take **your** holy spirit from me” (Ps. 51:11 NRSV; cf. Neh. 9:30).

The New Testament contains the same truth. 1 Thessalonians 4:8 says, “God, who gives his holy spirit to you.” This echoes Isaiah 63:11 (NRSV): “Where is the one who put within them his holy spirit…?” In addition, the holy spirit is called “the spirit of Yahweh” or “the spirit of God” (Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 1 Sam. 10:6; Mic. 3:8). In those phrases, the genitive case, represented by the English word “of,” could be a genitive of origin (“the spirit from God”), or it could be a genitive of possession (“the spirit belonging to God”). However, it is also possible, and even likely, that both meanings are correct, and God used the genitive case because it can express two accurate meanings, and thus two truths, at the same time. Either way, the jurisdiction God holds over the spirit, and His prerogative to give it as He wills, shows that the holy spirit is not co-equal with the Father.

**9) The holy spirit is sent by God and Jesus**

The Bible shows us that “the holy spirit” is under God’s authority and direction, which makes sense when we understand it is the gift of His nature that He gives to believers to empower them. It is “sent” by God (John 14:26); it is “given” by God (Neh. 9:20; John 3:34; Acts 5:32; 15:8; Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; 1 Thess. 4:8; 1 John 3:24 and 4:13). After Jesus ascended to the right hand of God, God gave the holy spirit to people by giving it to Jesus who then gives it to people (John 15:26; 16:7; Acts 2:33; Titus 3:6).

The fact that the gift of holy spirit comes from God, but via Jesus Christ, explains why some New Testament verses say God gives it and others say Jesus gives it. The ultimate origin is God, and the immediate origin is Jesus. Thus, the way the holy spirit is portrayed in the New Testament fits with it being a gift from God and does not fit with it being a “co-equal” Person in a triune God.

**10) The “holy spirit” is a gift to people**

When God gives His nature, “the holy spirit,” to people so they can be supernaturally empowered with spirit, it is a gift to the person who receives it. We can see God’s love for people when He gives them His holy spirit, and the Bible specifically calls it “the gift of holy spirit” (Acts 2:38; 10:45). In contrast to the gift of holy spirit, “God” is never a gift given to people; He is God. Thus, the fact that “the holy spirit” is a gift to people is good evidence that HOLY SPIRIT cannot refer to a co-equal “Person” in a triune God who is “God the Holy Spirit,” but rather that the Bible is telling us that God gives His very nature, “holy spirit,” to people as a gift.

**11) The gift of holy spirit has different names**

There are different “names,” or more properly, descriptions, for “the holy spirit,” the gift of God’s nature, and these different descriptions emphasize different aspects of it. It is most often called “the spirit of Yahweh” (or similar designations such as the “spirit of God,” or “spirit of the Lord God,” or “spirit of the Living God”) because it is God’s very nature and it comes from Him. That is also the reason God calls it “my spirit” (e.g., Isa. 42:1; Acts 2:17-18). In addition, it is referred to as:

* “the spirit of wisdom” (Exod. 28:3; Deut. 34:9), because through it God communicates wisdom to believers.
* “the spirit of your Father” (Matt. 10:20), because it comes from God and is His nature.
* “the spirit of truth” (John 14:17; 16:13), because through it, God and Jesus give truth to the world.
* “the spirit of the Son” (Gal. 4:6), because God gives it to Jesus, who gives it to people (Acts 2:33).
* “the spirit of Jesus” (Acts 16:7), and “the spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:19), because it comes to us from Jesus Christ and brings attributes of Christ into our lives.
* “the spirit of glory” (1 Pet. 4:14), because of the glory it brings to the believer, both now and in the future.
* “the gift of holy spirit” (Acts 2:38), because it is a gift from God to His people.
* “the promise of my Father” (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4), because God had promised to give it to believers.
* “the helper, the holy spirit” (John 14:26), because it helps us in our life and in our service to God.

These different “names,” or designations, for the gift of holy spirit are extremely helpful in showing us what God has done for us by giving us His gift of holy spirit. Through it God and Jesus give us wisdom and lead us in the truth. It helps us walk powerfully with God and Jesus. It brings a living presence of God and Jesus into our lives, and it assures us of the glory to come. All these different “names” for “the holy spirit” fit with it being a gift from God to people, and also fit with it being God’s very nature, “holy” and “spirit.” In contrast, the designations above do not portray “the Holy Spirit” as a co-equal and co-eternal “Person” in a triune God.

**12) God anoints people with His nature—holy spirit**

The words “Messiah” in Hebrew (*mashiyach* #04899 מָשִׁיחַ) and “Christ” in Greek (*christos* #5547 Χριστός) both mean “anointed one.” Thus, although we call Jesus, “Jesus Christ,” which eventually did become a title, the early Christians would have known him as “Jesus the anointed one.” Kings and priests were anointed with oil and known as “anointed ones” or sometimes as “God’s anointed” (e.g., Exod. 29:29; Lev. 4:3, 5, 16; Num. 35:25; 1 Sam. 10:1; 12:3; 16:13; 24:6; 2 Sam. 1:16; 19:21; 22:51; 23:1; 1 Kings 1:39; 2 Kings 23:30; Ps. 18:50).

That kings and priests were anointed with oil was not “just a ceremony,” the oil was supposed to symbolize the gift of holy spirit that God poured out upon them to give them spiritual power. That spiritual power was why God “anointed” Jesus Christ with holy spirit (Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18), and why Jesus was said to have been “anointed” even though people knew he had never been formally anointed with oil (Acts 4:27; Acts 10:38).

That people would be said to be “anointed” with holy spirit helps explain why the Bible also uses liquid vocabulary when describing it and says that God would “pour out” His spirit upon people (Isa. 44:3; Joel 2:28-29; Zech. 12:10; Acts 2:17-18, 33). The liquid vocabulary the Bible uses of the holy spirit, and that it was “poured out,” connects it with the physical oil that was poured out upon kings and priests.

Many words associated with God’s spirit give it the attributes of a liquid, which is consistent with the holy spirit being God’s nature and not a “Person.” We are baptized with and in it like water (Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:5). We are all made to “drink” from the same spirit, as from a well or fountain (1 Cor. 12:13). It is written on our hearts like ink (2 Cor. 3:3). We are “anointed” with it, like oil (Acts 10:38; 2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:27). We are “sealed” with it as with melted wax (Eph. 1:13). It is “poured out” on us (Acts 10:45; Rom. 5:5). It is “measured” as if it had volume (2 Kings 2:9; John 3:34). We are to be “filled” with it (Acts 2:4; Eph. 5:18). All this language is designed to point us to the truth that the holy spirit is the nature of God that brings with it the invisible power and influence of God, and all these liquid terms fit with the holy spirit being a gift of God that He distributes to people.

**13) The omission of “The Holy Spirit”**

If God wanted to disclose that He had a triune nature or that there was a three “Person” Godhead, there are places in Scripture where He could have easily revealed it. What becomes evident with a thorough reading of Scripture is that if there were a third “Person” in a triune God, then there are many verses that inexplicably leave him out. For example, no one, including Jesus, ever prayed to “the Holy Spirit,” and the Holy Spirit is never worshiped. Instead, when Jesus prayed, he called the Father “the only true God” (John 17:3), and “the Lord of heaven and earth” (Matt. 11:25). Also, only the Father knew the timing of the End (Matt. 24:36). Similarly, when Jesus returns, he will come in his glory and the glory of the Father and the holy angels, but no mention is made of “the Holy Spirit” (Luke 9:26). Also, “the Holy Spirit” never greets the Churches, like Jesus and God do (e.g., Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2).

Furthermore, Scripture teaches that anyone who continues in right doctrine has “both the Father and the Son,” but “the Holy Spirit” is omitted (2 John 1:9). Similarly, Christians are only said to fellowship with the Father, Son, and each other (1 John 1:3). The Bible also says, “No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also” (1 John 2:23). Similarly, 1 John 2:22 says that a person who denies the Father and Son is an antichrist, but why is the “Holy Spirit” not included as well? Also, why does Jesus only say he speaks and does what the Father tells him, and never gets direction from “the Holy Spirit” (e.g., John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 7:16; 8:16, 28, 29; 12:49, 50)? Also, in the everlasting city of Revelation 21 and 22, God and Jesus Christ are portrayed sitting on a throne but there is no throne for the “Holy Spirit” in the everlasting city, and in fact, there is no mention of “the Holy Spirit” at all in the everlasting city.

Something that should stand out for us in all these records—and the many that are similar but are not mentioned above—is that Jesus never taught that there was a Trinity and never taught that there was a “Person” in a triune God referred to as “the Holy Spirit.” Furthermore, he never corrected the theology of the people he was speaking to. Instead, he reinforced what his Jewish audiences already believed: that there was one God, who Jesus called “the Father” and “God,” and there was the Messiah of God, the Son of God, who received direction from God and who obeyed Him. One very good example of that is Mark 12:28-34, in which an expert in Old Testament law asked Jesus about the greatest commandment. Jesus openly taught that there is one God and one Messiah; he never taught that there is a Trinity or that there is a “Person” known as “the Holy Spirit.”

**14) Blaspheming “the Holy Spirit”**

Jesus magnified God’s holiness—and also showed that he was not God and that “the Holy Spirit” was not a third “Person” in a triune God—when he said that if someone spoke against him it could be forgiven, but if anyone blasphemed “the Holy Spirit,” it would never be forgiven (Matt. 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-29; Luke 12:10). But we would not expect that to be the case if the doctrine of the Trinity is correct, and the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are co-equal “Persons” in a triune God. If the doctrine of the Trinity was correct and there was “one God in three Persons,” then it would be impossible for someone to blaspheme one of the “Persons” of the Godhead and be forgiven, but blaspheme another “Person” of that same Godhead and not be forgiven.

However, what Jesus said about blasphemy fits perfectly with what the people of the time believed: there is one God who is referred to in many different ways, and one Messiah, Jesus Christ. Someone can blaspheme the human being, Jesus Christ, and be forgiven, but people cannot blaspheme our Holy God and be forgiven. It makes sense that Jesus would refer to God as “the Holy Spirit” in this context because it emphasizes God’s special holiness.

**15) Peter used “the Holy Spirit” when referring to God**

In Acts 5:3, Peter told Ananias that he had lied to “the Holy Spirit,” which in that context can be seen to be another way of referring to God, because in the next verse, Acts 5:4, Peter said Ananias lied to “God.” We can see why Peter used the designation, “the Holy Spirit” to refer to God in this situation because it emphasized God’s supreme holiness, which magnified Ananias’ sin.

Calling God “the Holy Spirit” in one sentence and then “God” in the next is a good example of the common Semitic parallelism of equivalent terms. Throughout the Bible, it is common for something or someone to be mentioned twice, but in slightly different terms.

For example, when Naomi returned from Moab to Bethlehem, having lost her husband and both her sons, she said to the people, “Why do you call me Naomi, since **Yahweh** has testified against me and ***El* Shaddai** has afflicted me?” (Ruth 1:21). Deuteronomy 32:3 speaks of “proclaiming the name of **Yahweh**” and “ascribing greatness to ***Elohim***.” Psalm 46:7 says that “**Yahweh of Armies** is with us; the **God of Jacob** is our refuge.” Deuteronomy 32:15 says that Israel “forsook **God**, who made him, and lightly esteemed **the Rock** of his salvation.” Psalm 78:41 says that Israel “tested **God**, and provoked **the Holy One** of Israel.” In each of the above examples, God is referred to twice, using different names, and many more examples could be cited. All those examples reflect the common Semitic use of parallelism, which draws attention to something by calling it by different names. That is what Peter did to Ananias, who lied to “God,” who he also called “the Holy Spirit.”

**16) The “Holy Spirit” does not have a name**

A reason to believe that “the Holy Spirit” is one of the many designations for God and not a separate “Person” in a triune God is that it does not have a name. God’s name is Yahweh, which occurs over 6,000 times in the Old Testament and also shows up in many personal names that include its shortened version, “Yah.” Joshua and Elijah are good examples. Also, our Messiah has a name: “Jesus.”

In contrast to Yahweh and Jesus, “the Holy Spirit” is not a name, it is a description. Furthermore, we have no evidence in the Bible that “the Holy Spirit” was ever used as a name because no one ever used it in direct address. Many people spoke or prayed directly to God, starting out by saying, “O Yahweh” (translated as “O LORD” in almost all English versions). Furthermore, the name “Jesus” is a Greek form of the name “Joshua” (in fact, the King James Version confuses “Joshua” and “Jesus” in Acts 7:45 and Heb. 4:8), and many people spoke “to Jesus” in the Bible. But no one in the Bible ever used “the Holy Spirit” in direct address; there is simply no actual name for any “Person” known as “the Holy Spirit” anywhere in the Bible, and that is good supporting evidence that no such separate “Person” exists.

**17) The gift of “the spirit” changed**

If “the spirit” was a “Person,” in an eternal triune God, then he always existed and would have always been the same. But John 7:39 (NRSV) says that until Jesus was glorified, “there was no Spirit.” Most scholars agree on the reading of the original Greek text, and with the exception of the word “Spirit” being uppercase when it should be a lowercase “s,” (“spirit,” not “Spirit”), the New Revised Standard Version represents the original Greek text quite well. It reads, “Now he [Jesus] said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Many other versions basically agree with that translation of John 7:39 (DBY, NAB, NJB, Rotherham, YLT, William Barclay’s New Testament, The Kingdom New Testament, and Moffatt’s Bible).

God had given the gift of holy spirit to people in the Old Testament, so why would John 7:39 say that at that time, when Jesus was alive and fulfilling his ministry, there was no spirit? The context tells us. On that occasion, Jesus was speaking about a new fullness of the nature of God that God was about to give to people. Although the “holy spirit” God gave in the Old Testament was God’s nature, after the Day of Pentecost He gave His nature in a new, fuller way than He had ever given it before. This fuller gift of God’s nature had not been given to people before Pentecost, but it had been foretold in the Old Testament (Ezek. 11:19; 36:26). It was because this new spirit was promised in the Old Testament that the New Testament calls it “the promised holy spirit” (Eph. 1:13; cf. Acts 2:33; Gal. 3:14). Also, because Christians are the first to receive this new spirit, we have the “firstfruits” of the spirit (Rom. 8:23), and the spirit we have is a guarantee that we will be in the coming Messianic Kingdom.

Even if the reading of John 7:39 in versions such as the ESV is accepted, which adds the word “given” to the text and reads, “for as yet the Spirit had not been given,” (e.g., KJV, NASB, NIV, NLT), it still cannot refer to a “Person,” the eternal Holy Spirit, because the holy spirit had been given in the Old Testament. We see this from verses such as Psalm 51:11 (NASB), when David said, “do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.” Thus, even English versions that say the Spirit had not been given still present a problem, because it obviously had already been given. The common Trinitarian explanation for John 7:39 is that the fullness of the ministry of “the Holy Spirit” did not come until Jesus was glorified, but that is sidestepping what the biblical text says. John 7:39 does not speak about the “ministry” of the Spirit, or its power, but it speaks of the spirit itself and says that there “was no spirit.” That statement makes perfect sense when we understand the “spirit” Jesus was speaking about was a new, fuller, gift of holy spirit that God was about to give to believers.

The key to understanding verses such as Psalm 51:11 and John 7:39 is that in the Old Testament, God put His nature, holy spirit, upon some believers, but He gave a new and fuller gift of holy spirit on the Day of Pentecost, which is why believers in the New Testament could speak in tongues and also interpret tongues, but believers in the Old Testament who had the holy spirit could not.

[For more on the gift of holy spirit in the Church Age, see commentary on John 7:39.]

**18) The gift of holy spirit as “the helper”**

The Greek noun *paraklētos* has different meanings depending on the context, but primarily refers to an advocate, an encourager, or a helper. In most English versions *paraklētos* gets translated in the New Testament as “comforter,” “encourager,” “advocate,” “counselor” or “helper” (e.g., John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 John 2:1). Jesus Christ himself is referred to as our *paraklētos* in 1 John 2:1.

The “holy spirit” is identified as a “helper” to believers in John 14:26. The Greek word *paraklētos*, translated “helper,” is a masculine noun in Greek, so masculine pronouns are used with it due to grammatical convention. However, it is clear from Christ’s teaching that the helper is not a person; the gift of holy spirit that Christians have is a gift, and thus an “it.” At the time Jesus spoke of the “helper,” it was “with” the apostles, but would soon be “in” them (John 14:17)—which is what happened on the Day of Pentecost when holy spirit went from being with (or “upon”) people in the Old Testament and Gospels (e.g., Num. 11:17; Judg. 3:10; 1 Sam. 10:6), to being born “in” people in the Church Age.

The helper (the holy spirit) is sent by the Father (John 14:16-17) and Jesus (John 16:7). It does not speak on its own, but it speaks only what it hears (John 16:13). Thus, the gift of holy spirit is directed by God and Jesus, which is what we would expect since it is God’s nature born in us. Also, it is very helpful to see that there are distinct overtones of the figure “personification” in the description of the “helper,” such as that it will “speak,” or “guide” us into truth (John 16:13). Personification is a common literary device used in the Bible. For example, we see “Wisdom” personified in Proverbs 8 and 9 (for more on the figure personification, see commentary on Prov. 1:20).

The gift of holy spirit is the nature of God, and when it is born in us it becomes part of our very nature (2 Pet. 1:4). As a part of our nature, it is always having an effect upon us and working to form us into the image of Christ. Furthermore, as we might expect, our new holy nature is in conflict with our sin nature, which is also working in us such that we sin (Gal. 5:17). Because of the way the holy spirit nature works in us, and because of the way God and Jesus work through it to help and guide us, personifying the holy spirit in us and saying that it guides, teaches, speaks, etc., is highly appropriate.

**19) Personification of “soul” and “spirit”**

There are times when the Bible says God has a “soul,” but that is not scriptural proof that there is a distinct person known as “Soul,” who is separate from God Himself; it is simply a personification of God’s deep feelings and convictions (e.g., Judg. 10:16; Ps. 11:5; Prov. 6:16; Jer. 5:9, 29; 9:9; 15:1; 51:14). In most English versions, that God is said to have a soul is hard to see, because the Hebrew word *nephesh* is usually translated as “he,” “me,” “myself” or some equivalent word. But the translation of *nephesh* as “soul” can almost always be seen in Young’s Literal Translation.

The word “spirit” is also sometimes used in a similar way. For example, Mark 8:12 says that Jesus “sighed deeply in his spirit.” In this case, it is simply a way of saying that Jesus sighed deeply within himself. It is easy to see in the context that Jesus’ “spirit” does not refer to a separate “Person” in Jesus. Another example is when Mary said, “my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Luke 1:47). Mary was deeply stirred by what Elizabeth said to her, and her use of “my spirit” does not refer to a separate “Person,” but a deep part of her.

Similarly, there are times when “the spirit of God” is simply a way of referring to God, usually referring to God in action (e.g., Gen. 1:2). Thus, when it comes to God, just as He is sometimes said to have a soul, He is sometimes said to have a “spirit,” but when “spirit” is used in that way, it is just another way of referring to God and emphasizing something about Him. Any time the Bible says, “the spirit of God,” it is the context that clues us to the meaning of the phrase.

[For more on the usages of “spirit” in the Bible, see Word Study: “Pneuma.”]

**Conclusion**

This appendix has presented evidence that there are two major uses of HOLY SPIRIT: “Holy Spirit” (capital “H” and “S”) is one of the many designations for God, while “holy spirit” (lowercase “h” and “s”) is the gift of God’s nature that God gives to believers to spiritually empower them. When God is referred to as the “Holy Spirit,” it emphasizes His power and special holiness. The fact that the “Holy Spirit” is another designation for God and not a separate “Person” in the Trinity explains why the “Holy Spirit” is never prayed to or worshiped, why it never sends greetings to believers, why it does not have a throne like God and Christ do, why believers are never said to have fellowship with it like we do with God and Christ, and why someone is an antichrist if he denies the Father and Son, but the “Holy Spirit” is not included in that anathema.

In contrast to God, who is sometimes referred to as “the Holy Spirit,” the “holy spirit” is the gift of God’s nature that God “gives” (or “sends”) to people. God calls it “my spirit,” and it is commonly designated as “the spirit of God,” meaning the spirit that belongs to God. Furthermore, the “holy spirit” is divided and distributed among many people, and when it is poured out upon them it empowers them, which is why Jesus referred to it as “the helper.” Also, although God does not change, the gift of God’s holy spirit that believers have today is different from the spirit that God gave in the Old Testament, so the gift of God’s spirit has changed.

The simple and straightforward reading of the Scripture is that there is one God, who is sometimes referred to as “the Holy Spirit” and whose proper name is Yahweh; one Lord who is the man Jesus Christ; and one gift of holy spirit that is the nature of God that He gives to people to spiritually empower them.

[For information on another aspect of the Trinity, that Jesus Christ is actually fully human and not “God the Son,” see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.” For more information on the uses of the word “spirit” in the Bible, see Word Study: “Pneuma.” For a more thorough understanding of the gift of holy spirit than could be provided in this appendix, see *The Gift of Holy Spirit: The Power to be Like Christ*, by Graeser, Lynn, and Schoenheit.]