

34 Reasons Why the “Holy Spirit” Is Not A “Person” – Separate From the Only True God, the Father

The doctrine of the Trinity depends upon the reality of a “third person” called “the Holy Spirit” to complete a supposed multi-personal Godhead. Without such a separate person who is “co-eternal” and “co-equal” with the Father and the Son, the “Triune” God disintegrates. It is therefore wise to consider the reasons why this idea is not supported by logical scrutiny nor the weight of scriptural evidence.

Before exploring the reasons why this teaching is not biblically sound, we should first consider its practical consequences. We must obviate the common objections that we are merely splitting hairs over unprovable doctrines, which truth is not at stake and that one teaching is equivalent to another as long as each is sincerely believed and God is approached with humility and love. It is our assertion that the teaching that “the Holy Spirit” is a separate “person” from God, the Father, is not true and results in some serious practical disadvantages to living the Christian life, namely:

- a. Confusion about the distinction between “the Giver” and “the gift” results in misunderstanding of many verses of Scripture that become unintelligible, and the truth is exchanged for a man made myth.
- b. A lack of recognition of the permanence of the gift of holy spirit in the life of a believer results from the confusion about the coming and going of a “person.”
- c. Worship, praise, prayer, song and liturgy are directed toward an imaginary “third person” in the traditional Christian “Godhead,” but it ought to be directed primarily to God, the Father and secondarily to the Lord Jesus Christ. The **only true God, the Father**, seeks those who will worship Him “in spirit and in truth [reality]” (John 4:23), in other words, worship Him for who He really is.
- d. Improperly discerning and understanding what the gift of holy spirit is, many Christians naively assume that virtually all spiritual manifestations are from the true God, and too often fail to discern the genuine from the counterfeit, and are therefore led into error.
- e. Furthermore, being willingly “ignorant of spiritual matters” (1 Cor. 12:1; 14:37 and 38) these Christians run the risk that the Lord will disregard their worship, leaving them vulnerable to demonic influences.
- f. Failing to understand that “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets,” and instead being taught to be “controlled” by the Holy Spirit, many become influenced by demons, even while thinking that they are being “led by the spirit” of God.
- g. Many are not walking in the power of the spirit because they are waiting for a “person” to move them, while God is waiting for them to utilize by faith that which they have already been given.

We are now ready to examine the principal reasons for denying the Trinitarian assertion that “the Holy Spirit” is a separate person from the Father, the one God of Scripture. These are drawn from our own ruminations and from the work of James H. Broughton and Peter J. Southgate (*The Trinity: True or False?* 1995), Anthony Buzzard (*The Doctrine of the Trinity; Christianity’s Self-Inflicted Wound*, 1994), Charles Morgridge (*The True Believer’s Defence*, 1837), Fredric A. Farley (*The Scripture Doctrine of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost*, 1873) and The Racovian Catechism, 1609.

1. God is said to have a throne (1 Kings 22:19; Dan. 7:9), inhabit heaven as His dwelling place (1 Kings 8:30,39,43 and 49), and yet “heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain” Him (1 Kings 8:27). So how can He be said to have a throne and a dwelling place and yet be uncontainable? Ps. 139:7 indicates that God’s *spirit* and His *presence* can be equivalent terms. God is therefore omnipresent by His “spirit,” which is not a separate “person.” This presence can also be extended by His personal ministers and agents, whether Christ, angels, or believers. None of these is a separate person who is also “God” in some multi-personal Godhead, but rather empowered agents who are equipped to do the will of God.

2. Exodus 23:20-22 mentions the angel of God’s presence that would go before Israel in the wilderness. “Person” God has permitted angels to speak as if they were God Himself, and even to use His personal name, *YAHWEH*. A few examples of this principle are Manoah and his wife (Judges 13:21 and 22), Jacob wrestling (Gen. 32:24-30; Hos. 12:3-5), Moses (Ex. 3:2-4, 6 and 16) and Gideon (Judges 6:12, 13, 16 and 22). What is sometimes attributed to Jesus or to “the Holy Spirit” in the Old Testament is better explained by this principle of God manifesting Himself by means of an angelic messenger who speaks for Him in the first person (“I the Lord,” etc.) and manifests His glory.

3. Although the Hebrew word for “spirit” (*ruach*), can refer to angels or evil spirits, which are persons or entities with a personality, the Hebrew usage of “the spirit of God” never refers to a person separate from, but a part of, God Almighty. Neither does the phrase, “the spirits of God” occur, which would refer to separate spiritual entities within a multipersonal God.

a. Zechariah 6:5 refers to the “four spirits of the heavens” riding in chariots, but the NIV text note supplies an alternate reading of “winds,” which makes more sense in the context—the four winds of heaven going North, East, etc.).

b. Revelation 1:4 refers to the “seven spirits” before the throne of God. Are these seven “Holy Spirits,” or sentient entities, within the “Godhead?” The context provides the answer: they are the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne (4:5 – NRSV) and the seven horns and seven eyes of the slain Lamb (5:6). These are likely the same “spirits” mentioned in Isaiah 11:2 in connection with the Messiah: the spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of counsel, the spirit of might, the spirit of knowledge and the spirit of the fear of the Lord. These “spirits” are undoubtedly symbols of the intense power of insight and judgment with which the Lamb will judge and reign over the earth during the Millennium.

4. As with the Hebrew word, *ruach*, the Greek word for spirit (*pneuma*) also has many different meanings, the correct one also being determinable only from the context of each occurrence. Although Greek has both upper and lower case letters, the early manuscripts employed either one or the other. Therefore, no accurate distinction can be made in the original manuscripts of the Bible between upper case “Holy Spirit,” a proper noun referring to God, and lower case “holy spirit,” referring to an impersonal force. Compounding the problem is the fact that the article “the” was often added by translators, leading the reader to think that “the Holy Spirit” is referring to a separate person, a third person of “the Holy Trinity” as taught by traditional Christian orthodoxy.

5. Scholars admit that the concept of the Trinity cannot be substantiated in the Old Testament. In particular, “the Holy Spirit” as any kind of independent or distinct entity has no place in Old Testament revelation. Therefore, they say, the concept must be derived from the New Testament. With the exception of a few comparatively difficult verses in the Gospel of John that are often misunderstood, the New Testament also gives no certain and incontrovertible indication of a “Holy Spirit” as a personal being co-equal with the Father and the Son. This is a rather glaring omission if the Triune God is supposed to provide the foundation of Christian orthodoxy, yet the “tri-unity” of God cannot be clearly established even with New Testament revelation. Thus it makes sense to understand “holy spirit” in the New Testament just as it was understood in the Old Testament, either God Himself or His presence and power.

6. The Greek word for “spirit,” *pneuma*, is neuter, as are all pronouns referring to the spirit, making them necessarily impersonal. New Testament translators knew this grammatically, but groundlessly translated references to the coming “spirit of truth” as “He” instead of “it” because of their Trinitarian prejudice (e.g., John 14:17). If they had consistently translated the neuter pronouns of John 14 through 16 as “it,” “its,” “itself” and “which” instead of “he,” “his,” “him,” “who,” and “whom,” the case for the “personality of the Holy Spirit” would largely disappear from Christian belief. Such a major theological doctrine with such important implications for foundational Christian theology cannot depend on a few pronouns, but rather should be founded upon the weight of the biblical evidence considered as a whole, apart from tradition and prejudice.

7. Any translation from one language to another must recognize the relative unimportance of gender. For the most part, languages that assign a gender to nouns do so in a rather arbitrary manner. For instance, the Spanish word for car is masculine, *el carro*, while a bicycle is feminine, *la bicicleta*. Yet no one would translate into English “the car, he...” or “the bicycle, she...” Either word would require the neuter “it” to reflect the impersonal nature of the object. A writer or a poet might employ such a figurative expression in the use of pronouns, but any reader acquainted with the objects referred to would recognize the figure of speech employed. Such poetic personification is employed in reference to “the Comforter.”

8. The figure of speech Personification is common in Scripture, and is defined as attributing personal qualities, feelings, actions, etc., to things that have no real personality or personal consciousness. Wisdom is personified as such in Proverbs 8 and 9, yet no sensible person would seriously consider that a literal person named “Wisdom” helped God create the world, as Proverbs 8:30 says. The spirit of God is personified as “the Comforter” in John 14:16 and 26, 15:26, 16:7. Therefore, personal pronouns are appropriate to agree with the personal nature of the figurative title. It is clear from John 16:13 that this Comforter is “sent,” “does not speak of himself” and is instructed (“whatever he hears he speaks”).

9. The “Comforter,” more properly translated as “Counselor,” is said by Jesus to fill the void created by his going to the Father (John 14:12). By this spirit he would still be present: “I will come to you” (14:18); “I am in you” (14:20); and “I will show myself” (14:21). By this spirit his work with them would continue: “It will teach you”(14:26); “It will remind you of everything I have said” (14:26); “It will testify about me” (15:26); “It will convict the world of guilt” (in

preparation for his judgment—16:8); “It will guide you into all truth” (16:13); “It will bring glory to me by taking what is mine and making it known to you” (16:14).

All of these statements point to the role of the gift of holy spirit in continuing the work that Jesus started, and even empowering his followers for greater works. This spirit is not independent and self-existent, but is “the mind of Christ” within the believer, influencing, guiding, teaching, reminding and pointing the believer to follow his Lord and Savior. This spirit is certainly not “co-equal” when by its very design it serves the risen Lord and Christ. Yet because it carries the *personal* presence of Christ into the life of every believer, the use of Personification is highly appropriate. As a practical matter, holy spirit in us will not lead us anywhere that the Lord himself would not lead us if he were personally present. We can study Christ’s life and his priorities in the written Word to verify whether the “spirit” leading us in is fact the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ or whether it is “another spirit.” For instance, he whose basic commitment was “it is written” will not be leading his followers away from relying on Scripture as the only rule of faith and practice.

10. The “soul” or the “spirit” of man is often personified like the spirit of *God is*. “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” (Ps. 42:5). “I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, thou hast much goods laid up...’” (Luke 12:19). “The spirit indeed is willing...” (Matt. 26:41). “The spirit of Titus was refreshed...” (2 Cor. 7:13). Yet no one would argue that the “spirit of man” is a separate person from the man himself. The figure of speech *Personification* is universally and readily recognized, and in the case of “the Comforter” ought to be recognized as well.

11. The spirit of man bears the same relation to man as the spirit of God bears to God (1 Cor. 2:11). As the spirit of man is not another person distinct from himself, but his human consciousness or mind by which he is able to be self-aware and contemplate things peculiar to himself, so the spirit of God is not another person distinct from God. It is that consciousness and intelligence that is essential and peculiar to Him whereby He manifests and reveals Himself to man. As the spirit of man means the man himself (the essence of a man is his *mind*), so the spirit of God means God Himself. The parallel usage of mind and spirit is seen in the Apostle Paul’s citation of Isaiah 40:13 (NRSV) (“Who has directed the spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has instructed him?”) and in Romans 11:34 and 1 Corinthians 2:16 where “spirit” is rendered “mind.”

12. If the “spirit of truth” in John 14:17 is a person, then “the spirit of error” in 1 John 4:6 must also be a person, since the two are directly contrasted. The fact is that each “spirit” represents an influence or a power under which a person acts, but neither is a person in itself.

13. 1 Corinthians 2:12 directly opposes the “spirit of the world” with “the spirit which is of God.” As the “spirit of the world” is not a person separate from “the world,” neither is the “spirit of God” a person separate from God. Each is an influence emanating from a source that produces certain attitudes, behaviors or “fruit.”

14. The “breath” of God and the “spirit” of God are synonymous terms (Job 4:9; Ps. 33:6; Ps. 104:29 and 30; John 3:8; Job 27:3). It is as inconceivable that the breath of God could be a person distinct from God as that the breath of a human could be a person distinct from a human.

It is especially absurd to speak of one self-existent and eternal person as “the breath” of another such person.

15. The “spirit of God” is synonymous with the “hand” and “the finger” of God (Ezek. 3:14; Job 26:13; Ps. 8:3; Luke 11:20). It is nonsense to call a “co-equal and co-eternal person” the “hand” and “finger” of another such person. In fact, as a man’s hand and finger are subordinate and

literally, the Greek says “some of,” or “part of” my spirit.” The footnote in Weymouth’s translation reads “literally ‘of’ or ‘from’ my spirit—a share or portion.” Though we cannot conceive of how a *person* might be so divided, we can understand that the spirit of God, as the power of God, might be distributed among many. 1 John 4:13 echoes this truth in saying, “We know that we live in Him and He in us, because he has given us *of* his Spirit” (NIV).

20. Many words associated with God’s spirit give it the attributes of a liquid, which by definition cannot refer to a person. This liquid language is consistent with the spirit being His presence and power. We are baptized (literally “dipped”) 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 and 22; 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). This “filling” is to capacity at the new birth and to overflowing as we act according to its influence.

Even the use of spirit as “wind” implies a liquidity, for air masses behave as a fluid, flowing from areas of higher to lower pressure. All this figurative language must be designed to point us to the truth that the spirit of God is the invisible power and influence of God. It comes into our lives to buoy us up, to help us, to comfort us, to unite us and anoint us for the work to which He has called us. As liquid seeks the lowest level, so the spirit of God comes to us in our lowly and needy state, beneath our sins and iniquities, our faults and our failures to lift us up to stand in all the grace and truth that Christ brought.

21. The “holy spirit” is clearly said to be given by God to men. A divine “person” cannot be given or bestowed by another divine person, because to be given is to be under the authority of another. If “the Holy Spirit” is co-equal with the Father, He cannot be under His authority.

22. By definition, the spirit *of* God is derived *from* God. What comes *from* God as its source cannot also *be* “God,” without the term “God” being reduced to a formless and incomprehensible abstraction. Nothing and no one can be both a source of a thing and the thing itself.

23. In biblical usage, “the Holy Spirit” is a synonymous term for “God.” In Acts 5:3, Peter says Ananias lied to “the Holy Spirit.” In verse 4 Peter says he lied to “God.” This is an example of the common Semitic parallelism of equivalent terms, and is not evidence that Ananias lied to two separate persons. If that were the case, why would verse 4 not say that Ananias lied to “the Father” instead of to “God.” Neither is this parallelism evidence that another divine person called “the Holy Spirit” is also “God” and therefore part of a triune “Godhead.”

24. “The holy spirit” is equivalent to “the power of the Most High,” as Luke 1:35 (NIV) clearly indicates by another use of parallelism (cp. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 10:38; Rom. 15:13; Rom. 15:18 and 19; 1 Cor. 2:4 and 5). The context is the conception of Jesus Christ. Matthew 1:18 also records that Mary “was found to be with child through ‘the Holy Spirit.’” Yet all through the New Testament are references to the fact that *God* is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. If “God” is “the Father,” and “the Holy Spirit” is also “the father” of the baby Jesus, there is a potential paternity suit. Trinitarianism leads to much unnecessary confusion by asserting a

separate personality of “the Holy Ghost,” and cannot explain away the logical conclusion that according to that view the Son has two “Fathers,” or two separate persons fathering Jesus.

25. The “Holy Spirit” (properly “holy spirit”) is used synonymously and interchangeably with “the spirit of Jesus” (Acts 16:7; Phil. 1:19); “the spirit of the Lord” (Luke 4:18, etc.); “the spirit of his son” (Gal. 4:6); “the spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:19). In this usage, “the spirit” is the mind and power of Jesus Christ, who fills and guides believers to do the will of God, his Father. He is, after all, the expert in how humans can be influenced to obey the will of God without coercion or intimidation. The following are examples of the interrelationship and interdependence between the Lord Jesus Christ and his “spirit.”

- a.** Acts 13:2 says, “The Holy Spirit said, ‘Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.’” Later in Acts 16:6 (NIV), in the midst of the work Paul was called to, “the Holy Spirit” kept Paul and his companions from preaching in Asia. Verse 7 (NIV) says that the “spirit of Jesus” would not allow them to enter Bithynia.
- b.** 2 Corinthians 3:17 and 18 says that the Lord (Jesus) is “the Spirit.” He has been invested with all spiritual authority and power to effectively carry out his responsibility as the Head of his body. By his “spirit” he is able to guide and direct his many servants (2 Cor. 12:8 and 9).
- c.** Galatians 5:22 and 23 list the “fruit of the spirit” (the nature of Jesus Christ); John 15:5 says “If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit.”
- d.** We are sanctified by the spirit (2 Thess. 2:13); we are sanctified in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:2), whom God made to be sanctification for us (1 Cor. 1:30).
- e.** The spirit of truth, holy spirit, is the counselor (*parakletos*); we have an advocate (*parakletos*) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John 2:1).
- f.** We are strengthened by the spirit in the inner man (Eph. 3:16); Christ dwells in our hearts (Eph. 3:17).
- g.** We have access to the Father by the spirit (Eph. 2:18); in Christ and through faith in him we have access with confidence to God (Eph. 3:12).
- h.** The spirit apportions to each one individually as he chooses (1 Cor. 12:11 – AMP); the Lord Jesus pours out the spirit (Acts 2:33) and gave some apostles, some prophets, *etc.* (Eph. 4:11).
- i.** The spirit intercedes for us (Rom. 8:26); Christ Jesus intercedes for us (Rom. 8:34).
- j.** The Spirit says to the churches... (Rev. 1:1); the revelation of Jesus Christ...to show to his servants (Rev. 2:7).

26. Many Trinitarians assert that “the Holy Spirit” comes and permanently dwells within a believer when he accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior. But many also teach that the Holy Spirit comes upon a believer *after* he is born again. They also pray for “the Holy Spirit” to attend their meetings, and welcome “Him” to come as He desires. This puts them in the difficult position of having to explain how a Christian can have the person of “the Holy Spirit” simultaneously dwelling in him and coming and going from Christian meetings.

The simple answer to this dilemma is that there are two usages of “the spirit” that must be distinguished. One is “the gift of God’s nature that is permanently received when a person is born again.” The other is “the power and influence of God” as He manifests His presence in His Creation (Gen. 1:1) and among His people (2 Chron. 5:14). In contrast to the permanent gift, this can wax and wane according to the faith of those present and the will of God in the situation. The

gift of God's nature, holy spirit, is not always being energized into manifestation. God, "the Holy Spirit," (the Giver) energizes the spirit within believers as they act in faith (Acts 2:4).

27. John 7:39 says that the Holy Spirit was not yet given, and in Acts 1:4 and 5 (NIV) Jesus tells his disciples to wait for "the gift of my Father" that would come "in a few days." If the Holy Spirit is a person, and He was present in the Old Testament, then how is it possible for Him to be spoken of as "not yet given." It is also confusing to contemplate how the gift of a "person" is even possible, and the only answer Trinitarians can provide is that this is part of the "mystery" of the Trinity.

This "mystery" is solved when we understand that the spirit of God we receive is not a separate person, but rather the gift of God to empower His people. In the Old Testament, this empowering was temporal, hence David could pray that it not be removed from him (Ps. 51:11). It was also measured out differently to different people, hence Elisha could pray to receive a "double portion" (2 Kings 2:9). It was not given to all, and therefore its presence was noteworthy (Gen. 41:38). Since Pentecost, when the spirit was said to have "come," it is now in all believers permanently and without measure, as it had been given to Jesus Christ. He who had the spirit "without measure" (John 3:34), enabling him to do his Messianic work, poured out this same spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:33 – NIV). And it is he, the true Baptizer, who fills each believer who comes to him for salvation (Matt. 3:11; Eph. 1:23).

28. The only verse that would indicate that there might be three persons sharing one name is Matthew 28:19: "...baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." This verse is quoted in a different form by the early Church Fathers, notably Eusebius (d. 340), who quotes the verse at least 18 times as follows: "baptizing them in my name." This agrees with the testimony of the Book of Acts and Paul's epistles, which associate only the name of Jesus Christ with baptism. Even if the verse reads as found in modern versions today, it does not validate the "Holy Spirit" being a separate person from God.

Arguments from Omission

29. The Holy Spirit is never worshiped as are the Father and the Son, neither does any verse of Scripture command such worship. This is surprising if the Holy Spirit is truly a co-equal and co-eternal member of a triune "God" worthy of worship. If "God" is worthy of worship, and "God" exists in three persons, then shouldn't each "God" person be worthy of worship? Then why is this idea not found in the Scripture?

30. In the opening of their New Testament epistles, every one of the writers identifies himself with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, but not one does so with "the Holy Spirit." If they were ignorant of the truth of a "tri-personal" God, and this truth constitutes the foundation of the Christian faith, then their apostleship was incomplete at best, and at worst they were teaching error. Their failure to clearly teach a three person Godhead proves the assertion that the doctrine of the tri-personal God and a third person in an eternal Godhead was not believed or practiced by the Apostles. In fact, the doctrine was not codified until the fourth century in the Athanasian creed. Since it was not believed nor practiced by the apostles, and the apostles were

commissioned by the Lord Jesus himself, then it is logical to assert that the doctrine was not believed nor practiced by the Lord Jesus either.

31. Lacking sufficient Scriptural justification, the orthodox view of “the Holy Spirit” was fully developed in the fourth century after Christ and the Apostles, contemporaneously with the rise of Neoplatonic philosophy, which posited an abstract God “beyond being,” in which a variety of divine persons could be “one” in “essence.” This was basically a regurgitation of Gnostic philosophy, which had been vigorously opposed by the first century Apostles but later embraced by many of the “Church Fathers” who helped to establish “orthodoxy.”

32. In the Church Epistles, (Romans through Thessalonians), the Apostle Paul sends personal greetings from “God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” If “the Holy Spirit” were an integral and personal part of a triune Godhead, then why does “He” not send “His” personal greetings as well? The only good answer is that there is no such person, for as an inspired writer of Scripture, Paul was on intimate talking terms with God and the Lord Jesus. If there were a third person involved, wouldn’t Paul have surely known about it and included “Him” in his greetings to the churches? When Paul does include additional persons in his greetings, salutations and adjurations, he names “the elect angels,” not “the Holy Spirit” (1 Tim. 5:21; cp. Luke 9:26 and Rev. 3:5).

33. In the NIV translation, Philippians 2:1 and 2 refers to “fellowship *with* the Spirit,” yet 1 John 1:3 says that our fellowship is with “the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” Why is the Holy Spirit left out? A better translation of Philipians 2:1 is the *King James Version*, which renders the phrase “fellowship of the spirit,” pointing to the fellowship among believers who share a common spirit and who therefore ought to be able to get along with each other.

34. In the eternal city of Revelation 21 and 22, both God and Jesus Christ are prominently featured. Each is pictured as sitting on his throne (Rev. 22:1). If “the Holy Spirit” is a “co-eternal” member of a triune Godhead, it is strange indeed that He seems to have no seat of authority on the final throne. This is consistent with the biblical truth that there is one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, and no such separate person known as “the Holy Spirit.

By restoring the Father to His unique and singular position as God, we give Him all the worship, credit, respect, and awe He deserves as the One True God. By restoring Christ to his position as the man accredited by God, the only-begotten Son of the Father, the Last Adam, the one who could have sinned but voluntarily stayed obedient, the one who could have given up but loved us so much that he never quit, the one whom God highly exalted to be our Lord, we give Jesus Christ all the worship, credit, respect, and awe that he deserves, and we can draw great strength and determination from his example.

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