

The Holy Spirit

In the Bible, God's Spirit is described in a way distinct, but not separate, from God himself. In the Old Testament, God's Spirit is associated with the gift of prophecy—the gift of receiving and communicating God's messages. We read that “the spirit of God rushed upon” Saul, and he joined a band of prophets (1 Samuel 10:10); the Lord took some of his spirit from Moses and gave it to the elders, and they were able to prophesy also (see Numbers 11:25).

The word *spirit* in Hebrew (also in Greek) can also be translated as “wind” or “breath.” We read in the creation story that “a mighty wind”—a phrase that can also be translated as “a wind of God” or “the spirit of God”—swept over the waters (Genesis 1:2). It is the breath or spirit of God that gives life to humans: “The LORD God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7).

In the New Testament, the Spirit is also connected with the “new creation” of God's Son in human form: Mary conceived Jesus not through ordinary human means, but “through the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:20). The distinction of the Spirit within the unity of God is shown elsewhere in the New Testament as well. Paul writes, “For the Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God. . . . No one knows what pertains to God except the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10–11).

Just as the spirit was associated with the gift of prophecy in the Old Testament, so the New Testament speaks of the Spirit's giving spiritual gifts to the followers of Jesus, including the gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues (see 1 Corinthians, chapter 12). At the Feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes upon the Apostles, the followers of Jesus, giving them the power and confidence to go out into the world and preach their message about Jesus Christ (see Acts of the Apostles 2:1–4). The Spirit assists in prayer, “for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings” (Romans 8:26). The Spirit is also connected with the written Word of God in the Scriptures. The authors of the Scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit: “All scripture is inspired” (2 Timothy 3:16). The Greek word for *inspired* translates as the wonderfully expressive “God-breathed.”

The Spirit is also intimately connected with Christ. In the Gospel of John, the Father will send the Spirit (also called the Comforter, or *Paraclete*) to Jesus' followers after Jesus has returned to the Father. Jesus tells his disciples, “The Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you” (John 14:26). Just as Jesus comes in the Father's name, so the Spirit comes in Jesus' name.

Paul teaches that the Spirit enables a believer to accept Christ: “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3).

(This article is adapted from *Reason, Faith, and Tradition: Explorations in Catholic Theology*, by Martin C. Albl [Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2009], pages 149–150. Copyright © 2009 by Martin Albl. All rights reserved.)

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