

*The Holy Spirit is from eternity truly God, the third person of the divine Trinity (Acts 5:3–4; 2 Corinthians 13:14).*

*The foundation on which the church is established is God’s revelation in Jesus Christ (John 1:18; 1 Corinthians 3:11). This foundation was laid as the Holy Spirit made the truth regarding Jesus Christ known to the apostles, thus enabling them to bear witness to him (John 15:26–27; 16:13–15; Acts 1:21–25; Ephesians 2:20; 3:4–5). In this way, the apostles and their intimate co-workers were inspired by the Spirit to put the New Testament message into writing, and so to complete the Scripture (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:12–21; 3:15–16). Since the work of the apostles was unique and unrepeatable, the office of apostle ended when the last of the New Testament apostles passed from the scene (1 Corinthians 15:5–8). Ever since the completion of the canon, the Spirit’s means of communicating God’s truth has been to illuminate the Scriptures which he inspired (2 Timothy 3:16–17).*

(Sola 5 Confession 6.1–6.2)

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John MacArthur has written a book on the Holy Spirit titled *The Silent Shepherd*. The book is so titled because, in Reformed(ish) circles, the Holy Spirit is often a neglected member of the Trinity. We talk much about the Father and the Son, but comparatively little about the Spirit. Many Charismatic churches, on the other hand, emphasise the ministry of the Spirit to the detriment of Jesus Christ. Christians should strive to strike a biblical balance as they wrestle with the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Section 6 of the Confession seeks to help us in this regard.

The Confession begins with a simple affirmation, which sets biblical Christianity over against non-Trinitarian sects like the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Mormons: **The Holy Spirit is from eternity truly God, the third person of the divine Trinity**. Read the proof texts supplied for this affirmation and comment on how they support it.

Acts 5:3–4: \_\_\_\_\_

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2 Corinthians 13:14: \_\_\_\_\_

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The Confession speaks of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of the apostles: **The foundation on which the church is established is God’s revelation in Jesus Christ (John 1:18; 1 Corinthians 3:11). This foundation was laid as the Holy Spirit made the truth regarding Jesus Christ known to the apostles, thus enabling them to bear witness to him (John 15:26–27; 16:13–15; Acts 1:21–25; Ephesians 2:20; 3:4–5).**

According to John 15:26–27, the Spirit would bear witness about Jesus Christ, as would the apostles. The implication, which is made explicit in 16:13–15, is that the Spirit would guide the apostles’ witness about him. Does the Spirit still enable God’s people to bear witness of him? If so, how does this differ from his witness-bearing ministry with the apostles? \_\_\_\_\_

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If the Spirit was sent to guide God’s people into all truth (John 16:13), how do we understand periods in which the gospel seems to have been largely hidden? For example, Catholics often argue that the Reformation could not have captured gospel truth that was largely forgotten, for if the Spirit promised to guide the church into all truth, how could the gospel have been forgotten for so long? How would you respond to this question? \_\_\_\_\_

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“A Confessing Community: Studies in the Sola 5 Confession of Faith”

The Confession further identifies the uniqueness of the Christian Scriptures on the basis of Spirit inspiration: **In this way, the apostles and their intimate co-workers were inspired by the Spirit to put the New Testament message into writing, and so to complete the Scripture (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:12–21; 3:15–16).**

How does the promise of John 16:13–15 help us reject the claim of the Mormon Church (and others) that God’s truth had been so corrupted that Joseph Smith (or others) were called to recover it by recording what God revealed to them? \_\_\_\_\_

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Think for a moment about the Scriptures. If the Scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit, what is the implication for the Christian church today? How should we view the Scriptures? \_\_\_\_\_

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The Confession goes on to speak of the unique office of apostle: **Since the work of the apostles was unique and unrepeatable, the office of apostle ended when the last of the New Testament apostles passed from the scene (1 Corinthians 15:5–8).**

Read Acts 1:15–23 and 1 Corinthians 9:1–2. According to these verses, what were the qualifications for the office of apostle? \_\_\_\_\_

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Given the above, what should we think of those who claim the office of apostle today? \_\_\_\_\_

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There are some individuals in the Scriptures, who are not of the Twelve or Paul, who are called “apostles.” These include Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Andronicus and Junia (Romans 16:7). If the office of apostle was reserved to those who were eyewitnesses of and commissioned by the risen Christ, in what sense were these individuals “apostles”? \_\_\_\_\_

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The Confession concludes with a note about the Spirit’s current ministry to the church through the Scriptures: **Ever since the completion of the canon, the Spirit’s means of communicating God’s truth has been to illuminate the Scriptures which he inspired (2 Timothy 3:16–17).**

Paul writes of the inspired and therefore authoritative nature of the written Scriptures. The Confession talks of the Spirit’s role in communicating God’s truth through the Scriptures. Why is it important to recognise the Spirit’s role in this regard, and how should this impact our Bible study? \_\_\_\_\_

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