

The Function Of The Holy Spirit In Man's Communion
With God The Father

By

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THESIS STATEMENT

It is the function of the Holy Spirit to enable man* to commune with God the Father, subsequent to Scripture, after salvation by Jesus Christ, as the person of ultimate divine authority dwelling with the believer as God in residence in daily living.

(*man refers to humans)

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INTRODUCTION: CONNECTER OR DIVINE INDWELLING OF GOD

According to Dolezal, the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, coequal with and distinct from God the Father and God the Son.¹ Barth assures, the Holy Spirit is God in all His Deity with absolute sovereignty and condescension, in the complete “hiddenness and revealedness of God”.² Caulley converse, whereby without the work of the Holy Spirit man is not capable to decide to accept God or have the faith to be saved.³ While traditionally Christians agree empirically the Holy Spirit is the person through whom man “shares in divine life” there is far less consensus on what function the Holy Spirit plays in man’s daily life.⁴ Hence, the Holy Spirit is often seen as a rather impersonal channel for expressing the actions, circumstances or attributes of the Father and the Son.⁵

This researcher argues that it is the function of the Holy Spirit to enable man to commune with God the Father and communicate with Scripture, after salvation in daily living. Whereby, the Holy Spirit is not a mere connecter, but the person of ultimate divine intellectual, authority and self sufficient, who interacts, unite and fellowships with mortal finite man. Thereby, this data will help diminish the subordinate and disregarded place of the Holy Spirit in evangelical Christian thinking, religious techniques and the church, because the Holy Spirit is more than just

¹ James E. Dolezal, “Trinity, Simplicity and the Status of God's Personal Relations,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16, no. 1 (January 2014), 85.

² Karl, Barth, *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: The Theological Basis of Ethics*, Translated by R. Birch Hoyle with a foreword by Robin W. Lovin. [1st English edition London: F. Muller, 1938] (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press. 1993), 3.

³ T. S. Caulley, “Holy Spirit,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2d ed., ed. Walter E. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 571.

⁴ Ian A. McFarland, “The Holy Spirit and the Constitution of the Trinity,” *Theology Today* 54, no. 3 (September 1997), 335.

⁵ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit: Contours of Christian Theology*, (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1996), 3.

an agent, whereby to communicate with man, but rather God dwelling in the believer in an earthly environment.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Within the history of the church, from its conception to modern times the importance of and the appreciation of the Holy Spirit has been mostly neglected with the majority attention given to God the Father and God the Son with a regard for hierarchy.⁶ Hence, the early church realized whereby the Holy Spirit existed as part of the Godhead, there was no theological doctrine of authority formulated to man or the church. Thereby, the teachings by Gnosticism infiltrated the practices of the early church.

First, Montanism assumed predominant controversial ideology in the Christian church during the second century, which preceded Monarchians and Sabellianism during the third century and Arianism in the fourth century.⁷ Thus, these teachings invoked the church fathers and directly compromised the belief system and guidelines of the early church. Thereby fundamentally triggering the church fathers resolve and enticing them to undertake and recognize that principally there was indeed a need for a theological doctrinal ideology that addressed the nature of the Holy Spirit.

As inquiries continued to challenge the precise nature of the Holy Spirit, false teachings continued to infiltrate and confront the early church teachings. In response to these doctrinal assaults, the Council of Constantinople was assembled in 381 to address visible contentious issue, however, the Council did not resolutely explain the essence of the Holy Spirit or His

⁶ Ellen T. Charry, "Spiritual Formation by the Doctrine of the Trinity," *Theology Today* 54, no. 3 (October 1997): 367-369.

⁷ Johannes van Oort, "The Holy Spirit and the Early Church: The Experience of the Spirit," *Hervormde Theologische Studies* 68, no. 1 (2012), 1-7.

function with God the Father and God the Son.⁸

Then in 589 the Synod of Toledo was summoned to resolve the points of contention surrounding the nature of the Holy Spirit and determined whether or not the Holy Spirit proceeded from both the Father and the Son, with the Synod deciding whereby the Holy Spirit preceded from the Father.⁹ Thereby caused a separation between the Western Church and the Eastern Church, which conversely believed the Holy Spirit preceded from both the Father and Son and not only the Father respectively, thereby resulted the Great Schism that has not been repaired.¹⁰ Leaving the Western Church and the Eastern Church still divided over the issue of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in regards to His relationship to God the Father and God the Son.

Hence, during the era of Clement of Alexandria and Theophilus of Antioch, the church regarded the Holy Spirit as part of the Godhead.¹¹ With pneumatological development in its theological infancy, Tertullian stands recognized as the first church father to use the term Trinity to describe the complex and specific function of the Holy Triad to minimize the perception of polytheism.¹²

Acknowledged by Wright, the history of the Holy Spirit from a theological point of view can best be conceptualized as a process from experience to doctrine.¹³ From experience in prayer, supplication, worship and sensational gifts as seen in Origen, Hippolytus, Tertullian, and

⁸ Ibid., "The Holy Spirit and the Early Church: The Experience of the Spirit," 5-6.

⁹ J. R. Wright, "Holy Spirit in Holy Church: From Experience to Doctrine," *Anglican Theological Review* 83, no. 3 (Summer, 2001), 443-445.

¹⁰ H. E. Baber, "Trinity, Filioque and Semantic Ascent," *Sophia* 47.2 (2008): 149-60.

¹¹ Ibid., "Holy Spirit in Holy Church: From Experience to Doctrine," 443.

¹² Ibid., 444-446.

¹³ Ibid., 444-445.

Montanus to the development of doctrine as written by St. Basil of Caesarea and communicated in the third paragraph of the Nicene Creed, the doctrine of Holy Spirit reveals itself.¹⁴

Nevertheless, some evangelical Christians still questioned the relevance of the Holy Spirit to the Christian faith as an essential part of the Godhead.¹⁵ Hence, throughout church history the Trinitarian controversy gave little consideration to the historical significance of God the Holy Spirit, nor put forth meaningful effort to develop a doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

CONTEMPORARY THOUGHTS ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

David Friedrich Strauss has described the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as “Achilles heel” along with other notable theologians how referred to the doctrine as “step child” or “Cinderella” doctrine of ideology.¹⁶ Two pioneers of the twentieth-century Trinitarian ideology, Karl Barth and Karl Rahner , inspired a new generation of Trinitarian such as Robert W. Jenson, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jüergen Moltmann, Eberhard Jungel, Colin E. Gunton, Ted Peters and Bruce D. Marshall as well as others.¹⁷ Each of these theologians favor a formal natural ideology as the dominant perspective for the function of identifying the Holy Spirit in the life of man.¹⁸

Hence paramount characteristic of modern day theologians have been founded on the development of the personality sciences, which comprehend man in “terms of selfhood, the unconscious, freedom, spirit”.¹⁹ Reflecting the principal of Augustine who struggled to

¹⁴ Ibid., 443-444.

¹⁵ Ibid., “The Holy Spirit and the Early Church: The Experience of the Spirit,” 6-7.

¹⁶ Jerome L. Ficek, “The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Contemporary Thought,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 03, no.3 (Summer 1960), 70.

¹⁷ Timo Tavast, “The Identification of the Triune God: Robert W. Jenson’s Approach to the Doctrine of the Trinity,” *Theology Update* 51, no. 2, (June 2012), 155.

¹⁸ Ibid. “The Identification of the Triune God: Robert W. Jenson’s Approach to the Doctrine of the Trinity,” 155-157.

¹⁹ Ibid., “The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Contemporary Thought,” 70-72.

understand the Holy Spirit in terms of human personality, whereby, mirrors God's image and the richness of His nature, numerous modern theologians associate the "understanding of man as spirit to the doctrine of God as Spirit".²⁰

PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is unmistakably presented as a person in John 16:13-14²¹ and Ephesians 1:14. In these verses the personal pronouns represented by "he" and "who" refer to the Holy Spirit as a living entity. In the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20) disciples are commanded to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, further enforcing the Holy Spirit is a person. Ferguson assures that it is through man's fellowship with the Holy Spirit, whereby, man can actually have personal fellowship with God and personal fellowship with each other because incorporate fellowship belongs to God and He shares it in divine community.²²

Holy Spirit's Function in the Life of Man Before Salvation

From the beginning (Genesis 1:2), the Holy Spirit "broods" over the waters in creation. Thereby it is the Holy Spirit who reveals man's fallen nature, need for redemption and draws him to salvation. While most theologians and scholars agree fundamentally the Holy Spirit initiates, guides, and accomplishes salvation, however, many disagree over how the Holy Spirit affects conversion, whether directly or indirectly, and conversion has been, and is still, a much-debated matter for many believer and academy.²³

²⁰ Ibid., "The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Contemporary Thought," 71-73.

²¹ All Scripture quotations are taken from the *Zondervan KJV Study Bible* version unless otherwise noted, The Zondervan Corporation, 2002.

²² *The Holy Spirit: Contours of Christian Theology*, 78-99.

²³ Karl, Barth, *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: The Theological Basis of Ethics*,

While Isaiah 59:10 describe man as dead, in a desolate place, and unable to intercede for self. Paul elucidates depravity Romans 1:18-20, which denotes the corrupt fallen state of man. John 16: 7-11 upholds fundamentally the Holy Spirit convicts man of this fallen nature and whereby Jesus Christ saves man from sin. The Holy Spirit enabled the prophets (Isaiah 61:1) to communicate divine truth and enable man's moral concentration and holiness in Psalms 51:11. He gave Bezaleel the wisdom to construct the tabernacle (Exodus 31:2-5) and importantly the Holy Spirit inspired man to write the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 1:10-11).

Hence every reference to the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament demonstrate empowering selected individuals, for a selected length of time, for defined assignments relative to God's chosen people, the nation of Israel.²⁴ Hence indwelling occurs with Joseph in Genesis 41:38, Joshua in Numbers 27:18, in Daniel in Daniel 4:8, in Samson in Judges 14:6 and in David in 1 Samuel 16:13. Whereby the indwelling was temporary and often withdrawn by God when the assignment was complete, such as demonstrated with Samson in Judges 13:25, Saul in 1 Samuel 10:10 and Ezekiel in Ezekiel 2:2. Subsequent to Scripture the Holy Spirit also came to restrain against sin, such as in Genesis 6:3 and Nehemiah 9:20.

Thereby this concept, the function of the Holy Spirit in salvation is still a point of contention has created a great deal of misunderstanding throughout church history and is still emotionally debated today as one of the most deliberated and contentious aspects of the Holy Spirit.²⁵ However, "Jemison does not think contrarily the divine persons are in any sense

²⁴ James M. Hamilton, Jr., *Gods Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testament*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2006), 34-37.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, *Gods Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testament*, 44-55.

identical, particularly if this entails common *possession* of some divine *res* (the oneness of God ought not to become a fourth constituent of the divine life).”²⁶

Holy Spirit’s Function in the Life of Man After Salvation

Believers affirm overall whereas the Holy Spirit is the “Comforter,” which Jesus Christ referred to in John 14:26 and whereby the Holy Spirit guides nonbelievers to Jesus and enable man to live as a Christian. The Holy Spirit also give gifts to Christians, such as prophecy, healing, ministry, teaching, giving, leadership and mercy.²⁷ Subsequent to Acts 1:4-8, during Pentecost, Jesus informed the disciples persistently that the Holy Spirit would baptize and empower them.

After Jesus’ ascension, grace (Psalm 145:9; Luke 6:35), restraint from sin (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7; Romans 13:14), conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16: 7-11), indwell the believer (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), seal the believer (Ephesians 1:13-14), lead the believer (Galatians 5:16-18), regeneration (John 1:13) as well as salvation (John 3:5).

HOLY SPIRIT’S INDWELLING

Jesus Christ taught that there would be profound transformation in the ministry of the Holy Spirit after His departure, which liberally indicated the Holy Spirit would indwell the believer with permanent residence (John 7:38-39). Subsequent to Romans 8:9, any man who does not have the Holy Spirit, which is the distinguished marking of a Christian has not received salvation. Which is affirmed in John 14:16-17 the Holy Spirit will be with man for eternity, even though sin can grieve the Holy Spirit, it can not cause man to lose the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30).

²⁶ Christopher Wells, "Aquinas and Jenson on Thinking about the Trinity," *Anglican Theological Review* 84, no. 2 (Spring, 2002), 345.

²⁷ Charles E. Bouchard, “Recovering the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Moral Theology,” *Theological Studies* 63, no. 3 (September 2002), 539 – 551.

For a believer is not filled as a container is filled with a liquid, but since the Holy Spirit is a person, once salvation occurs through Jesus Christ man is immediately indwelled (Romans 8:9). Subsequent to 1 John, 1:7, the Holy Spirit dwells in and has fellowship with the believer through the interaction of the word of God in the illumination of the word. Ficek assures nonetheless man's relationship to God is always a relation in freedom and spirit.²⁸ Hence, it is the Holy Spirit who produce "daily, constant communion with God the Father and God the Son".²⁹

Indwelling of the Holy Spirit Facilitates Daily Life

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is God in permanent residence in the body of a believer in Jesus Christ every day, all day.³⁰ Whereby, the Holy Spirit gives God's divine wisdom for application to everyday situations and circumstances in life of the believer. Hence wisdom goes beyond man's intellect, it is divine in nature, and is supported by Scripture; which enables man to know God personally, interact with God, and be in constant fellowship with God while still in a physical body on earth.³¹

Consequently, the Holy Spirit may be used in the practical daily application of spiritual growth, marriage, business and finance, education, family and domestic concerns, health and wellness, politics, military, ministry and any other area relevant to the believer desires or needs encouragement. It is the Holy Spirit who enables man to progress and profit regardless of the specific area of weakness, because the Holy Spirit divinely interact with and facilitates all facets of man's life (1Corinthians 12:7-11).

²⁸ Ibid., "The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Contemporary Thought," 79.

²⁹ Ibid., *The Holy Spirit: Contours of Christian Theology*, 37- 45.

³⁰ Ibid., 37-45.

³¹ Ibid., 47-58.

Indwelling of the Holy Spirit Facilitates Church Life

Through the directive of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ started the church as God's original community, for His people of the Old Testament to testify to the manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth and worship Him.³² The church continues to function as the divine body of the Holy Spirit for perfecting the believers for work in the ministry, edifying the body of Christ, a place to abide until all men come into the unity of faith and receive salvation with the measure dispensed by God (Ephesians 4:12-13).

Also, the Holy Spirit facilitates the communal life of the church, encouraging unity, worship, fellowship and service.³³ His presence is manifested through the church's openness and responsiveness to the Holy Spirit's leadership. Hence, the church enables a place for believers to minister to each other, manifest good stewardship in the grace of God and glorify God (1 Peter 4:10:11).

THE FUNCTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CHRISTIAN LIVING

Man's body serves as the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19), which signifies that the Holy Spirit is personally present with man in daily Christian living. The sanctuary is God's dwelling place as the Holy Spirit is God, which now dwells in His sanctuary of the individual believer and as well the evangelical church to provide divine intervention into the life of man.³⁴ Since the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, is the glory of God on earth, He has revealed Himself and made available to all believers His personhood, so now it is possible for man to be permanently in communion with God.³⁵

³² Ibid., *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: The Theological Basis of Ethics*, 55-77.

³³ Ibid., "The Holy Spirit and the Early Church: The Experience of the Spirit," 7.

³⁴ Nicholas M. Healy, "By the Working of the Holy Spirit: The Crisis of Authority in the Christian Churches," *Anglican Theological Review* 88, no. 1 (Winter, 2006), 7-11.

³⁵ Ibid., *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: The Theological Basis of Ethics*, 57-71.

CONCLUSION: DIVINE AND EARTHLY COMMUNION

“Obviously, human thought and language fail adequately to comprehend or express such realities,”³⁶ nevertheless it has been augured explicitly that the function of the Holy Spirit is to enable man to commune with God the Father, subsequent to Scripture, after salvation by Jesus Christ, as the person of ultimate divine authority dwelling with the believer as God in residence in daily living.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is important because “the gospel of Jesus Christ includes the message that the Holy Spirit has been poured out on all flesh.”³⁷ Notwithstanding the Holy Spirit is foundational and critical to the believer’s life as the method that God has decided to use to commune with man until God the Son returns. Nonetheless, several important issues, include the history of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, evidence of the doctrine, as well as church application of the doctrine was defended in position that the Holy Spirit enables man to commune with the divine God.

Barth declares that the scope of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is extremely complex and beyond what man can even know.³⁸ However, an attempt was made to defend and limit the topic to the Holy Spirit’s function in commune with man, however, it still involved an exceedingly complex undertaking that can never be truly separated from God the Father and God the Son.

Nevertheless, this research focused on the specific and limited function of the Holy Spirit in man’s daily life through the use of scholarly books, journals, and other academic documents that present a Trinitarian reformed Protestant view. Thereby, the data from the research support the obvious observation that there is much scholarly ideology on the person of the Holy Spirit,

³⁶ Ibid., “Trinity, Simplicity and the Status of God's Personal Relations,” 98.

³⁷ Ibid., “Holy Spirit”, 573.

³⁸ Ibid., *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: The Theological Basis of Ethics*, 3-5.

but still much work needs to be done in order to add satisfactorily to the scholarly body of research on function of the Holy Spirit.

In summary, analysis of this research contends that the function of the Holy Spirit is to enable man to commune with God the Father, subsequent to Scripture, after salvation by Jesus Christ, as the person of ultimate divine authority dwelling with the believer as God in residence in daily living. Whereby, this may help to diminish the subordinate and overlooked place of the Holy Spirit in evangelical Christian thinking, practical application, and the church and add to the body of knowledge. Especially, since subsequent to Wagoner's observation a significant number of Trinitarians do not understand the doctrine of the Holy Spirit,³⁹ and many still do not grasp the person of the Holy Spirit as God within man.

³⁹ Robert A. Wagoner, *The Great Debate Regarding The Father, Son, & Holy Spirit*, (Santa Ana, California. 1997), 88.

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