

BETHEL SEMINARY

**CREDO PAPER: DIVINITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, LORDS SUPPER, AND THE
KINGDOM OF GOD**

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

TS513 Systematic Theology II

By

Chad Richards

May 2017

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PART ONE: DIVINITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the Old Testament we see the spirit (*ruah*) of Yaweh is God's power in action (Packer 1988, 316). While the personhood of the Spirit can be read from the NT into the OT, it cannot be read out of it. The spirit in the OT is often represented as God's breath (Ezk. 37:9) that helped shape creation (Gen. 1:2), and was often associated with the enabling of people for ministry and task (Num. 27:18; Judg. 3:10; 1 Sam, 10:10; Ex. 31:1-3). Interestingly, it never appears that the Spirit of the OT has its own distinct personhood. However, as we turn into the New Testament we see that the Holy Spirit appears to have a distinct personhood from the Father and Son, with a ministry of his own (Packer 1988, 316). It is clear throughout the New Testament text that the Holy Spirit is a divine being that not only shares the same attributes as God but participates in similar workings as the Son and the Father.

At the beginning of the divinity debate, the question being looked at was led chiefly by Eustathius. He oversaw a group of writers known as the *pneumatomachoi* who believed that the Spirit nor the works of the Spirit were divine (McGrath 2011, 229). In countering Eustathius, writers such as Athanasius and Basil of Caesarea pointed out the formulation for baptism which includes the notion that Christians are baptized in the name of the, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This argument eventually prevailed but patristic writers were still hesitant to speak openly of the Spirit as "God" (McGrath 2011, 229).

First, the Holy Spirit appears to have the same authority of God. For example, the Holy Spirit is able to drive out demons (Matt. 2:28) which is a feat only capable by that of divinity. Moreover, the words God and Holy Spirit are used interchangeably demonstrating the divine au-

thority of the Spirit. In the book of Acts as Peter claims that lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God (Acts 5:3) he uses Holy Spirit and God interchangeably as implicitly demonstrating that they are one in the same. According to Peter, lying to the Spirit is no different than lying to God (Erickson 2013, 782). In 1 Corinthians Paul seems to think that God's temple is the same as "a temple of the Holy Spirit" and therefore believes in a theological understanding that the Holy Spirit is in fact God (1 Cor. 3:17-17; 6:19-20).

Second, the Holy Spirit displays and possess the same attributes as God (Erickson 2013, 782). McGrath says that, "The Spirit is responsible for the creating, renewing, and sanctification of God's creatures. Yet how could one creature renew or sanctify another creature? Only if the Spirit was divine could sense be made of these functions" (Packer 1988, 229). If the Holy Spirit functions and shares attributes of God, then, he must be God. In addition, look at how the Spirit seems to share in the omniscience of God (Packer 1954, 14). 1 Corinthians says that "the Spirit searches all things" (1 Cor. 2:10) and that the Spirit has the omniscient power to know the very thoughts of God (2:11) because the Holy Spirit is God.

Third, the works of the Holy Spirit are only works that can be held by a divine being (Erickson 2013, 783). In Genesis the Spirit is involved with the creation process (Gen.1:2), while in Job the Spirit is attributed for having created the heavens (Job 26:13). In addition to the Spirit's creative role he also shares many other works that are divine. The Spirit mediates fellowship with the Father (Rom. 5:5; 8:23; 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph 1:14), transforms believers into Christlikeness and has an active role in the sanctification process (2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 5:16-25; Jude 20-21), gives gifts that have the power to build and encourage the church (Rom. 12:3-13; 1 Cor. 12; Eph.

4:7-16), and assures believers that they are children and heirs of God (Rom. 8:12-17; 2 Cor. 1:22; Jn. 3:24). Through these functions it is obvious that the Holy Spirit is in fact a divine being.

The Holy Spirit has the very authority, attributes, functions, and is equal with God and the Son. It is out of this conviction that Christians ought to put the Holy Spirit back in His place and stop treating Him like a second class citizen in a Jesus centered environment. The Spirit is “more than Gods aid, He is God-with-us-now” (Pinnock 2011, 67) and the Spirit has every claim upon our worship. For evangelicals, it is easy to let the Holy Spirit take a back seat to Jesus. The calling for evangelicals is to “create a space in our lives for him by being attentive and welcoming. The pace and rhythms of our lives, no less than the disposition of our hearts, must reflect a posture of invitation to the Spirit (69).

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PART TWO: THE LORDS SUPPER

The sacraments of the church are means in which the congregation can interact with God's Spirit. They are often referred to as a "means of grace" (Horton 2011, 351). The sacraments include the preaching and teaching of the Scripture, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Debate around the Eucharist or Lord's Supper have centered around three differing views. First, the Catholic church for centuries taught a view of "Transubstantiation" in which the elements of wine and bread metaphysically become the body and blood of Christ (Erickson 2013, 1041). Second, Martin Luther's view, called "consubstantiation" was similar to transubstantiation in that the elements are in fact present "in, with, and under" the bread and wine, however they are not molecularly changed (1042). Third, the view of other reformers like Zwingli and Calvin believe that the Eucharist is more of a "symbolism" and representation of what Christ accomplished on the Cross (McGrath 2011, 420). Is it possible that a balance of all three views is what is actually happening during communion? I believe that in communion the Holy Spirit is present and amongst His people and while communion is a great symbol of the death of Christ, there is more happening. As a member eats the bread and drinks the wine, they are drinking and eating grace into their life and interacting with the Spirit of Christ in a spiritual way. Communion is more than just remembrance but it is a way to receive grace, experience Christ's Spirit in a tangible way, and come to the Cross in repentance, while walking away having participated in an element that can bring spiritual growth (Smith 2011, 586-87).

First, the Lord's Supper, while it is a remembrance of Christ, it is also an experience of Christ. Gordon Smith says, "It is an act of deep communion with the risen Christ" (Smith, 2011, 587). It is during communion that the Spirit is gathered around the table "with us" as two or

more are gathered (Matt. 18:20) and a deep communion with God takes place that transports us back to that place of the Cross (Macchia 2014). In the same way that a veteran interacts with his fallen comrades as he places his hand on the veterans memorial, so does one interact with God's Spirit as they interact with the elements of Communion (Tyra 2013). Second, spiritual growth takes place in the acts of Communion. While a member seeks reconciliation and repentance at the Cross during communion that member experiences spiritual growth through the elements. "In so doing, the Christian community affirms again the forgiveness of God that is found in Christ and renews its covenant to walk in faithful obedience to Christ and the church. Thus, the Lord's Supper is vital to spiritual growth (Smith 2011, 586).

It appears in the book of 1 Corinthians that there is a way to drink judgment onto yourself in the taking of communion (1 Cor. 11:27). Is there a specific way to participate in Communion? While different denominations will stress different practices of communion it does appear in 1 Corinthians that there are some hospitality practices in preparing to go to the Table. First, a member ought to examine oneself (1 Cor. 11:28). "Preparation for the Lord's Supper will also awaken in the individual the desire to be completely certain that the particular sins which disturb and torment him and are known only to God are forgiven" (Bonhoeffer 1954, 121). Bonhoeffer would encourage the church to *examine* ones inner workings and not only confess them to God but confess them to another member. While Bonhoeffer makes many strong arguments for not only divine confession but also material confession with another brother, one could argue that confession to God is sufficient (1 John 1:9). Can a person find spiritual growth in confession with a brother? Yes. Is it necessary? No, for when we confess to God, he is righteous and just to forgive us. Second, a person ought to thank God and give praise to the Lord. The Lord's Supper,

“While Christocentric, should be thoroughly Trinitarian: the church celebrates a “Eucharist”-giving thanks to the Creator” (Smith 2011, 587). It is easy to simply go up to the table without praising the one who gave us access *to* the Table. Third, participants in the Eucharist ought to pray for the needy in their church. We should pray for the struggling single mom, the couple going through a divorce, and the drug addict that is trying to get sober. It appears that the Corinthian church was coming to communion drunk and neglecting the poor and eating as gluttons (1 Cor. 11:18-22), and as a result were reaping judgement onto themselves (Macchia 2014). As a result, we ought to learn from the Corinthians and use our time of Communion to pray for the struggling members of our church as communion unifies us to each other and should not divide us. In conclusion, the Lord’s Supper is the way that a member can experience spiritual growth, interact with the Spirit of the risen Lord in a deep communion, and receive grace. As these three things happen in unity so does the communal church become unified together under the Trinity.

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PART THREE: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

For years Christian's have made the whole of their faith about getting into Heaven. The baby boomer generation has leaked this evangelistic message into the hearts of their congregation over the past twenty years that makes Christianity only about getting into heaven. This is not a bad thing but it is missing the entirety of the Gospel. Heaven, yes, is incredibly important and it is a great treat that we get to partake in as we come to the Lord but it is not the *whole* of Jesus' message. When we make the whole of Christianity about getting into Heaven we are merely securing a get out of Hell free card and can often feel stuck in our Christian walk. Yes, we have our Heaven card, but we are living like Hell right now. Church has become mundane and just something we do on Sundays and we have lost the vigor of the Christian faith. I believe that the central message of Jesus (Packer 1988, 367) is found in Matthew 4:17 when Jesus says, "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is near," and if we can learn to live like this is true, it can help us live closer to Jesus in the everyday life and not just the after life.

Now, what is the Kingdom of God? Dallas Willard describes God's Kingdom as, "The range of his effective will, where what he wants done is done" (Willard 1997, 25). This meaning is both eschatological and present in its being (Ladd 1993, 62). However, the problem is that the-

ologians and scholars are often vague about what this means (Stassen 2011, 561). So, what *is* the Kingdom of Heaven and why does it matter?

First, the Kingdom of Heaven is what happens when God is in control and it is present. This is the proclamation that Jesus is King and He is in fact ruling today. Where do we see evidence of Gods Kingdom in the world? Stassen argues that we see Christ's reign in seven categories: deliverance, justice, peace, presence of God as Holy Spirit, joy, healing, and return from exile or repentance and return to God (Stassen 2011, 562). When we experience these things in our life we are experiencing pieces of God's Kingdom. Moreover, we see God's kingdom most evident within the church as the church participates with God's Kingdom. However, we cannot be confused into thinking that the church is the Kingdom. Ladd gives five specific aspects of the relationship between the Kingdom and the church: (1) The church is not the Kingdom (2) The Kingdom creates the church (3) The church witnesses to the Kingdom (4) The church is the instrument of the Kingdom (5) The church is the custodian of the Kingdom (for the church has been given the Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven (Ladd 1993, 55-68). As the Kingdom is present we experience more of Gods Kingdom by allowing his Kingdom to intersect with ours and we pray, "Thy will be done." We can invite God's kingdom into our life in very practical ways. As missionaries are led out into the fields of Haiti they are pointing people to Gods Kingdom and being witnesses to it. As preachers share the Good News they are sharing about Gods Kingdom and inviting people into it. Much of the Christian life is infiltrated with Gods Kingdom and as we develop a language to describe it we will have a greater understanding and appreciation of it.

Second, the gift of the Kingdom is eschatological and is associated to spiritual salvation. A person receives salvation when they partake in the acceptance of the Kingdom of God. The

person who accepts the Kingdom of God experiences the Kingdom of God. “This eschatological salvation is elsewhere described as merely as a saving of one’s (true) life in contrast with losing one’s physical life (Mk. 8:35). This eschatological salvation can be described simply as entrance into eternal life (Mk. 9:43; Mt. 25:46) or into the joy of the Lord (Mt. 25:21, 23) (Ladd 72).” The Kingdom manifests itself through the church (Grudem 1994, 864) and while it is “here and now” it is also “not yet.” As the Apostle Paul has said, “For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known (1 Cor. 13:22). The Kingdom is eschatological not just from a salvific perspective but from an eternal perspective. As one receives entrance and participation in God’s Kingdom “they will begin to experience something of what God’s final kingdom reign will be like” (Grudem 1994, 864). In addition, that person will experience some measure of victory over sin (Rom. 6:14; 14:17), over demonic opposition (Luke 10:17), and over disease (Luke 10:9). “They will live in the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:28), Rom. 8:4-17), who is the dynamic power of the coming Kingdom. Eventually Jesus will return and His Kingdom reign will extend over all creation (1 Cor. 15:24-28) (Grudem 1994, 864). Why does the Kingdom matter? It matters because as we recognize God’s activity in the world it draws us closer to Him as we celebrate and partner with his activity. If we only make the Christian walk about getting into Heaven then we can accept Jesus into our hearts and move on. There is work to be done in the here and now and God calls all of His creation to pray, “On Earth as it is in Heaven.”

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