

**Missiological Reflection on the Intervention (Guidance) of the Holy Spirit in Acts 13:1-3  
and its Relevance to Promoting Christian Missions in African**

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**Abstract**

*The Holy Spirit plays a prominent role in God's mission today. He is the most important Person in the Triune God concerning Christian missions. One of the significant roles of the Holy Spirit in this regard is the effectual guidance through instructions of individuals or groups into God's mission on earth. Christian missions without the explicit divine guidance of the Holy Spirit resemble a ship at sea with a faulty compass. Christianity in Africa is gradually getting the world's attention and recently becoming the centre of academic discussion concerning religion. However, the concept of missions and the work of the Holy Spirit concerning missions have received either little or no attention in recent scholarship. This study employs a synchronic approach which is the form of exegesis in the context of the canon, which deals with the interpretation of individual books and texts in their present 'canonical' form. It is argued that this form is the definitive version because the decisions made by those shaping the individual biblical books and the canon as a whole should be taken seriously. This article offers some missiological reflection on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit in Acts 13:1-3 and validates the Holy Spirit's implicit scriptural position as the most important Person in the Triune God in Christian missions in Africa. The article recommends that African Christian missionaries and sending churches must pre-initiate missionary work through prayers and fasting, receive explicit guidance in the place of prayer concerning missions' outreaches, and must not neglect or ignore the Person and work of the Holy Spirit in their missionary endeavours.*

**Keywords:** Missiology, Holy Spirit, Scripture, African Christianity, Church.

## **1.0. Introduction**

The Holy Spirit and Christian missions have not always been strongly associated with Mission Theology. Historically, most missiological reflections were solely focused on Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> When one looks through recent missiological handbooks, particularly those among the most reputable and acclaimed, such as David Bosch's "*Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*"<sup>2</sup> and Senior and Stuhlmüller's joint work, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*,<sup>3</sup> one is surprised by how little reference to the Holy Spirit has been made in scholarly missiological books as such.

With such a dearth of scholarly contributions from well-known missionary scholars, attempting an overall presentation of the Holy Spirit's significance for mission in a single paper like this is not easy. Therefore, this paper aims to provide some missiological reflection on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit in Acts 13:1-3 and also seeks to validate the Holy Spirit's implicit scriptural position as significant Person in the Triune God in Christian missions. He plays prominent role in God's mission today. He is the most important Person in the Triune God concerning Christian missions. One of the significant roles of the Holy Spirit in this regard is the effectual guidance through instructions of individuals or groups into God's mission on earth.<sup>4</sup> Christian missions without the explicit divine guidance of the Holy Spirit resemble a ship at sea with a faulty compass. Moreover, for obvious reasons, a faulty compass is worse than no compass.

Many Christians and missionaries sending churches or agencies seek guidance on reaching the unreached today. How can today's missionary enterprise overcome its current challenges? Where and how do we find qualified missionaries? What are the financial implications of the next mission project? The world, in all its complexities, offers numerous opportunities and options.

Nonetheless, the Holy Spirit provides simple answers to this deep need in contemporary missions through guidance and timely interventions. Palmer avers that "guidance" refers to two radically different things. The first is biblical guidance, which God provides directly through the Holy Spirit, and the second is providential guidance, God's decretive will in bringing things to pass.<sup>5</sup> Whichever guidance is required; the writers of this paper believes only the Holy Spirit guides and intervenes at different times in Church history to help individuals and groups to carry out God's mission.

The Holy Spirit's guidance and instructions on how and where God's mission is to be carried out are not ambiguous; on the contrary, they are clear and understandable by those

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<sup>1</sup>Anastasia Vassiliadou. "The Significance of the Holy Spirit for Mission." [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu).

<sup>2</sup>David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 2011).

<sup>3</sup>C.P Carroll Stuhlmüller and C.P. Donald Senior, *The Biblical Foundation for Mission*. (Maryknoll, New York; Orbis Books, 1983).

<sup>4</sup>Andy Chambers, *Exemplary Life: A Theology of Church Life in Acts* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012).

<sup>5</sup>Edwin H. Palmer, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Baker Book House, 1958), 101-102.

born and led by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit's guidance is straightforward.<sup>6</sup> The primary goal of the guidance is to proclaim God's redemptive plans (*Christian missions*) for the salvation of all humanity.

In general, the missionary task of the Holy Spirit amongst the Triune God cannot be overemphasized. He is analogous to the "*superior vena cava*" in human anatomy.<sup>7</sup> The Holy Spirit is the Triune God's "*superior vena cava*" for Christian missions. Someone may rightly asked, "How large a part does the Holy Spirit play in Christian missions?" A small part? A significant part? Or is He everything? The guidance (instruction) of the Holy Spirit relating to Christian missions in the scripture was essential for its many successes. Leroy Eims affirms, "The Holy Spirit is the specific strategy of the Great Commission Jesus gave His disciples."<sup>8</sup> The writers believe that minimizing the interventional instructions of the Holy Spirit in Christian missions is a recipe for its failure.

As earlier stated, this paper aims to offer some missiological reflection on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit in Acts 13:1-3 and validate the Holy Spirit's implicit scriptural position as the most important Person in the Triune God in Christian missions. An attempt will be made not to replicate existing Evangelical and Pentecostal scholarship on this topic but to highlight some of its significance to contemporary missions that readers may otherwise overlook. To begin, the researcher will sketch the work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

## 2.0. A Sketch of the Holy Spirit Work in the New Testament

The New Testament is the final norm for Christians in assessing the Person and works of the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup> It is a perplexity to organize systematically the themes of the work of the Holy Spirit that is so vast in scriptural testimony in a framework of this paper that is so limited for such a mighty task.<sup>10</sup> The goal is to sketch some works of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. It must be stated and implied here that the work of the Holy Spirit does not begin belatedly with Pentecost but is found profusely in all creation and its continuing providences, and especially in the entire history of salvation, which in due time comes to fulfillment in the incarnation, and the Spirit enabling the church to be finally consummated at the final resurrection.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> R.A. Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan. Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 142.

<sup>7</sup> The superior vena cava in human anatomy is the two main veins bringing de-oxygenated blood from the body to the heart. Veins from the head and upper body feed into the superior vena cava, which empties into the right atrium of the heart. It carries blood from the head, neck, arms and chest. The vena cava is the largest vein in human body. In a similar vein, the Holy Spirit is the largest singular Personality in Christian missions. [www.kenhub.com](http://www.kenhub.com) accessed on 5|05|2023.

<sup>8</sup> Leroy Eims, *Disciples in Action: A Study of the Apostles' Ministry in Acts. Witnessin, Making Discoples, Equipping Labourers, Training Leasers* (Wheaton, Illinios: Victor Books, 1981), 27.

<sup>9</sup> Donald G. Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit: Works and Gifts* (Downwers Groves, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 2000), 76.

<sup>10</sup>Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit: Systematic Theology*, Vol., 3 (New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 32-34.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

Many missiologists (like every other Christian) view the Holy Spirit as a mystery, the “hidden” Member of the Triune God. The Father and the Son are known, but the Holy Spirit’s Person is mostly unknown.<sup>12</sup> The title of ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ conveys the idea of personhood naturally, but the Holy Spirit is thought of in impersonal terms.<sup>13</sup> For instance, the Hebrew (רוּחַ, *rûah*) and the Greek (πνεῦμα; *pneuma*) terms for ‘Spirit’ mean ‘breath’ or ‘wind,’ and the familiar images for Spirit (fire, water, oil, dove) in the Scriptures seem to suggest an impersonal force or thing. Unfortunately, some interpreted several passages in the New Testament treated the Holy Spirit impersonally, in language that suggests a dynamic force than a Personality.<sup>14</sup> Few Christians understand Who the Holy Spirit is, why the Holy Spirit came, and what the Holy Spirit’s roles are in Christian missions. Despite these shortcomings in scholarship concerning the Person of the Holy Spirit, the works are conspicuous in the Scriptures and today’s society.

First, some Christian scholars recognize Christian missions as the central theme in Acts of the Apostles.<sup>15</sup> While, suggest that the central theme in the Book of Acts is the Spirit empowerment for Christian missions.<sup>16</sup> The significant task of the Spirit in the *Missio Dei* (Mission of God) and *Missio ecclesiae* (Mission of the church) in the New Testament is empowerment for missions. In pursuing this assertion, the writers will seek to rely on and identify with the writings of the New Testament scholars, who implicitly affirm the essential empowerment the Holy Spirit offers believers in bringing about God’s redemptive plan on earth.

Donald G. Bloesch said it is a theological mistake to magnify one work of the Holy Spirit over the others in scripture. The Spirit, active in creation and soul regeneration from the dominion of sin and Satan, is also the Principal-Agent empowering Christians to bear witness to Christ’s resurrection.<sup>17</sup> Eddie Gibbs advances the view of Donald Bloesch, reaffirming that the spiritual dynamic that triggered and sustained the first disciples from Pentecost is linked exclusively to empowerment by the Holy Spirit. The Pentecost phenomenon Gibbs concluded must be interpreted as distinctively missiological, that is, the essential empowerment of the church by the Holy Spirit is not primarily concerned with salvation, or “even a second work of grace,” but on the contrary for witness throughout the

<sup>12</sup> Ray Pritchard, *Names of the Holy Spirit* (Chicago, Moody Press, 1995), 7.

<sup>13</sup> Ivan Satyavrata, *The Holy Spirit: The Lord and Life-Giver* (Nottingham, England; InterVarsity Press, 2009), 71.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Henry J. Cardbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (London, SPCK, 1968), 316.; see also, Jacques Dupont, *The Salvation of the Gentiles: Essays on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. John R. Keating (New York: Paulist, 1979), 11–33.; Donald P. Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundation for Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 255–79.

<sup>16</sup> Denzil R. Miller, *Empowered for Global Missions: A Missiological Look at the Book of Acts* (Springfield, MO: Life, 2005), 62, 69.; David CheeWaiCheum, “The Spirit and Mission in the Book of Acts,” *Journal of Asian Mission* 6.2 (2004): 3–12.; Craig S. Keener, “Power of Pentecost: Luke’s Missiology in Acts 1–2,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 12.1 (Jan. 2009): 47–73.

<sup>17</sup> Donald G. Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit: Works and Gifts* (Downers Grove, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 2000), 73.

world.<sup>18</sup> The writers share the view of Bloesch and Gibbs but add that Holy Spirit plays important role in the Triune God with the sole responsibility for empowerment for missions. *The Cape Town Commitment*<sup>19</sup> that avows that the Holy Spirit gives power for missions, and without such powers, all missionary endeavours is fruitless further affirms this exclusive role of the Spirit in missions.

Second, in addition to empowering the believers for Christian missions, the Holy Spirit is also uniquely involved in equipping them with diverse spiritual gifts for their holy vocation to witness and be ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ's world.<sup>20</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:4; 8-11; 28 and 29, Paul said:

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit...for to one is given the word of wisdom through the same Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles by the same Spirit, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, administration, and varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all workers of miracles?"

It is evident from these scriptural verses that the work of the Holy Spirit is uniquely distributed to the '*church gathered*' to be thoroughly equipped to do the work of ministry when the '*church scattered*' into the world. Some scholars have earnestly tried to set forth the varieties of pneumatology (Person and work of the Holy Spirit) in the New Testament. One such scholar is Thomas Oden, who affirms that as Man, Jesus walked daily in radical dependence on the Holy Spirit for equipping and that every gift requisite to the mission of Jesus Christ in the days of His flesh came by the Holy Spirit.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Oden attests that "the Holy Spirit filled the growth of Jesus with grace (John 3:34, Luke 2:40), descending in the form of a dove at His baptism (Mark 1:10, Matt. 3:13-17), anointing and equipping Him to the messianic mission."<sup>22</sup> Buttressing the view of Oden is R.A Torrey, who avows that Jesus Christ is the only perfect manifestation in history of the complete work of the Holy

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<sup>18</sup> Eddie Gibbs, "The Launching of Mission: The Outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost" in *Mission in Acts*, Robert L. Gallagher and Paul Hertig, eds. (Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 2004), 18-19.

<sup>19</sup>Doug S. Birdsall and Lindsay Brown, *The Cape Town Commitment of Faith: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action* (The Third Lausanne Congress 2013), 28.

<sup>20</sup>Donald G. Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit: Works and Gifts* (Downwers Groves, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 2000), 73.

<sup>21</sup>Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit: Systematic Theology*, Vol., 3 (New York, Harper Collins Publishers, 1994), 47.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid 48

Spirit in man.<sup>23</sup> Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit, led by the Holy Spirit to offer Himself without spot to God, anointed and fitted for service by the power of the Holy Spirit, and raised to life from the dead by the same Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's many works include anointing, sealing, infilling, baptizing, revealing truth, life-giving, guidance, counseling, regeneration, empowerment, transformation, and utterances.

Several examples in the scriptures are evident of the work of the Holy Spirit, which is intricately connected to the work and mission of Christ and the church. The writers believe only the Person of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity empowers and equips believers with spiritual gifts to carry out their responsibilities in Christian missions.

### 3.0. A Synopsis of Christian Missions in Acts 13

The book of Acts does not tell who its author was; it is more like the Gospels than the Epistles in the New Testament. From the earliest times, at least from the end of the second century CE, the tradition has been that the author was Luke, the one described as 'the beloved physician' in Col. 4.14 (also, II Tim. 4.11; Philemon 24). The evidence available from Acts does not enable a firm judgment. However, two features within the document itself are particularly relevant.<sup>24</sup>

One is the presence of 'we/us' sections in the second (the Pauline) half of the narrative, where the impression certainly seems to be given that the narrator was personally present at and involved in the events described (16.10–17; 20.5–15; 21.8–18; 27.1–28.16). Most critical studies ascribe this feature to the artistic invention or literary convention, but the abruptness of the transitions from third person to first person and back again are better explained in terms of personal presence and absence, and overall it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the narrator intended his readers to infer his involvement in the episodes described.<sup>25</sup>

The other is that Acts is the second of a two-volume work — Luke-Acts. This is signaled in the opening sentence of the latest volume (1:1–2), as also by the stylistic characteristics which permeate both volumes, and is confirmed by the several deliberate points of parallel between the two volumes, which effectively lock them together. Therefore, one can take the prologue to the Gospel (Luke 1:1–4) and conclude that the claim indicated there, of careful research after sources and eyewitness information, also applies to the Acts.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> R.A. Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan. Zondervan Publishing House, 1974) 220. Bruce A. Baker, "The New Covenant and Egalitarianism." *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 12:37 (December 2008), 27-51.

<sup>24</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Acts: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).; Mark A. Brighton, "The Sicarii in Acts: A New Perspective." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 54:3 (September 2011), 547-58.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas L. Constable, "Acts." In *Surveying the Gospels and Acts*, Paul D. Weaver, ed. (Schroon Lake, N.Y.: Word of Life, 2017), 219-71.

<sup>26</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *A Brief Introduction to the New Testament* (New York and Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2004).

In other words, it makes little difference whether one can or cannot give a particular name to the author of Acts or describes his character and precise relation to the story he tells. It is enough to know that he was personally close to the events, often/usually able to draw on eyewitness recollections, and did his task with considerable care and a due sense of responsibility. Since one cannot be sure who he was, sticking with the traditional identification of the author as 'Luke' will be preferable.

Like the Gospel, Acts is addressed to one Theophilus. Knowing who he was other than that, the manner of Luke's address in Luke 1:3 ('most excellent') suggests that he was a man of some rank and influence (also, the address in Acts 23.26, 24.3, and 26.25). There is no suggestion that the two volumes were for Theophilus' personal use alone. The hope would rather be that Theophilus would act as a sponsor, formal or otherwise, for the work.<sup>27</sup> He must have been either a Christian or a strong sympathizer. His sponsorship would not have made much difference in the various Christian churches that would soon learn of and seek out their copies, but it could have made a difference in drawing attention to the volume among the literate and governing classes in some parts of the Empire. The address, however, does not help one much in resolving why Luke wrote his two books.

Not many hang on the date of the composition, but a date in the middle of the second generation of Christianity (the 80s) fits best with the evidence: (1) a volume written sometime after the Gospel of Luke, itself usually thought to be dependent on Mark's Gospel (usually dated to the late 60s or early 70s), (2) by someone who had probably been a companion of Paul, and (3) whose portrayal of earliest Christianity seems to reflect the concerns of the post-Pauline generation after that stormy petrel had disappeared from the scene.<sup>28</sup>

### 3.1. Exegesis and Exposition

All New Testament writings come down in different textual forms, from manuscripts and translations dating chiefly from the fourth century onwards. Usually, the differences between them though multitudinous, are insignificant. However, in the case of Acts, a text form of Acts (usually called the 'Western' text) can be discerned, which consistently seeks to clarify and smooth the earlier text by numerous elaborations. These do not belong to the original text and are rarely referred to in the some commentary, but they are often exciting and tells how Acts were received and used within early Western Christianity.<sup>29</sup>

The launch of the first planned mission into Gentile territory (at least according to Luke) must be represented appropriately. Saul/Paul had already been forewarned of this mission and its consequences in 9:15–16. However, rather like Peter in 10:17–20, the heavenly vision has to be confirmed by the Spirit's prompting (13:2, 4) and, again, like Peter

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<sup>27</sup> Donald A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*. 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts: Ariel's Bible Commentary series* (San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 2020).

<sup>29</sup> James D.G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996).

in 11:1–18, by the church’s confirmation (13:3).<sup>30</sup> Of these two, the more critical, as always for Luke, is the manifest will of the Spirit. However, the latter is not unimportant. In other words, what follows is usually called ‘the first missionary journey.’ However, it is the only missionary journey as such that Paul undertakes. Moreover, he does so with the full backing of the Antioch church and as their missionary.

13.1 Ἦσαν δὲ ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ κατὰ τὴν οὖσαν ἐκκλησίαν προφῆται καὶ διδάσκαλοι ὃ τε Βαρναβᾶς καὶ Συμεὼν ὁ καλούμενος Νίγερ, καὶ Λούκιος ὁ Κυρηναῖος, Μαναὴν τε Ἡρώδου τοῦ τετραάρχου σύντροφος καὶ Σαῦλος.

*“In Antioch, in the church that was there, there were prophets and teachers—Barnabas, Symeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, foster-brother of Herod, the tetrarch, and Saul.”*

Here, one has the first real insight into a form of organization and worship other than that in Jerusalem. There it appears to have been a mixture of ideal theology (‘the twelve’ representing a reconstituted Israel) and pragmatic reaction to developments (the appointment of ‘the seven’ in 6:1–6), with the emergence of James and ‘the elders’ (12:17; 11:30) foreshadowing a more settled structure — foreshadowing, one might say indeed, the emergence of a single figure leader (bishop) supported by a team of elders/deacons (cf. I Tim. 3:1–13 and 5:17–22). Moreover, worship is represented as an evolving combination of attendance at the Temple and the teaching and fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers in members’ homes (2:42, 46; 5:42; 12:12).<sup>31</sup> However, here one sees a different pattern, a community characterized by the leadership of prophets and teachers. This certainly foreshadows the structure of the churches subsequently established by Paul (Rom. 12:6–9; I Cor. 12:28) and implies a more charismatic or more immediately Spirit-led organization and worship (as the next verse confirms; cf. I Cor. 14:26; I Thess. 5:19–22). It is not unimportant to observe that already within earliest Christianity, there was such a diversity of structure and liturgy and that the vigour of Paul’s mission to the Gentiles grew immediately out of the spiritual vitality of the Antioch church.<sup>32</sup> That only ‘prophets’ and ‘teachers’ are mentioned may be significant (this is the only place in Acts where ‘teachers’ as such appear). The two together imply a balance necessary to the life of any church — an openness to new insight and development inspired by the Spirit (the role of the prophet), balanced by a loyalty to the tradition taught and interpreted (the role of the teacher). No other or higher figure of authority (apostle, elder) is mentioned. Since Luke elsewhere assumes the appointment of elders in the Pauline churches (14:23; 20:17), the portrayal here is hard of his contriving and assuredly is

<sup>30</sup> Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit: Activating God's Power in Your Life* (N.c.: W Publishing Group, 1988).

<sup>31</sup> Alan J. Thompson, "Unity in Acts: Idealization or Reality?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51:3 (September 2008): 523–42.

<sup>32</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, Vol., 2 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, and Leicester, Eng.: Apollos, 2004).



derived from tradition. The diversity of the leadership group is also noteworthy — Barnabas first mentioned (embodying the continuity with Jerusalem begun in 11:23–26),<sup>33</sup> Simeon, probably a black man (Niger = ‘black’), Lucius from Cyrene where there were solid Jewish colonies (2:10; 11:20), Manaen, a man who may have been brought up with Herod (Antipas) the tetrarch and had been his intimate friend (or courtier), and Saul. The Greek may imply that the first three were designated as the prophets and the last two as the teachers — if so, an exciting status for Saul/Paul in the light of his subsequent work (Stephen and Philip in chaps. 6–8).<sup>34</sup> That none of the names match those in 6:5 need not be evidence against the view that Hellenists founded the Antioch church; new leadership would continually emerge in a rapidly developing mission.

13.2 λειτουργούντων δὲ αὐτῶν τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ νηστευόντων εἶπεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον · Ἀφορίσατε δὴ μοι τὸν Βαρναβᾶν καὶ Σαῦλον εἰς τὸ ἔργον ὃ προσκέκλημαι αὐτούς.

*“While they were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Come, set Barnabas and Saul apart for the work to which I have called them.”*

The guidance from the Spirit came in the course of worship, presumably through a word of prophecy — that is, prophecy not just as a general exhortation but as a specific directive.<sup>35</sup> The religious service was offered (a more accurate rendering than ‘worship’) to the Lord — once again, the identity of ‘the Lord’ (God or Christ) was left unclear. That it was accompanied by fasting suggests both a sense of loss at the departure of Jesus (Luke 5:34–35) and a disciplined seeking out the will of the Lord (Neh. 1:4; Luke 2:37). The Spirit is represented in speaking in ‘I’ terms. Alternatively expressed, the ‘I’ of the prophecy is understood not as God or as the exalted Jesus speaking, but the Spirit — that is, of course, the Spirit as the mouthpiece of God and Jesus (16:7). But the corollaries of such language for Christian understanding of God were not yet being explored.

13.3 τότε νηστεύσαντες καὶ προσευξάμενοι καὶ ἐπιθέντες τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῖς ἀπέλυσαν.

*“Then, after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul and released them.”*

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<sup>33</sup> S. Jonathan Murphy, “The Role of Barnabas in the Book of Acts.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167:667 (July-September 2010): 319-41.

<sup>34</sup> Robin G. Thompson, “Diaspora Jewish Freedmen: Stephen's Deadly Opponents.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 173:690 (April-June 2016): 166-81.

<sup>35</sup> Craig S. Keener, “The Spirit and the Mission of the Church in Acts 1–2.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 62:1 (March 2019):25-45.

The other leaders did not immediately obey the word of prophecy. There was further fasting and prayer. In other words, they already recognize that prophecy is not self-validating (it must be of God because a godly person spoke it under inspiration). Instead, it must be tested and evaluated (as in I Thess. 5:19–22 and I Cor. 14:29–32). However, once an ordinary mind had been achieved, the church acted. As in 6:6, the laying of hands here is in part recognition of an already manifested spiritual endowment and vocation and part commissioning to a particular work. In this case, Barnabas and Saul are commissioned as missionaries of the church in Antioch — a longer-term commissioning than in the case of Stephen (to waiting on the table), but still a short-term commission in the light of the subsequent developments in Paul’s missionary work.<sup>36</sup> This probably determines the sense in which Barnabas and Saul are subsequently designated as ‘apostles,’ in some contrast to the apostolic status Paul insisted on for himself (14:4 and 14).

#### 4.0. Missiological Reflection on The Intervention (Guidance) of The Holy Spirit

The thrilling scene of Christian missions through the intervention and guidance of the Holy Spirit in Acts 13 opens in Antioch, where believers gathered in worship through fasting. The Holy Spirit intervened and spoke in response, calling Barnabas and Saul to a specific task. In this section, the researchers will attempt a pneumatological dimension to Christian missions.

In the past, the term “missions” was interpreted as primarily an ecclesiastical activity or restricted to a salvific context. However, this definition is deficient because it stresses anthropocentric<sup>37</sup> efforts over God’s initiative. Understanding the difference between *Missio Dei* and *Missio ecclesiae* is essential.<sup>38</sup>

God’s missionary activity in the world is referred to as *Missio Dei*. The Sender is God the Father, and His Son is sent to redeem fallen humanity. The Spirit is sent by God the Father and Son (John 20:21-22) and is currently sending the church to accomplish His purposes. *Missio ecclesiae* refer to the church’s participation in God’s more extensive missionary work, which has been ongoing since creation. The church’s “sendness” implies that her mission exists as part of God’s mission, as crucial as it is. This new position marks a significant shift from church-centred activities toward becoming a mission-centred church.<sup>39</sup> Moltmann emphatically emphasizes “It is not the church’s mission to save the world; it is the

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<sup>36</sup> William J. Larkin, Jr. "The Recovery of Luke-Acts as 'Grand Narrative' for the Church's Evangelistic and Edification Tasks in a Postmodern Age." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43:3 (September 2000): 405-15.

<sup>37</sup>In comparison to God and animals, anthropocentric regards humankind as the most important or central element of existence. Anthropocentrism literally translates to "human-centeredness." Yu-Jen Hu, *Anthropocentric/Biocentric Orientations Toward Natural parks: A survey of Student at Oklahoma State University* www.eolss.net. Accessed on 13|05|2023.

<sup>38</sup>S.B. Bevans and R.P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Missions Today* (Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Book, 2004), 290. In contrast to ecclesiology (church doctrine) or soteriology, *Missio Dei* locates the locus of Christian missions in the doctrine of the Trinity (the doctrine of salvation). See also David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Mission Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 390.

<sup>39</sup>P. L. Wicker, “Mission from the Margins: The *Missio Dei* in the Crisis of World Christianity,” *International Review of Mission* 369 (2004): 187.

mission of the Son and Spirit through the Father, which includes the church”.<sup>40</sup> God sending of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world for the redemption of humankind is in keeping with His pattern of intervention by the Holy Spirit into God’s mission in the Old Testament.<sup>41</sup> Although the Old Testament is the Word of God primarily to the nation of Israel, its value is beyond them. It is for the whole human race. Like the Old Testament, the New Testament reveals the mighty, gracious acts of God’s redemption through His Son, Jesus Christ, by the power and intervention of the Holy Spirit.<sup>42</sup>

George A.F. Knight states, “...God was in Israel seeking to reconcile the world unto Himself. In Israel, God failed in redeeming the world. It remained for Him to act in Christ “to draw all people unto Himself finally.”<sup>43</sup> On this basis, Knight hopefully affirms that the central theme of the Old Testament is the revelation of the redeeming activity of God in and through the Son, Israel.<sup>44</sup> The writers also believe that God sent Jesus Christ in power and, through the intervention of the Holy Spirit as the “true Israel” in the New Testament, to accomplish what the “former son” did not succeed in accomplishing for God under the Old Covenant. The Biblical narratives in Acts 2 point to this fact, which the writers now turn to.

Pentecostal scholarship, in the words of David G. Peterson, has regarded the Spirit coming upon the disciples at Pentecost and then upon the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17), the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-8), and the twelve ‘disciples’ in Ephesians (Acts 19:1-7), as providing a paradigm for everyone to experience Spirit-baptism in addition to conversion.<sup>45</sup> The explanation David Peterson gives is based on the summary of J.M. Penney<sup>46</sup> and Robert P. Menzies<sup>47</sup>, who offers foundations of Pentecostal theology from the

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<sup>40</sup>Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993) 64

<sup>41</sup>Arthur F. Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom: The story of God’s Mission in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Academic, 2003), 231

<sup>42</sup> Kenneth G. Hanna, *From Gospels to Glory: Exploring the New Testament* (Bloomington, Ind.: Cross Books, 2014).; David Instone-Brewer, "Infanticide and the Apostolic decree of Acts 15." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52:2 (June 2009), 301-21

<sup>43</sup>Knight George Angus Fulton, *A Christian Theology of the Old Testament* (London, SCM, 1959), 8.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 9

<sup>45</sup>David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids Michian/Cambridge UK; William B Eerdmans Publishing Company/ Apollos, 2009) 62.; Steven J. Lawson, "The Priority of Biblical Preaching: An Expository Study of Acts 2:42-47." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158:630 (April-June 2001):198-217.

<sup>46</sup> J.M. Penney, *The Missionary Emphasis Lukan Pneumatology* (Sheffield; Sheffield Academic, 1997).; Irwin W. Lutzer, *We Will Not Be Silenced* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 2020).

<sup>47</sup> R.P. Menzies. *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1994; repr. London: Clark International, 2004). R.P. Menzies and Penney presents a modified Pentecostal view on Pneumatology.

standpoints of history, hermeneutics, and exegesis.<sup>48</sup> The researchers believe that God the Holy Spirit is the Only Person in the Triune God that initiates and causes all of the events from Pentecost until Barnabas and Paul are called and sent into the specific task of Christian missions to the entire Gentile world in Acts 13. This view might have escaped many scholars in missiological and theological scholarship.

The summation of David G. Peterson reaffirms the earlier position of the researchers. Peterson said in analysing Acts 13:1-3 that the first piece of planned “oversees mission” carried out by representatives of a particular local church, rather than by solitary individuals, and begun by a deliberate church decision was inspired by the Holy Spirit, rather than somewhat more casually as a result of persecution.<sup>49</sup> The Holy Spirit (amongst the Triune God) is most significant to any Christian mission, whether in an “oversee mission” like in Acts 13 or a “local mission” like in Acts 2.

#### 5.0. The Relevance of the Guidance of the Holy Spirit to Promoting Christian Missions in African

While the writers agree with scholars that God the Father is the Author of *Missio Dei*, and Jesus Christ continued the *Missio Dei* in the New Testaments through *Missio ecclesiae*, the Holy Spirit became the person through Whom the Father and Son carry out their missionary works. In scripture and biblical scholarship obviously shades more light to this assertion.

Beginning with scriptural references, Acts 5:1-4; John 4:24; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ezekiel 36:27; Genesis 1:2; John 15:26 and 2 Peter 1:21 bear scriptural testimonies that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit *in* God and *of* God. However, Acts 5 contains one of the most convincing statements in the Bible about the Holy Spirit being the Spirit of God. When Ananias lied about the property’s cost, Peter stated that Satan had filled Ananias’ heart with the desire to “lie to the Holy Spirit” (Acts 5:3), and he concluded by saying that Ananias had “lied to God” (verse 4). The implication is that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, and if so, He is God’s Primary Agent in *Missio Dei*.

Yong Jo Song further claims that the Holy Spirit is solely responsible for Christ’s redemptive work: “From His conception to His glorification, Jesus Christ required the Holy Spirit to work out redemption.”<sup>50</sup> Yong Jo affirms the position of the Scriptures in Matthew 1:20, Luke 4:18, Acts 10:38, and Romans 8:11. Therefore, modern Christian missions must prioritise the Person and Works of the Holy Spirit to be successful.

The first relevance of the work of the Holy Spirit in missiological task in Acts 13:1ff is that the Holy Spirit amongst the Godhead pre-authorises Christian missions through effective praying. R. Kent Hughes, in response to the characteristics of the Antioch church, avows that “Antioch was certainly where the real action was: teachers teaching, prophets

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<sup>48</sup> Andrew. Judd, "Do the Speakers in Acts Use Different Hermeneutics for Different Old Testament Genres?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 64:1 (March 2021):109-27.

<sup>49</sup> David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapid, Michigan; Willaim B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 375-376.

<sup>50</sup> Yong Jo Song, "The Holy Spirit and Mission: Toward a Biblical Understanding to the Holy Spirit on Relation to the Mission of the Church with Special Reference to Contemporary Religious Movement in Korea." Doctor of Miss. Dissertation., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1981.

prophesying in the atmosphere of prayers. It was the image of the original church militant!"<sup>51</sup> Antioch displayed the ideal profile of a missionary church. The first characteristic revealed is the rite of prayer as a prerequisite for embarking on cross-cultural missions, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prayers and supplications. (Acts 1:14; Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6, Romans 8:26-27). Contemporarily, only the Spirit amidst the Triune God can inspire and burden people for unevangelized people groups, as seen in Acts 13. Similarly, in Matthew 4, the Holy Spirit led Jesus Christ into the wilderness for forty days, fasting (and praying) before the launch of His ministry in Israel.

The second relevance is that the Holy Spirit authorizes Christian missions by appointing and consecrating individuals or groups. It is evident from Acts 13:1-3 that the Holy Spirit calls individuals into missionary work. The Holy Spirit is the missionary Spirit *in* the missionary Father and Son to instill life and power in God's missionary church in preparation for the church's missionary work to the ends of the earth. Without God's gifts, guidance, and power, the Holy Spirit, the church's missionary effort in Africa is merely human. The Holy Spirit enables the church to powerfully proclaim the gospel and motivate modern Christian missionary enterprises, especially on African soil.

The third relevance is that the Holy Spirit can provide unerring guidance when praying for missions. For example, in the Antioch church, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me, Barnabas and Saul for the work which I have called them." (Acts 13:2). It must be established that the Holy Spirit's guidance is *straightforward*. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). The immediate implication is that modern missionary and sending churches in Africa must continuously depend on the Spirit of God to carry on their missions. To deviate from the explicit, unerring guidance of the Spirit of God is to engage in a mission based on human efforts and self-help calculations.

### Conclusion

An ardent student of Christian missions will find the chronicles of the Holy Spirit thrilling in the book of Acts. The scene recorded in Acts 13:1-2 confirms it. Given the witness of scripture, which attests to the manifestation of the Spirit's presence amidst Christ-followers, the Holy Spirit not only calls men and sends them forth for a definite line of work, as revealed in Acts 13:1-2 but empowers the church to carry out missions by bestowing power, authority, providing explicit guidance and ability on its members. God the Spirit is sent by the Father and Son (John 20:21-22), and He sends the church today to fulfill His purposes.

These researchers submit to the *Cape Town Commitment* that there is no true gospel and no authentic biblical mission without the Person, work, and power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>52</sup> The Holy Spirit remains the Only Member of the Triune God who carries out the *Missio Dei* through the *Missio ecclesiae*, intervening and guiding individuals and groups into worldwide missions. The future of a plant is staying attached to the soil. Similarly, the future of modern Christian missionary enterprise in Africa that will fulfill the purpose of God in soul-winning

<sup>51</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire* (Wheaton, Illinois; Crossway, 1996), 174.

<sup>52</sup> Doug Birdsall and Lindsay Brown, *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action*. The 3rd Lausanne Congress, 26.

and church planting must be attached to the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. It can be a misplaced conclusion if one omits in Acts 13:1-3 that the missiological perspective of the Holy Spirit's exclusive role amongst the Godhead in guiding individuals and a local church, as seen in Antioch, is to focus specifically on cross-cultural missions.

### **Recommendations**

Practically, the mission of God the Father and God the Son is the sole responsibility of God the Holy Spirit. God is Spirit (John 4:24), and Jesus Christ was conceived, baptised, and anointed by the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:18). As a result, when it comes to Christian missions, the Holy Spirit is the Triune God's "*superior vena cava*." The implication for contemporary missions therefore are:

1. African Christian missionaries and sending churches must pre-initiate missionary work with the Holy Spirit in prayers and fasting.
2. African Christian missionaries and sending churches must receive explicit guidance from the Holy Spirit in the place of prayer concerning missions' outreaches.
3. African Christian missionaries and sending churches must not neglect or ignore the Person and work of the Holy Spirit in their missionary endeavours.

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