

## A TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

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WISE AND SPIRITUAL men have written numerous books on the Father and the Son. . . . On the contrary, the Holy Spirit has not yet been studied so extensively and with like care by the learned and famous commentators on the divine Scriptures so that one might easily understand the proper character of the Spirit, and the fact that we can call Him neither Son nor Father but only the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> This lament was valid for the year 393 when Augustine wrote it, and the situation has not greatly changed.

In Christology the patterns have been established; the various models have been worked and reworked. Writing in Christology, one can draw on a long history of theological reflection, especially on the last two decades, which have been especially abundant in Christologies "from above" and "from below." The same cannot be said of pneumatology. Anyone writing on pneumatology is hardly burdened by the past and finds little guidance there.

Nicolas Berdyaev, who promoted a "spiritual Christianity" beyond doctrinal definition, bourgeois morality, and legislated worship, called the doctrine of the Holy Spirit the last unexplored theological frontier.<sup>2</sup> Western Christians assume Eastern Christians have charted that frontier, but Nikos Nissiotis says that in pneumatology even the Orthodox churches are deficient.<sup>3</sup> Speaking from a specific Western context, A. G. Adam called a theology of the Spirit a desideratum not yet filled.<sup>4</sup> Albert Outler, with the Methodist tradition's special sensitivity to pneumatology growing out of Wesleyan sanctification doctrine, notes "the strange reticence and ambiguity of the traditional teaching about the Spirit, both in the Scriptures and in the church tradition."<sup>5</sup> He says further: "Despite heroic hermeneutical efforts by recent exegetes, the biblical notions of pneumatology are far from simple and clear. The creeds of the early church are almost cryptic. . . . The bibliography of important literature

<sup>1</sup> *On the Faith and the Creed* 8, 19, 20 (CSEL 41, 20-23).

<sup>2</sup> *Spirit and Reality* (London: Bles, 1946) 22.

<sup>3</sup> "The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity for Church Life and Theology," *The Orthodox Ethos*, ed. A. J. Philippou (Oxford: Holywell, 1964) 37-38.

<sup>4</sup> *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* 1 (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1965) 29.

<sup>5</sup> "Veni, Creator Spiritus: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," *New Theology*, no. 4, ed. Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman (London: Macmillan, 1967) 195-96.

in pneumatology is downright skimpy; we have no 'classics' here to compare with those in theology proper, in Christology or Christian ethics."<sup>6</sup>

This lacuna in theology is matched by one in philosophy. Otto A. Dilschneider calls attention to Heidegger's remark, at the beginning of *Being and Time*, that although philosophers since the time of Plato and Aristotle have been writing about metaphysics and ontology, the core question about being has been overlooked and even forgotten. The Holy Spirit, like being in philosophy, has slipped out of focus and been pushed into obscurity even when theology was being vigorously discussed.<sup>7</sup>

Pope Leo XIII, in the encyclical *Divinum illud munus*, lamented the forgetfulness of the Holy Spirit,<sup>8</sup> and Yves Congar surmises that Roman Catholics tend to ascribe to Mary the role Protestants characteristically assign to the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup> S. Daecke criticizes Karl Barth, the most prolific Protestant theologian of the 20th century, for not having arrived at a formal, explicit treatment of pneumatology after 13 volumes of his *Church Dogmatics*.<sup>10</sup> And the most recent formal Catholic effort to give prominence to pneumatology actually serves to highlight the problem. There is no pervasive pneumatology in Vatican II's Constitution on the Liturgy, a matter of some surprise, given the doxological function of the Spirit.<sup>11</sup> When it came to the third draft of the Constitution on the Church, more references to the Holy Spirit were inserted into the text.<sup>12</sup> From a numerical point of view, these references are satisfactory, and some effort was made to make them organic to the whole presentation; still, it is clear that they were imposed on the text.

Augustine would know that the renewal of interest in Trinitarian theology in any age would bring with it a new awareness of the Spirit. That seems to be happening today. Barth, with some real misgivings, saw it coming. As the last exercise in a long love-hate relationship with

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> "Die Geistvergessenheit der Theologie," *TLZ* 86 (1961) 261.

<sup>8</sup> *Acta sanctae sedis* 29 (1896–97) 654.

<sup>9</sup> *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* 1 (New York: Seabury, 1983) 153–54, 160.

<sup>10</sup> "Neue Konjunktur für den Geist," *EwK* no. 9 (1975) 520. One can criticize Barth's pneumatology, but, in principle, not having a formal treatment of pneumatology is not sufficient basis for criticism. As a theologian, Barth has a high pneumatological consciousness.

<sup>11</sup> Robert T. Sears, "Spirit: Divine and Human. The Theology of the Holy Spirit of Heribert Mühlen and Its Relevance for Evaluating the Data of Psychotherapy" (Ph.D. dissertation, Fordham Univ., 1974) 6. Though the Constitution on the Liturgy is certainly deficient, Sears seems to overstate the case. There are five explicit references to the Spirit and one indirect to be found in arts. 5, 6, and 43.

<sup>12</sup> Henri de Lubac, *The Church: Paradox and Mystery* (Shannon: Ecclesia, 1969) 35.

Schleiermacher,<sup>13</sup> Barth, in the last year of his life, published a critical evaluation of that theologian in which he wrote of

the possibility of a theology of the third article, a theology where the Holy Spirit would dominate and be decisive. Everything that one believes, reflects, and says about God the Father and God the Son in understanding the first and second articles would be demonstrated and clarified basically through God the Holy Spirit, the *vinculum pacis* between the Father and the Son. The work of God in behalf of creatures for, in, and with humanity would be made clear in a teleology which excludes all chance. I give only indications of what I occasionally dream of regarding the future of theology....<sup>14</sup>

Some years earlier he had warned against making the Spirit a presupposition to a theological premise, a kind of domestication of the Spirit, as though theology "had hired" the Spirit or was to be found among the theologians' possessions.<sup>15</sup>

If Barth's agenda is accepted, the future theology will integrate pneumatology more fully, and it will be done in a Trinitarian mode. The scholars of the future, like those of the past, will still grope their way. This article will attempt to demonstrate how the postapostolic period stumbled over the Spirit (generally in the right direction) partly because of the unreflective nature of the biblical witness with its host of open questions. Proceeding topically and drawing on biblical and patristic sources, the mutuality between the mission of Christ and the Spirit will be outlined. Indications will be given of how the Spirit exercises mutuality through a contact function—the Father touching history and the Church through Christ in the Spirit—a function which is operative at the end of a movement from the Father. The Spirit is also the point of entry into a movement back to the Father. In all of this the Trinity is the control. Though the Spirit has this contact function and is even central, it will be argued that Christ is not displaced from his centrality. Finally, the problem of the Spirit as an object of theological reflection and as a way of knowing the Trinity is faced.

<sup>13</sup> Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History* (London: SCM, 1972) 425–73. See also Philip Rosato, *The Spirit As Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1981) 7, 12–22, 31–34.

<sup>14</sup> Schleiermacher—*Auswahl mit einem Nachwort von Karl Barth*, ed. Heinz Bolli (Munich: Siebenstern-Taschenbuch, 1968) 311. Even in the act of dreaming of a theology in which Father and Son and all creation would be understood in the light of the Holy Spirit, Barth had some misgivings about those who would rush in too quickly to take up the task. "I give a warning! If I am to be spared the accusation of sheer insanity, then only very spiritually and intellectually competent people, a truly 'knowledgeable Theban' will be of use in designing and developing a theology of the third article" (*ibid.* 312).

<sup>15</sup> Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (London: Weidenfeld and Nelson, 1963) 57–58.

## I

## PATRISTIC GROPINGS AND BIBLICAL OPEN QUESTIONS

*Stumbling in the Right Direction*

Much more critical work must be done on the individual patristic authors before the clear lines of historical development are adequately clear. Nonetheless, it is evident that the obscurities of the NT witness caused many difficulties, especially in the earlier patristic period. Scholars do not agree on the importance the earlier postbiblical writers attached to the doctrine of the Spirit. Some say that the role of the Spirit was thrown into the background. The mission of Christ, as manifest in his life, death, and resurrection, was comparatively recent history, and whatever and whoever he was, it was a unique history, and it absorbed the attention of both theologians and simple believers. The life of the Spirit belonged to the definition of the Christian life, and the Church might have been content to acknowledge the mystery and observe a decent reticence about the precise nature of the Third Person, as H. B. Swete remarked.<sup>16</sup> Of the apologists of the second century in particular, it was said that they were so preoccupied with the Word and their crusade to make Him recognized as the Son of God and the author of creation that they neglected the Spirit.<sup>17</sup> The mission of the Spirit was looked upon as secondary and supplementary to that of Christ. When they did eventually turn their attention to the Spirit, they did so with a certain Logos logic.<sup>18</sup> They would argue that "since we have ascribed this and that character to the Son, so we must, by a like necessity, say a similar this and that about the Spirit."<sup>19</sup> At a later date Basil (ca. 330–79) used this method in *On the Holy Spirit* 5:7—8:21.<sup>20</sup>

One needs to respect the necessities of historical development, but, speaking out of a more developed pneumatology that is less under attack, one should not tie pneumatology to Christology in such a manner as to deprive the Spirit of a proper, specific personhood and function.

<sup>16</sup> *On the Early History of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit with Special Reference to the Controversies of the Fourth Century* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, 1873) 5–6.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Galtier, *Le Saint Esprit en nous d'après les Pères grecs* (Rome: Gregorian Univ., 1946) 34.

<sup>18</sup> Olivier Clement, *Le visage intérieur* (Paris: Stock, 1978) 83.

<sup>19</sup> Pavel Aleksandrovich Florensky, "On the Holy Spirit," *Ultimate Questions*, ed. Alexander Schmemann (London: Mowbrays, 1977) 144.

<sup>20</sup> "At times in these chapters it is necessary for the reader to remind himself that this is intended to be an essay on the Holy Spirit, not just another essay on the Son and Logos" (Jaroslav Pelikan, "The 'Spiritual Sense' of Scriptures: The Exegetical Basis for St. Basil's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic. A Sixteen-Hundredth Anniversary Symposium* 1, ed. Paul Jonathan Fedwick [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981] 341).

Sometimes balancing off Christ and the Spirit was a way of creating what has been called “a false window,”<sup>21</sup> just as architects in ages past would insert into the design of a building a fake window through which nothing could be seen, serving only to give the illusion of symmetry, balance, and wholeness. Pneumatology, too, was sometimes constructed in this deceptive way, which meant that not even the available biblical witness was utilized and no real theological reflection took place. Divine life and revelation were all bound to the Logos. What writers were really sure of was that the Spirit was “further away” from the Father and the Son and “nearer” to us. When they did advert in a formal way to the Spirit, it was usually in reference to His “emerging divinity” and His personhood.

### *Is There Really So Little?*

Wolf-Dieter Hauschild has questioned this general assumption about the lack of pneumatology in the early theologians. Though he granted that they neglected certain theological areas belonging properly to pneumatology, these authors, nevertheless, “say more about the Spirit than has been generally revealed in the research.”<sup>22</sup> Further, the areas in which the early theologians are alleged to be deficient have not been examined with sufficient care. But few will want to contest the view that the early theologies of the Spirit were enveloped in obscurity<sup>23</sup> or that they were hesitant and groping. Both in Clement of Rome (fl. ca. 96) and the *Shepherd of Hermas* (2nd c.) the Holy Spirit was a central preoccupation, though the Spirit had a truncated function and was related only to those in the community with specific functions (mystagogue, gnostic, prophet, ecstatic).<sup>24</sup> Though Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 110) was largely influenced by John and Paul, he did not take over from them the unique and preponderant role the Spirit has in the normal Christian life.<sup>25</sup> The *Didache* (between 70 and 110) lacks a pronounced pneumatology.<sup>26</sup> Nei-

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Hopko, “Holy Spirit in Orthodox Theology and Life,” *Holy Spirit: Commonweal Papers* 3 89 (1968) 186.

<sup>22</sup> *Gottes Geist und der Mensch: Studien zur fröhchristlichen Pneumatologie* (Munich: Kaiser, 1972) 11.

<sup>23</sup> “Es proverbial la oscuridad que envuelve a la primera teología de Espíritu Santo” (A. Orbe, *La teología del Espíritu Santo* [Rome: Gregorian Univ., 1966] v).

<sup>24</sup> Helmut Opitz, *Ursprünge fröhkatholischer Pneumatologie: Ein Beitrag zur Entstehung der Lehre vom Heiligen Geist in der römischen Gemeinde unter Zugrundelegung des 1. Clemensbriefes und des “Hirten” des Hermas* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1960) 136, 151.

<sup>25</sup> Galtier, *Le Saint Esprit* 33.

<sup>26</sup> The date of the *Didache* is much disputed. In dating it between 70 and 110, Henry Chadwick remarks: “It may be odd there, but it is much odder anywhere else” (*The Early Church* [Baltimore: Penguin, 1967] 47). J. P. Audet dates it at 60 (*La Didache, Instructions*

ther in the doxology, nor in the two petitions for unity, nor in any place in the Eucharistic prayer is the Spirit mentioned. Only in the baptismal formula is the Spirit included, making the pneumatology of the *Didache* less developed than that of many NT books.<sup>27</sup> Justin Martyr (ca. 100-ca. 165) seemed able to distinguish between the Logos and the Spirit in the eternal Trinity; he was less successful when it came to differentiating between the two in the economy of salvation.

No major complaint can be leveled at Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-ca. 215) in his description of baptism, but in general he had little to say on who the Spirit is, what the Spirit effects in the Christian life, or the manner of the Spirit's operation. For all Clement's concern for the perfect Christian, the role of the Spirit remained secondary. In a word, the Spirit is marginal to his religious consciousness, his attention being wholly focused on the Father and the Son. However, there is no fuzziness about the Spirit's identity, and no attempt to fuse Spirit and Word.<sup>28</sup> Given his Montanist proclivities, Tertullian (ca. 160-ca. 225) surprisingly attributed only a restricted role to the Spirit, that of inspirer of prophecy and the giver of revelations,<sup>29</sup> certainly an impoverishment in the light of the NT teaching on walking in the Spirit and a fuller spectrum of charisms. Origen (ca. 185-ca. 254), the first theologian to expound the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in a formal way, was greatly puzzled and unsure of himself when writing on the Spirit. He subordinated the Spirit to the Son (as the Son to the Father).<sup>30</sup> The First Person of the Trinity alone embraces the totality of reality; the Son is concerned only with rational beings, and the Spirit acts only in regard to the saints. Athanasius (ca. 296-373) was surer of himself, the question of the Spirit arising for him historically within the Arian controversy, "a crisis within a crisis," as Shapland called it.<sup>31</sup> Athanasius defended the reticence of Basil on openly declaring the

*des apôtres* [Paris: Gabalda, 1958] 187–200). L. Duchesne puts it under Trajan (d. 117); see *Early History of the Christian Church* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1909) 109.

<sup>27</sup> Aidan Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation* (New York: Pueblo, 1978) 36–39.

<sup>28</sup> Georg Kretschmar, *Studien zur frühchristlichen Trinitätstheologie* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1956) 63; Haushild, *Gottes Geist* 75, 84; Galtier, *Le Saint Esprit* 70–73.

<sup>29</sup> G. W. H. Lampe, *God As Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977) 135. Lampe, however, seems to judge Tertullian too severely. See Wolfgang Bender, *Die Lehre über den Heiligen Geist bei Tertullian* (Munich: Hueber, 1961) 53–55, 98–100, 168–71.

<sup>30</sup> On the *Principal Doctrines* 1, 3, 5 (SC 252, 152, 154). See also Jean Daniélou, *Origen* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955) 252–62. Origen did not accept the three Persons, as is evident in his baptismal formula and in many other passages. The Son and the Spirit transcend all other spiritual beings, but are themselves transcended to an even greater degree by the Father. They differ from the Father in essence, power, and other attributes.

<sup>31</sup> C. R. B. Shapland, *Introduction to The Letters of Saint Athanasius concerning the Holy Spirit* (London: Epworth, 1951) 35.

divinity of the Spirit, and to a lesser degree he chose a similar stance. Athanasius never used *theos* of the Spirit, only once saying that the Spirit is of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father and Son in letters written to defend the divinity of the Spirit.<sup>32</sup> Rather, he chose to insist that the Spirit is different from creatures and is above them.<sup>33</sup>

A caution against exaggerating the uniformly high quality of the Fathers' pneumatology is found in Gregory of Nyssa's (ca. 330-ca. 395) relative silence on the Spirit in his *Life of Moses* and in his commentaries on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes.<sup>34</sup> In addition, there is his apparent restriction of the Spirit to the souls of the worthy, somewhat in the style of Origen. He so stressed the worthiness of the recipient (as did Basil<sup>35</sup>) in his *On the Christian Institute* that this must have been Gregory's characteristic stance.<sup>36</sup> Basil's major preoccupation in *On the Holy Spirit* was to defend the divinity of the Spirit without actually saying so in explicit terms, for fear of alienating some he wanted to convince<sup>37</sup> and in his desire not to go beyond the language of Nicaea. Except in one instance,<sup>38</sup> Basil lacked any interest in relating the Spirit to creation, restricting it to its role in the Incarnation and in the sanctification of beings endowed with reason, either human or angelic.<sup>39</sup> Basil clearly stood in the broad tradition of Origen,<sup>40</sup> even though he had his reservations about the Alexandrian.

<sup>32</sup> To *Serapion* 1, 27 (PG 26, 593). Shapland is in error when he claims that *homoousios* is also applied to the Spirit in 3, 1 (*The Letters* 133, n. 7); the reference there is to the Son.

<sup>33</sup> To *Serapion* 1, 27 (PG 26, 593). See also Adolf Laminski, *Der Heilige Geist als Geist Christi und Geist der Gläubigen: Der Beitrag des Athanasios von Alexandrien zur Formulierung des trinitarischen Dogmas im vierten Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: St. Benno, 1969) 140.

<sup>34</sup> Anthony Meredith, "The Pneumatology of the Cappadocian Fathers and the Creed of Constantinople," *ITQ* 48 (1961) 208–9.

<sup>35</sup> On the *Holy Spirit* 9, 2; 26, 61 (SC 17<sup>bis</sup>, 326, 468).

<sup>36</sup> Meredith, "Pneumatology" 209.

<sup>37</sup> This also seems to have been part of the motivation of the Council of Constantinople in 381; see Adolf Martin Ritter, *Das Konzil von Konstantinopel und sein Symbol: Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des II. Ökumenischen Konzils* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965) 296f. See also André de Halleux, "Towards an Ecumenical Agreement on the Procession of the Holy Spirit and the Addition of the *filioque* to the Creed," *Spirit of God: Spirit of Christ*, ed. Lukas Vischer (London: SPCK, 1981) 81. To be noted is the restriction of the Creed to what Scripture says of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>38</sup> *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* 2, 6 (SC 166–70); I am indebted to Anthony Meredith for this reference.

<sup>39</sup> J. Verhees, "Pneuma, Erfahrung und Erleuchtung in der Theologie des Basilius des Grossen," *Ostkirchliche Studien* 25 (1976) 46. Karl Holl defended Basil against the accusation that his pneumatology is defective because evasive; see *Amphilochius von Ikonium in seinem Verhältnis zu den grossen Kappadoziern* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969) 140, n. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Hans von Campenhausen, *The Fathers of the Greek Church* (New York: Pantheon, 1955) 83.

The reluctant bishop and life-long friend of Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus (329–89), was unhappy about Basil's refusal in *On the Holy Spirit* to state the full and unambiguous participation of the Spirit in the Godhead, and was dissatisfied with the way the Council of Constantinople asserted the divinity of the Spirit by circumlocution ("Lord and Giver of life"). Gregory wanted to express that divinity in the same terms used of the Son, and attempted to get others, mainly Basil, to do the same. He chided others for being angry with him for starting with "a strange interpolated God," namely, the Holy Spirit, and he added that "they are afraid where there is no fear."<sup>41</sup> Gregory possibly wished to indicate that the divinity of the Spirit, besides being recognized at the end of a long salvation-history development,<sup>42</sup> was only for the strong; for to reveal the divinity of the Spirit before that of the Father and the Son might "subject us to the danger of losing all of our capabilities, like people who are stuffed with food immoderately, or who fix eyes that are still too weak on the light of the sun."<sup>43</sup> In the previous ages there might be justification for want of clear teaching, because of this need of a gradual unfolding. But the unfolding must one day reach completion, and Gregory was convinced that the day had arrived. The time had come to do away with veiled language and dark sayings.

If one studies this history in greater detail than given in these brief references, what emerges is the considerable pain and struggle in establishing the identity, function, and especially the divinity of the Holy Spirit, even though the actual period of dispute was comparatively short.

It may seem obvious for the contemporary theologian to acknowledge the divinity of the Holy Spirit and his personal distinction within the Trinity but we have only to read the fathers of the fourth century to realize afresh how tremendously difficult it was for orthodox pneumatology to shake itself free not only from subordinationism but also from a certain confusion between the Spirit, on the one hand, and his gifts, or the divine nature, or the incarnate Logos, or the risen Christ, on the other, a confusion encouraged by the imprecisions of Scripture.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *Fifth Theological Oration, On the Holy Spirit* 3 (Gregor von Nazianz, *Die fünf theologischen Reden*, ed. Joseph Barbel [Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1963] 222).

<sup>42</sup> *Fifth Theological Oration* 26 (Barbel 262, 264).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> De Halleux, "Towards an Ecumenical Agreement" 75. There was little direct attack on the divinity of the Spirit until the fourth century. "Largely, this result was due to its raising no special problem; if the godhead was not unitary, it was as simple to conceive of three Persons as of two: hence the deity of Christ carried the weight of Trinitarian controversies without any necessity for extending the range of dispute, and as matter of history, the settlement of the problems connected with the Father and the Son was found to lead to an immediate solution of the whole Trinitarian difficulty" (G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* [2nd ed.; London: SPCK, 1952] 81). See also T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 209.

A continuing obstacle in relating the Spirit to the other two Persons of the Trinity and to the Christian life was the Spirit's want of a definite "form" or "personality." "Spirit" is not a proper name; both the Father and the Son are also spirit. As Origen found out, it was difficult to recognize a *proprium* (that which characterizes the Spirit as distinct from the Father and the Son) of the Spirit, without radicalizing what is uniquely the Spirit's and ending up in subordinationism.<sup>45</sup> But if there is no *proprium*, nothing that belongs uniquely to the Spirit, how is the Spirit to be distinguished from the Father and the Son? This must be done in such a way as to safeguard the unity. Because of the difficulty in avoiding the horns of the dilemma, it was difficult to acknowledge the Spirit as "a really clear and functional figure," in the way one acknowledges the Father and the Son.<sup>46</sup> Referring to this development, Pavel Florensky saw the substitution of "grace" for "Spirit" as an unsuccessful attempt to give discernible function and form to the Spirit.<sup>47</sup>

This struggle with obscurity and ambiguity alongside of the clarity with which the Spirit was ranged with the Father and Son, especially in the discipleship-baptism commission of Mt 28:19, makes understandable the discretion of Hilary of Poitiers (ca. 315–67), who at the beginning of his treatise *On the Trinity* posed the cul-de-sac in which he and other thinkers in the ancient Church found themselves: "Concerning the Holy Spirit, we should neither be silent nor should we speak. But we cannot remain silent because of those who do not know Him."<sup>48</sup>

In the fourth century when one spoke of pneumatology, it was first in relation to Christology, and this without a false subordinationism (there is a true nonontological subordination). To speak of the Spirit was to engage in Christology, but the latter was a Trinitarian reflection. Athanasius fought for the divinity of the Spirit because he saw that it was a Trinitarian issue; brutally put, one cannot have a Trinity with only

<sup>45</sup> *On the Principal Doctrines* 1, 3, 5 (SC 252, 152, 154).

<sup>46</sup> Martien Parmentier, "St. Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 60 (1978) 702. See also Georg Wagner, "Der Heilige Geist als offenbarmachende und vollendende Kraft: Das Zeugnis der orthodoxen Tradition," *Erfahrung und Theologie des Heiligen Geistes*, ed. Claus Heitmann and Heribert Mühlen (Munich: Kösel, 1974) 215, 220.

<sup>47</sup> Florensky, "On the Holy Spirit" 152.

<sup>48</sup> 2, 29 (CCL 62, 64; tr. FC 57, 58). Regarding Hilary's position on the divinity of the Spirit, see also Jaroslav Pelikan, *Development of Christian Doctrine* (New Haven: Yale Univ., 1969) 125–26. Hilary, like many others, was reluctant to go beyond what the Scriptures taught about the Spirit. This norm had wider theological application. See Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine 2: The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600–1700)* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1974) 16–20. See also Raimundo Panikkar, *The Trinity and Religious Experience of Man* (New York: Orbis, 1973) 65: "Faith in the Spirit cannot be formulated; it too is silent."

Father and Son.<sup>49</sup> The Alexandrian also saw a soteriological motive for his defense of the Spirit. That only Christ as the Son of God could bring redemption, and with it a new creation, was a major preoccupation of Athanasius. But even Christ as the glorified Lord can bring this redemption to creation and into the hearts of believers only through the Spirit, through whom Christ binds humankind to himself; this is to recognize that the Third Person exercises a contact function. Within the framework of this logic the Spirit cannot be a creature; He must be divine.<sup>50</sup> Only a divine person could fulfil this task. The argument from the work and effect of the Spirit to His divinity was a favorite patristic way of taking care of the silence of Scripture.<sup>51</sup> A variation on the effect-to-cause reasoning was to argue from their own immediate experience to the divinity of the Spirit.<sup>52</sup>

The theological movement in this history was from Christology and soteriology to pneumatology. But, as has been seen, there was a wider theological horizon. The attack on the divinity of the Holy Spirit by the *Pneumatomachoi* became significant for the larger theological development. They pushed for a solution and received one they did not like. Under the force of their attack, the doctrine of Nicaea, that Christ is of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father, was applied to the Spirit, and in this way the Trinitarian question received an important impulse toward full development.<sup>53</sup> The firming up of the doctrine of the Spirit was therefore tied in this historical way to the maturation of both Christological and Trinitarian doctrine, a development which corresponds to the logic of the fourth-century historical situation. Apart from any postapostolic dispute, it corresponds to a biblical imperative.

### Syriac: A Genuine Semitic Witness

These brief historical notes have been chiefly on the Greek authors, with some small attention to the Latin writers. But there is another tradition, which can claim great, possibly greater, antiquity: the Syriac. The Christian Syriac history stands alone as the only Christian tradition

<sup>49</sup> *Three Orations against the Arians* 1, 15 (PG 26, 44c).

<sup>50</sup> *To Serapion* 1, 24 (PG 26, 585, 588). See also Laminski, *Der Heilige Geist* 74–75, 182.

<sup>51</sup> Galtier, *Le Saint Esprit* 10; Congar, *I Believe* 1, 111.

<sup>52</sup> Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* 81.

<sup>53</sup> Peter Meinhold, "Pneumatomachoi," *Paulys Realencyklopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, ed. Georg Wissowa, Wilhelm Kroll, et al. (Waldsee: Druckenmüller, 1951) 1066–1101. See also Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, "Die Pneumatomachen: Eine Untersuchung zur Dogmengeschichte des vierten Jahrhunderts" (Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. of Hamburg, 1967) 6; Kretschmar, *Trinitätstheologie* 1; Carl Anderson, "Zur Entstehung und Geschichte des trinitarischen Personbegriffes," *ZNW* 52 (1961) 23; Hermann Dörries, *De Spiritu Sancto: Der Beitrag des Basilius zum Abschluss des trinitarischen Dogmas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956) 94–120.

which has a genuinely Semitic culture, the gospel being first preached in Aramaic, of which Syriac is a dialect.<sup>54</sup> Tatian (ca. 120), born into “the land of the Assyrians” and Greek-educated (later he attacked Greek culture as corrupting), was a cosmopolitan. Through his travels he came into contact with Middle Platonism and other popular philosophies, which he incorporated into his theological writings. The compiler of the *Diatessaron* developed a species of Spirit soteriology. Because of sin, each person is only a torso, being deprived of the divine Spirit which belonged to the original state of humanity.<sup>55</sup> The new creation means the restoration of the primeval unity of the Holy Spirit-body-soul. The Third Person redeems the soul.<sup>56</sup> The Spirit was, however, in the middle of Tatian’s theological reflection. He did not yet arrive at a clear, distinct view of the Spirit as a personal being (not even the NT did that) but, with an awareness not found in his contemporaries, he was moving in that direction.<sup>57</sup>

Of special importance are Aphrahat (ca. 260–345) and Ephrem (ca. 306–74). Aphrahat is “the sole surviving representative of a type of Christian . . . utterly independent of Latin and Greek philosophy.”<sup>58</sup> One could add: not even dependent on the Greek NT, as Aphrahat cited the Gospels from the Old Syrian version found in Tatian’s *Diatessaron*. He copiously cited the Hebrew Scriptures, less often the NT.<sup>59</sup> An authentic Semitic and Aramaic culture is present in him, using, as he did, the same thought modes and language as Jesus. So isolated was he from Greek civilization that he did not know of the Council of Nicaea (325), though he died about 20 years after it closed.<sup>60</sup> In the ecclesiastical creed Aphrahat cited, there is no third article dedicated to the Spirit as in the Greek creeds.<sup>61</sup> The Spirit works through the law and the prophets. God gave the prophets His Holy Spirit, that this Spirit might teach and lead

<sup>54</sup> S. P. Brock, *Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition* (no place, no publ., 1979)

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<sup>55</sup> Winfrid Cramer, *Der Geist Gottes und des Menschen in frühsyrischer Theologie* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1979) 54.

<sup>56</sup> Tatian, *Address to the Greeks* 13, 1 (*Die ältesten Apologeten*, ed. Edgar J. Goodspeed [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957] 280).

<sup>57</sup> Cramer, *Geist Gottes* 57–58. See L. W. Barnard, “The Heresy of Tatian—Once Again,” *JEH* 19 (1968) 1–10; H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ., 1974) 235.

<sup>58</sup> Frank Gavin, *Aphraates and the Jews* (New York: AMS, 1966) 1, 2; G. G. Blum, “Afrahat,” *TR* 1, 628.

<sup>59</sup> Jacob Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism: The Christian-Jewish Argument in Fourth-Century Iran* (Leiden: Brill, 1971) 5.

<sup>60</sup> Ignatius Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca* (Rome: Pont. Inst. Orientalium Studiorum, 1965) 49–50.

<sup>61</sup> Aphrahat, *Demonstrations* 1, 19 (*Patrologia Syriaca*. ed. J. Parisot [Paris: Didot, 1894] 1, 44c).

the Christians through their mouth. "One cannot recognize here a specifically Christian understanding of the Spirit. The presentation does not go beyond the Old Testament and Jewish tradition, with the restriction of the Spirit to the prophets."<sup>62</sup> That as late as the middle of the fourth century one is still faced with such a strongly Hebrew conception of the Spirit in an official Christian creed is further evidence of the isolation of segments of the early Syriac tradition.<sup>63</sup>

Still needing adequate study is the depiction of the Spirit as feminine and sometimes specifically as mother by Aphrahat and other Syriac authors. The presence of the mother image was found in orthodox circles and in a Christian culture strongly imbued with biblical symbols and content. But a scholarly caution is in order. Sebastian Brock, speaking of the majority of Syriac authors, said that "it would be unwise to stress their consciousness of the femininity of the Spirit. Moreover it should be remembered that *Logos*, the Word, was also rendered by a feminine Syriac word, *melta*, and in the Old Syriac version of St. John's Gospel it is still construed as feminine (in the Peshitta, however, and in later Syriac writers generally, *melta*, 'Word,' is always treated as masculine)."<sup>64</sup> Also to be considered is the silence in the tradition when the Spirit began to be spoken of in the masculine, quite possibly under the influence of the developing Trinitarian doctrine. No protests are recorded.<sup>65</sup> Ephrem, whose pneumatology is important for Christology, ecclesiology, and the sacraments,<sup>66</sup> also writes of the Spirit in the feminine, but only once does he appear interested in a special way in this aspect.<sup>67</sup> Nonetheless, the feminine usage is very old, as is the image of mother; there is a developed literary use of the feminine Spirit, sometimes specifically as mother, in a culture which is authentically Semitic, dominated by biblical word-pictures and expressed in the language of Jesus. Even if it might be demonstrated that the kind of support for a mother Spirit was not to be found in the Syriac tradition in the way and to the extent that had been expected, a quite valid case for the feminine could be made on other

<sup>62</sup> Cramer, *Geist Gottes* 69, 70.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Brock, *Holy Spirit* 4.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Sebastian Brock, Oxford, June 17, 1981.

<sup>66</sup> *Hymnen de ecclesia* (CSCO 198–99); *Hymnen de fide* (CSCO 154–55); Louis Leloir, *Doctrines et méthodes de s. Ephrem d'après son commentaire de l'évangile concordant* (CSCO 220); *Carmina Nisibena* (CSCO 240–41); Robert Murray, "A Hymn of St. Ephrem to Christ on the Incarnation, the Holy Spirit, and the Sacraments," *Eastern Churches Review* 2 (1970) 142–50; Sebastian Brock, *The Harp of the Spirit: Eighteen Poems of St. Ephrem* (no place: Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, 1983).

<sup>67</sup> Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1975) 318.

grounds, namely, the necessity of expressing the full range of gender possibilities within the Godhead.

### *Unreflective Biblical Witness*

That neither the Spirit nor the *proprium* of the Third Person received due attention is historically true. One of the reasons for the elusive, fuzzy identity of which Augustine complained—and for patristic groping—is the lack of a fully reflective teaching on the Spirit in the Scriptures themselves.

Albert Outler alludes to the reserve and unclarity of the biblical teaching on the Holy Spirit. Besides the lack of a mature, nuanced teaching on the Spirit in the NT, there are obscurities which raise important theological issues as well. In the biblical text, is the Spirit power or person? Or is that an improper question to bring to the text? Does the Spirit lose identity in the Johannine conception of the risen Christ, so that the Spirit is the “personal presence of Jesus in the Christian while Jesus is with the Father”?<sup>68</sup> Or do the Spirit and Jesus retain their identities even while each is present and operative at the interior of the other? And does Paul identify the Spirit with the risen Christ? Or with the pre-existent Christ?<sup>69</sup> Is it a false lead which 2 Cor 3:17 (“The Lord is the Spirit”) gives, so that some of the postapostolic writers fused Lord and Spirit?<sup>70</sup> And if not a matter of simple identification, how is it that for Paul Lord and Spirit are almost interchangeable?<sup>71</sup> If it is true, as Lucien Cerfaux contends, that it would be difficult to exaggerate the importance which Paul attributed to the work of the Spirit,<sup>72</sup> how is it that he, along with other NT authors, apparently knows nothing about the Pentecost experience Luke describes so vividly?<sup>73</sup> Would the weight and function of pneumatology shift if it were demonstrated that even the relatively few references to the Holy Spirit in the

<sup>68</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (xiii–xxi)* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970) 669, 1139.

<sup>69</sup> Wolfson, “The Holy Spirit As the Preexistent Christ,” *Philosophy of the Church Fathers* 165.

<sup>70</sup> “The Differentiation of the Logos and the Holy Spirit,” *ibid.* 235, 236. See also Pelikan, “The ‘Spiritual Sense’ of Scripture” 354.

<sup>71</sup> C. F. D. Moule, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 26.

<sup>72</sup> *The Christian in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967) 239.

<sup>73</sup> Raymond Brown thinks that what is described in Jn 20:22 and Acts 2:1–4 is functionally the same event, namely, the one gift of the Spirit bestowed by the risen and ascended Lord (*John xiii–xxi* 1039). C. K. Barrett thinks that there may be two accounts of “Pentecost” in Acts, namely, 2:1–4 and 4:31 (*The Holy Spirit in the Gospel Tradition* [2nd ed.; London: SPCK, 1947] 159–60). One has to admit the possibility that there was a series of experiences of the Spirit’s presence in the community which Luke gathered together and expressed in one graphic narration.

Synoptics,<sup>74</sup> and to the Spirit-Paraclete in John, are not really the very words of Jesus, but are the editorial embellishments of a redactor or Evangelist? And how many impartings of the Spirit does Acts envisage? As if commenting on this list, Jules Lebreton remarked that "in the question of the Holy Spirit revelation furnished little material."<sup>75</sup>

No attempt is made to confront these questions in this paper, but they indicate the magnitude of the problem the theologian faces when dealing with the biblical material.

## II

### MUTUALITY AND PRIMARY CONTENT

#### *Reciprocity of "in Christ" and "in the Spirit"*

In spite of the many open questions in the biblical text, there is much that is clear in the biblical witness which has not been adequately exploited in systematic theology.

In the Scriptures both the revelation of the Spirit and the bestowing of the Spirit, who is uniquely the Spirit of Christ, take place only in and through Christ. To identify Christ is to find the Spirit. This linking of pneumatology and Christology is, according to Ernst Käsemann, "a decisive feature and perhaps even an original insight of Pauline theology,"<sup>76</sup> something evidenced in the manner in which Paul interprets the formulae "in Christ" and "in the Spirit." This relation of pneumatology to Christology is "a starting point for Pauline theology."<sup>77</sup> "Being in the Spirit" and "being in Christ" mutually interpret each other. In Paul "the Spirit determines the Christian life as a whole . . . 'being in the Spirit' becomes the proclamation of 'being in Christ' both as the crucified and as the resurrected one."<sup>78</sup> When Paul says that "anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (Rom 8:9), he is giving a moral exhortation and at the same time pronouncing "one of the most important sayings" in his theology.<sup>79</sup> In Johannine theology, also, there is no lofty revelation of the Spirit-Paraclete independent of Christ's

<sup>74</sup> "Why Do the Gospels Say So Little about the Spirit?" *ibid.* 140–62. Posing the question as to whether Jesus actually spoke the words about the Spirit attributed to him by the Synoptics, Barrett answered: "The question is not so much whether the Jesus who is presented in the Synoptic Gospels did speak them as whether he could have spoken them. They presuppose a considerable perspective of continuing Christian history, and it must be asked whether room for this can be found in the eschatological thought and teaching of Jesus himself" (*The Gospel according to St. John* [2nd. ed.; London: SPCK, 1978] 88).

<sup>75</sup> *Histoire du dogme de la Trinité* 2 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1938) 561.

<sup>76</sup> *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 221–22.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* 224.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 136.

identity. The revelation of the Paraclete is “an application of the revelation in Jesus.”<sup>80</sup> The Spirit who begets and the Spirit who is communicated in baptism comes from above, from the Father, but there is no act or manifestation of the Spirit which is not through Christ.<sup>81</sup>

In the infancy narrative (1:5) Luke builds the formulation of Jesus’ divine sonship on the same themes that Paul draws on in Rom 1:3–4. Luke reads: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and power from the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy—Son of God.” And the Romans text reads: “Born of the seed of David according to the flesh, designated Son of God in power according to the Holy Spirit as of resurrection from the dead.” Both go back to the common theological tradition which ascribed the conception of the Son of God in Mary’s womb to the creative act of God’s Spirit.<sup>82</sup> Even in the enthusiasm of the Pentecost event, Luke places in the mouth of Peter a sermon (Acts 2:14–36) not about a Spirit-centered kingdom but about Jesus crucified and risen. When the Spirit is mentioned, it is to point out to the audience that Jesus “having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit . . . has poured out this which you see and hear” (Acts 2:33). The early Christological reflections are already the beginnings of pneumatology.<sup>83</sup> Though very likely one cannot say that the first Christology was a specific Spirit Christology, the understanding of the mediation between Christ and humankind is uniquely the work, indeed an event, of the Holy Spirit, and this leads to a “pneumatically oriented Christology.”<sup>84</sup> Such a Christology was not aided by an explicit NT teaching on the Trinity, which, of course, did not exist. Not even the roots of the Trinitarian doctrine are present in the NT, if one is speaking of a three-personed God.<sup>85</sup> What does exist is the explicit triadic formulas, suggesting that threeness of this kind was implicit from the beginning.<sup>86</sup> As Reginald Fuller says in a related context, this is “not just a quirk of the Greek mind, but a universal apperception.”<sup>87</sup> The triadic emphasis in the NT forms the point of departure for the trajectory which developed into Trinitarian doctrine as we understand it. And within that triadic

<sup>80</sup> Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John* 390.

<sup>81</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (i–xii)* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966) 162.

<sup>82</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (London: Chapman, 1977) 311–16; see also 50–54, 133–43.

<sup>83</sup> Heribert Mühlen, “Das Christusereignis als Tat des Heiligen Geistes,” *Mysterium salutis* 3/2 (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1969) 515.

<sup>84</sup> Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (New York: Paulist, 1976) 249.

<sup>85</sup> Franz Josef Schierse, “Die neutestamentliche Trinitätsoffnenbarung,” *Mysterium salutis* 2 (1967) 85.

<sup>86</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (3rd ed.; London: Longmans, 1960) 12.

<sup>87</sup> *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (London: Lutterworth, 1965) 248.

mentality the relationship of “in Christ” and “in the Spirit” was worked out.

How, in systematic categories, does one express this biblical relationship between Christology and pneumatology? Mühlen contends that Christians have no relationship to the Spirit as someone who stands over against them, but the Spirit is “itself the unmediated, mediating immediacy of our standing over against Christ,”<sup>88</sup> which is a way of saying that there is no experience of the Spirit except through Christ. Or, cast in more philosophical terms, every experience of the Spirit is materially, not formally, the experience of Christ.<sup>89</sup>

### *Two Hands of the Father and the Order of Salvation*

How was this mutuality of Christ and the Spirit handled in the postapostolic period? After having written that “concerning the Holy Spirit we should neither be silent nor should we speak,” Hilary of Poitiers went on to insist that any talk of the Spirit must be Trinitarian speech, since “He whom in our profession we must join with the Father and the Son cannot be separated in such a profession from the Father and the Son.”<sup>90</sup> The Trinitarian mystery is the ultimate reality and the absolute hermeneutic. That mystery is attained by individual and collective discovery of that presence in human history through the double mission of the Son and the Spirit which Paul is dealing with in his “in Christ” and “in the Spirit.”

Irenaeus (ca. 130-ca. 200) dealt with the problem in a Trinitarian framework. In his view, it is the insistent activity of “the two hands of the Father,” that is, the Son and the Spirit, that makes the discovery of God in history possible: “for at no time did Adam escape from under the hands of God.”<sup>91</sup> The two hands also set in motion “the order and plan for those who are saved,” that is, believers advance “by degrees . . . first by the Spirit they mount to the Son, and then (they ascend) by the Son to the Father.”<sup>92</sup> Both hands bear the imprint of the Father. The Son, sent into the world, manifests the Father (Jn 1:18), interprets and leads to the Father. Irenaeus grasped the NT teaching that Jesus reveals the

<sup>88</sup> Mühlen, “Das Christusereignis” 514–15.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> *On the Trinity* 2, 29 (CCL 62, 64; tr. FC 57, 58).

<sup>91</sup> *Against the Heresies* 5, 1, 3 (SC 153, 26, 28).

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 5, 36, 2 (SC 153, 458, 460). See J. Mambrino, “‘Les deux mains de Dieu’ dans l’oeuvre de saint Irénée,” *NRT* 79 (1957) 355–70. Aquinas wrote of the necessity of having knowledge of the divine persons “in order to have a right view of the creation of things . . . so that we may have the right view of salvation” (*Summa theologiae* 1, 32, 1).

Father who is the unique source of Trinitarian life; conversely, Trinitarian life shows who Jesus really was and is.<sup>93</sup>

If the Father invested His identity in the Son, Jesus on the cross revealed what kind of a Father sent him, and at the same time demonstrated the power of “the eternal Spirit through whom he offered himself” (Heb 9:14).<sup>94</sup> Historically, the Trinitarian question becomes an inevitability once one asks about the identity of the Jesus who died and was raised, and it was here that the question was posed in the developing thought of the community. This soteriologically weighted Christology introduces the specific Trinitarian problematic.<sup>95</sup> So one place of entry into the Trinitarian mystery and into history is Christology, or, more specifically, the mission of the Son, where the historical and experiential discovery, individual and collective, of the order of salvation in the person of the Son was possible.

### *Pneumatological Point of Entry*

One can speak of “a second place” of entry which is the “historical and salvific experience” of the Spirit, the other “hand” by which the Father reaches into history, which defines the mission of the Spirit.<sup>96</sup> One hesitates to number the missions as first and second. To say that the mission of the Spirit is second might imply a quasi-ontological subordinationism, as though both the Spirit and His mission were of a second order, still exalted, still divine, but of a lower dignity, a junior-grade person with a junior-grade mission. When a subordinationist pneumatology dominates, one arrives at a new Monophysitism of the humanity of Christ, as Nissiotis remarked, the inverse of the older Monophysitism. “We have to understand that according to the Scriptures, the work of the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, is as important as that of Christ. Without this work, nothing can exist in history, neither the reality of the Incarnation and the reconciliation in Christ, nor personal commitment to him in his community of faith. Everything degenerates into easy generalization and docetic abstractions.”<sup>97</sup>

To say that the mission of the Spirit is as important as that of the Son might be interpreted as a diminishing of the saving work of the cross. That is possible only if one has a fully consequent pneumatology, which

<sup>93</sup> Schierse, “Die neutestamentliche Trinitätsoffenbarung” 89.

<sup>94</sup> Käsemann, *Romans* 247.

<sup>95</sup> William J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Univ. of America, 1982) 29.

<sup>96</sup> Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Seabury, 1978) 135.

<sup>97</sup> Nikos A. Nissiotis, “Pneumatological Christology as a Presupposition of Ecclesiology,” *Oecumenica 1967* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1967) 239.

would view the two missions in complete temporal succession, individual and separate. Such a theology might be difficult to place explicitly stated in formal treatises, but it is a widespread theological attitude. When Irenaeus taught that "without the Spirit of God we cannot be saved,"<sup>98</sup> he was using a specifically Trinitarian logic. The mission of the Spirit, seen just as important as that of the Son, could mean the abandonment of a cross-centered theology only when that mission is conceived atomistically and divorced from "the trinitarian history of God's dealings with the world."<sup>99</sup> The theology of the cross has nothing to fear from a Trinitarian pneumatology.

### *Contact Function*

Joseph Ratzinger proposes that the mission of the Spirit in history (in contrast to the person of the Spirit) was possibly the object of an ancient Greek credal affirmation.<sup>100</sup> The end of the creed to which he was referring read "I believe in Holy Spirit." The insertion of a definite article where none exists, Ratzinger writes, misplaces the meaning. Originally the phrase seemed to refer to salvation history, not primarily to the Trinity. It was apparently not meant to designate the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Trinity, but the mission of the Spirit in history and in the Church. This emphasis on the Spirit in relation to history and the Church has special theological significance. In functional terms (obviously not ontologically) the Spirit is the point of contact between God and humankind. Therefore, when one builds a theology, one does not start with a consideration of God, nor with humankind in itself. One starts at that point where the one "touches" the other.<sup>101</sup> One starts with the historical experience (individual and collective) of the Spirit, which is the obverse side of the Spirit's mission. The Spirit who is experienced in history is that point of contact between God and humankind, the point where "the perfect Father"<sup>102</sup> through the Son touches history and therefore the Church, but in another direction the Spirit is the point of entry into the mystery of Christ through which the mystery of the Father is attained.

To return to Irenaeus, he spoke of "an order and arrangement of those who are saved," that is, believers advance "by degrees; first by the Spirit they mount to the Son, and then by the Son (they ascend) to the Father."

<sup>98</sup> *Against the Heresies* 5, 9, 3 (SC 153, 114). See also Laminski, *Der Heilige Geist* 170.

<sup>99</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1977) 64.

<sup>100</sup> *Introduction to Christianity* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970) 255.

<sup>101</sup> Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Geist und Wirklichkeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980) 34. See also Walter Kasper, *Der Gott Jesu Christi* (Mainz: Grünwald, 1982) 275–76.

<sup>102</sup> *Against the Heresies* 5, 1, 3 (SC 153, 26).

Again, Irenaeus spoke of this contact function of the Spirit, pneumatology as a point of entry: "For the Church is entrusted with this gift of God (Holy Spirit). . . . And in the same gift is dispensed the communion of Christ, that is, the Holy Spirit—the earnest of incorruption, and confirmation of our faith, and the ladder whereby to ascend to God."<sup>103</sup> The Spirit is both contact and the point of departure for the return to the Father.

Several times Basil referred to the contact function, formulating it in such a way as to emphasize its Trinitarian character.<sup>104</sup> Because of this general link-character of pneumatology, blasphemy against the Spirit will have no remission, cutting asunder, as it does, the immediate link through which forgiveness, repentance, and renewal are offered. The contact function suggested the Holy Spirit as a kind of synonym for "economy"<sup>105</sup> and "kingdom."<sup>106</sup> In John Meyendorff's phrase, the Spirit "is the very content of the kingdom."<sup>107</sup>

In speaking of the contact role of the Spirit, one meets spatial and even geographical expressions which carry the meaning in a pictured way but need qualification. Categories of space, when applied to the role of individual persons of the Trinity, are to be considered functionally. In spatial terms the Holy Spirit is not nearer to us than either the Son or the Father. But functionally He is; His role in the order of salvation gives Him an immediacy proper to His person. That such nonappropriated relations of the divine Persons to the created order exist is, as Karl Rahner reminded us, "a free and unobjectionable opinion in theology."<sup>108</sup> The three self-communications are the self-communication of the one God in the three relative ways in which God subsists. The three-foldedness of this self-communication is not to be understood as a merely verbally distinct communication, as though what was communicated was absolutely and in every respect the same, but because of our weak understanding is named, by a purely external literary device, with different words. In salvation history the distinction of this self-communication is "real." Within the historical order, that is, within salvation history, the self-communication of the triune God takes place through a double

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 3, 24, 1 (SC 211, 472; tr. LF 303).

<sup>104</sup> *On the Holy Spirit* 11, 27; 18, 47; 26, 62 (*The Book of Saint Basil the Great on the Holy Spirit*, ed. C. F. H. Johnston [Oxford: Clarendon, 1892] 61–63, 94–96, 120–21).

<sup>105</sup> De Lubac, *The Church* 35, n. 22.

<sup>106</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *Chapters on Prayer* 58, identifies the kingdom with the Spirit and the only-begotten Son (PG 79, 1180 among the works mistakenly attributed to Nilus of Sinai). But others identify the kingdom with the Spirit; see Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Lord's Prayer* 3 (PG 44, 1157c), and Maximus Confessor, *Explanation of the Lord's Prayer* (PG 90,884b).

<sup>107</sup> *Byzantine Theology* (London: Mowbrays, 1974) 169.

<sup>108</sup> *The Trinity* (London: Burns & Oates, 1970) 34.

mediation, corresponding to the mission of the Word and the Spirit. The character of this twofold mediation is determined by the specificity of the manner of origin and what constitutes the Word and the Spirit, who are more than verbally distinct.

### *A Two-Directional Hermeneutic*

While insisting on the "real" distinction between the two missions of Word and Spirit, there is danger of conceiving of them as two foci at the ends of an elongated circle, thus  While possibly not heretical, such a conception would be dangerous and might lead to a kind of economic tritheism. The relation of the double mission of Word and Spirit has been expressed in the formula "from the Father through Christ (Word) in the Spirit." In this conception the two distinct invisible missions are coextensive. And if one retains the circle as a means of demonstrating the theological conception, the two missions are visualized as two circles of equal size and equal "depth," which only appear to be superimposed on one another to the point where they seem to be one, but are in reality unmixed and without confusion, forming one geometrical reality (if that is not a violation of geometric laws), in a way reflective of the unity and diversity proper to God.

Two "sendings" corresponding to the two who are "missioned" seem to be mentioned in the text of Gal 4:4 f. John, too, speaks of a double mission (Jn 7:37–39; 14:26; 15:26; 20:21–22). But alongside the distinction of missions is a radical relating of the one to the other. The Father sends the Spirit in the name of the Son (Jn 14:26), and the Son sends the Spirit from the Father (Jn 15:26). The source of both is the Father. Luke also has this mutuality of Spirit and Son (Lk 24:49; Acts 2:33). In a different perspective Paul reaches the point where the mutuality expressed in "Lord" and "Spirit" becomes almost interchangeable (Rom 12:5, 11; 1 Cor 6:11; 2 Cor 3:17, 18). Paul did not resolve this mutuality into complete identification; while remaining distinct, the Spirit becomes the mode of the risen Lord's existence.<sup>109</sup> A further caution should be given. The mission of the Son is operative and effective only in the mission of the Spirit ("through Christ in the Spirit"). This seems to be what Paul says in Rom 15:18–19: "For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has wrought through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit." Though one can say that Christ works through the Spirit, that cannot be turned around. The Spirit does not

<sup>109</sup> Eduard Schweizer, "Pneuma," *TDNT* 6, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 419.

work through Christ.<sup>110</sup> In some respects Christ and the Spirit are interchangeable, but not in all.

If both missions go out from the Father, both lead to the Father: *a Patre ad Patrem*. Building on the biblical witness (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6; Eph 2:18; 1 Cor 15:24), the patristic tradition developed the theology of the movement from the Father through Christ in the Spirit, and back by the same movement to the Father. In the fourth century the complete liturgical pattern became “from the Father, through Christ His Son, in the Spirit, to the Father, blessed Trinity, one God.”<sup>111</sup> Here, too, each Person has a proper function which must not be generalized to the point where, in an attempt to save the divine unity, the Trinity is dissolved into a verbally nuanced unitarianism.

“From the Father to the Father” is the larger biblical framework for a theology of the mission of the Spirit. Within that NT triadic doctrine there are smaller related perspectives. Speaking again of the link between pneumatology and Christology as the decisive insight in Pauline theology, Käsemann goes on to say that this bond between the two is the point of departure for the interpretation of the formulae “in Christ” and “in the Spirit.” Still unresolved is the question of the degree to which Paul was influenced by the pneumatology of the enthusiasts, but Käsemann says that Paul could appropriate the terms of enthusiasm because he took “Christ in us” seriously.

Initially the apostle changed and sharpened the conception “in the Spirit,” which he had found in enthusiasm, through the “in Christ.” Nevertheless, the reciprocity in the use of the formulae makes sense only if they are derived from pneumatology and understood in the light of it. By the Spirit Christ seizes power in us, just as conversely by the Spirit we are incorporated into Christ.<sup>112</sup>

The specificity of this function is called “the contact function” in this paper, which is to say that the Spirit is the universal point of contact between God and history. The Spirit is also the point of entry into the

<sup>110</sup> Sigisbert Regli, “Firmsakrament und christliche Entfaltung,” *Mysterium salutis* 5 (1976) 325.

<sup>111</sup> Cyprian Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1959) 116.

<sup>112</sup> Käsemann, *Romans* 221–22, 226, 254. See also Käsemann, “The Beginnings of Christian Theology,” *New Testament Questions* (London: SCM, 1969) 104: “The whole history of primitive Christianity from its beginnings to its issue in early Catholicism is one long struggle to formulate adequately the indissoluble and yet always precarious connection between the Spirit on the one hand and the Gospel and Christology on the other. According as this attempt succeeds or fails, the community remains Christian or lapses into Judaism and heathenism, is competent or incompetent to speak adequately of miracle and the ministerial office.”

Christological and Trinitarian mystery. The Spirit leads through Christ to the Father. In hermeneutic terms, pneumatology is the universal (because coextensive with the reach of Christ's work) horizon determining the interpretation of all reality. There is, therefore, a two-directioned hermeneutical function to pneumatology. In one direction, it is both the point of entry and the hermeneutical principle for the interpretation of Christology and Trinity, and in the other direction, it is the point of entry and hermeneutical principle for the interpretation of history and ecclesiology. That two-directional function will never become outsized or disordered. It does not threaten Christology or the cross. The reason: it is within the larger movement of life from the Father to the Father. As long as pneumatology is truly Trinitarian, the controls are built in.

### *Spirit Displace Christ?*

But if one attributes a universal contact function to the Spirit, would not Christ's rightful centrality be threatened? The suggestion has even been made that pneumatology indeed should be central so as to overshadow the centrality of Christ, at least to compensate for the long concentration on Christology at the expense of pneumatology,<sup>113</sup> a kind of pneumatological affirmative action. Such a shift would be a theological distortion of the first order. Even if Cyrus of Edessa (6th c.) was right in calling Paul "the trumpet of the Spirit,"<sup>114</sup> the center of the good news in Paul is Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead. However much one has reason to speak of the Spirit being forgotten, or of a deprived, truncated pneumatology, neither the NT nor the theological tradition makes the Holy Spirit the central content of the gospel or the principal topic of theological reflection.<sup>115</sup> And that is as it should be. Mühlen could be defended when he wrote that "every dogmatic tract is basically about Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>116</sup> Nor is right order restored by positing two centers, each over against the other, corresponding to two foci of the elongated circle which diagramed a possible relation of the mission of the Son and the Spirit.

The relation of pneumatology to Christology is rather seen in the way "in Christ" is related to "in the Spirit" in Pauline thought, or the way the two Persons are related in the liturgical formula "through Christ in the Spirit." "'Being in Spirit' becomes the proclamation of 'being in

<sup>113</sup> G. J. Sirks, "The Cinderella of Theology: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit" *HTR* 50 (1957) 88.

<sup>114</sup> *Explanation of the Passion* 3, 8, in *Six Explanations of the Liturgical Feasts by Cyrus of Edessa: An East Syrian Theologian of the Mid-Sixth Century* (CSCO 356, 66).

<sup>115</sup> John Reumann, *Righteousness in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 116.

<sup>116</sup> "Das Christusereignis" 513-14.

Christ,' both as the crucified and the resurrected one."<sup>117</sup> Pneumatology, therefore, does not replace Christology as the central proclamation, or the prime subject matter for theological reflection.<sup>118</sup> Rather, every Christological statement has its pneumatological counterpart—something which seems to have been perceived as early as Ignatius of Antioch.<sup>119</sup> A second aggregate of theological content in addition to Christology is not thereby proposed. What is recommended is that another dimension at the interior of the Christological mystery be recognized, just as "being in the Spirit" is an interpretative imperative at the interior of "being in Christ." The mutuality and reciprocity are at the very core of the mystery. Though there may be temporal priorities to the visible mission of the Son, as a matter of fact the invisible missions are simultaneous, to which corresponds the concomitance of "being in the Spirit" and "being in Christ," as also in the liturgical doxology "through Christ in the Spirit." With this in view, one can support Richard McBrien's decision not to have a separate treatise on the Holy Spirit in his two-volume *Catholicism*.<sup>120</sup> And Maurice Wiles raises the question whether a frontal, direct attempt to elaborate a nuanced pneumatology is the best way to take care of a historic deficiency.<sup>121</sup>

### *No Tract Apart*

The norm is not whether a theology gives equal time to the Spirit, or whether pneumatology is expressly and directly addressed, but whether the doctrine of the Holy Spirit permeates the whole theological concern, not as the dominant theme but as an interpretive perspective. If the mission of the Spirit is equal to that of the Son, that must be evident in the whole of theology. A systematic theology may well dedicate a long,

<sup>117</sup> Käsemann, *Romans* 136.

<sup>118</sup> Alfons Nossol, "Der Geist als Gegenwart Jesu Christi," *Gegenwart des Geistes: Aspekte des Geistes*, ed. Walter Kasper (Freiburg: Herder, 1979) 133.

<sup>119</sup> Theodor Rüsch, *Die Entstehung der Lehre vom Heiligen Geist bei Ignatius von Antiochia, Theophilus von Antiochia und Irenäus von Lyon* (Zurich: Zwingli, 1952) 123.

<sup>120</sup> *Catholicism* 1 (Minneapolis: Winston, 1980) 369–70: "We do not have in this book a separate treatment of the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is at issue in every major theological discussion: the divinization of humankind by grace, the renewing and reconciling presence of God in history, the mystery of the Church, the celebration of the sacraments, the exercise of Christian witness. 'The Holy Spirit cannot become a formula, a dogma part,' the Orthodox theologian Nikos Nissiotis writes. 'Pneumatology is the heart of Christian theology; it touches all aspects of faith in Christ. It is a commentary on the acts of the revealed triune God, the life of the Church, and of the man who prays and is regenerated. Orthodox pneumatology does not allow the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to become a separate chapter of dogmatic theology.'"

<sup>121</sup> "The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology," *Explorations in Theology* 4 (London: SCM, 1979) 67.

separate chapter to the work of the Spirit and still be woefully lacking. What is to be avoided is a tract apart. Writing at length on the Spirit, composing a distinct work (as in the case of Athanasius and Basil in the fourth century and Bouyer and Congar in our own),<sup>122</sup> is not in necessary violation of the ban on tracts apart. "Apart" here refers to methodology, not to material content. Pneumatology is apart when it is divorced from the Trinitarian controls and principles.

There are a number of reasons why theologians have failed to deal adequately with pneumatology. Beyond the elusiveness, there is the fear of the Spirit which, Wolfgang Trillhaas notes, has become a "dogmatic fear." But the basic reason is broader and deeper, and that is the want of a bold Trinitarian theology. In the economic Trinity the difficulty, which arises out of fear of economic tritheism, is the reluctance to recognize any work as functionally proper to the Spirit. In the immanent Trinity the difficulty is the predisposition to think of the manner or mode of the Spirit's existence too exclusively according to the mode of the Father and the Son, rather than understanding the Spirit according to His own proper mode, as the Spirit of the Father and the Son.<sup>123</sup> Within Trinitarian doctrine, whether economic or immanent, it is a lack, in one way or another, of a sense of *proprium*.

### *Spirit As Theological Object*

The observation of Nissiotis that "the most important and most difficult task of theology was, and remains, that of delving more and more deeply into the doctrine of the Trinity, on the basis of pneumatology"<sup>124</sup> is by no means an unhealthy absolutizing of the Spirit. Such an undertaking does not entail building an exaggerated pneumatology. Nissiotis' proposal would be in accord with the contact function of the Spirit and would be a specifically Trinitarian endeavor. In pneumatology the theological orientation must be Christological and Trinitarian; in this sense the doctrine of the Spirit is central. If one is developing a Spirit Christology, and if one's theological perspective is truly Trinitarian, then

<sup>122</sup> From a methodological point of view, Florensky expressed what is, at very least, a curious opinion: "Gregory of Nyssa and Basil the Great refuted the deniers of the Holy Spirit; and in spite of their love of intellectual flights, they were unable to fly up to the level of the question of the Holy Spirit. With them, too, the Spirit is examined only in connection with the Father and the Son, and not independently" ("On the Holy Spirit" 146). Here Gregory and Basil are blamed for what should have been cause for praise.

<sup>123</sup> T. F. Torrance, "Spiritus Creator," *VCaro* 23 (1969) 82; Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* 258, 259; Wagner, "Der Heilige Geist" 215.

<sup>124</sup> "Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity" 39–40. Nissiotis wants all theology to be pneumatological in the sense that all theology is Trinitarian. See also Waclaw Hryniewicz's handling of Nissiotis' pneumatology in "The Centrality of Christ in Orthodox Theology," *Collectanea theologica* 46 (1976) special fascicle, 164.

the Spirit will be central in the sense in which “through Christ in the Spirit” indicates. The doctrine of the Spirit is a methodological center, not a material center. If Jesus Christ is the “what,” the Spirit is the “how.” Because the invisible mission of the Son and that of the Spirit are coextensive and simultaneous, the Spirit is central, but not as displacing Christ from the center. Each occupies the center, each according to a proper function, even while the doctrine of Christ remains the content object of theological reflection. Such a framework is a guarantee against a contextless pneumatology and other strained misplacements.

Historically, this Trinitarian principle was operative in dealing with pneumatological issues. Within a Trinitarian dynamic Gregory of Nyssa handled the variant reading of the Lord’s Prayer in Lk 11:2: “May the Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us” instead of “Your kingdom come.” Though the variant had a Marcionite flavor (the variant is found in Marcion [d. ca. 160] but was picked up by Evagrius [346–99] and Maximus [d. btw. 408–23]), Gregory thought it worthy of comment as long as it was given a specifically Trinitarian interpretation.<sup>125</sup> Hilary of Poitiers wrote a treatise *On the Trinity* which is really about Christology and soteriology. Hilary, together with Augustine, saw the necessity of doing Christology in a Trinitarian mode. Neither was under any absolute compulsion to give the Holy Spirit equal time. Athanasius’ four *Letters to Serapion* are a defense of the divinity of the Spirit, but the argument is essentially, even aggressively, Trinitarian. In brief, his argument was that those who hold the Spirit to be a creature tear asunder the Trinity.<sup>126</sup> Not as a matter of tactic, but as a demand of his Trinitarian hermeneutic, Athanasius developed no pneumatology apart from Christology and soteriology. In Basil’s *On the Holy Spirit*, though the learned bishop was preoccupied with the question of the divinity of the Spirit, the defense was worked out in forceful Trinitarian terms. The same could be said of Gregory of Nyssa’s *On the Holy Spirit, to Eustathius*.<sup>127</sup>

If Jesus Christ is the content of all theological reflection, a further question is raised: Is there any sense, beyond what has already been indicated, in which the Holy Spirit is the object of theological inquiry?

What Gabriel Marcel had to say about mystery is pertinent. He had grave reservations about using the category of mystery where some kind of presence was not making itself felt.<sup>128</sup> A purely noetic category is not

<sup>125</sup> On the Lord’s Prayer 3 (PG 44, 1161c). See also Reinhart Staats, “The Nicene-Constantinople Creed as a Foundation for Church Unity: Protestant Thoughts on Its Centenary, 1981,” *ITQ* 48 (1981) 227, n. 36.

<sup>126</sup> To Serapion 1, 2 (PG 26, 532–33).

<sup>127</sup> This work of Gregory’s is not found in Migne, but is printed in Franz Oehler, *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter* 1/2 (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1858) 164–85.

<sup>128</sup> *The Mystery of Being* (London: Harvill, 1950) 204.

adequate to mystery's reality. Here mystery as a primary category must not be confused with problem:

A problem is something which I meet, which I find complete before me, but which I can therefore lay siege to and reduce. But a mystery is something in which I myself am involved, and it can therefore only be thought of as "a sphere where the distinction between what is in me and what is before me loses its meaning and its initial validity." A genuine problem is subject to an appropriate technique by the exercise of which it is defined; whereas mystery by definition transcends every conceivable technique.<sup>129</sup>

One should resist the temptation, Marcel held, to treat a mystery as an object. As a kind of presence, mystery is, as a matter of principle, beyond the very possibility of being grasped or laid hold of.<sup>130</sup> To face mystery and to acknowledge its true nature can only be done from the inside. "There are no objective statements that can be made about it from the outside, for by definition it is *our* situation, the situation we cannot get outside of."<sup>131</sup>

The Holy Spirit cannot be objectified and viewed from a distance simply because, though distinct, the Spirit is not separable from the very processes by which an attempt is made to "define" Him. The Spirit can never become an object of theological reflection in the sense that the sacrament of baptism can, because the Spirit is the universal comprehensive horizon within which any and all theological reflection is possible.

The scholastics had a way of discussing the same kind of thing in their epistemology. They said that the formal principle of understanding does not allow itself to be adequately reflected upon because this reflection is nothing else but itself.<sup>132</sup> Or, when a person is trying to reflect on reflection itself, one is moving in a circle. Why? Because to think about thinking is already doubling. One is already using thinking in attempting to discover what the "object" of thinking is. In much the same way we must use the Spirit to understand the Spirit.

A similar "metaphor" would be Eric Schaeder's "coinherence." Here the object and the subject dwell within each other. That is why for Schaeder all talk about the nonobjectivity of God is rooted in pneumatology.<sup>133</sup> Thus the Spirit known (object) is discovered by the Spirit

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. 211–12.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. 207–8.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. 204.

<sup>132</sup> Mühlen, "Das Christusereignis" 513–14.

<sup>133</sup> *Das Geistproblem der Theologie*, as quoted in Goertz, *Geist und Wirklichkeit* 29–30.

See also Barth, *Evangelical Theology* 57–58; "theology now supposes it can deal with the Spirit as though it had hired him or even attained possession of him. It imagines that he is a power of nature that can be discovered, harnessed, and put to use like water, fire, electricity, or atomic energy.... But a presupposed spirit is certainly not the Holy Spirit,

knowing (subject). This is why the tract on the Spirit is not just another tract among many. Nor is it properly a separate theological object to be analyzed somewhat on the model of Christology or ecclesiology. In the Spirit every theological statement is made and becomes intelligible.<sup>134</sup> “The Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. . . . No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Cor 2:10–11). That is why pneumatology is to theology what epistemology is to philosophy.<sup>135</sup> Pneumatology determines the “rules” for speaking about God.

The operation of the Spirit at the interior of every statement about the Spirit is not simply a Christian insight. Martin Buber, working out of his *I-Thou* relationship, said that “the Spirit is not the *I*, but between *I* and *Thou*. It is not like the blood that circulates in you, but like the air in which you breathe.”<sup>136</sup> Within this same OT conception of the *ruach* as the ground of all life, Pannenberg theologizes about the Holy Spirit. The divine Father and the Son, transcendent because distinct from the believer, have an object-like character, in some way facing the subjectivity of the believer. This transcendent Father and Son, as it were, “spring over” to embrace the subjectivity of the believer. When we talk about the knowledge of God, there is about it something facing us, transcendent to us—“objective.” When we know anything but the unique transcendent God, our knowledge “repeats” the object, while at the same time becoming one with it. But we know God in a different way. The Spirit suspends and absorbs that repetition. The result is that the Spirit of God within us is knowing God in a different way. It is an awareness of God facing the human, but known by the Spirit within the human: the objective become nonobjective.<sup>137</sup>

Whether those who composed the earliest credal formulas had grappled in any formal way with the “nonobjectivity” of the Spirit is doubtful, but that they in some oblique way dealt with it seems likely. In some of the early “rules of faith” (*regulae fidei*) there is mention of the Spirit. Such a formula is found, for example, in Irenaeus: “We have received baptism

and a theology that presumes to have it under control can only be unspiritual theology.” Goertz maintained that Barth esteemed the work of Schaefer but took care to see that he “was soon forgotten” (*Geist und Wirklichkeit* 14).

<sup>134</sup> Mühlen, “Soziale Geisterfahrung als Antwort auf eine einseitige Gotteslehre,” *Erfahrung und Theologie* 154. See also Otto Dilschneider, “Geist und Kirche,” *Im Horizont des Geistes*, ed. Claus Heitmann and Fidelis Schmelzer (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1971) 9–19.

<sup>135</sup> Klauspeter Blaser, *Vorstoß zur Pneumatologie* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1977) 20–21.

<sup>136</sup> *I and Thou* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1937) 39.

<sup>137</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus: God and Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968) 336. For a critique of Pannenberg in this respect, see Hill, *The Three-Personed God* 163.

for the remission of sins in the name of God the Father and in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, incarnated, dead, and risen, and in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>138</sup> The reason for including the Holy Spirit was very likely to make clear that baptized Christians owed the same baptismal profession to the Spirit as was given to the Father and the Son.

In general, the great abundance of rules of faith do not allude to the Spirit. An example of this type of rule is also found in Irenaeus: “The rule of faith is that there is one all-powerful God, who created all things through His Word, one God, maker of heaven and earth, announced by the law and the prophets, and one Christ, Son of God, given for us.”<sup>139</sup> No mention of the Spirit. Other rules of faith follow this binary pattern. The conclusion should not be drawn that the absence of the Holy Spirit meant that faith in the Spirit was a matter of individual choice, or that faith would be essentially complete without the inclusion of the Spirit. Binary rules of faith were not complete expositions of the faith. Not because faith in the Spirit was an optional addition was the mention of the Spirit excluded, possibly consciously, but because the rules of faith represent doctrinal formulae directed to unbelievers. They are short statements, easy to remember, which could be given when the first proclamation of the faith was given to pagans or Jews, as Irenaeus clearly stated.<sup>140</sup> The Spirit was mentioned in the rule of faith when one had embraced the faith, been accepted into the community by baptism, and the time had come to explain why the Father had missioned His Son, what the Son did and continues to do. To do this is to explain baptism and the Trinitarian economy, “all of which are summed up in the giving of the Spirit (*donatio Spiritus*).”<sup>141</sup> In those cases where the Spirit was injected into the theological debates, He was invoked as the “source of the demonstration of the truth, the conserver of the tradition, the one who guarantees the rule of faith because the Spirit is the teaching subject, not the object taught.”<sup>142</sup>

<sup>138</sup> *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 3 (SC 62, 32).

<sup>139</sup> *Against the Heresies* 3, 1, 2 (SC 211, 24). See also 1, 22, 1 (SC 263, 308–10).

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.* 3, 12, 13 (SC 211, 236, 238).

<sup>141</sup> Joseph Moingt, *Théologie trinitaire de Tertullien: Histoire, doctrine, méthodes* 1 (Paris: Aubier, 1966) 79. In this section I am indebted to Moingt. See also Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 3, 6, 1 (SC 211, 64–68); 3, 21, 4 (SC 211, 408–14). See also Hans-Jochen Jashke, *Der Heilige Geist im Bekenntnis der Kirche* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1976) 43. Care should be taken not to reduce to a simple identification a baptismal creed on the one hand and a rule of faith (*regula fidei*) and a rule of truth (*regula veritatis*) on the other, even while recognizing that the terminology is somewhat fluid. See F. J. Badcock, “Le credo primitif d’Afrique,” *RBén* 45 (1933) 9.

<sup>142</sup> Moingt, *Théologie trinitaire* 1, 79.

## III

## THE HOLY SPIRIT: A WAY OF KNOWING

*A Theology in the Spirit*

If pneumatology is the point of entry into the world and the Church, and a portal to the Christological and Trinitarian mystery, and if pneumatology is in some way theological hermeneutics, we need to know more clearly what a theology in the Spirit (in contrast to a theology of the Spirit) means.

Here Barth can give some idea of the dimensions of the problem. If one is to make Trinity integral to the theological task, one has to avoid either appending it or giving Trinity the kind of extrinsic treatment which leaves the essential structure and movement of theology untouched. Rahner referred to this when he said that the Trinity is presented in such a way that were it simply dropped, nothing would have really been changed.<sup>143</sup> Barth, on the contrary, placed the Trinity in the prolegomena to his *Church Dogmatics*, covering 194 pages of the whole of 1/1. His positioning of Trinitarian doctrine in the prolegomena was dictated by his conviction that, though there is an objectifying of the being of God, it was not to be understood as God rendering Himself intelligible as an object, in the manner in which a human subject is made available as an object to be known. The God of the Bible who encounters a human person in the objectivity of the divine One “is not identical with any human subject who knows Him, so also He is not one object in the series of other objects” of human knowing;<sup>144</sup> the knowledge of God is “an utterly unique occurrence in the range of all knowledge.”<sup>145</sup> Barth concluded: “Certainly we have God as an object; but not in the same way as we have other objects.”<sup>146</sup> Objectivity of this kind differs from the other objectivity of human knowing because the separating out from the range of all knowledge takes place in God,<sup>147</sup> something seen more clearly in Barth’s doctrine of revelation.

For Barth, revelation was not something God gives to humankind; God is not in every respect something other than the revelation given. When Barth said that God is Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness,<sup>148</sup> he was saying that the Trinity belongs to the very structure of revelation. In

<sup>143</sup> “Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise ‘De trinitate,’” *Theological Investigations* 4 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966) 79.

<sup>144</sup> *Church Dogmatics* 2/1 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1957) 15.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. 21.

<sup>147</sup> Eberhard Jüngel, “God’s Being-As-Object,” *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God’s Being Is in Becoming* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 42–60.

<sup>148</sup> *Church Dogmatics* 1/1 (1936) 417.

this sense God is not someone who reveals; God as Trinity is the revelation.

Barth's teaching on the Trinity is highly Christological.<sup>149</sup> But there is also a pronounced pneumatological character to his Trinitarian doctrine in a way which relates to the theme under discussion here. For Barth, the role of the Spirit in uniting the Son of God to the humanity of Jesus is paralleled by the role of the Spirit in uniting the revelation, God's Word, to humankind. Apart from the Spirit there is no other means of union. The Spirit is the sole source of a relationship with God and the sole hope of salvation: "The indwelling of the Spirit in us, the self-inaugurated motion of the Spirit toward us, by which men are related to God, and which is their death and life, is necessary for the establishing of our relation to God. There is no other means of union, and this one is sufficient."<sup>150</sup> The Christian's relationship to Jesus Christ comes about through the Spirit, present to the believer, saying "yes" to the Word. This yes "is the mystery of faith, the mystery of knowledge of the Word of God, but also the mystery of willing obedience, well-pleasing to God. All of it exists for man 'in the Holy Spirit,' to wit, faith, knowledge, obedience."<sup>151</sup> The Spirit is sole possibility of any knowledge of the Father and the Son. The Spirit has a contact function; the Spirit is the "place" where the Father through the Son touches history, the locus of entry into the Christological and Trinitarian mystery. In Barth pneumatology fulfils a mediating function.<sup>152</sup>

While rejecting neither historical knowledge nor critical reflection, Barth contended that the task of theology is the same as that of preaching. The biblical message which will be preached is grasped "by the reason of the Spirit that is *identical* with its content, and that in faith."<sup>153</sup> Theological exegesis of this kind was not accepted either by the critical or conservative theologians, but it did spark a rethinking of NT hermeneutics. The situation was not greatly helped by the reflections of Karl Girsengroß of Griefswal, who proposed that historical exegesis be sup-

<sup>149</sup> The Christocentric character of Barth's Trinitarian doctrine is to be viewed positively. In a different mode Basil's doctrine of the Trinity was also Christocentric; see Pelikan, "The 'Spiritual Sense' of Scripture" 341.

<sup>150</sup> Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford: University Press, 1933) 291. See also Rosato, *The Spirit As Lord* 47, 68–69, 72, 77–78.

<sup>151</sup> *Church Dogmatics* 1/1, 518–19.

<sup>152</sup> See the long sections in *Church Dogmatics* 1/2 on "The Holy Spirit the Subjective Reality of Revelation" 203–42, and "The Holy Spirit the Subjective Possibility of Revelation" 242–79. See also Rosato, "The Act of the Spirit: Barth's Mediating Principle," *The Spirit As Lord* 17–21.

<sup>153</sup> Barth, *Theologische Fragen und Antworten, Gesammelte Vorträge* 3 (Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1957) 10.

plemented by a higher “pneumatic exegesis” directed by the Spirit.<sup>154</sup> Helmut Thielicke seems to stand in this same general tradition of pneumatic exegesis.<sup>155</sup> This two-tiered approach met with even less approval than Barth’s suggestion, and this on the grounds that the Spirit could not be critically verified or made the presupposition to scientific method.<sup>156</sup>

If these solutions are not acceptable, still they have pointed to a dimension of exegetical and theological hermeneutics which needs to be reckoned with. By reason of faith, the Spirit opens to every believer, and therefore to the theologian, that horizon where the Spirit operates in a unique way, within which revelation is appropriated. Perhaps one can push further and ask if there is some way in which theology, as today’s reflection on the enduring faith, should be moved, carried along, and animated by the Spirit who is that expansive point of contact where God’s knowing touches human knowing as faith understanding. Evidently it would be difficult to separate theology from a personal and communitarian confession of faith, simply because this profession, if it partakes of the full character of faith in the sense of the NT,<sup>157</sup> is elicited by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3).

Basil faced the same problem Barth addressed. In elaborating a theology of the Spirit, Basil complained about those who “make only technology in place of theology,”<sup>158</sup> referring to those who attached excessive importance to philosophical subtleties. The bishop of Caesarea spoke of the knowledge of God which is attained in the Holy Spirit in terms similar to those Barth used, but also similar to Marcel’s vocabulary. After having stressed the necessity of discipline and asceticism,<sup>159</sup> Basil went on to demonstrate that the knowledge of God is knowledge of and in the Spirit, knowledge from within:

If we are illumined by divine power, and fix our eyes on the beauty of the image

<sup>154</sup> Werner Georg Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems* (2nd ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1969) 371.

<sup>155</sup> *The Evangelical Faith* 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 202: “The hermeneutics of the Holy Spirit means that the truth intended cannot possibly fall under the general categories which are the epistemological conditions for the usual definition of truth. We are thus confronted again by the familiar phenomenon in theology that when the terms are transferred to theology they undergo a sharp modification of sense. Linguistically we still have the same word ‘truth’ but it now denotes something very different.”

<sup>156</sup> Kümmel, *The New Testament* 371.

<sup>157</sup> Adolf Darlap, “Der Begriff der Heilsgeschichte,” *Mysterium salutis* 1 (1965) 37.

<sup>158</sup> Letter 90 2 (*Saint Basile, Lettres*, ed. Courtonne, 1, 196). See also J. M. Hornus, “La divinité du Saint-Esprit comme condition du salut personnel selon Basile,” *VCaro* 23 (1969) 33.

<sup>159</sup> *On the Holy Spirit* 9, 23 (*The Book of Basil*, ed. Johnston, 53).

(Son) of the invisible God, and through the image are led up to the indescribable beauty of its source (Father), it is because we have been inseparably joined to the Spirit of knowledge. He gives those who love the vision of truth the power which enables them to see the image, and this power is Himself. He does not reveal it to them from outside sources, but leads them to knowledge personally. "No one knows the Father except the Son," and "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit." Notice that it does not say *through* the Spirit, but *in* the Spirit. . . . He reveals the glory of the Only-Begotten in Himself, and He gives the true worshipers the knowledge of God in Himself. The way to divine knowledge ascends from one Spirit through the one Son to the one Father.<sup>160</sup>

Knowledge of this kind is from within, a theology in the Spirit, and is not attainable by merely exterior means. If one does not know God in the Spirit, one does not know at all. For Basil, as for Barth, the Spirit is the point of entry into the Christological and Trinitarian mystery.

In the Judeo-Christian (here the term means non-Greek and non-Latin) and Syriac tradition, Philoxenus of Mabbog (ca. 440–523) presented a similar position on the pneumatological roots of the knowledge of God. One of the ancient theories of optics is that vision is a combination of light already inherent in the interior of the healthy eye and the external light of the sun or lamp which surrounds natural objects. Sight occurs when the external light of the sun meets the interior light that is actually in the eye. Basic to this theory of optics is the likeness of the interior light in the eye to the external light of the sun. Without the likeness of these two forms of light, no sight is possible.<sup>161</sup> Applying this theory of light to the knowledge of God, Philoxenus held that the Holy Spirit dwells in the believer and is that very interior light which links the believer with the exterior light of God and spiritual realities. Because of the likeness of the interior light (Spirit) in the believer and the exterior light (God), knowledge of God is possible. The Spirit gives the proportionality. Without the Holy Spirit the believer is like a blind person in the presence of objects; what should be seen is not, because what is in the eye to make it operate correctly is absent. Without the Spirit one cannot see the God who is present.<sup>162</sup> In this sense God is object, but only because He is seen with His own seeing. For Philoxenus, too, this is knowledge in the Spirit. The Spirit serves a contact function.

#### *The Spirit Gives Proportionality*

If one moves back from Philoxenus to the NT, one discovers in the Johannine materials the conviction (1 Jn 3:24; 4:13) that the possession

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. 18, 47 (*The Book of Basil* 94–95)

<sup>161</sup> Roberta C. Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies* (Oxford: University Press, 1976) 95.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. See the text of Philoxenus in "Memra de Philoxène de Mabboug sur l'inhabitation du Saint-Esprit," ed. A. Tanghe, *Muséon* 73 (1960) 51.

of the Spirit "becomes a way of knowing," leaving no doubt that the presence of the Spirit is both experience and knowing.<sup>163</sup>

This way of knowing, rooted in individual and community, is not based on the reception and exercise of the more dramatic charisms. Rather, in the Johannine writings one has to do with that quieter, more commonplace inner experience in individuals and the community which brings the presence of the Spirit into conscious awareness analogous to, but distinct from, the manner in which the Spirit is experienced in Gal 4:6 and Rom 8:14, the "Abba, Father" passages.<sup>164</sup> "The modern critical reserve over against such an experience of the Spirit should not darken this perspective which in early Christianity formed a really deep conviction. The witness of Paul, as of Johannine Christianity, would, on the contrary, be a question posed to us, whether we have not, in this perspective, become blind and poor."<sup>165</sup>

In Paul the Spirit is also a way of knowing. In 1 Cor 2:14 f. natural knowledge and understanding are seen as not adequate to the truth which the Spirit teaches. Implicit in these verses is the principle that in order to know a truth one must have a faculty proportionate to it.<sup>166</sup> The Spirit gives that proportionality. Within the theological disciplines, therefore, pneumatology is, in some sense, epistemology, and to this degree determines the rules for speaking about the presence of the mystery. With the proportionality which the Spirit gives, one can know Jesus, the image of the Father who sent him. With the same proportionality one can recognize the presence of God in history and the face of the Son in His Church.

This is neither a ban on all metaphysical analysis, nor on critical thinking, nor on a rigorous intellectualism within theology, but a caution that even a chaste and disciplined rationalism is not sufficient. In the fourth century Didymus the Blind (ca. 313–98) referred to the difference between the various kinds of knowledge and indicated the magnitude of

<sup>163</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg, "Die johanneische Gemeinde und ihre Geisterfahrung," *Die Kirche des Anfangs* (Festschrift for H. Schürmann; Leipzig: St. Benno, 1977) 286. This section is indebted to Schnackenburg.

<sup>164</sup> The formulation here has to be awkward because in the early Church the charisms were not considered to belong to the extraordinary life of the Church but to its normal expression. Therefore one cannot contrast the commonplace, "regular," ordinary inner experience of the Spirit on the one hand with the extraordinary, unusual experience of the same Spirit in the charisms on the other. Both belonged to the normal, mature life of the Christian community, and this not just at Corinth. See Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1961) 181–87, 209–10. See also Schweizer, "Pneuma," *TDNT* 6, 423–24; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975) 297; Otto Kuss, *Der Römerbrief* (2nd ed.; Regensburg: Pustet, 1963) 549–50.

<sup>165</sup> Schnackenburg, "Die johanneische Gemeinde" 286.

<sup>166</sup> Richard Kugelman, "The First Letter to the Corinthians," *Jerome Biblical Commentary* 2 (London: Chapman, 1968) 258–59. See also Walter Kasper, "Aspekte gegenwärtiger Pneumatologie," *Gegenwart des Geistes*, ed. Kasper (Freiburg: Herder, 1979) 10.

the hermeneutical problem: the Holy Spirit “will teach not like those who have acquired an art or knowledge by study and industry, but as being the very art, doctrine, and knowledge itself.”<sup>167</sup> The Spirit as a way of knowing cannot be verified by critical methods and therefore cannot be a presupposition to a scientific method. This one would still want to maintain. The nonobjectivity and hiddenness of the Spirit are reasons for the elusive quality of all knowing in the Spirit and all speech about the Spirit. Also, the Third Person of the Trinity has no proper name, unlike the First and Second Persons. In itself, “Spirit” is generic; the Father and the Son are also spirit. If one speaks of the work of creation and redemption in reference to the First and Second Persons, and of sanctification in reference to the Third Person, then the work of the Spirit falls less immediately under scrutiny.<sup>168</sup> The Spirit is known by what is effected; but if one argues back from effects, that does not leave a reasonably satisfying account of who the Spirit is. Perhaps this persistent imprecision is one of the reasons (in addition to not wanting to go beyond the explicit witness of Scripture) why the Fathers hesitated to make unambiguous statements about the Spirit’s origin and divinity.

Florensky remarked that the Third Person is represented “only formally” when procession is employed to indicate the manner of origin, procession being “a term without any concrete meaning. People have talked about this a great deal, but nothing much has been said.”<sup>169</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus warned that those who pried too closely into the distinction between generation and procession would be driven into a frenzy.<sup>170</sup> For Basil, the term “procession” did not dissipate the haze concerning the mode of the Spirit’s existence, and what is more, Basil thought that this kind of very precise knowledge was not important.<sup>171</sup> Eschatology was Augustine’s answer. He thought that the difference would be understood only beyond death in the light of glory.<sup>172</sup>

The elusive character of the Spirit also pushed the Fathers into uncomfortable positions. Louis Bouyer noted that Augustine scarcely spoke of the Holy Spirit except where he could not avoid it, such as when he found the Spirit in a citation which he had invoked in order to support

<sup>167</sup> *On the Holy Spirit* 1, 2 (PG 23, 130).

<sup>168</sup> P. C. Christou, “L’Enseignement de saint Basile sur le Saint Esprit,” *VCaro* 23 (1969) 95–96.

<sup>169</sup> “On the Holy Spirit” 150.

<sup>170</sup> *Fifth Theological Oration* 8 (*Die fünf theologischen Reden* 230–32).

<sup>171</sup> *Against the Sabellians, Arius, and the Anomoeans* 6 (PG 31, 613).

<sup>172</sup> *On the Trinity* 15, 25, 45 (CCSL 50A, 523–24). See also John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* 1, 8 (PG 94, 824a). Similarly, Adam of St. Victor (d. btw. 1117–92) confessed in Latin verse that he did not know what generation and procession meant: “Quid sit gigni, quid processus/ me nescire sum professus/ sed fide non dubia/ qui sic credit, ne festinet” (*Sequence on the Trinity* [PL 196, 1459]).

a thesis on which he had already decided. A tendency displayed by Augustine, and still apparent in his heirs ancient and modern, was to refer to grace in those contexts in which the Easterners would speak of the Spirit.<sup>173</sup> Hilary of Poitiers, in an attempt to give a pronounced and balanced Trinitarian conclusion to his *On the Trinity*, has a section devoted to the Father and the Son. There is a note of frustration in the lines devoted to the Holy Spirit. Hilary confessed in his prayer peroration that he held fast to the belief that the Spirit "is from you," but added "although I do not grasp it with my understanding."<sup>174</sup> He bolstered his ignorance by recalling that there were other things he did not understand, including his own regeneration. Then, somewhat lamely, he concluded: "I shall assert nothing else about the Holy Spirit that is above the judgment of the human mind except that the Spirit is your Spirit. And I pledge myself to avoid a futile contest of words, but give myself to preserving profession of unquestioning faith."<sup>175</sup> Basil, who in 375 wrote what may be the classic treatise on the Spirit, confessed eleven years earlier that he did not know very much about the Spirit.<sup>176</sup> In writing against Eunomius in 364, he had a difficult time fleshing out his section on the Holy Spirit. The material Basil devoted to the Spirit covers nine columns in Migne, while 37 were devoted to the Father and 40 to the Son.<sup>177</sup>

Even after centuries of reflection, writing on the Trinity manifests a certain impoverishment when it comes to the Third Person, something which has been noted in Karl Rahner's exposition.<sup>178</sup> Very likely this will not and cannot change, simply because revelation is ambiguous at this point, as Niceta of Remesiana (d. ca. 414) remarked: "That there is much about the Holy Spirit we cannot understand is clear from the Gospel."<sup>179</sup> Such frustrations prompted Congar, on finishing his valuable three-volume work on the Spirit, to say that it had been "a long and thankless study."<sup>180</sup> Hendrikus Berkhof almost came to the point of giving up

<sup>173</sup> Louis Bouyer, *Le consolateur* (Paris: Cerf, 1980) 222.

<sup>174</sup> *On the Trinity* 12, 56 (CCSL 62, 626).

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. Luis F. Ladaria calls attention to a special problem in Hilary's pneumatology. "Although the Holy Spirit is mentioned with a certain frequency, there are only a few texts which deal directly with the Spirit. Therefore the study of this theme requires very special attention. Certain affirmations, some of them important, are not repeated. Many allusions can only be discovered on minute examination of individual texts, whose meaning might escape even an attentive reader" (*El Espíritu Santo en San Hilario de Poitiers* [Madrid: Eapsa, 1977] 325–26).

<sup>176</sup> *Against Eunomius* 3, 6, 7 (PG 29, 668–69).

<sup>177</sup> Milton Anastos, "Basil's *Kata Eunomiou*," *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981) 117–18.

<sup>178</sup> Hill, *The Three-Personed God* 139.

<sup>179</sup> *The Power of the Holy Spirit* 5 (PL 52, 855).

<sup>180</sup> *I Believe* 3, 272.

pneumatology as the topic of a lecture series because of the problems involved.<sup>181</sup> Finally, Pannenberg writes words with which anyone who has worked in the area would agree: "there is almost no other subject in modern theology so difficult to deal with."<sup>182</sup>

## V

## CONCLUSION

Though there is no formal doctrine of the Trinity in the NT, there is a rich triadic teaching which is now being reappropriated. But the unreflective character of the scriptural witness on the Holy Spirit gave rise to much groping in the earliest centuries and continues today. Barth's prediction in the last year of his life was that the theology of the future would be a theology of the Spirit done in a Trinitarian mode. Any move in that direction will have to ground itself in the biblical teaching on the mission of the Son and the Spirit, most especially on the mutuality between Christ and the Spirit. This mutuality is also involved in the two missions through which the Father touches history and the Church. Within the rhythm of the economic Trinity, the Spirit exercises a contact function, giving pneumatology a hermeneutic role. The Holy Spirit is the point of entry into history and the Church in one direction, and, in another, into the Christological and Trinitarian mysteries.

If the two missions are to be kept in balance and fruitful tension, it has to be recognized that they are equal, that is, the mission of the Spirit is as important as that of the Son. Otherwise the doctrine of the Trinity collapses. Two unequal missions cannot be supported within Trinitarian doctrine. What does one do with the unity within the Godhead if one mission is greater than the other? If the two missions are equal, this has to be evident in the manner in which theology is structured. That is to say, the equality of the missions is not an academic question but has profound ramifications for theology, liturgy, private prayer, pastoral practice, and the way we perceive material creation. Though equal, the Spirit is not a second theological focus in the sense of a second theological body of knowledge alongside Christology; the Spirit is an interpretive perspective which informs the whole of theology, operating at the center of the Christological moment. This is a specifically Trinitarian imperative, and it is not met by sprinkling references to the Spirit throughout a text in a purely external manner. Further, recognizing the equality of

<sup>181</sup> *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1964) 9.

<sup>182</sup> "The Working of the Spirit in Creation and in the People of God," *Spirit, Faith and Church*, ed. Wolfhart Pannenberg et al. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969) 13. Hans Urs von Balthasar contended that to write a theology in which the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is thematic belongs to one of theology's most difficult tasks; see *Spiritus Creator: Skizzen zur Theologie* 3 (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1967) 9.

the two missions need not lead to a bloated, aggrandizing pneumatology which displaces Christ from his centrality. Both Christ and the Spirit are at the center but in different ways: Christ as the “what” and the Spirit as the “how.” As this “how,” the Spirit is a way of knowing Jesus and the Father; as a “how,” the Spirit is a way the Father through Christ has contact with history and the Church. The contact function is a mode of the “how.” Because of the Spirit’s contact function, the Father through the Son leaves His traces (*vestigia*), divine footprints in the sands of the universe.<sup>183</sup>

If one looks back at the history of pneumatology, one of the major causes of the difficulty is the displacement of pneumatology from its Trinitarian context. As a discipline, it keeps slipping out of its frame. And in pneumatology Trinity is more than content; it is process, method, and control.<sup>184</sup> To do pneumatology is to do Trinitarian doctrine, more especially the doctrine of the economic threeness. To modify and transpose what Basil said of the Son, when we name the name of the Spirit, we confess the three-personed God.<sup>185</sup>

<sup>183</sup> Rahner chides contemporary theologians for their easy dismissal of the classical doctrine of *vestigia* or *imago trinitatis* in the world as pious speculation; see “Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise ‘De trinitate’” 81 (Rahner, *Trinity* 40–42). For the OT as a preparation for the doctrine of the Trinity, see Raphael Schulte, “Die Vorbereitung der Trinitätsoffenbarung,” *Mysterium salutis* 2 (1967) 49–82.

<sup>184</sup> This is also true of Christology.

<sup>185</sup> *On the Holy Spirit* 12, 28 (*The Book of Basil* 63–65).



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