

THEOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS IN OUR PREACHING ABOUT THE SPIRIT

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[Editor's note: The author elucidates various presuppositions which affect preaching about the Spirit. To appreciate pneumatology, one needs to reflect on how redemption aspires toward imparting the Spirit. Christ, sent by the Father on mission, is the "what" of the gospel. On the other hand, the Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, is the "how" of the gospel, in the sense that the Spirit actualizes in us the objective redemption won by Christ.]

THE WORD FOR SPIRIT in the biblical languages also means "wind" or "breath." Grasping the Spirit is like grasping breath or capturing wind. The elusive, nonconcrete nature of the Spirit should put one on guard against unrealistic expectations. This is difficult material. What I wish to present here are neither homily hints nor immediate material for proclamation. Rather I want to elucidate theological presuppositions to preaching about the Spirit. I situate pneumatology in its primary context, and indicate in what sense the redemptive economy is directed toward imparting the Spirit as a goal; I look at the manner in which Christ differs from the Spirit. I consider questions regarding equality, centrality, divinization, the sociopolitical role of the Spirit. I conclude with some brief remarks about the Spirit as experience.

Though the Old Testament *ruach* is not completely identical with the New Testament *pneuma*, from a Christian perspective there are not two Spirits. And spirit/Spirit plays an identical function in both testaments. Spirit (charism) is constitutive of the identity of Israel.¹ And

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¹ "At the very beginning of Israelite religion we find the charisma, the special individual endowment of a person; and to such an extent is the whole structure based on it, that without it, it would be inconceivable" (Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961] 1.292). "It is therefore evident that the charismatic was an absolutely constitutive factor in Jahwism" (Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols. [New York; Harper & Row, 1962, 1965] 1.102).

the Holy Spirit is constitutive of the identity of Jesus Christ ("The Holy Spirit will come upon you" [Luke 1:35]) as well as of the Church and Christian life.

According to the wish of Pope John Paul II, the year 1997 focussed on the mystery of the Son. This year 1998 is dedicated to the Holy Spirit; next year is to be the year of God the Father. The context is not only important but decisive. Trinity is the primary location of the Spirit. When there is trouble with the doctrine of the Spirit it is largely because it has slipped out of its trinitarian framework.² One can say the same for Christology.

By Trinity Christian tradition does not mean merely threeness. Naked threeness is not enough. There is a trinitarian dynamic, a movement from a starting place and a returning to the source. God reaches through the Son in the Spirit to touch and transform the Church and world and to lead them in the Spirit, through Christ, back to the Father.³ In this paradigm the Spirit is not only the point of contact with the Church and world, but also the turning point by which the way back to God is opened.⁴ This suggests that the *from, through, in, to* schema of Ephesians 1:3–14 and 2:4–5, 18–22 is what Cyprian Vagaggini calls the "primordial and predominant" paradigm in the New Testament and in the liturgical orations.⁵ This paradigm is the trinitarian dynamic.

² The creative work of Michael Welker, *God the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), a book of considerable range, is essentially compromised by the fact that the Trinity is not the primary context of Welker's reflection on the Spirit. Welker has produced a pneumatology "apart", his strong point is that he appreciates the Spirit as an agent of social transformation.

³ David Coffey concedes that we encounter God in the order of Spirit, Son, Father, but denies that this is based on the reverse of the processions of the divine persons, namely, Father, Son, and Spirit (*Grace the Gift of the Holy Spirit* [Sydney: Catholic Institute, 1979] 111–18). Coffey, standing in the tradition of Piet Schoonenberg and Walter Kasper, is supported by Ralph Del Colle (*Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in a Trinitarian Perspective* [New York: Oxford University, 1994] 101–3, 109–33, 149, 154). Before the elaboration of the processional model, the paradigm Father-Son-Spirit-Son-Father is found already in an initial way in Clement of Rome, *To the Corinthians* 42:1–5, *Sources Chrétiennes* (= SC) 167, 168, 170, and also in Ignatius of Antioch, *Ephesians* 9:1, SC 10:64. But it is clearest in Irenaeus, who is working out of a liturgical/baptismal model: "Therefore the baptism of our rebirth comes through these three articles, granting us a rebirth unto God the Father, through his Son, by the Holy Spirit. For those who are bearers of the Spirit of God are led to the Word, that is, to the Son, but the Son takes them and presents them to the Father, and the Father confers incorruptibility. So without the Spirit there is no seeing the Word of God, and without the Son there is no approaching the Father, for the Son is the knowledge of the Father, and the knowledge of the Son is through the Holy Spirit" (*Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 7, SC 406:92).

⁴ The relation of Christ to the Spirit should not be frozen in one paradigm. Though the model given above is a dominant one, there is also that of Christ, God, Spirit as formulated in 1 Cor 13:14.

⁵ *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1976) 198, 209, by way of a cautionary note, observe that Vagaggini tends to read later theological positions into earlier texts.

No earthly power can bring one into communion with God. Unless one "touches" or is touched by the Spirit, no communion is possible. Gregory of Nyssa noted that the Son was anointed with the Holy Spirit, and one who is going to have contact with the Son must first touch the Spirit whose anointing covers the Son. "There is no interval of separation between the Son and the Holy Spirit."⁶ According to Justin Martyr, one cannot see God unless one is "adorned with the Holy Spirit."⁷ And for Basil, not to attain salvation is to be separated from the Holy Spirit.⁸

In Galatians 3:13–14, Paul writes that the purpose of the cross was the imparting of the Spirit, an astonishing statement that orients history from the time of Abraham and from the central redemptive act on Calvary to the giving of the Spirit. In the same vein, there is a long tradition going back at least to Athanasius that the purpose of the Incarnation is, in Athanasius's words, "that we might receive the Holy Spirit."⁹ Nicholas Cabasilas made a similar observation.¹⁰ Why is redemption oriented to the Spirit? Does this displace Jesus Christ from the center? No. That is not a viable option. Rather the Spirit makes real and personal in us what is real and personal in Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. The reality of God in Christ, not as a viable concept but as vital experienced actuality, is the work of the Spirit. For Gregory of Nyssa the Spirit is the principle of reality,¹¹ making the work of Christ real in history and in the Church. This is an acute issue. Today we have gone beyond Luther's question, "How can I find a gracious God?" and beyond the need of giving a rational structure to a belief system. The question we are more likely to ask is "Can I experience God as real and personal in the place where I experience myself as real and a person?"

CHRIST AS THE "WHAT" AND THE SPIRIT AS THE "HOW"

Christ, sent by the Father on mission, is the "what," the content of the gospel. After Pentecost, the apostles did not go out and preach the glories of the Spirit; they proclaimed Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified,

⁶ *On the Holy Spirit against the Followers of Macedonius*, in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, ed. Werner Jaeger et al., 11 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1960–1992) 3/1.102–3; hereafter cited as Jaeger.

⁷ *Dialogue with Trypho* 4.1; *Die ältesten Apologeten*, ed. Edgar J. Goodspeed (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1914) 95.

⁸ *On the Holy Spirit* 16, 40; SC 17bis.388.

⁹ *On the Incarnation* 8; PG 26.996c.

¹⁰ "What is the result and the effect of the sufferings of Christ, of his acts and of his discourses? If one considers them in relation to ourselves, it is nothing other than the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Church" (*Explanation of the Divine Liturgy* 37.3; SC 4bis.228). Pseudo-Macarius says that the ascetical life has as its goal "the imperishable riches, which is the Holy Spirit" (*Homily* 3.3, in *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien des Makarios*, ed. Hermann Dörries et al. [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1964] 21–22).

¹¹ Martien Parmentier, "St. Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 59 (1977) 423–24.

whom God raised up (Acts 2:23–24). The good news tells of the crucified and exalted Jesus Christ, sent by the Father in the power of the Spirit. On the other hand, it is the Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, who actualizes in us the real objective redemption won by Christ;¹² in this sense we may call the Spirit the “how” of the gospel. This is why the vocabulary of remembering and efficacy is often used of the Spirit. The Spirit is the Church’s memory of the Christ mystery. But the Spirit is an effective memory—or if you will, an epiclesis of the redemptive mysteries—making real and actual in our presence and in our history what is real and actual in Christ. This is why Karl Barth rightly but still lamely calls the Spirit “the subjective realization of the atonement.”¹³

Calling the Spirit the “how” is a little untidy because trinitarian thought is not so easily turned into an epigram. The crudity of the expression indicates the care with which it is to be used. The Spirit is not a “what,” because one can never turn the Spirit into a theological object in the sense of a specialized area to be studied. The Spirit is not an object over against us. That is why a book on the Spirit considered as a separate topic is inadvisable. Alongside of the christological object of theological reflection, one does not have a pneumatological object. One can reflect theologically “in the Holy Spirit” but not “on the Holy Spirit” as an entity. Rather, the Spirit is the “how” by which any and all theological reflection is possible. The Spirit is the “total horizon” within which theological reflection takes place. The Spirit is not a specialized object within the horizon, nor a section of the vista. The Spirit is the total trinitarian hermeneutic, determining the rules for speaking about God and the Son. In Heribert Mühlen’s justifiably opaque, but still helpful, summary, the Spirit is “the mediated mediation who mediates all to all, but who himself needs no further mediation.”¹⁴ Hans Urs von Balthasar’s formulation, equally introverted, still has a clarity: the Holy Spirit is first and primarily the non-objective-eternally-beyond-all-objectification-breathing mystery “in whose light everything that is at all capable of being illuminated becomes clear and transparent The Spirit is breath, not a full outline, and therefore he wishes only to breathe through us, not to present himself to us as an object; he does not wish to be seen but to be the seeing eye of grace in us.”¹⁵ The Spirit is not the object seen, but the subject indwelling us who sees: “No one knows the thoughts of God

¹² Athanasius calls the Spirit “the living efficacy” (*To Serapion* 1.20; SC 15.119). See also W. T. Hahn, *Das Mitsterben und Mitaufstehen mit Christus bei Paulus* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1937) 118; Ingo Hermann, *Kyrios und Pneuma* (Munich: Kösel, 1961) 66, 140–41.

¹³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 10 vols. (New York: Scribner, 1955–1962) 4/1.643.

¹⁴ Heribert Mühlen, “Das Christusereignis als Tat des Heiligen Geistes,” *Mysterium Salutis* 7 vols. in 5 (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1969) 3/2.514.

¹⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology, 3: Creator Spirit* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993) 111–12.

except the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11). Is then all speaking and writing vain because the Spirit is not an object? The Spirit, as the "light in which we see light," can be thematized. But the Spirit as light can be seen only as it radiates and reflects off an object: Christ, the Church, the Christian life. If reflected light were not possible, neither would pneumatology be.

While saying that the Spirit is the "how" carries an important insight, it also carries the danger of our seeing the Spirit only in an instrumental sense, as a tool. This would place the Spirit in the second moment after the first christological moment. It would be as though one builds up the Church in the first constitutive christological moment and then, in a subsequent, nonconstitutive moment, one adds the Spirit (the Spirit as an afterthought), which is theologically unacceptable.¹⁶ Also it would carry the danger of placing the Spirit on the outside of the mystery of God; a more compromising danger could hardly be found. The Spirit is not just the person who makes the mystery of God present and real; the mystery made present is not something other than the self of the Spirit. The Spirit is the "how" from the interior of the mystery of God, making the living actuality of trinitarian life present, real, personal, and remembered, from the inside, from the first moment of the redemptive economy. The Spirit is the Great Insider.

Who Is More Important?

Basil of Caesarea customarily used two different doxologies in liturgical assemblies. First, "Glory be to the Father with the Son, together with the Holy Spirit," a more horizontal ranking of names, stressing equality, therefore affirming the divinity of both the Son and the Spirit. Second, "Glory to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit," a more descending/ascending model stressing function.¹⁷ It

¹⁶ One can discern traces of a subsequent pneumatology in the ecclesiological formulation of *Lumen gentium* no. 4: "When the work which the Father had given to the Son to do on earth (cf. Jn. 17:4) was accomplished, the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that He might forever sanctify the Church, and thus all believers would have access to the Father through Christ in the one Spirit (cf. Eph. 2:18)." The text seems to reflect a pneumatology which takes its point of departure too exclusively from Pentecost: Christ established the Church (first moment) and then he sent the Spirit at Pentecost (second moment). The Vatican II decree *Ad gentes* no. 4 attempts to rectify the formulation. Speaking of the salvation accomplished once for all, the text continues: "To accomplish this goal, Christ sent the Holy Spirit from the Father. The Spirit was to carry out his saving work inwardly and to impel the Church toward her proper expansion. Doubtless, the Holy Spirit was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified. Yet on the day of Pentecost, he came down upon the disciples to remain with them forever (cf. Jn 14:16)." There would be no reason to complain about the instrumental role assigned to the Spirit in these texts if they were accompanied by the conviction that instrumentality is a first-moment function, and that the instrument works not as an external, subsequent tool, but from within the presence of the whole mystery.

¹⁷ *On the Holy Spirit* 1.3; SC17bis.256,258.

was the second that brought down accusations that Basil appeared to minimize the consubstantiality of the Spirit with the Father and the Son. Basil was already suspect for not aggressively shouting the divinity of the Spirit from the housetops, as Gregory Nazianzus wanted him to.¹⁸ In his defense Basil wrote *On the Holy Spirit*, in which he insisted that equal honor has to be given to equals—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the word *homotimos* (“equal in honor”) is Basil’s own coinage.

Basil was in fact following the lead of the New Testament, where the Spirit and the work of the Spirit are no less important for understanding who God is and what God does than the saving work of Christ.¹⁹ In postbiblical trinitarian theology, Father, Son, and Spirit are three equal persons. As equal persons the Son and the Spirit have equal missions. Even such a pillar of orthodoxy as Athanasius, who sought to demonstrate the divinity of the Spirit, had difficulty giving the Spirit full measure. For Athanasius the Spirit always remained an “understudy of the Son,” a perpetual stand-in who never quite attains majority.²⁰ Even today there is still a widespread attitude that the person and mission of the Son, made incarnate in Jesus Christ, is more fundamental, more substantial, more central, than the work of the Spirit. The Spirit becomes a junior-grade person, with a junior-grade mission; a second-order person with an important but essentially diminished role. On this basis, the Trinity collapses. One cannot have a Trinity of equal persons, one of whom is junior to the other in importance, the two having unequal missions.²¹

What does this mean in terms of proclamation? If the Son and Spirit are equal persons with equal missions, should the Son and the Spirit be given equal time in our preaching. Should we preach half of the Sundays on Jesus Christ and half on the Spirit? It does not work that way. The proclaimed gospel is about Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. Neither the New Testament nor tradition makes the mission and work of the Spirit *the* central content of the gospel in the way the work of the Son is. Nor is the Spirit *the* principal topic of theological reflection as Jesus Christ is.

Of course the work of the Spirit is proclaimed. Because the Son of God was conceived by the power of the Spirit in the womb of Mary, and was raised from the dead by the Spirit,²² the crucified Son of God sends

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Otto Kuss, *Der Römerbrief*, 3 vols., 2nd ed. (Regensburg: Pustet, 1963–1978) 2.540.

²⁰ R. P. C. Hanson *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988) 751.

²¹ Kilian McDonnell, “A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit?” *TS* 46 (1985) 191–227, at 207; also “The Determinative Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” *Theology Today* 39 (1982) 142–61.

²² James D. G. Dunn holds that in Romans 1:3–7 Paul, who believes Christians will be raised from the dead by the Spirit (8:11), seems to want to say that the Spirit raised up Jesus, but hesitates (*Christology in the Making* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980] 144).

the Spirit on mission after the Resurrection. The Spirit's relation to Jesus during his earthly life is not the same as the Spirit's relation to the risen Christ. The Resurrection made Christ the Lord of the Spirit. Of course the Spirit belongs to the proclamation as fully an "autonomous" person as the Father and the Son, but the Spirit as manifested in Jesus Christ and in the two missions in history.

If it is true, as Heribert Mühlen suggests, that every dogmatic tract is basically about Jesus of Nazareth, and every experience of the Spirit is basically an experience of Jesus Christ,²³ that is not a basis for collapsing pneumatology into Christology.²⁴ The doxology "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit," where the Spirit is placed alongside the Father and the Son, is used in theology to express distinction and equality. If all tracts and all experiences are about Jesus Christ, then the doxology "Glory be to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit" is helpful. Son and Spirit occupy the same central "space" in different modes ("in" and "through") on the way to the Father. Pneumatology is not collapsed into Christology. This doxology demonstrates that one can defend Mühlen's formulation. In the words of Gregory Nazianzus, the Spirit is "not a rival God."²⁵ In trinitarian logic, what is given to the Spirit is not taken away from the Son, or vice-versa. Equal honor is given to equal persons, but the mode of their equal missions is infinitely different.

Who Is More Central?

If the Son and the Spirit are both of equal importance, is not the Son more central than the Spirit? Both the Son and the Spirit are central, but they are central in different ways. The centrality of the Spirit does not threaten or displace the centrality of the Son. Each occupies the center according to each one's proper function. Both are at the center in different ways, as indicated by the way "being in Christ" is related to "being in the Spirit" or by the liturgical formula "through Christ in the Spirit." Son and Spirit are not two centers, one superimposed on the other. But as there is an inner penetration of persons ("The Father

But C. K. Barrett ascribes the Resurrection of Jesus to the Spirit (*The Epistle to the Romans* [New York: Harper & Row, 1957] 159–60). Otto Kuss believes that the Spirit "truly and effectively" raises Jesus (*Römerbrief* 505); Kuss recognizes that "it is very difficult" to determine the exact meaning of "the Spirit of holiness" in 1:3, and he reviews the various scholarly interpretations (ibid. 6–8). Joseph A. Fitzmyer points out that the issue in 1:3 is not *his* Resurrection but *the* resurrection, reflecting the early belief (see Acts 4:2, 23:66) that Jesus' Resurrection is already the beginning of the general resurrection (*Romans* [New York: Doubleday, 1993] 237); Fitzmyer holds that "the efficiency of the Resurrection is again attributed" to the Spirit, and he refers to 1 Cor 6:14 (ibid. 491).

²³ "Das Christusergebnis als Tat des Heiligen Geistes," *Mysterium Salutis* 3/2.514–15. See also James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975) 322–23, 326.

²⁴ Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit* 174. ²⁵ *Oration* 31.26; SC 250.328.

and I are one" [John 10:30]), so, without mixture or confusion, the mission of the one is at the interior of the other. The mission of the Spirit is not alongside the central mission of Christ. The mission of the Son is operative, effective, and real only in the mission of the Spirit. Without mixture or confusion they occupy the same trinitarian "space," taking us and our universe beyond ourselves, moving toward a consummation, the Father.

The doctrine in this form is hardly preachable. But if the relationship is clear to the preacher, pitfalls can be avoided. Basil's first doxology, "Glory be to the Father with the Son, together with the Holy Spirit," stresses equality. But the second, "Glory to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit," stressing function, enables one to say more clearly that both the Son and the Spirit occupy the trinitarian center: one moves in the center/Spirit through the center/Jesus Christ back to God, the absolute start and the absolute end.

A homilist might speak of the one economy of salvation having its Christ moments and its Spirit moments. These moments are interchangeable in some respects but not in all. One can say that Christ works through the Spirit, but not vice versa. The Spirit does not work through Christ. Believers do not belong to "the body of the Spirit." They are not "the temple of Christ."²⁶ If by being "in the Spirit" one means being in the person of the Spirit (and not the broader principle of divine life or grace), and if by being "in Christ" we mean our identification with Christ, then "in the Spirit" and "in Christ" are not interchangeable. One is not identified with the Spirit but with Jesus Christ.²⁷ One is not chosen "in the Spirit" but "in Christ" (Romans 8:39, Ephesians 1:3-12).²⁸ Though not interchangeable in all respects, there is a kind of mutuality. If there is a christological concentration to pneumatology, there is a pneumatological concentration to Christology. The one is not just a duplicate, or the reverse, of the other. Pneumatology is not collapsed into Christology. The Spirit concentration, less developed, is as important as the christological. The two kinds of concentration have a character as different as the two persons, and they are infinitely different.

The homilist can avoid these complexities by saying that being "in the Spirit" interprets being "in Christ," tells us what it means, makes it real, personal, and interior. Having spoken of the two moments, the homilist can then indicate that we go beyond ourselves in the Spirit through Christ back to the Father. This is not just a personal journey, nor even just an ecclesial destiny, but a cosmic voyage; the whole of

²⁶ Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3 vols (New York: Seabury, 1983) 2:101

²⁷ Ignace de la Potterie and Stanislaus Lyonnet, *The Christian Lives by the Spirit* (Staten Island: Alba, 1971) 217

²⁸ Ferdinand Prat explores the relation of "in Christ" to "in the Spirit" and concludes "On the whole, the equivalency of the formulas is a very limited one, and even where it does exist there is a fine shade of meaning which is not negligible" (*The Theology of Saint Paul*, 2 vols [Westminster: Newman, 1964] 2:394-95)

creation and history is caught up in this movement back to God, the supreme start, source, and end. Eschatology belongs at the beginning as well as at the end.

ACQUIRING THE SPIRIT, THE GOAL OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

The introductory programmatic paragraph of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaks of God reaching out to sinful creatures, giving them a share in divine life, making them adopted children by the power of the Holy Spirit. In Scholastic terms this is what is known as supernatural elevation. The Greek and Syrian traditions spoke rather of divinization, invoking, among others, Jesus' words "I am the vine; you are the branches" (John 15:5). One and the same life exists in vine and branches. One and the same life is present in the head of the body and the members. As the Spirit makes Jesus the Son of God, so the Spirit makes us to share in the same life as the Father and the Son, becoming adopted sons and daughters in the Son. This is what Irenaeus,²⁹ Origen,³⁰ Athanasius,³¹ the two Cappadocian Gregories,³² mean when they say, "God became man so man could become God." Or what Ephraem the Syrian means when he says, "He gave us divinity, we gave him humanity."³³ The Spirit makes Jesus to be the Son of God, and us to be daughters and sons of God. Gregory Nazianzus works backward from inner transformation to the divinity of the Spirit: "How could [the Spirit] not be God, the one through whom you become God."³⁴ Cyril of Jerusalem announces the principle that "whatever the Spirit touches becomes holy and transformed."³⁵

Paul's admonition "to pray always" (1 Thess 5:17) makes sense only when situated in this already realized sharing in God: "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. . . . You have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry 'Abba, Father,' the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8:14–16). A believer cries out to God not because participation is wanting, but because it is a present reality. In the Spirit one lives the life of God. One can, of course, pray to the Spirit, but the burden of evidence is that the Spirit, as the very life of God, wants to pray in us and with us through Christ to the Father.³⁶ One has the right to say 'Abba, Father' because one has received the Spirit and therefore has a real participated communion in the life proper to God. Further, what the Spirit leads us to beyond

²⁹ *Against Heresies* Preface, 5.1.1; SC 153.14.

³⁰ *On First Principles*, 1.6.2; SC 252.196–200.

³¹ *On the Incarnation of the Word* 54.3; SC 199.458.

³² Gregory Nazianzus, *Dogmatic Poem* 10.5; PG 37.465; Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Orations* 25; Jaeger 3/4.64.

³³ *Hymns on Faith* 5.17; Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 155.17.

³⁴ *Orations* 39.17; SC 358.186.

³⁵ *Mystagogical Catecheses* 5.7; SC 126.154; Cyril is using this principle in an eucharistic context, but it has broader application.

³⁶ Balthasar, *Creator Spirit* 111.

death is less the vision of God, and more to the flowering of this communion along the spectrum of God's life, or if you will, seeing from inside the eye of God. "It is through the Spirit that we are partakers of God."³⁷ Communion in the nature is sharing in the glory. Communion, sharing, fellowship, participation (all synonyms for one reality held in common) is an essential of the faith, and consequently it is a major theme of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*.³⁸

This present sharing has an unrealized ("already" but "not yet") dimension to it. The Spirit is the newness one already possesses. Ernst Kasemann was convinced that Paul taught that "Christianity is not a Jewish sect which believes in Jesus as the Messiah. It is the breaking in of the new world of God characterized by the lordship of the Spirit."³⁹ Thomas Aquinas expressed the same when he wrote, "The new law consists chiefly in the grace of the Spirit."⁴⁰ Bishop Kallistos Ware contends that "the whole aim of the Christian life is to be a Spirit-bearer, to live in the Spirit of God, to breathe the Spirit of God."⁴¹

Because being possessed by the Spirit is the very definition of being a Christian, one does not have two classes of Christians: those who have the Spirit and those who do not. According to Paul (Gal 3:3), every Christian "begins in the Spirit." But some, while having the Spirit dwelling within, live according to the flesh (1 Cor 3:1). Flesh here is not corporeality or even sexuality, which are good. Rather flesh is operative when the controlling power is pride, greed, sensuality, jealousy, and contentiousness. In this sense, some who possess the Spirit are still flesh. Others not only have the Spirit but live under the Spirit's influence; they see with the Spirit's eyes, walk in the Spirit as the environment of their moral lives (Gal 5:15-6:6).⁴² Spirit and flesh are two powers contending within the one who possesses the Spirit.

Though the Christian is seen as already possessing the Spirit because of faith and baptism, the Greek and Syrian traditions contain statements that say the goal of Christian life is to acquire the Holy Spirit.⁴³ But this means allowing the Spirit already possessed to attain ascendancy. Ascendancy of the Spirit in the life of the Christian can be

³⁷ Athanasius, *To Serapion* 1 24, SC 15 126

³⁸ Here I am indebted to Godfrey Diekmann, O S B

³⁹ *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1980) 191

⁴⁰ *Summa theologiae* 1-2, q 108, a 1

⁴¹ *The Orthodox Way* (London Mowbray, 1979) 119

⁴² Franz Jozef van Beeck, *Christ Proclaimed A Christology of Rhetoric* (New York Paulist, 1979) 117

⁴³ Paul Evdokimov, *L'Orthodoxie* (Neuchâtel Delachaux et Niestlé, 1959) 146-47, Raymund Erni, "Pneumatologische und triadologische Ekklesiologie in ihrer Bedeutung für Struktur und Leben der Kirche," in *Unterwegs zur Einheit Festschrift für H Sturmann*, ed J Brantschen and P Selvatico (Freiburg Herder, 1980) 817, Placide Deselle, *L'Esprit du Monachisme Pachômien* (Begrilles Abbey of Bellefontaine, 1980) LI-LXI, Sebastian Brock, *Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition* (Bronx, N Y John XXIII Center, 1979) 138-39

pure gift, or it can be the result of the ascetic striving under grace for purity of heart, a spiritual single-mindedness to follow the Lord in complete generosity. Among the Greeks, Origen,⁴⁴ Basil,⁴⁵ Gregory of

⁴⁴ In Origen the relation of the Spirit to the Christian life is wholly oriented to "the worthy," rather than to the baptized, giving his teaching in this area a highly ascetical quality. He teaches, against the gnostics, that the Spirit is not limited to a privileged class; rather, "every rational creature receives without any difference a share in the Holy Spirit" (*On First Principles* 7.2; SC 252.328). Origen relates this to baptism (*Commentary on John* 6.33.166; SC 157.254,256). He clearly says "the Holy Spirit can indwell" the baptized (32.7.75; SC 385.220). But he thinks that only "the worthy," those who completely commit themselves ascetically to the gospel, receive baptism; see the note of Henri Crouzel and Manlio Simonetti in SC 253.188–189. He still insists on the ascetical aspect when he distinguishes "the worthy" from the body of Christians: "In those persons alone do I think that the operation of the Spirit takes place, who are already turning to a better life, and walking along in the way of Jesus Christ" (*On First Principles* 1.3.5; SC 252.154). The whole Trinity, including the Spirit, is necessary for salvation, which all of good disposition receive in baptism (*ibid.*). Origen makes it clear to catechumens that moral transformation is a necessary condition for receiving the Spirit (*Homilies on Leviticus* 6.2; SC 286.274,276), and asserts that the "special action of the Spirit" is reserved to the ascetic Christian (*On First Principles* 1.3.5; SC 252.152). See also *On First Principles* 1.3.8; SC 252.162,164 where the use of the comparative *dignius* ("more worthy") seems to indicate that "those previously sanctified through the Holy Spirit" [at baptism?] are "deemed worthy of advancing to this degree through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit" [through the ascetic life?]. With some reason Wolf-Dieter Hauschild suggests that Origen's (and Clement of Alexandria's) pneumatology is not valid for the whole of Christian existence, but only for the ascetics; the danger was already present that pneumatology would become a monk's theology (*Gottes Geist und der Mensch: Studien zur frühchristlichen Pneumatologie* [Munich: Kaiser, 1972] 284). Origen's influence was enormous. But the research, while rightly emphasizing Origen's ascetic/ethical teaching on the Spirit, does not, it seems to me, attend sufficiently to Origen's teaching that the Holy Spirit is also given in baptism. In view of the biblical witness (Matt 28:19; Mark 1:8; Acts 1:5; 11:16; 1 Cor 6:11) and the tradition, e.g. Clement of Alexandria (*Tutor* 1.6.25.3–1.6.26.2; SC 70.158), Origen could hardly have ignored the relation of the Spirit to baptism entirely, which was widely recognized in the time of Clement (*ibid.* 51). To be sure, for Origen, the Spirit once given the ascendancy of the Spirit is an ascetical/ethical process, as is clear in his *Homilies on Luke* 24.2; SC 324.326. This second-moment ascetical striving receives all his attention. See also Henri Crouzel, *Origène et la "Connaissance Mystique"* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1961) 44, 435.

⁴⁵ The Spirit "fills all things with power, but only those worthy share it" (*On the Holy Spirit* 9.22; SC 17bis.326); the "worthy" are those who strive after holiness and true knowledge of God. The usage here depends on Origen, yet Basil is not simply repeating Origen but clearly moving beyond him. See Benoit Pruche, SC 17bis.326 n.1: "although he does not dwell with those who are unworthy, he nevertheless remains present in a certain manner in those who were one day marked with the seal, waiting upon the day of their conversion." See also 16.40; 18.46; 22.53; 26.61; 26.62; SC 17bis.390, 410, 442, 468, 472. Basil, like Origen, seems to have two levels of Spirit possession, full and less full. As early as about 363, Basil was already restricting the Spirit to the worthy (*Against Eunomius* 3.4; SC 305.160). He continued this theme two years later (*On Baptism*; see SC 357.116, 117, 130, 144, 152, 156, 174, 176, 186, 208, 212). His position remained unchanged in *On the Holy Spirit* about eight years later, as indicated above. In these contexts the presence of the Spirit seems conditioned by the moral worthiness of the individual (Anthony Meredith, "The Pneumatology of the Cappadocian Fathers and the Creed of Constantinople," *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 48 [1981] 203–4). Basil was concerned that ascetics be persons of the Spirit, or more literally "become spirit" because

Nyssa,⁴⁶ and, in the Syrian tradition, Philoxenus of Mabbug,⁴⁷ all have, in different formulations, the ideal of two kinds of possession of the Spirit, full and less full. The full possession issues from radical following of Christ.

The Syrian tradition holds that baptism confers the gift of the Spirit (the "already"), but since giving implies receiving, in an adult there must be a conscious and full acceptance of the gift (the "not yet"), if one is to experience the full life of the Spirit.⁴⁸ Though full life of the Spirit was often equated in the tradition with the ascetic life in its celibate form, this is not the biblical view. Paul, speaking in a broader context, says that mature Christians "live by the Spirit" (Gal 5:16), are "led by the Spirit" (Gal 5:18), regulate their lives by "the law of the Spirit" (Rom 8:2), therefore have "the mind of the Spirit" (Rom 8:6). The gift of the Spirit is the first gift in a total process that ends when the believer

they are born of the Spirit (*On Baptism* 1 2 20–21, SC 357 168,170) Though Hermann Dorries would deny that Basil makes the doctrine of the Spirit a "monks' dogma," yet the monks "were carriers of the doctrinal development of the doctrine of the Spirit the cloister is the capital city of the dogma [of the divinity of the Spirit]" (*De Spiritu Sancto* [Gottingen Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956] 160, 161) Jaroslav Pelikan believes that in some sense Basil's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is "a monastic dogma" ("The 'Spiritual Sense' of Scripture The Exegetical Basis for St Basil's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," in *Basil of Caesarea Christian, Humanist, Ascetic*, ed Paul J Fedwick, 2 vols [Toronto Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981] 1 357) Helmut Saake reviews the research on the monastic character of pneumatology, and comes to the conclusion that it did not come out of monasticism, but from the periphery of the earlier apologetic monotheistic/trinitarian speculation ("Minima Pneumatologica," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 14 [1972] 107–11) Pia Luislampe disagrees with Saake's position (*Spiritus Vivificans Grundzüge einer Theologie des Heiligen Geistes nach Basilus von Caesarea* [Munster Aschendorff, 1981] 31)

⁴⁶ Gregory was also greatly influenced by Origen and by his own brother Basil He speaks of life beginning in baptism, but this beginning needs to be completed in those who are "worthy" (*On the Holy Spirit against the Macedonians* 19, Jaeger 3/1 105–6) There is a curious anomaly In his great spiritual writings, such as *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, *Homilies on Ecclesiastes*, and the *Life of Moses*, Gregory mentioned the Spirit but he did not give it the substantive attention one would expect when dealing with spiritual growth (Meredith, "The Pneumatology of the Cappadocian Fathers" 208) *The Christian Institutes*, a work of major significance, written in his last years, and borrowing considerably from his earlier works, contains Gregory's final statement on the nature of asceticism Werner Jaeger notes that in this work there is a strong accent on the Holy Spirit, together with encouraging the readers to strive to reach perfection, the state of worthiness (*Gregor von Nyssa's Lehre vom Heiligen Geist*, ed Hermann Dorries [Leiden Brill, 1966] 108–9)

⁴⁷ Philoxenus spoke of two baptisms, the first as an infant, and the second in adult life, when the believer engages in the ascetic life and enters into the fullness of the life of the Spirit "You have two baptisms One is the baptism of grace which arises from the water, the other is the baptism of your own free will" (*Discourse* 9 276, SC 44 258) But the formulation is deceptive because Philoxenus does not believe that there are two baptisms, for the second is the unfolding of the first, see Kilian McDonnell and George Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Collegeville Liturgical, 1991) 299–320

⁴⁸ Brock, *Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition* 138–39

becomes a spiritual body, "a mode of existence determined solely by the Spirit."⁴⁹ Free unmerited grace, or being "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:9–11), means, as Karl Adam loved to say in his lectures in Tübingen, that we start at the top of the ladder. We do not start at the bottom and claw our way to the top where we receive the fullness of life in the Spirit.

What needs to be retained is the biblical teaching on the absolute primacy of the Spirit's initiative, not only at the beginning but at every point along the redemptive process. However, human beings are not wooden pegs. Giving implies receiving. Whatever one thinks about the patristic category of less full and full possession, or about the ascetic efforts of the worthy, the early Church was right in light of the biblical evidence that under grace a disciplined/ascetic style of living makes a difference in relation to living and walking in the Spirit. This need not be restricted to celibates. Gregory of Nyssa, who wrote on the topic, was probably married. Whatever life choice is made (single, vowed celibate, married), growth in God reaches its perfection in the ascendancy of the Spirit. In this sense, the goal of the Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit.

The Political Spirit?

One of the difficulties with the formulation of the doctrine of the Spirit is that it has been dominated either by ecclesiology (inspiration, infallibility) or by the interior life (grace). But what about the secular order, programs of social transformation, public service, politics? This side is underdeveloped. The tradition Jesus inherited gave the spirit of God a considerable role in the elders (Num 11:25–29) (judicial/political); judges (Judg 3:10; 11:29; 13:25) (military); some prophets (1 Sam 10:10; 19:23; Ezek 2:12, 22; Neh 9:30; Zech 7:12) (also prophetic and political); some kings (1 Sam 11:6; 16:13–14) (political), especially the messianic king (Isa 42:1). The spirit has a public face. Nor was the spirit limited to Israel, as one sees in the Persian king Cyrus (Isa 48:16) (political and military), and Balaam, the non-Israelite diviner (Num 22–24).

Jesus himself appropriated this public Spirit at the beginning of his ministry (Isa 61:1–11; Luke 4:18–19) when he characterized his messianic mission to the poor, captives, and oppressed. However, there is a consensus among exegetes that there is little about the Spirit in the Synoptic Gospels (in contrast to the Fourth Gospel and Paul) inasmuch as Jesus himself seldom spoke of the Spirit.⁵⁰ Though the authenticity

⁴⁹ Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* 311.

⁵⁰ C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit in the Gospel Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1947) 140–62; Eduard Schweizer, "The Spirit of Power," *Interpretation* 6 (1952) 264, and his *The Spirit of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 35; Franz J. Schierse, "Die neutestamentliche Trinitätsoffenbarung," *Mysterium Salutis* 2.97. However, care should be taken how such statistics are used. G. Beasley-Murray points out that though everyone agrees love

of a number of the Spirit-sayings of Jesus in the Synoptics has been questioned, the saying in which Jesus promises the Spirit to those facing persecution by human tribunals, by "rulers and authorities" (Luke 12:11–12), both religious and political, seems so well attested that it is hardly possible to doubt its authenticity.⁵¹ Precisely in the sociopolitical area, tradition hands down Jesus' assurance that the Spirit will speak in the believer brought to judicial judgment, troubled by the prospect of mounting a convincing defense. Although disciples are condemned by human tribunals, the Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel will offer the real meaning of the events, and the judges will take their place among the judged and condemned (John 16:7–15).⁵²

The role of the Spirit is also cosmic. In Romans 8:15–16 the prayer of the Spirit in us crying "Abba, Father" is precisely a cry of children to their Father, lifting up the whole of the created order which shares in Adam's ruin. Therefore the cosmos groans as if in labor to share in our liberty and freedom as those who live the life of the Spirit constituting us God's children. The Spirit praying in us asks God to free the whole of creation from temptation and decay in favor of a mode of being that belongs to God alone, lived in the Spirit that made believers into sons and daughters.⁵³ The issue is cosmic redemption in solidarity with human redemption.

The Experience of the Spirit

James D. G. Dunn contends that Spirit is "essentially an experiential concept" for Paul,⁵⁴ who reminded his Galatian readers of their experience of the Spirit as a well-remembered event (Gal 3:2) to which Paul returned repeatedly (Gal 3:14, 27; 4:5–7, 29; 5:1, 5, 7–8, 16–18, 21–22, 25; 6:8). The experience of the Spirit "was the fundamental defining feature of a Christian."⁵⁵ It also belonged to the normal expectation. Grace, too, the correlative of Spirit, is not just something Christians believe in but also something they experience (Rom 3:24; 5:15, 17, 20; 2 Cor: 6:1). Paul's ardent wish for his converts was that they might experience grace, so as to know God's power unequivocally. One cannot read such expressions as "all grace abounding in you," "the surpassing grace of God," "the riches of his grace lavished upon us" (2

is a central theme of the Gospels, Jesus mentions it explicitly only twice ("Jesus and the Spirit," in *Mélanges bibliques en hommage au R P Bédarida Rigaux*, ed André de Halleux [Gembloux Duculot, 1970] 463–79) See also Yves Congar, *The Word and the Spirit* (San Francisco Harper and Row, 1984) 88 n 19

⁵¹ Barrett, *The Holy Spirit in the Gospel Tradition* 130

⁵² De la Potterie and Lyonnet, *The Christian Lives by the Spirit* 74–75

⁵³ Kasemann, *Commentary on Romans* 237

⁵⁴ *Jesus and the Spirit* 201

⁵⁵ *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Cambridge Cambridge University, 1993) 61

Cor 9:8,14; Eph 1:7) and think that grace is divorced from experience.⁵⁶

Experiential language for the Spirit is taken over into tradition. Irenaeus used an experiential mode when he wrote that in the Spirit "we see and hear and speak."⁵⁷ In his last years Hilary of Poitiers recalled his own baptism as a convert: "We experience intense joy (*maximum gaudium*) when we feel within us the first stirrings (*initia sentimus*) of the Holy Spirit."⁵⁸ Speaking not of the early Church but of historic Orthodoxy, John Meyendorff restated the thesis about the acquisition of the Spirit in terms of experience: "The conscious and personal experience of the Holy Spirit is . . . the supreme goal of the Christian life in the Byzantine tradition, an experience which presupposes constant growth and ascent."⁵⁹

Experience, as I use the word in these pages, is not just a single psychological moment, a solitary sensual perception, nor even just an event of the soul, though it may include all of these. I speak rather of an encounter, an ongoing personal meeting, between the Spirit of Christ and the total human person. We are not merely rational animals. We are thinking, feeling, tasting, loving, hurting, hoping, rebelling, obedient animals. This total person is the subject of spiritual experience. This openness to experience need not entail canonizing a raw, self-righteous, autonomous rapture, a self-validating authority, operating in a conceptual vacuum. Experience here is more cumulative than singular;⁶⁰ it stands in a discerning tradition, within a community which itself is gathered together in the Holy Spirit. A tyranny of experience obtains when the Christian life is conceived as a progress from one mountain-top experience to another; Christians do not live on the heights, but mostly in the valleys, often in the desert. The silence and absence of God is integral to Christian experience.

Though the New Testament is not just the product of religious experience, experience is primary in shaping the history and character of first-generation Christianity. The theological thinking of Jesus, Paul, John, and the early Christians was rooted in their experience of God; their sole access to that experience was the Spirit.⁶¹ The question is whether we can now reappropriate their witness with purely conceptual tools. If one regards the Spirit as an experiential *concept* in Paul, then from the concept follows only the abstract idea of Spirit. Why abstract? As Hermann Gunkel said in the 19th century, the concept of Spirit in Paul is grounded in "very concrete views and deep inner experiences." Without opting for an esoteric pneumatic exegesis, is it possible for one to understand the dogmatic statements of Paul or

⁵⁶ Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* 202–3.

⁵⁷ *Against Heresies* 5.20.2; SC 153.260.

⁵⁸ *Tract on the Psalms* 64:14; Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 22.245.

⁵⁹ *Byzantine Theology* (London: Mowbrays, 1974) 177.

⁶⁰ Caroline F. Davis, *The Evidential Force of Religious Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989) 239–41.

⁶¹ Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* 360–61.

his use of the term "Spirit" unless one has in some manner reappropriated the experience of the Spirit?⁶² "God the Holy Spirit is God as we experience God."⁶³ Without the Spirit, God is inaccessible and unknowable.

Where Does One Start?

Against this background, where does the homilist start? Many speaking on the Spirit start at Pentecost. In my judgment, Western pneumatology has been too dominated by Pentecost. One should also advert to the long history of Israel that preceded the Pentecost event in which the spirit of God was present as the act of God. Though the Old Testament spirit is not completely identical with the trinitarian Spirit, from a Christian perspective there is not one spirit in the Old Testament prophets and another Spirit in Christ and Christians.⁶⁴ This should be remembered when one is speaking of Jesus Christ, who is conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). The Spirit descends on Jesus at his baptism (Matt 3:16). Jesus, full of the Spirit, is led by the Spirit to the place of temptation (Matt 4:1). Jesus, "filled with the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:1, 14, 18–21; 6:19), is *the* Spirit-bearer when he engages in his ministry. When Jesus dies "blood and water" flow from his pierced side, the water signifying the Spirit as the living water issuing from him (John 19:34; 7:38–39). The Spirit raises Jesus from the dead (Rom 8:11). The risen Savior breathes the Spirit on the disciples (John 20:22). "It is not by measure that [the Father] gives the Spirit [to Jesus]" (John 3:34). The Spirit constitutes who Jesus is, being the power of his ministry, and when Jesus departs, the Spirit takes his place. This gives us a clue as to the relation of the Spirit to the Church, the Body of Christ, and to the Christian life. The Spirit is the principle of identify of Jesus, the Church, and the Christian life. Now we see that Paul's "being in the Spirit" interprets his "being in Christ."⁶⁵ For Athanasius the principle is that "the Spirit has to the Son the same relationship as we have known the Son to have to the Father."⁶⁶ Therefore, as the Father reveals the Son, so the Spirit reveals the Son.

CONCLUSION

The homilist/presider at the liturgy, surrounded by the people gathered in the Holy Spirit, leads the community into an experience of the

⁶² *The Influence of the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979; originally published in 1888) 75.

⁶³ R. P. C. Hanson, "The Transformation of Images in the Trinitarian Theology of the Fourth Century," *Studia Patristica* 17/1 (1982) 112.

⁶⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.36.7; SC 100.910,912; Origen, *On First Principles* 1.Preface.4; SC 252.82; Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 16.39; SC 17bis.386.

⁶⁵ Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* 221–22.

⁶⁶ *To Serapion* 3.1; SC 15.164.

Spirit on the way back through Christ to the Father. The Spirit is the goal of redemption, because the Spirit makes real and personal in us what is real and personal in Jesus Christ and his death and Resurrection. The work of the Spirit is therefore as substantial, as important, and as central as the work of Jesus Christ, seen especially in our communion in God's life, a kind of divinization—one and the same life in vine and branches—having ramifications for the sociopolitical life. The Spirit whom the presider calls down upon the gifts and the congregation is no Hegelian absolute Spirit, no segregated Spirit, no context-less Spirit, no stationary Spirit, no Spirit beyond history, experience, and consciousness, but the Spirit proceeding from the Father, sent by the Son into history from within history, returning through the Son to the Father carrying along community and cosmos. God is so radically personal, that unless the homilist/presider can elicit from the texts and from the sacramental action the sense of presence, the sense of the All Holy, unless the proclaimer of the Scriptures can communicate the New Testament experience of the personal invisible God made real, personal, and visible in Jesus Christ who comes in the power of the Spirit, then liturgy is mere ritual, a matter of technique. As Basil says, "If you remain outside the Spirit you cannot worship at all."⁶⁷

⁶⁷ *On the Holy Spirit* 26.64; SC 17bis.476.

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