

## PNEUMATOLOGY OVERVIEW

- Topic: Trinitarian Guidelines for Speaking about the Holy Spirit  
Coordinator: Regina Bechtle, Mount St. Vincent College, Bronx, New York  
Moderator: Earl Muller, Gregorian University, Rome  
Presenter: Kilian P. McDonnell, Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research, Collegeville, Minnesota

In recent years there has been a revival of interest in the Trinity, after years of neglect. Alongside of this revival another retrieval is the recovery of the doctrine of the Spirit. What is surprising is that the revival of trinitarian doctrine and that of the Holy Spirit have not met in any significant way. The Spirit is the principle of identity of Jesus Christ. If the Spirit is not fully integral to the trinitarian mystery of Christ then Christology loses its principle of identity, the Spirit, and becomes anthropology.<sup>1</sup> And if Christology loses its principle of identity then ecclesiology is compromised. The controls for both Christology and pneumatology are trinitarian.

Both Old Testament scholars Walther Eichrodt and Gerhard von Rad hold that the spirit (charism) is constitutive of the identity of Israel.<sup>2</sup> What echoes of this can we find in the New Testament? The angel said to Mary: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born of you will be holy and he will be called Son of God." So the Spirit belongs constitutively to who Jesus is, belongs to the first constitutive moment of his existence. The Spirit is not added later. But the role of the Spirit in constituting the identity of Jesus was neglected in later christological formulations. This had a negative effect on the body of Christ, the Church. The *Constitution on the Church* of Vatican II is an unusual document,

---

<sup>1</sup>Ignace de la Potterie, "L'Esprit Saint et l'Eglise dans le Nouveau Testament," in *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum*, Atti del congresso Teologica Internazionale di Pneumatologia, 2 vols., ed. José Saraiva Martins (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983) 2:806.

<sup>2</sup>"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." Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961, 1967) 1:292. "It is therefore evident that the charismatic was an absolutely constitutive factor in Jahwism." Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols., trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1962, 1965) 1:102. See also Rolf Rendtorff, "Reflections on the Early History of Prophecy in Israel," *Journal of Theology and Church* 4 (1967) 34.

but it still has a pneumatology which is less than ideal. It builds up the Church in christological terms, and then when the christological moment is all over, then the Spirit is added in a second moment (par 4).<sup>3</sup> That is too late. The Spirit belongs to the first constitutive moment. This has profound implications for the life of the Church, evangelization, preaching, liturgy, the Christian life. The Spirit is not decorative tinsel.

There is a christological concentration to the doctrine of the Spirit, but the first location of both Christology and pneumatology is Trinity. It is not sufficient to have Christ and the Spirit related to the divine threeness. The issue is not just Trinity of persons, but the trinitarian dynamic, the trinitarian movement. God reaches through the Son in the Spirit to touch and transform the world and church to lead them in the Spirit through the Son back to God. Within the rhythm, the dynamic of life from the Father to the Father, salvation is effected, the Church lives. The Son and the Spirit function as the two hands of the Father to open the way back to the source and goal of all, the Father.<sup>4</sup> Naked threeness, therefore, is not enough. If pneumatology and Christology are not kept within this movement, they lose their primary location (Eph 1:3-14; 2:4-5, especially 18-22; Rom 8:3-17)

In the New Testament the Spirit is not less important for understanding who God is and what God does than the saving work of Christ.<sup>5</sup> In a quite unsystematic way the trinitarian question is first posed by the New Testament itself, and is posed in a number of ways, also in pneumatological terms. The Spirit who "is from God . . . searches everything, even the depths of God" (1 Cor 2:12,10). The Spirit is both the "Spirit of God" and "Spirit of Christ" (Rom 8:9-11).

#### TO DO PNEUMATOLOGY IS TO INSIST THAT THE SPIRIT IS EQUAL TO THE FATHER AND THE SON

I am going to speak about theological attitudes and use "autonomy" in relation to the Son and the Spirit. Of course, autonomy is quite improperly used in relation to the persons of the Trinity, because in this case person is a subsistent relation. A person is defined relationally. Therefore autonomy is a problematic word.

We know that from the time of Augustine there have been problems with person as a trinitarian category. In his treatise *On the Trinity* he asks the readers

---

<sup>3</sup>"When the work which the Father had given 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. . . ."

<sup>4</sup>Irenaeus, almost a biblicist, grasped his vision from the Scriptures (Rom 5:8-11; 8:26-30; 2 Cor 5:18-21; Gal 4:4-7).

<sup>5</sup>Otto Kuss, *Der Römerbrief*, 3 vols. (Regensburg: Pustet, 1963-1978) 2:540.

indulgence for the inadequacy of the word.<sup>6</sup> When applied to the Trinity, each of the three is a person in a different sense than the other two. And the differences between the persons are infinite. The norm is: all is one except where there is opposition of relations (the Father generates the Son and is not the Son).

The Spirit historically has had difficulty winning recognition as a full person. We think we know what a Father is, and a Son, but what is a Spirit? The problem is compounded because the Father and the Son are also spirit. Neither the Father nor the Son has had the same kind of difficulty winning full recognition as a person. For instance, the Son is fully recognized as person and has a kind of "autonomy," that is, is fully a self. But the Spirit does not attain the same level of being fully a self, is not recognized as having the same kind of autonomy. One can see this already in the writings of St. Athanasius, even when he is trying to establish the full divinity of the Spirit. But if the trinitarian controls are in place, then the same full level of selfness has to be ascribed to the Spirit as to the Son, even if the Spirit is both "the Spirit of Christ" and "the Spirit of the Father." To push it further, if there is a pneumatology which is dependent on Christology, there is also a Christology which is dependent on pneumatology. The one corrects the other, as John Zizioulas points out.<sup>7</sup>

Few would deny the equality of the Spirit to the Father and the Son. There are three equal persons. The issue here is not ontological equality, but equality in significance, mission equality. There is a widespread attitude that the mission and work of the Son is more primary, more important, more central, than the work of the Spirit. To suggest that the mission and work of the Spirit is as important as the work of Christ is perceived as attacking the foundations of the faith, as though what one gives to the Spirit one takes away from Christ. Or it is seen as an attack on the centrality of the cross in favor of a Spirit Christianity.

But one cannot have equal persons with unequal missions. Impossible. The dignity of the mission follows the dignity of the person. One cannot suggest that alongside of the major all-important mission of the Son, there is a junior grade person with a junior grade mission, of lesser significance. To posit such a proposition is to destroy the Trinity. It collapses; and with it the Incarnation, the baptism of Jesus, the miracles, the death on the Cross, and the Resurrection. In

---

<sup>6</sup>7.6.11; CCh 50.262; M.Schmaus, *Die psychologische Trinitätslehre des heiligen Augustinus* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1927) 148; L. Scheffczyk, "Uneingelöste Traditionen der Trinitätslehre," *Trinität: Aktuelle Perspektiven der Theologie*, ed. E. Drewermann et al. (Freiburg: Herder, 1984) 68.

<sup>7</sup>"Implications ecclésiologiques de deux types de pneumatologie," *Communio Sanctorum*, Mélanges offerts à Jean-Jaques von Allmen (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1982) 141-54.

a word, salvation. This is not a minor point.<sup>8</sup> The principle seems clear; its application demands theological discernment.

Are we going to subvert the centrality of Jesus Christ and his saving work? Are we going to place alongside of our well-developed Christology, an overblown, inflated pneumatology? Or is this a tactical feint, a temporary compensation to the Spirit for the absolute dominance of Christology over pneumatology in the West? A kind of pneumatological affirmative action to redress past wrongs?

However much one wants to achieve theological balance in the mutuality and reciprocity of Christ and the Spirit, the gospel proclaimed is about Jesus Christ and him crucified and risen. Neither the New Testament nor the tradition makes the mission and work of the Spirit *the* central content of the gospel or *the* principal topic of theological reflection.<sup>9</sup> After the Pentecost event the apostles did not go out and announce the glories of the Spirit. What did they proclaim? "Jesus of Nazareth . . . this man you crucified . . . but God raised him up" (Acts 2:23-24). The gospel is about Jesus Christ sent by the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. In elaborating a systematic theology there is rightly a christological concentration. Every experience of the Spirit is materially an experience of Christ.<sup>10</sup> "Every dogmatic tract is basically about Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>11</sup>

Both Jesus Christ and the Spirit are central, but they are central in different ways. The material center of the Gospel is Jesus Christ; the Spirit is the methodological, doxological, and hermeneutical center. If Jesus is the "what" of the Gospel, the Spirit is the "how." The central mission of the Spirit does not exist alongside or after the mission of Christ, but the mission of the Spirit lives and operates at the interior of Christ's mission, without mixture, without confusion, to use Chalcedon's christological formulation. Just as the persons coinhere (*perichoresis*) in each other ("The Father and I are one" Jn 10:30; "The Father is in me and I am in the Father" Jn 10:38), so too, the missions coinhere, meet in a personal way in each other, operate within each other, have communion in the same glory they bring to the Father, share in each other's movement back to the Father.

---

<sup>8</sup>"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. Everthing degenerates into easy generalization and docetic abstractions." Nikos A. Nissiotis, "Pneumatological Christology as a Presupposition of Ecclesiology," *Oecumenica 1967*, ed. Friedrich W. Kantzenbach and Vilmos Vajta (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1967) 239.

<sup>9</sup>John Reumann, *Righteousness in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 116.

<sup>10</sup>Heribert Mühlen, "Das Christusergebnis als Tat des Heiligen Geistes," *Mysterium Salutis* (Einsiedeln: Benzinger: 1969) 3/2:515.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. 514.

Because the visible mission of the Son and the invisible mission of the Spirit are coextensive and simultaneous, the Spirit is central, but not as displacing Christ from the center. Each occupies the one center, according to each's proper function, even while Christ remains the content object of proclamation and theological reflection. Obviously, this is not to exclude the Spirit from the proclamation. One cannot separate Christ from the Spirit, his principle of identity. To proclaim the God-man is to proclaim the Holy Spirit that came down on Mary and overshadowed her (Mt 1:35); to announce the Resurrection is to speak of the Spirit whom the risen Christ sends (Jn 16:7).

That both are equal, both at the center, does not mean that one must give the Spirit equal time. I am not suggesting we preach on the Spirit as much as we preach on Jesus Christ. It may be in order to mention the Spirit more than we do. In focusing on Jesus Christ we have also to proclaim the Spirit. The Spirit should permeate the whole theological process as the interpretive principle which explains how the mystery of Christ came to pass, as the doxological force which gathers into unity the triumphant cosmic work of Christ in that final hymn of praise rendered to the Father. The controls here are the mutuality of "being in Christ" and "being in the Spirit," representing not two contents, but participation in one mystery by two modes, within the rhythm and direction of trinitarian life. The norming, the controls, are radically trinitarian. But its nature should not be mistaken. The controls are not theological statements about the Trinity, but the very movement of trinitarian life, the flow of trinitarian rhythms, the history of the trinitarian reach beyond the divine self, from the Father to the Father.

#### TO DO PNEUMATOLOGY IS TO START AT THE BEGINNING

In the West there has been a tendency to take the Pentecost event of Acts 2 as the point of departure for pneumatology. If pneumatology takes its point of departure only from the Pentecost event, then this impoverishes the whole previous history, including the history of Jesus. Then the life and preaching and miracles of Jesus are "Spiritless." Beyond this there is the pragmatic Marcionism, the pragmatic denial of the Spirit of Yahweh as constitutive of the history and identity of Israel. While the understanding of the Spirit of Yahweh in the Old Testament is not identical with the Holy Spirit in the New, there are not two Spirits.

#### TO DO PNEUMATOLOGY IS TO DO ESCHATOLOGY

Though one should not restrict the spirit in the Old Testament entirely to eschatology, yet whenever *ruah* is associated with an outpouring it is always

eschatological in nature.<sup>12</sup> In the New Testament the Spirit is explicitly named as the eschatological gift, the "pledge of our inheritance" (Eph 1:14).

Eschatology was, of course, never lost in the postbiblical period, but the relation of the Spirit to eschatology seems to fade from the memory of the Church from the time of the third century authors onwards, excepting sporadic outbreaks like Joachim of Fiore (ca. 1132–1202).<sup>13</sup>

But if the Spirit is the pledge of the our inheritance, and if this is forgotten, then where is the Church going? Does the Church have a terminus? Is it just existing, having its own glorious self as its goal? If the Spirit is the down payment on glory, it is the Spirit who keeps us from confusing our future with an illusion, glitter with gold.<sup>14</sup> Eschatology is one of the guarantees that pneumatology is not exclusively appropriated by the interior life or by the structures of the institutional Church, two prisons in which the Spirit historically has been imprisoned. The Spirit has to be related to the economic order and to political life. If the Spirit leads us to the Word who in turn presents us to the Father,<sup>15</sup> then, if the Spirit is neglected or undervalued, how will we find our way to God?

#### TO DO PNEUMATOLOGY IS TO START WITH EXPERIENCE

What happens when the religious task becomes entirely reflective, entirely rational assent? Then the transcendent One no longer "overwhelms" the believer. The person believes by sheer conviction, without an experiential base, faith being the religiously correct attitude toward the transcendent Other. In defense of this intellectual adhesion one posits an inverse relationship between faith and experience. It is supposed that what is given to experience is taken away from faith.<sup>16</sup> But this is to change the nature of faith. Faith is neither a leap into a great unknown void, nor an absolute risk; it is based on experience, even if minimal.<sup>17</sup> In this framework faith is not dethroned and replaced with experience. Even if we give experience its full due, we are justified by faith alone.<sup>18</sup> Religious

<sup>12</sup>Arthur E. Sekki, *The Meaning of Ruah at Qumran* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989) 82n.35.

<sup>13</sup>R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1988) 751, 752.

<sup>14</sup>Jean-Jacques von Allmen, "Le Saint-Esprit et le culte," *Revue de Théologie et Philosophie* 9 (1959): 16.

<sup>15</sup>Irenaeus, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, 7; SC 406.92.

<sup>16</sup>Louis Dupré, *The Other Dimension: A Search for the Meaning of Religious Attitudes* (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1972) 39, 40; Rudolf Schnackenburg, "Die johanneische Gemeinde und ihr Geisterfahrung," *Die Kirche des Anfangs*, ed. Rudolf Schnackenburg et al. (Freiburg: Herder, 1978) 287.

<sup>17</sup>Klaus Koch, *The Prophets: The Assyrian Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 123.

<sup>18</sup>Though "alone" is not found in the Greek text of Romans 3:28, it does render the sense of the text, and, in fact, was found in the tradition (Origen, Hilary, Basil, Ambrosiaster, Chrysostom, et al) including Thomas Aquinas: "Non est ergo in eis [moralibus et

experience does not possess greater authority than believing faith.<sup>19</sup> Intensity alone is an invitation to chaos and distrust; naked assent alone leads to sterility and unbelief.

#### THE CROSS AND EXPERIENCE

Experience is not the whole fire, just the spark. The gospel suffers a basic perversion if all is reduced to the experience of the Spirit. What about the experience of the Cross? What about the critical function of the Cross? Paul struggled with the enthusiasts of his day to keep the communion between Spirit and cross. In the famous appeal of Paul to the Galatians's experience of the Spirit (3:1-5), he says the proclamation of the crucified Christ effected the Galatians' first experience of the Spirit.<sup>20</sup> In the same chapter of Galatians Paul indicates that the purpose of the Crucifixion is the imparting of the Spirit in faith (Gal 3:13-14).

In Romans 8 Paul, writing in a broad trinitarian mode, begins with the ideas of the enthusiasts and with the experiences of the Spirit they have had, then confronts them with the theology of the Cross. If the Spirit is power (Rom 15:13; 1 Cor 2:4), so is the Cross (1 Cor 1:17). The Cross too identifies and defines God. Finally, the author of Hebrews has Christ offering himself up on the Cross to God through the power of the Spirit (Heb 9:14), giving a trinitarian interpretive clue to the issue of the experience and the Cross.<sup>21</sup>

#### WHAT HAPPENS WHEN EXPERIENCE IS ABSENT?

If the experiential is absent from the religious culture, or from liturgical practice, then a formal faith may not be enough to sustain Christians in their present situation. Also it may be a large factor in atheism.

During the *ad limina* visit of the Brazilian bishops to Rome in 1995, Pope John Paul II said that the exit of Catholics out of the Church into enthusiastic groups was "caused in large part by the loss of religious experience."<sup>22</sup> Michael J. Buckley, reflecting on the origins of atheism recognizes that "the religious experience of human beings provides evidence that cannot be supplanted by something else. . . . The god who is so personal must have the personal as the

---

caeremonialibus legis] spes justificationis, sed in sola fide, Rom 3:28." *Commentary on the First Epistle to Timothy*, cap. 1, lec. 3; S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Commentaria in omnes S. Pauli Apostoli epistolas* (Augustae Taurinorum: Marietti, 1896) 2:187. Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans* (New York: Doubleday, 1993) 360-62.

<sup>19</sup>Kenneth Hamilton, *The Protestant Way* (London: Epworth, 1956) 106.

<sup>20</sup>David J. Lull, *The Spirit in Galatia: Paul's Interpretation of pneuma as Divine Power* (Missoula MT: Scholars Press, 1980) 53.

<sup>21</sup>Heinz D. Wendland, *Der Briefe and die Korinther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968) 108; Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 207.

<sup>22</sup>*Western Catholic Reporter* (Edmonton, Alberta) 18 September 1995.

foundation of his human assertion, and all other reflection that bears upon the existence of this god must have the personal as its critical context."<sup>23</sup> There is in God such "a personal density . . . that neither inference nor external information can sustain faith without experience."<sup>24</sup> Buckley says that the answer to atheism are the experiential dimensions of Christology and pneumatology.<sup>25</sup>

Then there is Raymond Brown's comment on Johannine ecclesiology: "a loving relationship to Jesus . . . remains an intrinsic necessity in the church. . . . a church must bring people into some personal contact with Jesus so that they can experience in their own way what made people follow him in the first place. . . ." <sup>26</sup> Therefore, can the Church's pastoral agenda be successful if religious experience is missing?

To settle for a quick definition, experience is provocation, the seizure of the invading reality before the mustering and intervention of abstract thematizing.

What do the Scriptures tell us of religious experience? Some distinctions need to be made. Paul's own experience (2 Cor 12:1-10), when caught up to the third heaven, is certainly not central to his message.<sup>27</sup> Nor is experience the central content of the gospel. Nonetheless it would be difficult to imagine a biblical doctrine of the Spirit without the experiential element. Eduard Schweizer says: "Long before the Spirit was a theme of doctrine [the Spirit] was a fact in the experience of the community."<sup>28</sup> Schweizer also suggests that in "dialectal theology" the focus on the Word of God led to a neglect of all discussion on experience.<sup>29</sup> Or Rudolf Schnackenburg's observation that "the Spirit for the Johannine community was an experienced reality. . . . The modern critical reserve concerning such an experience of the Spirit should not obscure the fact that early Christianity was convinced of it. In this matter have we [today] not become blind and poor?"<sup>30</sup>

It would easy to demonstrate the continuing role of religious experience in the early and medieval authors. Origen, Hilary of Poitiers, Gregory of Nyssa,

<sup>23</sup>*At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven CT: Yale University, 1987) 361.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. 64, 361. Buckley finds especially attractive Bonaventure's proposal of Christ as the answer to the denial of God and quotes Wolfhart Pannenberg (*Jesus—God and Man* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968] 130): "Who and what God is becomes defined only by the Christ event. Jesus belongs to the definition of God."

<sup>26</sup>*The Churches the Apostles Left Behind* (New York: Paulist, 1984) 97.

<sup>27</sup>Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 1994) 868; Eduard Schweizer, "A Very Helpful Challenge: Gordon Fee's *God's Empowering Presence*," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 8 (1996): 12.

<sup>28</sup>πνεῦμα κτλ., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 6:396.

<sup>29</sup>"A Very Helpful Challenge," 8 (see n. 27, above).

<sup>30</sup>"Die johanneische Gemeinde und ihre Geisterfahrung," *Die Kirche des Anfangs*, 286.



Ephrem, Jacob of Serugh, Philoxenus, Rupert of Deutz, William of Thierry, Bernard of Clairvaux. I give one example. Hilary, whom Catholics recognize as a Doctor of the Church, describes his own liturgical baptism as an adult: "We who have been reborn through the sacrament of baptism experience intense joy when we feel within us the first stirrings of the Holy Spirit."<sup>31</sup> "Among us there is no one who, from time to time, does not feel the gift of the grace of the Spirit."<sup>32</sup> Religious experience may include some emotional elevation. But experience is not always associated with emotional excitement. Bernard of Clairvaux speaks of his own experience which left the senses untouched and was a pure movement of the heart: "As often as the Word-bridegroom entered me, he never ever indicated his introitus, either orally, or visibly, or tangibly. None of his movements ever came to my knowledge; none of my senses indicated that he had invaded my inner being. As I have said before, it was only through a movement in my heart that I realised his presence."<sup>33</sup>

#### WHAT ABOUT ENTHUSIASM?

Religious experience is broader than "enthusiasm." The two are not identical. In the face of enthusiasm the Church was on guard from the early years. If the Acts of the Apostles is among the most enthusiastic books of the New Testament, it evidently was not a "bestseller." Ernst Haenchen notes that only slowly, and in the wake of the Third Gospel, did it gain full recognition.<sup>34</sup> Ernst Käsemann, the exegete very critical of enthusiasm, says:

After a history of two thousand years, Christianity cannot entirely do without enthusiasm. A Christianity in which there are no signs and mighty works, no visible charismata, in which the "God is really among you" of 1 Cor 14:25 is no longer heard from pagans in answer to its preaching, its actions, and its suffering, [this Christianity] becomes empty, doctrinaire, and a form of ideology. . . . No matter what danger enthusiasm may have brought to the church, the final defeat of enthusiasm has always signalized a sleeping church.<sup>35</sup>

Experience of the Spirit belongs to the normal life of faith. But a conscious pursuit of special religious experiences is another matter, and can end in embracing religious fluff. Such an ardent pursuit is a peril, easily mislocating holiness in spiritual elevations, rather than in communion in the Paschal mystery, in selflessness, patience, suffering and the service of others.

<sup>31</sup>Hilary, *Tract on the Psalms*, 64.14; CSEL 22:246.

<sup>32</sup>Idem, *Tract on Psalm 118*, 118.12,4; SC 347.76.

<sup>33</sup>*Sermons on the Song of Songs* 74.2; S. Bernardi Opera vol. 2; *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum*, ed. Jean Leclercq et al. (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957) 240.

<sup>34</sup>"The Book of Acts as Source Material for the History of Early Christianity," in *Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays presented in honor of Paul Schubert*, ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn (London: SPCK, 1968) 259.

<sup>35</sup>*Jesus Means Freedom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969) 51, 54.

Apart from this misplaced quest, one must evaluate religious experience positively. The postbiblical tradition was not simply living off scriptural memories.<sup>36</sup> They were not simply cloning familiar biblical texts. The Christians of the postbiblical period also knew that one could not experience the persons of the Trinity separately. As R. P. C. Hanson puts it "We experience God as God in the Holy Spirit. We do not have direct experience of God the Father or God the Son independently of God the Holy Spirit: God the Holy Spirit is God as we experience God."<sup>37</sup>

The spiritual life is not a royal progress from mountain top to mountain top. Neither the Church nor the individual gets to live on the pinnacle of the mountain. Life is lived in the valleys, or often in deserts, places of hunger and temptation, into which the Spirit drives us, as the Spirit did Jesus (Lk 4:1-2). There we experience the absence of God, God's indifference. When we do experience God it is rare and brief. Even the fiery Isaiah apparently lived off the single inaugural vision for most of his adult life (Isa 6:1-13).<sup>38</sup> At whatever stage the experience of God comes, it is a gift of the Spirit; no one walks even part way up the mountain on one's own power. But without some kind of religious experience, however minimal—many, very many, never get carried to the top of the mountain—faith becomes a doctrine, incommunicable as gospel, a doubtful support of ultimate fidelity. If Pope John Paul II is right about leakage from the Catholic Church, and if Michael Buckley is correct about the antidote to atheism, it is here, within the rational structures of faith, within liturgical worship, that the experiential will elicit the believing response.

#### KNOWING BY DOXOLOGY

In 1960 Leo Scheffczyk, historian of trinitarian doctrine well aware of the range and riches of thought in this field, suggested that "speculative trinitarian theology cannot easily develop itself further; it has reached near to the boundaries."<sup>39</sup> On this, he declared, there was general agreement. On the other hand, there is that other agreement, namely, that trinitarian doctrine, and pneumatology, are essentially doxological in their origins and character.<sup>40</sup> Could one not go

<sup>36</sup>Jean Gribomont, "Esprit, Pères Grecs," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 4 (1960): 1271, 1272.

<sup>37</sup>"The Transformation of Images in the Trinitarian Theology of the Fourth Century," *Studia Patristica* 17/1 (1982): 112.

<sup>38</sup>Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978) 250.

<sup>39</sup>"Die heilsökonomische Trinitätslehre des Rupert von Deutz und ihre dogmatische Bedeutung," *Kirche und Überlieferung*, ed. J. Betz and H. Fries (Freiburg: Herder, 1960) 90.

<sup>40</sup>Edmund Schlink, *The Coming Christ and the Coming Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967) 16-45; Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Analogy and Doxology," *Basic Questions*

beyond these two observations and develop a new style of doing trinitarian theology which would gather up the fruits of the long history of trinitarian and pneumatological speculation, retaining philosophical categories and argumentation, but casting trinitarian thought also—not exclusively—in aesthetic, hymnodic, and doxological images, so that one can pray and preach and celebrate it. This is not a pietist suggestion. One can do this without slipping into antirational sentimentalism or into crude anthropomorphism. In the fourth century Basil did it in his tract *On the Holy Spirit*, and in the middle ages William of St. Thierry and Richard of St. Victor.

Doxology alone speaks the language of this country, pneumatology and Trinity. Desire, the heart of doxology, stumbles ahead of reason and penetrates where vision cannot go. Desire, eager, bleary-eyed, clubfooted desire touches what it cannot see. Ultimately, not definitions, not dialectics, but doxology brings the theological task to fulfillment. Pneumatology and Trinity end where they begin, in doxology.<sup>41</sup>

KILIAN MCDONNELL

*Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research  
Collegeville, Minnesota*

---

(London: SCM, 1970) 1:211-38; Dietrich Ritschl, "Historical Development and Implications of the Filioque Controversy," *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ* (London: SPCK, 1981) 64-65; Pia Luislampe, "Die doxologische Struktur der basilianischen Pneumatologie," *Spiritus vivificans: Grundzüge einer Theologie des Heiligen Geistes nach Basilius von Caesarea* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1981) 32-40; William J. Hill, *Three-Personed God* (Washington DC: Catholic University, 1982) 162; Catherine M. LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991) 319-75.

<sup>41</sup>Franz Courth, *Trinität in der Schrift und Patristik in Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte 2/1a* (Freiburg: Herder, 1988) 207.