

HOLY SPIRIT

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The Holy Spirit (Heb., *ruah*; Gk., *pneuma*) is the third Person of the Trinity. The Christian understanding of God affirms that God's unity is tripersonal. The God whom Jesus called Father is revealed and present to us in the incarnation of the Word and the gift of the Holy Spirit. To say that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, however, does not satisfy the desire for greater comprehension; if anything, it brings awareness of the degree of mystery involved in efforts to understand the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

"And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him" (Matt 3:16); John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in a fifteenth-century Renaissance painting by Pietro Perugino, Kuntshistorisches Museum, Vienna.

SPIRIT OF JESUS/BIBLICAL WITNESS

Although the Bible is the fundamental source of knowledge about God, there is no systematic doctrine of the Trinity in either the OT or the NT. The sacred writings of Israel neither express nor imply any understanding of plurality in God. God does many things in the lives of the people of Israel, but the God of Israel is one. The power of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is present in the spirit that stirs the waters of creation, as well as in the strength and courage of the priests, prophets, and kings who guide, reproach, and inspire the people of Israel; but this power cannot rightly be equated with the third Person of the Trinity. Efforts to isolate passages where the spirit of Yahweh is mentioned so that one might come to an understanding of the third Person of the Trinity are misleading at best.

Nevertheless, one of the factors in Jesus' understanding of God was the OT metaphor of God's Spirit. According to the Jewish tradition, the spirit of Yahweh functions as the creative and life-giving energy of God, as well as the power of Yahweh that comes to rest on the judges, kings, and prophets anointed to guide and challenge God's people. The spirit of Yahweh is thus God's presence at work in the lives of God's people, especially in those called to lead the community to live according to God's will.

Among the thematic links between the OT and the NT was the expectation of an ideal leader who would be anointed with God's Spirit and thus be able to definitively establish God's rule in Israel (Isa 42:1-4; 61:1-2). The NT reveals that Jesus is not only conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), but that he is the one anointed by the Spirit of God (Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-13; Luke 3:21-22) to proclaim in his person the presence of God's reign. The biblical affirmation that Jesus is the Christ, that is, that Jesus is the anointed one of Yahweh, is one of the most significant pneumatological affirmations (affirmations concerning the Holy Spirit) in the Bible.

God anoints Jesus of Nazareth with the Spirit. The resultant identification of Jesus with God brings the Christian understanding of God to a

new and decisively different level. God is preeminently present in Jesus of Nazareth. In the context of Jesus' death and Resurrection, this divine presence is sent to dwell within and to empower the small band of disciples who experienced the Risen Lord. This Spirit of Jesus becomes at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) the unity of the otherwise disparate believers and



the pneumatic presence of the Risen Lord enabling all who believe to remain faithful until the Lord Jesus comes again (Rev 22:17-21). It is the power of the Spirit of the resurrected Lord Jesus that unites and animates the Christian community even today.

Thus the biblical witness concerning God's Spirit points to the elusive, energizing, and universal presence or activity that the Christian community has come to affirm as that of the divine Person who (together with the Son) is sent by the Father as the means of human union with God.

SPIRIT OF GOD/DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENTS

Belief in the one God who is Father, Son, and Spirit is the central truth of all Christian theology and the core reality of Christian living. In an attempt to name the specific personal identity and unique role of the Holy Spirit one encounters the most basic and foundational questions of theology: Who is God? How do persons experience God? The Christian community maintains that it is Jesus of Nazareth, born of Mary by the power of the Spirit, who is the revelation of God. In the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus is found the specifically Christian answer to the question of God's identity. The Christian community also maintains that it is God's gift of the Holy Spirit that enables human relationship with God. Persons are one with the triune God insofar as they accept the gift of divine grace, that is, the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Jesus reveals God's identity, and the Holy Spirit makes human relationship with God possible.

Knowledge of God's reality and experience of God's presence are inseparable. Although there is a logical and necessary distinction between who God is and how people experience God, there is no real separation between the two. There is no knowledge of the triune God apart from oneness with that Holy Mystery. In like manner there is no awareness of the lordship of Jesus without a corresponding intimacy with the Holy Spirit. Thus, whatever is said of Jesus has an impact on an understanding of the Spirit, just as whatever is understood of the Spirit influences what can be said of Jesus. The Spirit is the transcendent power given by God within whom believers recognize the historical person who is God's self-revelation. The Spirit is the intangible presence that enables believers to touch God in the humanity of Jesus.

In like manner, pneumatology (the theology of the Holy Spirit) is distinct (but inseparable) from both trinitarian theology and Christology. There is no pure or isolated doctrine of the Spirit that develops independently from the other central doctrines of the Church. Since all theology of the Holy Spirit is intrinsically related to Christology and trinitarian theology, extreme caution must be taken in making any definitive claims about the manner of the Spirit's being and activity. The theological model that a community of believers chooses to make central in an explication of the Holy Spirit will need to be correlated with the analogies that particular community (or individual) uses in Christology and trinitarian theology.

The existence of models or metaphors for talking about the reality of God made manifest and present in the person of Jesus and the power of the Spirit need not suggest that nothing true can be said about the mystery of God. The need for analogical language in theology does require, however, a degree of pluralism in theology; otherwise a metaphorical explanation can be mistaken for the reality itself.

Although no one conceptual model of God or of the Holy Spirit can hope to be sufficient, it is nonetheless true that not all theological efforts are equally satisfactory. Selectivity is needed about any proposed models for understanding the Holy Spirit.

Christian theology in the West, however, has not tended to err on the side of saying too much about the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, the greater danger seems to be the absence of serious theological reflection on the uniqueness of the Spirit's person and role. Both the nature of theology and the particular manner of being of the Spirit make the task difficult. Efforts to focus theological inquiry on the Spirit's person and function are hampered by the fact that the Spirit is less an object of interest or a focus of inquiry than the focusing power of all theological speculation as well as the source of all prayerful commitment. There is a kind of self-effacing quality to the Spirit's manner of being within and among persons that often leads to a benign neglect of the Spirit's unique role in the knowledge of and union with the God of Jesus. The Spirit is God's gift enabling recognition and acceptance of the lordship of Jesus. Thus, both knowledge of Jesus and commitment to God can be enriched insofar as one becomes more explicitly attentive to the unique role of the Holy Spirit in one's life as a Christian.

The most succinct statement of the Christian community's understanding of the Holy Spirit is found in the third article of the Nicene Creed (the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, or creed of the Council of Constantinople, 381). In the first article of the creed the Christian community asserts its faith in the Father who is creator; in the second article the community affirms its belief in the Incarnate Word who redeems; in the third article the Church proclaims its commitment to the Spirit in whom the unity of God as well as the unity of the community with God rests.

In 325 the creed of the Council of Nicaea stated that orthodox faith included belief "in the Holy Spirit," but it did not further specify who the Spirit is or how the Spirit works in the lives of the faithful. During the decades that followed Nicaea the question of the Spirit's divinity came to the fore in a series of theological debates between those who followed the Pneumatomachians in denying the divinity of the Spirit and those who

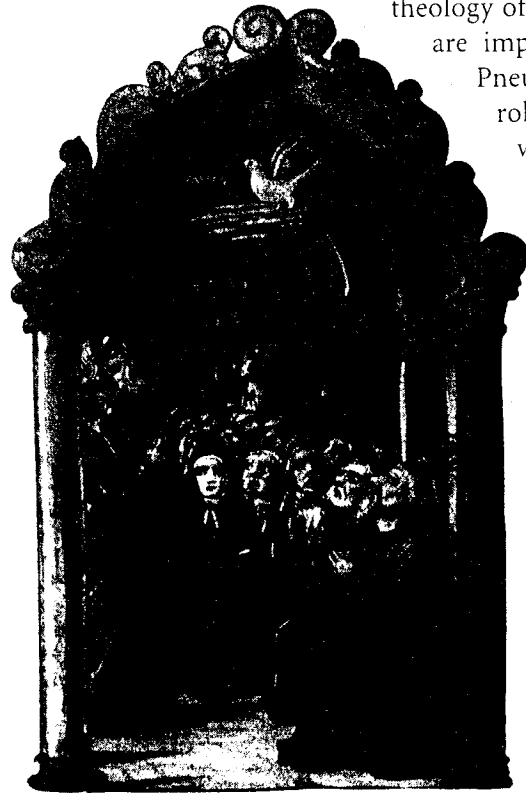


"When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. . . . All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability" (Acts 2:1, 4); *The Coming of the Holy Spirit* by the Master of Osma (ca. 1460), in the Osma-Soria Chapter House, Soria, Spain.

followed the Cappadocians (Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa) in affirming that the Spirit is God. Thus, the Council of Constantinople added a series of affirmations about the Spirit's full lordship as well as the Spirit's role in the mystery of salvation. The Catholic Church thus prays in its Sunday eucharistic celebration: "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come."

The Council of Constantinople and all subsequent theological reflection link the Spirit to the formation of the Christian community, the experience of salvation through Baptism, and the hope for future glory. The creed suggests that the Spirit works within believers as the source of their union with one another, as a means of their oneness with God through the baptismal initiation commitment, and as the promise and impetus of their glorious transformation in the resurrection of the dead.

The Holy Spirit descending as a dove upon the Blessed Virgin Mary and the apostles, early fifteenth-century illustration in the *Missale Romanorum*; Tarazona Cathedral archives, Zaragoza, Spain.



SPIRIT OF COMMUNION/ECCLESIOLOGY AND GRACE

Most of what could be said about the Holy Spirit usually remains implicit in ecclesiology (the study of the Church) and theological anthropology (the doctrine of grace). Since the Spirit has been given to humanity as the source of unity with God and among God's people, the theology of grace and the theology of the Church are implicitly theologies of the Holy Spirit. Pneumatology seeks to make explicit God's role in the experience of communion—with one another and with God.

The Holy Spirit is the animating principle of the Church of God which has the Lord Jesus as its head. The Nicene Creed's statement of Christian belief in (that is, commitment to) the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church" summarizes the Catholic Church's understanding of the role of the Spirit in the community of the baptized; it summarizes the pneumatology implicit in Catholic ecclesiology. The characteristics delineated in the phrase "one, holy, catholic and apostolic" are known as the marks of the Church. The Holy Spirit's function is to endow the community with these qualities and to enable the members of

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the Church to cooperate with one another in making these essential aspects more fully realized in the community.

The oneness or unity of the Church is a way of asserting that the baptized are united in the Spirit so that they can be one with each other and with Jesus in their common commitment to proclaim God's reign. The Pauline image of Church as the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-31) reminds believers that they are one in Christ because they have been anointed by the one Spirit who is manifested differently according to the various gifts and ministries received (1 Cor 12:1-11). Diversity is not a detriment to unity insofar as the Spirit is its source. The Spirit of God makes people one in Christ, but not at the cost of personal uniqueness with regard to distinct roles in the community. It is particularly important to remember that the unity occasioned by the presence of the Holy Spirit is the unity of the diverse. Thus the Spirit of Jesus is as much the cause of appropriate diversity as the cause of unity. Divisiveness among members of the Catholic Church as well as the division among the various denominations of Christian communities are signs of the lack of the fullness of God's Spirit.

The holiness that characterizes the Church is also the gift of the Spirit. The Church is the temple of God because God's Spirit dwells in it (1 Cor 3:16-17). The sacramental life of the Church celebrates and intensifies the experience of being called to this intimacy with the triune God. The Catholic Church identifies seven paradigmatic moments of Christian life to celebrate sacramentally: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. Each of the seven is an occasion for experiencing the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit.

The link between the Catholic celebration of Confirmation and the Holy Spirit is particularly rich in symbolism. Confirmation (originally part of the baptismal initiation rite itself) celebrates the presence of the Spirit and raises the community's consciousness of God's power at work in the lives of the baptized. Confirmation is not, as is sometimes erroneously thought, the first moment of a Christian's experience of the Spirit. If there is a "first" sacramental experience of the Spirit, that moment occurs at Baptism. The baptismal commitment itself, however, is a celebration and confirmation of God's prior presence in the baptized and the Church's means of welcoming that person into the life of the Christian community.

Reflection on the implications of the holiness of the Church is the focus of theological discussion on the mystery of grace. The Christian's participation in the life of God (the grace of holiness) is the effect of the presence of the gift of God who is the Spirit of union. One of the principal themes in the doctrine of grace concerns the manner in which the efficacious grace of God works with the inalienable freedom of the individual person. Efforts to articulate the mystery of the life of faith often stumble on the presumed conflict that must exist between the grace of God and the exercise of human freedom. Although numerous texts have been written to address the dynamic of God's gracious activity in the

lives of free persons, all theological speculation eventually must acknowledge that the unity of the divine and the human in the experience of grace is the effect of the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit makes individuals one with God without diminishing God or destroying persons.

The third mark of the Church, catholicity, is perhaps the most easily misunderstood of the four. The term "catholic" does not refer to the Catholic Church in its difference from other Christian churches, but to the wholeness or oneness of the Church. It is a reiteration of the mark of unity but draws attention to the need for the Church to be inclusive—racially, culturally, and sexually. In addition, the catholicity of the Church serves as a reminder that the particularity of this or that local Christian community is not a threat to the universal Church. The Spirit is the divine presence who enables the particular to have universal significance.

The fourth characteristic of the Church, apostolicity, says that the Church is a missionary body called to fidelity to the fundamental mission of Christ, that is, to proclaim the presence of God's reign. Church members share the task of the apostles; they are called and enabled to pass on the faith of the apostolic community and to continue the proclamation of the Good News until the Risen Lord comes in glory. The Holy Spirit is the bond of union not only with the Church of the apostles, but also with the Church of the last days.

SPIRIT OF ALL CHRISTIANS/ECUMENICAL REFLECTIONS

Although there are numerous theological nuances that distinguish the efforts of theology to name the person and work of the Holy Spirit, Christians of all denominations generally understand the Holy Spirit as the personal gift of the Father of Jesus, the gift who enables relationship with God. There are, however, a few significant differences that require some comment.

Catholics and Protestants can be distinguished from the Eastern Orthodox tradition in their inclusion of the phrase "and the Son" in the Nicene Creed to identify the manner in which Western Christian theology has tended to explain the Spirit's procession from the Father. The theological debate around this issue (the *Filioque* controversy) has been an aspect of the ecumenical efforts of the Eastern Orthodox and the Catholic churches.

Although less sharply defined, Catholic understanding of the doctrine of grace also notably differs from the usual Protestant understanding. In the Catholic tradition great emphasis has been placed on the real change that occurs in graced persons as a result of God's salvific activity on their behalf. The traditional distinction between uncreated grace (God) and created grace (God's effect in the lives of the justified) has sometimes led Catholics to so stress the latter that they appear to reify and quantify grace rather than affirm its fundamental reality, namely, the actual presence of God in persons.

A related matter concerns the question of whether uncreated grace can best be understood as the presence of the Holy Spirit or as the

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indwelling of the triune God. Is the experience of grace the experience of the Spirit's unique (or proper) work in salvation or is grace only attributed to the Spirit? In other words, does the Spirit function in one's life in a specific manner that communicates the Spirit's unique personal identity in the triune God?

All Christian theology struggles with the desire to say something meaningful about God and God's relationship with humans in Jesus and the Spirit. Sometimes the limits of the language distract searchers from the truth. There are two common affirmations about the Holy Spirit that may easily be misinterpreted.

First, to say that the Spirit is the source of union with God and with one another in Christ is not to say that the Spirit is not also the source of plurality. As noted above, the Spirit unites without destroying or diminishing real difference. The personal distinctiveness of the divine Persons is not denied by their communion; the infinite difference between God and humans is never obliterated; the diversity of gifts within the Christian (and broader human) community is a blessing.

Second, to say that the Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity is not to say that the Spirit is in any sense subordinate to the first and the second divine Persons—unless one is willing to also affirm a similar dependence of the others on the Spirit. Too often Christian theology speaks of God and Jesus and presumes that all has been said. The difficulty in being definitive about the elusive, energizing, and universal presence of God's Spirit is no reason for silence. The silence to which believers are called is the silence of prayerful adoration of the Mystery who envelops their being.

See also Confirmation; *Filioque*; God; pneumatology; spirituality, Christian; Trinity, doctrine of the.

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