

SECOND EDITION

# PNEUMATOLOGY

The Holy Spirit  
in Ecumenical, International,  
and Contextual Perspective

VELI-MATTI KÄRKKÄINEN



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## Abbreviations

- ANF *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 10 vols. New York: Christian Literature, 1885–1887. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- BC *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Edited and translated by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959.
- LW *Luther's Works*. American ed. (Libronix Digital Library). Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman. 55 vols. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002.
- NPNF<sup>1</sup> *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. 1st series. Edited by Philip Schaff. 14 vols. New York: Christian Literature, 1886–1889. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- NPNF<sup>2</sup> *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. 2nd series. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. 14 vols. New York: Christian Literature, 1890–1900. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- TDNT *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76.

## Preface

For some time I had felt a need to revise this textbook written about fifteen years ago. Indeed, it was the first in the trilogy of textbooks on key areas of systematic theology geared toward students, ministers, and interested lay leaders. The other two, also published by Baker Academic, are *Christology: A Global Introduction*, 2nd ed. (2016) and *The Doctrine of God: A Global Introduction*, 2nd ed. (2017). I have corrected some inaccuracies and poor formulations as well as updated references and made documentation more detailed. Furthermore and importantly, I have not only thoroughly revised the text but also to a large extent rewritten it for two reasons. First, since the writing of the first edition, a flood of scholarly literature in relevant fields of biblical, historical, and doctrinal studies on the Holy Spirit has emerged. Second, I have published a number of works that bear on this topic. Working over the years on those projects has given me another opportunity to learn more widely and deepen my insight into the complexities of pneumatology.

The most important works of mine on which I depend in this revision are the edited volume *Holy Spirit and Salvation: The Sources of Christian Theology* (Westminster John Knox, 2010) and *The Holy Spirit: A Guide to Christian Theology* (Westminster John Knox, 2012). While the latter is a primer to the history of pneumatology and contemporary theology, the former is a wide and diverse collection of primary sources throughout history accompanied by a theological narrative. Furthermore, I am indebted to my most recent contribution, *Spirit and Salvation*, vol. 4 of *A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World* (Eerdmans, 2016), which sets forth my own constructive proposal in a critical dialogue with four other living faiths. Finally, two

recently edited collections in pneumatology have also greatly inspired and challenged my thinking of the Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, continuing to teach theology students not only in the United States (Fuller Theological Seminary) and Europe (University of Helsinki) but also in various locations in the Global South (for example, Nairobi, Kenya) has further helped me think about how to best communicate these lessons to students and other interested readers.

In addition to having revised the whole text, I have added completely new sections: the last chapter of the book focuses on perceptions and interpretations of the Spirit of God among four living faith traditions (Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist). That comparative theological section distinguishes the current book from all other available primers. In its revised form, the text provides a concise introduction to biblical and historical developments in pneumatology as well as a wide survey of contemporary diversity in both the Global North and the Global South, including “pneumatologies” of four living faiths. At the time of this writing, no other textbook attempts even nearly as wide of a reach.

I am deeply grateful to Robert Hosack at Baker Academic, who helped me gain this opportunity for revision. He was also the one who negotiated the trilogy in the first place about fifteen years ago. The most meticulous and insightful contribution to the final form of the text came from Baker Academic editor Eric Salo. Happy is the author who has the chance to work with a professional such as Eric. My doctoral student Viktor Toth checked all the bibliographic references. He also prepared the indexes. Although any mistakes and inaccuracies are to be attributed to no one but myself, I can only imagine how many more there might have been without their close attention to the details and nuances.

As always, I am grateful to my wife of over three decades, Anne-Päivi, who always supports my writing tasks and helps make life so much easier and happier. Every morning with a cup of coffee and devotional together makes life more than worth living—a fresh start and journey.

1. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, ed., *The Spirit in the World: Emerging Pentecostal Theologies in Global Contexts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Kirsteen Kim, and Amos Yong, eds., *Interdisciplinary and Religio-Cultural Discourses on a Spirit-Filled World: Loosing the Spirits* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

# Introduction to Pneumatology as a Theological Discipline

## A Pneumatological Renaissance

In recent years, one of the most exciting developments in theology has been an unprecedented interest in the Holy Spirit. A renaissance concerning the doctrine and spirituality of the Holy Spirit has stirred much interest and even enthusiasm from all theological corners. The reverberations can be felt everywhere from new theological studies in the academy to the publication of popular books to the emergence of new spiritual orientations and movements, such as “green” pneumatology and liberation pneumatology. The Catholic theologian Elizabeth Dreyer vividly describes this enthusiasm:

Renewed interest in the Holy Spirit is visible in at least three contexts: individual Christians who hunger for a deeper connection with God that is inclusive of all of life as well as the needs of the world; the church that seeks to renew itself through life-giving disciplines and a return to sources; and the formal inquiry of academic philosophy and theology. In effect, one can hear the petition, “Come Creator Spirit” on many lips these days.<sup>1</sup>

1. Elizabeth A. Dreyer, “An Advent of the Spirit: Medieval Mystics and Saints,” in *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology*, ed. Bradford E. Hinze and D. Lyle Dabney (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001), 123.

When studying the Holy Spirit, we need to remember that he is not out there just for the sake of academic study—as important as an adequate and respectful intellectual understanding of this topic may be. According to the scriptural testimonies, we ourselves are subjected to the deepest and most penetrating investigation of the Spirit of God: “The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:10). At the same time, the Spirit feeds, nurtures, and cultivates our lives. Hence, as Dreyer goes on to say, “many Christians desire to encounter a Holy Spirit who brings new life to their spirits in the concrete circumstances of their lives and who renews the face of the earth as we enter the third millennium.”<sup>2</sup> As God’s divine energy that permeates all life and everything in the cosmos, the Spirit is also the most intimate “contact point” between the Triune God and human beings. The Spirit manifests himself in various ways in the lives of Christians and churches, such as in the form of a rushing wind or the most subtle breeze.

While there may be several reasons for the resurgence of pneumatology in the cultural and religious environment in postmodern, pluralistic societies, three interrelated reasons in theology and spirituality seem to be of decisive importance. First, the entrance of the Eastern Orthodox churches into the official ecumenical organization, the World Council of Churches (WCC), has made the rich pneumatological and spiritual tradition of this ancient church family more easily available to other churches. The doctrine of the Spirit has always played a more prominent role in Eastern Orthodox theology, with roots in the classical works of Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, and the three Cappadocians (Basil the Great, his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and their friend Gregory of Nazianzus). The Eastern Church gives a balanced priority to pneumatology, whereas the Christian West (Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Protestantism) focuses on Christology.<sup>3</sup> The Eastern Church’s cultivated pneumatological sensitivity comes to the fore in doctrine, liturgy, and spirituality.

Second, the dramatic spread of Pentecostal and charismatic movements throughout the world has made other Christians wake up to the significance of the Holy Spirit in the everyday lives of all Christians. “The rise of the charismatic movement within virtually every mainstream church has ensured that the Holy Spirit figures prominently on the theological agenda. A new experience of the reality and power of the Spirit has had a major impact

2. Ibid.

3. See Constantine N. Tsirpanlis, *Introduction to Eastern Patristic Thought and Orthodox Theology*, Theology and Life Series 30 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), chap. 4; and John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), chap. 3.



upon the theological discussion of the person and work of the Holy Spirit,” remarks the Anglican Alister McGrath.<sup>4</sup>

Third, there is the massive and dramatic shift of the Christian church from the Global North (Europe and North America) to the Global South (Africa, Asia, and Latin America). That has meant—particularly in Africa, soon to be the most “Christianized” continent—a new and fresh rediscovery of the charismatic element in church and personal Christian life.

These and related developments, including the rise of the doctrine of the Trinity to the center of theological attention and a fresh appreciation of spirituality in liturgy, have further contributed to the pneumatological renaissance. No wonder the world’s largest Christian family, the Roman Catholic Church, in preparation for the commencement of the third millennium, paid special attention to the spirituality of the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup> In the Christian world at large, the issuing of publications, the celebration of special services, and the organizing of lectures and research programs related to pneumatology all witness to the continuing heightened import of the doctrine of the Spirit.

Significantly, the WCC, under the overall theme “Come Holy Spirit—Renew the Creation,” already in its 1991 World Assembly focused theological reflection on various aspects of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in relation to the church, ecumenism, and creation. Two years later, the WCC-related Faith and Order meeting at Santiago de Compostela, Spain, offered a groundbreaking theological understanding between the Spirit and the *koinonia* (“communion”) of the church. Similarly, the following WCC General Assembly at Harare, Zimbabwe (1997), gave attention to pneumatological topics and founded a Joint Working Group between Pentecostal/charismatic Christians and the WCC. One of the purposes of this team is to assess the meaning of the pneumatological renaissance for the Christian church worldwide.

These “signs of the Spirit” and many others are reverberations from a renewed theological reflection on the Spirit that had already begun during previous generations of contemporary theology. The “church father of the twentieth century,” Karl Barth, wrote these often-quoted, programmatic words toward the end of his life as he reflected on the starting point of Christian theology: “Everything that one believes, reflects and says about God the Father and God the Son . . . would be demonstrated and clarified basically through God the Holy Spirit, the *vinculum pacis* between Father and Son. The work

4. Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 227.

5. Pope John Paul II, *Celebrate 2000! Reflections on the Holy Spirit: Weekly Readings for 1998*, sel. and arr. by Paul Thigpen (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1997). This work contains weekly reflections on the Holy Spirit through the entire year of 1998.

of God on behalf of creatures for, in, and with humanity would be made clear in a teleology which excludes all chance.”<sup>6</sup> Not without reason, Barth considered pneumatology a major focus of the theology of the future.<sup>7</sup> And the great Russian Orthodox thinker Nikolai Berdyaev, in his fierce opposition to materialism, argued for “The Reality of Spirit” and the search for “The New Spirituality [for] the Realization of Spirit.”<sup>8</sup>

## The Experience of the Spirit

A distinctive feature of this new search for the Spirit and spiritual life is that rather than looking for generalizations and abstract definitions, as too often has been the case in the past, people are experiencing a hunger for a concrete, lived experience of the life-giving Spirit:

Many Christians desire to encounter a Holy Spirit who brings new life to their spirits in the concrete circumstances of their lives and who renews the face of the earth as we enter the third millennium. Not unlike earlier times of perceived crisis, Christians today attempt to reconnect with the wellsprings of the faith, hoping these roots will bring stability, order and meaning to a postmodern world that is often felt to be hopelessly fragmented. In particular, many seek to retrieve a three-personed God who is related to the human community and to the entire universe in love, challenge, and care—a personal God who identifies with human joys and sorrows.<sup>9</sup>

Consequently, the challenge given to theology in its reflection on the Holy Spirit is to retrieve concrete, particular aspects of the pneumatological tradition. The task of theology is to reflect on these experiences. In the words of Jürgen Moltmann, one of the most widely acclaimed pneumatologists of our day, “whatever we may say in general about ourselves and other people in the light of eternity, the Spirit of life is present only as the Spirit of this or that particular life.” Therefore, “the experience of the Holy Spirit is as specific as the living beings who experience the Spirit, and as varied as the living beings who experience the Spirit are varied.”<sup>10</sup>

6. *Schleiermacher-Auswahl mit einem Nachwort von Karl Barth*, ed. Heinz Bolli (Munich: Siebenstern-Taschenbuch, 1968), 311, as cited in Kilian McDonnell, “A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit?,” *Theological Studies* 46, no. 2 (1985): 193.

7. See McDonnell, “Trinitarian Theology,” 193.

8. Chapter titles (1 and 7, respectively) in Nikolai Berdyaev, *Spirit and Reality* (1939; repr., London: G. Bles, 1946).

9. Dreyer, “Advent of the Spirit,” 123.

10. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 56.

The Catholic theologian John R. Sachs asks pointedly, “What is it that invites us, perhaps compels us, to think and to speak about the Spirit today?” He responds by mentioning several reasons, including

an incredible interest today in the Spirit and spirituality. People are paying attention to the spiritual dimension of their lives and often seem to be experiencing the Spirit in ways and places that often challenge traditional theologies and Church structures and sometimes have little connection with traditional religious practice. The Spirit is present and active beyond the official structures and ordained ministries of the Church.

Sachs then adds a noteworthy comment: “Theologians from who[m] I have learned the most, both ancient and modern, all warn against trying to comprehend the Spirit in a systematic way.” He recommends the attitude of “honorable silence”; otherwise pneumatology cannot avoid useless speculations. Overly speculative study of the Spirit would also hinder us from becoming more acutely desirous of and sensitive to the Spirit.<sup>11</sup>

The most prominent twentieth-century Roman Catholic theologian on the Spirit, the French Dominican Yves Congar, approached the challenge of the Spirit experience by seeking a balance between what he calls a distrust of “personal principle” and an eclipse of an “institutional principle.” The “personal principle” refers to the place accorded to the initiatives of individuals as persons and to what those persons have to say on the basis of personal convictions. The “institutional principle” sees the church as a communion of such persons led by the Spirit.<sup>12</sup> A healthy pneumatology requires balance between these two seemingly contradictory orientations. On the one hand, the Spirit’s works are experienced in the individual lives of believers, but on the other hand, the only way for an individual believer to grasp the message of the Spirit is via the church communion through its worship and the proclamation of the Word of God.

It has been the task of the rapidly growing Pentecostal and charismatic movements to remind the church catholic that in devotion to God’s Spirit, it is not theology that is primary but rather a revitalization of the experience of the Spirit. Even though the experience of the Spirit always leads to theological reflection on its meaning, spirituality is the first contact point.<sup>13</sup>

11. John R. Sachs, “‘Do Not Stifle the Spirit’: Karl Rahner, the Legacy of Vatican II, and Its Urgency for Theology Today,” *Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings* 51 (1996): 15, available at <http://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/cta/article/view/4114/3680>.

12. Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3 vols. in one, trans. David Smith (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1997), 2:152–53.

13. See Kilian McDonnell, “Theological Presuppositions in Our Preaching about the Spirit,” *Theological Studies* 59, no. 2 (1998): 219–35.

This is clearly evident in the biblical record: a powerful, often charismatic experience of the Spirit came first; only afterward, and in a slow tempo, came theological reflection.

Approaching the topic of the Spirit from the perspective of experience is the only way to do justice to the “object” of our study. It is one of the rules of scientific inquiry that the methodology has to fit the object, not vice versa. That said, a word of warning is in order here: the Spirit is not an “object” of human study in the same way that, for instance, the objects of the physical sciences are. In fact, as mentioned, the Spirit, rather than being an object of our scrutiny, is the One who searches us (1 Cor. 2:10–11).

The Spirit and spirituality belong together. Early in church history, Augustine reflected on the relationship between these two as he noticed that the main difficulty in speaking about the Spirit is that “he withdraws from us into mystery even more than Christ.”<sup>14</sup> According to Augustine, there are three conditions for speaking about the Spirit. First, talk about the Spirit cannot be based on pure theory but must touch an experienced reality. Second, however, experience alone does not suffice. It must be tested and tried so that “one’s own spirit’ does not take the place of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>15</sup> This is the critical task of theology as it attempts to discern this difference. Third, the originality of an individual theologian has to be replaced by the communal discernment of the whole church, which is guided by the very same Spirit. Writes Augustine: “Suspicion will always arise when someone speaks on his own account, ‘from within.’ . . . The Spirit does not speak on his own (John 16:13).” In this respect, originality and truth can easily lead to a paradox. Therefore, the importance of submitting one’s experience of the Spirit to the control and testing of the church cannot be overemphasized.<sup>16</sup>

### The Holy Spirit as the “Cinderella of Theology”

The times are gone when it was a commonplace to describe the Holy Spirit as the Cinderella of the Trinity: when the other two “sisters” went to the divine ball, Cinderella was left at home!<sup>17</sup> Nowadays it will not do to speak about the

14. As interpreted by Joseph Ratzinger, “The Holy Spirit as *Communio*: Concerning the Relationship of Pneumatology and Spirituality in Augustine,” *Communio* 25 (Summer 1998): 324, available at <http://www.communio-icr.com/files/ratzinger25-2.pdf>.

15. *Ibid.*, 325.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Moltmann, among others, uses the striking illustration of Cinderella in regard to the Holy Spirit. See Jürgen Moltmann, *Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 1.

Holy Spirit as the *theos agraptos*—the God about whom no one writes—as did Gregory of Nazianzus in the fourth century, or as “the forgotten God,” as was the habit among Catholic theologians of the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup>

But that was not always the case. Even before the division of the church in 1054, the theologians of the East accused their Western counterparts of “forgetfulness of the Spirit.” The Greek Orthodox theologian and WCC official Nikos Nissiotis, following Vladimir Lossky and others, has most dramatically articulated the charge of “Christomonism” against Western theology.<sup>19</sup> According to Nissiotis, Christianity in the West was seen as unilaterally referring to Christ, the Spirit being an addition to the church, to its ministries and sacraments. Although these critiques are one-sided and harsh—perhaps intentionally, in order to make the point—undoubtedly a pneumatological deficiency has too often been found in the Christian West.

Even though in recent years it has become common to introduce pneumatological treatises with a lament of the Spirit’s neglect,<sup>20</sup> it is of course inaccurate to claim that the church and theology had lost sight of the Holy Spirit until the last century or so. The Spirit was always acknowledged and sought out. Hence, rather than speaking of a *Geistvergessenheit* (oblivion of the Spirit), we should speak of a pneumatological deficit; that is, too often a subordinate, secondary role was assigned to the Holy Spirit. According to yet another leading Roman Catholic pneumatologist, the Benedictine Kilian McDonnell, the criterion for a healthy pneumatology is not so much the number of references to the Spirit as the integrity of the theological vision. One can have a plethora of references to the Spirit and still suffer from a pneumatological deficit. Critical questions in this regard include, among others: What is the role of the Spirit in the doctrine of the Trinity, or the church, or salvation? What would change in the theological system if the Spirit were introduced?<sup>21</sup>

There are several reasons and manifestations for this pneumatological deficit, including the somewhat depersonalized conception of the Spirit as

18. Donald J. Gelpi, “The Theological Challenge of Charismatic Spirituality,” *Pneuma* 14, no. 1 (1992): 185.

19. Nikos A. Nissiotis, “The Main Ecclesiological Problem of the Second Vatican Council and Position of the Non-Roman Churches Facing It,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 6 (1965): 31–62. For the views of Vladimir Lossky, see *In the Image and Likeness of God*, trans. John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), esp. chap. 4, “The Procession of the Holy Spirit in Orthodox Trinitarian Doctrine.”

20. Already in the 1960s, Hendrikus Berkhof lamented that even in the Anglo-Saxon literature one could discover little of substance on the topic of pneumatology. *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1964), 10.

21. See, e.g., Kilian McDonnell, “The Determinative Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” *Theology Today* 39, no. 2 (1982): 142–61.

the “bond of love” and the infamous *filioque* clause (that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son*).<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, from the church fathers on, the Holy Spirit has often been introduced as “the Unknown Third.” On the basis of biblical hints, some have noted that the Spirit hides himself and retreats rather than stands at the forefront, so to speak. Indeed, the Eastern Orthodox tradition at times speaks of the “kenosis” of the Spirit: the Spirit never calls other divine persons to himself but points to the Son. Some theologians have also spoken of the “self-effacing” nature of the Spirit: the Spirit does not show us himself; rather, he shows us the face of the Father in the face of the Son.<sup>23</sup>

Yet another reason for the subordinate role of the Spirit has been ecclesial. The church’s ambiguous experience with charismatic and prophetic movements has often led the leadership of the church to try to control the work of the Spirit out of fear of chaos and lack of order. Some theologians wonder, for example, whether the church catholic, in its rejection of the second- and third-century charismatic-prophetic movement known as Montanism, lost an opportunity to integrate charismatic-pneumatological spirituality more fully into its life.

Reflecting on the minor role assigned to the Spirit in the past, the former general secretary of the WCC, Konrad Raiser, has noted that what is most characteristic of theology in general and ecumenical theology in particular is its *dialogical* nature. Ecumenical theology has taken shape in response to challenges from both inside and outside the movement. Genuine dialogue does not aim at comprehensiveness. It may leave things open or unsaid, to be taken up at a later stage. Dialogue is moved forward by what the respective partners perceive to be the most pressing issues at a given time, allowing for later reformulation of earlier insights once a new challenge arises. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is a case in point. Until the 1980s or so, the ecumenical movement did not seem to see the need to enter more fully into a discussion of pneumatology.<sup>24</sup> Now that the need has been felt and fresh impulses given, the result has been a flood of works on various aspects of the Spirit. Exciting and fruitful dialogues about the Spirit are under way as we speak.

22. For an insightful discussion, see Bernd Jochen Hilberath, “Identity through Self-Transcendence: The Holy Spirit and the Fellowship of Free Persons,” in Hinze and Dabney, *Advents of the Spirit*, 265–94.

23. See Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976), 168. For a whole monograph on the theme of the Spirit’s “kenosis,” see D. Lyle Dabney, *Die Kenosis des Geistes: Kontinuität zwischen Schöpfung und Erlösung in Werk des Heiligen Geistes* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997).

24. Konrad Raiser, “The Holy Spirit in Modern Ecumenical Thought,” *Ecumenical Review* 41, no. 3 (1989): 375.

## The Place of Pneumatology in (Systematic) Theology

Traditionally, pneumatology has not received a separate locus in Christian systematic theologies. Unlike the doctrine of the Trinity or the church, the discussion of the Spirit has not stood on its own feet, so to speak. Most often pneumatological topics have been incorporated into the doctrine of salvation (soteriology) and inspiration of Scripture. Pneumatology has also been connected routinely with the doctrine of the church. This placement seems natural in view of the fact that already in the ancient creeds the Holy Spirit was connected with the church. In the creeds, the church is named in the clause following that of the Holy Spirit.<sup>25</sup> According to the *Traditio Apostolica* (*The Apostolic Tradition*) of Hippolytus, the third baptismal question is, “Do you believe in the Holy Spirit in the Church?”<sup>26</sup>

This connection between the Spirit and the church is all good and important. At the same time, it raises the question of the role and place of the Spirit in dogmatic presentations. If the Spirit is not given a separate chapter similar to Christology, what then? An interesting solution appears in the late Lutheran Wolfhart Pannenberg’s monumental three-volume *Systematic Theology*. On the one hand, as in the tradition, there is no one distinct chapter on the Spirit. On the other hand, innovatively, pneumatology is present in all theological topics. Indeed, Pannenberg connects the Spirit with each of the main loci of theology. His treatments of God, creation, human beings, Christology, soteriology, and eschatology are heavily imbued with pneumatological perspectives and resources. In this approach the Holy Spirit, far more than serving as a “gap-filler,” is an integral part of the theological structure and discussion itself.

The late Canadian Baptist Clark H. Pinnock’s widely acclaimed 1996 title, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, not only follows in the vein of Pannenberg (though independently as far as I can tell). In fact, it takes the “turn to the Spirit” even further. Pinnock endeavors to construct a full-scale systematic theology from a pneumatological perspective. He discusses the topics of revelation, the Trinity, creation, Christology, the church, and theology of religions and connects them with pneumatological foundations. The result is an exciting mixture of theology, spirituality, and insights about the Spirit.<sup>27</sup>

In these more recent approaches to the discussion of the Spirit, such as that of Pannenberg and Pinnock, pneumatology bears obvious similarities

25. See Miguel M. Garijo-Guembe, *Communion of the Saints: Foundation, Nature, and Structure of the Church*, trans. Patrick Madigan (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 1–2.

26. Cited in *ibid.*, 1n3.

27. Clark Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996).



to Christology. Although the discussion of Christ's person and work usually occupies a central role in any systematic theology, Christology also has integral connections with other systematic topics: How could the doctrines of revelation, God, salvation, church, or eschatology be construed without a christological foundation? The same question could be asked regarding pneumatology.

### Various Contemporary Approaches to the Study of the Spirit

Although separate treatises on the Holy Spirit have been written during church history—one need only refer to classical works such as those of Athanasius and the Cappadocians, particularly Basil the Great—never before have so many pneumatological studies appeared as during the past two decades or so.

On top of what was mentioned in the previous section, an important and widely debated proposal has come from the pen of the leading contemporary constructive theologian, Jürgen Moltmann. His *Spirit of Life*,<sup>28</sup> with the telling subtitle *A Universal Affirmation*, provides an extensive critique of what he sees as a limited and reductionist treatment of the Spirit in the history of theology, as well as a bold proposal of the need to widen and expand the domain of pneumatology with regard to the Spirit's "public" role in society, politics, and the environment. And he does this all without leaving behind traditional pneumatological discussions, particularly the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation) from election and justification to sanctification and glorification (although that also needs a robust revision!). Briefly put, Moltmann is in search of a "holistic" pneumatology in which the doctrine of the Spirit encompasses areas that are often left behind in older pneumatologies, such as the human body and the earth.

Moltmann's student Michael Welker presented in his *God the Spirit* another unique, though totally different from his honored teacher's, approach to the doctrine of the Spirit.<sup>29</sup> Welker interacts with biblical materials, especially the Old Testament, and attempts to discern the patterns and leading themes that emerge from the biblical discussion of pneumatology as conceived against the backdrop of our postmodern and pluralistic world. Rather than relying on general conceptions and philosophical generalization, Welker listens to "concrete," "realistic" voices in the canon and, rather than trying to reconcile them, freely allows the plurality its own witness. In a qualified sense, Welker's study could be labeled a "biblical theology" of the Spirit.

28. Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*.

29. Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, trans. John F. Hoffmeyer (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).



A host of other specialized studies on the Spirit have also seen daylight recently. The Catholic José Comblin's *The Holy Spirit and Liberation* finds its point of departure in the liberation theologies of Latin America.<sup>30</sup> It attempts to discern the work of the Spirit from the perspective of liberation, freedom, and community development. The Catholic feminist Elizabeth Johnson's *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* seeks to discover a distinctively holistic female perspective on the doctrine of God in general and the doctrine of the Spirit in particular.<sup>31</sup> Other socially and politically oriented pneumatological proposals include the German Reformed Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz's *God's Spirit: Transforming a World in Crisis* and Croatian-American Pentecostal (currently Anglican) Miroslav Volf's *Work in the Spirit*.<sup>32</sup> These innovative discussions relate pneumatological discussion to political realities and work. A distinctive feature of Volf's work is that it also interacts with the Marxist understanding of work and society.

A highly promising new approach to the study of Christian theology and pneumatology is environmental. An example of an insightful "green" or ecological pneumatology is Mark Wallace's *Fragments of the Spirit: Nature, Violence, and the Renewal of Creation*.<sup>33</sup> Wallace takes careful note of biblical and historical resources in Christian theology and faces the environmental challenges with a full-blown pneumatological approach to creation and ecology. A number of female theologians, including the abovementioned Elizabeth Johnson, have also tried their hands at green pneumatology.<sup>34</sup>

Blair Reynolds has written his study *Toward a Process Pneumatology* in critical interaction with American process philosophy and theology.<sup>35</sup> His creative work inquires into potential commonalities between his theological movement and some marginal Christian spiritualities, especially those that draw from the wells of mysticism.

This brief sampling of fresh and innovative perspectives on the doctrine and spirituality of the Holy Spirit suffices to highlight the contours and approaches

30. José Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989).

31. Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

32. Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, *God's Spirit: Transforming a World in Crisis* (New York: Continuum, 1995); Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

33. Mark I. Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit: Nature, Violence, and the Renewal of Creation* (New York: Continuum, 1996).

34. Elizabeth Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993).

35. Blair Reynolds, *Toward a Process Pneumatology* (London: Associated University Presses, 1990).

of contemporary pneumatology. A number of other proposals will be introduced in the course of the discussion.

Having now surveyed the theological landscape with regard to the place and role of pneumatology in current theology, the first task is to inquire into the varied biblical perspectives concerning the doctrine and spirituality of the Spirit. Thereafter, a fairly detailed historical tracing of the doctrine of the Spirit will be in order, before launching into the mosaic of diverse contemporary proposals.