



What Theologians Are Saying about the Holy Spirit

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Prior to the late 1960s, students at mainline denominational seminaries or university divinity schools would have found little in the library on the topic that has been given me for this issue of *Word & World*. Virtually all theology of the twentieth century—until the sixties—could be called theology of the word or biblical theology. Fundamentalists, by definition, were and are theologians of the word in the form of the Bible alone. Neo-orthodox, confessional, and conservative theologies, based on the priority of the revelation to which the Bible is the chief witness, dominated the seminary education of my generation of pastors and theologians in mainline churches.

The so-called “crisis in biblical theology,”¹ coupled with the rise of a wide range of critical alternatives—feminist, political, black, liberation, womanist, process theologies—interrupted the prevailing consensus, introducing what David Tracy in 1975 called “the new pluralism in theology.”² And then in 1991, Spirit theologies erupted on the public arena of the global church. At the assembly of the World Council of Churches in Australia, Chung Hyun Kyung, in her dramatic address to the delegates, spoke on the theme: “Come Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation.” She extolled the spirit and vitality of indigenous religions as the same Spirit whom Christians call the third person of the Trinity. Many at the assembly welcomed her address as a word from the very breath of God; others were incensed that this non-Western-woman theologian had introduced a pagan belief. This was

¹Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia:Westminster, 1970).

²David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1975).

In this article, Professor Snook provides a useful and thorough review of literature on the Holy Spirit.

not the first time that the Christian community has been embroiled in “conflicts about the Holy Spirit.”³

The Lutheran bishop, New Testament scholar, and Harvard dean, Krister Stendahl, wrote the Bible study for the assembly at Canberra, entitled “Energy for Life.”⁴ In the preface, he states that he wanted to experiment with “Spirit language” not “Christ language,” and acknowledges that his “own tradition is not used to such language.” In addition, he acknowledges his preference for the Eastern churches that believe that the Spirit proceeds from the Father. The Orthodox, he observes, are not as anxious about the Spirit as Lutherans and other Western Christians who recite the *filioque* in the Nicene Creed during their liturgy. In professing that the Spirit “proceeds from the Father *and the Son*,” Lutherans tend to restrict the Spirit’s range of freedom to the confines of the church.

It was that same spirit of experimenting with language that guided me in writing my own theology of God’s Spirit during the decade following Canberra.⁵ The publishers accepted my title, *What in the World Is God Doing?* by which I wanted to convey how unlimited is the scope of God’s secular functions in the world—beyond the work of the Spirit in the church. In this present essay of bibliographic samplings from the present-day sea of books on the Holy Spirit, I have chosen those theological works that I think justify Stendahl’s—and my—conviction that the Spirit of God cannot be confined to Luther’s explanation in the *Small Catechism*. This cannot be an exhaustive list, of course, but is a proposed guide for *Word & World* subscribers who want to read further about the much-neglected doctrine of the Holy Spirit beyond the other resources in this issue.⁶

THE SPIRIT IN SCRIPTURE: BIBLICAL ROOTS OF THE DOCTRINE⁷

A helpful summary of biblical scholarship regarding the Spirit of God prior to

³Anyone interested in these recurring disputes about the Spirit may want to consult a collection of essays by Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant theologians, *Conflicts about the Holy Spirit*, ed. Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann (New York: Seabury, 1979).

⁴Krister Stendahl, *Energy for Life: Reflections on the Theme, “Come Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation”* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990).

⁵Lee E. Snook, *What in the World Is God Doing? Re-Imagining Spirit and Power* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999). In this, my own “experiment in language,” I drew upon the several structures of imagination that guide the plotting of the Christian narrative: comedy, tragedy, romance, and satire.

⁶Once the universal presence of the Holy Spirit was more widely acknowledged, theologians, philosophers, historians, ethicists, and art historians began publishing on a wide range of topics: e.g., José Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989); Alan Olson, *Hegel and the Spirit: Philosophy as Pneumatology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Joel Kovel, *History and Spirit: An Inquiry into the Philosophy of Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1991); Patrick Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty: An Introduction to Theological Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992); Paul Jersild, *Spirit Ethics: Scripture and the Moral Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

⁷In addition to the authors discussed in this section below, see also Yves Congar’s three volumes, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1983, which are gathered up in a very readable—and brief—book: *The Word and the Spirit* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986); and Frederic Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), in which Bruner offers an extended analysis of those New Testament texts so important to Pentecostal Christians, in order to criticize the pneumatology of that movement. Bruner had been a missionary in the Philippines. His study reflects the conflicts between Pentecostalism and his own church-sponsored work.

the 1960s can be found in Bible Key Words from Kittel's theological dictionary.⁸ In the detail that one expects from the Kittel studies, the authors observe that the Spirit in the Old Testament is the everywhere-present and creative power of God at work in the world. The Spirit works with the moral purpose both to transform every person into the people of God and to change the world into the new creation. Then, turning to the New Testament, the authors observe that "[l]ong before the Spirit was an article of doctrine it was a fact in the experience of the primitive Church. This explains why the New Testament statements about it exhibit both such diversity and such unity."⁹

After the 1960s, the most accessible and commendable analysis of the Spirit in Scripture and in the history of the doctrine is that of Alasdair Heron, published in 1983.¹⁰ The twentieth century until 1980 is the time frame of the last three chapters of this highly readable study, with particular emphasis on Heron's own Reformed tradition.

In 1994 Michael Welker's magisterial work became available in English as *God the Spirit*.¹¹ Perhaps the chief contribution of this impressive work is the nearly exhaustive survey of relevant biblical material. A working pastor will find this a useful resource for presenting to congregations the work of the Spirit in Scripture. When all is said and done, Welker declares that the philosophical concepts (Aristotle versus Hegel) that have dominated thought about history and Scripture—at least in Welker's Germany—remain "theologically unsatisfying, indeed unacceptable."¹² He is looking for a way to articulate a doctrine of the Spirit that will be compatible with Scripture and that will aid in halting all that is presently "self-destructive." By that he means ecological degradation (section 6.2), a sense of human hopelessness (6.3), the loss of any sense of eternal life (6.4), and the loss of basic trust in God in the midst of life (6.5). Jesus Christ is, for Welker, the clearest instance, the final norm, for discerning the presence and power of the Spirit in the world. The Spirit is omnipresent in the world, not uniformly so, but always in ways that are contingent on a wide diversity of circumstances. The Spirit of God is omnipresent as a "multipresence" whose power does not overpower or control every detail of every event. As Welker states repeatedly, it is the "power of free self-withdrawal for the benefit of others."¹³

Pentecostal and charismatic movements are arguably the most significant phenomena among Christians throughout the twentieth century and are one of the

⁸Eduard Schweizer et al., *Spirit of God*, trans. A. E. Harvey, Bible Key Words 9 (New York: Harper & Bros., 1960).

⁹*Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁰Alasdair I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the Bible: The History of Christian Thought, and Recent Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983).

¹¹Michael Welker, *God the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

¹²*Ibid.*, 302.

¹³For example, *ibid.*, 248-249.

reasons theologians like Welker have written of the Spirit.¹⁴ Biblical scholars in mainline seminaries and divinity schools kept their distance from these movements until late in the century, probably fearing that a charismatic scholar would pollute academic study of the Bible with his subjective and experiential biases. James D. G. Dunn, however, does not apologize that the perspective of his New Testament scholarship is from “a fairly close acquaintance with and interest in Pentecostalism and the modern ‘charismatic movement.’”¹⁵ Neither the experience of Jesus, nor of the first Christians, nor of present-day Christians can be disallowed in serious academic study of the New Testament. His ample five-hundred-page scholarly work on Jesus and the Spirit is his testimony in support of that thesis. He concludes with words that every pastor might heed:

One thing we can be sure of: the life of the Christian church can go forward only when each generation is able creatively to reinterpret its gospel and its common life out of its own experiences of the Spirit and word which first called Christianity into existence.¹⁶

THE SPIRIT IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH¹⁷

It was not until 1969 that the provocative work of Hans von Campenhausen, professor of church history at Heidelberg, became available in English.¹⁸ In simplest terms, it is his thesis that authority in the earliest decades of the Christian movement was the power of the Spirit that had come upon the Apostles, most especially at Pentecost. By the third century, the church had begun to organize itself along the hierarchical lines of the Roman Empire, so that authority and power were no longer bestowed as gifts of the Spirit but were now transmitted institutionally and vested in the bishops.

In 1968 the then-Lutheran scholar of church history at Yale, Jaroslav Pelikan, published a study of Martin Luther’s view on much the same question.¹⁹ Martin Luther, as a reformer of the church and its institutions, was no radical like Karlstadt and Müntzer who set out to smash every structure and abolish every symbol of ecclesiastical power. In one after another reading of Luther’s significant writings, Pelikan shows how Luther insisted that the structures of the church can serve the

¹⁴This claim regarding the rise and influence of Pentecostalism on global Christianity is central to a well-received journalistic and theological report, namely, Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995).

¹⁵James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 360.

¹⁷For a sourcebook on the Spirit in early church writings, see Stanley E. Burgess, *The Spirit and the Church: Antiquity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984.)

¹⁸Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969).

¹⁹Jaroslav Pelikan, *Spirit versus Structure: Luther and the Institutions of the Church* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

Spirit's power but that no structure is equal to, nor can it claim to be the absolute guarantee of, that power. Even though the word of God is alive by the power of the Spirit, structures are necessary instruments of that power.

The Reformed theologian George Hendry of Princeton Seminary also recognized that in the history of the church, the question of church authority was always linked to the implied doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

The thesis...is that authority in the Church, together with [the church's vitality and unity]...is the work of the Holy Spirit; and that when one of these is isolated and made predominant, it is transposed from the key of the Spirit to the key of the flesh—the work of the Spirit is [then] equated with the vitality of some religious experience or the solidarity of some institutional structure or the authority of some doctrinal system.²⁰

We cannot leave this section without taking note of how the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been misused to justify Christian triumphalism. At no time in the history of the Spirit in the church has this been so evident and blatant than in the twentieth-century complacency of many Christians regarding hateful attitudes and actions against the Jews. This is the background to Michael Lodahl's book on the Spirit in the history of Jewish and Christian thought.²¹ For the sake of brevity, we must once again be overly simple in analyzing what is at stake here. Lodahl believes that one strand of traditional thought about the Holy Spirit is linked closely to a deadly form of thought about Jesus Christ: If the Holy Spirit is thought to be the *result* of the coming of Jesus, rather than the *source and ground* of the event of Christ, then that implies that the Spirit was not also present among the people of the Hebrew Scriptures. Furthermore, if the Holy Spirit is thought to be at work exclusively within the context of the Christian church, then the Spirit is used to justify a triumphalistic view and strategy in relation not only to Jews but to all other non-Christian people, cultures, and faiths.²² Lodahl exposes a doctrine of the Spirit that he calls "pneumatological anti-Semitism." He proposes that Christian thought about Jesus Christ must begin with an alternative doctrine of the Spirit. Such a project would mean that Christians must appropriate the Jewish sense of the divine presence or *shekhinah*. The last third of his study opens with a chapter called, "Toward a Shekhinah Christology."

Any honest reading of the Spirit in the history of the church will expose instances of misuse that call for rethinking and reimagining the power of the Spirit and for repentance for the triumphalistic spirit with which Christians have used this power against others.

²⁰George S. Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology*, rev. and enl. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964) 153.

²¹Michael E. Lodahl, *Shekhinah/Spirit: Divine Presence in Jewish and Christian Religion* (New York: Paulist, 1992).

²²*Ibid.*, 6.

THE SPIRIT IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND THEOLOGY OF MISSION

Anyone who has ever studied theology in a formal way knows that the Spirit is lumped together with the church, sacraments, and last things (eschatology) in so-called “third-article courses.” This seems right if one takes the ecumenical creeds as the proper order or sequence that should guide our thinking, professing, and confessing as people of Christian faith. When this sequence controls our thinking about God, it is no surprise if—by the time we get around to thinking about the Spirit—the shape of our thinking will already be fixed by how one thinks about God and Jesus. The Spirit seems to have had little effect on the thinking of many theologians about God—Father, Son, and Spirit—until recently. The reality of the Spirit—in thought—has been well under the control of the church through its theologians.

In the 1960s a reversal in thinking the faith began with several theologies of hope. The future of God (eschatology), some were saying, is where theology should begin and then work backwards so that Christian hope can shed light on, and have an effect on, the present.²³ Present-day theologies of the Holy Spirit are part of this reversal in the way one thinks the faith. The discovery of the Spirit in other religions has also meant a radical change in the way Christians must think about, and carry out, mission.

Three of Jürgen Moltmann’s later books are a case study of how beginning with the Spirit compels us to reverse, or at least to revise and modify, the usual way of theology.²⁴ First of all, Moltmann needs to restore human experience of the Spirit as a source for our thinking about the Holy Spirit and to get beyond the all-too-frequent way theologians have begun with revelation alone and then made revelation and experience into either-or opposites. He believes that the way theologians have rejected experience in liberalism and pietism has been excessive, because “Word and Breath proceed simultaneously from God.”²⁵ He develops “metaphors for the experience of the Spirit.” Personal metaphors include Lord, Mother, and Judge; formative metaphors are energy, space, and gestalt; movement metaphors entail tempest, fire, and love; finally, mystical metaphors consist of light, water, and fertility. All of these are necessary to speak of the Spirit of God, but no one of them is sufficient. Second, Moltmann revises Barth’s thinking of the Holy Spirit in which “the Holy Spirit remains entirely on God’s side, so it can never be experienced by human beings.”²⁶ In short, both the way we know God and the God whom we claim to know are

²³Jürgen Moltmann’s *Theology of Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967) was the best-known book of this genre in the 1960s. It was one of many efforts to reverse the order of Christian thought, beginning with last things, usually thought of as belonging to the realm of the Spirit.

²⁴The three titles are *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), *God in Creation* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), Moltmann’s Gifford Lectures, and *The Spirit of Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

²⁵Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 307.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 7.

tied together so that to alter one is to alter the other in our way of thinking. These books from Moltmann's later theology are a case in point.

The American theologian Peter Hodgson does not pit revelation against experience; rather, he claims that faith, as well as his entire theology of the Spirit, finds its base or source on what he calls "the revelatory experience of God."²⁷ Theology begins with an interpretation of experience, guided by sacred texts, as revelatory of God's power and presence. It focuses on Jesus Christ as the unsurpassable expression of God's purpose. At the same time, faith and its theology understand that the God of Jesus is not

an objectifiable, controllable object but blowing/living spiritual power, always ahead of theology....Wind or breath is the root metaphor present in the word "spirit," so to think of God as the wind blowing into the sails is to understand God as Spirit—the most unrestricted of the trinitarian symbols.²⁸

Hodgson, also, laments the way in which subordinating the Spirit has led to marginalization of women and exploitation of nature, not to mention ecclesiastical arrogance toward those outside the church. And, like Moltmann, he accepts the need for a multiplicity of metaphors, especially metaphors of relatedness or relationality: "Spirit is no one thing in this [vast network of relations] but the network itself, pure relation-ality."²⁹ Hodgson's theology of the Spirit leads to his own trinitarian or social understanding of God that he thinks is neither modalistic nor tri-theistic. One of his students, Nancy Victorin-Vangerud, has made a radical application of a trinitarian Spirit theology in order to reorder relationship in the family and in the church, thus de-centering the hurtful tyranny of the one over the many. She writes, "Pneumatology becomes the key for sustaining the mystery of the Triune community within the social, interdependent life of this world."³⁰

The Spirit as pure relationality is also the theme of John V. Taylor's aptly named *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission*.³¹ Taylor, once himself a missionary in Africa, understands how the Spirit is the beginning of new thought and new life. He writes:

We must relinquish our missionary presuppositions and begin in the beginning with the Holy Spirit. This means watching in any situation in which we find ourselves in order to learn what God is trying to do there, and then doing it with him.³²

²⁷Peter C. Hodgson, *Winds of the Spirit: A Constructive Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994) 35f.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 36.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 280.

³⁰Nancy M. Victorin-Vangerud, *The Raging Hearth: Spirit in the Household of God* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2000) 185.

³¹John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

³²*Ibid.*, 39.

The Spirit of God is “*universally* present through the whole fabric of the world,” and yet there are many other quite distinctive faiths in the world. For Christians, the universal go-between Spirit of God is *uniquely* present in Christ. But—and this is a huge “but”—the missionary task is not to find the uniqueness of Christ “enclosed in his church” but to find Christ on the periphery. The Christ who is the center of the Christian’s faith is also on the circumference, where the Christian meets the other at the circumference of the other’s faith. The Spirit of Christ, the go-between God, takes the Christian to the circumference where she and the other meet and are made “aware of the faith by which each lives.”³³

Taylor’s Spirit theology of Christian mission is not far from that of Paul Martinson, who is keen to give a sympathetic description of other “families of faith” to Christian readers before he takes up the question of mission theology and strategy. In Martinson’s view, the work of the Spirit is universal and God’s revelation is universal, imparted to all people and to all families of faith. He believes that the “pervading work of the Spirit throughout history has been far richer than we have imagined.”³⁴ Yet Martinson does not equate that universal presence of the go-between God, the Spirit, with the salvation of God in Jesus Christ. The difference that faith in Christ makes, for Martinson, is that in Christ God’s freedom to love is revealed. It is that event of love incarnate that defeats all that opposes God’s will for the world. Or as Martinson puts it, in Christ God has bound God-self to the world in love. By the power of the Spirit, God is present everywhere in the world, but in Jesus Christ that presence is the Spirit Word that turns the Christian to the world with a message. I think Martinson would agree with Taylor that the gospel message takes—or sends—the Christian to the periphery as the meeting place with the other, and that is where one finds Christ at the center of mission.³⁵

THE SPIRIT AND TRANSFORMATION OF THOUGHT AND WORLD

Another characteristic of much theology in the twentieth century was to isolate the history of creation from the history of salvation. Theologians tended to defer to natural scientists regarding creation, because science deals with facts. Their preference was to debate the meaning of history—the God of the Bible, after all, is the “God Who Acts” in history—and so theology would rather debate with philosophers and historians, who deal with ideas, values, meaning, and the interpretation of history. The split of creation from salvation was of a piece with the fact-value split so prominent in the consciousness of modern folk. It was not until the latter third of the century that the ecological crisis moved to the top of the theo-

³³Ibid., 181.

³⁴Paul Varo Martinson, *Families of Faith: An Introduction to World Religions for Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 219.

³⁵Cf. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), for an overview and analysis of the changes in thinking about mission.

logical agenda. Salvation is now relevant to creation. The two can no longer be separated in thought because they are tied together in reality.³⁶

How does God's saving work in Jesus Christ relate to the creation? Is not the earth also in need of salvation? Many theologians have begun to respond to the need for an expanded view of salvation, none with a more passionate, pastoral, and creative emphasis on a trinitarian theology of the Spirit than Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz.³⁷ He is intent on an "applied pneumatology," inquiring into the indwelling presence of God's Spirit in the world as the energy for saving, that is, transforming the world so much threatened by ecological, social, and political crises. Theology, he writes, is part of the problem and must also be transformed.

As I studied the biblical accounts, it soon became apparent that the Spirit is much more than the heart and soul of Pentecostal awakenings and sanctified living. It is the core-energy of creation itself....These questions could be worked out only within the setting of Trinitarian theology....The *ruach*, also known as *Sophia* or *Shekinah*, is understood as the power that defines and accompanies Jesus' life from the beginning. The creation of the world, the covenant with Israel and the redemption of all humankind in Jesus Christ are not separate processes.³⁸

In the three sections of this book, the author makes connections: the Spirit who is the very soul of the cosmic order with the Spirit who is the soul of every person, and with the Spirit who is the soul of Christian communities. The dangerous split in our thinking contributes to the way we are destroying the environment, doing violence with one another, and undermining the mission of the church. Our thinking, our theology, he says, must begin at the beginning, namely with the Spirit within the triune reality of God.

By now, in the year 2003, most pastors and theologians have long acknowledged that women catch meanings and nuances in Scripture and in the history of the church that their brothers have somehow missed. Feminist readings of the Bible call for rethinking and reconstructing and reinterpreting everything in theology and the church. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's reading of the church in the first centuries is pertinent to this essay. From the beginning the church was a missionary movement whose distinguishing mark was a radical equality in the power of the Spirit. It was not Paul's theology that led him to write that in Christ there is no longer Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female. There was a Christian missionary movement before Paul's conversion, and it was his experience in that movement that convinced him that—regardless of status in religion or society—all

³⁶The literature on science and theology multiplies, it seems, weekly. Two modes of thought that for so long were merely assumed to have nothing in common are now being explored together on both sides. Three of the foremost writers in this field are Ian Barbour, John Polkinghorne, and Arthur Peacocke. A very accessible review of developments in this interdisciplinary field is Kevin Sharpe, *Sleuthing the Divine: The Nexus of Science and Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), especially the chapter entitled, "The Mutual Relevance of Science and the Spiritual."

³⁷Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, *God's Spirit: Transforming a World in Crisis* (New York: Continuum; Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995).

³⁸*Ibid.*, xii, 48.

are equal as children of God, because “God has sent the Spirit of God into our hearts.”³⁹

By far the most compelling exploration of theology from the perspective of the Spirit is Elizabeth A. Johnson’s *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*.⁴⁰ Like other authors referenced in this essay, Johnson observes that the classical sequence—Father to Son to Holy Spirit—renders all our thinking “remote from the historical experience of the triune God...and therefore from the actual life of believing persons.” It is by “hewing closely to women’s experience” at those junctures where “the dialectic of God’s presence and absence shapes life,” that Johnson explores the mystery of God. It meant that she had to start not with the “first person” of the Trinity, “but with the Spirit....What results is a theology of the triune God that sets out from the experience of the Spirit.”⁴¹

By attending to women’s experience in the church, Johnson shows herself to be part of that reversal in theology, mentioned earlier, that had begun in the 1960s. The Spirit, she says, “allows a starting point more closely allied to the human experience of salvation without which there would be no speech about the triune God at all.” Johnson self-consciously adopts an “inductive approach to speaking about the triune God.”⁴²

I offer the following quotation from Johnson as a fitting conclusion to this essay on the Spirit in present-day theology.

Reflection on experience in its ordinariness and as it reaches its heights, depths, and limits links theology first of all to the doctrine of the Spirit, identified as God present and active in the world, as God who actually arrives and is effective wherever fragments of freedom and healing gain a foothold in the struggling world. The dialectic of the Spirit’s presence and absence is known in effects—new life and energy, peace and justice, resistance and liberation, hope against hope, wisdom, courage, and all that goes with love. There is a sense in which we have to be touched first of all by a love that is not hostile (the “third” person), before we are moved to inquire after a definitive historical manifestation of this love (the “second” person), or point from there toward the mystery of the primordial source of it all (the “first” person).⁴³ ⊕

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³⁹Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Early Christian Missionary Movement: Equality in the Power of the Spirit,” chapter 5 of *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983) 160-199. And Gal 3:38; 4:6-8. Her reinterpretation of texts leads her to consider implications for the doctrine of Christ in *Jesus: Miriam’s Child, Sophia’s Prophet* (New York: Continuum, 1994).

⁴⁰Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 121-122.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 122-123.

⁴³*Ibid.*