

against tyranny only a few days before; now abuses were being hurled at him by hundreds of prisoners and henchmen of the regime, whom the military had assembled for this purpose.

Mahmúd Taha sincerely believed that he was close to being the Second Coming of Christ (in his view, it was a question of *becoming* the Messiah, not of *being* the Messiah). Since he fell one step short of it, he expected somebody else to try again. Some Christians regard this as preposterous, while others see it as a gross misunderstanding of the role of Christ. However, some others find this closer to their understanding of Christ than anything they have witnessed in their own church.

Even if we accept that the correct Christian understanding of Christ is what the Vatican upholds or the Archbishop of Canterbury teaches, rather than what inspired individuals (scholars) have arrived at, the record of non-Christians' trying to attain to a Christian understanding of Christ – both from within their own religious tradition and from without – is certainly impressive, to say the least. The same must be said with regard to those many Jews and Christians who have spared no effort to read Al-Qur'án the way Muslims read it.

Overall, I cannot avoid the impression that Jacob Neusner dramatizes the difficulties involved in the dialogue enterprise, but this is surely more helpful than to do it the other way around.

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THE WORD PROCEEDS FROM THE SPIRIT

Interest in the theology of the Holy Spirit has recently been propelled by the urgent need for both an ecological theology of creation and a theology of religions in a pluralistic world. Theology of the Word Incarnate has traditionally been redemption-oriented and not easily adaptable to a theology of creation or to the idea of salvation outside the church. Now theologians are looking to a theology of the Spirit to explain God's presence in all creatures and in people of other religious traditions. In view of all that the Bible says about the Spirit in relation to creation and about the Spirit "blowing where it wills," even "to the ends of the earth," it seems to make sense to develop an ecological theology and a theology of religions in terms of God's activity as Spirit.

Consequently, the question of the relationship of God as Word to God as Spirit is becoming crucial for both ecological theology and a theology of religions. If Spirit is said to proceed from the Father and the Son or from the

Father through the Son, then it seems to follow that people of other religions who have the fruit or gifts of the Spirit are actually Christian in some sense, whether they know it or not, because the Word who was incarnate is the origin or necessary conditioner of the Spirit who illumines and graces their life under God. The traditional view of the dependence of Spirit on Word insists that there can be no manifestation or working of the Spirit without the presence of the Word who is Christ. This leads to the undesirable necessity of projecting Christ into every other religion or creature that can be seen in any way to have the Spirit of God. It logically requires that Christ be related to creation and other religions in a way that the Bible does not well support. Apart from two or three references to the cosmic Christ, the biblical record of the Word Incarnate does not, in fact, shed much light on the workings of the Spirit in creation. The stories about Jesus do not provide very much material for ecological theology. To say that the Spirit proceeds either from or through the Son is problematic for both ecological theology and a theology of religions.

Some theologians (for example, Philip Rosato and Paul Knitter) have tried to assert that there is an economy of God as Spirit that operates beyond the Word in creation and in people in other religions. This solution in effect separates Spirit from Word sufficiently to allow people of other religions to receive and manifest the Spirit without being anonymously Christian in any way. The same solution might also be applied to a theology of Spirit in creation, thereby extracting Christ from the process of photosynthesis, for example, where the Spirit might well be said to be present.

The problem with this position is that it divides the external operations of the Trinity, disrupts the process of *circumincession* or *perechoresis*, and, in effect, produces tritheism. If the God of other religions or of creation is a Spirit who works independently of the Word, who is God Incarnate for Christians, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that there are at least two Gods in operation, if not three.

A better solution for the development of an ecological theology and a theology of religions is to be found clearly in the Bible itself. Here the Word proceeds from the Spirit. Even the Word in the Messiah is derivative of the Spirit who creates the universe and, blowing where it wills, relates to people of any or all communities of faith. It is, I believe, a misunderstanding of the Bible to claim that the Spirit proceeds from the Word in a christocentric economy of salvation or creation.

The subordination of Spirit to Word occurred as a result of the christological decisions of Nicea and Chalcedon. It was very congenial to Constantinian assumptions of exclusive Christian supremacy. It has well served Western imperialism and visions of manifest destiny. Some would say it has provided a bulwark for patriarchal tradition. It was not, however, well founded in scripture.

There is much biblical evidence to confirm that it is the Spirit who brings the Word of God and that the Word is one among several particular aspects

of God who is Spirit. David, for example, is reported to have said, "The Spirit of the Lord speaks through me, his word is upon my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2; all biblical quotations are from the N.R.S.V., unless otherwise indicated). Before Balaam uttered his oracle to the encamped tribes of Israel, "the spirit of God came upon him, and he uttered his oracle" (Num. 24:2). Ezekiel described his prophetic experience in terms of the Spirit's bringing the Word: "Then the spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and he said to me, 'Say, Thus says the Lord: . . .'" (Ez. 11:5). The author of Zechariah expressed the general biblical view of the relationship of prophetic words to the Spirit when he spoke of "the words that the Lord of hosts had sent by his spirit through the former prophets" (Zech. 7:12).

It is true that the great prophets Jeremiah and Amos avoided referring to God's Spirit in connection with their prophesying, apparently because they did not wish to be confused with contemporary ecstatic "prophets" whose frenzied extravagances were claimed to be inspired by the Spirit. Hosea, however, who was approximately contemporary with Amos, continued to speak of "The prophet . . . the man of the spirit" (Hos. 9:7).

The later rabbinic tradition thought that the Spirit was the author of the Word of the Torah. "The expression 'holy spirit' . . . becomes a commonplace among the rabbis to express the divine revelation which is found in the words of the Torah or on the lips of the prophets."¹

Nor was this relationship of Spirit and Word lost in the New Testament. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews repeatedly referred to the Holy Spirit as the author of the Hebrew Scriptures: "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says . . ." (Heb. 3:7; cf. also 9:8 and 10:15). The Synoptic Gospels all include a message from Jesus to the disciples about the Holy Spirit's helping them speak before the courts: "[F]or it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit" (Mk. 13:11; cf. Mt. 10:20 and Lk. 12:11-12). We impart the gifts of God, St. Paul said, "in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:13).

For Paul, the Spirit was neither mindless power nor raw energy, "for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God" (1 Cor. 2:10). In Rom. 8:27, he referred explicitly to "the mind of the Spirit." The gifts of the Spirit in Paul's view included prophecy, teaching, and exhortation, among others (Rom. 12:5-8). The Pauline author of Ephesians wrote of "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17).

Even John, the great inspiration of Logos Christology, might have agreed with the idea that the Word is derived from the Spirit: "For he whom God sent utters the words of God, so measureless is God's gift of the Spirit" (Jn. 3:34, N.E.B.). John had Jesus insist again and again that his words came not from himself but from God: "The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own;

¹George T. Montague, *The Holy Spirit: Growth of Biblical Tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), p. 113.

but the Father who dwells in me does his works" (Jn. 14:10; cf. also 5:30, 7:16, 8:28 and 38, 12:44 and 49). John had Jesus say explicitly that "the Father is greater than I" (14:28). This clearly expresses a relationship of Jesus to God that is functional rather than ontological. The language of God's "dwelling in" a person usually refers in the Bible to the presence of God as Spirit.

The Spirit whom Jesus said would be sent by God to the disciples is called "the Spirit of truth" (Jn. 14:17) who "will teach you everything" (14:26) and "guide you into all truth; for . . . whatever he hears . . . he will declare to you" (Jn. 16:13). The author of the Revelation to John agreed that the Spirit speaks the word: "Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches" (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

There is no doubt that the Word is an important and central metaphor in the Bible for God's activities. However, in Hebrew thinking and, indeed, in most if not all of the New Testament, God's Word is not hypostatized as an entity indistinguishable from God. In much the greatest part of biblical thinking, God's Word, Wisdom, Hand, Arm, and Face, among other things, are alternative ways of speaking about God's presence as Spirit while implying at the same time that God is not to be thought of as entirely localized.

Spirit is portrayed in the Bible as a more wholistic metaphor than Word. It includes Word and produces words rather than being derivative of Word. Spirit produces not only mental effects but also physical, emotional, artistic, moral, and various other effects in human beings and other creatures and even in the inanimate world. When John had Jesus say, "God is spirit" (4:24), it is a statement about the primacy of the Spirit metaphor that corroborates and is confirmed by most of the other authors in the Bible.

The most significant evidence in the Bible of the Word's proceeding from the Spirit is the Spirit Christology that prevails in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament: "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse . . . The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him" (Is. 11:1a, 2a). Numerous scholars have agreed that the relationship of Jesus with God in the Spirit is the earliest and most influential understanding of Jesus in the New Testament writings. Philip Rosato has written that "except for the prologue of John's Gospel and the beginning of his first Letter, the prevailing New Testament paradigm of Jesus' being is the Spirit-bearer; Jesus is the Christ, the one anointed fully with the Holy Spirit; for this reason He is Messiah and Lord . . . With time, however, this paradigm gave way to that of the incarnate Word."²

Wolfhart Pannenberg concurred that "[p]robably the oldest attempt to express God's presence in Jesus was characterized by the concept of the Spirit."³ Walter Kasper, too, observed that "Scripture sees the Spirit at work

²Phillip J. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), p. 173.

³Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, tr. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968 [orig.—*Grundzüge der Christologie* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1964)]), p. 116.

in all stages of Jesus' life."⁴ Reginald Fuller has stated that the idea of the Spirit-filled eschatological prophet "gives a unity to all of Jesus' historical activity, his proclamation, his teaching with *exousia* ("authority"), his healings and exorcisms, his conduct in eating with the outcast, and finally his death in the fulfilment of his prophetic mission."⁵ Edward Schillebeeckx has shown that the common christological titles of "Christ," "Son of Man," "Son of God," and "Son of David" in the New Testament were affected decisively in their basic meanings by the earliest "prophetic-sapiental" tradition that saw Jesus as the one "filled with God's Spirit."⁶

The explosion of knowledge in modern biblical and historical studies is creating a consensus that the Word who "became flesh and dwelt among us" did so by virtue of the activity of the Spirit of God in Jesus of Nazareth. The consistent theocentricity of Jesus and the apostolic writers is being increasingly accepted, giving rise to the conclusion voiced by Schillebeeckx that "it is highly probable, historically speaking, that Jesus understood himself to be the latter-day prophet,"⁷ one who depended upon the Spirit in his vocation.

At the same time, biblical scholars are saying that the protological passages should not be interpreted, as they have traditionally been understood, to mean the personal pre-existence of Christ. If this is true, there remains no firm biblical evidence to claim that the Word precedes the Spirit. The opposite is clearly the case: The Word proceeds from the Spirit of God. If the precedence of Spirit over Word is acknowledged and the dependency of Word on God as Spirit is admitted, there will have to be radical rethinking of trinitarian doctrine, but there would be great benefits for an ecological theology, a theology of religions, and Christology in a pluralistic world.

God as Spirit could be seen as the source of the power and intelligibility that informs the whole creation, without involving the Messiah in physical or biological processes throughout the universe. The Spirit could be seen working redemptively far beyond its traditional ecclesiastical bounds. The Christ could be understood as "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit" (Lk. 4:1), as Christ is understood primarily by all the authors of the New Testament, with the possible exception of John. The theocentric character of Jesus' and the apostles' witness could be acknowledged. The functional concept of sonship, which is certainly the biblical view, could be recovered. The full humanity of Jesus, which was obscured by classical anhypostatic Christology, could be understood and commended to his faithful followers. At the same time the ultimate Godliness of Jesus could be maintained, and Christianity could enter

⁴Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977 [orig.—*Jesus der Christus* (Mainz: Matthais-Grünwald, 1974)]), p. 16.

⁵Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), p. 130.

⁶See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, tr. Hubert Hoskins (New York: Seabury Press; London: William Collins Sons and Co. Ltd., 1979 [orig.—*Jezus, het verhaal van een levende* (Bloemendaal: Uitgeverij H. Nelissen B.V., 1974)]), pp. 441-515.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 306.

into the dialogue with people of other faith-traditions with genuine openness to discover what the Spirit has said and done in them.

The Spirit in Jesus would be for Christians the test for authentic presence of God elsewhere, but Jesus as true image for the Spirit and the Word of God would not be thought to *constitute* all that is given by the Spirit to other peoples and to all the creatures of creation.

The Word's proceeding from the Spirit would require a change in paradigm or "framework" for Christian thought. It would require much theological exploration and elaboration. However, it appears to be the prevailing biblical paradigm, and it shows great promise to be the Word in season for a polluted and pluralistic world.

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FURTHER STUDIES OF JESUS AND PAUL BASED ON SWIDLER'S *YESHUA*

The appearance of Leonard Swidler's *Yeshua: A Model for Moderns* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1988) and its discussion in *J.E.S.* 26 (Summer and Fall, 1989): 535-536, 717-721, prompts me to offer the following reflections on Jewish-Christian relations.

Paul the Apostle has mystified readers to the present day. On the one hand, he identified himself as a Jew and a Pharisee who had studied under Gamaliel, Hillel's grandson (Phil. 3:5; Acts 22 and 23); on the other, he declared the Law to have come to an end (Eph. 2:15; Rom. 10:4). Swidler tells us that Paul must be read through Jewish lenses (p. 23) and that dichotomies such as law and grace or faith and works must be rejected (p. 66). I should also stress at the outset my belief that the goal of the scholarly dialogue is to remove hatred and misunderstanding, while both faiths remain intact.

In my book, *Jesus the Pharisee* (Paulist, 1985), I stressed the fact that two schools of Pharisees – the schools of Shammai and Hillel – existed from about 30 B.C.E. to 70 C.E. I further demonstrated that the Shammaites seized control of the Jewish community for most of this period. Shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., the Jewish people accepted the teachings of Bet Hillel. I also attempted to show that Jesus and Paul supported the school of Hillel and that all their criticism of Judaism and Pharisees was directed against the Shammaites.

Some of the basic disputes between the two schools included the questions