

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD**

### **The Old Testament**

The Old Testament speaks of the Spirit in many different ways that create a number of tensions, which cannot be reduced completely to a system.

The Old Testament does not speak of the "Holy Spirit" but of the "Spirit of God" (Yahweh), whereas the New Testament uses "Holy Spirit". There is, however, no difference in meaning. The "Spirit of God" is a spirit different from the world and, therefore, rightly named "Holy Spirit". "Holy" here means "of God"; it indicates the transcendence of the Spirit. In the Old Testament, the "Spirit of God" means a divine power active in the world, or rather, God himself insofar as he is acting in human beings and in the universe, in history and in nature.

The Spirit of God is considered as the source of life (Genesis 1:2; 2:7; 6:3; Psalm 33:6; Psalm 104:29f; Psalm 146:4; Job 12:10; 27:3; 34:14f; Ezekiel 37:7-10). The Spirit of God works powerfully and holds sway in history (e.g. Exodus 33:14-17).

In the majority of texts, the Spirit is imparted to specially chosen individuals, men equipped with tasks that affect the course of history, such as Joseph, Abraham, Moses, Gideon, etc. (Genesis 41:38; Numbers 11:17; Exodus 31:1-5; Judges 6:34; 14:6) and especially the Prophets (1 Samuel 10:6; 16:14; 3 Kings 17-19; 22:22ff; Micah 2:7; 3:8; Hosea 9:7; Ezekiel 2:2; 3:13ff; 11:1ff; Wisdom 1:4f; 7:7; 9:17). Now and again, the Spirit is praised as the cause of salvation for all the members of the people of God (Psalm 51:12f; Psalm 143:10).

The Spirit of God imposes the loftiest demands on the people of Israel, but he also comes upon the people as a blessing (Isaiah 44:3). God's fidelity to his covenant is guaranteed by the promise of his Spirit (Isaiah 59:21). Because the Spirit of God is in the midst of his people, there is nothing to fear (Haggai 2:5).

The most emphatic pointer to the new Messianic age is given by Joel (34:1-5). Salvation will be accomplished with the outpouring of the Spirit upon all. The meaning of this text is, as the New Testament text shows, not that the Spirit comes upon all people but that he is imparted to all the faithful within the believing community.

### **The New Testament**

Corresponding to this prophecy, we find in the New Testament the conviction that the Holy Spirit constitutes the redeemed community (the Church). John the Baptist saw the Messiah already present as the bearer of the Spirit and the giver of the Spirit to all (John 1:26). The Incarnate Son of God was conceived through the Spirit. He was equipped with the Spirit at his baptism. The same Spirit drove him into the desert for his first decisive struggle with Satan. The Spirit is the moving power behind every activity of Christ. Christ calls the opposition of people to the Spirit the unpardonable sin (Matthew 12:31; Luke 12:10; Mark 3:29f).

According to Acts, Christ promised the Spirit to his own during the time of his absence (Acts 1:8). In the power of the Spirit, they were then to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in

Samaria, and to the end of the earth. In fulfillment of this promise, the fundamental gift of the Spirit was given on the first Pentecost. In the miraculous events that accompanied it, it was manifest that the saving act of God in the world was pressing forward irresistibly (Acts 2:1-11). Those partaking in the event experience it as the definitive bestowal of salvation.

Peter interprets it as the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises. The Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit is the beginning of the communication of the Spirit that continues through all time. The Spirit henceforth leads and guides the Church and inspires all within it.

He chooses Paul to preach the gospel to the pagans (Acts 13:2ff). He is the unseen power behind the apostolic missionary activity. He sends the Apostle from the harvest fields of Asia to those of Europe (Acts 16:6f). The Spirit foretells to Paul the sufferings of his imprisonment (Acts 20:22f; 21:10f).

The Spirit will tell the faithful what to reply to their judges in the time of persecution, so they need not be anxious about their answers (Mark 13:11; Matthew 10:19f; Luke 10:11f). Because the Spirit leads the redeemed community, the lie of Ananias and Saphira is an offense against the Holy Spirit and is severely punished (Acts 5:3, 9).

It is the Pauline writings that contain the most comprehensive and impressive testimony to the Spirit, though the word covers a wide field and it is impossible to define exactly what Spirit meant to Paul. The functions that the Apostle ascribes to the Spirit form a number of sharp contrasts. They were not invented by Paul but were experienced within the community. The new and revolutionary element was that the baptized experienced effects that clearly come from God.

The most strange and surprising gift of the Spirit is the gift of tongues, an intelligible stammering in the enthusiasm of faith in praise of God. Paul judges this phenomenon in a basically favorable light but demands that it be exercised in an orderly way in the community. This demand supposes that the Spirit does not overwhelm the recipient but leaves him or her free to control the effects of the Spirit. But, then, the danger arises that the Spirit will be deprived of his effectiveness by human opposition. The difficulties of the communities in this matter caused Paul to issue the anxious warning: "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

But, there are other "charisms" of the Spirit that are better than those enthusiastic cries that no one could understand. One of the most important is inspired prophecy, that is, the explanation of the word of God. These gifts bring about more easily and effectively the building up of the community, which is the goal of all the functions of the Spirit. Strangely enough though the Apostle believes that the work of the Spirit should not be restrained, when he is faced with the confusion caused by the charisms at Corinth, he points out insistently that the Spirit works for unity and order. In this connection, Paul develops his personal doctrine of the Church as the body of Christ, which the Spirit produces and animates as its vital principle.

Even when the faithful are not gathered for worship, it is the Spirit who keeps alive their sense of dependence on God and urges them to live a life of the imitation of Christ. Paul teaches that the Spirit moves them to express their thanks and joy even in unintelligible sounds (Romans 8:26f) but, above all, to call God "Father" (Galatians 4:6).

But, the work of the Spirit is not confined to the extraordinary gifts. He is also active in the everyday life of the faithful. He is the foundation of a totally new life and activity. The baptized are a temple in which God dwells (1 Corinthians 3:16). Both the Church as a whole and the individual Christian are temples of the indwelling Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).

The Spirit is a force that is active not only in passing moments of ecstasy but also everywhere and always in the life of the baptized. He is the first-fruit, the pledge, the anticipation, the guarantee of the fulfillment of the end of time. He moves and guides the preachers of the message and all other Christian believers. Paul also sees the possession of the Spirit as the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises.

The notion that the Spirit is already a foretaste of final salvation gains more and more importance in Paul as it becomes clearer that the resurrection of Christ that the disciples experienced was not identical with his coming in glory, but that there was to be a long interval between the resurrection and the consummation of all things at the end of time. With the giving of the Spirit, a beginning at least had been made of the final consummation. In this way, the proper understanding of the "end time" is the period between the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and the Second Coming of Christ in glory, the age of the Church. We are in the "end time" but not necessarily at the end of time. Jesus taught that only the Father knows when that will be.

In the life of the believer, the Spirit grants all the gifts of salvation for which the believer longs. He is the giver of life (Romans 8:10), a life that partakes of the dialectical tensions between present and future (Galatians 6:8; Romans 1:17; 2:7; 5:17; 8:11ff). The Spirit gives life, but full life will come only in the future (Romans 6:4, 11, 13; 2 Corinthians 3:6).

The Spirit brings about freedom, liberation from the servitude of the Law, from sin, and from death - the ultimate freedom (Romans 8:2; Galatians 5:15; 2 Corinthians 3:17), the freedom of the children of God.

He brings about holiness (2 Thessalonians 2:13), so that the believer "thinks the things of God". The believer lives in the Spirit. This is opposed to the sphere of "the flesh"; he who lives in this realm thinks of the "things of the flesh". But, the believer is under the influence of the Spirit who dwells within (Romans 8:11). There is still something "fleshly" in the believer, who is under the influence of both powers. But, the Spirit is the predominant influence, and it is only a question of time until the "flesh" is completely eliminated.

The fact that the faithful are moved by the Spirit, that the whole redeemed community is constituted by the Spirit as its principle of life, is manifested in their behavior. There are ethical criteria for the discernment of the possession of the Spirit (Galatians 5:19-31; Romans 11:17; Galatians 3:19; especially 1 Corinthians 13). The sign of the new life is a new morality (Romans 8:6-11; 1 Corinthians 6:9ff; 15:9ff; Galatians 1:13-16; 5:9-23; Ephesians 1:17ff; 1 Timothy 1:12-16).

The gifts of the Spirit are an unforeseeable, heavenly, marvelous, and overwhelming intervention into human life. But, they must be accepted and given effect by people. Their purpose would not be fulfilled if they did not impel people to corresponding action. The deepest purpose of the Spirit is to be a Spirit of joy, of love, of service.

Characteristic of Paul is the combination of assertion and exhortation, of indicative and imperative (Galatians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17). There are two questions that especially arise with regard to Paul's teaching on the Spirit: what is the relation of the Spirit to Christ? Is the Spirit to be understood as personal or impersonal?

Regarding the first question, the Spirit is called both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. Galatians 4:6 asserts: "To prove that you are sons, God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of his Son, crying 'Abba! Father!' " "Spirit of God" and "Spirit of Christ" are interchangeable (as can also be seen from Romans 8:9ff).

Christ is, for the baptized, the principle of life since he gives them the Spirit (Ephesians 4:11-16). The meaning of the formula: "The Lord is Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:17) is disputed. Paul usually distinguishes Christ from the Spirit (e.g. 2 Corinthians 13:13; Romans 5:1-5; 1 Corinthians 12). Christ is active through the Holy Spirit, so that Christ and the Spirit do not constitute two separate principles of activity but combine as one. Christ accomplishes his work of redemption "in the Spirit" and is present in the Church in the Spirit as he exercises his saving power. For, in the resurrection, he himself became "spiritual".

As regards the personal nature of the Spirit, Paul attempts again and again to describe the Spirit from different approaches, primarily his function not his nature. However, one can infer the nature from the functions of the Spirit, especially when combined with Paul's texts in which the Spirit is named in the third place beside the Father and the Son, and hence in which the Trinitarian structure of the divine life is hinted at (especially 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 13:13).

At any rate, Paul's theology contains the kernel from which the Church's doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the third divine "person" could be developed. Paul's teaching is thus in agreement with the baptismal formula given in Matthew 26:28. The Spirit is the third person along with the Father and the Son. We find an echo of Paul's teaching on the Spirit in the First Letter of Peter (e.g. 1:1f).

In John, we find the personal nature of the Spirit more in evidence. According to John, Christ promises his own in the farewell discourse "another comforter", who will be his representative during his absence. He will remain with the disciples until the end of time and will help them to continue the work and the words of Christ (John 14:16f; 25f). He will convince the world that there is sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:5-11). The Spirit gives testimony to Christ, makes his work continually effective, and explains it (1 John 2:1).

--Michael Schmaus, edited by Patrick J. Hession