
A table of contents for *Theological Students Fellowship (TSF) Bulletin (US)* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_tsfbulletin-us.php

TSF BULLETIN

APRIL 1981

F BULLETIN VOL. 4 No. 5

ormerly *TSF News & Reviews)*
blished by Theological Students llowship, 233 Langdon, Madison WI 703. ISSN No. 0272-3913

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FOUNDATIONS

(Doing theology on the basics of classical faith)

NOTATIONS ON A THEOLOGY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, A Review Article Based on Eduard Schweizer's book, *The Holy Spirit*

By Ray S. Anderson, Assoc. Professor of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary.

Modern theologians have often lamented the lack of attention given the third article of the Creed. From the very beginning, the church's theological mind has been occupied with probing the content of belief in God the Father and God the Son. While confessing faith in God the Holy Spirit in a full trinitarian sense, theologians have not often articulated a doctrine of the Holy Spirit fully equivalent to the doctrine of God or the doctrine of Christ. In most text books on Systematic Theology, the section on the Holy Spirit is usually subsumed under Soteriology and Ecclesiology. From the perspective of the Eastern (Orthodox) Church, this is a tendency restricted to the Western (Roman and Protestant) Church and can be accounted for (they say) by the implied subordination of the Holy Spirit to the Son by the inclusion of the *filioque* phrase in the Nicene Creed. The original form of the Creed (4th century) reads: "And [I believe] in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father." Following the lead of the Church at Rome, the Western Church added, "who proceeds from the Father *and the Son (filioque).*" This was at least one of the reasons why the Eastern and Western Churches separated in the 11th Century, and to this day the Eastern Church sees the *filioque* issue as a continuing barrier to reconciliation within the Western Church. The direct procession of the Spirit from God the Father is necessary, argues the Eastern Church, in order that the Spirit be considered fully equal to both Father and Son in the Godhead. This is not the place to rehearse this argument. There are quite compelling reasons for continuing to hold that the *filioque* clause in the Creed is theologically justified (cf. Karl Barth, 1975, pp. 546-560). Whatever the merits of the *filioque* clause, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has certainly not received the same treatment as the doctrines of God and of Christ.

However, what systematic theologians may have tended to overlook, biblical theologians now seem to be discovering. Recent activity in the publication of books on the Holy Spirit are one evidence of this. Another is the discussion taking place with regard to Jesus and the Spirit (e.g., James Dunn, 1975). With the contemporary interest in "theology from below," it is not surprising that some theologians would see the Spirit of God, or Holy Spirit, as the proper point of entry for constructing a theology itself.

It is precisely this approach that Eduard Schweizer has taken in his most recent book, *The Holy Spirit.* Schweizer, who is Professor of New Testament Theology and Exegesis at the University of Zurich, states, "if we take seriously the fact that God in his Holy Spirit dwells with us, working in us and influencing us, it should be easy to discover even in the midst of our own experiences the reality of that God who as our Lord and Master stands above us with all his authority and power" (p.8). And he goes on to suggest that if it is really God whom we encounter in our experiences, the "theology from below" which "begins with our needs and desires, our troubles and concerns, will suddenly turn into a 'theology from above'" (p.8).

In developing his theology of the Holy Spirit, Schweizer is faithful to his task as preeminently a biblical theologian. Beginning with Israel's understanding of God as Spirit in the Old Testament, he moves quickly through the period of intertestamental Judiasm to the New Testament period. Indeed, it l comes clear that the New Testament is the most product source for his own research. Out of a total of 134 pages in t book, 79 pages are devoted to the New Testament period. addition to his survey of the biblical resources, Schweizer c atively carries through four motifs in his discussion: the Sp as God in his *strangeness,* as God in his *creative power,* Sp as our *knowing* of God, and the Holy Spirit in the *future consu mation.* In each period where there is human experience God's Spirit, Schweizer insightfully develops these motifs such a way that a theology of the Spirit emerges.

The Spirit of God is not the spirit of man, insists Schweiz nor is it the higher life of idealism in contrast to the concre and physical world. The Spirit of God is always God's presen and power in both his strangeness (inspiration and judgme and his creative power (life creating, life possessing). Knov edge of self as human (body and soul) as well as knowledge God as the transcendent source of all life is entailed in tl experience of God as Spirit. For Schweizer, a theology of tl Spirit is a theology of God as a personal presence, with tl power to effect and transform present life as well as the pow to consummate his purpose in a new humanity and a new cre tion. "God comes to us as Holy Spirit" (p. 50); "Jesus is tl bearer of God's Spirit" (p. 51); and, "The fact that the Spirit God was at work in him is what raised Jesus above everythir that was human or capable of human explanation" (p. 56). Als "In the Spirit God descends in person to man," (p. 99).

In looking at the New Testament sources, Schweizer co cludes that there is not one theology of the Holy Spirit, b rather, an emerging theology of the Spirit. From the synoptic Schweizer. The Spirit gives us the ability to perceive Jesus in world which is blind to the presence of God. This is experience his own life of teaching, healing, forgiving sin, and calling for disciples. For Luke, the Spirit is the power of God revealed Jesus as a power to proclaim the gospel, and in the church a the power to witness to the risen Christ and to go forth to th world with this message. In Paul, says Schweizer, the Ho Spirit is so bound up with the Spirit in Jesus that incorporatic into Christ's own life of community is the primary experience c Holy Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit are for the purpose of buildin up community. In the Johannine writings, we have the late evolvement of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, according t Schweizer. The Spirit gives us the ability to perceive jesus in world which is blind to the presence of God. This is experience as new birth and issues in new life, abundant life, which, be cause it is the life of God himself, is eternal life. Schweizer' book is highly original, insightful, and written in an extremel readable style. Thoughtfully read, it provides a helpful look a the emergence of a theology of the Holy Spirit from the biblica sources alone, with no attempt to carry out further reflection a to theological implications.

But it is precisely in following out these implications that "theology from below" must be critiqued. Certainly Schweize cannot be faulted for circumscribing his doctrine of the Spir with prior theological commitments to a doctrine of God a Father and Son. The Spirit of God is fully God; in fact, fo Schweizer, God and Spirit are so identical that one wonders i

TSF BULLETIN (Formerly *TSF News & Reviews*) is published five times during the school year (October-May). Membership in TSF ($10/yr; $8/yr students) includes both the *TSF Bulletin* and *Themelios* (the theological journal of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, three issues). Separate subscription rates are: *TSF Bulletin* — $6.50/yr; *Themelios* — $4.50/yr. Bulk rates are available on request. The Student Group Rate (10 or more copies delivered to one address) is $7/yr per person. All subscriptions and correspondence (except as noted on special order forms) should be sent to Theological Students Fellowship, 233 Langdon, Madison WI 53703. TSF is a division of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship.

ere remains sufficient differentiation within God for what the ıurch has traditionally spoken of as "three in one," or the ɔctrine of the Trinity. Schweizer himself is aware of this. "In a ertain sense," writes Schweizer, "God, the risen Jesus Christ, ıd the Holy Spirit are one and the same" (p. 76). True, the ıurch has always said as much in arguing for the unity of the odhead. However, it is not clear in what sense they are *not* ıe same. From below, that is, from the perspective of human xperience, it is the same Spirit of God present in the world as ather Creator, in Jesus as faithful Son, and in the church (or hristian experience) as true knowledge of God. Is this really ıy different from earlier modalistic concepts of God? And an ven more serious question is, can the doctrine of the Incarnaon be sustained if the differentiation between pirit be one only of divine function rather than one of divine eing?

It is of interest to note the similarity between Schweizer's ıeology of the Spirit "from below," and James Dunn's "Chris-ology from below." In his book referred to earlier, *Jesus and ıe Spirit*, Dunn suggests that as the "Spirit was the 'divinity' of esus, so Jesus became the personality of the Spirit" (p. 325). arlier in his book, Dunn asks whether or not the divinity of hrist may be understood as "inspiration to the nth degree" (p. 1). In his more recent book, *Christology in the Making* (1980), unn says that Jesus did not understand himself to be the ıcarnation of a preexisting divine Logos, but as inspired and mpowered by the Spirit of God (p. 138). It is only in the Johanine literature, suggests Dunn, that we "cross the boundary ne between 'inspiration' and 'incarnation'" (p. 212). While unn allows for the fact that the Johannine interpretation of esus as the incarnation of a pre-existing divine Logos may be nderstood as a valid interpretation of Jesus' divinity, he does ot argue convincingly that this rules out what some others ave called a "Spirit-Christology."

G. W. H. Lampe (1977) is more forthright in arguing against a oncept of Jesus as the Incarnation of a pre-existent divine ogos in favor of a "Spirit Christology" which understands God ımself to be present to us in Jesus through a total inspiration f the Spirit (p. 144). Wesley Carr, in his essay, "Towards a ontemporary Theology of the Holy Spirit" (1975), suggests hat we view the person of Christ as "The Spirit-filled man" (p. 15). "If a Spirit Christology is accepted," continues Carr, "the ıniqueness of Jesus can be affirmed while at the same time reserving the universality of God's redemptive work in every ime and place." It is important for us to see what this means for ıs in understanding the basis for our reconciliation and relaionship to God. If the Spirit now directly relates us to God as he presence of God in our own experience, then any need of a nediator between God and the human person is eliminated. This is precisely what Lampe argues. "For when we speak of God as Spirit we are not referring to a divine mediator. The early Church's theology demanded a mediator between God and ıis creation, and the Logos-Son Christology was developed with the praiseworthy intention of affirming that the mediator was himself of one and the same essence as God the Father. Yet in fact we need no mediator" (p. 144). The Spirit of God as he person and presence of God himself now inspires the believing Christian with the same Christlike quality which Jesus of Nazareth himself became under this indwelling of God.

Does this constitute a trend in a contemporary theology of he Holy Spirit? Possibly. It is not clear how Schweizer himself would come out in the debate over a Spirit Christology as against what might be called a Logos-Son Christology. Does he concept of inspiration replace that of incarnation for him, so that the differentiation between Jesus as the Son of God and he Spirit of God (Holy Spirit) become only a modalistic understanding of the single work of God? Schweizer gives us no real clue as to how he would answer these questions, if indeed he would even accept the questions as relevant. Certainly in the case of Dunn and Schweizer we can only raise these questions. With Lampe the issue is more clear. He has replaced

Christ as the mediator with the Spirit as unmediated experience of God. The result is that the incarnation of God is replaced with the inspiration of the humanity of Jesus. If a trinitarian theology is possible after having come to this conclusion, it can only be through an adoptionist Christology by which the man Jesus is incorporated into the Godhead as an act of reconciliation of all humanity. What is more likely is that such a theology of the Spirit will lead to unitarianism, with divine Spirit and human spirit moving along an undifferentiated continuum.

The question may rightly be asked at this point: What really is at stake in the potential loss of a concept of the Trinity, which rests quite exclusively on the doctrine of the incarnation of God as Son through the power of God as Spirit? Is not the attractiveness of a "theology from below" the fact that the vexing questions about the pre-existence of the divine Logos, the two natures of Christ and the concept of God as three in one are now rendered quaint and irrelevant? The remainder of this article can only touch upon some fundamental issues which are at stake with the hope that we will be alerted to the implications of certain trends in both Christology and a theology of the Holy Spirit. It is this writer's conviction that these issues are as vital for the church and orthodox theology as they were during the first six or seven centuries.

I will only mention three areas where much is at stake in this discussion. First, there is a critical soteriological issue at stake. With a Spirit Christology, where the deity of Christ becomes more a matter of high degree of inspiration, the objective basis for the atonement in the person and work of Christ as an historical work of God for sinners is destroyed. In its place, the Christian must discover in her or his own life, and through one's own humanity, the saving work of God. Jesus becomes the exemplification of a human life under the direct inspiration of God as Spirit. Rather than a single, historical incarnation of God as the unique event of Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection, each person's experience of God as Spirit becomes an "incarnation" of the Spirit. The historical Jesus disappears behind the spirit-filled testimony of the early church and the cross becomes itself universalized in terms of each person's spiritual identity as "child" in conformity to Christ's own acceptance as a Son of God. The atonement now becomes a matter of an unmediated encounter with God as Spirit, with a corresponding moral or spiritual perfectionism creeping in on the believer. Quality of faith as a subjective experience (whether individual or corporate) becomes the sole evidence for the reality of God in one's life.

Secondly, what is at stake is the whole matter of theological language or theological statements. It is not incidental to the discussion that Schweizer, in his opening chapter, says that all theological language must necessarily be "picture language" (pp. 8-9). Theological language cannot be said to refer directly to the being of God, for all human language falls short in this attempt. Rather, theological language, to use his term, must "picture" the experience of God (even in the form of biblical language) and so hope to "create a similar mood in the listener, or to remind him of something similar that he has experienced in his own life" (ibid.). Of course, once the Spirit of God moves directly upon our humanity without being mediated through the person of Christ as the God-man, human thought forms and human language suffer a mythological gap between experience and that which is experienced as transcendent and unexpressable. It is only in the incarnation of God, as correctly perceived by the early church, that the divine being is united to human being in such a way that knowledge of God can result

from direct apprehension of Jesus Christ as both God and human. Against Arius, the fourth century theologians argued for the concept of *homoousios*—that, concerning his deity, Jesus was of the same essence as the Father. The Trinity, then, as T. F. Torrance argues, becomes the very "ground and grammar" of theology (1980, pp. 40; 84; 155; 158-9). Through the incarnation, God creates a structure of revelation and reconciliation such that human thought forms and human language can be grounded in the reality of God without having to be deflected out of time and space, or to be deflected back upon the speaker or hearer so as to only "picture" God in terms of human experience.

Thirdly, what is at stake is the subjective distinction between the human spirit and the Spirit of God, with a corresponding confusion between faith and divine revelation. When God himself is perceived as undifferentiated Spirit, experienced as a subjective expression of our own life under the power of "divine inspiration," revelation as the truth of God becomes virtually identical with existential faith as the authentic human embodiment of that revelation. The danger of a Spirit Christology is particularly critical at this point. Disconnected from the historical Jesus, the Holy Spirit becomes incarnate in the spirit of every age, with a corresponding confusion between saving faith and religious experience, between divine Word and human interpretation, and finally, between the Kingdom of God and the church as a social and political entity.

It is worth noting at this point that a proper theology of the Holy Spirit must take account of Jesus' own warning: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority. . . . He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:13, 14). Any attempt to work out a theology of the Spirit will no doubt come to grief unless it is founded on a theology of the incarnation. If it is this that the *filioque* clause in the Nicene Creed as used by the Western Church seeks to protect, it may have arisen out of appropriate theological instincts.

This is still to lament the absence of good theological works on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. What we have reviewed in this article may be considered to be helpful, but must also be read critically and thoughtfully in terms of what is at stake. Students of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit can still be helped by Michael Green's biblical and perceptive book (1975). For a penetrating theological critique of the importance of a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, one can find help in the essay written by T. F. Torrance, "Come, Creator Spirit, for the Renewal of Worship and Witness" (1966, pp. 240-258).

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ACADEME

(Reports from seminary classroom special events, and TSF chapters)

PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CONVERSION

By Lewis R. Rambo, Assistant of Pastoral Psychology, San Francisco Theological Seminary.

I have benefitted from syllabic, classnotes, and persor conversations with Lewis Rambo for several years. TSFers v recall his article about us in the February 14, 1980 issue of T Christian Century. *His classes in San Anselmo and Berkel indicate thoughtful integration of theology, psychology, a pastoral concerns. This article, from the Spring, 1980 issue* Pacific Theological Review *(published by San Francis Theological Seminary), gives a summary of Rambo's thou and teaching. A more thorough presentation will be publish as* Conversion: Tradition, Transformation, and Transcenden — MLB

The subject of conversion has attracted a great deal of inte est during the last decade. In no small measure this intere has been generated by the resurgence of "born again" religi among Evangelicals and by the emergence of the new religio movements with their special appeal to the youth generatio

Discussions of the conversion experience are sometim difficult because many people often believe that those involv in new religious movements must either be crazy to begin wi or were brainwashed.[1] Conversations with Evangelicals abc conversion are also fraught with problems because the co mitted person insists that the "born again" experience normative and that since he/she has had that experience it is mark of superiority over those who have not. Needless to sa those not in the "born again" camp resent such insinuatior and, as a result, both sides fail to understand each other.

The purpose of this article is to explore the psychologic dimensions of the conversion process. Before tackling th theme, it should be clearly understood that conversion is complex phenomenon. For one thing, in some church circl the emphasis has been upon nurturing the person in the fam of God. Hence *continuity* is stressed, and the view is that pe ple change gradually as they grow in their walk with Chri Other elements of the Christian tradition focus on the impo ance of *discontinuity*, the rupture between the old life of sin a the new life of the spirit. The fact is, of course, that both p spectives are important. For a person to be in Christ, there both family nurture and the liberating break which, par doxically, is made possible by the solid foundation of nurture My own bias is that each point of view needs to appreciate th contributions of the other and that both are biblically based

Another preliminary problem in the study of conversion is th definition of the term. While it is beyond the scope of this ar cle, note that the biblical meaning of conversion is derived frc several words: *epistrephein, strephein, shubh,* and the mc familiar, *metanoia.* These terms mean "to turn," "turn agair or "return." In their original languages, these words have specifically religious connotations. However, within the Bib they are sometimes used to assert the importance of alteri one's life, turning from idols to the living God, or opening one mind to God.

Present-day definitions of conversion can mean the transf of membership of a person from one denomination to anothe or the shift of loyalty from a major religious tradition to a vas different one, such as from Buddhism to Christianity. For som conversion is a traumatic, emotional reorientation of life. F