

IMPORTANCE OF HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CONTEXT OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

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“The Holy Spirit is not a topic with which the modern world is really familiar with or interested in. And yet there is no other topic, if rightly interpreted could be of greater significance for the world, the world torn by disunity, afflicted by sorrow, driven to bestiality through boredom, a world that finds either life or meaning in life, a world that seek amusement instead of real Joy, loneliness in the crowd instead of real communion and burning passion instead of creative love”¹. A hint to the significance of this topic is already given in this introduction of Paul Varghese. But the central importance of this topic must be clarified in association with the whole Christian Theology. “The reality of the Paraclete stays in the centre of the whole Christian Theology and bears no regionalisation”² Therefore here I will try to give a brief overview of the importance of the topic Holy Spirit in the context of the whole Christian Theology.

1. Holy Spirit in Biblical Theology

The Holy Spirit is the answer to the three questions in relation to the Holy Scripture. First of all the question of the origin of the Holy Bible: According to the Christian faith the Holy Scripture contains the Word of God. That is the special feature that distinguishes the Holy Scripture from other written documents. But who has transmitted the word of God in human language to human beings? Through his revelation God gives His own Spirit to the elected believers and the Spirit transmits the content of Revelation in human language to the elected people of God. Therefore we can say that the Holy Scripture was “dictated” by the Holy Spirit. “The things that are revealed by God and that are contained and presented in the Holy scripture are transcribed through the influence of the Holy Spirit; for on the basis of the Apostolic Faith the Books of the Old Testament and the New Testament in their entirety with all their parts are considered to be sacred and canonical, because they are written through the influence of the Holy spirit (John 20:31; 2Tm 3:16; i Peter 1:19-21; 3: 15-16), being God as its origin and the same is handed over to the church”³

Secondly the Holy Spirit is the answer to the question of the content and essence of the Holy Scripture. The language and words of the Holy Scripture are linguistic signs, in which the Spirit of God is hidden. The Holy scripture is not simply words, but verbalization of the Spirit of God, so that human beings can experience the spirit of God by means of human language. So the content and inner essence of the Holy Scripture consists in the Spirit.⁴

Thirdly the spirit is the answer to the question of the purpose and aim of the Holy Scripture. The Holy scripture contains the living word of God and not dead alphabets and as bearer of the spirit of God the Holy scripture is not passive and static, but dynamic and lively. This dynamism and liveliness of the Holy Scripture are confirmed by the fact that, when they are read, preached and interpreted the Holy Spirit is transmitted. In short the purpose and aim of using the words of the scripture are mediation and transmission of the Spirit of God to human beings.

¹Paul Varghese, "Ich glaube an den Heiligen Geist". In: Die Orthodoxe Kirche und der Heilige Geist (Marburg 1966)7

²K. Lehmann, "Heiliger Geist, efreierung zum Menschsein – Teilhabe an göttlichen Leben. Tendenz gegen wartiger Gnadenlehre". In: Gegenwart des Geistes. Aspekte der Pneumatologie. Ed.W. Kasper (QD 85 Friburg)1979,202

³Dogmatic Constitution on God's Revelation 3:11. The second Vatican Council in : LthK (Suppliment Vol II) 545

⁴The Holy scripture as written word of God is the bearer of the Spirit of God. Compare the relation between word and the spirit in : H. Schier, Wort Gottes eine neutestamentliche Bessinnung, Würzburg:1958, 26-30; I bid, Grundzüge einer Paulinischen Theologie; Freiburg: 1978, 200 ft; Dilschneider, I believe in the Holy Spirit, Wuppertal; 1969, 36-38; M Alberts, Die Botschaft des neuen Testaments II/2, Zollikon – Zürich 1957, 142 f; P. Feine theologie des Neuen Testament, Berlin 1951, 262; H. Berkhof, theologie des Heiligen Geistes, Neukirchen 1968 und vollendende Kraft, Der Beitrag der Orthodoxen Theologie, in Erfassung und Theologie des Heiligen Geistes (Hrrg. c. Heitmann/H. Mühlen, Munich 1974, 214 – 222.

2. Holy Spirit in Dogmatic Theology

The aim of the formulation of the Christian dogma is nothing other than the preserving and transmission of the Spirit of God's Revelation. The topic Holy spirit is therefore is not one among many topics of dogmatics, but stays in the centre of all other themes of dogmatics⁵. Here we have to emphasize the repeated and increasingly loud criticism of "spirit Oblivion"⁶ in Western Theology. "Again and again at present the Spirit Oblivion that is the Spiritlessness of theology is complained and a renewal of the theology of the Holy Spirit is demanded"⁷ There were but individual attempts⁸ to understand the "traditions and doctrines of the Church pneumatologically as realization of the presence of Christ in Holy Spirit"⁹ Such an attempt doesn't mean an idealization of their results but signifies on the contrary, that these individual dogmatic formulas are fragmentary signs and witness, in, which and through which we meet the actual (object) Matter of faith that is the reality of Christ, which is present in the Holy Spirit"¹⁰ The central and important position of Pneumatology is particularly emphasised in Orthodox Theology and therefore the doctrine of the Holy Spirit stays in the centre of the Theology of the Orthodox churches¹¹.

3. Holy Spirit in Liturgical Theology

The Holy Spirit comes to the foreground, when we talk about liturgy and sacraments¹² The life of the Orthodox church, if rightly understood, can be summarized in the two concepts - ' spirit and Liturgy. Especially the sacramental Theology of the orthodox churches is closely related to Pneumatology, because the spirit is understood as the real accomplisher of the sacraments.¹³ The liturgical celebration of the Christian community is the historical moment of receiving the Holy Spirit and also the moment of experiencing the presence of God. The climax of all the sacraments is the Epiclesis (calling of the Holy Spirit) and thereby external symbols are filled with divine content (that is the Holy Spirit). Therefore the reception of the sacraments is in the first place receiving of the Holy spirit. For example according to the New Testament baptism is new birth out of water and spirit¹⁴ The adoption of the Christians as children of God through baptism is actually realized through possession of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ Also the Holy Spirit is the divine "energy" that comes down and transforms the eucharistic bread and wine to the body and blood of Christ.¹⁶ According to the Orthodox standpoint the epiclesis of the Holy Spirit is the climax of a sacrament especially of the Eucharistic celebration.¹⁷

⁵Cf. Lehman, Heikger Geist 202.

⁶ Cf. W. Kasper, 1979, 7, compare also Y. Congar, "Pneumatology or Christomonisme" dan la ttradition Latine " In: Ecclesia spiritu Sancto Edocta, Gennblouts, 1979, 41-63. J. Depnis, "Western Christomonism and Eastern Pneumatology" In: clem 35 (1979) 190-198; dilschneider, "Die Geistvergeessenheit der Theologie", In Th LZ 86, 1961, 255-266; P. Varghese, 7-8.

⁷Kasper, Aspekito 7.

⁸Ct for example J.S. Drey, Apologetik BD I, Mainz 1984, 357 369 ff, 372 ff

⁹Kasper, Aspekte 13

¹⁰Ibid

¹¹cf. P. Evdokimov, Presence do L' Esprit Saint dans la tradition Orthodoxe, Paris 1977; N.A. Nissiotis, die Theologic der Ostkirche in Ökumenischen Dialogue, Stuttgart 11968, 19ff; 64ff; 145ff; M. Fatey, Sohn und Giest.Theologische divergenzen zwischen Constantinopel und western, In: Cone (D) 15 (1979) 505-509; Dupius, Western Christomonism 190-198; W. Hrniewioz, Der Pneumatologische Aspekte der Kirche aus Orthoddoxer Sicht In: Cath (M) 31 (1977) 122-50; R Erni, Die Kiroche in Orthodoxer Schaa, Freiburg.

¹²cf. Evdokimor, presence 97 ff; Nissiotis, Die Theologie 232 ff.

¹³cf. K.H. Kandler, abendmahl und Heiliger Geist, In: KUD 228 (1982) 215-227; Wagner, der Heikge Geisst 221

¹⁴cf. joh 3:5; Evdokimov, Presence 97 f; Berkof, Theologic 76-96

¹⁵Rom 8:15, Gal 4:6

¹⁶Wagner, der Heilige Geist 221, Justices the crucial role of the Spirit in the Sacrament through the following quotation from Cyril of Jerusalem: "Everything, that is touched by the Holy spirit is blessed and transformed."

¹⁷Wagner, Der Heilige Geist 221; Kandler, Abendmahl 215 ff, Nissiotis, Theologie 126 ff.

4. Holy Spirit in Moral Theology

The Christian life is in short a life in the Spirit. The spirit of God is the divine power that empowers the believers to lead a christian ethical life.¹⁸ There was a “moral revolution” when the immoral gentiles at that time received the Holy Spirit after their conversion and adopted new life style. Especially the letter to the Ephesians makes it earlier and also the letter to the Galatians.¹⁹ Everyone, who possesses the Spirit of God, is led by the Spirit. The life of the christians was an expression of the work of the Spirit of God. The christians as possessors of the Spirit of God are free from external force, because they do good out of the inward urge of the Spirit.

Apostle Paul had no doubt that the ethical and moral life of the Christians completely depends on the Spirit. A summarized overview is given in Gal 5:16-25. The change in way of life through the spirit occurs in two phases: The first phase is the refusal of the flesh and the works of the flesh. “Now the works of the flesh are plain: immorality, impurity, liessntiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal 5: 19-21). The second phase is the realization and adoption of the fruits of the Spirit in the life of the Christians. “But the fruit of the Spirit is Love, joy, peace, forefearness, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law (Gal 5:22-23)”.

5. Holy Spirit in Ecclesiology

Ecclesiology is a topic that inseparably belongs to pneumatology. This is proved by the third article of the creed of the church²⁰ The out pouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the crucial moment in which the birth of the church was manifested.²¹ Two facts have become apparent here: firstly the Holy Spirit acts as the creator of the church or as “Spiritus Creator” of the church. Secondly, because the Spirit has come down upon the church He acts as the soul of the body of the church. Thus the Holy Spirit is not only the creative power behind the birth of the church, but also its essence.

The church is defined with term “sacraments”²² or “Sacrament of Salvation”.²³ Recently this definition has been deepened and specified using the expression “Sacrament of the Spirit”²⁴ and thus the pneumatological dimension of the church was brought to the forefront. As sacrament of the Holy Spirit the church is the “sign and instrument of the Holy Spirit”²⁵

In the theology and in the life of the Orthodox churches the Pneunactological dimension of ecclesiology is strongly emphasised.²⁶ First of all the Holy Spirit comes as the eschatological gift of

¹⁸H.B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament. A study of priitive christian teaching*, London 1921, 175; W.

Rainhard, *das wirken des Heikgen Geists in Mensohen nach den Briefen des Apostel Paulus*, Freiburg 1918, 63-65.

¹⁹Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief (Hth K IX)* Freiburg 1977, 364ff)

²⁰J. ratzinger, *einfechrung in das Christentum*, Munich 1968, 277:” Here the text of our creed sets us a task: the doctrine of the church has to find its origin in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and its gifts”.

²¹J. Panagopoulos, *Die Urchristliche Prophetic: Ihr Charakter und ihre funktion*, in : *Prophetic vocation in NT and todaay NT*, S (Hrrg J. Panago Poulos, Leiden 1977, 12; Kasper, *Aspekte* 19.

²²cf. *Dogmatische Konstitution uber die Kirche 1:1*, the second Vatican Council, In: *Lexicon for Theologies un Kirche* (Suppliment Volum I) 157; M. Bernards, *Zur dehre von der Kirche aals sakrament*, *Beobachtungen aus der Theologie des 19 und 20. Jahrhunderts* In: *Mth Z* 20, 1969, 29-54; L. Boff, *die Kirche als sakrament in Horizont der Welterfahrung*, Paderborn 1972, Y. Congar, *Un Penple messiqnique. L' Eglise Sacrament du Salut. Salut et Liberation*. Paris 1975.

²³J. Ratzinger, " *Kirche als Heilssakrament*" In: *Zeit des Geistes* (Hrog. J. Reikerstorger), Wien 1977, 59-70

²⁴cf. W. Kasper, *die Kirche al Sacrament des Geistes* In: W. Kasper and G. Sauter, *Kirche Ort des Geister*, Freiburg 1976, 13-55, H.G. Koch, *Neue Persectives der Theologie des Heiligen Geistes* In: *Herkor* 30, 1976, 458-459. M.

Kehl, *Kirche Sacrament des Geistes*, In: *Gegenwart des Geistes* (QD 85) (Hrrg. W. Kasper), Freiburg 1979, 155-180.

²⁵Kasper, *Aspekte* 18

²⁶Erni *Die Kirche in Orthodoxer Sschau*, In: *US* 36, 1981, 226-241; Nissibitis, *Theologie* 64 – 85. Hryniewicz, *Der*

Salvation for the realisation of the eschatological salvation and then the church emerges as the place of the presence of the Spirit and of the Salvation.

6. Holy Spirit in Christology

The person of Jesus Christ is the unique centre of Christian faith and the essence of Christianity is to be understood from this centre. "With him, alone with this name or with this lively historical person and His work the essence of Christianity can be outlined or the *proprium christianum* can be defined"²⁷ In western Theology the Christology is very well explored, but quite often at the expense of pneumatology.²⁸ Strictly speaking, Christology and Pneumatology are closely connected.²⁹ Considering the close relation between these two topics we must emphasise both the topics equally and one or other topic should not be emphasised at the expense of the other. In the following aspects the importance of the theme Holy Spirit in relation to Christology can be presented:

1. Holy Spirit and the expected Messiah: The root of the New Testament concept of the close relation between the Spirit and Messiah has to be sought in the Old Testament idea of Messiah³⁰, because in Old Testament the possession of the Holy Spirit is presented as special qualification of the Messiah³¹
2. Jesus as receiver of the spirit: The synoptic gospels report that Jesus received the Holy Spirit by baptism³². Immediately after receiving the Holy Spirit there came the declaration that Jesus is the Son of God. According to Rom 1:4 Christ is enthroned by the Spirit of Holiness as the Son of God.
3. Jesus as bearer of the Holy Spirit: According to Luke Jesus is the bearer of the Spirit of God³³ and he starts his public ministry filled with power of the Spirit³⁴.
4. The risen Christ as giver of the Spirit³⁴: In Joh 20:22 the risen Christ is introduced as the giver of the Holy Spirit. For Apostle Paul the Spirit of Christ is identical to the Spirit of God and believers must possess the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9).
5. Identification of Spirit and Christ: "Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of Lord is, there is freedom (2 Cor 3:17). The identification does not happen in relation to persons, but in relation to functions."³⁵
6. Christ and Paraclete: In the statements about Paraclete in the Gospel of John the close affinity between Christ and Spirit is clearly recognizable.³⁶
7. According to Apostle Paul you can know and confess Jesus as Lord only by the Holy Spirit (1

pneumatologische Aspekte 122-150.

²⁷A. Nossol, Der Geist als Gegenwart Jesu Christi, In: Gegenwart des Geistes (Hrsg. W. Kasper) (QD 85) Freiburg 1979, 132.

²⁸Kasper, Aspekte 12.

²⁹W. Schmitz, geisterfahrung also Christuss erfahrung, In: Erfahrung und theologien des heiligen Geistes (Hrsg. C. Heitman/H. Mühlen) Munich 1974, 101 ff; Berkhof, theologie 14-33; kasper, Jesus der christus, mainz 1974, 296 ff; O.A. Dillschneider, die Notwendigkeit neuer Antworten auf neue Fragen. Auf den Weg zum dritten Glaubensartikel: Ich Glauben an den Heiligen Geist, In: Erfahrung und Theologie des Heiligen Geistes (Hrsg. C. Heitman/H. Mühlen). Munich 1974, 157; Nossol, Der Geist 132-154; Koch, Neue Perspektiven 459

³⁰Schmitz, geisterfahrung 101 ff; for the close relation between Spirit and Messiah in OT R. Koch, Geist und Messiah. Beitrag zur biblischen theologie des AT, Wien 1950; M.A. Chevallier, L'Esprit et le Messie dans le Bas Judaïsme of le Nouveau Testament, Paris 1958; J. Klausner, the Messianic idea in Israel, New York 1955.

³¹Three places in Isaiah, which were taken into New Testament indicate it Is 11:1 – 1, Peter 4:14; Is 42:1- Mt 12:18; Is 61:1-Lk 4:18.

³²Mt. 3:16 f; Mk 1:10 f; Lk 3:21f

³³Lk 4:1, 14, 18; 10:21

³⁴Cf Berkhof, theologie 19; schmitz, Geisterfahrung 102.

³⁵I. Hermann, Kyrios und Pneuma. Studium zur Christologie der Paulinischen Hauptbriefe, Munich 1961, 140; Berkhof, Theologie 28. The risen Lord works always in Spirit.

³⁶Cf R.E. Brown, The Paraclete in the fourth Gospel in : NTS 13 (1966) 113-132; I bid, The Paraclete in the light of Modern Research in St Ev 4 (1968) 158-165; U.B. Müller, die Paraklet vorstellung in Johannesevangelium, in: Zth K 71 (1974) 31-77; Schmitz, Geist erfahrung 114; Nissiotis, Der Geist 142.

Cor 12:3).

8. On the basis of the Theology of Revelation, according to Karl Barth the Spirit is the “Subjective reality of revelation and Jesus is the “Objective reality of revelation”³⁷

On the basis of the close relation between Spirit and Christ we can rightly speak of a Pneumatological Christology³⁸ and the plenty of statements of the NT justifies such a comprehension. A pneumatological Christology is also the only solution for the Christological crisis and the problem of misunderstanding in relation to different Christological definitions.

7. Holy Spirit in Soteriology

It is after all not possible to speak about Christian Salvation without reference to the Spirit of God, because the Spirit of God itself is the Gift of salvation,³⁹ which comes down through Christ to the Christian believers. In the Spirit of God or in the Spirit of Christ is Christian Salvation realized and brought to the present. What the believers receive as gift of salvation through believing in the Gospel is according to the Apostle Paul the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:2). Also Luke presents the Holy Spirit as eschatological Gift of Salvation (Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-4). Holy Spirit is the actual and concrete gift of salvation, which the believers received through the work of Salvation of God in Christ. The Holy Spirit, that the believers possess is the first instalment of the future inheritance.⁴⁰ A life in the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit means therefore foretaste of the realization of the eschatological salvation in history.

8. Holy Spirit in Ecumenical Theology

The unity of the universal church is given in advance in the unity of the Spirit of God (Eph 4:3). The one Spirit is cohesive power of the body of Christ, namely the Church (Eph 4:4). If the ecumenical efforts seek unity in diversity, they must begin with the rediscovery of the given unity of the church in the Spirit of God. The one Spirit is the “Source of Unity”⁴¹ From this central source flows out the diversity and the Spirit unifies the diversity to Unity. From the Unity of the Spirit we move towards the unity of the church. The Apostolic creed is an obvious evidence for the priority of the Pneumatology over ecclesiology.⁴² Immediately after the confession of faith in one Spirit appears the confession of faith in one church. Ecclesiology belongs to Pneumatology and therefore the solution for ecclesiological problems should be sought in Pneumatology.⁴³ The diversity in churches” is richness of the one spirit⁴⁴ In one spirit we can see at the same time the unity in diversity and the source of diversity in Unity⁴⁵ The theme Holy Spirit became more relevant in the context of the loud criticism against the Western Theology. The problems of Scientific Theology have been pointed out by J.S. Drey⁴⁶ already in the last century. “Instead of dialectical Specialization or pure grammar or with word rummaging philology he encourages a

³⁷cf. Karl Barth, Die Kirchliche dogmatik Vol I/2 16-17. This definition of Karl Barth cannot be emphasised, because the Spirit is also an "objective" reality of revelation and an objective factor for salvation.

³⁸cf. Berkhof, theologie 21; Koch, Neue Persoektiven 459; Nossol, Der Geist 134 ff.

³⁹cf. Schmithals, Geisterfahrung 102ff

⁴⁰cf. 2 cor 11:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14; Rom 8:23

⁴¹cf. J. Achimiuk, die Gemeinschaft des Heiligen Geists – Quelle der Einheit der Kirche in : Gemeinschaft des Heiligen Geistes heute – Trinität, Kirche, Schöpfung. Bericht der Studienkonsultation der KEK 24-28 März 1981, Cardiff, Grossbritannien (KEK Studienheft Nr.13) Genf 1981,49.

⁴²Cf. Ratering, Einführung 275 ff; kasper, Aspekte 19.

⁴³According to kasper, Kirche as sacrament 47 f the renewal of Pneumatology has grater importance in ecumenism. Compare P.49: 'Out of the renewal of Pneumatology shall come the impulse for the solution of the present ecumenical stagnation.

⁴⁴cf. Einheit in Geist – Vielfalt in den Kirchen. Report of the VIII Plenary assembly of the CEC on 18th - 25th October 1979 Crete (Ed CEC Geneva) 62-64

⁴⁵Cf. Kasper Die Kirche als sakrament 49ff.

⁴⁶Revision des gegenwartigen Zustandes der Theologie, in : Geist des Christentums und des Katholissmus (Hrsg. J.J. Geiselman) Mainz 1940, 85-97.

theology that touches the inner intuition and that seeks not only for individual special themes but also for the organic co-relation of the whole”⁴⁷. In our century H.U. Von Balthasar brought this criticism repeatedly to our consciousness⁴⁸. We can perceive a certain “spiritlessness” in the Theology. This spiritlessness of theology is the result of “Spirit – oblivion”⁴⁹. In the context of the criticism of “Spirit Oblivion” of Western Theology, it has been accused for overemphasising christology which is “Christomonism”⁵⁰. If there is a Theology of Holy spirit in western theology, it is according to Berkhof⁵¹ suffering under two types of criticism:

1. In the Catholic Theology the work of the Holy Spirit has been strongly institutionalized⁵² and therefore His work has become static. So the most important aspect of the Spirit namely dynamism and freedom are lost to a great extent.

2. Contrary to that in the protestant Theology the work of the Holy Spirit has been individualized⁵³ and an introvert theology was developed in which the unity of the Spirit and the Universal outlook of theology are lost. The orthodox Theology summarises the work as well as the experience of the Spirit with the expression “Communion of the Holy Spirit”. There in the institutional and individual aspects of the experience of the Spirit is included, but without any overemphasis of one over the other. The church is according to orthodox point of view, in the first place the communion of the Holy Spirit and Christian existence is an existence in the Spirit. It is high time that the Christian Theology rediscovers the significance of the Holy Spirit in the relation to the whole Christian Theology. It is not only a responsibility, but also a challenge for the Christian Theology as well as for the Churches.

⁴⁷Kasper, Aspekte 8f, Kasper summarises J.S. Drey;s Criticism against scientific theology.

⁴⁸Cf for example Theologie und Heiligkeit in: Kasper, Verbum Caro. Skizzen zur Theologie I. Einsiedeln 1960, 195-225.

⁴⁹Kasper, Aspekte 7ff, Dilschneider, DieGeistvergessenheit 255 ff

⁵⁰Congar, Pneumatologic 41f; Dupuis, Western Christomonism 190 ff; Varghese, Ich glaube 7; H.J. Pottmeyer, der Heilige Geist und die Kirche. Von Einer Christomonistischen zu einer trinitarischen Ekklesiologie, in: Der Lobpreis des Dreieinigen Gottes in Heiligen Geist. 1600 Jahre Bekenntnis von Nicäa – Konstantinopel (Tut St 2/81) 45 ff

⁵¹Berkhof, Theologie 37 f

⁵²Ibid,37

⁵³Varghese, Ich glaube 8; Berkhot, theologie 37