

The Spirit in creation

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Abstract

The result of the Arian controversy was the affirmation of the total equality of the trinitarian persons. This led to the realisation that all three persons of the Trinity are involved in every external action of God. Despite this, the role of the Holy Spirit in creation has not been clear, partly due to few specific references in the creation narratives. However, it may be suggested that the Spirit does not act in the creation of matter, which is the role of the second person, but in the provision of the underlying form and order necessary for very existence, and specifically for the dynamic interaction which is of the essence of life, as in the second account of the creation of the man (Gen 2). This reflects the fact that the action of the Spirit is also essential in salvation to link Christ's work on the cross to the believer. While separation is a feature of the Genesis creation narrative, this is balanced by the interrelating of what had been created.

So, although Christian theology has commonly seen the world as 'spirit'-less, restricting the action of the Holy Spirit to the church, this would be understood as referring to the limitation of his direct action. His immanent presence is nevertheless essential in all for very existence. The Spirit is not in the world, but underlies it.

Creation may be seen as a theistic act, by transcendent intervention to give matter, and giving interaction in immanent presence. The nature of the world therefore reflects the theistic nature of God, involving both distinction and relating. Indeed it then reflects the trinitarian nature of the creator, in which the persons maintain their absolute distinction at the same time as their total equality through the interaction of *perichōrēsis*, specifically enabled by the action of the Spirit as generating and undergirding relationship. The parallel between the created and the creator is seen especially insofar as the discrete elements of matter interrelate to give form and interaction.

It is in their interaction that the elements of creation fulfil their purpose, and so specifically that humanity reflects its nature as created in *imago Dei*.

Keywords: creation, Holy Spirit, immanence, *perichōrēsis*, theism, Trinity.

Introduction

Opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt. A natural reaction to the Arian heresy of the fourth and fifth centuries was to so affirm the equality of the persons of the

Trinity as to see the only distinction between the persons in the relationships between them. The distinctiveness of the Father is then only his Fatherhood, and likewise for the others. Yet it is clear that this is not adequate, as only the second person was incarnate. He is distinct in that only he became human, and only he enacted salvation by dying for us. In keeping with this, it has been common to distinguish between the activities of the persons; commonly the Father has been seen as the creator, the Son as redeemer and the Spirit as sanctifier. Yet the persons are equal, and so it has been realised that just as the persons are rendered totally equal in their distinction by their *perichōrēsis*, or interpenetration, so the three persons are involved in every activity of God. While the Son died, the Father and Spirit were intimately involved in atonement; indeed, the Father also suffered to redeem.

Thus, while it has been common to attribute creation to the Father, this was not in the passivity of the other persons. Indeed, the New Testament clearly portrays the second person as the actual creator, the agent of the Father (1 Cor 8:6). Bulgakov¹ says that the Father only gave the will to create, maintaining his transcendence. This is quite compatible with the Genesis account, where God spoke in the act of creation; John's prologue, reflecting Genesis 1, makes the identification quite explicit.

Elsewhere, there is affirmation that both the Spirit and the Word were involved in creation (e.g. Ps 33:6). Yet, while the role of the Spirit in creation has necessarily been affirmed, what he did has not been clear. While the Spirit brooded over the primeval chaos (Gen 1:2), was his action limited to being passively present? Sproul² quotes the medieval hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*, which implies more than this; incidentally, it gave the title to Moule's work on the Spirit (1889). Surely he is not just associated with salvation in re-creation, or with sanctification?

Spiritus vitae

Although the role of the Spirit in creation is not explicit in Genesis 1, the second account of creation in the next chapter does suggest an action in the creation of humanity. While the clay figure of the first man was inert when formed from the dust of the ground, it was enlivened when God breathes into it. The word ריח is not present in the Genesis 2 story, but it is implied by the breathing of God.

In this case it is the Spirit which gives life, an affirmation certainly repeated later in the Bible. This involves the active interrelating of the substance of the figure. Before the breathing, the matter did interrelate, but in a static sense;

¹ S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 219.

² R. C. Sproul, *The Mystery of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1990), p. 76.

afterwards, there was also a dynamic interaction. Later, in the account of the raising of the slain host (Ezek 37), the רִיחַ breathed into the reassembled corpses to enliven them. So in both Genesis 2 and Ezekiel 37, a clear distinction is drawn between the creation of matter and its enlivening. It is only the second aspect which is specifically related to the Spirit; it was when the 'breath' entered the lifeless bodies that they lived. In Psalm 104:29–30, even if the same word רִיחַ is used, the Psalmist carefully distinguishes the creative Spirit of God from the breath of life; it is likewise in Job 33:4.³ Enlivening is characteristic of the work of the Spirit insofar as he gives the interrelating which is characteristic of life. The life in both accounts is human life, which does imply a particular role of the Spirit in humanity. It is then common to believe that the work of the Spirit is not coupled with the material creation, observing that the Old Testament texts are rather connected to the giving of life.⁴ Indeed, even the early church did not make the connection.⁵

Nevertheless, this does not mean that other forms of life are spirit-less; Ecclesiastes 3:19–20 in fact identifies people with the animals, 'all have the same רִיחַ', which leaves on death. Psalm 104:29 refers to the return to dust of living things when the רִיחַ leaves, a reference which is not restricted to people. This implies a similarity in the creation of all life, a two-stage creation of matter and its enlivening. Genesis 1 makes no distinction between people and other forms of life; it does not mention the Spirit as enlivening. However, it affirms the difference in that people are in the image of God, which implies a reflection of the Spirit.

While seeing the activity of the Spirit in giving the interaction of life may well indicate that it is limited to that, it may well suggest a role in the inanimate as well. The same Augustine who saw the distinction of the trinitarian persons in the distinct relationships of each also saw the role of the Spirit as bonding, as the *vinculum amoris*, or 'bond of love'. His action in the Trinity may then be seen as extended into the creation. This action is essential to salvation, 'spiritual life' which is through the relationship which he gives with God.

Relation and bonding are not just essential for life, but for all things. While a mechanical understanding of existence sees the priority of matter, Moltmann⁶ affirms relationships; material and interrelation complement, as

³ L. Neve, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament* (Tokyo: Seibunsha, 1972), p. 73.

⁴ B. Gaybba, *The Spirit of Love: Theology of the Holy Spirit* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987), p. 10.

⁵ A. I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), p. 11.

⁶ J. Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, the Gifford Lectures 1984–5 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 11.

wave and particle in light. Just as the role of the Spirit in Genesis 2 is the production of the dynamic interrelating of the matter of the clay figure, so giving it life, the Spirit may be understood to give the relationship between the elements of matter, so giving form and therefore existence. Although the Spirit is only referred to once in Genesis 1, this does suggest a role for the Spirit in creation. The Spirit is then present at the very start of creation, as this aspect is essential for the existence of anything at all; the Spirit provides the interaction necessary for existence and the life of plants and animals.

This then demands that the Spirit is indeed God and not a created entity, specifically a wind. Although רוח can mean either 'spirit' or 'wind', a duality paralleled in many other languages, certainly in Genesis 1:2 it was the Spirit and not simply a mighty wind. Neve⁷ points out that all the texts from the same period as the writing of Genesis 1 describe רוח as creative power, not a wind (Is 40:13, Ps 33:6, Job 26:13); he observes that 'wind of God' would be unique in the Old Testament. Blocher⁸ agrees, and adds that the verb is associated with a bird, not a storm. When רוח is wind, it is always destructive, but when beneficent, as in Genesis 1, it is 'spirit'.⁹

Without form and void

In the first reference to the earth, it is described as being 'without form and void'; it is the situation prior to specific creation,¹⁰ 'undifferentiated, unorganised, confused and lifeless agglomeration'.¹¹ This is not just a poetic term, but the two terms reflect the two aspects necessary for existence, the matter itself but also the form without which the matter is simply chaos. In later affirmation, creation was 'out of formless matter' (Wis 11:17), 'out of things that did not exist' (2 Macc 7:28). The 'earth' (Gen 1:2) is not precreated matter, as distinct from the ancient Near East view,¹² or a relic of a disaster, but simply a term for everything under the heavens, including the sea.¹³ Reference to the waters also indicates disorder.¹⁴

⁷ Neve, *Spirit of God*, p. 68.

⁸ H. Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* (Leicester and Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), p. 68.

⁹ V. P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), p. 114.

¹⁰ Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, p. 116.

¹¹ U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), p. 23.

¹² K. A. Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, vol. 1A, *Genesis 1–11:26* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996), p. 142.

¹³ Cassuto, *Genesis*, p. 20.

¹⁴ C. E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 17.

Existence does not just need matter, but also the form which is produced by the way in which the elements of matter relate together; this is then a result of the action of the Spirit which relates, and it is the relating which gives form. Calvin¹⁵ comments that, 'Before God had perfected the world it was an undigested mass . . . the power of the Spirit was necessary to sustain it. This mass was rendered stable for the time, by the secret efficacy of the Spirit.' Likewise, 'the Spirit is present as the Go-Between who confronts each isolated spontaneous particle with the beckoning reality of the larger whole and so compels it to relate to others in a particular way'.¹⁶

The Spirit prepared the earth for the creative Word,¹⁷ such as by giving the laws and systems. For Philo, and much later Christian thought, following Plato, forms preceded the creation of the material.¹⁸ First was the action of the Spirit, then that of the Word.¹⁹ This is totally essential for any existence; 'the cosmos stands permanently in need of this supporting Creator's will';²⁰ the reference to 'will' also suggests the Spirit. The Spirit is creative power, bearing and articulating the Word, while the Word communicates the Spirit, making it specific and concrete. Moltmann²¹ can affirm that creation is by God, through the Son, in the Spirit. Irenaeus is well-known for his view that God acts by his 'two hands', Son and Spirit (*Adv. Haer.* 4.20.1); while the former executed creation, the Spirit nourishes and increases it.²² Pannenberg²³ affirms that the Son acts in the power of the Spirit, while the Spirit mediates the working of the Logos.

Blocher²⁴ feels that Genesis 1 is interested in form not being. Genesis 1 is not so much about nothingness and creation, but chaos into cosmos; its concern is to give prominence, form and order to the creation out of chaos.²⁵ Thus, far from being absent from the creative process, the Spirit is

¹⁵ J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948), pp. 74–5.

¹⁶ J. V. Taylor, *The Go-between God: the Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (London: SCM, 1972), p. 31.

¹⁷ Mathews, *Genesis*, p. 140.

¹⁸ Gunton, *Triune Creator*, p. 46.

¹⁹ Bulgakov, *Comforter*, p. 194.

²⁰ G. von Rad, *Genesis*. 2nd edn (London: SCM, 1963), p. 49.

²¹ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 9 (cf. also Bulgakov, *Comforter*, p. 192).

²² H. P. Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), p. 39.

²³ W. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), p. 110.

²⁴ Blocher, *In the Beginning*, p. 66.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

totally fundamental to it. Gunton²⁶ comments that there is a long Christian tradition of seeing the Spirit giving direction to the created order.

Vinculum amoris

A clear feature of the Genesis 1 passage is the fact that creation proceeds by separation. This is related to the nature of the 'word', as words define entities and actions, and distinguish them from others. But at the same time, simply separating does not create; there needs to be a relationship between what has been separated, or reality will simply disintegrate. The Spirit balances the principle of separation,²⁷ providing the underlying structures in which things relate. Existence, life, warp and weft of interrelationships subsist in the Spirit (Acts 17:28).²⁸ In the case of a living being, especially of a higher order, the various parts or organs are distinct with specialised functions, and the interaction between them is their life. In the case of a human being, this is commonly called a 'soul'. The interaction is not just random, but functions in terms of underlying norms or laws; it is this which can be called the 'spirit'. It is not an accident that the locus of much of this control lies in the brain, which is also the focus of will and motive, which is often seen in terms of the 'spirit' of a person.

God's action was that of filling the created order with a diversity of life;²⁹ this reflects his theistic nature, giving both the diversity reflecting transcendence and order reflecting immanence. Both aspects are essential; creation is through separation, without which nothing can exist,³⁰ but then also relating what is separated. The same is true of all creation, but especially of people in the *imago Dei*; they transcend the material by being alive, they are immanent to it as material, but are also transcendent from other material things as occupying a different space.

It is a commonplace today to observe the interrelationship between the various forms of life. There is deep interaction for mutual benefit. What must be noted here is that the interaction is not just between forms of life but includes the inanimate. It is obvious that biological life can only exist in relating to it; after all, we all depend on somewhere to stand or perhaps float; biological entities are not only made of what is essentially inanimate material, but are dependent for their well-being on the input not only of basic foods but on many other things such as minerals. In particular,

²⁶ Gunton, *Triune Creator*, p. 86.

²⁷ Blocher, *In the Beginning*, p. 77.

²⁸ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 11.

²⁹ Sproul, *Mystery*, p. 86.

³⁰ Taylor, *Go-between*, p. 26.

a feature of every living being is respiration, which is an interaction with inanimate gases. This interaction is aptly pictured by the Spirit; indeed, in many languages the words for 'breath' and 'spirit' are the same. Breathing is the most conspicuous sign of life. In this case, the action of the Spirit in underlying relationships can hardly exclude the inanimate with which the animate interrelates! The current tragedy is the breakdown in harmony at all levels, between God, people, other forms of life and the inanimate environment, to the detriment of all.

Spiritus creator

It is then the Spirit who performs the first creative act. For Bulgakov,³¹ this gives 'proto-reality'. Buber says that in the beginning was relationship.³² The traditional view is that Genesis 1:1 is the first act of creation, the remaining verses describing subsequent actions.³³ However, it is more likely that the majestic introduction to the book of Genesis, the Old Testament, and indeed the Bible, is a word of introduction. Genesis 1:1 is an introductory verse.³⁴ It is likely that the authors of P thought that the first act of creation was light, so read 'in the beginning when . . .'³⁵ Prior to this, however, in Genesis 1:2, the Spirit provided the essential forming for the existence of anything. It is thereafter that creation of material can start.

Before this there was nothing at all. The suggestion is sometimes made that Genesis 1:2 is the start of a re-creation, the first having been destroyed in some catastrophe. This could imply that the action of the Spirit is not totally fundamental, unless, as must be unlikely, very order also collapsed. However, for von Rad,³⁶ the idea of a re-creation is 'quite impossible'.

The action of the Spirit then underlies especially the first three days. He is the one who gives energy, manifested initially as light. Energy is basic to the bonding of material, so its form; *רוח* in the Old Testament always speaks of power.³⁷ Von Rad³⁸ comments that, in darkness, everything loses its appearance of form and shape. The Spirit gives form, seen in the second day in the separation of the waters, which strongly suggest chaos. Then the third day reflects the emergence of life, active interaction.

³¹ Bulgakov, *Comforter*, p. 194.

³² Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 11.

³³ G. J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 1, *Genesis 1–15* (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), p. 11.

³⁴ Cassuto, *Genesis*, p. 19; Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 47.

³⁵ W. S. Towner *Genesis* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), p. 15.

³⁶ Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 48.

³⁷ Blocher, *In the Beginning*, p. 69.

³⁸ Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 51.

Immanent Spirit

The Spirit is then concerned not only with things of God, and with people, but also with other forms of life, and even with other forms of existence. Nevertheless, this action of the Spirit has rarely been acknowledged. Christianity has usually strongly denied the action of the third person in the world as a whole. The Greek worldview, which has been so influential in Western thought and in Christian theology, has made a strong separation between spirit and matter. The world, being material, is seen as 'spirit'-less. In his very influential article, Lynn White³⁹ has accused Christianity of being the most materialistic of religions, so that the world is Godless, a view exacerbated by Christianity's monotheism. Aquinas taught that nature is the world of 'irrational things'.⁴⁰ The earlier Augustine said, in his *Soliloquies*, 'I desire to have knowledge of God and the soul. Of nothing else? No, of nothing else whatsoever.'⁴¹

More than this, it is commonly believed that the action of the Spirit in the Old Testament is intermittent, in contrast to a more constant presence in the New.⁴² Nehemiah 9:20 speaks of God's giving his Spirit in the same terms as that of the manna, a gift specific to Israel, and also of temporary duration.

Then, even though he came in fullness on the church at Pentecost, Jesus affirmed that the world could not receive him (John 14:17). The natural person does not receive the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor 2:14). Indeed, the very point of Pentecost was that the Spirit came only onto the cChurch. Thus he is the agent of new life, of redemption, although it is noteworthy that this is seen in terms of creation (e.g. 2 Cor 5:17). Then, if he was not in non-Christian people, he was surely not in animals, and even more surely not in the non-living. Ferguson says that the New Testament puts the Spirit and the world in antithesis.⁴³ Thomas says that, in contrast to the Old Testament, there is an absence of 'cosmical relations of the Holy Spirit' in the New;⁴⁴ God relates to the world by the second Person.

A medieval affirmation, going back to Augustine, but cited by Leo XIII and Pius XII in particular, is that the Spirit is the 'soul of the Church', and therefore its 'unifying principle'.⁴⁵ Irenaeus had said that 'they have no share in this Spirit who do not join in the activity of the Church . . . where the

³⁹ L. White, Jr., 'The Historic Roots of our Ecologic Crisis', *Science* 155/3767 (1967), pp. 1203–7.

⁴⁰ Santmire, *Travail of Nature*, p. 11.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴² A. W. Wainwright, *The Trinity in the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1962), p. 32.

⁴³ Ferguson, *Holy Spirit*, p. 244.

⁴⁴ W. H. G. Thomas, *The Holy Spirit of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1913), p. 285.

⁴⁵ G. S. Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology*, rev. edn (London: SCM, 1965), p. 55.

church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit is, there is the church and every kind of grace'.⁴⁶ A Reformation perspective is that, because the Spirit is absent from those who are not Christian, they are 'totally depraved', for it is only as obedient to the Spirit that people can please God, so not sin. Heron,⁴⁷ however, alerts us to the danger of seeing the Spirit necessarily present in the organised church, or even identifying the two.

The same emphasis is found in the Lukan writings; the disciples were told to wait for the 'promise of the Father . . . until you are clothed with power from on high' (Luke 24:49, also Acts 1:4). Then the filling of the Spirit at Pentecost was subsequent to the resurrection, so glorification of Christ (cf. John 7:39). Likewise in Paul, the presence of the Spirit is not in all, seeing that he is given as an earnest, or as first-fruits of a fuller reality later (2 Cor 1:22, 5:5, Eph 1:14). He can also appeal to the Galatians on the evidence of the receipt of the Spirit (Gal 3:2). Indeed, the action of the Spirit, as in *glossolalia*, can be such as emphasises the distinction from the world (1 Cor 14:21).⁴⁸

While it may well be valid to see that the Spirit's direct action is limited, especially in the Old Testament situation, this does not preclude activity in other ways. The Nicene creed does confess the Spirit as 'Lord and giver of life', even if this need not necessarily demand universal activity. It is true that 'in him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28), and that the Spirit, as God, is omnipresent (Ps 139:7). Calvin then, although he does see some general action of the Spirit in providence,⁴⁹ distinguishes between the general and special action of the Spirit; it is the latter which is confined to Christians, and includes sanctification.⁵⁰ So while he may rarely act in a transcendent sense, his presence as immanent may be accepted as essential to very existence.

Indeed, although Pinnock⁵¹ asserts that the 'universal divine presence' is not often repeated, he feels that it is a weighty concept in the Bible. For Berkhof,⁵² 'God is always and everywhere actively present in his creation';

⁴⁶ Heron, *Holy Spirit*, p. 95.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁴⁸ J. 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* (London: SCM, 1975), p. 231.

⁴⁹ Gaybba, *Spirit of Love*, p. 101.

⁵⁰ S. B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Leicester: IVP, 1996), pp. 247–8.

⁵¹ C. H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), p. 51.

⁵² H. Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 321.

Moltmann,⁵³ claiming support from Psalm 104:29, asserts that, without his action, things would stop existing. Newton also had this view.⁵⁴ The last two centuries, however, have seen the action of God in more immanentist terms than in direct action.⁵⁵ Not that this is new; in his later life, Augustine spoke of God ever active, immutable yet changing all and close at hand, ‘universally immanent’.⁵⁶ Calvin indeed taught that the Spirit’s being is ‘diffused over all space, sustaining, invigorating and quickening all things, both in heaven and in earth (Inst, 1.13.14). Moltmann⁵⁷ comments that the Greek *πνευμα*, Latin *spiritus* and German *Geist* are always in antithesis to matter and body, but the Hebrew *רוח* is rather integral to matter, ‘a force in body and soul, humanity and nature’. Here the last affirmation is particularly relevant. He also cites Gunkel, who refers to the Spirit as ‘life-giving, formative divine power’.

The Orthodox Fedotov believes that Spirit is active in the dynamism of the universe and in inspiration of all who create beauty;⁵⁸ Taylor⁵⁹ notes that the Revised Version says that the Spirit ‘garnishes’ the heavens (Job 26:13); likewise he empowered Bezalel to adorn the tabernacle (Exod 31:2). The Spirit is linked with wisdom and so with Bezalel.⁶⁰ These are of course through order. As the Spirit is like wisdom, he is at work everywhere.⁶¹ Pinnock⁶² writes that ‘we encounter Spirit in the life of creation itself, in the vitality, the joy, the radiance, the music, the honey, the flowers, the embrace’. Plato understood its manifestation in terms of aspiration, love of the perfect and of beauty.⁶³ Bulgakov⁶⁴ also rejoices in the Spirit’s origination of beauty.

The Holy Spirit fills the universe and holds all in unity;⁶⁵ he is the immanent and anonymous presence of God.⁶⁶ In the universe, he is its

⁵³ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 102.

⁵⁴ Gunton, *Triune Creator*, p. 127.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁵⁶ Santmire, *Travail of Nature*, p. 62.

⁵⁷ J. Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 40.

⁵⁸ Y. M. J. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 2, ‘He is Lord and Giver of Life’ (New York: Seabury and London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983), p. 219.

⁵⁹ Taylor, *Go-between*, p. 25.

⁶⁰ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, p. 53.

⁶¹ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, p. 218.

⁶² Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, p. 50.

⁶³ Hendry, *Holy Spirit*, p. 97.

⁶⁴ Bulgakov, *Comforter*, p. 203.

⁶⁵ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, p. 224.

⁶⁶ Taylor, *Go-between*, p. 64.

'total cohesion, its structure, its information, its energy',⁶⁷ essentially a 'panentheism'.⁶⁸ On the other hand, the affirmation of distinction avoids pantheism.⁶⁹ In no way does the Spirit eliminate the distinction from God.⁷⁰ It must be remarked here that, if the complete transcendence of the world from God is not right, neither is total identity: Thomas⁷¹ says that the doctrine of the Spirit is a protest against any tendency to identify God with the world.

The Spirit is then immanent in all creation, upholding it 'by his word of power' (Heb 1:3). This of course complements the transcendence of God; difference and dominance then reinforce each other.⁷² These two emphases reflect theism; 'the Trinitarian concept of creation binds together God's transcendence and his immanence'.⁷³ Thus, in contrast to the near deism which has characterised Western thought, Moltmann and such as McFague affirm also God's immanence. The idea of the filling with the Spirit which flows from this then counteracts an idea of domination implied in transcendence.

Thus the Spirit need not be seen as only connected to life, but as giving the orderliness in things.⁷⁴ For Polkinghorne,⁷⁵ following Montefiore, God's preservation of regular order is an important part of his action on it; his purposive activity is hidden in the structure of scientific law. God's immanence is not simply omnipresence,⁷⁶ but is in the underlying laws and order. For Augustine, 'he governs all the things in such a way that he allows them to function and behave in ways proper to them'; God's creative providence is present everywhere by the brooding of the Spirit.⁷⁷ Relation, caused by the Spirit, is absolutely essential for existence to occur at all; without a stable order, there is simply chaos; the current state of the world therefore reflects the self-limitation, or *kenōsis* of the Spirit.⁷⁸ For Basil of

⁶⁷ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 14.

⁶⁸ Bulgakov, *Comforter*, p. 200.

⁶⁹ S. McFague, 'Imaging a Theology of Nature: The World as God's Body', in C. Birch, W. Eakin and J. B. McDaniel (eds), *Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), p. 213.

⁷⁰ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, p. 34.

⁷¹ Thomas, *Holy Spirit of God*, p. 201.

⁷² McFague, 'Imaging', p. 209.

⁷³ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 98.

⁷⁴ Sproul, *Mystery*, pp. 78, 83.

⁷⁵ J. Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence: God's Interaction with the World* (London: SPCK, 1989), p. 38.

⁷⁶ Thomas, *Holy Spirit of God*, p. 195.

⁷⁷ Santmire, *Travail of Nature*, pp. 62, 63.

⁷⁸ Bulgakov, *Comforter*, p. 206.

Caesarea, the Spirit is the ‘perfecting cause’, enabling the created order to be truly itself.⁷⁹ Moltmann⁸⁰ notes, citing von Rad, that in the Wisdom literature, the three poems of Proverbs 8, Job 28 and Ecclesiasticus 24, ‘the Wisdom of God is presented as an ordering power immanent in the world’. Wisdom 8:1 presents wisdom as ‘ordering all things’. Order is significant in the wisdom literature; it is the fundamental aspect, giving unity to the creation. The picture of the world as ‘God’s body’⁸¹ is of the world as God’s self-expression, which naturally implies order. For Pannenberg, ‘the divine Spirit is the field of force through which the world becomes and is upheld as what it essentially is’.⁸² For Hauerwas, the Spirit upholds the routine.⁸³ Moltmann feels that Wisdom is virtually interchangeable with the Spirit; likewise Pinnock⁸⁴ says that wisdom is described like the Spirit. ‘It is the spirit (רוח) in a man, the breath (נְשָׁמָה) of the Almighty, that makes him understand’ (Job 32:8). When Ezekiel prophesied to the dry bones, the sending of the רוח on them resulted first in their return to orderliness, and then a return to life. Here the original form is an aspect of the creation by the Logos, who is then immanent in creation; Irenaeus uses the word ‘inherent’.⁸⁵ Then the Spirit enhances the relation to the Logos, so increasing that order; the parallel is the relation to the cross by the Spirit, so applying salvation.

In fact, some modern Christian understandings of evolution see it proceeding in terms of the order that God laid down in the creation.⁸⁶ In this case, God’s ongoing action in providence or continuing creation is that of increasing order. The Spirit gives the specific form of order.⁸⁷ Salvation parallels this, indeed described as a ‘new creation’ (2 Cor 5:17); justification is giving order, in the relation to God, sanctification is increasing orderly interaction. All of these demand the action of God, for as Charles Hartshorne pointed out,⁸⁸ the only explanation of order is an orderer. Without this, the

⁷⁹ Gunton, *Triune Creator*, p. 10.

⁸⁰ Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, p. 46.

⁸¹ McFague, ‘Imaging’, p. 213.

⁸² Gunton, *Triune Creator*, p. 160.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁸⁴ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, p. 53.

⁸⁵ Santmire, *Travail of Nature*, p. 40.

⁸⁶ D. T. Williams, ‘Evolution through kenōsis’, *Expository Times* 121/8 (2010), pp. 390–4.

⁸⁷ Gunton, *Triune Creator*, p. 192.

⁸⁸ In C. Birch, ‘Chance, Purpose, and the Order of Nature’, in C. Birch, W. Eakin and J. B. McDaniel (eds), *Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), p. 190.

natural progression of things is the slide to chaos in the increase of entropy, and in human life, ethical decline.

Vestigia Trinitatis

The presence of the Spirit in the creation may also be seen in the idea that the creation is *vestigia Trinitatis*. In this case the role of the Spirit in the Trinity is paralleled in the world. In the former, he acts in *perichōrēsis*, which by the full interaction of the persons enables their full equality without compromising distinction. Effectively the persons are fully transcendent and immanent to each other, expressing the nature of theism. God's relationship to the world is similarly theistic, and as reflecting the Trinity, the nature of the creation is both separation, but also interrelation. Things are distinct but not exclusively so; they interact in a perichoretic way. In particular, people transcend the material by being alive; they are immanent to it as material, but also transcendent from other material things occupying a different space. Pinnock⁸⁹ writes that the self-differentiation of the Son from the Father is the basis of creation; it may well be added that the action of the Spirit in the Trinity giving differentiated fullness in *perichōrēsis* is the basis of re-creation.

It is not an accident that the creation is a reflection of the nature of God as Trinity. Its very fecundity is a reflection of God's creativity, but more specifically, the separation reflects the distinction between the persons, a separation which nevertheless is one in which there is interrelating. The underlying bonding on which this interrelating rests is a function of the third person.

The characteristics of the Spirit are then reflected both in the creation as a whole and specifically in humanity. Indeed, it is the action of the Spirit to repeat her nature in what is made. In the creation, the Spirit produces light, the ordering of what has been differentiated, and life. It is the same things which are produced specifically in humanity, when she fills. Incidentally these are the features which underlie the development of science and technology.

Like an eagle

One of the reasons for identifying ריח in Genesis 1 with the Spirit rather than a wind is that the verb, מְרַחֵף, is not really appropriate to the latter. Cassuto⁹⁰ says that it bears exactly the same sense as in Deuteronomy 32:11, of an eagle fluttering over her young. Here the picture is indeed significant for the understanding of creation. If the picture is of the female bird, it interestingly relates to the gender of ריח. This does balance off the masculine grammar of

⁸⁹ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 59.

⁹⁰ Cassuto, *Genesis*, p. 25.

the other persons, and is in keeping with other pictures attributing feminine characteristics to God, which all have the idea of maternal care, so appropriate for God's concern for both the creation as a whole and humanity in particular. Notably, what a mother does is to give form to matter.

But the job of the eagle does not stop with the laying of the egg, or even its hatching. It provides the environment for growth; only with the care of the adults can the young reach maturity.⁹¹ This is the purpose of the eagle, indeed its 'spirit'. Indeed, 'spirit' may be understood in terms of purpose; Moltmann⁹² refers to the "drive" and "instinct" awakened by God'. Surely God did not create just on a whim, but with a purpose. Indeed, when the result of his creation is repeatedly described as good, it would indicate just that. It embodied its spirit; it was right for its purpose. And what was that? Most significantly, the purpose of the eagle is to bring up its children as eagles; in effect, in its image (Gen 1:27).

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, p. 42.