What is the spirit saying?
Trends in pneumatology

by Duncan Reid

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Introduction

In 1968, shortly before his death, Karl Barth wrote this:

Everything that we are to believe, consider and say about God the Father and God the Son in the light of the first and second articles of the creed could be outlined and illuminated with regard to its fundamentals in the light of God the Holy Spirit. ... In the CD IV/1-3, I had the good sense to place at least the doctrine of the church and the discussion of faith, hope and love expressly under the heading of the Holy Spirit. But can we, indeed must we not also place the themes of justification, sanctification and calling also under this heading? To say nothing of the doctrines of creation and eschatology. Could we not in this way also throw light on the hitherto dominant doctrine of Christ ('conceived of the Holy Spirit')? Is not the God who is known and proclaimed throughout the world in his covenantal self-revelation, is this God not also Spirit—i.e. the God who makes himself present and available now in his own freedom, power, wisdom and love?!

It is well known that Barth's theology works from particular loci or starting points, and considers the whole gamut of Christian doctrine from these perspectives. Barth's theology is also notoriously christocentric. Largely as a result of his immense influence, Protestant theology in the middle decades of the century was also highly christocentric. But here we find Karl Barth, at the end of his life, entertaining the thought of a whole new starting point for dogmatics, a non-christocentric, pneumatological starting point. This project that Barth foresawed but did not live to inaugurate has subsequently been carried out by others. It is this rediscovered theology of the Spirit that I want to survey in this paper, trying in particular to bring together some of the common themes that run through much of the new discussion of pneumatology.

A renewed discussion of the Holy Spirit

Walter Kasper has argued that 'throughout the history of the Church, and especially now, a theology of the Holy Spirit has been an urgent need'. Pneumatology has been the subject of far less theological discussion than christology, and in popular piety the Spirit has suffered long periods of general neglect, interspersed with temporary upsurges of charismatic enthusiasm. These bouts of spirit-filled enthusiasm at various times in (especially western) church history have served as reminders of a third person in the Trinity, and as necessary correctives to an institutionalism that has often been all too ready, both literally and metaphorically, to set things in concrete. They draw urgent attention to the unbalanced nature of much of mainstream trinitarian thinking.

Kasper argues that the need for reflection on the Spirit has always been there, but it is now more urgent than ever. The term 'spirit' has a history in western thought of being used to designate not just one reality among others, but 'the truest of all realities'. During the course of the 19th century this tradition was replaced by a materialist philosophy in which 'spirit is understood as an epiphenomenon of reality'. Positivism took this further by demanding exact definitions, and spirit by its very nature, does not lend itself to definition, let alone exact definition ('Spirit blows where it will'). The effect of this for Kasper is, as he rather paradoxically puts it—'spirit is present anew today in the mode of absence'. There is, in other words, a gap in our consciousness, a sense of absence that cannot be quite pinpointed, because it is identical with that presence formerly designated by 'spirit'. The sense of absence leads to the quest for a realm of spirit in a variety of utopianisms. The yearning at the heart of this quest is for a transfiguration of our reality, a transformation that neither trivialises nor abandons our experienced reality, but rather dignifies it and redeems it.
The question of the filioque clause

If there is an urgency about the need to recover a notion of Spirit, it is equally important that we get it right. In particular, there seem to be very few serious theologians of any confession today still prepared to defend the late addition of the words ‘and the Son’ (the so-called filioque clause) in the western version of the Nicene creed. Herwig Aldenhoven, one of the contributors to the Lukas Vischer book *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ*, brings a particularly forceful critique, pointing to some practical consequences of the flawed pneumatology he associates with the filioque clause. First, there can be a tendency to reduce the Spirit to being a mere instrument or agent of God. The Holy Spirit is treated in effect, if not in official doctrinal formulations, as less divine than the first and second persons of the Trinity. There is a corresponding tendency to speak of the Spirit as a thing, for example a ‘bond of love’ within the Godhead, and to represent the Spirit in religious art as less than human, as a dove, for example.

Secondly, the filioque clause gives the operation of the logos an ontological priority over the operation of Spirit in the process of knowing. Knowledge is understood primarily in a cognitive way, with little or no room for intuitive or affective forms of knowing. Where logos is ascendant over pneuma, the world comes to be seen as an object over against the thinking subject, and the Word of God addressed to us gains an ontological priority over Spirit’s response in us. The consequence, according to Aldenhoven, is an authoritarian understanding of church and ministry. This authoritarianism can be either clerical and institutional in flavour (the traditional Catholic version of this pathology) or sectarian and individualistic (the traditional Protestant version). Aldenhoven, who lists these problems in relation to the filioque clause, is not so crude as to blame the filioque directly for them, but argues that the theology of the filioque clause makes it impossible to resist these tendencies. The Word and the Spirit must be seen in a mutual relationship if these tendencies are effectively to be called in question and a more properly biblical understanding of God’s Spirit regained.

The Spirit of God and the ‘western spirit’

This need to get our pneumatology right is taken further by Michael Welker, who argues that the western world (and today that in effect means the whole world) is governed by a ‘spirit’ quite other than the Spirit of God.

The Western world has been shaped and defined by a spirit that exhibits another constitution, other interests, other goals, and other power structures than the Spirit of God. This spirit has also spread over the rest of the world . . . . In a manner that seems highly self-evident, this spirit acquires plausibility and trust and possesses an almost boundless power of expansion. Because this is the case, this spirit—whether it became explicitly recognisable or remained as an all-infusing medium underneath the threshold of consciousness—has been frequently confused with the Spirit of God.

This means a practical discernment of spirits becomes essential. The ‘western spirit’, as Welker calls it, directs itself to the cult of the private individual, stratified institutions, and a cognitive hegemony over the world. This spirit can come only to itself and through itself; it cannot come to or for the other. It is quite different from the Spirit of God as described in the Bible, and summarised in the Apostle’s Creed in terms of a community of saints, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body, and eternal liveliness.

Where logos is ascendant over pneuma, the world comes to be seen as an object over against the thinking subject.

Welker traces the origin and pedigree of this understanding of ‘spirit’ back to Aristotle, for whom the identity of thinking subject and thought object is spirit, and this is further identified as ‘the god’, or the divine. There are several obvious but deceptive link-words with the biblical tradition, notably spirit, god or godhead and life. But these realities, which the biblical tradition approaches existentially and equates with God’s Spirit, are here approached cognitively and equated with thought, and not just thought, but self-related thought, i.e. thought directed to self-consciousness and self-actualisation. And all this is attained through cogitation. The divine is completed or actualised in self-contemplation, and this actualisation is specifically placed on a higher plane than potentiality, which of course involves the possibility of change, growth, development, response, and mutuality in relation to others. All these are excluded in Aristotle’s schema. Thus Aristotle offers us a highly reductionist understanding of reality, viz. reality as thought, and controlling thought at that. The biblical notion of God comes little by little to be interpreted by way of this metaphysical framework.

It was one of the great theoretical decisions in the history of western culture, according to Welker, and therefore with implications for all the life-forms of the planet, when the Spirit of God came to be interpreted by way of the metaphysics of Aristotle. It was not a single decision, but rather a slide or shift into a way of seeing. If we take seriously the Johannine affirmation that ‘God is spirit’ (Jn 4:24), and interpret this ‘spirit’ in an Aristotelian way, then not only ‘spirit’ but also God comes to be thought of as self-identified, beyond the world, and all-controlling.

Any adequate theology of Holy Spirit must come to grips with this notion ‘spirit’ that comes to the surface of western thinking from Aristotle to Hegel and beyond. We must clearly distinguish the biblical spirit from this ‘western’ spirit.
that spirit emphasises self-actualisation (coming to self-consciousness) and self-appropriation (coming to self-possession), the biblical Spirit of God, by contrast, has the tendency to lose itself in the movements of human beings, so that there is a kenosis of the Spirit. This biblical Spirit can appear unclear and numinous, but despite this it builds a ‘domain of resonance’ or a ‘field of energy’ oriented to the needs of others. This spirit, I would want to add, is not equivalent to this field of energy, but builds it. It builds not self-identification and control, but the very opposites—liberating self-openness to new possibilities of living for others. Thus it comes in conflict with forces that seek to control.

Spirit and freedom

Jürgen Moltmann points out that ruach—spirit—is related etymologically in Hebrew to the word for room, space, interval, and carrying the more metaphorical significance of relief and liberty. Thus to experience ruach is not only to experience confrontation but also to be lead out into a space in which life can freely unfold. So, Spirit is experienced spatially as breadth in which we can ‘live and move and have our being’. Michael Welker explores the theme of liberation in various Old Testament stories in which the Spirit never appears as a miracle-worker nor as a war-spirit, but as a spirit of justice and mercy who rescues from situations of trouble, danger and hopelessness. This Spirit brings forth unexpected powers and unlikely effects, by means of finite, mortal and often not even particularly likeable human beings, with the result that people are delivered from uncertainty, fear and helplessness. The early experiences of the Spirit in Israel are experiences of a new beginning for the community of God’s people, based on forgiveness of sin and a renewal of life for those who had been downtrodden. This is very similar to way the third article of the creed speaks of the Holy Spirit, viz. in terms of the communion of saints (even fairly unlikely saints), forgiveness of sins, and resurrection to renewed life with God. This is, Welker points out, far closer to the Old Testament experience of the Spirit than are the countless metaphysical, speculative and individualistic notions of spirit that have appeared in Christian theology through the centuries.

It is impossible that someone should receive the Spirit and no-one notice.

The consequent transformation of power structures is another sub-theme in Welker’s book. It is a public thing, this nexus between powerlessness and empowerment through the Spirit. Just as it is impossible that one should decide to ‘become inspired’—it is God’s decision alone, and has nothing to do with human decision or will—it is also impossible that someone should receive the Spirit and no-one notice. It is always a public matter. There is always a real, concrete alteration in the recipient of the Spirit, and there is always a public reaction.

The experience of the Spirit is the experience of an ‘emergent process’ that breaks the accepted routine, the accepted pattern as to what is considered ‘normal’. It is not a cult of the numinous in some undefined, disembodied sense, nor is it freedom from concreteness or from external points of reference. Rather, it is an experience of the freeing presence of God within particular concrete events. The experience of the Spirit is often equated with wisdom, but again, not in some disembodied or eternal sense, but wisdom understood as technical or artistic skill or political skill. Finally, surprisingly, this spirit of wisdom from God is often recognised by foreigners, by outsiders. It is an emergent process that brings life.

Spirit and vitality

It is significant, according to Moltmann, that the Nicene Creed resorts to a feminine picture of the Spirit as the life-bearer, the giver of life. The Spirit is the one from whom we receive both natural life and new life in baptism. This early picture of Spirit as mother in Aramaic-Syrian Christianity (and still preserved in Oriental Orthodox Churches) has been lost to more Western Churches—largely because of linguistic usage. In the model of the Trinity as Father/Mother/Son, in which Moltmann sees an expression of the more social Trinity of the Eastern Church, the Spirit is placed before Christ, and pneumatology before christology.

The theme of the vitality of the Spirit is taken up and explored in differing ways by Jean-Jacques Saurmond and Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz. This vitality of the Spirit is a vitality that seeks justice and freedom. Saurmond explores the vitality of the Spirit in the charismatic movement, and seeks to develop a charismatic theology. The focus of Müller-Fahrenholz is more with justice and ecology. Several factors that endanger the world are named: cynicism, the result of the ‘psychic numbing’ leads to a paralysis whereby those who actually hold power become insensitive to evil through too much information, and fundamentalism, not just religious fundamentalism, but any ‘single issue’ perspective that evades the complexity of issues. Müller-Fahrenholz then seeks a spiritual paradigm that will address these factors.

What follows is a reinterpretation of the phenomena or ‘gifts’ traditionally associated with the Holy Spirit. First, the power of truth enables us to see clearly. In the current situation, the Renaissance ideal of individual encyclopaedic knowledge is no longer realisable. Rather, Müller-Fahrenholz advocates a communal quest for an integrated picture of reality, against specialisation, and for accessibility of information and opinion to as wide a net-work of people as possible. Only in this way will the corresponding ‘net-work of lies’ be exposed and contradicted. Confession of guilt and forgiveness are parts of this process, not somehow to make good the past, but to estab-
lish and enable, in the Spirit, a new beginning. Secondly, the Spirit gives the power of solidarity. The term *consolatio* has traditionally been associated with Spirit as comforter, but this has been sentimentalised. Müller-Fahrenholz critiques three ways of devaluing of *consolatio*, as privatisation, as therapy, and as the easy, hypocritical optimism, often expected of the church and its representatives. All of these stand in contrast to the New Testament picture of *consolatio* as solidarity, with its associations of genuineness, authenticity, trustworthiness and, simply, solidity.

**Spirit and beauty**

After citing Augustine on disembodied, ‘spiritual’ beauty, Jürgen Moltmann offers his own response both to Augustine and to the beauty of God:

> When I love God I love the beauty of bodies, the rhythm of movements, the shining of eyes, the embraces, the feelings, the scents, the sounds of all this protein creation. When I love you, my God, I want to embrace it all, for I love you with all my senses in the creations of your love. In all the things that encounter me, you are waiting for me.

Theologians as diverse as Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin have understood the Holy Spirit, by virtue of being the fountain of truth, as also the inspiration of writers and artists. Barth’s famous appreciation of Mozart is a 20th century example. As a consequence, Patrick Sherry, who has written extensively on this, argues that

> those who destroy the beauty of God’s creation or who create ugliness may be sinning against the Holy Spirit. Such a conclusion is likely to seem unwelcome and strange to most people, because we have got used to the idea that beauty is a luxury, that a concern with natural beauty or with art is only one among many things which may occupy people’s leisure hours, and that such a concern has little to do with religion.

This role of the Spirit in creation ‘at large’ has priority over the role of the Spirit in the specific creation of Church.

Why single out beauty for a special connection with Holy Spirit? Because the creation, which God saw and pronounced to be good, is attributed to the brooding of the life-giving Spirit, and also because the Old Testament attributes human artistic talents to the work of the Spirit. The Spirit’s role in creation is as the one who indwells and quickens to life. The Spirit of life, the life-giver, is not present as an external thing, but as something or rather someone at work within the forms of all created beings. God’s wisdom, which can also be a personification of Spirit, is at the creation as God’s companion and delight. Wisdom ‘plays’ before God (Proverbs 8), and this notion of play, which is aesthetic and sensuous, is associated especially with the festivals of creation on the Sabbath and in the Jubilee year. This role of the Spirit in creation ‘at large’ has priority over the role of the Spirit in the specific creation of Church. Thus we may not narrow the scope of the Spirit to the traditional confines of ecclesiology, ‘spirituality’ and numinous experience. Any reference to the Spirit in the church comes only after this recognition of Spirit in the creation as a whole.

It is important that we distinguish this nexus between Spirit and beauty both from the ‘beauty industry’ and from understandings of art that are merely conventional or sentimental. Both these phenomena are driven by the ‘western spirit’ identified by Michael Welker, which our civilization has habitually confused with the Spirit of God. The corrective is to remember that God the Spirit ‘spoke through the prophets’, and to discern where artists are functioning as prophetic voices for our own times.

**Spirit and the eschatological community.**

The Spirit is also the perfecter of creation. At Pentecost, the Spirit not only descends upon the disciples, but also emerges from these same disciples as life-giving words, and forms them as a nucleus of the Spirit-filled community. In the emerging Christian trinitarian tradition, the Spirit is the one whose work is to manifest the glory of the Christ (the appearance of the Spirit at the baptism and at the transfiguration of Jesus), who in turn shows forth the true image of the Father as the source of glory. Patrick Sherry goes on to explore the eschatological significance of this theme. If there is to be a final transfiguration and glorification of all things through the power of God, then the Holy Spirit will participate in this work, as a work of the Trinity. Moreover, the Spirit will have a special affinity with this work, because of the Spirit’s particular connection with beauty. Hence we can argue, according to Sherry, that the Spirit’s work in creating and inspiring earthly beauty is an anticipation of what is to come.

The credal formula ‘resurrection of the dead’ speaks of this continuity of livingness, but speaks also of the experience of the real discontinuity of death. Because our embodiment is in and of the Spirit, and our real fleshly life is made capable of being the locus in which God’s glory can be made present, death—the death of the physical body—is taken with deadly seriousness in this schema. This is the opposite of invoking a fantasy world of the beyond. Rather, it points to the reality of a communion that enfolds the living and the dead. The Spirit who brings this about stands in sharp contrast to the spirit of the times or Welker’s western spirit, because those spirits destroy the community of the living and the dead, the community that transcends time.
The gifts of the Spirit

The question of the practical equipping of the community of God’s people for their work in the world brings us again to the doctrine of the gifts or charismata of the Holy Spirit. This is a theme to be found in all the treatments of pneumatology mentioned so far. The church as the worshipping community is constituted by the Spirit. Worship, and therefore church, are what happens when people recognize and respond to the creative love of God in the Spirit, where Spirit is not so much the object of worship as the focus or the location of worship. One of the issues identified by Michael Welker for the Spirit-filled community is that of glossolalia: are we dealing with clear, comprehensible speech, or with speech that needs interpretation? Sometimes in the New Testament the Spirit is given with gift of tongues, and sometimes without. This at least indicates that the gift of tongues is not a necessary accompaniment of the Holy Spirit, and this conclusion seems confirmed by 1 Cor 12: 8–10, where this gift is mentioned after the others, especially after that of prophetic speech, i.e., comprehensible speech that builds up the congregation within their social context. But there may be a prophetic element in contemporary charismatic and pentecostal emphasis on glossolalia, according to Welker, in that this has been taken polemically against what is seen as liturgical stagnation, ‘abstract’ theology, and a secular morality and lifestyle in the mainstream churches. We have to note that to relativise the value of something, as the New Testament does in relation to glossolalia, is not to deny its value as such, in this case as a sign of the presence of the Spirit and of the importance of baptism in the Spirit.

It is important that it be the Spirit of God, the Spirit encountered in and by the community of biblical faith, that we rediscover.

One feature of this new discussion of gifts or charisms is to take it out of its traditional place as a sub-category of ecclesiology, that is as a description of the equipping of specific ministries within the church. It is this emphasis that in the past has tended to reduce pneumatology as such to being little more than a sub-heading of the doctrine of the church. Ecumenical discussions and a renewed theology of creation have broadened the scope of this doctrine to the attempt to discern the workings of God’s gifts in the world at large. The doctrine of the gifts of the Spirit takes us into the discussion of God’s grace, a discussion that has traditionally confined itself to christology, and more specifically to the question of human sin and of how God chooses to address this human predicament through Christ. The doctrine of God’s grace is now raised, however, in relation to the third person of the Trinity. Joseph Sittler was a pioneer of this exploration of the doctrine of grace in a trinitarian and pneumatological rather than an exclusively christological context. A particularly useful concept here, borrowed from Eastern Orthodox thought and making an appearance in much of the recent writing, is that of God’s energy. Krister Stendahl puts it this way:

When I try to answer the question how I personally experience the Holy Spirit, then the first and clearest answer has to be: as energy. I think it is a good word. I think it is a better word than power. Power is for ruling. Energy is for living.

God’s presence in the worshipping community and prior to that more diffusely through the whole of creation is yet to be fully explored in terms of God’s energy or, as Welker puts it, the ‘field of resonance’ of God’s Spirit.

To sum up. There has been an enormous increase over the past thirty years in discussion about pneumatology. This much can be demonstrated by referring to the publications in the area, and the increasing prominence of the discussion for other areas of theology. Further, certain themes can be seen to run through this renewed discussion, themes that have their own internal links one with another. But the important emphasis of all the contributors to this discussion is not just the renewed discussion in itself of pneumatology, but the insistence on getting it right. It is important that it be the Spirit of God, the Spirit encountered in and by the community of biblical faith, that we reconsider.

References
3. Ibid., p. 199.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
12. J. Moltmann, Spirit of Life, pp. 94-8. This ‘mother role’ of the Spirit is problematic from the viewpoint of feminist theology.

13. See J. Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, pp. 157-158. Though this theme was not lost entirely: Julian of Norwich is a notable western medieval example of a theologian who attributes to the Spirit this mother-role, and it re-emerges in 18th century Pietism.


18. This tends to be true of the artistic avant garde of any particular age, those visionaries who see more clearly than their contemporaries the specific predicament of their age and are able to draw attention to its particular pathologies. But, from a theological perspective, this is never without the inherent ambiguity of all created things (see W. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, p. 200). The corrective to this, of course, is to acknowledge that the Spirit is not everywhere equally at work, and the Spirit-filled community offers a means of testing or discerning the presence of God's Spirit—though this exercise of discernment by the church can at times be a notoriously slow process.


The Holy Spirit: an annotated reading list

The past ten years has seen what amounts to a spring-time of scholarly treatments of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. There were some early signs of this flowering. As early as 1946 Regin Prenter published his pneumatological interpretation of Luther's and C. K. Barrett his study of New Testament pneumatology. George Hendry produced his more general survey in 1956, and Hendrikus Berkhof's 1964 lecture series at Princeton was published in 1976. In addition to these occasional forays by leading scholars into the realm of pneumatology, there were also treatments of the Spirit within other works not exclusively devoted to this theme. Paul Tillich's Systematic Theology has a trinitarian structure, so it is hardly surprising to find the Spirit as the major focus of volume three. Some attempts to develop a doctrine of the Holy Spirit strike the contemporary reader, familiar with the recent resurgence of interest in the Trinity, as highly inadequate. In this category I would place Geoffrey Lampe's 1976 Bampton Lectures, in which 'Spirit' is reduced to being little more than a general term for 'God'.

These earlier excursions into pneumatology are few and far between. As in other aspects of European political and cultural life, the year 1968 seems to form a watershed. An early indicator of things to come is Anna Marie Aagaard's 1967 dissertation (in Danish, but fortunately including an abstract in English) highlighting what she sees as an inadequate doctrine of the Spirit underlying both Protestant and Roman Catholic missiology, stemming from the immense influence of Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics and the Vatican II document Gaudium et Spes, both highly influential within their own spheres of theological influence in the mid-1960s.

By the late 1960s, the number of books on pneumatological themes started to increase. Some of these cannot be separated from the growing interest in trinitarian themes at this time. In 1970, Frederick D. Bruner published an early attempt to address theologically the emerging phenomenon of the pentecostal movement. John V. Taylor in 1973 won the Collins Religious Book Award with his book The Go-Between God,

By contrast, the books on pneumatology that have appeared during the 1980s and into the 90s would make a considerable list. Another feature of the past fifteen or so years is that books about the Trinity and other theological themes have increasingly tended to make reference to the Spirit as a major theme. Feminist authors have been prominent in drawing attention to pneumatology, though it is also fair to say that, as with other issues, there is no single feminist position on the doctrine of the Spirit. The Spirit has also come to be named specifically, especially in recent years, in the titles of books about more general theological issues.

There have also been several significant collections of essays. An early collection in German, edited by H. Meyer and others, appeared in 1974 under the title *The Rediscovery of the Holy Spirit*. In 1979 Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann edited an issue of *Concilium* on conflicts about the Holy Spirit. This was the first issue of the journal to be devoted exclusively to pneumatology. Ecumenical consultations were held on the question of the *filioque* clause, reopening an older ecumenical discussion pursued last century by H. B. Swete in England, Josef Langen in Germany and V. V. Bolotov in Russia. A collection of patristic writings on the Spirit was published in 1984 in the Michael Glazier patristics series, and 1986 saw the publication of the papal encyclical *The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church & the World*. The 1991 WCC Assembly in Canberra took as its theme 'Come Holy Spirit—Renew the Whole Creation'. This was the first time in its more than 40-year history that the WCC had focussed an Assembly theme on pneumatology. Prior to the Canberra Assembly, the *Ecumenical Review* devoted several issues to the doctrine of the Spirit. In the following year, in a public lecture delivered in Adelaide, Veronica Brady suggested that what is positive in the Australian experience of God might be more meaningfully encapsulated in the word 'spirit' than in the more dominant traditional references to the first and second persons of the Trinity.

Significant more recent works on pneumatology include books by Jürgen Moltmann, Michael Welker, Jean-Jacques Suurmond, Gordon Fee, Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz and Mark Wallace. Moltmann's book follows and is informed by his work on the doctrines of God and creation. The meaning of the Spirit as 'giver of life' in the fullest and most generous sense of the word is explored here. Welker, a close associate and colleague of Moltmann's, offers us a detailed exegesis of the many biblical references to God as Spirit, and a forceful critique of metaphysical misunderstandings of 'spirit' within the theological tradition. In Suurmond's treatment of pneumatology the charismatic and pentecostalist movements, to which reference is made in the other works, move onto centre stage. Suurmond is an insider to these movements. In developing some pointers to a fully charismatic theology, he treats these movements with sympathy, but without falling into the uncritical fundamentalism of some of their representatives. As its title suggests, Fee's book is a detailed study of the pneumatological references in the Pauline writings. In its last hundred odd pages (pages 799-915) it sets out to develop a concluding theological synthesis. Müller-Fahrenholz explores the vitality of the Spirit in relation to the 1991 World Council of Churches Canberra Assembly theme of the renewing of the face of the earth.

In 1996 both the Catholic Theological Society of America and the study group on systematic theology at the American Academy of Religion devoted their annual conference time to the question of pneumatology. A further international symposium on pneumatology in North America is planned for 1998. If there is one thing we can be sure of, it is that we will be hearing more theological reflection about the Holy Spirit in the coming years.

References


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