

The Holy Spirit

Setting the World on Fire

Edited by

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The Spirit and the Nearness of God

Colleen M. Griffith

Theologians who seek to capture the immanent-transcendent Spirit in words are like children at play, blowing beautiful bubbles into the air and then chasing after them to hold on to them. The bubbles never yield to the children's attempts to grasp and possess them. In the theological rendition of the game, the Spirit doesn't either. Likened in Scripture to both "wind" and "breath," the Spirit of God necessarily resists human attempts to exhaust its multifaceted contours or control its movements.

The Apostle Paul sensed all of this. For him, the Spirit was something to be lived in and not manipulated. It was an experiential reality, an effective gift, whose reception was demonstrable. The Spirit was the self-communication of God, and as such, it was neither capturable, nor something that could be pinned down in human language. Paul describes the Spirit wisely, using multiple referents that reflect different points of emphasis. Thus, he speaks of the Spirit as one who leads (Rom 8:14), quickens (Rom 8:11), and reveals even the depths of God (1 Cor 2:10). He writes about the Spirit as the activator of gifts (1 Cor 12:4–11), the one who "bear[s] witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8:16), and the one through whom "God's love has been poured into our hearts" (Rom 5:5). For Paul, it is the Spirit that "helps us in our weakness" and "intercedes with sighs too deep for words" (Rom 8:26). And the fruit of this Spirit is concrete and palpable: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal 5:22–23).

The Holy Spirit Makes Us Divine

Brian Dunkle, SJ

Although the authors of this volume hope to speak to a contemporary audience, our reflection on the identity of the Holy Spirit has an ancient pedigree. Since the time of Jesus, Christians have contemplated the specific place of the Holy Spirit in the blessed Trinity and in the life of the church. Today, however, describing the role of the Spirit seems more elusive than other types of theological speculation. In part, the difficulty stems from the Spirit's very title. Unlike the terms *Father* and *Son*, which are familiar to us from daily use, the word *Spirit* can seem vague and obscure, calling to mind something eerie that appears only to the peculiar and eccentric. Indeed, sometimes Scripture uses the term in just this fashion. As Jesus states in the Gospel of John, those born of the Spirit are like the wind, which "blows where it chooses...but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes" (John 3:8). The confusion contributes to a certain bafflement before the dynamics of the "spiritual" life. Given the vague status of the Spirit in our imaginations, many of us can focus our spirituality on something more concrete, especially on Jesus Christ, the Son, who offers a clear and reliable moral guide.

By contrast, theologians in the early centuries of the church devoted extensive attention to the role of the persons of the Trinity in daily life. Their concern centered on Scripture and salvation: What does the Bible tell us about God's plan for our creation and our destiny? One of many responses understood the Holy Spirit as playing a special role in a dynamic called "deification": the Spirit bestowed holiness and thereby

Matter Matters

Saintly Relics and the Holy Spirit

Franklin T. Harkins

In the early morning hours of Wednesday, March 7, 1274, having received the eucharistic body of Christ, Thomas Aquinas, in the forty-ninth year of his life, died at the Cistercian abbey of Fossanova.¹ The early biographer William of Tocco relates that shortly after Thomas's death, John of Ferentino, subprior of Fossanova, was cured of blindness after prostrating himself on the corpse of the deceased Dominican, "placing his own face on his face," and praying to God that—by Thomas's merits—his sight might be restored.² Because other miracles began to occur shortly thereafter, the Cistercians at Fossanova feared that the wonder-working remains of Thomas, to which they had exclusive access, would be stolen by his Dominican confreres or others. Consequently, they exhumed the corpse from its resting place, cut off the head, and hid it in a corner of the chapel. They reasoned that even if Thomas's body were taken from them, his head and its supernatural power would be theirs.³

By the time of Thomas's death, the medieval practice of relic theft had enjoyed a long history.⁴ Nearly four decades earlier, in 1236, the head of the deceased Elizabeth of Thuringia was similarly separated from her body during the solemn translation of her remains. Afterward, it was carefully prepared for enshrinement and veneration by faithful pilgrims. In his "Sermon on the Translation of Blessed Elizabeth," Caesarius of Heisterbach explains concerning the saint's detached head, "To ensure that the sight of it would not strike horror into onlookers, the brothers

The Holy Spirit in the Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite

John F. Baldovin, SJ

If you were to ask Catholics what the center of the Mass is, the majority would surely answer, “The words of Christ, ‘This is my Body’...” or “the consecration.” We have certainly been trained to think this way both by theology and by our liturgical practice. But that answer doesn’t tell the whole story. The words of the Lord are framed within the Eucharistic Prayer (EP), which begins with the greeting of the priest, “The Lord be with you” and ends with the people’s acclamation, “Amen.” In fact, the church’s official introduction to the Mass, *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (no. 78) calls the EP the “center and highpoint of the entire celebration.”

One way of understanding this prayer is to see it as the articulation of the four actions that make up the entire celebration of the Eucharist proper: taking, blessing, breaking, giving. The Eucharist is made up of two parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In the first, we receive God’s word, proclaim it, and ponder it. In the second, we respond to God’s gracious initiative by doing what Jesus commanded us to do at the Last Supper in memory of him, namely take, bless, break, and give. Understood in this fashion, the EP is a kind of commentary on the second part of the liturgy. It is also a rich mine for theological reflection on the Eucharist since it represents the church’s “rule of prayer.” It is important to realize this “dialogue” and mutual

The Holy Spirit and the Pilgrimage of Faith

Richard Lennan & Nancy Pineda-Madrid

Shortly after his election in 2013, Pope Francis presented his vision for the church, a vision that came in the form of *The Joy of the Gospel*, *Evangelii Gaudium*. That document expresses Pope Francis's passion for a missionary church, a church that embodies God's mercy in response to the pain of the world, and so rejects the temptation to be inward looking, aloof, or judgmental. For Pope Francis, the church's capacity to be merciful is connected intimately with its trust in God's Holy Spirit, who prompts the community of faith to embrace the freedom of God and to renounce "the attempt to plan and control everything to the last detail" (no. 280).¹ To grow as a merciful community, therefore, the church must allow the Spirit to "enlighten, guide and direct us, leading us wherever [the Spirit] wills" (no. 280).

The link that Pope Francis highlights between the Spirit and the church is one that has become more prominent in Catholic thought over the last fifty years. That contemporary prominence contrasts sharply to the situation that prevailed for much of the second millennium, during which the Spirit was not central to the Catholic imagination, as will be discussed more fully in this chapter. The Second Vatican Council was the immediate catalyst for ending the long neglect of the Spirit. The contribution of Vatican II to an expanded awareness of the Spirit's presence and activity is summarized neatly in an encyclical by Pope John Paul II: "In a certain sense, the Council has made the Spirit newly 'present' in our difficult age" (*Dominum et Vivificantem* 26).²

Spirit, Wind, or Breath

Reflections on the Old Testament

Andrew R. Davis

Anyone who has learned a second language knows what a challenge it can be to produce a translation that is both faithful to the original language and consistent with the grammar and style of the translated language. This challenge is certainly familiar to translators and interpreters of the Bible, since they must render its ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek into modern languages. The difficulty is especially acute when dealing with words that carry theological significance. One such Hebrew word is *ruah*, which denotes “spirit” but also “wind” and “breath.”

Divided into two parts, this chapter first provides an overview of *ruah* in the Old Testament and explores how the study of a biblical concept can inform Christian theology. This overview will be by no means comprehensive, since there isn’t enough room to cover all the (almost four hundred) instances of the word.¹ Rather, we focus on its use as a term for “spirit,” and show that this meaning applies to vertical (divine-human) as well as horizontal (human-human) relationships. The chapter then examines the multivalence of *ruah* by looking at two passages—Genesis 1:2 and Ezekiel 37:1–14—in which the word’s meaning is ambiguous and offers a valuable framework for thinking about the work of the Holy Spirit in contemporary communities of faith.

The Holy Spirit and the New Testament in Light of Second Temple Judaism

Angela Kim Harkins

Our discussion of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is informed by the different functions of the Spirit in Second Temple Judaism (519 BCE–70 CE), an era that followed Israel's return from the Babylonian exile.¹ The vibrant Second Temple period gave rise to what later became Christianity and Judaism. Biblical scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries scarcely paid attention to the Second Temple period, largely due to their quest for the historical origins of ancient Israel. Today, however, the study of the Second Temple period has emerged as a distinct field and a most suitable context for understanding the New Testament.

How we think about the past is profoundly shaped by our experiences in the present age. Two major events of the twentieth century have transformed our understanding of the New Testament: the Holocaust and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. The horrors of the Holocaust and the discoveries of those ancient writings by Jewish groups near the time of Jesus have forced scholars to reimagine the diverse expressions of Judaism during the time of Jesus. Consequently, there has been a transformation in how Christians think about themselves vis-à-vis the religious other. This broader appreciation for the diverse forms of Judaism prior to and contemporaneous with the New Testament period is an important characteristic of biblical scholarship in the last two generations.

Three Sightings of the Holy Spirit in the Early Church

Francine Cardman

When the Apostle Paul arrived in Ephesus, he encountered “some disciples” and asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit when they became believers. They replied, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” Since they had received only John’s baptism of repentance, he baptized them “in the name of the Lord Jesus” and laid hands on them, whereupon the Holy Spirit came on them and they began to prophesy and speak in tongues (Acts 19:1–7). This small incident attests to the presence, absence, and potentially challenging role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians then and now. It recalls John’s promise of one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16), as well as the tongues of fire and gifts of speech at Pentecost early in Luke’s narrative (Acts 2:1–6). That formative moment is often regarded as the birth of the church, the beginning of the promised messianic age, in which God “will pour out [God’s] spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy” (Joel 2:28). The newly baptized Ephesian followers of Jesus, caught up in the Spirit of prophecy, were a case in point.

Relating the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8), Luke casts his history of the church’s beginnings as the embodied history of the Spirit in the world of the Roman Empire. Taking its lead from Luke’s perspective, this chapter examines three “sightings” of the Spirit in the life of the early churches, events that led variously to recognition, resistance, and resolution among individuals, small groups, and emerging institutional leadership. The first is a second-century

Medieval Writers

Women, Men, and the Holy Spirit

Catherine M. Mooney

Many people think of the twelfth through sixteenth centuries as the golden age of Christian spirituality because so many spiritual teachers and mystics emerged during this period and still inspire people today. Spirituality shares some of the same landscape as theology, but without being the same thing. Theology generally regards the study of God, and theologians often strive to articulate their insights in language that is both rational and organized. Spirituality has more amorphous boundaries and is less oriented toward a systematically analytical study of God. Spiritual texts convey insights about God, but are often more exhortatory, aiming to deepen the readers' experience of God. They include texts such as sermons, prayers, letters of advice, and accounts of personal encounters with God. It is more accurate to speak about spiritualities rather than a single spirituality during these centuries because there is so much diversity among great spiritual teachers. This is certainly true regarding their understandings and experiences of the Holy Spirit.

In this chapter, I present a sample of their teachings, organizing them under three broad rubrics—monastic, mendicant, and mystical writers—each group representing a period in which they stood out. In the process, I will show that perspectives on the Holy Spirit are influenced not only by these varying religious identities and chronological periods, but also by the distinct social locations of men and of women. This can stimulate consideration today about how apparently theoretical

Discerning the Action of God

André Brouillette, SJ

Discerning God's voice is an art more than a science. It entails a quest for a God who is in action, who cannot be seized, but certainly felt and heard. A radical choice of attentiveness to the discreet traces of the Spirit's passage must be made, and unfold over time. The tradition inherited from our holy predecessors, both through their lives and teachings, can guide the discerner along the way.

The Holy Spirit is hard to seize and depict. For that reason, the creedal statement of the Council of Nicaea (325) simply named the Spirit alongside the Father and the Son in one movement of adoration. The Council of Constantinople (381) delicately added some qualifications about the third person of the Trinity, as the one who is giver of life and has spoken through the prophets. Medieval liturgical hymns, expressions of the faith of the church in prayer, developed the understanding of the Spirit as Creator, the one who fills the earth and hearts, the giver of gifts, of light, and of truth. The Spirit is impelled to come: *Veni Creator Spiritus*, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, conveying the belief that the Spirit is God in movement.

However, the Holy Spirit has not generated the same literary or artistic creativity that the second person of the Trinity has. The Son is the unique *icon* of God, God's face and image, and the very Word of God. The Spirit is by nature neither. Consequently, the difficulty of depicting and voicing the action of the Spirit is rooted in her nature. But the Son is not the only active person of the Trinity; the Spirit constitutes the very means of the continued presence of God to human beings. Since the action of God in the world is channeled in the Spirit, it is the language

Oscar Romero

Renewed by the Spirit

O. Ernesto Valiente

In the course of his pastoral ministry, Oscar Romero was transformed from a cautious and traditional priest into a prophet and martyr. This chapter explores the action of the Holy Spirit in the process of that transformation. It considers Romero's formation and early pastoral work, then focuses on his episcopal ministry in Santiago de María and the first six months of his tenure as archbishop of San Salvador. This is a particularly fruitful period in which to examine the Spirit's agency in Romero's life because it marks a transition in how he perceived his ministerial role.

Instead of an approach that considers only Romero's direct references to the Holy Spirit in his preaching and writings, we will also examine the guiding presence of the Spirit through Romero's appropriation of the theological virtues, which the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches are "the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being" (1813). Hence, taking an approach that stresses Romero's experience within his own situation, we will examine how his appropriation of the virtues that flow from grace—faith, love, and hope—shaped him as a "heroic witness of the kingdom of God."¹ While acknowledging the deeply interrelated nature of the three theological virtues, we will also argue for the primacy of the Spirit's incarnating love as the main source and reason for Romero's transformation.

Spiritual Charisms in the World Church

Margaret Eletta Guider, OSF

The Holy Spirit would appear to create disorder in the Church, since he brings the diversity of charisms and gifts; yet all this, by his working, is a great source of wealth, for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of unity, which does not mean uniformity, but which leads everything back to harmony.

—Pope Francis, *Homily on the Solemnity of the Holy Spirit*
(May 19, 2013)

This chapter draws attention to the role and function of religious orders and ecclesial movements in the world church today, highlighting the action of the Holy Spirit in the living out of the spiritual charisms associated with those orders. While holding fast to hope in the harmony of charisms as envisioned by Pope Francis, we cannot ignore the existing tensions and unreconciled divisions between, among, and within religious orders and ecclesial movements, as well as the toll that such discord takes on the people of God. Though some members of the church are unaware or unaffected by this reality, others have direct knowledge and experience of the disruption and disunity it generates and sustains over time. By way of concrete examples, a few come to mind:

- Parishioners impacted by a radical change in parish life when a religious order of priests withdraws from the parish and an ecclesial movement assumes parochial leadership

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the Hispanic Parish

Hosffman Ospino

Moving quickly toward the front of the lower church, Diana walks with confidence to deliver the *enseñanza* (teaching) before the *círculo de oración* (prayer circle). Everyone in the parish knows her well. Diana was first introduced to the spirituality of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal while a member of the parish youth group in her home country.

A mother of four, two adult and two teenage children, Diana's journey has not been easy. She separated from her husband long ago and raised her kids mostly on her own. Not having much education, she has held many odd jobs. Her unwavering faith, however, gives her the certainty that God walks with her. She does not have much but gives generously. Tonight, she will share her *testimonio* (witness). People raise their hands and pray out loudly asking that the Holy Spirit come upon Diana. She lowers her head, closes her eyes, and prays with them. The moment gains intensity. Some people pray in what they call "tongues," neither Spanish nor English. Musicians start playing a few chords, then a familiar song brings everyone together: *Espíritu Santo, ven, ven en el nombre del Señor* ("Holy Spirit, come, come in the name of the Lord"). A new air invades the worship space. Diana opens her Bible to read the passage of the Syrophenician woman in Mark 7:24–30. During the next forty-five minutes, she will break open the passage, share her thoughts about it, connect it to her own life and the life of the community, and help the group discern what God is saying to them this very evening. Diana has never received theological formation or formally studied the Scriptures,

The Adolescent and the Transforming Spirit

Theresa O'Keefe

We have all witnessed the dancing of a small child. Happy to twirl in the center of a room, she is simultaneously confident and unconscious of others' attention. It is a fun, joyful thing that makes us smile. In time, this dance is replaced by another dance taken up as a young adolescent. At that time, she starts a dance that alternately seeks out an audience and dismisses it. One moment she wants to be invisible and the next she steps to center stage. She is, in turn, generous and shy, flamboyant and unsure, self-conscious and self-forgetting, vulnerable and confident. It is alternately easy and awkward, and sometimes grace filled. In all her dancing, she is placing herself before the world, looking to be seen, loved, and to love. She dances forward, demonstrating her new-found desire to be recognized, known, and valued for who she is. She then steps back, sensing her vulnerability in her search. If we are honest, it is a dance we have all done as we grew into a sense of ourselves and our place in the world. In fact, it is a dance we never stop doing, for we are always looking to love and be loved. What makes the dance special in adolescence is that it is the first time we are learning these steps. It is the first time we are conscious of ourselves, such that we might give ourselves to another and receive another in kind.

The metaphor of dancing is aptly associated with the Spirit, as the words used to describe the Spirit are those of action and movement. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) uses words such as *awakening, communicating, touching, outpouring, and speaking*.¹ They reflect movement,

Empowered by the Holy Spirit

Andrea Vicini, SJ

The Holy Spirit is at the heart of the moral life and empowers persons and communities to discern, judge, decide, and act by promoting just relationships as well as personal and social flourishing. For today's readers, the previous sentence is not likely to be contentious. Since the Second Vatican Council, with its invitation to recognize the signs of the divine in history, believers and theologians have been attuned to discerning the presence, gifts, and action of the Holy Spirit. Writing before the Council, however, the distinguished scholar Henlee Barnette (1911–2004) lamented that “one of the surprising things that strikes the student of Christian ethics is the fact that ethicists almost universally ignore the essential relationship of the Holy Spirit to Christian morality.”¹

Barnette rightly stressed that “the Spirit is the source of all moral excellencies” and, as portrayed in Scripture, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal 5:22–23). In Christian life, the Holy Spirit is “the spring of ethical power.”²

In creation and throughout history, the Spirit sanctifies every creature. In moral life, the Spirit forms and informs one's conscience,³ and “contributes to the ‘enrichment and expansion of our moral subjectivity’ by entering the hearts of people and empowering ‘the ways we function cognitively, volitionally, and affectively.’ [...] Moreover,] the Spirit is present volitionally as the power of conviction in our decision making.”⁴ Hence, “without the energizing of the Spirit the Christian ethic would be

The Holy Spirit as Dynamic Meaning Maker

Melissa M. Kelley

On October 31, 2015, a Russian airliner crashed in Egypt, killing all 224 people on board. Twelve days later, forty-three people were killed and hundreds injured by twin suicide bombers in Beirut, Lebanon. On the following day, a terrorist group attacked several sites in Paris, France, killing 130 people and wounding hundreds more. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the violent extremist group that operates out of bases in Syria and Iraq, claimed responsibility for all three attacks.

In the wake of this terrorist violence, focus in the United States turned immediately to Syrian refugees, those millions of people who had fled the four-year civil war in Syria and were desperately seeking refuge somewhere in the world. Strong voices in the United States, including many in the United States Congress, governors, mayors, and candidates for the presidential nomination, insisted that the United States must declare an immediate and perhaps permanent halt to resettling any Syrian refugees, because potential or actual terrorists could enter the United States under the guise of refugee status and inflict great harm on the country. Within one week of the Paris attacks, the United States House of Representatives passed a measure significantly tightening the process for acceptance of Syrian refugees in the United States.

In response to this strong opposition to the resettlement of Syrian refugees in the United States, other prominent voices expressed the imperative that concern and compassion for the refugees must not be sacrificed to unrealistic fears, particularly given the careful refugee vetting process