The Spirit of Power

The Uniformity and Diversity of the Concept of the Holy Spirit
in the New Testament

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Whoever really wishes to listen humbly to Scripture, and does not desire to interpret it arbitrarily, must pay attention quite seriously to the diversity, indeed the logical inconsistency, which it exhibits. He will not be afraid to face its variegated historic development and to recognize that there is afforded here no ready-made, systematized doctrine, but the account of the community which, bit by bit, defending herself first against one then against the other misconception, had confessed what Jesus Christ signified to her. Just as he will never rightly grasp the Deity of Jesus Christ who does not take his full humanity seriously, so also he will scarcely rightly hear God speaking who is not prepared really to see the human quality of Scripture. If one believes that the one living God stands behind the manifold testimonies of Scripture, then one must not fear when a careful and humble reading of these testimonies confronts him oftentimes with statements which cannot at once be made logically consistent with one another. He will not arbitrarily harmonize them by means of his own formulae; he will permit God to impress upon his community first this, and then that truth, as it became necessary.

So, both the unity and the diversity of the New Testament statements concerning the Holy Spirit rest upon the fact that the New Testament community experienced the reality of the one and the same Spirit long before she—in the midst of the most diverse experiences and difficulties, and in the face of the most diverse misconceptions which threatened her—developed step by step a doctrine of the Spirit. If historical and critical research has taught us to pay careful attention to the particular testimony of each separate biblical witness, and not as it were to stifle it

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1. For all more detailed arguments and evidence I must refer to my article "pneuma" which will appear in the Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament. I will also mention there all those from whom I have learned.
with a formula of uniformity, "orthodox" theology has likewise taught us to take seriously the reality of the one God who is behind all this diversity.

I. Mark and Matthew

The surprising thing about Mark lies in the fact that he very rarely speaks of the Holy Spirit. One can name only the following passages: 1). The word about blaspheming the Spirit (3:28ff.); 2). The statement that the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness (1:12); 3). The promise that the disciples when brought before the judgment would be endowed with the Spirit (13:11); 4). The word of John the Baptist concerning baptism with the Spirit (1:8); 5). The account of the manifestation of the Spirit at the baptism of Jesus (1:10); 6). The equating of a word of Scripture with the word of the Spirit (12:36).

If we ask first of all concerning the concept of the Spirit which is expressed in these words, it becomes clear that the community has here scarcely gone beyond what has already been said in the Old Testament and in Judaism. According to 3:30 they have committed blasphemy against the Spirit who see in Jesus 'driving out of demons not the power of God, but that of an unclean spirit. The divine Spirit is, therefore, just as in the earliest passages of the Old Testament and in the conception of primitive people in general, conceived of as a supernatural power for the performance of especial miracles, which manifests itself in a manner formally quite like the power of demons. This is the case when it is said of the Spirit: "He drove Jesus forth into the wilderness" (1:12). Just so the Spirit could drive the ancient prophets, against their will, up into the mountains or down into the abyss. It is also an Old Testament concept that the Spirit, in times of especial need, bestows superhuman wisdom in speaking (13:11). Thus Joseph and Daniel possess the Spirit of God, in order to interpret dreams and rightly to reply to the ruler who threatened them. Also, that the Messiah would be imbued with the Spirit (1:10), is an Old Testament hope which continued vitally in Judaism. The Spirit can here signify substantially no more than the power to perform wonders and to speak wisdom. The equating of Scripture and the Spirit is first properly a prevailing concept of pre-Christian Judaism. Only the word concerning the baptism of the Spirit through the Messiah seems to break through the framework of Judaism. The original form of this Logion is, however, preserved for us by Matthew and Luke, where it says: "He will baptize you with the (Holy) Spirit
and with fire.” Fire is certainly to be understood, as in the verses immediately before and after, as a sign of the judgment. Since the word *pneuma*, in the Old Testament, as in the New, can mean “wind,” “storm” just as well as “spirit,” it is a question whether the Baptist did not have exactly the same concept as an approximately contemporary Jewish apocalypticist who portrays the Messiah as he appears as judge of the world and sends forth from his mouth “a fiery stream, a flaming breath and a violent storm,” which destroys all his foes (IV Ezra 13:10). The *pneuma* emanating from the Messiah is so concretely conceived as a storm wind which uproots trees and snaps off masts; it is not the “Spirit” of our language, now so hopelessly abstract. The immediately following picture of the winnowing (Matt. 3:12) presupposes in any case the storm wind. The same concept of judgment by fire and storm is to be found in a rabbinical parable as well as in certain Old Testament passages. Then the idea of the unique baptism of the Spirit, as it is found in Mark 1:10, would seem to have arisen from the experience of the community as a result of a new understanding of this word of double meaning, *pneuma*.

Doctrinally stated, therefore, the concept of Spirit, especially in this last passage, has become something quite new as over against Judaism. And yet it already is clear in Mark that the Spirit is here experienced in a totally different way than in Judaism. This is shown by the fact that only once more are Spirit and Scripture equated one with another. Orthodox Judaism at that time lived with few exceptions in the consciousness that the Spirit had died out: “There is no more any prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long” (Psa. 74:9). “Our fathers had in earlier times and former generations the righteous ones and the holy prophets as helpers... But now the righteous have been gathered to their fathers, and the prophets have laid themselves down to sleep” (Apoc. Bar. 85:1, 3). “When Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the last of the prophets, died, the Holy Spirit vanished out of Israel” (Strack-Billerbeck I, 127). For this reason Daniel was not placed among the prophets, but only among the “Writings.” And for this reason the Holy Spirit is equated with the Scripture. At that time he was living, but now no more. It is just this identification of the Holy Spirit and the letter of Scripture, which an age without spirit had made, that Mark pushes quite to one side. Certainly that is true, but that is not the substance of

2. That Luke did not himself consider the appearance of fire as the fulfillment of the baptism by fire is proven by Acts 1:5 where (against Luke 3:16) the promise of the baptism by fire is missing.
his message. What is essential in it is certainly not that the Spirit had once in time past spoken; what is essential is that he now, in Jesus Christ is present.

Thus, too, in the passage about blaspheming of the Spirit there is certainly no new concept of Spirit present, but rather the decisive awareness that this Spirit, still understood in the Old Testament sense, is present in Jesus Christ. He is not something that one can find preserved only in the form of letters, and for which one can perhaps still hope; he is not merely something of the far distant past or of the equally distant future. He is of the present tense. And so unconditional, so overpowering, is the knowledge of this fact that the denial of it makes all the difference between Heaven and Hell. This is even more emphatically underscored by Matthew who, in the same pericope, maintains that it is precisely in Jesus’ casting out of demons that the Rule of God has begun (12:28).

The passage, too, concerning the support promised the disciples when called upon to stand before courts of judgment, to be sure limits (as did the Old Testament and Judaism) the experience of the Spirit still to particular men and particular occasions; but at the bottom of it is the knowledge that in such persecution the eschatological woes, and with them the eschatological presence of God, have become reality. That is even more strongly the case in the words of John the Baptist. Whatever may have been its original reading, the Evangelists saw prophesied in it the general endowment of the community with the Spirit. To be sure it is not intimated by so much as a word how this gift of the Spirit should manifest itself, or how one should understand the event of its bestowal. But behind this passage, as indeed behind the thoroughgoing reinterpretation of the word \textit{pneuma} from the storm wind of judgment to the wind of God’s blessing on the community of Jesus, there stands the awareness of being the eschatological community in which the promises of God have been fulfilled, and in which God, through his Spirit, is present.

Thus the manifestation of the Spirit upon Jesus at his baptism is not simply the endowment of a prophet with the Spirit, but is a demonstration which shows that here the new, the eschatological intervention of God has taken place. This is emphatically underscored, finally, in the Great Commission of Matt. 28:19, a passage which, to be sure, one may with good reason suspect was inserted secondarily into Matthew’s Gospel. Yet, even if it cannot with certainty be traced back to Jesus himself, one must reckon with the possibility that, perhaps in a very limited circle, already in Matthew’s time, alongside the simple formula of other parts of the community, in his own community the tri-partite formula
was in use. Paul had, in fact, coined similar formulations decades previously (I Cor. 12:4-6, II Cor. 13:13). But that is to say that the community of which Matthew was a member understood the coming of the Spirit, exactly as it did the coming of Jesus, as the eschatological event in which God has invaded this world and encounters man for his salvation.

A peculiar position, finally, must be accorded to the statement that Jesus was begotten of the Spirit (Matt. 1:18, 20). The story is preserved in Luke in its more original form. In Matthew the event is not recounted at all, but is only announced by an angel—in order to provide a defense against false suspicion. Such a suspicion is, therefore, presupposed here. In Luke, however, there lies here what was originally a separate legend, which was not in the first instance linked either with the account of the birth of Jesus nor with that of his baptism. But in it there emerges an entirely new concept of the Spirit, such as was known in the Old Testament only in very rudimentary fashion, but which, on the contrary, was very strongly developed in Hellenistic Judaism: the Spirit is here understood as the life-giving, creative power. Precisely so Plutarch, a contemporary of Luke, reports that the Egyptians believed that the Spirit of God entered into a mortal woman and in her begot the germ of the child that was to be. It is apparent, however, that, although this heathen Hellenistic concept represents indeed the form in which the present thought is cast, the similarity is merely of the form and therefore unessential. The story is, in fact, told by Luke so that it surpasses the story of the birth of the Baptist. That is to say that the essential feature in it is simply the direct invasion of the Creator God, quite independent of human activity. In no sense does Luke mean to assert that we have here another notion of Spirit than in the Old Testament, specifically the Hellenistic notion that the spirit can engender life. Luke does not intend to make a new declaration about the Spirit, but a new declaration about Christ. It is that alone that he wishes to underscore by means of this story: that the One who is born here is fundamentally different from all others. To express this idea Luke, a Hellenist, makes use of the concept of the creative Spirit, a concept familiar to him and one, linked up with Gen.

3. Also in Did. 7:1-3, 9:5 the unitarian and trinitarian forms are used side by side.
4. "Legend" is merely a concept relating to form. No judgment is passed concerning its historicity. This says nothing concerning the truth of the statement, which does not depend on the "historicity" of the empiric facts.
5. In orthodox Judaism Gen. 1:2 was not interpreted as the creative Spirit of God, but as the storm wind which belongs to chaos. Nevertheless in hellenistic Judaism Gen. 1:2 is brought into close connection with the cosmogonic questions and concepts of the Spirit which originated in Grecian thought.
Interpretation

1:2, widely understood in Hellenism and in the pagan world. But here the concept receives little stress. By means of it Luke wishes to say but one thing: in Jesus Christ God himself has intervened, in him has the all-decisive encounter of God with the world, which far surpasses all that has gone before, become reality. Whether we really believe this, whether we seriously reckon with this fact or not—that alone will indicate whether we have said Yes or No to this narrative.

If we now ask ourselves, finally, why so few references to the Spirit are to be found in Mark and Matthew, we must first of all answer that this shows a remarkable fidelity to the tradition. The later experiences of the Spirit on the part of the community were not projected back into the life of Jesus. Clearly Jesus himself had scarcely ever spoken of the Spirit; only a single one of these sayings (Mark 13:11) may be traced back to him with any certainty. But that is not the real answer. The fact that the Gospel writers resisted the temptation to portray Jesus in a comprehensive manner as if he were the first ecstatic (Pneumatiker), to depict him after the analogy of the astounding ecstatic phenomena of the church (I Cor. 12-14!), shows a profound theological insight. The community recognized with remarkable clarity that Jesus had not made them the people of the end-time as an ecstatic miracle worker any more than he had done so as a spirit-endowed teacher. If anything really and decisively new had happened over and above what the Old Testament offered, then it was not because here a spirit-filled example or teacher had appeared; it was rather simply that in him God himself had met the community as he never had before. That is why it is not the phenomena of the Spirit that are interesting, but rather this peculiar position of Jesus. Wherever in Mark and Matthew the Spirit is mentioned, it only serves the purpose of depicting Jesus as the unique One, the one in whom God himself encounters his community eschatologically. To portray Jesus as a pneumatic would not have served this purpose—the Old Testament prophets and those gifted with the Spirit in the community of Jesus were as much—this purpose could be served only by precisely those traits which distinguish Jesus from his predecessors and followers.

II. Luke and Acts

In Luke a theological distinction is to be seen. Not only does he mention the Spirit fully three times as often as Mark, not only does the first half of Acts exhibit the greatest frequency of references to the Spirit to be found in the New Testament, Luke also paves the way for a new un-
derstanding of the Spirit. From the point of view of method, that can be grasped most clearly in the Gospel because we can here control the corrections that he made in the material transmitted to him. It is precisely because Luke otherwise transmits his tradition with great objectivity, making for the most part only stylistic changes, that these alterations are all the more important.

Mark 1:12 reads: “The Spirit drove him (Jesus) into the wilderness.” Luke reproduces this sentence thus: “But Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit returned... and was led in the Spirit in the wilderness forty days.” That which sounded faintly in the tradition before him as a result of the selection, indeed the avoidance of references to the Spirit, is here elevated into conscious expression: Jesus is not the object of the Spirit, is not a pneumatic possessed of the Spirit. Jesus has become the subject of a transaction “in the Spirit.” He is Lord over the Spirit. That is shown also by the fact that Luke 2:40 repeats verbatim the concluding comment made about the growth of John the Baptist in 1:80, but omits the expression “he grew in the Spirit.” Jesus does not grow in the Spirit, he is from the beginning onward in full possession of the Spirit. As an evidence of this, Luke gladly takes up the narrative of the generation by the Spirit, since it shows the uniqueness of Jesus, far above that of the Baptist. In like manner, Jesus appears in the Acts ever and again as the Lord over the Spirit, as the giver of the Spirit. No more is he a parallel figure to the Old Testament prophet or to the Christian miracle worker. As the Lord of his community he is the Lord over the Spirit.

The story of the descent of the Spirit at the baptism must actually seem to contradict this statement. But here, too, Luke has brought in a characteristic change. He emphasizes that the Spirit appeared “in bodily form” as of a dove. Thereby he makes the point that we do not have to do with the endowment with the Holy Spirit of a man who previously had not had it, but with a demonstration in which God visibly designated this Jesus as his Son, the one called to the Messianic office. Such outwardly visible manifestations of the Spirit are important to Luke throughout. One thinks of the Pentecost narrative and the signs perceptible even to unbelievers; of the earthquake which accompanied the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 4:31; of the glossolalia of Acts 2:4-13, 8:18, 10:46, 19:6, so extraordinary yet again attested by unbelievers. There is betrayed here a characteristic trait which on the one hand reveals the chief particular interest of Luke, and on the other hand points up the limitations of his grasp of the doctrine of the Spirit: Luke is concerned
to show how the Spirit has peculiar, yet extraordinary and visible ac-
tivities which reach deep into the corporeal existence of man and into his
daily life.

But one must be warned against a misunderstanding. Luke 12:10
places the saying concerning the blaspheming of the Spirit in an entirely
new connection. The Spirit, to blaspheme whom is unforgivable, is no
longer the Spirit efficacious for the casting out of demons. Were that so,
Jesus would be designated only as a pneumatic. In the context which Luke
gives it, it has become the Spirit who speaks in the disciples when they,
persecuted by their enemies, in faith bear their witness to Jesus (cf. vs.
12). This is true not only of this passage. Not a single time are the mir-
cles, which to Luke were by no means unimportant, attributed to the
Spirit. The name of Jesus, faith in Jesus, Jesus himself, prayer, bodily
contact, the shadow or the handkerchief of the Apostle and, above all,
the “power” of Jesus brings healing, but never the Spirit. Luke is here
bound by Judaism more strongly than all the others, and for Judaism the
Spirit had become almost exclusively the “Spirit of prophecy.” That
does not mean at all that Luke did not look upon prophecy resulting
from the presence of the Spirit as a divine miracle; naturally it was that.
This is especially to be seen where it appears as glossolalia (Acts 2:4,
10:46, 19:6 and perhaps also 8:18), or where a momentary inspiration
enables one to behold the future (Luke 1:41, 67; Acts 11:28; 20:23;
where the disciple, by the power of the Spirit, sees through the thoughts
of another and tells him of his inmost self (Acts 5:3, 9 (?); 13:9), or
where he recognizes the will of God, otherwise hidden from men, and
can take action accordingly (Acts 8:29; 10:19; 11:12; 13:2, 4; 16:6f.;
20:22; cf. 7:51, 55). And even the “normal” proclamation of the gospel
in the face of the world, hostile and threatening to the disciples is a di-
vine miracle (Luke 12:12; Acts 1:8; 4:8, 31; 5:32; 6:10; 18:25). This
is given the very clearest expression when Luke, in the quotation from
Joel in Peter’s Pentecost sermon, adds the words: “And they will
prophesy” (2:18). Thus Luke sees here the fulfillment of the prophet
predictions, it is for him the sign of the last days: the new Israel of
God’s community in the end-time is a community of prophets. So the
Holy Spirit is for him no longer merely a sign of the peculiar significance

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6. Only in the formulation of 10:38, which is taken from the tradition, is the Spirit also
mentioned along with the “power.” 8:39 is a lone instance in which there is an echo of Old
Testament concepts, but it is possible, for several reasons, that the text offered in Acts is the
original.
of Jesus; it is the real and central gift of God to the community which seals the coming of the new aeon. This, too, is shown once more in a correction which Luke makes upon his source. Matt. 7:11 transmits the saying that the Father will give to those who ask him "good things." Luke alters it to read: he will give them "the Holy Spirit." That is to say, the Holy Spirit is to him the substance of what God bestows upon his community.

With that, what is at the most intimated in Mark and Matthew in the words of the Baptist regarding the baptism of the Spirit, becomes clear. In the Old Testament as in Judaism the Spirit is never regarded as necessary for salvation. It was always limited to a few especially chosen men and, even in the case of these, was usually thought of as a transitory possession. That prevents Mark and Matthew from seeing more in the bestowal of the Spirit than a sign of the presence of God for especially chosen individuals or for especial occasions: for Jesus himself or, by derivation, also for martyrs when they stand before the judgment. Luke understood that a new age had begun as over against the Old Testament. No longer, as it were, drop by drop, no longer only for especially chosen individuals, no longer only for brief moments is the Spirit bestowed, but upon all members of the new community. In that it was clear to Luke that the old aeon had ended and the new age had come. What the Old Testament longed for, what it hoped for in some far off time of redemption: "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them" (Num. 11:29)—precisely that has come to pass. The last days have come and in them all members of the people of God possess the Spirit. Such passages as Acts 19:2, 2:38, 15:8f.; also 8:16ff., 9:17; 10:44; 11:16f., presuppose this. It is attested by the quotation from Joel (Acts 2:17-21), in which the outpouring of the Spirit upon "all flesh" (that is, all flesh that is obedient to God, as the alteration in vs. 18a stresses) signifies the prelude to the eschatological catastrophe and the dawn of the last days. When Luke, going beyond the Old Testament text, adds that this shall take place "in the last days," he merely emphasizes thereby the point that for him, with the gift of the Spirit, the last and highest which comes from God has begun, the prelude of the Parousia of Christ. In like manner, the Pentecost events are portrayed in eschatological colors which, both in contemporary Judaism and in paganism, was language which all would understand as symbolic of the last days.

To be sure, even here the dependence of Luke upon the concepts of Judaism is again to be seen. He goes beyond the prevailing notion in
that he declares that the Spirit is bestowed permanently upon all members of the community. And yet, he cannot conceive of the Spirit otherwise than as a supplementary gift. Still, as in Judaism, the Spirit is not necessary to salvation. This is indeed an anomaly; it can take days, weeks, or even years before a baptized person even receives the Spirit, yet it does not follow that he is thereby changed again from a believer into an unbeliever (Acts 9:17, 8:16, 19:2). Thus faith is never traced back to the Spirit. Even when Luke wishes to emphasize that coming-into-faith (zum-glauben-kommen) is a God-given, miraculous event, he speaks of God who opens the heart, or of Jesus who produces faith, but he does not speak of the Spirit. It is always those who already believe, who are already obedient that receive the Spirit (2:38, 5:32, etc.). Prayer, too, is not the outworking, but the presupposition of the receiving of the Spirit (Luke 3:21; Acts 4:31; 9:9, 11; 13:1ff.). The Spirit is, therefore, not the power which binds a man to God and transfers him into a state of salvation; it is a supplementary power which enables him to give form to his faith in the concrete activity of the proclamation of the gospel. The distinction between this and the Old Testament and the Jewish concept rests only in the fact that here this power is no longer given to individuals, but to the whole community. The peculiar quality of the Lukan witness consists, therefore, in the fact that a community without the special power for the concrete fulfillment of its missionary commission will be revealed as a spiritless community. Precisely because Luke does not trace the very existence of the community back to the Spirit, he reminds her with a voice, she could not fail to hear that she must approve her faith in the power of the Spirit by the missionary proclamation of the gospel.

III. Paul

The above-mentioned difficulty in Luke's understanding of the Spirit is that of the early church in general. On the one hand, she must, because of her origin in Judaism, understand the Spirit as a supplementary power for especial acts which is accorded only to the believing and obedient. On the other hand, because of her experience, the Spirit was to her the mark of the eschatological community, the new people of God. Since the Spirit does not provide the basis of the life of the believer as such, and does not bestow salvation as such, the early church could understand him only as a sign of something yet to come, of something still outstanding, of that which the Parousia itself would bring. Thus the
outpouring of the Spirit is understood in Acts 2:17-21 as the beginning of the eschatological catastrophe, in Heb. 6:4f. as a foretaste of the good things of the age to come.

But is the Spirit really only this? Only a rather unusual, welcome to be sure, yet basically unnecessary sign of what is only yet to come? Luke wanted to go beyond that. He wanted to announce the Spirit as the thing itself. But when he understood the Spirit as the power for preaching and carrying out the mission, he thereby underscored the incompleteness of this event. For a mission must necessarily signify something begun but not completed. But could, then, the fulfillment of all prophecy, the essence of the end-time, the character of the new people of God receive its essential stamp by saying that in it something had been begun but not yet finished? The last days must be fulfillment, not beginning. And if one wished, for example with Heb. 2:4, to lay more weight on the mighty acts of the Spirit, could one seriously maintain that that which is decisively new, that which distinguishes the community of Jesus from the Old Covenant, lies in the fact that miracles now happened somewhat more frequently than previously?

But still a further question arose, and one which became far more urgent: how, then, was the imparting of the Spirit connected with the coming, the life, the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Why must one really believe on Jesus in order to have the Spirit? Only because he, as the Exalted One, had the power to impart it? Or only because he, after the Resurrection, was able to return as judge? But why, then, did he have to come to the earth and die?

To both questions a Christendom, which had received a strong impression from Hellenistic thought, gave a radical answer. We know it in its maturest form from the Gnostic documents of the 2nd century. But it was given in a somewhat more primitive form even before Paul, and is plainly recognizable behind his Epistles. The possibility of this new interpretation, indeed almost a compulsion to it, arose from the fact that the Hellenist could think of power only in the form of a substance: "All power is substantial."? Were it promised to him that he should receive power, he could only imagine that as a new material, a fluid, which should penetrate him. Therefore, if the Hellenistic-thinking community experienced the Spirit, she would understand it as a heavenly substance. She had long thought of the contrast between earth and heaven as one between evil matter and the higher, good substance, of which last the

7. Diogenes Laert. VII, 38 and 56.
human spirit consisted. If Jesus were announced to her as the bringer of the Spirit, she would understand very well that in him the heavenly world had broken in. He is the bearer of this heavenly substance. In that a distinct answer to all questions was given: the meaning of the sending of Jesus consists precisely in the fact that he has brought to men the heavenly substance of the "Spirit." Union with him signifies, therefore, union with this new divine substance, union with the heavenly world in the midst of the evil material world. But, with that, possession of the Spirit becomes simply salvation, possession of the heavenly world.

And yet, this too could not be the solution. It is no accident that in the entire Gnostic literature the Cross has no place. In this way of thinking it could, at the most, play a purely tactical role, that of deceiving the demons so that they would not notice that the ambassador of the heavenly world had entered the scene. For here, indeed, redemption was understood in purely naturalistic terms. A man was, in fact, redeemed through the possession of a new substance, he was "saved from nature," as is often said in Gnostic writing. That leads necessarily and directly to the elevation of immorality into a program. Precisely because a man sins, he shows his strong belief in the new substance which dwells within him, which through no contamination with the world could ever be lost. But, indeed, if one thought in such a consistently naturalistic way, how would one think of the mediation of the new substance through union with Jesus? How could Jesus really "bring" this purely physically conceived substance and "bestow" it upon the believer? Again, it was only logical that Gnosticism should here have thought it through to the end. If the divine nature is bestowed upon the believer with no possibility of its being lost, if he has been "saved from nature," then there could not ever really have been a time when he did not yet possess it. If there is no end for this divine nature of his, then there was also no beginning of it. He had always possessed it. It had merely been covered up, had merely remained unknown to him. Then the meaning of the coming of Jesus consisted in the fact that he reminded men of this divine, innermost self which had been hidden from man.

That is precisely the answer of Gnosticism. But then, was the coming of Jesus necessary at all? Was not, then, merely the mythos of the Redeemer who had come all that was necessary? Was it not, then, a matter of indifference whether historically anything had happened or not? The only thing that was essential, indeed, was that the believer be reminded of what was in him. Then, indeed, the mythos of Fall and Redemption,
of the humiliation and exaltation of the heavenly Ambassador would be necessary, but only as a mirroring of what would happen to every Gnostic: as a mirror that shows the hearer his situation and awakens him to the remembrance of his heavenly self. But it would make no difference whether behind this mythos there lay an historical event or not. It would also make no difference whether one called the heavenly Ambassador Christ, or Attis, or whatnot.

Paul could have borrowed a good part of these Gnostic concepts. The thing in them which was first of all quite right was the concern to understand the Spirit not only as the sign of something yet to come, but as the fact of salvation itself, and above all the concern to understand the endowment with the Spirit, and the entire redemptive work of Jesus Christ, as a unity. But Paul could have likewise carried some of the concepts of the early church a bit further. In these there was maintained the concern in no case to understand the Spirit as something that belonged to man, something at his disposal, but as the presence of the Lord who remains ever the Sovereign—and so remains over against man ever the Coming One whom man cannot yet have in his own possession. Both traits can be clearly traced in Paul: on the one hand, in his conception of the spiritual body of the Exalted One, on the other hand in his understanding of the Spirit as the pledge of him who is to come. We will, however, not attempt to trace these here, but rather will inquire concerning the insight in which both are taken up and united.

In the doctrine of the Spirit held in the church before the time of Paul, the resurrection—and the exaltation—of Jesus was the only definitive event. Naturally the church, even before Paul, had thought over the meaning of the Cross and, already before him, had arrived at the formula that Jesus “died for our sins according to the Scriptures,” and that his “blood” cleanses us. But it had, as far as we can see, not yet really brought the event of the Cross, and the event of the imparting of the Spirit into connection with one another. For Paul, however, the very event which, in his days as a Pharisee, had been to him the decisive offense, had become now clearly the decisive saving event: the Cross. Linked to the assertion that he has nothing to preach save “him crucified,” is one of the most important passages for the understanding of the Pauline concept of the Spirit: 1 Cor. 2:6-16. Here the Spirit is portrayed as the miraculous divine power which imparts supernatural understanding, “the wisdom hidden in secrecy” which is not at all “human wisdom” (vss. 7, 13). That is something that the early church
as well as the Gnostic community could say. And when Paul declares that the substance of this knowledge is “the deep things of God,” he makes use of an expression which the Gnostics also liked to use. But Paul means something entirely different. What are these “deep things of God”? The gift given us by God through his grace, namely the death of Jesus on the cross which took place for us. He is the “wisdom of God” (1:24) which Paul has to proclaim (2:7), and which for the nonspiritual remains only “foolishness” (1:23, 2:14).

But with that the point of decision is reached. With the Gnostic Paul says that it is the Spirit who transfers us out of the old aeon into the new, out of the earthly into the heavenly world. But how does he do this? Not through some heavenly substance, but through the recognition of God’s saving act on the Cross. With the early church Paul says that this Spirit is something entirely apart from man, in no way his property or something placed at his disposal. But why is he that? Not because he is some sort of supplementary power which is temporarily accorded to man for special tasks, or merely a flickering sign of the Coming One, now flaring up, now dying out, but because in his very essence he points man away from himself to that which has been done for him by God at the cross of Jesus Christ. Because man cannot make disposal of the saving act of God at the cross, because it is not his own doing nor within his capabilities, precisely for that reason he cannot look upon the Spirit as something which is his property and stands at his disposal. Paul is distinguished, therefore, from Luke in the fact that he understands the Spirit as the decisive saving power which unites man with God, and thus bestows salvation upon him. And he is distinguished likewise from Gnosticism in the fact that in no sense does he understand this union of man with God naturalistically, but as Spirit-given faith in the saving act of God in the cross of Jesus. Thus he can speak of the “Spirit of faith” (II Cor. 4:13). Thus “to have the earnest of the Spirit” can be identical with “walking by faith” (II Cor. 5:5, 7). And thus the acknowledgment of Jesus as the Lord can be the one decisive mark of the possession of the Spirit (I Cor. 12:3).

With this the notion of “power” passes over into that of the “norm.” Expressed in the indicative, the Spirit is the power, above all the superhuman, divine power which is totally foreign to man, which bestows upon him the new life in faith in the work of God in his behalf. Expressed in the imperative, the Spirit is no less than the norm according to which this man will henceforth shape his life. In the indicative it is
to be announced to him: you live not at all by your own power, but by
the power of God. In the imperative it is to be told him: now really
live in the power of God and no more by your own abilities and capabil-
ities. If the Spirit, therefore, is the power which unites men with the
saving act of God, indeed reveals it to him, then he is likewise also the
norm upon which the believer orientates himself. Thus, however, with
Paul, just as all imperatives rest upon and take their life from indicative
statements, so with him, as with the entire community both before and
after him, is the Spirit above all a power foreign to man, bestowed upon
him from without—and only as such, then, also the norm of his life:8
“If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit also let us walk” (Gal. 5:25).

All of Paul’s important pronouncements regarding the Spirit flow
from this one conviction: the Spirit is the power which places men
within the saving act of God in Jesus Christ, reveals it to him, discloses
it to him as something which took place for him, in short, lets him be-
lieve. To be sure, this believing is not conceived merely only as an initial
event, but as something which is ever and again consummated anew.
It is precisely this perpetual consummation which is given especial stress
when Paul speaks of the working of the Spirit. Thus he can depict be-
lieving negatively as denial of the “flesh” and positively as an opening
of oneself toward God and one’s neighbor.

To live by the saving act of God must mean no more to live by one’s
own potentialities. It is just these potentialities of one’s own which Paul
gathers up in the term “flesh.” They include, naturally, the instincts but
are by no means confined to these. To them belong in even greater
measure the intellect, the will, ambition, and also “religiosity” as an
attitude of the human soul. “To worship in the Spirit of God” means,
therefore, “not to trust in the flesh”—whereby “flesh” is more exactly
described as the totality of all the qualities and actions of which a man
can boast, summed up as his “own righteousness which is of the law”
(Phil. 3:3-9). So, also according to I Cor. 2:1-16, the recognition of
the saving event includes the renunciation, not of human wisdom, but
of the trust in such wisdom. And, according to II Cor. 3:6ff., the “mak-
ing alive” which the Spirit effects consists in the fact that he imparts
to man the new righteousness in Christ and therewith frees him of the
desire to stand before God by the observance of the written law. “Flesh”
and “Spirit,” therefore, are here something altogether other than in the

8. In part with, and in part against, R. Bultmann, Theologie des Neuen Testaments, Sections
38 and 3.
Hellenistic world, where they are cosmic principles and so describe the cosmic existence of man in one or the other of two regions.

Life in the Spirit signifies, therefore, to live by the saving act of God or, negatively stated, to be free of all building upon one’s self, one’s own powers and privileges. Stated positively, then, this must mean to be free for others. “To walk in the Spirit” means “no more to fulfil the lust of the flesh,” and thus “through love to be servants one of another” (Gal. 5:13, 16). Just as “Spirit,” so can “love” in this passage appear as the antithesis of “flesh.” “Love” is nothing other than the believing life in the Spirit which has become free of trust in the flesh, thus from a continuing abiding with one’s self; it is only understood in its outward turning, in its turning toward others. I Cor. 13 shows that love is not only the chiefest gift of the Spirit, it is the one which comprehends all others, includes all others as various differentiations in itself. It is, therefore, nothing other than faith; it is “faith working” (Gal. 5:6). Thus too, when the Spirit appears as the Spirit of sanctification, that at times stresses more strongly the fact that it is the Spirit that takes man from his lost estate and places him in the righteousness procured by Christ (in I Cor. 6:11 “sanctified” is synonymous with “justified”); at other times it stresses more strongly the fact that it is the Spirit that allows man now to live in this state, that is, bestows upon him the concrete formation of this new state of his (I Cor. 6:19, II Cor. 6:6, I Thess. 4:7f.). Both are the same, only observed from different viewpoints.

If Paul had thus learned to understand the Spirit as the power of God which makes it possible for us to believe in the saving act of God in Christ, which frees us from all trust in our own works and which, at the same instant, lays us quite open to our neighbor and a life in love toward him, he had actually done no more than really to think through to the end what already appears in rudimentary fashion in the Synoptics as an interpretation of the Cross. Even there the event of the Cross is understood as the expiatory work of God in our behalf which saves us (Mark 14:24); as a call to repentance which reveals to us our own wicked and false doings (Mark 12:1-12); and as that which makes possible an imitation in true love toward others (Mark 10:42-45).

The difference between Paul and Acts does not, therefore, lie in the fact that here for the first time the ethical side of the Spirit’s working is seen, or in other details, all of which are but outworkings of a single decisive change in the understanding of the Spirit. Paul recognizes what had already been experienced before him, but what had not yet been
elevated into conscious theological expression: that the Spirit is not only a supplementary gift for especial occasions, but is the power which binds men to Christ and to what, in Christ, God had done for them. There­with it is declared that the entire life of the believer is really a new, "eschatological" life, that it is a gift of grace not only in certain extraordinary phenomena or in particular utterances, but in his total existence, indeed in the very foundation of his being; it is an act of God, life springing from his power and no longer from its own roots. For this rea­son, in I Cor. 12-14, Paul sternly corrects the opinion of the Corinthians, who thought that the extraordinary nature of a phenomenon was a sign of its origin in the Spirit of God. For this reason, too, he prefers to push glossolalia into the background and list the pastoral care and leading of the community also as gifts of the Spirit. Whoever wished to place a higher value on the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit than on the normal ones remained yet at man's level and had not yet understood how completely the Spirit points one precisely away from this level to Christ alone.

IV. John

What happened in the case of the prophets did not happen to Paul: his message concerning the Spirit did not sink back again to become a doctrine of the spirit of wisdom which lives in man. It was taken up by John and, in part, still more resolutely thought through to a conclusion. But since he was writing a Gospel, it becomes abundantly clear what significance the Pauline insights have for the picture of Jesus as the Synop­tists had already drawn it.

This is shown first of all by the fact that the old concepts are even more resolutely avoided: the idea of a sudden appearance of the Spirit, of the extraordinary manner of its manifestation, thus, of the ecstatic phenomena or marvellous acts of the Spirit, is lacking. In no sense does Jesus appear here as a pneumatic. Yet John is not satisfied here with the way which Luke took. He does not merely modify the notion of an inspiration of Jesus by the Spirit, he excludes it altogether because in it there would always seem to be expressed a fundamental separation of the Son from the Father which could only be overcome through a third person, the Spirit. In a somewhat simplified manner one could formulate it thus: by the Synoptics the unity of Father and Spirit is presup­posed quite without question, and this then cast light upon the Son and determined his way; while with John the unity between Father and Son
is the presupposition which is assumed without question, and which alone leads to the sending of the Spirit. For this reason John tells neither of the begetting of Jesus by the Spirit nor of his endowment with the Spirit at his baptism.⁹

John proceeds from the “Gnostic” conception. Spirit and flesh for him, too, are the two spheres which stand over against one another. “God is Spirit” sounds at first flush quite Gnostic: God belongs to that higher sphere which is inaccessible to men. But this concept becomes something quite new in that John does not speak of it as a Stoic would, as if this divine substance penetrated the entire cosmos; nor yet as a Gnostic would, as if it lived in the divine spark which, itself foreign to man, none the less dwells within him although it is, at best, buried within him. To be sure, this has a formal resemblance to all sorts of Greek parallels where it is said that God must be prayed to in the spirit. But essentially something entirely different is meant: God is not to be found in the divine spark which is innate in man and embodied in him. He is to be found only at one single place: in the Son who became flesh. To pray to God in the spirit does not, therefore, mean to pray to him in the consciousness of one’s own spiritual nature (Geistsubstanz), and certainly not to pray to him in some spirituality of one’s own which stands in contrast to the external cult. Rather it means no longer to pray to him in the sphere of the flesh, in the various human categories of thought and in terms of human possibilities, but in his own sphere where he himself is, in the “heavenly world,” and there where this heavenly world has broken into the earthly world: in Jesus Christ who is “the truth.”

So then John can announce that the Spirit is life-giving. He means thereby nothing other than Paul meant, who could say the same thing (John 6:63, II Cor. 3:6). Only he does not think as Paul does in rabbinic-legal categories, but rather in the thought forms of a non-orthodox Judaism. He can, therefore, more directly characterize life as union with Jesus Christ, as being joined to him, without going the whole way with the thought of Paul. Spirit is recognition of the saving act of God at the Cross, therefore, liberation from sin, therefore the renunciation of one’s own righteousness, therefore the open heart toward one’s neighbor, therefore redemption, salvation. In a far less restricted fashion than Paul, John thus takes up concepts which originally had been understood quite naturalistically. He understands the coming of God in Jesus Christ

⁹. The descent of the Spirit is conceived of only as a sign for the Baptist, of the baptism of Jesus nothing more is said.
as such as the step which had spanned the dividing line between God and world which is so ruinous for man. To live means once more to be with God. With less concern than Paul, John can, therefore, speak of being "begotten of the Spirit." But he does not mean this in a naturalistic sense: no alteration of the soul-substance or anything like that is meant but, as in Paul, the gift of the recognition that in Jesus God himself has encountered man.10

This overcoming of a naturalistic, materialistic way of thinking is perhaps most clearly to be seen in 6:63 and 7:38f., and in the words concerning the Paraclete. In all these passages it is maintained that the earthly Jesus and communion with him, and union with him, cannot yet really give the Spirit and life. Only after his death and his exaltation will the Spirit be present and, therewith, fulness of life. But that is no longer a mythical concept, as if only the Exalted One had the power to pour out the Spirit (cf. Acts 2:23). In it there is expressed only the clear recognition that the "historical Jesus" alone is of no help, but only the "Christ of faith" who is, in fact, none other than the historical Jesus now recognized in his full significance for the believer. Thus far, the Paraclete is the same as Jesus, and yet Another who can only come when the work of redemption is completed.

Thus the Pauline thought is here conceived quite radically: the Spirit is none other than the Christ. But now it is the Christ as he comes to the believer in the preaching of the community: namely, as the one who has come for him, who lived for him, who was crucified for him, who was raised again for him. Thus the Spirit is the divine power of the Christian proclamation (the Lukan formulation appears to be taken up anew), in which Christ himself, as the one who had brought the redemptive work to its conclusion, comes to the believer and bestows life upon him.

Where is life to be found? John asks that, while Paul would ask: Where is righteousness (and, in it, life) to be found? And his answer is at first glance quite Gnostic in form: it is only to be found with God, in the sphere of the Spirit, not of the flesh, in "heaven," not upon "earth"; for God is Spirit and to him there comes only he who himself stands in the Spirit. But what is Spirit? A heavenly substance, as the Gnostic thought? An angelic being, as primitive, popular belief would have an-

10. Begetting from above is not simply a moral renewal, although it can include this; it is so far elevated above the judgment of man that it cannot be shown up or measured as moral newness. That a man is "born again" only God can ascertain, however much this fact should and must be manifested in concrete actions (but this is not an easy thing for others to judge).
swered? A sign of something else, flaming up and ever again dying out, as the earliest church would have said? For John there is only one answer: access to God is only to be found where God himself encounters the world, that is in Jesus. Then Spirit can be nothing else than the "heavenly world" which, in Jesus came to meet man. Yet not simply in the earthly Jesus ("flesh is of no avail"), rather in the earthly Jesus as the one who is recognized as the salvation of the community, who both died and was raised again for her sake. So the Spirit, therefore, is the power of the post-Easter message in which Jesus is not only portrayed, but is preached, as the one who has come, who has been crucified and raised again for the community. So finally, there comes in the Spirit none other than he, Jesus himself, as the Exalted One, as the one who has brought the redemptive work to completion, as the one who is present for the sake of the community, and who gives to her the gift of life.

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If we listen humbly to the Scripture, without doing violence to it, we will recognize in what variegated forms, conditioned by all sorts of very human presuppositions, the earliest community attempted to express what the Holy Spirit meant to it. We can maintain that many of these statements were inadequate, open to misunderstanding, and indeed dangerous—just, as, in fact, all that we say about God is. But we will glimpse behind all these statements, so fragmentary and unsytematized, the unity of what has taken place here: the unity of the reality of the Holy Spirit. In him has God encountered them all, however awkward, however limited by their background they might be in speaking of it, the God who, in a final and unique way has reconciled the world unto himself in Jesus Christ.