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THE SPIRIT
OF THE FATHER
AND OF THE SON

Theological and Ecumenical Perspectives

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CONTENTS

Foreward	7
1. Spirit of the Father and of the Son	13
2. The Spirit, God at work	17
3. The Holy Spirit, God as love	27
4. The Holy Spirit and the divine nature	33
5. The Spirit of the Father	43
6. The Spirit of the Father and of the Son	49
Conclusion	61

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FOREWORD

The book of Wisdom puts it magnificently: "The Spirit of the Lord has filled the world" (Wis 1:7). It was the beating of the wings of the Spirit that enabled creation to spring into life. It is thanks to its presence that Israel was a messianic nation whose successive generations had, in Paul's terms, a "spiritual", Christlike character (Gal 4:29), heralding the time when a girl from this people would conceive of the Holy Spirit. It is above all the mystery of Jesus which is filled with the Spirit. Born of God by the Holy Spirit, offered to him, "through the eternal Spirit" (Heb 9:14), Jesus was raised up by the Spirit of the Father through his almighty power (Rom 8:11). The Church was born and never ceases to be born of the waters of the Spirit (Jn 3:5) which flow from the side of Christ (Jn 7:37-39). Those who believe in him are transformed from glory into glory by the Spirit that shines on the face of Christ (2 Cor 3:18): one day they will be raised a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:44) by the power of the same Spirit (Rom 8:11).

Yes, indeed, the Spirit of the Lord fills the world. More, it is the fulness of God himself, the infinite depth where the divine mystery is formed; for it is in it that God begets and the Son is begotten. In the architecture of the

Trinity it is the central pillar, the all-encompassing mystery.

However strange this may seem, the Spirit has been virtually absent from theology over the last few centuries. In order to guard against a similar development in the future, it would be as well to find out why this became possible. I think we can distinguish two predominant reasons. One is to be found in the method used by a theology that was not sufficiently nourished by the prayerful faith of the Church which listens to the Word of God in Scripture and lives from sacramental worship: following its own paths, its logic could only lead to scanty pasture. The second cause follows from the first and was perhaps the decisive one. It is to be found in the style, more juridical than trinitarian, of understanding the mystery of the redemption. God thus appeared as justice to which offence has been given and which demanded infinite amends, and not as the Father who in love, which is to say in the Holy Spirit, begets his Son in the world and leads him, through life and death, to the glorious consummation of this begetting (Acts 13:32-37), raising him up in the Holy Spirit. In Jesus people saw the God-man who, on account of his divine nature, was able to pay the infinite price due to justice; they did not see in him the Son who, in his life and death, gives his assent to his Father who begets him in the Spirit. As a result the Spirit was not mentioned, and the

salvific meaning of the resurrection, the complete pouring out of the Spirit in the world, was ignored; all that counted was the suffering thrown into the scales of justice. The ecclesiology that was inspired by this juridical theology of the redemption could only be miserly in its references to the Holy Spirit. The Church was seen above all in its institutional aspect and considered as a simple instrument for applying the merits of Christ; whereas it is the great paschal sacrament by which the risen Christ encounters men and women in order to gather them into his body in the communion of the Holy Spirit.

But over the past few decades the Spirit has been returning with the power and gentleness that are proper to it, and is little by little re-establishing itself within the perspectives of theology.

Recently I published a book on the Holy Spirit.¹ But the mystery of the Holy Spirit, as inexhaustible as it is worthy of adoration, invites one always to renew one's investigations, and it is with joy that one answers this appeal. In that book I spoke among other things, but too concisely, of the relationship of the Spirit to the Father and the Son. In the pages that follow I have wanted to devote broader consideration to this subject, because it is here, in this relationship, that the mystery of the Spirit is to be found in its depth.

This study of mine falls within the frame-

work of the debate which for centuries has set the theologies of the Greek and Latin Churches against each other. Everyone is agreed that the Spirit proceeds from the Father. Jesus said so (Jn 15:26). But does it also proceed from the Son, as the Western Church affirms? The Eastern Church is inclined to deny this, and has often denied it categorically, because the honour of being the source belongs only to the Father. This divergence of view, because it touches the central mystery of the faith, the Trinity, has been thought sufficient to justify the break between these two Churches. Theology is thus faced with the imperative obligation of finding the point of meeting so that the Spirit, which is divine harmony and communion, may cease to be the cause of disagreement and division in the Church.

The study of the relationship of the Spirit to the Father and to the Son thus assumes a double importance, both theological, since this relationship provides the key to the mystery of the Spirit and ecumenical, since it falls to such study to resolve one of the problems that divide the Church.

To achieve this end it is advisable to question Scripture precisely on this subject more than has been done, since Scripture has much light to throw on the question, particularly when it evokes the first Easter when the glory of the Trinity was spread through the world. We shall find that it recognizes the legitimacy of

the demands both of the Greeks and of the Latins in what is essential in these: those of the Greeks when they claim for the Father alone the honour of being the source of the Spirit; those of the Latins when they want the Son to share in the mystery of which the Father is the source.

May the Spirit which fills all things make its presence of love and light felt in the pages which are here devoted to it.²

¹ *L'Esprit Saint de Dieu*, Paris, 1983. English translation: *Holy Spirit of God*, London, 1986.

² Some of the ideas expressed in these pages are to be found, sometimes developed a little more fully, in my article "Le Géniteur, l'Engendré, l'Engendrement" published in *Communautés et Liturgies*, no. 2-5, 1987, pp 181-198.

SPIRIT OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON?

The Holy Spirit is the bond of the Church's unity. But oddly enough the theology of the Holy Spirit is one of the causes of the division between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. While the Nicæan-Constantinopolitan Creed affirms that the Spirit "proceeds from the Father" the Catholic Church has accepted the addition of the extra detail "and [from] the Son" - *Filioque*. The Greeks do not only accuse the Latins of having changed a conciliar formulation but many of them regard the Latin formula as a heresy. The Catholic Church, even if it is ready to return to the original formulation, nevertheless believes that the latter is incomplete: it teaches that the trinitarian origin of the Spirit is not without connection with the Son.

Debate has got bogged down in this. To resolve the problem of the procession of the Spirit appeal has been made to the authorities of the past, but this appeal sometimes stops at the centuries when the crisis flared up and the two Churches were confronting each other, sometimes at the Fathers of the Church (par-

ticularly certain Eastern Fathers), but one never or hardly ever goes back to the source of all theology, Holy Scripture. A biblical scholar was able to write: "If one goes through the work published . . . by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches where theologians from all the major Christian confessions discuss the *Filioque*,¹ one quickly discovers that the biblical citations and references are thinly scattered and without much weight in the debate."²

This method has even been erected into a principle by declaring that recourse to Scripture is useless since it does not throw any decisive light on the problem.³ But if the question of the procession of the Spirit is central for the faith, as Orthodox theology in particular affirms with vigour, must we think that revelation, expressed mainly in the Scriptures, is silent on a subject of such importance? It seems on the contrary that only recourse to the Scriptural source can prevent the debate getting bogged down and allow the complex of problems to be encountered afresh at a depth where all those who are humbly and honestly seeking the reunion of the Churches can meet each other.⁴

One preliminary question has to be faced in advance of any investigation into the procession of the Spirit: what does Scripture say about the mystery of this Spirit itself? Knowing that the second person of the Trinity is that of the Son, we can affirm without hesitation that this

person proceeds from the Father and from him alone and does so by generation. But what would we know of the origin of this person without knowing his nature as the Son? Hence why should one want to talk of the procession of the Spirit without even questioning Scripture on what the Spirit is? To the extent that one does not know the nature of the Spirit one will not know either from whom it proceeds or how, and one will find oneself forced to make the often repeated avowal: "We have learned that there is a difference between the generation [of the Son] and the procession [of the Spirit] but in no way have we learned what kind of difference this is."⁶

The key to the problem of the procession of the Spirit is to be found in the mystery of the Spirit itself, and on this Scripture has a lot of light to throw.

¹ The reference is to a collection of papers edited by Lukas Vischer and published under the title *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ: Ecumenical Reflections on the Filioque Controversy*, London/Geneva, 1981.

² M.-A. Chevallier, "L'Évangile de Jean et le Filioque", in *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 57 (1983), p. 93.

³ P. Evdokimov, *Présence de l'Esprit Saint dans la tradition orthodoxe*, Paris, 1977, p. 49 (quoted by M.-A. Chevallier, *art. cit.*). With what he regards as the entirety of Catholic and Orthodox theologians he concludes that recourse to Scripture does not work and that the only thing is study of the patristic texts.

⁴ M.-A. Chevallier, *loc. cit.*: "I hope I may be permitted . . . to affirm a conviction which is not only that of a professional biblical scholar but also that of a believer involved in ecumenical

THE SPIRIT, GOD AT WORK

research: it is only an exact and detailed reference to the Scriptural foundations that will allow the whole complex of problems to be re-shaped in a way that all are able to recognize.⁵

⁵ Augustine, *De fide et symbolo* 9:19, CSEL 41, p. 22, attributes theology's lack of knowledge about the Spirit to the fact that Scriptural studies are not developed enough: "The Holy Spirit has not always been studied as fully and carefully as it might by scholars and leading commentators on the Scriptures so that it would be easy to understand its proper character, which has the effect that we cannot call it either Son or Father but only Holy Spirit."

⁶ John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* 1:8, PG 94: 820, 824. The same assertion is made by contemporary theologians. Yves Congar, *La Parole et le Souffle*, Paris, 1983, p. 167 (cf. *Je Crois en l'Esprit Saint*, vol. III, Paris, 1980, p. 83 (ET: *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, London/New York, 1983)): "The Latin Fathers and theologians proclaimed like the Greeks that they could not penetrate the difference generation and procession (the *ἐκπόρευσις* of the Spirit)." According to B. Bobrinsky, *Le mystère de la Trinité*, Paris, 1986, pp. 249 sq., this admission can already be found in Gregory of Nazianzus.

If the "how" of the procession of the Spirit is unknowable, how can one affirm with assurance that it proceeds from the Father alone or from the Father and from the Son? Does not this form part of the "how"?

Sometimes theologians have thought they could define the trinitarian origin of the Spirit by the word of procession itself (cf. Jn 15:26: "The Spirit ... who proceeds from the Father").

But according to John both the Son and the Spirit "proceed" from the Father. If he uses two different verbs (*ἐξήχθησαν*, *ἐκπορεύονται*) this is simply a stylistic variation: cf. R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannes evangelium*, vol. III, Freiburg, 1975, p. 136 (ET: *The Gospel according to St John*, vol. 3, London/Tunbridge Wells, 1982); M.-A. Chevallier, *op. cit.*, p. 99. One must not therefore make the *ἐκπόρευσις* (or procession) of the Spirit into a hypostatic characteristic of it, unless to specify the nature of its procession.

With remarkable consistency, the books of the Old Testament and still more those of the New link the two terms "Spirit of God" and "power of God".¹ Spirit and power are twins, linked throughout the Bible in inviolable faithfulness.

According to the Old Testament, the Spirit is the divine power of creation and life.² It is the Spirit that gives the heroes of Israel their strength,³ that endows its wise men with intellect,⁴ that sends out the prophets – "men of the Spirit" (cf. Hos 9:7) – and enables them to preach the good news and work wonders (Is 61:1-2).

The New Testament concludes the process of identifying the Spirit with the power of God. The texts are numberless. When the Holy Spirit comes upon Mary,⁵ it is "the power of the Most High" that overshadows her, demonstrating that "nothing is impossible with God" (Lk 1:35-37). Jesus is "anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38), he opens his ministry in the power of the Spirit (Lk 4:14, 18). He sets himself against the domination of the devil in the power of God (Lk 11:20), which Matthew (12:28) interprets as the Spirit itself.

In the glorification of Jesus we find the entirety of God's power involved in this greatest of his works. To describe it the epistle to the Ephesians heaps up phrases expressing the idea of power (Eph 1:18-20). One could say that God's almighty power exhausts itself in the raising of Jesus, that God cannot do anything greater, since "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" in Christ as a result (Col 2:9): from now on the humble servant (Phil 2:7-8) shares equally in the infinite lordship of the Father (Phil 2:9-11). "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me," Jesus tells the disciples after his resurrection (Mt 28:18, cf. 26:6-4).

Now, "the power of his resurrection" (Phil 3:10) is none other than the Holy Spirit. Paul's assertion: "He was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God" (2 Cor 13:4) is interpreted in 1 Peter 3:18 as "being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit". In Romans 8:11 Paul speaks openly of the Spirit as the power of the resurrection, both for Christ and for those who believe in him.

He says the same in Romans 6:4 "Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father." The link which unites the Spirit, power and glory is known.⁶ Glory is the great manifestation of God's majesty: "In the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord" (Ex 16:7).⁷ It is the shining brightness of the mystery of God. Glory belongs to what Peter calls "the spirit of glory and of God".⁸ The Spirit, the power and the

glory bring about the unique resurrection of Jesus and, following 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, that of those who believe in him, because they form a single cause.

Exalted in the power and the glory of the Spirit, Jesus promises the apostles: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you".⁹ That is why the apostolic preaching is spread "in demonstration of the Spirit and power" (1 Cor 2:4), winning "obedience from the Gentiles... by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom 15:18-19).

What has been said of Paul – "The close combination of the two concepts of the Spirit and of power is one of the characteristic marks of Pauline theology"¹⁰ – applies to the theology of the Bible as a whole: the Spirit is God's power at work. In Trinitarian language one can conclude that in God the Spirit is the working person. Cyril of Alexandria asserted: "The Spirit... is not alien to the divine nature, but as the natural and essential and substantial power proceeding from it and remaining in it achieves all the works of God".¹¹ Power, all-powerful activity, is a hypostatic characteristic of the Spirit.

Furthermore it is never presented as the effect of God's action: it is that action. In the Easter event when the mystery of the Trinity is fully realized and revealed in the world, it is the Father who arranges the act of resurrection which affects the Son while the Spirit is the

power of the resurrection (Rom 8:11). The Spirit is neither he who glorifies nor he who is glorified but the glorification of the one who has been raised up. In the annunciation, where the mystery of Easter is already reflected, God is the Father who begets, the Son is begotten in the world, while the Spirit is the all-powerful action in which the work is accomplished. The same arrangement appears in different fields: in that of creation, where God creates in Christ and for him (Col 1:16) through the Spirit which is the agent of revelation;¹² in that of sanctification, where it is the Father who sanctifies the Son (Jn 10:36) and his sons and daughters through the Spirit which is their sanctification. Irenaeus explained it long ago: "The anointer is the Father, the one who is anointed is the Son, and the anointing is the Spirit."¹³

If it is true that God's action in his almighty power constitutes a hypostatic characteristic of the Spirit, if in other respects it is certain that the Father has only one action by which he is God the Father, then we are driven to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is this power of begetting in person. In enumerating the three persons of the Trinity one can give the Spirit a trinitarian name which corresponds to those of the Father and of the Son: in God there is the begetter, the begotten, and the act and power of begetting. Both the Son and the Spirit proceed from the Father in his paternity: one is begotten, the other is the begetting.

Numerous texts bear witness that in Jesus the divine sonship is linked to the presence and the action of the Spirit: "he is Son of God in the Spirit. In the story of the annunciation, the Spirit does not play the part of a man with regard to Mary: it is God and not the Spirit who is the Father of the child; the Spirit is like the divine womb, of which Mary is the human counterpart; it is the begetting power of God.¹⁴ In the story of Jesus's baptism and according to John 1:32-34 he on whom the Spirit rests is Son of God. The resurrection of Jesus is the work of the Father (Gal 1:1), who begets his Son in the fullness of sonship. God has raised him up according to the words of Psalm 2: "You are my son, today I have begotten you" (Acts 13:33 quoting Ps 2:7). It is the Spirit which is the Father's action of raising Jesus up (Rom 8:11), the glorious begetting of Christ.

This role is also played by the Spirit but at another level, in the sonship of the children of God. These are "born of water and the Spirit" (Jn 3:5), "by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit" (Tit 3:5): they are born of water, which is a feminine, maternal symbol, and of the Spirit which it symbolizes and which is like the divine womb of their birth. It is in their communion with Christ that the Father begets men and women, since his entire action is concentrated on bringing the Son forth in the world, and it is in the Spirit that he begets them: "When the time had fully

come, God sent forth his Son ... so that we might receive adoption as sons ... [and] has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father'" (Gal 4:4-6). The Father raises Jesus up in the Spirit (Rom 8:11), he raises him up in a fulness of begetting (Acts 13:33; Rom 1:4), and he raises those who believe in Christ "together with" Christ (Col 2:12) in "the power of his resurrection" (Phil 3:10, 21) who is the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:11). It is in this way that the Church is formed by the Son: "By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (1 Cor 12:13), which is that of Christ (1 Cor 12:27). The two phrases which characterize the Christian life – "in Christ" and "in the Spirit" – are almost synonymous.¹⁶ Everything demonstrates that it is in the Spirit that one becomes a child of God, in communion with the Son, himself begotten in the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit in its effusion is thus inseparable from the Son who is Son in the Spirit, as inseparable as from the Father who, in the Spirit, is the Father of the only Son.¹⁷

The objection may perhaps be made that to understand the Spirit as the divine begetting is to place it before the Son and change the order of the Trinity which theology does not have the right to disturb. But neither should one make of the Spirit the last person of the Trinity, brought forth after the Son, and a person who would be sterile since no other person would proceed from it. Furthermore, if the Father brought forth

the Spirit after the Son, apart from his begetting, the Father would not in this action be the Father, he whose entire being is identified with the fatherhood of the only-begotten Son. The Father and the Son are the two poles of the movement of the Trinity, and the Spirit is this movement. It is naturally named in the third place, after the two poles, but it is far from being the last. Although it may be neither the beginning (the Father) nor the conclusion (the Son), it is at the beginning and at the conclusion, since it is in it that the Father begets and the Son is begotten: far from being barren, it is the fertility of God. We should not therefore be astonished to find more than once in the tradition the pattern Father-Spirit-Son.¹⁸

The more normal enumeration is not intended to contradict the wonderful mystery of the perichoresis¹⁹ of the Trinity, of which the Spirit is the movement. In placing the Spirit last we are not denying that it is also at the beginning and everywhere.

Here, then, is a first truth we have to take account of in order to establish the relationship of the Spirit to the Father and to the Son: the Spirit is the divine begetting.

¹⁶To enumerate all the texts would take too long here. I would refer readers to my two previous works *La Résurrection de Jésus, mystère de salut*, Le Puy, 1950, pp. 106-113, 10th ed., pp. 70-74 IET; *The Resurrection*, London, 1960, and *L'Esprit Saint de Dieu*, Paris, 1983, pp. 19-24 IET; *Holy Spirit of God*, London,

1986), as well as my article *Le Géniteur, l'Engendré, l'Engendrement in Communautés et Liturgies*, 1987, pp. 181-184.

² Gen 1:2; Is 32:15, 44:3-5; Ps 104:30.

³ Judges 3:10, 6:34, 13:25, 11:29, 14:6, 14:19, 1 Sam 10:6.

⁴ Num 24:2; 2 Sam 23:2; Is 9:5, 11:2.

⁵ The image is taken from the Old Testament where the Spirit, which is the power from on high, descends on someone and overshadows him or her.

⁶ For the parallel between Spirit, power and glory cf. *La Résurrection de Jésus, mystère de salut*, ch. 3, and *L'Esprit Saint de Dieu*, Paris, 1983, pp. 19-24 [English translations listed in note 1]. Gregory of Nyssa's saying may appear a little simplistic on account of its style of argument but it is very exact: "No one of those who examine the question would be able to contradict that the Holy Spirit is called glory if he or she considers the words of the Lord: 'The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them' (Jn 17:22). In effect he gave them this glory when he said to them: 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (*Hom. in Cant.* 15, PG 44:1117).

⁷ Ex 19:16; Deut 5:22; cf. Jn 2:11, 11:40.

⁸ 1 Pet 4:14. Some manuscripts read: "The spirit of glory and of power and of God".

⁹ Acts 1:8; cf. Lk 24:49.

¹⁰ J. Lebreton, *Les origines du dogme de la Trinité*, Paris, 1919, vol. 1 p. 398 [ET: *History of the Dogma of the Trinity* vol. 1, London, 1939].

¹¹ *Theocaurus Assert.* 34, PG 75:580/608, cf. 72:908.

¹² B. Bobrinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 274, citing V. Lossky: "The Son is the manifestation, the Spirit is the power which manifests", and p. 83: "It is the Spirit of revelation. Every time it is a question of revelation, of witness, the Spirit ... is necessarily there."

¹³ *Adv. haer.* 3:18:3, SC 211:350. Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto* 12, SC 17:155: "To name Christ ... is to show God who has anointed the Son who has been anointed, and the anointing which is the Spirit."

¹⁴ Do not some Orthodox theologians say the same? P. Evdokimov, "L'Esprit Saint pensé par les Pères et vécu dans la liturgie", in *Le Mystère de l'Esprit Saint*, Mame, 1968, p. 85: "One can say with Father Meyendorff (*Russie et chrétienté*, 1950, nos 3-4, p. 177) that its [the Spirit's] *raison d'être* is in the Son". Similarly B. Bobrinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 298: "The Son will thus be the *raison d'être* of the procession of the Spirit."

Bobrinsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93: "There is here [Lk 1:25-32] an operational convergence between the pouring out of the Spirit and the birth of Jesus."

He says "almost" because these must not be confused: Christ and the Holy Spirit. Cf. my *La Résurrection de Jésus, mystère de salut*, ch. 6 [ET: listed in note 1 above].

It should recall that great passage in Basil of Caesarea's *De Spiritu Sancto*, 16:39, SC 17:180-181, where the Spirit is presenting Christ as "anointing" of Christ and as "inseparable" from him. Cyril of Alexandria (*In Job.* 9, PG 74:261) agrees: "At the moment when Jesus says the Spirit will be sent, he promises that he will send the Spirit himself."

¹⁵ B. Bobrinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 75: "In Irenaeus of Lyons, as well as in the superior André Benoît has underlined in his study of this text (*Saint Irénée*, Paris, 1960), one finds passages where the Spirit is mentioned in advance of any Christological affirmation," p. 78: "The Church, particularly in its experience and liturgy of the sacraments, has continually oscillated between the pattern Father/Son/Spirit and the pattern Father/Spirit/Son." I think theology talks of a perichoresis or round dance of the Spirit and the Son, but not really for what Latin theology calls circumincession (circulation) or circumincession (interpenetration).

THE HOLY SPIRIT, GOD AS LOVE

The literature of the New Testament allows us to go further. With the same consistency it links the two ideas of Spirit and love, just as it links Spirit and power. The books of the Old Testament did not bequeath it this legacy: is this the reason why the New Testament never identifies the Spirit and the love of God explicitly? But in numerous passages it presupposes this very link as an inescapable truth for the Christian experience.

One passage alone comes close to an explicit identification: "Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rom 5:5). God makes the gift of his Spirit: by this gift the love of God – that which is in the heart of God – is poured into our hearts. It has been *poured*. Now in biblical language it is the gift of the Spirit which is expressed by the image of effusion, sometimes directly and explicitly: "I will pour out my Spirit,"¹ sometimes indirectly, as when the gift of the Spirit is compared to water poured out.²

Thanks to this love poured into his or her heart, the hope of the believer will not be disappointed³ on the day of the Lord. It is the presence of the Spirit which assures the believer of his or her final salvation,⁴ of which the grace of the Spirit now present constitutes the earnest, the first fruits of the fullness to come.⁵ All this allows us to conclude that, according to Rom 5:5, the love of God is poured into the heart of the believer through the presence of the Spirit.

Numerous passages, less formal, suggest by their regular association of the two concepts that charity is a hypostatic characteristic of the Spirit. The Colossians are praised for their "love in the Spirit" (Col 1:8), and the two expressions "in the Spirit" and "in charity" seem to be used virtually synonymously: those who believe live in both, they act and sanctify themselves in the Spirit and in love,⁶ and it is in the Spirit and in love that the Church is built up.⁷ It is again by the Spirit that the Church is united to Christ (Rom 8:9), forming but a single body with him (1 Cor 12:13-27). Now in human language love is the term used for the power that unites one being to another so as to make but a single body. The Spirit is a power of communion which creates the unity between the believing followers of Christ: "The fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor 13:14).⁸

Though less explicit than Romans 5:5, these passages are convincing: they express the intuition that everything that falls within the domain

of love comes from the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the Spirit is opposed to the flesh not simply as the power from on high contrasted with the weakness of the creature, but again as love, as an infinite opening out in contrast and contradiction to shutting oneself up in oneself, egoism and hatred (Gal 5:17-23). Through his death in the weakness of the flesh (Rom 8:3) Christ has become "a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor 15:45), a being who gives himself and source of life, the Holy Spirit having "spiritualized" him completely. According to the excellent definition provided by a great exegete and theologian, Heinrich Schlier, the Spirit is in God the power of opening up and pouring oneself out,⁹ the almighty power of an overflowing love. Theology is able to say at one and the same time that it is love hypostatized as it is power in person.¹⁰

If then the Spirit is, in God, the activity and if it is love, it is in love, by the very fact of loving, that the Father accomplishes his unique activity, that of begetting the Son. In God, there is the begetter, the begotten and the begetting. Following Augustine we should add that there is "he who loves, he who is loved, and love".¹¹

It seems that we should resolutely avoid an opinion found in one school of Latin theology according to which the Father begets the Son by way not of love but of intelligence.¹² It is by loving that God begets "his beloved Son" (cf. Col 1:13). It is thus that the divine perichoresis

obtains: the Father is the Father in love; the Son is the Son in love; he is the Son "in the bosom of the Father" (Jn 1:18), he is born and lives in his loving embrace.¹³ It must be repeated: without being either the beginning or the end of the Spirit is at the beginning and at the end. It is the womb where everything is achieved.

¹ Joel 2:28-29; cf. Is 32:15, 44:3-5; Zech 12:10; Acts 2:18, 10:45; Tit 3:6.

² Ezek 36:25-27; Is 44:3-5.

³ Translating *καταργήσω* as being "confounded" rather than "disappointed" seems right: cf. the commentaries of R. Bultmann, E. Käsemann, H. Schlier, and U. Wilckens.

⁴ Eph 1:4, 4:30.

⁵ Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 1:22, 5:5.

⁶ Rom 8:4, 14 and Eph 5:2; Rom 15:16 and Eph 1:4.

⁷ Eph 2:22, 4:16; Col 2:2.

⁸ Is it a question of all sharing in the Spirit or a communion created by the Spirit? Without a doubt it would be futile to make this distinction and set the two ideas off against each other.

What is involved is a communion or fellowship created by the Spirit in the sharing in this Spirit, "which goes better with the final phrase 'with you all'" (M. Carrez, *La deuxième épître de saint Paul aux Corinthiens*, Labor et Fides, 1986, p. 244). Cf. in the same way 1 Cor 10:16 where the "participation" (or "communion") "in the body of Christ" is at one and the same time communion in this body and the communion of those who believe in one body. Theology is aware that the Spirit is the principle of communion in God in the first place, a truth expressed in the liturgical formula "in the unity of the Holy Spirit". Augustine *De Trinitate* VI:7, CCL 50:235: *ideo unitas, quia caritas*.

⁹ *Die Kraft der Selbsterschließung Gottes*; God's power of disclosing or revealing himself, *Der Römerbrief*, Freiburg-Im-Breisgau, 1977, p. 268.

¹⁰ Several theologians refuse to see in love a personal characteristic of the Spirit. V. Lossky, *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient*, Paris, 1944, p. 78: "The Spirit will

never be assimilated to the love of the Father and of the Son."¹¹ P. Evdokimov, *Le Mystère de l'Esprit Saint*, Paris, 1968, p. 93: "The Holy Spirit is not the love of the Father and of the Son, is not the bond between them . . . In fact, love is inherent in all three persons, 'love is the very life of the divine nature'" (quoted from Gregory of Nyssa, *De anima et resurrectione*, PG 46:96). Of course, love is common to all three persons, but in keeping with each one's hypostatic character. The Father is love according to 1 John 4:8, not because he identified himself with love but because his work is of love: he sent us the Son (1 Jn 4:9). The Son is love itself. B. Bobrinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 158, recognizes this: "The Holy Spirit is the mutual love and bond of love between the Father and the Son." One cannot raise the objection that love is the attribute of the divine nature common to all three persons, because we shall see that all that reason attributes to the divine nature Scripture attributes particularly to the Holy Spirit as a characteristic of its person.

Greek theology is loth to interpret the mystery of the three persons according to the concepts of human psychology in the way that Latin theology is wont to do (for example, when it is said that the Son is born of the Father by way of intelligence, that the Spirit proceeds by way of love). It is not of course by following simple psychological concepts that one should understand the Spirit who is love. To say that the Father loves means that he is the Father, that he begets; to say that the Son is loved and that he loves the Father is to express his sonship; the Spirit is love in person in as much as it is the divine begetting. In this way one is placing oneself beyond simple psychological considerations. In all this however there is manifest an analogy with human love; but in speaking of a hypostatized love one is suggesting that no analogy is capable of plumbing the depths of the mystery of the one who is love itself.

¹¹ *De Trinitate* 8:14, CCL 50:290; cf. 6:7, CCL 50:236.

¹² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I:41:2 ad 2 (Latin edition, London/New York, 1976, vol. 7, p. 165). St. Paul calls Christ *the Son of God's love* in the sense of his being loved superabundantly by God, not in the sense that love is the principle of the Son's being begotten. "The begetting would thus not be the act of paternal love. The Son would be born by the way of intelligence, and love would beake itself to this Son who has been begotten."

¹³ The formula "in the bosom" indicates intimacy and tenderness,

as of the husband who clasps his wife to his bosom (Deut 13:6), of the wife who clasps her husband to her bosom (Deut 28:56) or her child (Ruth 4:16), of the beloved disciple "lying close to the breast of Jesus" (Jn 13:23).

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE DIVINE NATURE

By talking in this way we evoke a new aspect of the mystery of the Spirit. Theology distinguishes between the three persons in God and the divine nature: it is hardly able to dispense with this distinction which reason finds unavoidable. But Scripture, while permitting this distinction, and even suggesting it, does not use this kind of language.¹ What reason thinks it can say of the divine nature Scripture attributes in a special way to the Holy Spirit? This does not mean that the Spirit should be identified with the divine nature, because what a more rational theology calls nature is not exactly a divine person. But everything that is contained in the notion of divine nature is found hypostatized in the Holy Spirit.

As a matter of fact, what we call the divine transcendence (and what the Bible calls holiness) is represented by the Spirit with regard to earthly reality: it is the Most High. Jesus proclaims the Spirit as the power from on high (Acts 1:8): in being born of it the children of God are born from on high (Jn 3:5-7), in the

manner of Jesus himself who is from above and not from below (Jn 8:23). Being the Most High, the Spirit comes down in order to act in the world: it came down on the Virgin Mary (Lk 1:35); it descended from heaven to rest on Jesus (Mk 1:10); it is "sent upon" the disciples (Lk 24:49), "sent from heaven" (1 Pet 1:12) "from the Father" (Jn 15:26), whither Jesus must ascend to be able to bestow it (Jn 16:7).

The traditional contrast and opposition between the Spirit (or spirit) and the flesh is that which obtains between the heavenly reality which is power, fulness, holiness, and the realities of shadow and weakness, transitory and inclined to sin.³ In contrast to external, transitory worship Jesus proclaims worship "in spirit and truth", since "God is spirit" (Jn 4:23-24). It is only "spiritual" reality that is "true", according to the language of John: while "the flesh is of no avail, the words that I have spoken to you" (the realities I have been talking to you about) "are spirit and life" (Jn 6:63), are the realities of the fulness of heaven that lies beyond this world.

The contrast between flesh and Spirit (or spirit) finds a Pauline parallel in the antithesis between the spirit and the letter. The latter denotes the old covenant and its writings to the extent that these are merely the surface and transitory image of reality, while the Spirit (or spirit) is the fulness and depth of reality (2 Cor 3:5-17).⁴ Christ the Lord "is the Spirit" (2

Cor 3:17), the reality of fulness: he is this because he is a "life-giving spirit", the man from heaven, contrasted with Adam who is physical and of the earth (1 Cor 15:45-47). After affirming "The Lord is the Spirit" (the depths of reality) the Apostle can go on: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is . . ." (2 Cor 3:17), since Christ "is the Spirit" because of the fulness of the Spirit that is in him.

In non-biblical language one says that Christ is God because he is endowed with the divine nature. But Scripture sees in him the man of the Holy Spirit, born of God in this Spirit: "Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Lk 1:35). This divine sonship is brought to its complete fulfillment when, raised up in the Spirit, Jesus becomes "a life-giving spirit". The term "the whole fulness of deity" – which "dwells bodily" in Christ (Col 2:9) – is "quite close to *πνεῦμα*" (Spirit).⁵ The closeness is such that in the past more than one exegete thought wrongly that he was obliged to interpret Romans 1:3-4 of the double nature of Christ, both human and divine: "Descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness. . . ."⁶ As for those who believe, Scripture says they become children of God not through sharing in "a divine nature"⁷ but by the Holy Spirit, in which they are born and grow to maturity.⁸

In the first centuries of Christianity there was

a strongly attested theological tradition according to which the Spirit constitutes the heavenly or divine aspect of Jesus, what we call his divine nature.⁹ This tradition was able to cite in its support the Johannine symbolism of blood and water. When the soldier "pierced his side with a spear, . . . at once there came out blood and water" (Jn 19:34). The occurrence is of such importance that the evangelist felt obliged to swear to its truth "that you also may believe" (that you may have the faith). Jesus is "flesh" (Jn 1:14), and the blood flowing out bears witness to his authentic humanity. But he is also from on high (Jn 8:23), and the water is the proof of this because it is the symbol of the heavenly reality.¹⁰ The gospel which John wrote "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (Jn 20:31) here provides the divine proof of the truth of what he is saying: Jesus is man and Son of God. Now this "on high", symbolized here by the water, is identified in other passages with the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5). Jesus proclaims that the Spirit will be poured out like water from his side when he has been raised up (Jn 7:37-39). The symbolism of the water is thus complex: it evokes at one and the same time the Spirit and the heavenly aspect of the mystery of Jesus.

While John's gospel is concerned above all to proclaim Jesus's divinity, the first epistle is concerned to proclaim his human authenticity in the face of the threat of the docetist heresy (1

Jn 4:2): "This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood" (1 Jn 5:6). This is the Christian faith (1 Jn 5:5-12). It preserves the unity of the two aspects of the mystery of Jesus: in the heart of those who believe,¹¹ the Spirit joins the witness of the blood and the water, the Spirit who is involved in this mystery: "And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth" (1 Jn 5:7).

Theology lists numerous divine "attributes" in which the divine nature is expressed. Not only are these attributes to be found in the Holy Spirit,¹² but they belong to it in a particular way, to the extent that one can recognize in them a hypostatic character of the Spirit. God is holy, holiness is a major attribute of divinity, and he is Spirit (Jn 4:24): linked together these two attributes give the Holy Spirit its name:¹³ God is almighty: the¹³ Holy Spirit is in person the divine power. God is he who is living:¹⁴ the Spirit is the abundance of life, it is the Spirit of life (Rom 8:2) to the extent that through it Christ becomes "a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor 15:45).¹⁵ God is the eternal one and it is "through the eternal Spirit" that Jesus offers himself to God (Heb 9:14). God is love (1 Jn 4:8): the Spirit is God's love personalized.¹⁶

Unity is another divine attribute. In a more

rational language one says of God that he is one in the unity of a common nature. But Scripture talks not of a nature possessed in common but of "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor 13:14), while the Liturgy glorifies the Father and the Son "in the unity of the Holy Spirit".¹⁷ The Fathers and theologians celebrate the Spirit as "the bond of unity". Men and women, while possessing a common nature, are infinitely scattered, while the Father and the Son are one in the most absolute unity there is, that of a person who is common to them: one in the indivisible unity of a third person, in their Spirit belonging to both, a person who dwells in them, who as it were permeates them, in whom they are the Father and the Son. Here we find the pattern we have already noticed many times of the cause, the effect, and the action: the Father who is the source of unity, the Son who is one with him, and the Spirit that unites them.

With all these insights before our eyes we shall not be surprised at the sympathy Augustine felt for an idea circulating in his age: "Some have been bold enough to believe that the very fellowship of the Father and the Son and, so to speak, their divinity (which Greeks call *θεότης* is the Holy Spirit... They say that this divinity, which they also want to be understood as the mutual love and charity of the two, is called the Holy Spirit."¹⁸ Is this why the Spirit exhibits to a lesser extent than the two other

persons the characteristics which to our eyes mark a person and why Scripture describes it in impersonal images: wind, water, fire? It is nevertheless in the Holy Spirit, that is to say, in the infinite begetting, that the Father is, that he is the person of fatherhood; it is in it, in the begetting in its infinite reception, that the Son is, that he is the person of sonship. It is there that their divine nature is found, their way of being the essential, infinite God the Father, the essential, infinite God the Son. In God, everything assumes the dignity of the person, just as the theological concept of divine nature tries to express.¹⁹

Here, then, is a collection of scriptural insights which throw a beam of light on the mystery of the Holy Spirit. Theology should be inspired by these to draw from them some conclusions about the relations of the Spirit to the Father and to the Son.

¹ Only one of the later writings (2 Pet 1:4) talks of "the divine nature". This formula is no doubt inspired by Hellenism or by the language of Gnosticism: cf. Grundmann, s.v. *δὴμιον*, *δὴμιον*, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. II, Grand Rapids, 1964, p. 309; Köster, s.v. *φύσις* *θεοῦ*, vol. IX, Grand Rapids, 1974, pp. 271-278.

² So as to avoid multiplying scriptural references we shall limit ourselves to the New Testament. For the Old Testament see note 12 of next chapter.

³ X. Léon-Dufour s.v. "chair", *Vocabulaire de Théologie Biblique*, Paris, 1962, 2nd edition, pp. 150-151: "This kind of opposition between flesh and spirit ... is directly inspired by the Semitic opposition between earthly and heavenly..."

⁴ The same antithesis is to be found again in Rom 8:1-3 and, in

another form, in Col 1:17 where the reality of Christ is the body that casts its shadow in the Old Testament.

⁵ As is stated by the authors of the French ecumenical translation of the Bible in their note on Colossians 1:19. B. Bobrinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 73 (cf. pp. 77-81): "When the gospel and the Fathers say that the Spirit rests on Christ, this means at one and the same time the hypostatic presence of the Holy Spirit and the fullness of the divinity. There is a profound correspondence between these gospel formulas in which the Spirit is mentioned and the saying of Paul: 'In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell' (Col 1:19, 2:9)." For this correspondence between the Holy Spirit and "the common nature of the three persons" see also V. Lossky, *L'Image et à la ressemblance de Dieu*, Aubier-Montaigne, 1967, p. 70.

⁶ See for example B. Weiss, *Lehrbuch der biblischen Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, Berlin, 1903, p. 297 [ET: *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, Edinburgh, 1882-83], and the commentaries by Lagrange, Cornély, and Huby.

⁷ With the exception of 2 Pet 1:4 see note 1 above.

⁸ In 3:5; Rom 8:5-17; Gal 4:4-7. While using the language of "the divine nature" the Fathers and theologians repeat that it is the gift of the Spirit that makes men and women sharers in the divine nature. Cyril of Alexandria (*In Johannem* 14:18, PG 74:260) writes in order to show that the Spirit is of the same substance as the Father and the Son: "How does the creature come to share in the nature of God? By receiving the Holy Spirit." He repeats: "They share in the [divine] nature [of Christ] having received the Spirit" (*Ibid.*, 15:1, PG 74:333). See the passages cited by B. Bobrinsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 256-257.

⁹ F. Bolgiani, "La théologie de l'Esprit Saint de la fin du premier siècle après Jésus-Christ au concile de Constantinople (381)", in *Les quarante Neufes* 9, Paris 1979, p. 41: "The Holy Spirit is often thought of as the invisible pre-existing reality, in some way the divine side of Christ." It is well known that Justin had difficulty in distinguishing the Logos and the Spirit (cf. *Apologia* 1:33). This tradition is to be found in the paschal homilies, from which the following quotation comes: "By the blood that has been poured out for us we receive the Holy Spirit, since both the blood and the Spirit are made one so that, by the blood which is of our nature, we may be able to receive the Spirit that is foreign to us" (PG 59:726-727). Similar language is found in Irenaeus, *Démonstration* 97, SC 62:167: "He [the Son of God] has closely linked the Spirit of God the Father with the creature

of God, and man has been made in the image and likeness of God." Cf. also *Adu. Haer.* 5:1:1, SC 153:21: "Christ made God come down among men by the Spirit." Is it this tradition that Athanasius is drawing on when he writes (*De Incarnatione* 8, PG 26:996): "It is why the Word and Son of the Father joined to the flesh has become flesh, the perfect man, so that human beings joined to the Spirit might become one spirit. God himself is bearer of the flesh [σάρκαφόρος] and we human beings bearers of the Spirit [νευματοφόροι]?"¹⁷

¹⁸ The water of baptism makes one be born from on high (Jn 3:3-5); Jesus gives water that wells up to eternal life (Jn 4:14); water flows from the side of Jesus in his exaltation in heaven (Jn 7:37-39).

¹⁹ Cf. J. de La Potterie, *La Vérité selon saint Jean*, Rome, 1977, vol. I, pp. 391-395.

²⁰ In the case of the Old Testament E. Jacob (*La Théologie de l'Ancien Testament*, Neuchâtel, 1955, p. 100 [ET: *Theology of the Old Testament*, London, 1958]) recognizes that "the Spirit characterizes everything which is contained in the word God."²¹ As P. Evdokimov states (*op. cit.*, p. 92), with the Fathers "the Spirit is holiness hypostatized". Cf. B. Bobrinskoy, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

²² Judg 8:19; 1 Sam 17:26, 36; 1 Kings 17:1; 2 Kings 19:16; Ezek *passim*.

²³ Already in the Old Testament it is the source of all life (Ps 104:30): life abounds wherever the Holy Spirit is spread (Is 32:15, 44:3-5).

²⁴ Augustine *De Trinitate* xv:19, CCL 50A:513-514, notes that the Father and the Son have in common being love, spirit, holy: it is not in vain that the Spirit which is common to the two of them bears the name of the Holy Spirit and that love belongs to it. Does not the saying of Athanasius, in his fourth letter to Serapion (SC 15:180), go in the same direction: "It [the Holy Spirit] is what belongs to the substance of the Word and also what belongs to the Father?"

²⁵ The doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer.

²⁶ *De fide et symbolo* 9:19, CSEL 41:23.

²⁷ This kind of statement can seem provocative, so used are we to distinguish the divine nature on the one hand and on the other the three persons. But it seems that a scriptural knowledge of the Holy Spirit obliges us to transcend the opposition between essentialist and personalist theologies. Nor does such a statement contradict the Christological dogma of the two

natures, human and divine, united in the person of Christ. The Chalcedonian dogma is without doubt the best formulation philosophically speaking of the mystery of Jesus; but exegetes are aware that the Bible does not express itself in this philosophical language. And the latter has its limitations. This definition is static: it does not include Jesus's personal development in which his mission of redemption was accomplished. For the salvation of the world Jesus had to become through death what he was since his birth: the Son of God begotten by the Father in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. "Being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation..." (Heb 5:9). Instead of talking of two natures united in the person of the Son, one could also say that this man Jesus is the Son begotten in the Holy Spirit who, through his life and his death, has fully accepted his divine begetting. To say this is to affirm his humanity, his divinity, and the mission of redemption that he accomplished.

THE SPIRIT OF THE FATHER

If the Spirit is the divine begetting, the love within which God is the Father, this is *prima facie* evidence that the spirit proceeds from the Father: he is "the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father" (Jn 15:26).

According to its commonest biblical designation it is called the Spirit of God.¹ Now in the New Testament with its trinitarian theology the word "God" denotes the Father of Jesus, whom we call the first person of the Trinity: "There is one God, the Father . . ." (1 Cor 8:6). Jesus is "the Son of God", and "God" and "the Father" of Jesus are perfectly synonymous: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."² This fact is certain, universally confirmed by the texts.³ In calling it "the Spirit of God" we are designating it as the Spirit of the Father of Jesus Christ: the relationship of the Spirit to God the Father is primordial. At first sight one could even believe that the Spirit who is the divine begetting only springs up in the Father: this is where we encounter one of the limitations of the language we are using, since the word

"begetting" normally applies to the father and not to the son.

The Spirit is moreover, the expression of the nature of this God the Father. It is in the begetting, that is to say, in the Holy Spirit, that this God the Father is what he is: paternal and primary person. His nature of God the Father is in this infinite begetting. As Meister Eckhart said: "God's chief aim is giving birth."⁴ His divine being thus exhausts itself as it were in the infinite power of loving, in which he is himself in ecstasy in his Son. He is the essential Father, as much Father as God, as much God as Father. The Holy Spirit is truly the attribute of the Father, inseparable from his fatherly being.

Because the Spirit is the divine begetting we know that it proceeds from the Father in a different way than does the divine Begotten. This gives us some light on the manner of its procession. It is action, it is love: an action cannot be separated from the person who acts; love remains in the heart of the person who loves while making that person go out of himself or herself into another. While the Son "goes out" from the Father, differentiates himself from him in an infinite otherness, and goes as far as becoming incarnate in creation, the Spirit proceeds from the Father without leaving him is never like a baby at birth, never differentiates itself from the Father. It remains within him, the Spirit of God in his fatherhood. It no more differentiates itself from the Father than

the spirit or soul of a man differentiates itself from that man: it is the attribute of the Father, as his nature by which God the Father is what he is.

Because the Spirit is the divine begetting one does not obtain a triangular representation of the Trinity. Not only does each person differ infinitely one from the other in his personality, but only two poles exist between them, because the Father has only one Son, the sole and final expression of the action of fatherhood which is concluded in the begetting of the Son. No other person can be born of the Father, whose entire mystery is in this unique begetting. Nevertheless the Spirit too comes from the Father and moreover comes from the Father in his fatherhood, since he is the essential Father who only acts as Father. While the Spirit is not the Son, the whole of God's fatherly being is invested in the pouring out of the Spirit as much as in the generation of the Son. That is why the Spirit is not inferior either to the Father or to the Son and receives the same worship and glorification as they do (*qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur*).¹ Without being a Son, the Spirit proceeds from the Father in his fatherhood, since he is in person the eternal begetting. The Tri-unity has two poles, the Father and the Son, and the eternal movement goes from one to the other: the Spirit is this movement which encompasses and unites them.² That is why Eastern Chris-

tians like to say: "Glory to the Father and to the Son in the Holy Spirit."

Wonderful mystery, in which the Three are infinitely different and of equal majesty, united by the Father in his unique begetting!

Greek theology likes to celebrate the absolute monarchy of the Father, the honour he has of being the source from which everything begins and is accomplished. But this monarchy is very unlike the absolute monarchies known in history: it is trinitarian. The Spirit wells up from the Father but is not inferior to him, because it is in the Spirit that the Father begets, it is in the Spirit that he is the person of the Father.³ While everything has its source in the Father and no person proceeds from the Spirit, the latter is neither inferior to the Father nor barren: it is the abundance in him who is the source, it is the fruitfulness of God. Without being the beginning, it is nevertheless at the beginning; without being the conclusion or accomplishment of the movement of the Trinity it is at the conclusion, because it is the movement which goes from the Father to the Son, to the extent that it is also the Spirit of the Son.

¹ For example in the New Testament Rom 8:14; 1 Cor 2:11-13, 3:16, 6:11, 7:40; 2 Cor 3:3.

² 2 Cor 1:3, 11:31; Eph 1:3.

³ This vital fact, which unfortunately is little taken into account by theology, was already pointed out by T. de Régnon, *Études*

THE SPIRIT OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON

sur la Sainte Trinité, Paris, 1892, vol. 1, pp. 439-451. See above all Karl Rahner, "Theos in the New Testament" in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1, London/Baltimore, 1961, pp. 79-148, and also F.-X. Durrwell, *Le Père. Dieu en son mystère*, Paris, 1987, pp. 13-18. There are only rare exceptions which in fact serve to confirm the rule: they are a few passages where Jesus is called God because he shares the divinity of his God and Father.

⁴Sermon 68 (*Impletum est tempus Elisabeth*) in Meister Eckhart, *Sermons and Treatises*, translated and edited by M. O'C. Walsh, vol. II, London and Duverton, 1981, p.157. Maximilian Kolbe says the same thing more explicitly in *L'innocence révélée l'Esprit Saint*, writings translated by J.-F. Villepele, Paris, 1974, p. 48: "Who is the Father? What is his personal life? Begetting, because he begets the Son eternally. The Father begets, the Son is begotten, the Spirit is the process of conception, and there is their personal life by which they are distinguished from each other."

⁵What is called God's external activity also has two poles: the work of creation comes from the Father in the power of the Spirit towards Christ in whom all things were created (Col 1:16); by the incarnation the Father begets his Son in this world, in the power of the Spirit: the resurrection is the action of the Father on the Son in the Spirit; the Father sanctifies the Church and sanctifies the bread of the eucharist, making it the body of Christ, through the power of the Spirit; and the same will apply to the resurrection of the dead.

⁶The Spirit, while proceeding from the Father, is the principle of personalization. It is in it that the Father is the Father, the Son is the Son: it is in this way that the divine perichoresis is affirmed. In the world, the Spirit leads creation to the point of the dignity of the human person: by it the humanity of Jesus is assumed into the eternal person of the Son to the point of the full realization of the mystery of sonship in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

"The Spirit of God" is also called "the Spirit of the Son" (Gal 4:6), "the Spirit of Christ" (Rom 8:9), "the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:19), "the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:17).

If the Spirit is the divine begetting, the love in which the Son is born, the expression of the common nature of the Father and of the Son, one cannot talk of the procession of the Spirit from the Father unless in relation to the Son. Any attempt to separate the procession of the Spirit from the begetting of the Son would be against the truth of the Trinity.

The Spirit belongs to the Son as much as to the Father. If the Son did not possess it to the same extent as the Father the fullness of the Godhead would not dwell in him, because the Spirit is holiness personified, almighty power in person, and everything that prompts the idea of the divine nature is hypostatized in it. Without the full possession of the Spirit the Son would not be able to say: "All mine are thine, and thine are mine" (Jn 17:10). Those who believe are fellow heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17) by the fact

that they share in his Spirit (Gal 4:6-7), but the Son is pre-eminently the heir. Even more than the inseparable companionship of which Basil talks it is a question of a total impregnation, of an anointing of his being. To talk of the Spirit of Christ is to say that this man is more than a man because this Spirit is that of God in his divinity. At Easter when the mystery of sonship is revealed Jesus is born, he is and lives in the power of the Spirit to the point of being himself a "life-giving spirit" (1 Cor 15:45). So it is enough that he should communicate himself to men and women so that they may enter into the communion or fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

But the Son possesses the Spirit in a different way from the Father. The latter is the source: the Son receives it, the Son who is begotten in the Spirit. The mystery of the second person of the Trinity is entirely a matter of sonship: the Son is God in welcoming the gift of the Father.

The Spirit is not however received by him in passivity, like some object that one might possess. Nor can the Spirit itself be possessed in this way: it is the divine act of loving, the infinite abundance of the divine being, which is the source of God's internal ecstasy. It makes the Son as much as the Father give himself permanently, of such is their divine nature: not only is the Father God in giving himself to the Son, but the Son too is God in existing for and in the Father. Father and Son are God in the mutuality of their love, in the Holy Spirit.

Further, because the mystery of the Spirit is to well up in abundance, ought one not to say in this sense that the spirit flows from the Son too? It proceeds from the Father without leaving him, from the Son without leaving him, because it is the gift of love in the one and in the other. But in the Father it is that primordially, and by way of sonship in the Son, in whom it is truly the Spirit of the Son.

Anyone who accepts a gift allows the giver to give. Receptivity is never pure passivity: it is involved in the causality of the giving itself, a receptive causality. Two beings who love each other are aware of this when, in their mutual welcoming, each allows the other to love. By the welcome he offers the Son shares in his own begetting, in the abundant pouring out of the Spirit. For the Father begets both by his nature and in the free response given to the Son who welcomes: the Son is born and welcomes his birth both in virtue of his son-like being and in freedom. In infinite love human ideas of necessity and freedom are confounded and transcended. Beginning with the gift of the Father what takes place is a mutual exchange, a necessary and free communication.

Jesus who in this world is the mystery of the eternal Son provides the proof and illustration of this. The Father begets him, but it is up to

Christ to assent to the Father who begets him. What he is, the actions he performs and the words he utters come to him from his Father¹ in his fatherhood: "Whatever God the Father gives God the Son he gives him in begetting him."² When given its biblical name Jesus's assent to his Father is called obedience. John above all presents this as the virtue proper to the Son, as the expression of his sonship: in his obedience he is and shows himself to be the Son. Jesus's obedience is an assent to the fatherhood of God, to the divine begetting, right up to the day of unstinted assent, in becoming "obedient unto death" (Phil 2:8), to which corresponds the begetting of fulness. That is why "God has highly exalted him" (Phil 2:9), has raised him up "as also it is written in the second psalm, 'Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee'" (Acts 13:33). Now it is in the Spirit that the Father raises Jesus up whom he begets in the glorious fullness of his sonship. By his death Jesus thus summons the unfurling in him of the begetting power of the Father which is the Spirit.

Everything comes from the Father in his fatherhood, and it is he who raises up his anointed, his Christ,³ begetting him in the fullness of sonship. Nevertheless the Son plays a part in his own resurrection: "I lay down my life that I may take it again ... I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again" (Jn 10:17-18); "In three days I will raise it up...."

But he spoke of the temple of his body" (Jn 2:19, 21). What is this part that the Son plays in the action of his resurrection? It is that of the welcome due from a son: in death he assents to the Father who begets him; by becoming "obedient unto death" he calls forth the action of the Father in glorifying him. That is why "God has highly exalted him" (Phil 2:8-9). It is indeed the Father who sends forth the Spirit in which Jesus is raised up; but Jesus calls forth its effusion.

If it is true that the mystery of Jesus is that of the Word in its incarnation, ought it not to be admitted that the eternal Son takes part in the procession of the Spirit to the extent and in the same way that, by his unstinted assent to the Father, Christ opens himself to glorification and calls it forth? Very real is the role played by him in his resurrection, and the latter is unthinkable without his death; the two constitute twin aspects of the same paschal mystery. But Christ's participation is that of a son: it is receptive. Even dying in this way in unstinted obedience is something he receives from his Father who begets him in the Spirit: "Through the eternal Spirit [Christ] offered himself without blemish to God" (Heb 9:14). The Son takes part as a son in the eternal procession of the Spirit.

The same conclusion is forced on us when, rather than talk of obedience, we consider Jesus's death as the supreme act of love. We know that love arouses love. According to John

14:31 Jesus loves the Father and accepts his death out of love. The Father reciprocates and loves him because of the love his Son concedes to him: "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again" (Jn 10:17). The Father is the first one to love with "thy love for me before the foundation of the world" (Jn 17:24, 26); but his love is also called forth by seeing the Son in the generosity of his death. Now the Spirit of God is love hypostatized. If then once again Jesus in his death and resurrection is the mystery of sonship in his incarnation, it must be admitted that in the Trinity the love of the Son is for the Father an eternal calling forth of love. The Spirit which is this love flows from the Father, but it flows also in the loving response to the Son who loves him. The Son has his part in the eternal pouring forth of the Spirit. The Father fills the Son with his Spirit of love, and the love which takes over the Son elicits from the Father the gift of the Spirit in a perpetual round.

The perichoresis of the Trinity is a splendid mystery which needs to be taken into account in any consideration of the life of the Trinity. Not only is the Holy Spirit not inferior to the Father, having the honour to be at the beginning (without being the beginning), because it is in it that the Father is the Father, but the Son too is equal to the Father while receiving everything from him. If he did nothing but receive without himself being also a source he

would be inferior. A theology more philosophical than biblical might perhaps protest that because the Son receives the divine nature from the Father he is equal to him even without sharing in the pouring forth of the spirit. But one argues in this way at the level of the human idea of the divine nature and not at the level of the fellowship of the Trinity. The Son is the equal of the Father because in the Spirit received from the Father he allows the Father to give him this same Spirit, to beget the Son, to love him. In welcoming everything the Son enables the Father to be everything, to be the Father who begets in the Spirit.

It shows the wonderful humility of the Father in his "monarchy" when the Son who depends entirely on him enables him to be God the Father who begets him in the Holy Spirit. True love is known to be humble: here the love is infinite and the humility is boundless.

The Spirit of begetting, of love which gives birth, expression of the divine nature, is the Spirit at one and the same time of the Father and of the Son, united in the indivisibility of its unique person. At the same time the Spirit establishes them in their irreducible difference of infinite Father, infinite Son. The Spirit is unique and in itself infinitely diversified: the Spirit of fatherhood in the one, of sonship in

the other. Human beings have some experience of a reality which at one and the same time unites and diversifies, which unites two beings and establishes them in their difference: love by which someone gives himself or herself to the other and welcomes the other in himself or herself at the same time. Love is unique in giving itself and welcoming in one and the same movement of simultaneous flow and return. In the Father love is in the first place the giving of himself, in the Son the love of welcoming. In the second place and with the same force it is welcoming in the Father and giving in the Son. The Father and the Son each plays his role in the pouring out of the Spirit: the one as the Father, the other as the Son.

There is one passage which used to be frequently quoted in the controversy over the origin of the Spirit: "When the Counsellor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father" (Jn 15:26, cf. 16:7). In our days many people regard this passage as incapable of deciding these arguments. But is a passage which talks of the Spirit ever tame and without bite?

The Latins saw in it the proof that the Spirit proceeds at one and the same time from the Father and from the Son who "sends" it. The

Greeks rejected recourse to this text because, if it affirms the sending of the Spirit through the mediation of Christ, it remains silent on the trinitarian origin of the Spirit. They said that this sending belonged to the field of the "economy" of grace but not of the "theology" of the Trinity.

Beyond all question the passage concerns the gift of the Spirit bestowed on those who believe: the sending belongs to the field of "economy".⁴ But in the Fourth Gospel can one introduce a distinction which separates "economy" from "theology"? For John Jesus is the mystery of the Word made visible, the incarnate Son who, in his passover, attains the summit of "consecration"⁵ in the glorious fullness of his eternal sonship: "Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made" (Jn 17:5). In this fullness Jesus appears at one and the same time as the Son who is worshipped (Jn 20:28) and as the source of the Holy Spirit among men and women.⁶ It is in this way that he is in the world the emergence of the eternal mystery, at one and the same time as the Son and as the gushing fountain of the Holy Spirit. If Jesus becomes the source of the Spirit for those who believe in him at the moment when, in his human nature, he reaches the perfection of his glory as Son, can one separate this glory – which is that of the Son – from the pouring out of the Spirit and say that the glory of Easter corresponds to the eternal mystery of the Son

(cf Jn 17:5) but not to the Easter outpouring of the Spirit? The breath of God by which the Father breathes is also the breath of Christ glorified: "He breathed on them and said to them 'Receive the Holy Spirit' " (Jn 20:22). "The Spirit (breath) of God is given to the disciples as being the breath of the risen Jesus himself."⁷ The breath of the Father which Jesus spreads is also the breath of the Risen One in his eternal glory as Son.

The distinction between the mystery of the Trinity in its eternity and the Spirit given to men and women, between "theology" and "economy", does not involve any discontinuity: in the passover of Jesus "theology" becomes "economy" and the eternal mystery is accomplished for us. The difference resides in that last phrase, "for us". While theology considers the mystery of the Trinity in itself, the latter becomes ours through Jesus Christ: in the mystery of salvation, the Father begets his Son for us, Christ is the Son of God for us, the Spirit is the divine begetting for us so that in the Son we may become children of God.⁸

¹Jn 7:16, 8:26, 28, 40 *passim*

²Augustine, *In Johannem tract.* 106:7, CCL 36:612-613.

³Paul attributed the action of raising up to the Father, cf. for example Rom 4:24, 6:4; Gal 1:1.

⁴M.-A. Chevallier, *op. cit.*, p. 98: "No specialist in the Johannine writings would allow any longer today the interpretation

whereby this text would deal with the eternal procession."

⁵Cf. Jn 10:36 and 17:19.
⁶In his exaltation Jesus becomes the source of the Spirit according to Jn 7:37-39, 15:26, 16:7, and 20:22. Cf. the symbolic allusions in Jn 19:30-34. See also Acts 2:33.

⁷M.-A. Chevallier, *op. cit.*, p. 106. John "describes the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Son by presenting the Spirit as the very breath of the Son" p. 107. It is later that one "sees appear the distinction that hitherto had been unthinkable between the economic and the immanent Trinity" p. 110.

⁸According to Cyril of Alexandria and a host of other Fathers, the Holy Spirit is given in its person to the disciples of Christ. Cf. G. Phillips, "La grâce des justes de l'Ancien Testament" in *Éphémérides Théologiques Louvainenses* 23 (1947), pp. 521-556, 24 (1948), pp. 23-58. Would Jesus in his humanity have been able to send the Spirit in its person if the Son in his divine person was not able to?

CONCLUSION

It is time to sum up and conclude. The Son too possesses the Spirit of God: he is the heir of the Father whose wealth is the Holy Spirit, in whom he is the Father. He is the Begotten: would he be if he were not full of the Spirit which is the divine begetting? Would he be loved as much as he is, would he live by the love the Father bears him, if he lived outside and apart from the Spirit which is the eternal act of love? He would not enjoy, along with the Father, what is called the divine nature if he was not full of this Holy Spirit, in which all the attributes of God are hypostatized.

The Son does not possess the Spirit like something one keeps in one's own possession. The Spirit is an abundant outpouring, it fills with ecstasy the person who is possessed by it, it makes of that person someone who is a source for others. Further, being in communion with his Father, the Son shares in the abundant outpouring of the Spirit of the Father: in assenting to his begetting he has his part as a son in this begetting; in loving the Father he incites him to love, that is to say to the welling up of the Spirit who is love. But never does the Son encroach upon the Father's primacy, since his mystery is that of receptive sonship.

If one denied the Son all participation in the procession of the Spirit, one would not be honouring the holy perichoresis of the trinity. The Father's monarchy would become a domination, the Son would receive in passivity without responding to the Father, and the Spirit itself would be reduced to being sent after the Son, the last person of the three in whom the movement of the Trinity would run up against a dead end.

* * *

If this is how things are, there are some theological opinions it would be best to discard. In the first place there is that which presents the Father as producing the Son on the one hand, the Spirit on the other.¹ Such a theology professes its belief in three persons, but is it trinitarian? If the Spirit were produced in this way, the Father (who is still essentially Father) would not be acting as Father because the Spirit would proceed from him apart from the mystery of the begetting of the Son. The Son would appear neither as Son nor as God, since he would be produced apart from the mystery of the Spirit, of which we know that it is the divine begetting, that it is in person all that one can say of the divine nature.

In the same way one should resist the related view according to which the Father begets the Son by way of intelligence and

"breathes" the Spirit by way of love.² The Father, though essentially Father, would again be separated from the unique act of begetting when he produces the Spirit. Further, according to this view the Father produces the Spirit from the fact of loving the Son whom he has already begotten by way of intelligence: the Spirit thus becomes the last person of the three. This is to forget that according to Scripture the Spirit is God at work and that it is love, and that the Father only has one activity, that of begetting while loving.

The Father, being essentially Father, produces the Spirit in his fatherhood with regard to the Son: to the extent that the name of father is correlative to that of son, so the production of the Spirit ought to be included within this relationship. It has thus been possible to say, rightly, that the spirit flows from the Father and from the Son as from a single principle.³ However it does not flow from them as if from a single undifferentiated principle, as one school of thought widespread in Latin theology wanted. The philosophical argumentation that this is based on can boast of rigorous logic, but what revealed truth can it cite in its support? According to this theory, the Spirit does not flow from the Father as such nor from the Son as such, but from their fellowship in the single divine nature. Now the Father and the Son are essentially what they are, acting as such, one as Father, the other as Begotten. The Holy Spirit is not some-

thing that follows from their unity, and what is attributed to the divine nature is to be found in fact personalized in it. It does not flow from the Father and the Son after the begetting: it is itself this begetting which unites the Father and the Son.

Finally, to say that the Father produces the Spirit through the Son, to use an expression which is becoming general, would seem to be wrong at least at the level of language. This formula presents the Spirit as the ultimate pole of the activity of the Father, when this pole is none other than the Son, since he is the one and only pole of the activity of the Father.

In talking of the Spirit as of an eternal begetting one is not claiming to provide an explanation: one is using an image. But this image throws some light on the matter. It places the procession of the Spirit within the mystery of the fatherhood of God and thus also within the mystery of the Son. It allows one to recognize the Spirit's trinitarian place at the beginning and at the conclusion, to see in it the divine mystery in all its all-embracing depth. The Spirit is the womb of God where the eternal Son is born. Far from intending to provide a rational explanation, the image evokes the unfathomable depth of the mystery. What after all is a begetting whereby God is God the Father, a begetting which is a person?

It is a woman whom God has clothed with the sun (Cf. Rev 12:1) and covered with that

luminous shade (cf Lk 1:35) which the Bible calls the glory of God and which is the Holy Spirit. God begot his Son in the world at one and the same time in the Holy Spirit and in the womb of that woman. Mary, taken up in to the action of the Holy Spirit, is the human, earthly double of the heavenly mystery: Jesus is conceived at one and the same time in heaven and on earth, of the Spirit of God and of a woman. In the eyes of John Mary is "the woman", "the mother of Jesus".⁴ The evangelist does not mention her name but assimilates her being to her womanhood, to her motherhood: Mary is defined by the holy conception in her of the Son of the Father. Such is her identity in the eyes of God and in the history of salvation. She is the icon through which the mystery of the Holy Spirit is made manifest.

What precise formula should one use to express the relationship of the Spirit to the Father in his fatherhood, to the Son in his sonship? None would be able to hold the mystery which totally exceeds our ideas. In the world there are plenty of fathers, and every man is the son of another; but no one is the action of somebody, no one is in person either love or begetting. "The Spirit has neither face nor even name capable of evoking a human form."⁵ It is not the Word uttered but the Breath that bears it, the

voice that lets it be heard: the Spirit is something unsaid, it is unsayable.

But then why should we try to fix in a single precise formula what is an inexpressible complexity? Provided that no shadow is thrown on the honour of the Father in his fatherhood, nor on that of the Son in his ardent responsiveness, a formula would be satisfactory even if it were only a tentative approximation.

In default of the impossible goal of a formula that would be irreproachable in its exhaustive precision there is for the Churches an existential way of bearing witness to the Spirit in its truth: mutual love filled with humility is the seal of the presence in them of the one who is the love and the humility of God,⁶ and corresponds precisely to the mystery of the Spirit. Controversy and debate would be neither honest nor useful without the humble and passionate search for organic unity between the Churches. Unity between East and West existed at a time when, nevertheless, theological sensibilities and formulations were already different: all the same, these Churches then knew themselves to be sisters in the same faith. Doctrinal differences hardened, separation became established, when the bonds of love were broken. And then people tried to justify the break in the name of the Spirit who is fellowship and communion.

Paul writes: "It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment" (Phil 1:9). Without the

humble love that God gives to those who pray,
would one be able to know the mystery of love
that is the Holy Spirit?

¹ Photius (*Amphiloquia* qu 181, PG 101:896) notes that some people compare the Trinity to a balance with the point representing the Father and the two scales the Son and the Spirit: a fine image, but a very distant approximation to the mystery.

² Cf. note 12 of chapter 3.

³ Cf. Denzinger-Schönmeier (33rd edition, Barcelona/Freiburg/Rome/New York, 1965) 850, 1300, 1331.

⁴ Jn 2:4, 19:25-27.

⁵ J. Guillet, "Esprit de Dieu", in *Vocabulaire de Théologie Biblique*, Paris, 1962, 2nd edition, p. 390.

⁶ Over forty years ago T. Preiss ("Le témoignage intérieur de l'Esprit", in *Cahiers théologiques de l'activité protestante*, no. 13, Neuchâtel 1946, p. 26) was saying of the Spirit that it is the humility of God.