

And in one Lord Jesus Christ . . .

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THE DOGMATIC DOCTRINE OF the Holy Spirit is surrounded by controversy in the current theological discussion. The reason for this controversy lies primarily in the development of pneumatology in the history of the twentieth-century theology.¹ Although the Spirit of God forms a fundamental component of both the Christian religion and the dogmatic doctrinal tradition, what the office of the Spirit is, exactly, and how it is to be determined in its independence compared with God the Father and the Son, has remained notoriously unclear in the pneumatological debates of recent decades. It is no wonder, therefore, that the theological controversies that have surrounded the Holy Spirit since the second half of the last century move between the extremes of "an obliviousness of the Spirit" (*Geistvergessenheit*) on the one hand and "a keenness for the Spirit" (*Geistversessenheit*) on the other.² Both are ruinous to the doctrine of the Spirit of God as its dogmatic determinacy is dissolved. Against the background of the doctrinal development of pneumatology in the twentieth century, which led to the above-indicated alternative of either a forgetfulness of, or an obsession with, the doctrine of the Spirit, I would

1. See on this the overview of the development of doctrine by Wittekind, "Theologiegeschichtliche."

2. See Danz and Murrmann-Kahl, *Zwischen*. See already Moltmann, *Der Geist*.

like to propose that the Holy Spirit be understood as the “memory of Jesus Christ,” within the framework of a systematic theology of religious communication. This proposal makes it possible to determine not only the necessary function of the Spirit of God for the Christian religion, but also the work that is proper to the Spirit, that is, its autonomy in relation to God the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit, according to the thesis I wish to present, represents that Christianity, as a religion, depends on the creative appropriation of the memory of Jesus Christ. If dogmatic pneumatology wishes to hold on to the determinacy of the Holy Spirit, it must unfold this doctrine in this sense.

I would like to unfold the above-mentioned thesis, that the Holy Spirit, as the memory of Jesus Christ, is a necessary element of the Christian religion in three courses of argumentation. The first section begins with the dogmatic debate about the Spirit of God in the twentieth century, which forms the background of the history of the problems of the proposed new determination of the Spirit. The second section sketches a dogmatic foundation of pneumatology, in which the Spirit of God is derived as a necessary element of the Christian religion. On this basis, the dogmatic function of the Spirit of God in the Christian religion can be outlined in the concluding third course of argumentation.

1. Between the Obliviousness of the Spirit and Keeness for the Spirit; or, The Dogmatic Pneumatology in the Twentieth Century

Since the turn of the millennium, there has not only been a diagnosis of the “renaissance of the doctrine of the Trinity,” but also a renaissance of pneumatology.³ Indeed, since the second half of the twentieth century, numerous new drafts of dogmatic doctrines of the Spirit have been presented. What they have in common is that they seek to counteract an obliviousness of the Spirit in European academic theology. The keyword of an obliviousness of the Spirit in theology was introduced into the debate by the Berlin theologian Otto A. Dilschneider, a former student of Karl Heim. In 1961, he published an article in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung* with the title *Die Geistvergessenheit der Theologie*.⁴ The

3. See Habets, *Third*; Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*. See already Koerrenz, “Pneumatologie,” 45.

4. See Dilschneider, “Die Geistvergessenheit.”

keyword was taken up many times in further debate. But what exactly does the obliviousness of the Spirit in theology mean? Already in the aforementioned essay by Dilschneider, it becomes clear that it is not a matter of the theology of the twentieth century simply passing over the doctrine of the Holy Spirit with silence. Rather, the diagnosis of an obliviousness of the Spirit refers to certain versions of pneumatology, namely christological and soteriological bindings of the Spirit, as they are particularly significant for the Protestant doctrinal tradition.⁵ Already both Martin Luther and John Calvin connected the Holy Spirit with the individual appropriation of the salvation acquired by Jesus Christ.⁶

The soteriological and christological constructions of pneumatology developed by the reformers were renewed—*prima vista*—by the new theologies that arose after the First World War, which set themselves apart from the theological conceptions of their academic teachers. This generation of theologians not only emphasized the difference between the divine and the human spirit, but they also constructed pneumatology on this basis as a theological description of the salvation of faith. This theological description of the salvation of faith is now understood as an act that, without anthropological presuppositions, originates in an undervivable manner in the human being and is bound to this act. Significant for these theological drafts from the first half of the twentieth century is that they use Christology as a theological description of the reflexive structure of the act of faith and its event character. This results not only in the so-called Christomonism of the theologies of Karl Barth, Friedrich Gogarten, Rudolf Bultmann and others, but also in the binding of the Spirit of God to Christology. If the Holy Spirit is understood in this way, however, that is, as the appropriation of the salvation of faith that has appeared in Jesus Christ, and if God's Spirit does not point toward anything other than the Christ, can the Holy Spirit be determined as anything more than a *doublet* of Christ?

In the period following the Second World War, the soteriological and christological versions of the Spirit of God, as elaborated in the first half of the century, were perceived as a restriction and narrowing of

5. See Dilschneider, "Die Geistvergessenheit," 261: "But here the other side of the theological obliviousness of the Spirit is revealed, which drafted these doctrinal areas [sc. the subjects mentioned in the third article of the Creed] from a conception of the second article and transferred them to the third article, the 'Credo in spiritum sanctum' then being added, as it were, as an appendix."

6. On the pneumatology of Martin Luther and John Calvin, see Danz, *Gottes*.

pneumatology. They reduce the Holy Spirit, as it were, to an extension of Jesus Christ in history and, through their versions based on a theology of revelation, exclude both nature and society from theological reflection. If God reveals himself exclusively in Jesus Christ and can only be known here, and the Spirit mediates this knowledge, then theology can no longer take a position on cultural, social and ecological issues. These issues simply become irrelevant to it. It is precisely this, i.e., the soteriological and christological version of the Spirit of God, that the keyword of the “obliviousness of the Spirit” in theology aims at describing. In order to make theology applicable to the increasingly modern society in the second half of the twentieth century, as well as to the more and more clearly emerging consequential problems of the modernization process, the Spirit of God had to be redefined.

In his widely read book *Grundlagen der Dogmatik (Foundations of Dogmatics)*, which appeared in the early 1950s, Otto Weber already elaborated pneumatology as a critique of traditional soteriological versions and their anthropological intensification, proclaiming a “realistic pneumatology” that links creation and eschatology.⁷ As a result, numerous new drafts of the dogmatic doctrine of the Spirit emerged, which aimed to break the traditional soteriological and christological binding of the Spirit, to extend the work of the Spirit of God beyond its classical function of appropriation,⁸ and finally, even to detach the Holy Spirit from Christology.⁹ This led to a universalization of the Spirit. God’s Spirit no longer works only in Jesus Christ, whom he mediates in history, but also in nature, culture and society. In the dogmatic pneumatologies since the 1970s and 1980s, a keenness for the Spirit took the place of an obliviousness of the Spirit. Now the Spirit no longer operates in the narrow sense of an appropriation of salvation; it rather became a universal medium of integration. Wherever liberation is experienced in this world, that is, wherever the critique of modernity and its rational “iron cage” (*stahlhartes Gehäuse*) is exercised, climate change is opposed, or simply interpersonal relationships succeed, the Holy Spirit is at work. What is maintained, however, is the otherness of the Spirit of God in relation to the spirit of the world, so that all that can be said about God’s Spirit is that it is different from the world, namely, that it is unknowable. However,

7. See Weber, *Grundlagen*.

8. See Moltmann, “Der Geist.”

9. Thus the proposal of Senn, “Der Geist,” 85.

such a Spirit, while universal, is also wholly indeterminate. If the Holy Spirit is everything, then it is nothing.

The aporias of such a universalization of God's Spirit can be made clear by the conceptions of eco-theologies, which in recent years have increasingly come into the focus of theology against the background of the ecological crisis.¹⁰ Going beyond the traditional function of pneumatology, Sigurd Bergmann, for example, constructs, "Sister Spirit on Earth as an all-embracing space and a liberation movement at specific times and places."¹¹ The Spirit of God is seen as the differentiated space of life and its liberation, and it manifests itself in life as liberation and critique of the exploitation of nature and life. In this way the Holy Spirit becomes a universal medium of integration that no longer knows differences precisely because it eliminates them. Consequently, the Spirit then appears as the animation of life and finds its expression in animism.¹² With such a pneumatological conception, which holds to the transcendence of the Spirit¹³ and its binding to Jesus Christ,¹⁴ the anthropological narrowings of traditional pneumatology are indeed overcome. When the Spirit of God is understood as a universally liberating and integrating event, however, which manifests in all experiences of liberation: in the regeneration of nature as well as in the critique of modern capitalism, the Spirit of God becomes indeterminate and diffuse. For what is the properly religious element in animism and in the critique of capitalism?

As a result of the development of pneumatology in the history of theology in the twentieth and early twenty-first century, a contradiction between the christological-soteriological binding of the Spirit and its universalization can be observed. While the christological binding of the Spirit leads to a narrowing of pneumatology, in which the Holy Spirit tends to become a doublet of the Son, the detachment of the Spirit from Christology as well as its universalization leads to the dissolution of the determinacy of the Spirit of God. If one does not wish to accept this

10. See Conradie, "Journey"; Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology*.

11. Bergmann, "Where on Earth," 52.

12. Bergmann, "Where on Earth," 59: "From this perspective, animism appears not as the opposite of belief in the Spirit but as a mode of belief that should be respected as an expression of the life-giving Spirit and transformed in accordance with central codes of classical pneumatology."

13. Bergmann, "Where on Earth," 58.

14. The indwelling of the Spirit in nature and in life is, as it were, the continuation of the incarnation of the Son. Bergmann, "Where on Earth," 56.

contradiction, the demand for a new determination of the Holy Spirit arises. Thereby the christological binding of the Spirit must be maintained: The Holy Spirit is the memory of Jesus Christ. The meaning of this new determination of the Holy Spirit for the construction of dogmatic pneumatology must now be considered.

2. The Holy Spirit as a Necessary Element of the Christian Religion; or, On the Dogmatic Foundation of Pneumatology

The demand for a new definition of dogmatic pneumatology results, as we have seen, from its development in the history of theology in the twentieth century, which resulted in an aporia. The basis of the proposal to understand the Holy Spirit as the memory of Jesus Christ is a systematic theology of religious communication. It is incumbent on this theology to describe the Christian religion from the point of view of those who practice it, i.e., from the self-view of the believers. In doing so, I take as my starting point the distinction between theology and religion that is constitutive of modern Protestant theology. Systematic theology is a science, and it relates to the Christian religion against the background of the distinction between theology and religion. This distinction is not simply present, rather, it is one that systematic theology itself makes. Only in this way can systematic theology be an autonomous science and in it, consider the autonomy of the Christian religion.¹⁵ Systematic theology or dogmatics is a science of the Christian religion, but it is not itself religion. It is incumbent upon it to describe a complete image of the Christian religion from its own point of view. This means that systematic theology must construct Christian religion's knowledge of being religion. For this knowledge belongs constitutively to the Christian religion in European modernity.

The proposal that systematic theology is the science of the Christian religion takes up the transformations of Protestant theology around 1800, through which the concept of religion became the methodological basis of scientific theology. At the same time, the proposal takes up the theological critique of religion from the early twentieth century. Thus, the concept of religion is retained as the object of systematic theology, but it is derived neither by reference to an already given religious content nor by a given religious subject. Both God and religious subject

15. Danz, "Theologie."

are components of the Christian religion, but not presuppositions from which it can be derived. They arise together with the Christian religion in Christian-religious communication. Consequently, it is the task of systematic theology to construct the Christian religion as a self-referential communication event that knows itself as religion. Systematic theology thereby refers exclusively to the Christian religion. A universal anthropological concept of religion is thus dropped as an implausible construct.

From a systematic theology of religious communication, the starting points of the previous justification of religion since the Enlightenment—a religious object on the one hand and a religious subject on the other—are lifted into Christian-religious communication. This is a communication event structured in itself, formed from the same context whereby the Christian religion arises and is passed on in history. The constitutive elements of the Christian religion are: 1. the dependence of the Christian religion on its already given religious communication, the memory of Jesus Christ; 2. the understanding appropriation of the memory of Jesus Christ; and 3. the symbolic representation of the appropriated religious memory of Jesus Christ.¹⁶

In order to come into being, the Christian religion presupposes that Christian-religious communication already exists in culture as a differentiated and recognizable form of communication. Without an already handed down religious memory of Jesus Christ, the Christian religion cannot arise. This presupposes itself already, whereby this presupposition consists neither in a religious disposition in the subject nor in a religious object given in itself, but in Christian-religious communication. The memory of Jesus Christ, however, which is medially handed down in culture, is not yet religion itself. It is a hint to the Christian religion, but the handed down Christian-religious communication becomes religion only when it is appropriated by people understanding it as religion. The understanding appropriation forms its own element of the Christian religion, which is not yet contained in the handed down memory of Jesus Christ. The understanding appropriation of religious communication is underivable, since there is always the possibility of appropriating the handed down memory of Jesus Christ in a non-religious manner, i.e., in a historical, aesthetical, political and so on, sense. For the Christian religion to come into being, that is, for Christian-religious communication to succeed, a third element must be added: the symbolic articulation

16. See on the following Danz, "Gottes"; Wittekind, "Theologie."

and representation of the memory of Jesus Christ appropriated as religion. It too represents an independent element, which is neither already contained in the handed down memory of Jesus Christ nor in its understanding appropriation. Only through representation and articulation of the Christian-religious communication, appropriated as religion, does the Christian religion come into existence, becoming thus visible in culture and recognizable as Christian religion.

The Christian religion is constituted by the interrelation of the three mentioned elements: content, understanding and articulation. It cannot be traced back to just one of these elements. Only when Christian-religious communication succeeds, when the handed down memory of Jesus Christ is appropriated by people as religion and used for the articulation of their religion, is there religious content as well as a religious subject and its experiences and affects. The success of religious communication, in which the Christian religion first comes into being, is denoted by the concept of faith. Faith is not to be understood as opposed to religion, as in the German Protestant theology of the twentieth century, but as the reality of the Christian religion. In this sense faith is the symbol-productive reality of the religious memory of Jesus Christ.

As a religion, the Christian religion depends on the understanding religious use that people make of the handed down memory of Jesus Christ. The knowledge to perceive religion by communication, i.e., to distinguish between the communicated contents and their religious meaning, is as much a component of the Christian religion as its self-reference. In and with its contents, to which the Christian religion refers, it presents itself as a communication event that knows itself. Its contents, however, are not only an expression of religion, rather, they represent in the Christian religion simultaneously how it comes into being and how it functions as religion. The idea of God as the content of the Christian religion represents itself in it, namely, the Christian religion, as a transparent, self-referential and in itself structured event. 1. God the Father symbolizes the underivable religious understanding of the memory of Jesus Christ; 2. God the Son represents the binding of the memory of Jesus Christ to its symbolic representation; and 3. God the Spirit represents the dependence of the Christian religion upon the memory of Jesus Christ. In its notion of God, the Christian religion represents itself in the particularity of being a religion. Because it exists as religion in the appropriated and represented religious memory of Jesus Christ, God can be understood in it only as a Trinitarian God. In other words, in the

Christian religion, God comes exclusively from God to God as God.¹⁷ With its idea of God, the Christian religion symbolizes that it is, as religion, dependent on the understanding appropriation and representation of the handed down memory of Jesus Christ.

Thus both the systematic foundations of pneumatology and the necessary function of the Holy Spirit for the Christian religion and its independent function in it are derived from the concept of the Christian religion as a self-referential communication event that knows itself as religion and is structured in itself. The Spirit of God, again, represents its dependence on the memory of Jesus Christ. Against this background, we can now turn finally to the dogmatic function of the doctrine of the Spirit.

3. The Holy Spirit as the Memory of Jesus Christ; or, On the Dogmatic Function of Pneumatology

The task of dogmatics is to construct the inner functioning of the Christian religion as a religion from the perspective of those who practice it. The contents of the Christian religion are not only an expression of religion, but represent how religion originates and is passed on in Christian-religious communication. As religion, therefore, Christianity relies upon the religious use of the memory of Jesus Christ, appropriated in an understanding manner as religion. From this appropriation, results its specificity as religion, which it represents in the Trinitarian idea of God to which it refers. With the Trinitarian God is also derived the Holy Spirit as a necessary component of the Christian religion as well as its special function for the Christian religion. The Holy Spirit symbolizes in the Christian religion its knowledge that, as a religion, it consists in the religious memory of Jesus Christ. Since the Holy Spirit is the memory of Christ, it must be understood as the Spirit of Christ. But as religion, the memory of Jesus Christ that has been handed down, only comes into being in successful Christian religious communication in that it is used by human beings to communicate their religion: God present with human beings as the Spirit of Jesus Christ. For a dogmatic pneumatology this means that it must be constructed in a Trinitarian way.¹⁸

17. See on this formula Jüngel, *Gott*.

18. This takes up Jürgen Moltmann's demand to structure pneumatology in a Trinitarian way. See Moltmann, "Der Geist." But unlike Moltmann, here the Holy Spirit is transferred to the Christian religion and its self-referential knowledge of being religion.

Firstly, the proposed version of pneumatology takes up the christological and soteriological connection of the Spirit of God in the Protestant doctrinal tradition. Rejected with it are all attempts to postulate the Holy Spirit as a universal medium of integration, as they have been significant to pneumatological debates since the second half of the twentieth century. A Spirit that works, as it were, unconsciously by the actors and is not recognizable as such is a mere generalization postulate. It cannot be verified. Both universalizations and detachments of the Spirit from Christology are to be excluded from pneumatology since they lead to functionalizations of the Spirit of God and allows it to become indeterminate. In the interest of the dogmatic determinacy of the Holy Spirit, its christological binding is to be maintained. But does this proposal not repeat the dilemma of the Protestant doctrinal tradition, namely, that pneumatology becomes narrowly christological and a doublet of Christology? As it will become clear, such a christological narrowing does not result from the redefinition of the Holy Spirit as the memory of Jesus Christ within the framework of a systematic theology of religious communication. Rather, pneumatology has its own independent dogmatic function.

For the Protestant doctrinal tradition, the Holy Spirit is the individual appropriation of the salvation acquired by Jesus Christ. Both the biblical and the epistemological critique of modernity have dissolved the old Protestant presupposition of a salvation given objectively, as it were, in history, which merely should be appropriated by human beings. The modern critique not only dissolved the old presupposition of an objective salvation given in history but also replaced it by reflexive descriptions of the act of faith. In the proposed new formulation of pneumatology this reformulation is taken up. The contents of the Christian religion arise together with the religious subject in the Christian religion. This is dependent, however, upon the memory of Jesus Christ, which is passed on in culture bound to media. For appropriation, the traditional subject of pneumatology, this signifies two things: first, only in the understanding appropriation and symbolic representation of the memory of Jesus Christ does this memory arise as Christian religion and as the prerequisite on which it depends. Second, the individual appropriation through which the memory of Jesus Christ arises as a religion is at the same time its creative, individual re-creation. The Holy Spirit thus represents in the Christian religion not only its dependence on the memory of Jesus Christ, but also the necessity of its transformative re-creation in history. The moment of the dynamic and the surplus, which is already attributed

to the Spirit of God as “power from above” in the biblical writings, is thus taken up. The Holy Spirit liquefies the memory of Jesus Christ and keeps it elastic.

If dogmatic pneumatology concerns the dependence of the Christian religion on the memory of Jesus Christ as well as its transforming appropriation and transmission, this means for its object that it thematizes the identity and continuity of the Christian religion in history from its self-view.¹⁹ This is a communicatively produced view of the world and of life, which exists only as a self-description subject to permanent change. This means that identity and continuity of the Christian religion do not only presuppose discontinuity, but they are also constantly produced anew in the appropriation and symbolic articulation of the handed-down memory. Those who practice the Christian religion attach to it new interpretations of the memory of Jesus Christ, which they understand as its appropriate and contemporary expression. In this way alone, namely through the transformative appropriation of the memory of Jesus Christ, continuity and identity of the Christian religion emerge. Both continuity and identity of the Christian religion are constantly created anew. They do not underlie it as a given or substantial core, which merely changes its outer shell in history and itself remains invariant. Rather, the Christian religion as a whole—including its understanding of itself as a religion—is subject to ongoing historical change. This knowledge is represented in it by the Holy Spirit when it presents the dependence of the Christian religion on the memory of Jesus Christ as well as the necessity of its re-creative appropriation.

With the Spirit of God, the Christian religion represents that it is itself dependent on a certain history, which has to be appropriated and passed on transformatively by people as religion in order to exist as Christian religion. The religious passing on of the memory of Jesus Christ is an event integrated in communication, for which a triadic inter-relationship is constitutive. Passing on, then, denotes that *someone passes something on to someone else*. Only from the connection of these three elements does religious memory of Jesus Christ come into being. If the Holy Spirit symbolizes the knowledge of its dependence on this memory, then the Spirit of God must itself be understood in a Trinitarian fashion as giver, gift and appropriation.²⁰

19. Danz, “Gottes,” 194–203.

20. Danz, “Gottes,” 204–331.

In the Holy Spirit and its three moments of giver, gift and appropriation, the Christian religion represents itself as it is passed on as a religious memory-event integrated into history. Its identity and continuity is not provided by the giver, the gift or the appropriation. As a religious memory of Jesus Christ, it is constituted by all three elements together. Thus, while the religious memory of Jesus Christ is the origin and presupposition of the Christian religion, this memory is both origin and presupposition *in* the Christian religion alone. It is through the success of Christian religious communication that the Holy Spirit first comes into being as the medium of the Christian religion.

The Christian religion, as we have seen, consists in the transparent and self-referential religious use of the memory of Jesus Christ as religion. Consequently, the Holy Spirit is itself the memory of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God is recognizable solely by its reference to this memory and its media bodies. Without concrete narratives determined by content, the Christian religion would be unrecognizable and consequently could not be passed on in history. That is why the Bible, as the medium of the Spirit, is constitutive for the Christian religion and, like church and culture, a fundamental element of pneumatology. But the Christian religion neither consists in the content narratives of the Bible nor can it be sufficiently recognized as religion by them. For the biblical narratives and their contents can at any time be used in a non-religious sense by people, i.e., historically, aesthetically, politically, etc. The biblical texts become religion only when they are appropriated by people as religion and used to communicate the Christian religion. The difference between religious and cultural use of the biblical texts does not exist in the contents. On the level of content, religious and cultural communication simply do not differ. Christian-religious communication comes into being only through the religious use that is made of these contents by people. In the success of Christian-religious communication, the Spirit of God becomes a visible historical reality.

All Christian-religious communication takes place in the Holy Spirit. It is recognizable as Christian communication only through its binding to the Bible. Just as the memory of Jesus Christ, however, can be used by people in a cultural sense at any time, cultural communication is constantly included in Christian-religious communication. This is evident in the various conceptions of eco-theologies mentioned above. By including topics such as society, nature or the ecological crisis in Christian-religious communication, they lose their "cultural" or "normal"

meaning and function exclusively as an expression and representation of the Christian religion, for its being a religion consists exclusively in the fact that it represents itself as religion in and with its contentual statements. Religion and theology are autonomous systems only when they are self-referential. The Christian religion in the modern age refers only to itself as religion. Only through such self-limitations are the Christian religion and theology able to recognize other religions as well as an autonomous culture beside themselves and take their autonomy into account. However, this is precisely what is annulled when the Spirit of God is understood as a universal medium of integration in the sense of Hegel's "cunning of reason." Just as there is no Christian religion outside of it, so there is no Holy Spirit working unconsciously in nature and history.

I conclude. Systematic theology must be able to describe the Holy Spirit and its function for the Christian religion in an accelerating, changing world. It does not succeed if it constructs the Spirit of God on the one hand as a doublet of Christology or on the other hand universalizes it. In contrast, systematic theology must insist on the christological determinacy of the Holy Spirit and at the same time connect it with its liquefaction. Continuity and identity of the Christian religion in history, which arise in neither the producible nor constructible success of the Christian-religious communication in the Holy Spirit, and have their transparent reason, truth and validity in themselves, constitute the object of pneumatology as it has been suggested here. With the Spirit of God, the Christian religion thematizes itself as a communication involved in history, which refers to the memory of Jesus Christ and reinterprets it in every time and culture, and in this way creates it anew. Only by telling the memory of Jesus Christ differently does it remain identical with itself. This transparent functioning of the Christian religion is symbolized by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God must be constructed by dogmatics as such.