

God the Spirit

God the Spirit

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Preface

In my view, the most important contribution of the present book on “God the Spirit” is that it provides help in coming to a new perception of God and of God’s power. By stimulating readers to experience and to understand God and God’s power in new ways, the book serves as a guide past the mistaken paths of totalistic metaphysics, merely speculative trinitarianism, abstract mysticism, and irrationalism undertaken by conventional understandings of the Holy Spirit. It likewise serves as a guide past empty formulas and mere silence—be it meaningful or meaningless. The Holy Spirit is neither an intellectual construct nor a numinous entity.

My original intention was to begin my lengthier publications on the most important themes of Christian theology with a volume on “God’s Law and God’s Gospel.” Yet the contents and problems, the actual substance that was to be treated in working on that topic directed my attention, questions, and research over and over again to “God the Spirit.” Finally, what was theologically correct also came to make sense on a practical level: to give the Holy Spirit precedence over law and gospel.

In positive terms, the book seeks first to articulate the broad spectrum of experiences of God’s Spirit, searches and quests for the Spirit, and skepticism toward the Spirit that define the contemporary world. From this vantage point the book will introduce its readers into the contexts of the diverse testimonies to God’s Spirit that we find in the various biblical traditions. An interwoven fabric of testimonies and accounts of God and of God’s powerful action among human beings is made clear in a new way. The condition in which these testimonies in general find themselves in academic and popular theologies can be compared to a mosaic that is partly covered with rubble and partly broken in pieces. If the mosaic is to present pictures again, it must first be

laid bare and pieced together again. Or the condition of the biblical testimonies can be compared to a network of paths that must be rediscovered and resurveyed if it is again to afford access to desired destinations and views of the countryside.

We encounter the attested experiences of God's Spirit firmly embedded in various life experiences, particularly in experiences of life that is threatened and endangered, but also of life that has been delivered and liberated. A people is threatened with annihilation. A political system collapses or is abruptly reshaped. The moral network of a community is rent asunder. The sun sets on a historical world. People receive a new identity. A dispersed people is led together again. People who are strange or even hostile to each other open God's reality for each other. A disintegrated world grows together. Inasmuch as we investigate more closely the testimonies of such varied experiences and seek to grasp their complex interconnections, we are referred from a number of different perspectives to the rich *reality and vitality of the Holy Spirit*. We have to reckon with a complex pattern of interconnected testimonies that at first glance seem impossible to bring into agreement, let alone to harmonize and to systematize. A type of thought that is not sensitive to differences, that would like to jump immediately to "the whole" and to the way in which the Spirit presents a whole, will continue as in the past: stuck in the realm of the numinous, in the conjuration of merely mystical experience, and in global moral appeals. Only by drawing on their differences do the biblical testimonies mutually illuminate, strengthen, and clarify each other. It is precisely in this way that they can teach us to discover and to experience God's Spirit in our times and our cultures as well.

The procedure chosen here is, to be sure, not yet common in systematic theology. If one is seeking an academic label for this procedure, one could call it a "realistic theology."

A realistic theology is a theology that is related to various structural patterns of experience and that cultivates a sensitivity to the differences of those various patterns. It is precisely in this diverse and complex relation to God's reality and to creaturely reality as intended by God that realistic theology seeks to perform its task. We try to squeeze God's reality into simple systematizations and forms of experience. As finite and limited human beings, we necessarily make this reductionist attempt. A realistic theology makes clear that God's reality

is much richer than the forms into which we attempt to make it fit. A realistic theology makes clear that our experiences, our worldviews, our moral systems, and our value structures must be enlightened and changed in order to correspond to creaturely reality. A realistic theology also makes clear the way in which this must transpire.

Many theologies grounded in human experiences and forms of experience need to take as their points of departure both actual demonstrations of God's power within creation and people's search for God in the realm of that which is creaturely. This is true whether the orientation of such theologies be empirical, pietistic, moral, epistemological-philosophical, or otherwise. A realistic theology mediates this need of theologies grounded in human experience with the concern of classical, Reformation, and dialectical theologies "from above" to take God's divinity seriously and not to obstruct enjoyment of the fullness and glory of God.

Authoritarian theologies of one-upmanship have sought to grasp and expound God and God's revelation in numerous abstract formulas: God always comes "from above," God always "precedes," God is the "all-determining" reality. The theology of the Holy Spirit will challenge us to replace these formulas or to render them superfluous. It will teach us to concentrate in a new way on seeing God's reality make its appearance in tension-filled interconnections of different realms of experience that are not necessarily compatible with each other.

We live in many such interconnections of different realms of experience. Preeminent examples of such realms of experience are the moral market, the mass media market, the political market, and the public opinions market. Both in themselves and in their interconnections with each other, these realms of experience are charged with tension, confusing, and impossible to survey from any one vantage point. This book is an attempt to avoid succumbing to the pressure of these markets and being sucked in by them in the effort to know God's reality. On the basis of those testimonies to God's Spirit that have been and will continue to be the primary determinants of the life and thought of Israel and of Christian churches, this book has the goal of acquiring clarity concerning those traits that are characteristic and unavoidable for the appearance of God's reality and God's power in the midst of the structural patterns of human life.

In principle it would also be possible to characterize this theology of the Holy Spirit not as “realistic theology,” but as “biblical theology” or as “postmodern theology.” Unless I am mistaken, this book could even be regarded as the first comprehensive “biblical theology of the Holy Spirit.” But the designation “biblical theology” does not at present make sufficiently clear the systematic and constructive concern that is directed not only to past experiences and expectations of God, but to present and future ones as well. Why not “postmodern theology”? As a matter of fact, this book does gain new insight into primarily “premodern” experiences by cautiously employing “postmodern,” relativistic forms of thought that have been developing for over fifty years, particularly in North America. But the expression “postmodern” is currently too faddish, too bandied about in the mass commercial press, and above all too formal to be able adequately to summarize essential concerns of this book. “Realistic theology” is thus the preferable label, remembering that the “realism” shows itself and verifies itself precisely by simultaneously doing two things. On the one hand, it links a number of domains and forms of experience that are in part mutually compatible, and in part can be directly reconciled only with great difficulty, if at all. On the other hand, it remains sensitive to the differences of these realms and forms of experience.

Many readers may be sighing, “Those were the days, when every theology afoot had only ‘two sides’ (above and below, God and ‘the’ human person, the ego and the whole, experience or transcendence) or even just one system of reference (reality in the singular, ‘the’ modern subject, religious experience in the singular).” To that nostalgia one should calmly respond, “Those were also the days in which evidently no forms of thought and experience could be found that enabled clear insight into the testimonies to the Spirit of God. Those were the days in which demonstrations of God’s power and reality that happened by the Spirit of God received only distorted and misleading theological exposition and recognition, if they received any at all.”

Parts and early versions of chapters of this book were presented for discussion in lectures in Tübingen, Princeton, Münster, and Heidelberg. I am grateful to my students for their questions and their constructive critique, as well as for their enthusiasm, which stimulated the search for theological understanding. I especially thank my wife, Ulrike Welker, who critically read the first draft and the final versions of

the chapters of this book, and who proposed countless improvements. I should also acknowledge at this point my debt to Patrick D. Miller, Old Testament scholar at Princeton Theological Seminary, for one of the key insights of this theology of the Holy Spirit. Finally, I owe great thanks to my co-workers in Münster and Heidelberg, especially Sigrid Brandt, Michael Abstiens, Evamaria Bohle, Petra Jurick, Ellen Kiener, Rahel Maria Liu, and Markus Michel. They have helped me in diverse ways with the acquisition of literature, the technical preparation of the manuscript, and setting up the index. In addition they provided many suggestions about points of detail.

Heidelberg

—*Michael Welker*

Abbreviations

ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BEvT	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
CD	K. Barth, <i>Church Dogmatics</i> , ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1936–1962).
ChrTo	<i>Christianity Today</i>
EK	<i>Evangelische Kommentare</i>
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
EvT	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
Inst.	J. Calvin, <i>Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> , ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles, The Library of Christian Classics 20–21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960).
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBT	<i>Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie</i>
LW	<i>Luther's Works</i>
LXX	Septuagint
MySal	J. Feiner and M. Löhrer, eds., <i>Mysterium Salutis: Grundriss heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik</i> , 3d ed. (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1965–1981).
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>

NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
OTL	Old Testament Library
PG	J.-P. Migne, ed., <i>Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca</i>
PL	J.-P. Migne, ed., <i>Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina</i>
QD	Quaestiones Disputatae
RevExp	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
RGG	<i>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft</i> , 3d ed.
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
THAT	<i>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i>
ThSt[B]	<i>Theologische Studien</i> , ed. K. Barth
TLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TRE	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i>
WA	M. Luther, <i>Werke</i> , Kritische Gesamtausgabe ("Weimar" edition)
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

God the Spirit—A Problem of Experience in Today's World?

Without question, in our day people have experienced God's Spirit and continue to do so. Or are, for example, 300 million people—the current estimated size of the Charismatic Movement—in error? No one can exclude that possibility a priori. But if the members of the largest religious movement in history are not in error, is the so-called secular world, for whom the Spirit of God is to a large extent a phantom, blind? Has this world, by means of its forms of experience, its language, and its construction of “reality” in the singular, obstructed the functioning of its capacity to perceive God's Spirit? Has this world immunized itself against the power with which God is present among human beings and acts on them? This possibility as well cannot simply be excluded. But is it meaningful to attempt to change the secular world's habitual forms of experience in the direction of a greater openness to experience of the Spirit, if we do not know with certainty that we can trust the experiences of persons who appeal to the Spirit of God?

Those who today want to overcome such uncertainties and doubts and to go beyond their own forms of experience and the religious experiences of our day cannot expect any easy answer. To set out on the path to a new intimacy with the reality of the Spirit, one must expose oneself to numerous different perceptions of, and attestations to, the Spirit. And one must expose oneself to helplessness and skepticism with regard to such attestations.

A view that does not arbitrarily block out these difficulties must note at the outset that the secular common sense of the West has great difficulty in gaining even a distant perception of anything approaching God's Spirit. While this everyday understanding presumably only “sees ghosts” in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, members of the

Charismatic Movement are not the only ones who take seriously God's Spirit as a reality that unquestionably can be and is experienced. Many people in many lands can attribute the powerful spread of theologies of liberation in our world only to the action of God's Spirit. In societies that are dominated by individual, national, economic, and cultural forms of egotism, how could theologies of liberation develop into one of the most important forms of theology and piety? In massively patriarchal churches, how could feminist theologies make so much headway in barely two decades? How could this happen if not through God's Spirit, who, according to prophetic promise and Pentecostal confirmation, enables men and women, male and female slaves, old and young, local residents and people from other lands, intimates and strangers, to open God's reality with each other and for each other? How could this happen if a Spirit were not at work who—in accord with the prospect held out by the messianic promises of the Spirit—wills to make universal righteousness, mercy, and knowledge of God a reality?

In what follows I propose to take up the different types of perspectives on God's Spirit held by the contemporary world. We will be able to hear interconnections, differences, and incompatibilities of the many voices engaged in a questioning search for God's Spirit, and of the expectations placed on the Spirit. We will also be able to hear the similarly polyphonic negation of God's Spirit.

From this complex beginning I will turn to the very diverse testimonies to the Spirit of God found in the biblical traditions. These testimonies make use of a realism that remains to be discovered anew. Their realistic approach will help clarify the disparate contemporary experiences of God's Spirit and the doubts about God's Spirit. This should clear the way for experiencing the Holy Spirit in the future, for expecting the Spirit of God, for talking about the Spirit, for invoking this power of God, and for concurring in its action.

1.1: God the Spirit and the modern consciousness of the distance of God

The Spirit of God makes God's power knowable. The Spirit reveals the power of God in and on human beings and in and on their fellow creatures. The Spirit reveals this power through them and for them. The

Spirit makes it possible to know the *creative power of God*, which brings the diversity of all that is creaturely into rich, fruitful, life-sustaining, fortifying, and protective relations. The Spirit of God reveals the *power of God's mercy*, which God extends particularly to the weak, the neglected, the excluded, and the infirm. The Spirit enables God's glory to be known through creatures and for creatures precisely inasmuch as what is weak becomes strengthened, what is excluded is reintegrated, and what is infirm is enabled to stand erect and healthy. The Spirit also makes it possible to know *God's conflict* with the mighty and autocratic among the creatures of this world. The Spirit shows that human beings cannot bear abundance, vitality, richness, freedom, and the divine vocation to reflect God's glory. Instead, we persistently work against that. The Spirit of God makes clear that God, full of love, grapples with the machinations and powers that seek to counteract the divine creativity and mercy. God does not let human beings and other creatures out of their vocation to reflect God's glory for each other.¹

Experiences of God's Spirit are thus not merely private experiences, nor are they limited to conventicles or to other isolated groups. God does not make Godself knowable to "me" alone. God does not act merely "among us" here and now. Totally regardless of whether I or we are able or willing to experience it, God acts on people near and far in our time, but also in times both before and after us. This acting on other persons can happen through us, independently of whether we perceive it or not. Consciously or unconsciously, we are taken into God's service. Conversely, God exercises an influence on us through other people.

God's acting on human beings through human beings, on creatures through creatures, is not always easy to recognize.² It is often

1. This is shown especially by §§3.1, 4.5, 5.2ff., and 6.1ff.

2. To be sure, J. G. Hamann spoke eloquently in saying: "Speak, that I may see you!—This wish was fulfilled by creation, which is a speaking [on God's part] to what is created through what is created" (*Sämtliche Werke* 2, ed. J. Nadler [Vienna: Herder, 1950], 198). Yet Psalm 19, with which Hamann supports his claim, says not only that the heavens are praising God's glory, that the firmament announces God's handiwork, that one day tells it to another and one night makes it known to another; the Psalm also calls attention to the problem of the *clarity* and *comprehensibility* of God's speech "to what is created through what is created." The Psalm adds that this message, which goes out into the whole world, occurs with "no speech, nor are there

difficult to distinguish the reciprocal relations defined by God's Spirit from other relations between people and between creatures. A whole culture, a whole age can to a large extent lose this capacity to distinguish, lose the capacity to perceive the divine action, the action of the Spirit. The God who is near is then difficult to grasp. Piety retreats into the private sphere and then hardly makes sense to an outsider. Theologies flee into increasingly bald and sterile abstractions. There remains nothing to conjure other than "experience in itself" or simply "experience with experience." The arid assurance that every theology is practical, indeed "eminently practical," the assertion that faith makes people "capable of acting," and similarly empty formulas are supposed to hide the embarrassment that it is impossible to talk convincingly about God and God's action.

But why is the attempt to do so unsuccessful, if God's Spirit is present, is effective, and can be experienced in the world? God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is not only a power by which God once upon a time intervened in past worlds and made Godself knowable. God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is also the power and the force by which God intervenes in constantly new ways in the present world and makes Godself knowable to people living in the present and in the future. Yet this is understood only in parts of the contemporary world, only within certain spheres of contemporary humanity. In other parts of the world a theology of the Holy Spirit must reckon with the prejudice that every attempt to recognize and to make God's presence knowable is nothing more than an empty promise. The Holy Spirit counts for nothing more than an intellectual construct, a product of fantasy. Why?

"The modern world has lost God and is seeking him." This is the judgment passed by the mathematician, natural scientist, and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead.³ Many people of our day would subscribe to his judgment. Others would even claim that the world has

words; their voice is not heard." On Hamann and the theology of creation that followed his lead, see O. Bayer, "Schöpfung als 'Rede an die Kreatur durch die Kreatur': Die Frage nach dem Schlüssel zum Buch der Natur und Geschichte," *EvT* 40 (1980): 316ff.; O. Bayer, *Schöpfung als Anrede: Zu einer Hermeneutik der Schöpfung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986).

3. A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), 74.

given up seeking God. Or they would regard the search for God as an enterprise doomed to failure: There never was a God.⁴

A theology of the Holy Spirit even provokes claims that God is distant or dead or does not exist at all. How can a world lose God if indeed a power of God is at work that intervenes in this world? How can a world land in the situation of seeking God in vain, if God makes Godself knowable in this world—not only privately, but publicly as well? If it is characteristic of God, by the Spirit, to intervene in this world and to make Godself knowable, is then the modern public experience that God is absent not a proof that there is no God at all? If a theology of the Holy Spirit disputes that God is a past, lost, distant, inaccessible God who cannot be experienced, and if a theology of the Holy Spirit emphasizes that God acts mightily, that God is present and can be experienced, such a theology will serve as an intensified provocation to laments over God's distance from this world.

It might still be possible to swallow a "creator God" sometime "in the beginning" and "on high." It might still be possible to swallow a Christ who marks the transition into the Common Era. It might still be possible to swallow a God as part of a story about what happened "once upon a time." But in the face of the widespread experience that God is distant, it is too much to ask people to accept the claim that in God's Spirit God is near them, that in the Spirit God is present among them and acts on them. Theology can quote as zealously and as often as it wishes Karl Barth's remark that the Holy Spirit is the most intimate friend of common sense.⁵ Unfortunately, this is a far cry from making common sense a friend of the Holy Spirit!

4. In his description of "How the 'True World' Finally Became a Fable," Friedrich Nietzsche has strikingly depicted the step-by-step distancing of Western culture not only from belief in God, but also from philosophical metaphysics and from all forms of morality (*Twilight of the Idols*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. W. Kaufmann [New York: Penguin Books, 1976], 485–86).

5. K. Barth, CD 4/4, 28: "There is no more intimate friend of common sense than the Holy Spirit" [translation altered]; E. Jüngel, "Zur Lehre vom heiligen Geist," in U. Luz and H. Weder, eds., *Die Mitte des Neuen Testaments: Einheit und Vielfalt neutestamentlicher Theologie: Festschrift für Eduard Schweizer zum siebzigsten Geburtstag* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1983), 97ff., 100: "The belief 'that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him' . . . demonstrates that the Holy Spirit is the best friend of common sense."

Today in many cultures common sense simply has difficulty reciprocating the friendship of the Holy Spirit, whether because common sense cannot even perceive that friendship or because common sense receives little help in its occasional attempts to make friends with the Holy Spirit. In this way the suspicion is solidified that the Holy Spirit is a phantom, a ghost. But common sense knows, especially since the Enlightenment, that there are no such things as ghosts.

The suspicion of so-called common sense that the Holy Spirit is a phantom is strengthened by theologies and religious attitudes that emphasize the abstract transcendence and otherworldliness, the naked supernaturalness, or the mysterious and numinous character of the Holy Spirit. These theologies point to an unclaimed territory, so to speak, that common sense has left open. They do so with the shallow assertion that something is at work in what is transcendent, otherworldly, supernatural, mysterious, and numinous, where common sense can perceive (or assume) only emptiness, illusion, and deceit.

By contrast, the many biblical testimonies to the action of God's Spirit—testimonies that are determinative for faith—talk about this Spirit having entered into diverse realities of human life. They report that the Spirit has “descended” like rainfall on human beings or has been “poured out” upon them. They report that in concrete situations of distress and affliction, the Spirit has intervened in realities of human life, bringing vitality and renewal. And they report how the Spirit has done so. They do not sidestep the thorny question of how the Spirit of God and the Spirit's action were experienced and can be experienced. They face head-on the challenges that the action, the complex reality, and the experience of the Spirit present to the realities of our everyday lives and to our ways of experience. And they do not skirt the problems involved in the fact that the action of the Spirit is uncontrollable and often seemingly insignificant, and even remains intermittently distant.

The theology of the Holy Spirit that lies before you has the conscious aim of confronting the tensions and conflicts between the attestations that in the Spirit God is acting and can be experienced, and the assertions of secular common sense that God is distant and powerless. The two positions can not be torn apart into a spiritless “here and now” and a “beyond” that is inaccessible to rationality and experience. It is a real question whether such obscure and empty

words as "the transcendent," "the supernatural," "the otherworldly," and "the numinous" ought to be used at all in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. If they should be, then *that in which* the Holy Spirit's "transcendence" and "supernaturalness" consists must become clear in relation to the Spirit's intervention in the present. It must be made clear *what* about this force and power is and remains "otherworldly" and "mysterious."

The theology of the Holy Spirit that lies before you consciously enters the charged field established by the poles of, on the one hand, the experience of God's proximity and, on the other hand, the consciousness of God's distance. By doing so, this theology sets itself the task of making clear the reason why certain ways of comprehending reality, certain forms of so-called common sense, acquire only with difficulty a capacity to perceive the action of God's Spirit. This theology sets itself the task of making clear that certain constructions of reality and certain forms of experience practically make themselves immune to experiences of the Spirit. But it also confronts the problem of why contemporary worldwide religious movements, which in no way share the secular consciousness of God's distance and which explicitly appeal to experiences of the Spirit's might, have so far not had persuasive and contagious repercussions on many secular regions of the world.

1.2: God the Spirit and the worldwide Charismatic Movement

That the Spirit of God is effective among human beings today is asserted and attested in a religious movement that is expanding worldwide. This movement is composed of several intra- and extra-ecclesial currents. Adherents of the so-called Charismatic Movement or Charismatic Renewal have a number of things in common. They appeal to the powerful experience of the reality and presence of God in the Spirit. They report intense and joyful community experiences, particularly in worship, preaching, and praise of God. They open themselves to the plurality and individuality of the gifts of the Spirit and strive to overcome hierarchical community structures and denominational isolation. Many people who stand outside this development—whether connected with a church or of a secular orientation—find these experiences strikingly lacking in clarity and

determinacy. Evidently these experiences are not easy for everyone to follow. What is the reason for this?

The Charismatic Movement is considered to be the fastest-growing religious movement of our time. It is the largest religious movement in history, period. At the end of the 1980s its membership was estimated at over 300 million people in 230 countries. According to an estimate made in 1988, the movement is growing at a yearly rate of 19 million members.⁶ Although the figures given in different estimates diverge widely,⁷ there is hardly an account that does not

6. The figures given are from D. B. Barrett, chief editor of the respected *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World A.D. 1900–2000* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982). The data for 1988 are located in his article "The Twentieth-Century Pentecostal/Charismatic Renewal in the Holy Spirit, with Its Goal of World Evangelization," in North American Renewal Service Committee, ed., *A.D. 2000 Together 2*, no. 5 (1988): 1ff. See also W. J. Hollenweger, *Handbuch der Pfingstbewegung* (New Haven: Atlas Board of Microtexts, 1965–1967); W. J. Hollenweger, *Enthusiastisches Christentum: Die Pfingstbewegung in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1969); C. E. Jones, *A Guide to the Study of the Pentecostal Movement*, 2 vols. (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1983); W. E. Mills, *Charismatic Religion in Modern Research: A Bibliography* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer Univ. Press, 1985); J. A. Jongeneel, ed., *Experiences of the Spirit: Conference on Pentecostal and Charismatic Research in Europe at Utrecht University 1989* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991).

7. Barrett estimates the adherents of the classical Pentecostal movement alone at 78 million for 1975, 104 million for 1980, 149 million for 1985, and 176 million for 1988 ("Twentieth-Century Pentecostal/Charismatic Renewal," 2–3). By contrast, on the basis of an estimate made in the mid-1970s, A. Bittlinger speaks of 30 million to 40 million (*Charismatische Erneuerung—eine Chance für die Gemeinde?* ed. Koordinierungsausschuss für Charismatische Gemeindeerneuerung in der Evangelischen Kirche [Metzingen: 1979], 4). Barrett initially set the figures in the *World Christian Encyclopedia* at a lower level, but their upward revision was recommended by, for example, P. A. Pomerville, "Pentecostalism and Mission: Distortion or Correction? The Pentecostal Contribution to Contemporary Mission Theology," Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1982, 58ff. See also Pomerville's depiction of the difficulties in securing reliable figures and in adequately grasping essential characteristics when developments are changing so quickly. For example, at the end of the 1970s Bittlinger particularly highlights "the independent African churches, whose members today number some 8 million" (*Charismatische Erneuerung—Chance?* 4). A decade later Barrett is particularly impressed by the Chinese "'House church' Pentecostals," whom he estimates have some 40 million adherents.

emphasize the breathtaking success of this movement, which in a quarter of a century has spread over the whole earth and "in one form or another has found entry into all denominations and churches, both state and independent."⁸ For most of the adherents of the Charismatic Movement, their successful development is a direct proof that the Holy Spirit can be experienced and that in the Spirit God is present and acting in our contemporary world.

This attitude is shared even where differentiations and differences inside the movement are emphasized and negative aspects of the success story are highlighted.⁹ Throughout the literature three or four currents are distinguished that either designate themselves as "charismatic" or are so named by outsiders:

1. The so-called *classical Pentecostal movement* grows out of Methodism and a number of Baptist churches in Topeka, Kansas, in 1901.¹⁰ At first usually reprovved and isolated by the mother churches, the movement expands with enormous speed, especially in Latin America and Africa. Different developments quickly arise, including both independent churches and sects.
2. In 1960 a second charismatic awakening, the "*Charismatic Renewal*," begins in the U.S.A. It begins first among Anglicans

8. H. Kägi, *Der Heilige Geist in charismatischer Erfahrung und theologischer Reflexion* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zurich, 1989), 3.

9. According to Barrett, "Twentieth-Century Pentecostal/Charismatic Renewal," with the great success of the movement has come the phenomenon of enormous numbers of people turning away from the Charismatic Movement. He calls attention to the "growing dilemma" that many charismatics in the non-Pentecostal mainline Protestant and Catholic churches become inactive or leave the church entirely after two or three years. For 1988 he estimates that there were already 80 million "postcharismatics" (*ibid.*, 3), as he puts it in his study—a study that is not exactly free from the imperialistic compulsion to take everybody into one overarching structure. The four million "radio/television charismatics" whom he takes into account could also be reckoned among the negative aspects of the movement—and of its evaluation (*ibid.*, 1–2).

10. See D. W. Dayton's informative discussion in "Theological Roots of Pentecostalism," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 2 (1980): 3ff.

and Episcopalians, then in other churches of the Reformation.¹¹ In 1967 the Charismatic Renewal reaches the Catholic church and spreads there like wildfire.¹² About 1971 the movement takes hold of the Greek Orthodox Church as well.¹³

3. Parallel to this movement arises so-called *Neo-Pentecostalism*. Like the Charismatic Renewal, Neo-Pentecostalism wishes to remain within the existing churches. In opposition to the Charismatic Renewal, it accepts the theology of the classical Pentecostal movement, including its fundamentalist understanding of the Bible and its Baptist understanding of baptism. Above all it insists not only on "baptism in the Spirit" but also, closely connected with this baptism, on *speaking in tongues*. It treats speaking in tongues as an initiation into faith or as a culminating point on the path of faith after conversion and sanctification.¹⁴ Other characteristics of Neo-Pentecostalism are an individual experience of faith and an interest in spectacular experiences that supposedly underscore religious vitality.

11. For a treatment of the theological reactions of the mainline churches, see J. R. Williams, "The Upsurge of Pentecostalism: Some Presbyterian/Reformed Comment," *Reformed World* 31 (1971): 339ff.; also the "attempted integration" by J. Hesselink, "The Charismatic Movement and the Reformed Tradition," *Reformed Review* (Philadelphia) 28 (1975): 174ff.; C. Lindberg, *The Third Reformation? Charismatic Movements and the Lutheran Tradition* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer Univ. Press, 1983).

12. Bittlinger illustrates this by means of the attendance figures at the annual conferences of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the United States, which takes place at Notre Dame from 1967 through 1974 before being regionalized in 1975. In 1967, 70 people gather. In 1968, 150; 1969, 500; 1970, 1500; 1971, 5000; 1972, 12,000; 1973, 23,000; 1974, 37,000 (*Charismatische Erneuerung—Chance?* 5). Here, as well, attempts at theological integration quickly result. See, e.g., E. O'Connor, "The Hidden Roots of the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church," in V. Synan, ed., *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins* (South Plainfield, N.J.: Bridge, 1975), 169ff. A thorough overall exposition is to be found in R. Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1977).

13. Cf. J. R. Williams, "A Profile of the Charismatic Movement," *ChrTo* 19 (1975): 9ff. But see also the critical and defensive examination by J. W. Morris, "The Charismatic Movement: An Orthodox Evaluation," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 28 (1983): 103ff.

14. See A. I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 132ff. See also §§5.1 and 5.5 of this book.

4. Finally, recent literature mentions, with some uncertainty, "Third-wavers." This term is supposed to designate so-called evangelicals or other Christians who since the 1980s have been developing a piety centered on the Holy Spirit and on experiences of the Spirit, without being directly connected to the Pentecostal movement or the Charismatic Movement.¹⁵

The success of the Charismatic Movement is striking. Yet equally striking is the fact that the reasons for its success are not easily communicated to outsiders.¹⁶ Conversations with its members and the copious literature on the distinctive contours and the theology of the Charismatic Movement at the very least make common sense suspicious by virtue of the indeterminacy of their statements. More likely they scare common sense away. Obviously the forms of expression and of exposition are lacking that could communicate the defining impressions and underlying experiences to the outside, to another spectrum of forms of thought, experience, and life. The clearest and most helpful descriptions of the distinctive contours of the Charismatic Movement¹⁷ name the following elements as characteristic:

1. Members of the Charismatic Movement emphasize that they have experienced with new power the *reality and presence of God*. One particular component of this experience is recognition of the vitality and contemporary meaning of the biblical

15. See Barrett, "Twentieth-Century Pentecostal/Charismatic Renewal," 19; C. P. Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit: Encountering the Power of Signs and Wonders Today* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant, 1988).

16. This is reflected to an equal extent in the depiction of what is positive and of what is problematic in the Charismatic Renewal. Thus, e.g., see Y. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 2, "He Is Lord and Giver of Life," trans D. Smith (New York: Seabury, 1983), esp. 145–212; or Schütz, *Einführung in die Pneumatologie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985), 274ff.

17. With regard to the following discussion, cf. esp. Williams, "Profile of the Charismatic Movement," 9ff.; as well as A. Bittlinger, "Die charismatische Erneuerung der Kirchen: Aufbruch urchristlicher Geisterfahrung," in C. Heitmann and H. Mühlen, eds., *Erfahrung und Theologie des Heiligen Geistes* (Hamburg: Agentur des Rauhen Hauses; Munich: Kösel, 1974), 19ff.

- world.¹⁸ Another component is development of the capacity—often experienced for the first time—to pray, to enjoy prayer, and to talk about God in a new way with joy and power.
2. Members of the Charismatic Movement emphasize that they have come to a *new awareness of community* and to new community experiences. In this regard members often emphasize the connection between enjoyment of the community and *communal proclamation and glorification of God*.¹⁹
 3. Members of the Charismatic Movement emphasize that among themselves the abundance and diversity of the *gifts of the Spirit* (1 Cor. 12:8-10; Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Pet. 4:10-11) are taken seriously. They also insist that the gifts and endowments of individual human beings are thereby discovered and valued. They say that this leads to dismantling the separation of persons within the community into professionals who play the lead roles and laity who have only minor parts.²⁰
 4. Members of the Charismatic Movement emphasize that for them the relativizing and removing of confessional boundaries, and an attendant *opening to an ecumenical Christianity*, have become an important sign of the power of the Spirit's action.²¹
 5. Finally, members of the Charismatic Movement emphasize the experience termed "baptism in the Holy Spirit"²²—an experience that is evidently difficult even for them to describe. This baptism can be followed by *speaking in tongues*. For members of

18. Cf. T. F. Zimmerman, "Priorities and Beliefs of Pentecostals," *ChrTo* 25 (1981): 1109-1110.

19. Cf. Williams, "Profile of the Charismatic Movement," 10; H. Mühlen, "Die Geisterfahrung als Erneuerung der Kirche," in O. A. Dilschneider, ed., *Theologie des Geistes* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1980), 69ff., 72ff.

20. Cf. Bittlinger, *Charismatische Erneuerung—Chance?* 6-7, 14ff.; Mühlen, "Geisterfahrung," 83ff.

21. Cf. W. J. Hollenweger, "Charisma und Ökumene: Der Beitrag der Pfingstbewegung zur weltweiten Kirche," in *Rondom het Woord* 12 (1970): 300ff.; G. Gassmann and H. Meyer, eds., *Neue transkonfessionelle Bewegungen: Dokumente aus der evangelikalen, aktionszentrierten und der charismatischen Bewegung*, Ökumenische Dokumentation 3 (1976).

22. See §5.1.

Pentecostal churches and for Neo-Pentecostals, the succession is inevitable. Speaking in tongues is regarded above all as the acquisition of a new form of prayer language, a new way to express oneself in prayer, to give utterance to spiritual power, and to praise God.²³

If we juxtapose these experiences of charismatics to secularized common sense's experiences of God's distance in the modern world, we can formulate the following initial reservations regarding the movements of the Charismatic Renewal:

Certainly it is comprehensible to long for powers of the Spirit, for demonstrations that faith is powerful, has its own special qualities, and generates enthusiasm. Certainly one can only share the need for a rich, diverse community that takes individuals seriously and grows in the exchange of the individual gifts of the Spirit. Certainly we ought to work against forms of piety that one-sidedly emphasize cognitive and rational functions. But why are the experiences of the Spirit and of the Spirit's power so difficult to communicate to others who wish to understand them? Why are they so difficult to translate into many contexts of European and North American life? Don't practices such as speaking in tongues tend to repel people rather than to attract them—at any rate people of the Western world in the twentieth century? Don't these practices form new hierarchies in the community, especially the hierarchy of those gifted with interpretation and speech in contrast to the others? If this assessment is on the mark, are these endowments and manners of behavior really to be regarded as powers of faith and of the Spirit?

By contrast, because of their destructive forces, the dominant, mostly imperialistic forms for structuring experience, especially in Western cultures, are the object of increasing reproach from the ranks of the Charismatic Renewal. This reproach calls attention to the fixation on forms of technical-scientific rationality and to the ways in which they compel conformity in the Western world. To these the Charismatic Renewal opposes a shared sensibility for the miraculous

23. Appealing to, say, Rom. 8:26-27; Eph. 6:18; Jude 20; as well as to 1 Cor. 14:1ff. For greater detail see §5.5.

and the inexplicable and a liberation of "emotional intelligence."²⁴ On the one side is a spirit of the age, a *Zeitgeist* that destroys sustaining and sheltering environments, both natural and cultural.²⁵ On the other side is the strengthening of the "subjective sphere of experience" and of the "subjective competence to judge," as well as the connection with traditions that set in opposition to the specific achievements of the technical-scientific world a source of powerful alternatives for changing forms of life. Experience stands against experience!

On the secular side this same difference is of course "read" differently: Certainly it is correct that the dominant cultures of the Western world have maneuvered themselves into diverse disastrous processes that, once engaged, exercise their own ineluctable dynamic. Certainly it is correct that these cultures are marked by rationalities whose destructive potentials are becoming more and more readily recognizable. It is also an accurate assessment that these cultures hardly manifest forces for the renewal of their ethos, forces for the renewal of their forms of communication and understanding that would be able to meet the challenge of those self-destructive processes. But this does not validate the claims of an escapist version of religious cultural critique whose positive initiatives and whose alternatives cannot be clearly communicated to others. Specifically, this does not mean that such escapism can lay claim to the delivering and saving powers of God's Holy Spirit—provided that such a thing even exists.

If we free ourselves from this alternative and consider it from the outside, the following questions become unavoidable with regard to the Charismatic Movement.²⁶ Is the Spirit to which it appeals the Spirit of *truth*? Is the retreat to subjective feelings, and to a certainty that even within the church of Christ can only be communicated to a limited extent, appropriate to this Spirit? If we have to do with the Spirit of *truth*, then in any case it is inadequate to point to the *success* of the movement that appeals to this Spirit, even when that success is spectacular. Must not the liberating power of truth show itself in the fact that the insights of faith wrought by the Spirit could be carried over to

24. With regard to the following discussion, cf. H. Kirchner et al., eds., *Charismatische Erneuerung und Kirche* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1984), esp. 108–14.

25. See §1.5.

26. With regard to secular consciousness, see esp. §§1.4 and 1.5.

faith within secularized cultures and postures of consciousness? Must not the liberating power of truth make recognizable in a way that is also accessible to this latter faith the dominant cultures' ruling powers of self-endangerment and self-destruction? Must not the liberating power of truth contribute to "driving out" these powers?

Within the Charismatic Movement the interest in the Holy Spirit seems frequently to concentrate on the unusual, *sensational* action of the Spirit. This may be a reaction against the enlightened skepticism of the average Western mentality, against the rationality, homogeneity, predictability, and foreseeability of the ways in which that average Western mentality goes through life. Perhaps only the subjectivity, irrationality, exotic character, and implausibility attributed to religious life by the Enlightenment are emphasized and obstinately accepted. Perhaps that is the reason for highlighting the interest in the charisms of speaking in tongues and of faith healing—an interest that on the one hand has a strong public effect, but on the other hand is regarded with suspicion by publics both inside and outside the church. Perhaps that is precisely why unique, peculiar, or spectacular personal experiences, which are inaccessible to outsiders and which contradict the rationalities that the culture has drummed into its members, are regarded as "experiences of the Spirit" and made the focus of attention.

Without a doubt the biblical traditions also talk about charisms and particular experiences that come across to us today as spectacular and implausible. Without a doubt the biblical traditions connect some of these experiences with the action of the Spirit. Yet in no way do the biblical traditions regard an anomalous action of the Spirit as the best path to the experience and knowledge of God's Spirit. Instead of busying itself with unusual, sensational actions of the Spirit, a theology of the Holy Spirit ought to work toward an understanding of experiences of the Spirit that are open to sober and realistic perception. Only from that vantage point should a theology of the Holy Spirit then continue with circumspect questioning aimed at a greater understanding of the spectacular action of the Spirit. This approach is not meant to exclude the possibility that in the end the speaking in tongues wrought by the Spirit will perhaps appear less complex and astounding than, for example, the fact that the Holy Spirit brings righteousness, joy, and peace.

1.3: God the Spirit and the spread of liberation and feminist theologies

According to the messianic promises, God establishes justice, mercy, and knowledge of God through a "Chosen One" on whom rests the Spirit of God, as well as through the "pouring out" of the Spirit. There is no righteousness without mercy, without integration of the weak, without liberation of the oppressed, without those who have been forced to the margins of society participating in the processes of economic, judicial, social, and cultural life. For the revelation and execution of this divine purpose, women and men, old and young, slaves both male and female, people from "here" and people from other lands, adherents of "our" religion and those who come from other religious traditions are taken into God's service.

Liberation and feminist theologies of our day proceed de facto from these premises. The diversity of movements corresponds to the fullness of the Spirit who, according to the promises, neither brings nor wills to bring deliverance through only one group and for only one group, from only one perspective and in the framework of only one program or one plan for the world. It is in the various movements' orientation toward righteousness and freedom in the force field of justice, mercy, and knowledge of God that they receive their differentiated unanimity and the power that results from mutual strengthening.²⁷

Within the space of two decades, liberation and feminist theologies²⁸ have, in the phrase of Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, "already made [their] presence felt worldwide."²⁹ This means not only that they

27. See esp. §§3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1, and 5.3.

28. Concerning the structural analogy between, on the one hand, the various forms of liberation theology and, on the other hand, feminist theology, which likewise has acquired a great deal of internal differentiation, see E. Moltmann-Wendel, *A Land Flowing with Milk and Honey: Perspectives on Feminist Theology*, trans. J. Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 63ff.; A. E. Carr, *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women's Experience* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 148ff.

29. L. Boff and C. Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, trans. P. Burns (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1989), 78. The internal differentiation within Latin American liberation theology is documented by R. Gibellini, ed., *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979); K. Rahner et al., eds., *Befreiende Theologie: Der Beitrag Lateinamerikas zur Theologie der Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1977).

belong among the most significant forms of theology existing today, but that every credible act of asking about God and talking about God must confront the challenges and impetuses of these theologies. The thought and feeling characteristic of liberation and feminist theologies have begun to infuse all forms of theological thought and feeling. This is due not only to the fact that these theologies have great moral, political, and humanitarian rights on their side. Nor is it due, as conservative critics opine, to a temporary political and moral mood that sustains and enhances the success of these theologies. Liberation and feminist theologies take up central concerns of the biblical legal traditions and of God's will as expressed in these traditions. In addition, those theologies stand in the power of the promise of the Spirit of righteousness.³⁰ Thus they will continue to infuse and to change all forms of theology and piety and to exercise a transforming and renewing influence on the secular world.

To characterize the new departure effected by liberation and feminist theologies, people have spoken of a "paradigm shift" in religious life and piety, in theology and the church.³¹ Interpretations of this development have been offered from the perspectives of morality, politics, intellectual history, and cultural criticism. Thus it has been claimed that the sharpening of social conflicts observable throughout the world in our day, the desolation and destruction of natural and cultural environments, or the crises of orientation in the transition from modern to postmodern culture underlie this change of religious life and piety. Yet all these interpretations remain outside the concrete new discovery of God's word. How has this word again intervened in human life? How has this word again really laid claim on people?

As we see today, underlying this change in the Christian world was, along with impetus given by the Exodus event, primarily the motive

30. See, besides chap. 2, H. Mühlen, "Der gegenwärtige Aufbruch der Geisterfahrung und die Unterscheidung der Geister," in W. Kasper, ed., *Gegenwart des Geistes: Aspekte der Pneumatologie*, QD 85 (Freiburg: Herder, 1979), esp. 41ff.; E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 160–204; G. Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People*, trans. M. J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1984); J. Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, trans. P. Burns (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1989), esp. 7–13 and the unfortunately very abstract statements on 20–23.

31. H. Küng and D. Tracy, eds., *Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future*, trans. M. Kohl (New York: Crossroad, 1989).

power of provisions of biblical law. At issue are provisions concerning mercy as well as provisions concerning the interconnection between justice and mercy. At issue are also promises of the action of the Spirit that envision a fulfillment of this law, which aims at the universal realization of justice and mercy.

The provisions of the law concerning mercy are found—along with stipulations regulating justice and cultic life—in all bodies of law in the Old Testament.³² Through the mediation of the messianic promises, they continue to have a powerful effect in the New Testament.³³ The mercy laws and the promises of the Spirit look forward to God's particular partiality for those in a community who are weak, oppressed, and in distress. They overcome the merely moral or even sentimental moral attitudes that turn mercy over to kindhearted individuals and to situations that elicit kindhearted action.³⁴ The mercy laws cultivate among people the binding expectation of a continual focus on the weak and oppressed. They cultivate the expectation that those who are privileged will withdraw their own claims—even to the point of forgoing their legal rights—for the benefit of those who are weak and in distress. They cultivate the logical consequence of this: namely, the struggle for liberation from the systematic constraints of oppression and of being oppressed.³⁵

32. Cf. M. Welker, "Erwartungssicherheit und Freiheit: Zur Neuformulierung der Lehre von Gesetz und Evangelium I," EK 18 (1985): 680ff.; M. Welker, "Erbarmen und soziale Identität: Zur Neuformulierung der Lehre von Gesetz und Evangelium II," EK 19 (1986): 39ff.; M. Welker, "Security of Expectations: Reformulating the Theology of Law and Gospel," trans. J. Hoffmeyer, *Journal of Religion* 66 (1986): 237ff.

33. See M. Welker, "Gesetz und Geist," JBT 4, ed. O. Hofius and P. Stuhlmacher (1989): 215ff. With regard to the following discussion, cf. esp. §§3.1 and 5.3.

34. The process of theological reeducation is readily observable with regard to the doctrine of God in J. Moltmann's reworking of an article on God the "motherly Father," which first appeared in *God as Father*, ed. J.-B. Metz, E. Schillebeckx, and M. Lefebvre, *Concilium* 143, no. 3 (1981): 51–56. In 1981 the height of the motherly Father's giving is seen in the romantic "unending pain of love." By contrast, the 1991 version speaks of the "power of mercy" ("The Motherly Father and the Power of His Mercy," in *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology*, trans. J. Bowden [London: SCM Press, 1991], 19–25, esp. 23–25).

35. L. Boff and C. Boff foster sensitivity to the various levels of mercy by differentiating between a "Band-Aid" approach, "reformism," and systemic change (*Introducing Liberation Theology*, 4ff. and 25ff.).

The impetuses that go forth from the mercy laws and from the messianic promises that pick up on the mercy laws have left a deep mark on piety and theology worldwide. In terms of theological content, they form the deep structure of the theology of liberation.³⁶ This is true whether the biblical traditions mark the individual currents of liberation theology in a way that is conscious, detailed, and direct,³⁷ or whether they do so through the mediation of dogmatic reflection.³⁸ Mercy laws and the promise of the Spirit also form the material

36. This is not contradicted by the fact that a Neomarxism marked by Left Hegelianism, and a theological appropriation of that Neomarxism (one can hardly overestimate the impetus provided by J. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. J. W. Leitch [London: SCM Press, 1967]), were important midwives in the birth of liberation theology. The development from Hegel to Marx, the goal of which was that philosophical theory might become "practical," was defined by thinkers who were fundamentally influenced by the Judeo-Christian legacy (Hegel, Feuerbach), and especially by messianism (Bruno Bauer, Moses Hess). This messianism prevails against all attempts to secularize it by means of morality, grassroots politics, or politics in the narrow, "professional" sense. It explains the characteristic vacillation of Left Hegelianism and Neomarxism between critique of religion and passionate interest in it. See, e.g., E. Bloch, *Atheism in Christianity: The Religion of the Exodus and the Kingdom*, trans. J. T. Swann (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972); J. Moltmann, *Im Gespräch mit Ernst Bloch: Eine theologische Wegbegleitung* (Munich: Kaiser, 1976), esp. 13ff., 43ff. D. Henrich convincingly sketches the stages of philosophical, moral, and political orientation of the early Marx—stages that Marx left behind, but that Neomarxism brought to life again in relation to orthodox Marxism ("Karl Marx als Schüler Hegels," in *Hegel im Kontext* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971], 187ff.). This orientation of the early Marx is a force that relativizes orthodox Marxism from the perspective of its own roots, and a force that has been overlooked not only by conservative critics.

37. Cf. G. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. C. Inda and J. Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988), esp. 83–105; G. Gutiérrez, *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988); J. H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1975), esp. 62ff.; P. Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); C. Mesters, *Die Botschaft des leidenden Volkes* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1982).

38. Cf. P. C. Hodgson, *New Birth of Freedom: A Theology of Bondage and Liberation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); J. Sobrino, *The True Church and the Poor* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1984); R. R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon, 1983); F. Herzog, *God-Walk: Liberation Shaping Dogmatics* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988).

theological basis where the worlds and linguistic forms of the biblical tradition are criticized³⁹ as patriarchal,⁴⁰ often nationalistic, and supportive of the formation of class societies.⁴¹

In the mercy law and in the messianic promises that look forward to the fulfillment of that law, a new and clear path to knowledge of God's word was again opened. This fact has in part elicited and in part strengthened a new departure, an exodus that takes many forms in churches and societies. The messianic promises assign the name "Spirit of God" to the power that both promises and realizes new community for poor and rich, strong and weak, people separated and alienated by economics, politics, racism, and sexism. The publications of liberation theologies suggest that these theologies have not identified that power as their central motive force as decisively as was the case with the Charismatic Renewal Movement.⁴²

Undoubtedly this is the result of several factors working together. One must not underestimate the well-founded fear of feminist and liberation theologies that either a conservative or a liberal position will, in the name of a "Spirit" defined by other traditions and structures, fit them as "parts" into an overarching "whole," at the very least marginalizing them in the process.⁴³ It is still difficult to perceive the

39. R. R. Ruether calls attention to the "biblical critical principle" of the "prophetic-messianic tradition" ("Feminist Interpretation: A Method of Correlation," in L. M. Russell, ed., *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985], 117ff.); similarly L. M. Russell, "Authority and the Challenge of Feminist Interpretation," in *ibid.*, 138ff.

40. Cf. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*; and the discussion documented in Russell, ed., *Feminist Interpretation*.

41. A. N. Whitehead is helpful in making clear the way in which the slaveholder mentality was taken for granted in "classical" civilizations: "We differ from the ancients on the one premise on which they were all agreed. Slavery was the presupposition of political theorists then; Freedom is the presupposition of political theorists now" (*Adventures of Ideas* [New York: Free Press, 1933], 13).

42. Students who have lived in Latin American base communities, however, repeatedly report a well-defined pneumatological piety. M. Volf sketches analogies and differences between both movements with the intent of reducing the latter ("Materiality of Salvation: An Investigation in the Soteriologies of Liberation and Pentecostal Theologies," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26 [1989]: 447ff.).

43. In response to the discussion carried out in the volumes edited by Küng and Tracy (see n. 31 above), see M. Welker, "Theologischer Paradigmenwechsel?," *EK* 16

invigorating forces of the specific "pluralism of the Spirit" and to distinguish them from the vitiating, disintegrative pluralisms within secular cultures.⁴⁴ It is likewise still difficult to recognize and to make accessible on a practical level the powerful interplay of mercy, justice, and cultic life or, alternatively, mercy, justice, and knowledge of God. And it is difficult to recognize and to make accessible on a practical level the culture of community expectations and forms of behavior that issues from this interplay.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, in the face of opposition the chances of success still seem greater for those who resort to small-minded partisan politics than for those who build on the Spirit.⁴⁶ This could be changed by recognition of the particular power of the Spirit in the midst of the Spirit's apparent weakness in situations where it appears to be impossible to get an overview of how the Spirit is working.

1.4: God the Spirit, pluralism and individualism

God's Spirit makes God's power and God's righteousness knowable through and for women and men, slaves both female and male, old and young, people from "here" and people from other lands, adherents of "our" church and those outside our church who are seeking righteousness and knowledge of God. The Spirit reveals God's power by simultaneously illumining different people and groups of people, and by enabling them to become not only recipients, but also bearers of God's revelation. The Spirit reveals the power of God in strong, upbuilding, pluralistic structures. This pluralism is not a disintegrative, Babel-like pluralism, but constitutes enriching, invigorating force fields. It is not bound up with an abstract, uniform individualism that reduces everything to an unrealistic, abstract equality, reducing everything to "the

(1983): 376ff. M. K. Taylor provides an excellent discussion of the "trilemma" of postmodern theology and philosophy: namely, how to do justice to the task that requires us simultaneously "to acknowledge tradition, to celebrate plurality, and to resist domination" (*Remembering Esperanza: A Cultural-Political Theology for North American Praxis* [Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1990], 40ff.).

44. See §1.4; also §§3.3, 3.4, and 5.1.

45. These last two sentences frame the task of a "theology of law."

46. See §1.6.

ego," "the subject," the decision-maker, the consumer, or the payee.⁴⁷ The individualism of the Spirit is marked by diverse concreteness and by concrete diversity, without crumbling into the indeterminate plurality of "pure" individuality. No one is totally the same as others, and no one is unique in every respect. The Spirit of God gives rise to a multi-place force field that is sensitive to differences. In this force field, enjoyment of creaturely, invigorating differences can be cultivated while unjust, debilitating differences can be removed in love, mercy, and gentleness.⁴⁸

People have emphasized over and over again that God's Spirit works union, unanimity, and unity among human beings,⁴⁹ indeed that the Spirit "holds together" all that is created.⁵⁰ Not only has this been emphasized repeatedly, it has been emphasized in connection with the widest possible variety of interests.⁵¹ Less clarity and energy have been devoted to saying that the "unity of the Spirit" not only tolerates differences and differentiation, but that it maintains and cultivates differences that do not contradict justice, mercy, and knowledge of God.⁵² According to the prophetic promises whose fulfillment is proclaimed on Pentecost, the Spirit gives rise to a unity that speaks to and includes not only people of the most varied languages and traditions. The Spirit gives rise to a unity in which the prophetic witness of women is no less important than that of men, that of the young is no less significant than that of the old, that of the socially disadvantaged is no less relevant than that of the privileged. The promised Spirit of God is effective in that differentiated community which is sensitive to differences, and in which the differences that

47. See D. Bonhoeffer's classic confrontation with modern individualism and social atomism, *The Communion of Saints: A Dogmatic Inquiry into the Sociology of the Church*, trans. R. G. Smith et al. (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 20ff., 23ff., and *passim*.

48. See §§3.1ff., 5.1, 5.3, 5.4, and 6.3.

49. See, e.g., Phil. 1:27, Eph. 4:3-4, Jude 19; also esp. §§2.1, 5.1, and 6.2.

50. Wisdom of Sol. 1:7. See §3.5.

51. Congar ("He Is Lord and Giver of Life") designates the Spirit as the "principle of unity" (15), which he sees as supporting the "pastoral hierarchy" (17), on the one hand, and somehow taking account of individual diversity, on the other hand; cf. esp. 15-23; 213-30.

52. Cf. §§2.2, 3.1-3.5, 4.5, 5.1-5.3.