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EMBODIED SPIRIT: OUTLINES OF LUTHERAN PNEUMATOLOGY

Bernd Oberdorfer

At first sight, it does not seem to be a wise idea to focus a conference about Lutheran identity on pneumatology. Lutherans, to say the least, have not been widely known for advocating the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, did they not themselves practice a strict cautiousness with reference to the Holy Spirit, condemning everyone who directly referred to the Spirit instead of meditating God's revelation in the words of the Holy Scripture (*sola Scriptura*) as being "Spiritualist" or "Schwärmer"? And has their Christocentric approach to theology (*solus Christus*) not prevented them from developing elaborated ideas on pneumatology? Moreover, in the Reformers' internal conflict about the Holy Communion, was it not the Swiss Reformers who explicitly linked the sacramental commemoration (Zwingli) or representation (Calvin) of Christ to the Holy Spirit whereas the Lutherans in their rigid emphasis on the real and substantial presence of the whole Christ did not give the Spirit a special attention? Thus, it actually makes sense to characterize Zwingli's or Calvin's theology essentially as a "Theology of the Holy Spirit," but it would be an ambitious, if not vain, endeavor to do so for the work of Luther or Melancthon.

In the specter between –as has been said in a German word play– *Geistvergessenheit* und *Geistversessenheit*¹ (oblivion of, and addiction to, the Spirit), the Lutherans seem to come quite close to the extreme of oblivion (and particularly orthodox theologians regularly accuse them of being

¹ See Christian Danz and Michael Murrmann-Kahl, eds., *Zwischen Geistvergessenheit und Geistversessenheit: Perspektiven der Pneumatologie im 21. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

oblivious of the Spirit) and definitely are not in danger to become addicted. If Lutherans speak of the Spirit (and of course, they do), it seems to be a well-tempered, domesticated Spirit which, as it were, works in the shadow of Christ and hides as a captive behind the bars of the Holy Scripture.

But (even apart from the fact that the shadow sometimes is not the worst place to be and, at times, it is preferable to meet domesticated rather than wild animals) this first sight deserves a second glance. Indeed, the Lutherans were not silent when it came to the Spirit. It is true that they distrusted any claims of a freewheeling wafting of the Spirit. But they did so because they wanted to secure the authenticity, sufficiency, completeness and perfection of God's revelation in Christ to which we have access in an open book —the Holy Scripture. They wanted to prevent Christians from the temptation of searching for a second "spiritual" truth besides, or in addition to, or above, the truth which is revealed in the scriptures. They fought against the idea that there might be "higher" truths available by intercession of the Holy Spirit, truths that might be necessary to achieve full Christian perfection. Thus, they insisted that the Spirit's work be found within, not beyond the one, concrete revelation in which God makes Godself present in the world. This implies, however, the conviction that the Spirit itself is really, and substantially, present in the revelation and, moreover, that the revelation cannot be understood without reference to the Holy Spirit. The fact that the Spirit, according to Lutheran theology, is an "embodied" Spirit does not make the Spirit superfluous or reduce the Spirit to a subordinated tool. It rather implies that whenever we speak of God and God's revelation we have to speak about God's Spirit as well. In the following, therefore, I would like to elaborate outlines of Lutheran pneumatology focusing on the idea of the Spirit's embodiment.

THE SPIRIT'S EMBODIMENT IN THE WORD

Locus classicus of Lutheran pneumatology is article 5 of the Augsburg Confession. There we read:

So that we might receive this faith, the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments is established [sc. by God]. For through the Word and sacraments, as through tools, the Holy Spirit is given who effects faith, whenever and wherever it pleases God, in those who hear the gospel.²

² Latin version, my translation.

According to the systematic arrangement of the Confession, this article explains how the faith is achieved, which article 4 declared to be the cause and form of the justification of the sinner. Article 5 repeats the core message of the gospel, “not because of our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, God justifies those who believe that they are received into grace because of Christ.” Unambiguously, article 5 identifies the Holy Spirit as the source and effective cause of our faith. The Confession, on the one hand, by binding the Spirit’s work to the human practice of preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments as the Spirit’s “tools” (*instrumenta*), as it were, “earths” or “grounds” the Spirit’s presence; the Spirit commits itself to use these instruments to create faith. On the other hand, the Confession underlines that the Spirit does not work, so to speak, automatically; the Spirit “effects faith, whenever and wherever it pleases God.” However, this does not qualify the unique relevance of the gospel; the Spirit, whenever and wherever it works, effects faith “in those who hear the gospel.”

The text of article 5 is very dense and complex; the translation therefore has to be very concise (which, by the way, is not always the case in the English translations to which I had access). The complexity even increases if we compare the Latin with the German version because the comparison displays significant differences with reference to the question who “acts” in the process of faith-based justification:

In the Latin text, the Holy Spirit is given through the instruments of Word and sacraments and effects the faith. In the German text, the Holy Spirit itself uses the instruments of Word and sacraments in order to effect faith. In the German version, thus, Word and sacraments are instruments of the *work* of the Spirit. In the Latin version, however, these are instruments of the *gift* of the Spirit. In other words, in German, the Spirit *works* through Word and sacraments; in Latin the Spirit *comes* through Word and sacraments. It seems that the German text binds the Spirit even more strongly to Word and sacraments than the Latin does.

The German version gives a more elaborate expression of the Spirit’s work saying that the Spirit “comforts the hearts and gives faith.” Thus, it emphasizes the dimension of the heart and makes clear that faith is more than knowledge. I will come back to this later.

In the German text, it is the Spirit who works “whenever and wherever it wants to,” whereas in Latin, it is God who gives the Spirit “whenever and wherever it pleases God.” As in the first bullet point, the German version seems to ascribe the Spirit a more active role. We could take from this that the German version more explicitly reflects the Spirit’s status as a trinitarian person (although, of course, the Latin version is far from denying that).

In the Latin version, the “ministry of preaching (*docendi*) the gospel and administering the sacrament” is established (by God), whereas in Ger-

man, God established “the ministry of preaching, gospel and sacraments.” This subtle difference could be read in a way that the Latin focusses more strictly on the *ordained* ministry whilst the German, in a more general sense, ascribes the ministry of preaching, gospel and sacraments to the whole church. In any case, the discussion on whether article 5 speaks of ordained ministry in particular (some would even say, exclusively), or of the ministry of the church in general, runs through the whole history of Lutheran theology and has not yet been resolved unanimously. Of course, this is of great relevance for ecclesiology, but in the context of pneumatology I will not go deeper into that question.

Clearly these differences do not mark substantial contradictions, but rather indicate a variety of possible interpretations. However, with respect to pneumatology, both versions have in common that they describe gospel and sacraments as means and media of the Holy Spirit’s saving and sanctifying advent and presence in the world. The Spirit’s presence displays itself by causing people to believe in the truth of what is being proclaimed in the gospel. The Spirit does so, we must add, by revealing the real meaning of the Holy Scripture’s words, in other words by making people *understand*. And with reference to Luther’s basic concept of biblical hermeneutics – “was Christum treibet” (what moves to Christ, or more precisely, to believing in Christ) – this means to understand the words of the Bible as testifying Christ as Savior. The Spirit, therefore, does not actually testify for itself. Instead, the Spirit’s presence reveals itself indirectly when it testifies for Christ. In this dialectical sense, we could apply the biblical words “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe” (Jn 20:29) to the Spirit as well, so that we understand it as “Blessed are those who have not seen the Spirit and yet have come to believe.” In other words, the Spirit is visible when it makes Christ visible as Savior. It is visible in the mirror of Christ, the open book of the Holy Scripture.

This becomes even clearer in the anathema that concludes article 5. The reformers confirm they “damn the Anabaptists and others who think [German version: teach] that the Holy Spirit comes to people without the external word [German: without the bodily—*leiblich*—word of the gospel] through their own preparations and works.” It has been rightly remarked that this damnation does not really strike the “Anabaptists” who declined the baptism of infants with explicit reference to the Holy Scripture, but rather the “Spiritualists” who stressed a saving presence of the Holy Spirit which is neither bound to the media of Scripture and sacraments nor to the saving work of Christ. This way of understanding the Spirit’s presence, then, does not “move to Christ.” This explains why the Confession states that neglecting the media of Word and sacraments leads to the conviction that we have to prepare ourselves for the Spirit’s advent. This is because,

without the Word, we would not know that, due to what Christ already has done for us, we need no longer prepare ourselves for the coming of God. In other words, if we search for the Spirit beside and beyond, Christ (and Holy Scripture as Christ's medium), we will never find the Spirit. The Spirit is only present when and where the presence of Christ is affirmed or, even more precisely, when and where the Spirit affirms the presence of Christ.

This strong emphasis on the presence of Christ might explain why the Lutherans did not elaborate the role of the Spirit in their understanding of the Holy Supper. They wanted to prevent any suspicion that an explicit reference to the Holy Spirit might qualify the reality of Christ's presence which is indicated and induced by the powerfully promising word of consecration. This does not mean that they underestimated (or even contested) the presence of the Spirit in the Eucharist. But this presence, once again, is mediated through the Word—and only through the Word.

SPIRIT AND UNDERSTANDING: THE SPIRIT IS NOT A SCEPTIC

The phrase “powerfully promising word” might be used as a short formula for the Lutheran emphasis on the *sola Scriptura*. The Holy Scripture entails everything we have to know about our salvation: it is “sufficient.” And it not only entails its salvific content, it also reveals it. It is *sui ipsius interpret*, its own interpreter. There is nothing to add to the scriptures to make them understandable, neither an external authority nor a tradition—not even the Holy Spirit. The latter might be surprising because it seems to suggest that we do not need the Holy Spirit to understand the Holy Scripture. Yet, the contrary is true. However, the Holy Spirit is not something to be added to the scriptures to make them understandable. Rather it already is within the scriptures and reveals its salvific content. We do not need to first achieve the Spirit in order to turn toward the scriptures and understand them. Rather, the Spirit is within the scriptures and opens up our understanding.

This is the reason why Luther, in his famous controversy with Erasmus of Rotterdam, pointedly says, “The Holy Spirit is not a sceptic.” (*Spiritus Sanctus non est scepticus*).³ In this controversy, which has become crucial to Lutheran hermeneutics, Erasmus argued that the Bible is a book with very diverse content, including cryptic passages and ostensive contradictions. Therefore, it does not offer a clear understanding of itself but rather requires an external authority which is capable and entitled to give an

³ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. J.I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic), 70.

authentic interpretation. Moreover, Erasmus stressed the relevance of long-time church traditions; if a specific interpretation of a biblical phrase is supported by a significant number of ‘Church Fathers, Synods, Popes’ and respected theologians, this “cloud of witnesses” makes it more probable that this interpretation is true—more probably at least than if only a single theologian advocates it. Ironically, he asked Luther why he on the one hand so frankly doubted the decisions of Synods, Popes, and Church Fathers, and on the other hand was so sure to be right. It is more than evident that he accused Luther of subjectivism. For Luther, however, to accept that the Holy Scripture is not clear in itself would have meant to qualify the revelation itself. But God does not reveal Godself in vague adumbrations and ambiguous announcements because this would destroy the reliability of God’s word and make it uncertain to trust in it. According to Luther, the certainty of faith depends on the clarity and accessibility of the word of God. If the Holy Spirit were a sceptic, God would leave us alone in doubts and presumptions. Therefore, the Holy Spirit, being no sceptic, represents the reliability of God’s salvific presence. As to subjectivism however, Luther was convinced that the way the scriptures had spoken to him revealed their meaning. It was not just his subjectivist imagination but rather, as it were, an objective truth coming from outside (*extra nos*), and thus could be plausible to others as well. And he did not proclaim his interpretation of the scriptures as a mystic experience which cannot be further explained but only humbly accepted; he always argued exegetically. In his famous speech at the Diet of Worms in 1521, he announced that he was willing to retract when he was disproved “by Scripture and reason.” But undoubtedly, within the reformers’ movement, a plurality of interpretations of the Bible has arisen, all of them trusting in the revealing power of the Spirit, and questions of Bible hermeneutics, therefore, have always remained a crucial challenge for Lutheran theology. Thus, it does not seem exaggerated to say that the pathos and ethos of reading and understanding the Bible—and the struggles resulting from that—form an essential part of Lutheran identity.

THE WORK(S) OF THE SPIRIT

Let us go back to the Augsburg Confession. Article 5, as we have seen, focuses the Spirit’s work on the creation of faith. By strictly linking this work of the Spirit to the preaching of the gospel, the Lutheran tradition also implies a concentration on understanding this gospel; the Spirit reveals the Christological and soteriological meaning of the scriptures. This might raise the assumption that Lutheran pneumatology is restricted to cognitivism and subjectivism. Only the German version of article 5 indi-

cates something that goes beyond the dimension of understanding when it says that the Spirit “comforts the soul.” And implicitly, moreover, there is also a nod to ecclesiology in that preaching the gospel is an act of the church. This excludes a subjectivist misunderstanding of the Spirit’s work.

In article 3, we find a more elaborate description of the Spirit’s dynamics in Christian life. Article 3 summarizes the classical Christology with reference to the Apostles’ Creed. Coming to explain the way Christ rules “seated at the right hand of the Father,” the article, in its German version, states that Christ “through the Holy Spirit sanctifies, purifies, strengthens, comforts all who believe in him, also gives them life and all kind of gifts and goods und protects and guards them against the devil and the sin.” Interestingly enough, in the Latin version, Christ “sanctifies those who believe in him by sending the Holy Spirit into their hearts,” and it is the Holy Spirit then who “reigns, comforts and vivifies them and defends them against the devil and the power of sin.” Here the Spirit plays a more active role. Both versions, however, have in common that they give a broader picture of Christian life which is formed by Christ and inspired by the Spirit. We could even say that the ruling of the ascended Christ is realized in this Christian life of the believers. Christ and Holy Spirit are almost synonymous; Christ is present through the Spirit and its work.

Lutheran theology, thus, roots Christian life in the work of the Spirit. This becomes even more evident in Luther’s interpretation of the third article of the Apostles’ Creed in his *Small Catechism*. Here we read, “The Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, illuminated me with his gifts, sanctified and preserved me in the right faith, as well as (the Holy Spirit) calls, collects, illuminates, sanctifies the whole Christianity on earth in the one unanimous right faith.” And it continues, “In this Christianity (the Holy Spirit) daily forgives me and all believers all sins and will resurrect me and all dead people on the day of judgement and give me eternal life together with all those who believe in Christ.” Here the Spirit explicitly is the subject and driving force of the whole of Christian life. Here, moreover, the Christian life is clearly embedded in the church. Conversely, this means that the presence of the Spirit always has an ecclesial dimension.

THE CHURCH AS CREATURA SPIRITUS

It has often been remarked that the third article of the Apostles’ Creed, after naming the Holy Spirit, immediately switches to the church. Different from the Nicene Creed, it says nothing about the Spirit itself. This could mean that the Spirit’s presence in the world is realized in the church and its work of communicating the faith. The church, then, could be called

the (visible) face of the (invisible) Spirit. Although this does not give a full picture of the Spirit and its work (which is not limited to the church) and although the church should not be too self-reliant and forget that the church's face always also shows traces and scars of sin, it nevertheless is true that the Spirit reveals itself (by, as it were, hiding itself) in the church as the "congregation of the believers among which the gospel is preached purely and the holy sacraments are administered in accordance with the gospel" as article 7 of the Augsburg Confession in its German version puts it.⁴

In some ecumenical documents, therefore, the church has been called a "creature of the Word and of the Spirit." This fits perfectly with a Lutheran understanding of the church as "Creature of the Word (*creatura Verbi*)" as long as the "and" (sc. of the Spirit) does not imply an addition but rather an explanation, "creature of the Word, which means of the Spirit." Lutherans always were convinced that through baptism we are integrated into the one spiritual "body of Christ" and become a living part of it. Luther emphasized that because all members are baptized, they all enjoy the same status and dignity. There is no internal religious hierarchy in Christianity although, of course, there are different gifts, tasks, and responsibilities. Reformation historians say that this concept of the "common priesthood of all believers (or of all baptized)" was the core element of the Reformation's dynamics and thus forms an identity marker of all types or "wings" of the Reformation. Above all, this concept implies a critique of any qualitative differentiation with respect to the presence of the Spirit and contradicts any monopolistic presumptions about the spiritual competences of the clergy. "Whoever has crawled out of baptism," Luther said provocatively, "has already been ordained as priest, bishop or pope."⁵

The concept of the "common priesthood of all believers" has at least a two-fold scope. On the one hand, it ascribes to all believers a competence to do what a priest does, namely, to be a mediator (*Mittler*) between God and humans by interceding for others in prayer to God, and by presenting God's word to others. This includes the competence to read and interpret the word of God in the Holy Scripture, which is no longer an exclusive right of the clergy. On the other hand, it stresses that each and every task in the church has a spiritual dimension or, in other words, is a *charisma*, a gift of the Spirit. There are no higher or lower forms of *charisma*, there are no more perfect or less perfect forms of being Christian. This anti-elitist focus had the consequence that the Reformers prioritized the, as it were, "normal" and "natural" gifts of the Spirit and distrusted the interest in "supernatural"

⁴ The Latin version is slightly different: "congregation of the saints in which (sc. congregation), etc."

⁵ *Weimarer Ausgabe* (hereafter, WA) 6:408, 11-21.

or extraordinary spiritual gifts like celibacy or miracles. The emphasis to avoid a first-and-second-class Christianity is a most significant heritage of the Reformation because it resulted in a new perception of the dignity of “normal life” as being the full form of Christian life and witness.⁶ But it had the price of discrediting any forms of special vocations which are not open to everybody. It took centuries, e.g., until Lutheran churches rediscovered that monasticism does not necessarily result in religious elitism but rather can be an inspiring form of Christian witness. In the following paragraph, I would like to comment on both the dignity of “normal life” and the challenge of “paranormal” Christian lifestyles.

THE SPIRIT’S EMBODIMENT IN “NORMAL LIFE”

It was a great discovery of the Reformation that clergy and monasticism are neither the only nor the highest forms of Christian vocation. The Reformers taught instead that every profession, every way of living, has a special vocation and is a form of Christian witness. The German word for “profession,” *Beruf*, mirrors the idea that a profession is not simply a job but a vocation, *Berufung*. Not only a monk is “called” by God but also a mother or father who nourishes their children, a farmer who produces food, a politician who cares for the good order of a city or a state, etc. They all, by fulfilling their duties, practice love of the neighbor and thus witness to their Christian faith. Luther could even say that “normal life” always entails a dimension of asceticism which is at least as significant as the asceticism of a monk: parents who sit by the beds of their ill children; couples who care for one another in good as well as in bad days; farmers who harvest, if necessary, in rain and storm; politicians who assume responsibility, notwithstanding the circumstances—they all abstain from following their own interests by subordinating those interests to the needs of others. In his treatise “On Christian Liberty,” Luther pointed out that justification through faith makes one free from the necessity of caring for oneself and thus frees one to be “a willing servant” of anyone who needs help. Because Christ has given me everything I need for worldly and eternal life, I can “selflessly” use my capacities in favor of others. We can add that this selflessness also has a pneumatological dimension because it images the Spirit’s “selfless” witness for Christ.

⁶ See Bernd Oberdorfer, “Aus der Klausur ins ‘normale Leben’: Reformatorische Leitbildtransformationen,” in Bernd Oberdorfer and Eva Matthes, eds., *Reformation Heute*, vol. 5: *Menschenbilder und Lebenswirklichkeiten* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2019), 32–44.

This idea of “vocation” has resulted in a Lutheran ethos of “complying with duties” (*Pflichterfüllung*) which had a strong impact on the cultural, political, and even economic history of countries with significant Lutheran populations. The positive effects are so evident that they hardly can be overrated. One problem, however, cannot be denied. Lutherans had the tendency to read this ethos of complying with duties as implying an unconditional obligation to political obedience. If complying with duties is implicit in Christian freedom, then, quite paradoxically, political obedience becomes a requirement of Christian freedom, and, conversely, political disobedience appears as a selfish act of individuals who are not willing to subordinate their own interests to the common good. Political protest, in this regard, displays a lack of Christian freedom. As an act of the *homo incurvatus in seipsum* (human being crooked in him- or herself), it is an expression of sin. Not surprisingly, therefore, Lutherans have not belonged to the avant-garde of the concept of human rights. Instead, they had to learn belatedly that Christian freedom can also be expressed by defending the rights of individuals against the pressure of totalitarian states or powerful communities.⁷

It seems that this tendency to prefer loyalty to the state or community over individual freedom has the same anti-elitist focus as the Lutheran cautiousness with regard to “extraordinary” gifts of the Spirit. The philosopher Charles Taylor, in his comprehensive study on “The Secular Age”⁸, has argued that the Reformation played a significant role in the process of reducing the richness of religious expressions (by eliminating relics, saints, periods of fasting, most religious holidays, etc.) which in the long run resulted in a secular culture where religious practice has almost become invisible. Taylor concentrates on Calvinism (and does not seem to know much about Lutheran Reformation), and he does not ignore the positive effects of this process of reduction and purification (e.g., a decrease of superstition or an emphasis on equality and social justice). But although he definitely underestimates the inspiring potential of the Reformation to create new forms of religious expression (particularly in music and hymns),

⁷ See Oberdorfer, “‘Freiheit von ...’ Kleine theologische Apologie des Individualismus—im Horizont von Luthers Freiheitsschrift,” in *Kontroverse Freiheit. Die Impulse der Ökumene*, eds. Thomas Söding and Bernd Oberdorfer (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2017), 219–236; Oberdorfer, “Reformation und politisch-gesellschaftliche Emanzipation,” *Evangelische Theologie* 74 (2014): 118–126.

⁸ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007). Cf. Oberdorfer, “Exkarnation und geahnte Fülle: Zu Charles Taylors Diagnose des Glaubens im ‘säkularen Zeitalter,’” in *Mission zwischen Proselytismus und Selbstabschaffung*, eds. Jutta Koslowski and Andreas Krebs (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2017), 11–22.

he points to an important issue. Did the wonderful Lutheran emphasis on anti-elitism and “normal life” and the dimming out of the “extraordinary” gifts of the Spirit, not create—as an unintended side effect—the risk of losing the dimension of “overcoming the world,” of expressing a distance to the world, of eschatology? The challenge then would be to regain this dimension without breaking the anti-elitist framework.

THE SPIRIT AS LORD: TRINITARIAN PERSPECTIVES

I cannot end without some, albeit very sketchy, remarks on the Trinitarian dimension of pneumatology.⁹ The Reformers defended the dogma of the Triune God (cf. CA 1). However, they were very hesitant to continue the medieval speculations about the immanent life of God. Two famous phrases of Melanchthon mark a general consensus of the Reformers’ Trinitarian hermeneutics. He recommended the “secrets of God better be adored than explored,” and he stated that “to know Christ means to know his benefactions.” The knowledge of Christ—as the godly-human person of the dogma—is strictly rooted in the knowledge of Christ’s work of reconciliation and justification; there is no need for speculations that go beyond. This goes as well for the Trinity as a whole. To speak in modern terms, the Reformers maintained a strict correspondence between “immanent” and “economic” Trinity. There is no difference between the “immanent,” intrinsic being of the Triune God and God’s reality towards, and within, God’s creation. This also refers to the mutual relations among the Trinitarian “persons.” The Reformers underlined that, on the one hand, the Holy Spirit is—in the full sense—God and fully participates in all actions of God *ad extra*. Therefore, Luther could praise the vivifying presence of the Spirit as creator, *Spiritus creator*, in nature. Yet, on the other hand, they insisted on a very strong Trinitarian link between the Son and the Spirit. If, in the history of salvation, the Spirit is Christ’s Spirit and is sent by Christ and witnesses for Christ, this mirrors their eternal, intrinsic relations—the Spirit receives its eternal being not only from the Father but also from the Son. The Reformers, therefore, saw no problems to maintain the Western tradition of the “Filioque” although they did not use it polemically against the Orthodox tradition. In the ecumenical dialogues of the twentieth century, however, it became evident that in the history of salvation, the relations between Christ and the Spirit are mutual. It is the Spirit which, after Christ’s baptism in the river Jordan, empowers Christ to preach the gospel. If the

⁹ See Oberdorfer, *Filioque: Geschichte und Theologie eines ökumenischen Problems* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 267–275.

correspondence between “economic” and “immanent” Trinity is essential for Lutheran theology, this mutuality must be made visible in the conception of the eternal relations between Son and Spirit; the “Filioque” proves to be not false but one-sided and insufficient. This opens the door to a new and fruitful dialogue with the Orthodox Churches.

Challenges of Lutheran Pneumatology

I hope that my paper shows that Lutheran theology was not at all tacit about the Holy Spirit but rather developed rich ideas on pneumatology. Nevertheless, I would like to end with three challenges which result from the specific concentration of Lutheran pneumatology and need further reflection:

- First, its focus on embodying the Spirit in the Holy Scripture and its understanding evokes the question of what we can, and have to, say about “extraordinary” ways of the Spirit’s witness of God’s salvific presence.
- Second, its focus on faith evokes the question of what we can, and have to, say about the presence of the Spirit in creation.
- Third, its focus on Christian faith evokes the question of what we can, and have to, say about the presence of the Spirit outside the church, in other religions, in the secular world, etc.

It is clear that these questions are not supposed to qualify the soteriological focus of Lutheran pneumatology. But it is clear as well that they formulate essential challenges for Lutheran self-understanding and Lutheran identity within the context of our time and age.