

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LETTERS OF PAUL

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Resumen

La meta de este artículo es investigar acerca del Espíritu Santo en los libros de Pablo y hablar de uno de los temas más desafiantes de su pensamiento teológico. Algunos investigadores incluso dicen que la pneumatología de Pablo debe ser considerada como el aspecto central de su teología. El objetivo de este estudio preliminar solo es introducir este vasto tema acerca del uso de la palabra πνεῦμα en las epístolas de Pablo e interpretar también las afirmaciones teológicas más relevantes sobre el Espíritu Santo.

Palabras clave

Πνεῦμα – Espíritu Santo – Espíritu de Dios – Espíritu de Cristo – Espíritu del Señor – Espíritu de vida – Pablo – Teología bíblica – Epístolas de Pablo.

Abstract

This article aims to research about the Holy Spirit in the books of Paul, discussing one of the most challenging subjects of his theological thought. Some researchers even say that the pneumatology of Paul should be considered the central aspect of his theology. The objective of this preliminary study is only to introduce this vast theme about the use of the word πνεῦμα in the epistles of Paul and also to interpret the most relevant theological affirmations about the Holy Spirit.

Keywords

Πνεῦμα – Holy Spirit – Spirit of God – Spirit of Christ – Spirit of the Lord – Spirit of life – Paul – Biblical theology – Epistles of Paul.

Introduction

Researching about the Holy Spirit in Paul's letters is one of the most challenging studies about his theological thinking; so much so that some theologians wonder if Paul's pneumatology should not be placed among one of the core themes of his theology.¹

¹ Since we can find a very rich literature dealing with Paul's thinking on this topic, I'd like to mention the references which I consider to be the most relevant published in the last 50 years: Clark H. Pinnock, "The Concept of Spirit in the Epistles of Paul" (tesis doctoral, University of Manchester, 1963); M. M. B. Turner, "The Significance of Spirit Endowment for Paul," *Vox Evangelica* 9 (1975): 56-69; Edmund J. Dobbin, "Towards a Theology of the Holy Spirit, I", *The Heythrop Journal* 17, n°1 (1976): 5-19; *idem.*, "Towards a Theology of the Holy Spirit, II", *The Heythrop Journal* 17, n°2 (1976): 129-149; P. W. Meyer, "The Holy Spirit in the Pauline Letters: A Contextual Exploration," *Interpretation* 33 (1979): 3-18; Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (New York: Seabury Press; London: G. Chapman, 1983); D. P. Francis, "The Holy Spirit: A

In this preliminary and not exhaustive study, due to space limitations, we will just make an attempt to introduce the very extensive theme concerning the use of the word πνεῦμα in the letters of Paul, and interpret his most significant declarations about the Spirit.

Paul's use of the word Πνεῦμα

Without taking into account the uses of the word πνευματικός² in its different forms (noun, adjective or adverb) as well as the expression “power” (appearing also in different forms) related to the Holy Spirit,³ one can find 384

Statistical Inquiry,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 27 (1984) 299-313; Kendell H. Easley, “The Pauline Usage of Pneumati as a Reference to the Spirit of God”, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 27, n°3 (1984): 299-313; Hans Hübner, “The Holy Spirit in Holy Scripture,” *The Ecumenical Review*, 41, n°3 (1989): 324-338; Friedrich W. Horn denies the experiential dimension of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of Christianity, and puts forward the idea that Paul would have prominently developed his pneumatology throughout his ministry (Friedrich W. Horn, *Das Angeld des Geistes: Studien zur Paulinischen Pneumatologie. Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992]); T. Paige, “Holy Spirit”, in Gerald G. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1993), 404-413; Gordon D. Fee presents the most thorough study available about the pauline pneumatology; his research is a relevant primary source when it comes to exegetical issues (Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994]); idem, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996); Samuel Vollenweider, “Der Geist Gottes als Selbst der Glaubenden: Überlegungen zu Einem Ontologischen Problem in der Paulinischen Anthropologie”, *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 93 (1996): 163-92; Richard B. Gaffin, “Life Giving Spirit: Probing the Centre of Paul's Pneumatology”, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (1998): 573-589; Daniel B. Wallace, “Greek Grammar and the Personality of the Holy Spirit”, *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 13, n°1 (2003): 97-125; Monika Christoph, *Pneuma und das neue Sein der Glaubenden: Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der Rede von Pneuma in Röm 8* (EHB 813; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2005); Finny Philip, *The Origins of Pauline Pneumatology: The Eschatological Bestowal of the Spirit upon Gentiles in Judaism and in the Early Development of Paul's Theology* (WUNT II/194; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); John A Bertone, “The Law of the Spirit”: *Experience of the Spirit and Displacement of the Law in Romans 8:1-16* (SBL 86; New York: Peter Lang, 2005); Mark Pretorius, “The Theological Centre of Pauline Theology as it Relates to the Holy Spirit”, *Harvard Theological Studies* 62, n°1 (2006): 253-262; Clint Tibbs, *Religious Experience of the Pneuma: Communication with the Spirit World in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); Erik Konsmo examines how the metaphors used by Paul convey the concept of the tangible presence of the intangible Spirit in the Christian's life, and states that Paul's views about the role of the Holy Spirit is not at all peripheral, but central in his theology (Erik Konsmo, *The Pauline Metaphors of the Holy Spirit: The Intangible Spirit's Tangible Presence in the Life of the Christian* [SBL 130; New York: Peter Lang, 2010]).

² The word appears 26 times in the NT, 24 of which used by Paul (Rom 1,11; 7,14; 15,27; 1 Cor 2,13 [2x]. 15; 3,1; 9,11; 10,3-4 [2x];12,1; 14,1.37; 15,44 [2x].46 [2x]; Gal 6,1; Eph 1,3; 5,19; 6,1; Col 1,9; 3,16).

³ It seems that the addressees of Paul's letters understood that the Spirit manifested Himself in “power,” since the words δύναμις and πνεῦμα are used interchangeably in his letters. For a discussion about this issue, see the arguments of James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-11* (WBC 38b; Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1998), 851. Paul not only resorts to a combined use of both

references to πνεῦμα in the New Testament,⁴ 160 of which are used only by Paul in the 14 letters⁵ believed to have been written by him (in this paper we include also the letter to the Hebrews). The chart below shows the frequency of the word πνεῦμα in the letters of Paul:

| | | | |
|----------------------------|----|----------------------------|----|
| Romans ⁶ | 35 | 1 Corinthians ⁷ | 40 |
| 2 Corinthians ⁸ | 17 | Galatians ⁹ | 18 |
| Ephesians ¹⁰ | 16 | Philippians ¹¹ | 5 |

meanings, but he uses the terms in such a way that the presence of πνεῦμα could mean the presence of δύναμις (Rom 1,4; 1 Cor 2,4; Gal 3,5; Eph 3,16; 1 Thess 1,5; 2 Tim 1,7). Therefore, one can imply that the references to δύναμις amount to the presence of πνεῦμα (1 Cor 4,20; 5,4; 2 Cor 4,7; 6,6-7; 12,9.12; 13,4; Eph 1,19.21; 3,7.20; Col 1,11.29; 2 Tim 1,8).

⁴ Raymond Edward Brown has found 380 uses (“Diverse Views of the Spirit in the New Testament,” *Worship* 57 [1983]: 227), whereas Tibbs (*Religious Experience of the Pneuma*, 306).

⁵ Πνεῦμα itself appears 53 times (Rom 1,4; 8,4.5.9 [2x].10.11.15 [2x].16.26 [2x]; 11,8; 1 Cor 2,10-11 [2x]. 12 [2x]; 3,16; 5,5; 6,17; 7,40; 12,4.8.11.13; 14,14; 15,45; 16,8; 2 Cor 3,6.17 [2x]; 4,13; 7,13; 11,4; Gal 3,2.5; 4,6.29; 5,17; 6,8; Eph 1,17; 4,4.30; 1 Thess 4,8; 5,19.23; 1 Tim 4,1 [2x]; 2 Tim 1,7; Heb 3,7; 10,15. 29); πνεύματος appears 53 times (Rom 5,5; 7,6; 8,2.5-6.11.23.27; 15,13.19.30; 1 Cor 2,4.10.13-14; 5,4; 6,19; 12,7-8.10; 14,32; 2 Cor 1,22; 3,6.8.18; 5,5; 7,1; 13,13; Gal 3,14; 5,17.22; 6,8.18; Eph 2,2; 3,16; 4,3; 6,17; Phil 1,19; 2,1; 4,23; 1 Thess 1,6; 2 Tess 2,2.13; 2 Tim. 1,14; 4,22; Tit 3,5; Philem 1,25; Heb 1,14; 2,4; 4,12; 6,4; 9,8.14); πνεύματι 49 times (Rom 1,9; 2,29; 8,9.13-14.16; 9,1; 12,11; 14,17; 15,16; 1 Cor 4,21; 5,3; 6,11; 7,34; 12, 9 [2x]. 13; 14,2; 15,[2x] 16; 2 Cor 2,13; 3,3; 6,6; 12,18; Gal 3,3; 5,5.16.18.25 [2x]; 6,1; Eph 1,13; 2,18.22; 3,5; 4,23; 5,18; 6,18; Phil 1,27; 3,3; Col 1,8; 2,5; 1 Thess 1,5; 2 Thess 2,8; 1 Tim 3,16; Heb 12,23); there are also five other situations where Paul uses a relative pronoun to refer to the human spirit in general (Rom 8,15), to the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6,19; Eph 1,14; Tit 3,6) and to the Spirit of God (Eph 4,30).

⁶ In Rom 8,1-27, Paul uses the word πνεῦμα 22 times, 5 of which with an anthropological meaning related to human spirit (8,10.15 [3x].16), and 17 in a theological sense with reference to the Holy Spirit (8,2.4-6 [2x].9 [3x].11 [2x].13-14.16.23.26 [2x].27).

⁷ In 1 Cor, Paul uses the term πνεῦμα 9 times, 2 of which with an anthropological meaning. (2,11.12), and 7 with a theological one (2,4.10 [2x].11-14); in 1 Cor 12,3-13, Paul uses 12 times the word πνεῦμα with a theological meaning (12,3 [2x].4.7-8 [2x].9 [2x]. 10-11.13 [2x]).

⁸ In 2 Cor, Paul uses the term πνεῦμα 17 times, 8 of which with an anthropological meaning (2,13; 3,6 [2x]; 4,13; 7,1.13; 11,14; 12,18), and 9 with a theological meaning (1,22; 3,3.8.17 [2x]. 18; 5,5; 6,6; 13,13).

⁹ In Gal, Paul uses πνεῦμα 18 times, 2 of which have an anthropological meaning (6,1.18), and 16 a theological one (3,2-3.5.14; 4,6.29; 5,5.16-17 [2x].18.22.25 [2x]; 6,8 [2x]), with a higher number of occurrences from 5,5 to 6,8.

¹⁰ In Eph, Paul uses the term πνεῦμα 16 times, 3 of which with an anthropological meaning (1,17; 2,2; 4,23), and 13 with a theological one (1,13-14; 2,18.22; 3,5.16; 4,3-4.30 [2x]; 5,18; 6,17-18).

¹¹ In Phil, Paul uses the term πνεῦμα 5 times, 2 of which with an anthropological meaning (1,17; 2,2; 4,23), and 3 with a theological one (1:9; 2,1; 3,3).

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|-----|
| Colossians ¹² | 2 | 1 Thessalonians ¹³ | 5 |
| 2 Thessalonians ¹⁴ | 3 | 1 Timothy ¹⁵ | 3 |
| 2 Timothy ¹⁶ | 3 | Titus ¹⁷ | 2 |
| Philemon ¹⁸ | 1 | Hebrews ¹⁹ | 10 |
| Total | | | 160 |

Considering Paul's letters as a whole, Galatians is the letter where we find the greatest amount of occurrences of the word πνεῦμα, followed by Ephesians, 1 Corinthians, Romans and 2 Corinthians. However, there are certain passages with a higher concentration of occurrences on account of the nature of the content being dealt with, and the theological purposes of the apostle as he addresses the receivers of his letters. For instance, Romans 8,1 to 27 is not only the climax of the Pauline theology about the Holy Spirit but it stands out as the passage with the highest number of use of the word πνεῦμα in all his letters. As a matter of fact, Paul refers to the Spirit in this pericope 22 times.²⁰

We will start our study with a brief mention of the anthropological use of this word in the writings of Paul.

¹²In Col, Paul uses the term πνεῦμα 2 times, 1 of which with an anthropological meaning (2,5), and 1 with a theological one (1,8).

¹³In 1 Thess, Paul uses the term πνεῦμα 5 times, 1 of which with an anthropological meaning (5,23), and 4 with a theological one (1,5.6; 4,8; 5,19).

¹⁴In 2 Thess, Paul uses the term πνεῦμα 3 times, 1 of which with an anthropological meaning (2,2), and 2 with a theological one (2,8.13).

¹⁵In 1 Tim, Paul uses the term πνεῦμα 3 times, 1 of which with an anthropological meaning (4,1), and 2 with a theological one (3,16; 4,1).

¹⁶In 2 Tim, Paul uses the term πνεῦμα 3 times, 2 of which with an anthropological meaning (1,7; 4,22), and 1 with a theological one (1,14).

¹⁷In Titus, Paul uses the term πνεῦμα 2 times with a theological meaning (3,5-6).

¹⁸In Phl, Paul uses the term πνεῦμα 1 time with an anthropological meaning (25).

¹⁹In Heb, Paul uses the term πνεῦμα 10 times, 2 of which with an anthropological meaning (4,12; 12,23), and 8 with a theological one (1,14; 2,4; 3,7; 6,4; 9,8.14; 10,15.29).

²⁰James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 423.

Anthropological use of πνεῦμα in Paul's letters

Generally speaking, Paul uses the term 45 times with an anthropological sense as a reference to the human spirit.²¹ He uses the word to refer to himself (Rom 1,9; 1 Cor 4,21; 5,3-4; 14,14-15; 16,18; 2 Cor 2,13; Col 2,5), to the woman (1 Cor 7,34), to the prophets (1 Cor 14,32), to the second Adam (1 Cor 15,45), to Titus (2 Cor 7,13), to Timothy (2 Tim 4,22), to Philemon (Phlm 25) and to the human beings in general.²² Obviously, the importance and meaning of the word is found in its theological use.

Theological use of πνεῦμα in Paul's letters

The apostle uses πνεῦμα 115 times with a theological meaning referring specifically to the Holy Spirit²³ in several ways: “Holy Spirit”;²⁴ “Spirit of holiness” (Rom 1,4); “Spirit of life” (Rom 8,2); “Spirit”;²⁵ “Spirit of God”;²⁶ “Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8,9); “Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3,17); “Spirit of His Son” (Gal 4,6); “Spirit of wisdom and revelation” (Eph 1,17); “Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1,19); “breath of his mouth” (of Jesus Christ, 2 Thess 2,8) and “Spirit of grace” (Heb 10,29).

²¹ Rom 1,9; 2,29; 7,6; 8,10.15 [3x]; 8,16; 11,8; 12,11; 1 Cor 2,11-12; 4,21; 5,3-5; 6,17; 7,34; 14,14-15 [2x]; 14,32; 15,45; 16,18; 2 Cor 2,13; 3,6 [2x]; 4,13; 7,1.13; 11,4; 12,18; Gal 6,1.18; Eph 1,17; 2,2; 4,23; Phil 1,27; 4,23; Col 2,5; 1 Thess 5,23; 2 Thess 2,2; 2 Tim 1,7; 4,22; Phlm. 25; Heb 4,12. Despite discussions whether the word refers to the human spirit or to the Holy Spirit, the following texts can also be included here: 1 Cor 5,3-4; 6,17; 14,14; 15,2 and Col 2,5 (Cf. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 24-26, 123-27, 229-30, 462, 645).

²² Rom. 2,29; 7,6; 8,10.15 [3x].16; 11,8; 12,11; 1 Cor 2,11-12; 5,5-6.17; 2 Cor 3,6 [2x]; 4,13; 7,1; 11,4; 12,18; Eph 1,17; 4,23; Phil 1,27; 4,23; 1 Thess 5,23; 2 Thess 2,2; 2 Tim 1,7; Heb 4,12; 12,23.

²³ Rom 1,4; 5,5; 8,2.4-5 [2x].6.9 [3x].11 [2x]. 13-14.16.23.26 [2x].27[2x]; 9,1; 14,17; 15,13. 16.19.30; 1 Cor 2,4.10 [2x].11-14.16; 6,11.19 [2x]; 7,40; 12,3 [2x].4.7-8 [2x].9 [2x].10-11.13 [2x]; 14,2.16; 2 Cor 1,22; 3,3.8.17 [2x].18; 5,5; 6,6; 13,13; Gal 3,2-3.5.14; 4,6.29; 5,5.16-17 [2x].18.22.25 [2x]; 6,8 [2x]; Eph 1,13-14; 2,18.22; 3,5.16; 4,3-4.30 [2x]; 5,18; 6,17-18; Phil 1,19; 2,1; 3,3; Col 1,8; 1 Thess 1,5-6; 4,8; 5,19; 2 Thess 2,8.13; 1 Tim 3,16; 4,1; 2 Tim 1,14; Tit 3,5-6; Heb 2,4; 3,7; 6,4; 9,8.14; 10,15.29.

²⁴ Rom 5,5; 9,1; 14,17; 15,13.16; 1 Cor 6,19 [2x]; 2 Cor 6,6; 13,13; Eph 1,13-14; 1 Thess 1,5-6; 4,8; 5,19; 2 Tim 1,14; Tit.3,5-6; Heb 2,4; 6,4; 9,8.14; 10,15. Unless otherwise specified, all biblical quotations are from the New International Version.

²⁵ Rom 8,4-5 [2x].6.9.11 [2x].13.16.23.26 [2x].27 [2x]; 15,30; 1 Cor 2,4.10 [2x].12-13; 12,4.7-8 [2x].9 [2x].11.13 [2x]; 2 Cor 1,22; 3,8.18; 5,5; Gal 3,2-3.5.14; 4,29; 5,5.16-17 [2x].18.22.25 [2x]; 6,8 [2x]; Eph 2,18.22; 3,5.16; 4,3-4; 5,18; 6,17-18; Phil 2,1; Col 1,8; 2 Thess 2,13; 1 Tim 3,16; 4,1; Heb 3,7.

²⁶ Rom 8,9.14; 15,19; 1 Cor 2,11.14; 3,16; 6,11; 7,40; 12,3 [2x]; 2 Cor 3,3; Eph 4,30 [2x]; Phil 3,3.

Paul's calling the "Spirit" as "Spirit of God", "Spirit of His Son", "Spirit of the Lord", "Spirit of Christ", "Spirit of Jesus Christ, and also as "Holy Spirit" and "Spirit of grace" clearly suggests a trinitarian focus of the word πνεῦμα in his letters. This seems to be a basic trinitarian axiom²⁷ to understand the theological use of πνεῦμα in these letters.

Basic trinitarian axiom in Paul's letters

In Paul's writings, (1) God is one, (2) God is three, (3) the three are fully God, (4) each one of the three is different from the other two, (5) the three exist and have an eternal relationship with one another as: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.²⁸

The Trinity belongs to the life, existence and form of the being of the triune God. Such reality could only be known if one of the members of the Godhead revealed it. As Sinclair Ferguson suggested, it was Jesus on His way to the cross who unveiled to His disciples the triune reality of the Godhead, His relationship with the Father and with the Holy Spirit (John 13-17).²⁹

It is the sending of God made flesh that has revealed the relation that exists between the Father and the Son (John 17,11.22-26). Jesus' incarnation (Luke 1,34-35; John 17,11.22-26), His ministry (Matt 4,1; Mark 1,12; Luke 4,1; Matt 12,28; Acts 10,38), death, resurrection (Rom 8,11; 1 Pe 3,18) and ascension (Acts 2,32-33) have revealed the relation that exists between the Son and the Holy Spirit. This knowledge may well have been the source for Paul's trinitarian formulations.

²⁷ For a study about the biblical evidence that contributes to the doctrine of the Trinity, see Arthur W. Wainwright, *The Trinity in the New Testament* (London: S.P.C.K., 1962); Leonard Hodgson, *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1944), 38-84; E. J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker, 1982), 3-33; Aubrey W. Argyle, *God in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1966), 173-181.

²⁸ For an exhaustive study of these concepts in the Scripture, see John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (New Jersey: P&R, 2002).

²⁹ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *A Heart for God* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1985), 18-37.

God is one

The concept of unity stems from the fact that He is God of both: Jews and Gentiles (Rom 3,29-30; 10,12-13; Gal 3,20), Father of the uncircumcised as well as of the circumcised (Rom 4,11-12), and the only God in His relation with human beings (1 Tim 2,5), since there are no other gods. There is but one God (1 Cor 8,4-6), the true (1 Thess 1,9), the only wise God (Rom 16,27; 1 Tim 1,17), and the only source of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12,4-6; Eph 4,4-6).³⁰

God is three

While we may have problems to determine the number of divine beings from the Old Testament, Paul uses specific trinitarian formulations to present the existence of three divine beings: Θεός (God), the Father; κύριος (Lord) or υἱός (Son), the Son and πνεῦμα (Spirit), the Spirit. He clearly distinguishes the three beings, referring to them as “one Spirit [...] one Lord [...] one God” (Eph 4,4-6; 1 Cor 12,4-6). He mentions the three together in Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews; in other words, the three are mentioned together in 9 of the 14 letters.

On the other hand, there are several passages where two of the three beings appear as a common source of blessings: the Father and the Son, on one hand (Rom 6,4; 1 Cor 15,24-28), and Christ and the Spirit, on the other (Rom 8,2,9; 2 Cor 3,17; Gal 4,6; Phil 1,19).

In the apostolic greetings and blessings, Paul always mentions “God, our God” and “our Lord Jesus Christ”;³¹ however, in 2 Corinthians 13,13 (14), the three are joined together: “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all”.

It is fascinating the statement addressed to the Corinthians regarding the inner relationship between the Spirit and God, the Father, and the Father and the Spirit: “The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God” (1 Cor 2,10); “no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Cor 2,11). Paul also told the members from the church of Rome that “he who

³⁰ These are trinitarian texts that distinguish the three persons of the Godhead as sources of spiritual gifts. Such attribute implies a triune unity.

³¹ 1 Cor 1,3; 2 Cor 1,2; Gal 1,3; Eph 1,3; 6,23-24; 1 Thess 1,1; 2 Thess 1,2; 1 Tim 1,2; 2 Tim 1,2; Tit 1,4.

searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will (Rom 8,27).

And what can be said about the inner relationship between the Spirit and Jesus Christ, the Son? The Christians in Corinth would give us a prompt answer. Paul had warned them: "No one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12,3).

Paul, addressing the believers in Rome, sums up in one single verse the triune relationship of the Godhead in the believer's life: You [...] are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Rom 8,9). It is remarkable how Paul puts in a nutshell the impact of God's triune activities on the believer's life. God, Christ and the Spirit work together in the life of those who are in Jesus. This triune operation means life for the believer, the kind of life resulting from the action of the triune God.

Interestingly enough, Paul's synthesis seems to bring to the reader's mind the same literary structure and organization used in the first eight chapters of the letter to the Romans, where the theme of salvation and sanctification by faith is discussed. There seems to be a clear trinitarian pattern in those chapters: (1) the judgment of God, the Father, on sin (1,18-3,20); (2) the atoning work of the Son, through which God justifies and sanctifies (3,21-7,25), and (3) the freedom and guidance of the Spirit (8,1-39).

There is a similar structure in the letter to the Galatians. The NIV entitles verses 3,26-4,7 as "Sons of God", verses 5,1-15 as "Freedom in Christ", and verses 5,16-26 as "Life by the Spirit", which corroborates our reasoning that, for Paul, God is one, but also three.

Ephesians 2,18 reads that "through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. This statement seems to be a clear pauline premise: through Christ, to the Father, by the Spirit. Thus, Paul's evidence for the trinitarian conception of God could be summarized in three groups of passages:

1. In the first group, an unequivocal trinitarianism is presented. For instance, in his blessing found in 2 Corinthians 13,14, Paul mentions together God, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, without making any distinction among the three persons. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assert that he perceives them as coequal.

2. In the second group of passages, Paul presents the Godhead as a trio. In Ephesians 4,4-6, He talks about “one Spirit [...] one Lord [...] one God and Father.” In 1 Corinthians 12,3-6 each person is introduced in sequence with the article “the”, following a similar pattern used in Ephesians 4. In a more indirect reference, the three persons are also mentioned in Ephesians 1,3-14.

3. In the third group of pauline texts, the three persons are mentioned together, but without any clear threefold structure. A good example of this pattern can be found in Galatians 4,4-6: “God sent the Spirit of his Son” (the same happens in Rom 8,1ss, 2 Thess 2,13ss and Titus 3, 4-6).

The three are God

Although it is not difficult to notice that the first theologian of the New Testament era describes the Spirit and the Son as fully God, there are those who argue against the divinity of the Holy Spirit. It is argued that in the pauline trinitarian texts the Spirit appears together with the Father and/or the Son (Rom 15,19; 2 Cor 13,13 (14); Eph 2,21-22; 4,4-6; Phil 3,3; Heb 2,3-4; 6,4-6; 9,14; 10,29-31). We have already mentioned in our discussion that we can find in Paul’s letters texts where two members of the Trinity are presented, either the Father and the Son, on one hand (Rom 6,4; 1Cor 15,24-28), or the Son and the Spirit, on the other (Rom 15,30; 1 Cor 6,11; Phil 2,1; Heb 10,29). In the latter case, both the Son and the Spirit are displayed in equality with the Father. Thus, it would be strange to consider, in these texts, one of the beings as not having full divinity.

In addition, Paul quotes texts from the Old Testament referring to Yahweh, and applies them to the Holy Spirit (cf. Jer 31,33-34 in Heb 10,15-17; Exod 25,1 in Heb 9,8; Ps 95,7-11 in Heb 3,7-11; Isa 64,4 in 1 Cor 2:9). He also mentions that the Spirit pours divine love and grace on the believer (Rom 5,5; 15,30; 2 Cor 6,6; Gal 5,16-17; Phil 2,1; Col 1,8) and that He is the power from God (Rom 15,13.19).

Like the Father and the Son, the Spirit is eternal (Heb 9,14), omniscient (1 Cor 2,10-11), and is called holy,³² being implied here that His holiness is that which belongs to God, and, therefore, not the kind of holiness which is derived from created beings.

³² Rom 5,5; 9,1; 14,17; 15,13.16; 1 Cor 6,19 [2x]; 2 Cor 6,6; 13,13; Eph 1,13.14; 1 Thess 1,5-6; 4,8; 5,19; 2 Tim 1,14; Titus 3,5-6; Heb 2,4; 6,4; 9,8.14; 10,15.

Like the Son, the Spirit performs deeds that are due only to God. He is the giver of life, both physical and spiritual (Rom 8,1; 1 Cor 15,45; 2 Cor 3,6); He testifies with our spirit that we have been adopted as children of God (Rom 8,15). It is through Him that the believer is washed, justified and sanctified (1 Cor 6,11). The Spirit bestows spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12,6-11) to help in the divine mission of salvation. He is the source of inspiration of the Bible (2 Tim 3,16).

Father, Son and Spirit: Three distinct persons

For Paul, the Father, the Son and the Spirit are distinct beings or persons. It is common to agree with the idea that the Father and the Son are different persons. However, some theologians wonder if the Spirit is really a third person related with the Father and the Son or if He is only an impersonal power or force operating in association with God, or even emanating from Him. Paul presents the Spirit as being related with the power of God (Rom 1,4; 15,13.19; 1 Cor 2,4; 2 Cor 6,6-7; 1 Thess 1,5; 2 Tim 1,7), but never as an impersonal force. The Spirit not only represents the power of God, but also His wisdom (1 Cor 2,4; 12,18; Eph 1,17).

Let us follow how Paul presents the Father, the Son and the Spirit in triune activity, although being distinct beings, when he explains to the Ephesians about the revelation of the “mystery of Christ”: “Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation,³³ [...] which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus” (Eph 3,2-6).

The main function or role of the Spirit is to make known the plan of God in Christ, the revealed mystery, and reveal the Son after His ascension, because “no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12,3).

Paul shows that the saving work of Jesus Christ is directly related with the ministry of the Holy Spirit and vice versa. Christ offered His atoning sacrifice for the sins of humanity (Rom 8,6-8) and applies the merits of this sacrifice by

³³ Instrumental Dative (inspirer).

means of His priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 7,25). Nevertheless, it is the Spirit who makes efficient what the Savior has accomplished (1 Cor 12,3).

The Spirit is the One who prepares the way for the conversion of souls, convicting each individual in regard to sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16,8), leading him or her towards the full knowledge of Jesus and the gospel (1 Cor 12,3). He leads to repentance (Rom 2,4), generates faith (1 Cor 12,9; Rom 12,3) and the new birth (Titus 3,5), and seals the believers (Eph 1,13), testifying that they belong to God (Eph 1,14; 2 Cor 1,21-22; 5,5; Rom 8,22-23; Eph 4,30); moreover, He brings about growth (Gal 5,16.22-23), sanctification (Rom 8,3.5-10; 1 Cor 6,11; 2 Thess 2,13), and equips the church for service (1 Cor 12; 2 Cor 3,6).

In this process of making efficient the work of Christ, the Spirit reveals, interprets, inspires, speaks, testifies, sends, knows, teaches, guides and intercedes. All those activities are made plain in Paul's letters when he uses *πνεῦμα* in nominative, accusative, genitive and dative forms.

Πνεῦμα in the nominative case³⁴

By using the nominative case, Paul presents statements in which the Spirit performs specific actions within time and history. The believers in Rome are told that “the Spirit of God lives” in them, and the evidence of such living is that they “are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit” (Rom 8,9-11).

The Corinthians are told that they “are God's temple, and, as such, “God's Spirit lives” in them (1 Cor 3,16). Paul states to the Romans “the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children” (Rom 8,16), and that He “helps us in our weakness,” interceding “for us with groans that words cannot express” (Rom 8,26). The Spirit also “searches all things, even the deep things of God (1 Cor 2,10), because “no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2,11). We are also told that, despite the diversity of gifts given by the Spirit, He is “the same”, and that the Spirit “gives them to each one, just as he determines” (1 Cor 12,11); moreover, He

³⁴ In this case, *πνεῦμα* functions either as subject, indicating who performs the action of the verb, or as the headword of the predicate nominal, modifying or giving information about the subject of the sentence.

“gives life” (2 Cor 3,6), and “where the Spirit of the Lord³⁵ is, there is freedom (2 Cor 3,17)

Paul reminds the Galatians that “the Spirit [desires] what is contrary to the sinful nature” (Gal 5,17). Timothy is told that “the Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Tim 4,1). And Paul says to the Hebrews that “as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert’ of Kadesh Barnea (Heb 3,7-8). The apostle states also that “the Holy Spirit [...] testifies to us” (Heb 10,15) about the new covenant that God promised to accomplish, saying: “I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds [...] [and] their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more” (Heb 10,15-17).

Πνεῦμα in the genitive case³⁶

By using the genitive case, Paul makes statements in which he describes the Spirit in terms of origin, source and possession of some good, object or service.

Writing to the Romans, he declares that “the Spirit of life”³⁷ makes us free from the law of sin and death (Rom 8,2); and he adds that “those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires”³⁸ (Rom 8,5), since “the mind controlled by the Spirit [lit. mindset of the Spirit]³⁹ is life and peace (Rom 8,6). In the same chapter, Paul says that those who have “the firstfruits of the Spirit”⁴⁰ wait for the redemption of their bodies (v. 23), and that “he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit”⁴¹, who “intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will” (v. 27).

Writing to the Corinthians, the apostle tells them that his message and preaching “were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a

³⁵ For Dunn, the “‘Spirit of the Lord’ here is the Spirit of God = ‘the Lord’ of Exodus 34:34” (Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 435 n. 115, 419-25).

³⁶ In this case, πνεῦμα describes (in terms of possession and origin), defines and restricts the noun modifying or qualifying it.

³⁷ Genitive (possession).

³⁸ Genitive (origin).

³⁹ Genitive (origin).

⁴⁰ Genitive (possession).

⁴¹ Genitive (description).

demonstration of the Spirit's power,"⁴² so that their "faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power" (1 Cor 2,4-5); in other words, "not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit"⁴³ (1 Cor 2,13). Paul adds that "the man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God,⁴⁴ for they are foolishness to him" (1 Cor 2,14).

Still addressing the church of Corinth, Paul mentions that the physical "body" of each believer is "a temple of the Holy Spirit"⁴⁵ [...] whom you have received from God" (1 Cor 6,19); he says also that "to each one the manifestation of the Spirit"⁴⁶ is given for the common good" (1 Cor 12,7). In addition, Paul points out that God has "given the earnest of the Spirit"⁴⁷ in our hearts (2 Cor 1,22, KJV); by saying that, he meant that the Spirit had been given to the believers "as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come" (2 Cor 5,5).⁴⁸ He adds that God (by giving us the Spirit) "has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit".⁴⁹ For Paul, "the ministry of the Spirit"⁵⁰ is more glorious than the ministry of the letter. The apostle finishes his second letter to the Corinthians wishing that "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit"⁵¹ be with all (2 Cor 13,13 [14]).

Writing to the Galatians, Paul reminds them that "by faith" we can "receive the promise of the Spirit"⁵² (Gal 3,14). He points out that "the fruit of the Spirit"⁵³ is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal 5,22-23). Addressing the Ephesians, he challenges them to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit"⁵⁴ (Eph 4,3), and asserts that "the sword of the Spirit"⁵⁵ [...] is the word of God" (Eph 6,17).

⁴² Genitive (origin).

⁴³ Genitive (origin).

⁴⁴ Genitive (origin).

⁴⁵ Genitive (origin).

⁴⁶ Genitive (origin).

⁴⁷ Genitive (possession).

⁴⁸ Genitive (possession).

⁴⁹ Genitive (description).

⁵⁰ Genitive (description).

⁵¹ Genitive (origin).

⁵² Genitive (origin).

⁵³ Genitive (description).

⁵⁴ Genitive (origin).

⁵⁵ Genitive (description).

When in prison, he confesses to the Philippians that he rejoices in his chains because he knows that thanks to their prayers and “the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ”⁵⁶ (Phil 1,19, KJV) everything will turn out for his deliverance (Phil 1,19, KJV).

When writing to the church in Thessalonica, Paul recognizes that, despite severe suffering, the believers “received the word [...] with joy of the Holy Spirit”⁵⁷ (1 Thess 1,6, NKJV). He thanks God on behalf of the Thessalonians because “from the beginning God chose [them] to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit⁵⁸ and through belief in the truth” (2 Thess 2,13). And in his letter to Titus, Paul says that God “saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit”⁵⁹ (Titus 3,5).

Paul’s use of *πνεῦμα* in the genitive case with prepositions is revealing. He says to the Christians in Rome that “God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit,⁶⁰ whom he has given us” (Rom 5,5), and that God “will [...] give life to [...] mortal bodies through his Spirit”⁶¹ (Rom 8,11); then he wishes that the God of hope might fill the believers with all joy and peace so that they could “overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit”⁶² (Rom 15,13); he also recommends that “by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit”⁶³ they join him in his mission by praying to God for him (Rom 15,30).

To the church in Corinth he states that although “no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him [...] God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.⁶⁴ The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God” (1 Cor 2,9-10).

To the Galatians he says that “the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit”⁶⁵ (Gal 5,17); he adds that “he who sows to the Spirit⁶⁶ will of the

⁵⁶ Genitive (origin).

⁵⁷ Genitive (origin).

⁵⁸ Genitive (origin).

⁵⁹ Genitive (origin).

⁶⁰ Genitive (description).

⁶¹ Genitive (description).

⁶² Genitive (description).

⁶³ Genitive (description).

⁶⁴ Genitive (description).

⁶⁵ Genitive (description).

⁶⁶ Genitive (description).

Spirit⁶⁷ reap everlasting life” (Gal 6,8, NKJV). To the Ephesians he informs that he was praying to the Father that He “out of his glorious riches [might] strengthen [them] with power through his Spirit⁶⁸ in [their] inner being” (Eph 3,14-16). Addressing Timothy, Paul recommends that he “keep by the Holy Spirit”⁶⁹ the precious teachings that were entrusted to him (2 Tim 1,14, NKJV).

Πνεῦμα in the accusative case⁷⁰

By using the accusative case, Paul makes statements in which the Spirit is involved in specific activities within time and history.

He addresses the Corinthians telling them that “we have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us” (1 Cor 2,12). He asks the Galatians: “Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? [...] Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?” (Gal 3,2.5). He tells them also that “God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘*Abba*, Father’” (Gal 4,6).

Paul admonishes the Ephesians that they should “not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom [they] were sealed for the day of redemption” (Eph 4,30). He warns the Thessalonians that “he who rejects this instruction [the call to holiness] does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit (1 Thess 4,8). He adds then: “Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thess 5,19, NKJV). To the readers of his sermon that makes up the book of Hebrews, Paul asks: “How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?” (Heb 10,29).

By using a prepositional construction in the accusative case, Paul declares to the Roman readers that the gospel that he preached was “regarding his Son [God’s], who as to his human nature was a descendant of David”, but

⁶⁷ Genitive (description).

⁶⁸ Genitive (description).

⁶⁹ Genitive (description).

⁷⁰ In this case, πνεῦμα is the direct object of the verb, complementing its meaning.

“through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1,4). Giving further emphasis to the role of the Spirit, Paul states that “God [...] sen[t] his own Son [...] to be a sin offering [...] in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.” Paul reinforces his point by saying that “those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires (Rom 8,3-5).

Πνεῦμα in the dative case⁷¹

By using the dative case, Paul makes statements in which the Spirit is the place, means, agent/cause or instrument the subject uses to perform certain action expressed by the verb.

To the believers in Rome, he says that they “are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit,⁷² if the Spirit of God lives in [them]” (Rom 8,9); therefore, “if by the Spirit⁷³ [they] put to death the misdeeds of the body, [they] will live” (Rom 8,13). He goes on to say that “those who are led by the Spirit of God⁷⁴ are sons of God” (Rom 8,14). Paul confesses that he has “great sorrow and unceasing anguish” because he wishes he “were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of [his] brothers, those of [his] own race”; he adds: “I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit”⁷⁵ (Rom 9,1-4).

Later on in the same letter, Paul exhorts the Romans to “accept him whose faith is weak” and explains to them that “the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁶ In addition, he states that “anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men” (Rom 14,1.17-18). As a minister to the Gentiles, Paul makes it clear to his readers in Rome that he has “the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might

⁷¹ In this case, πνεῦμα expresses the idea of place, agency/cause or instrument with which one does something. It indicates the instrument or means the subject uses to perform the verb action.

⁷² Local dative (sphere).

⁷³ Instrumental dative (cause).

⁷⁴ Instrumental dative (cause).

⁷⁵ Local dative (sphere).

⁷⁶ Instrumental dative (cause).

become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15,16).

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul highlights the instrumental function of the Spirit by categorically making them understand that “no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God⁷⁷ says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit⁷⁸ (1 Cor 12,3). In reference to the spiritual gifts, he declares that God gives to some “faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit”⁷⁹ (1 Cor 12,9). All, adds the apostles, “were [...] baptized by one Spirit⁸⁰ into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free” (1 Cor 12,13).

Paul states that “anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries by the Spirit⁸¹ (1 Cor 14,2, margin). He recognizes that the Corinthians are “a letter from Christ [...] written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God,⁸² not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Cor 3,3). He shows them that the service to God must be carried out “in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit⁸³ and in sincere love” (2 Cor 6,6).

He asks the backsliding Galatians: “After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?”⁸⁴ (Gal 3,3). He then recommends them: “Live by the Spirit”⁸⁵ (Gal 5,16), because “if you are led by the Spirit,⁸⁶ you are not under law” (Gal 5,18). Finally, Paul admonishes them to “keep in step with the Spirit”,⁸⁷ since “we live by the Spirit”⁸⁸ (Gal 5,25).

Paul reminds the believers in Ephesus that when they heard and believed the word of truth, they “were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise”⁸⁹ (Eph

⁷⁷ Instrumental dative (inspirer).

⁷⁸ Instrumental dative (inspirer).

⁷⁹ Instrumental dative (cause).

⁸⁰ Local dative (element).

⁸¹ Instrumental dative (manner).

⁸² Instrumental dative (cause).

⁸³ Dative of association.

⁸⁴ Instrumental dative (cause).

⁸⁵ Instrumental dative (cause).

⁸⁶ Instrumental dative (cause).

⁸⁷ Instrumental dative (cause).

⁸⁸ Instrumental dative (cause).

⁸⁹ Instrumental dative (element).

1,13, NKJV). He declares that through Christ we all “have access to the Father by one Spirit”⁹⁰ (Eph 2,18); moreover, it is “by his Spirit”⁹¹ that the believers, “being built together”, can “become a dwelling place in which God lives” (Eph 2,22). He goes on to explain that the mystery of Christ, the plan of God’s grace, “which was not made known to men in other generations [...] has now been revealed by the Spirit,⁹² namely, that “the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus” (Eph 3,2-6). Therefore, the apostle urges them not to “get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery”, but to “be filled with the Spirit”⁹³ (Eph 5,18). Finally, in order to make sure that his readers would have on them “the full armor of God [...] against the devil’s schemes,” he advises them to “pray in the Spirit”⁹⁴ on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests” (Eph 6,11.18).

Paul exhorts the Philippians by using very strong metaphors because of the dissent: “Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh,” and he gives the reason: “For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God,⁹⁵ who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh” (Phil 3,2-3). Speaking about the incarnated God, Jesus Christ, the great “mystery of godliness,” Paul tells Timothy: “God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit”⁹⁶ (1 Tim 3,16, NKJV).

Who is this Being about whom Paul speaks in his letters? Who is He? In all his letters, He is the protagonist and the performer of historical acts, the One in whom certain realities come into existence and from whom others derive. He is the instrumental agent. In short, who is He?

Conclusion

Having partially studied the theological use of *πνεῦμα* in Paul’s letters, we can come to the following conclusions:

⁹⁰ Local dative (sphere).

⁹¹ Local dative (sphere).

⁹² Instrumental dative (inspirer).

⁹³ Instrumental dative (element).

⁹⁴ Instrumental dative (inspirer).

⁹⁵ Instrumental dative (cause).

⁹⁶ Local dative (sphere).

1. Most of Paul's theological statements related to the use of *πνεῦμα*, investigated more thoroughly in their historical, literary and theological contexts, seem to have an axiomatic nature. In other words, they are propositions, maxims or truths which the apostle assumes without giving explanations; nevertheless, they are an important foundation of his pneumatology and the underlying structure of his thinking.

2. Paul is a trinitarian. He understands that God is truly one, although they are three. The three are fully God. Each one of the three is a distinct being. The three exist and have an eternal relationship as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3. Paul calls the Holy Spirit as "Spirit of God" and "Spirit of Christ", which presupposes the divinity of the Spirit, the existence of three distinct beings and their triune unity in nature, purpose and mission.

4. For Paul, the Holy Spirit is a real, historic and ever-present being. He is not a mere force, or a vague power, effect or impersonal energy. He is the personal and full presence of God dwelling among His people.

5. The complete possession of the Holy Spirit is only possible "in Christ." Such possession does not extend to all mankind.

6. The Holy Spirit is the divine agent in the gospel mission of the body of Christ, enabling the human instrument to preach the message, confirming the truth in the hearers' hearts by transforming them and giving them the guarantee that they are children of God.

7. Believers in Christ give evidence of the visible presence of the Holy Spirit through their attitudes, behavior and way of thinking and speaking.

8. The Holy Spirit leads the believers to a life of sanctification and witness; a life that shows a moral, ethical and spiritual dimension, made possible only through Him.

9. Since each believer is a member of the body of Christ, he or she has a specific function granted by the Spirit, a particular ministry to be carried out in mission.

10. The activities of the triune God in the history of salvation is the foundational hermeneutical presupposition to interpret and understand the theological use of *πνεῦμα* in the pauline letters.

Within the framework of the great controversy, Paul expounds a clear trinitarian understanding, essential for the plan of salvation. Christ is the main character in this drama of ages. He is the great protagonist in the historical event of salvation, the lamb provided by God that takes away the sins of the world. He is our High Priest seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, our king and judge, minister in the heavenly sanctuary, the author and finisher of our salvation.

Whereas the Son is the redeemer in His complete atoning priesthood, the Spirit is the One who allows mankind to discover Him, to take hold of the provided salvation, to recognize Him as Lord and to restore fully its relationship with God. However, the origins of such history of salvation as well as its accomplishment come from the hands of God, the Father, who “has put everything under” the feet of Christ. However, “when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15,27-28, NKJV).

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