

## Book Reviews

*The Holy Spirit and the Church According to the New Testament. Sixth International East-West Symposium of New Testament Scholars, Belgrade, August 25 to 31, 2013 (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 354)*, edited by Predrag Dragutinović, Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr and James Buchanan Wallace, in co-operation with Christos Karakolis, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2016, IX+516 p.

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As mentioned on the title page, the volume brings together the papers of The Sixth International East-West Symposium of New Testament Scholars, which was held in Belgrade (Serbia), August 25-31, 2013, and which addressed the topic: “The Holy Spirit and the Church in the New Testament”. The Symposium was the sixth in a series of conferences organized by the Eastern Europe Liaison Committee of *Studiorum Novi Testament Societas* (SNTS) and took place at the Orthodox Theological Faculty of the University of Belgrade. The Symposium, like the previous five, was dedicated to the dialogue and exchanges between Eastern Orthodox and Western Roman Catholic and Protestant New Testament scholars. The volume contains the papers and the seminar contributions presented during the Sixth International East-West Symposium of New Testament Scholars. The section “Papers from the Symposium” contains a series of “twin papers”, devoted to core texts of the New Testament, one from an Orthodox and one from a “Western” perspective. In addition to these “twin papers”, the program included three seminars on different topics related to the main theme of the conference. From the very beginning, Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr draws attention to the fact that “a scholarly conference structured by a selection of main papers and seminar contributions cannot cover every important aspect and all of the complicated research problems related to the theme of the Holy Spirit and the church in the New Testament” (p. 6). For this reason, in his *Introduction*, Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, in his own words, tries to fill in some gaps by pointing to additional New Testament evidence relating to the topic and by noting a small selection of more recent relevant scholarly studies.

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In the following I try to outline briefly the relevance of this volume from an Orthodox perspective, recalling the pneumatological, ecclesiological and hermeneutical importance of the topic: the Holy Spirit and the Church in the New Testament. I also try to make some comments, in order to raise interest in reading and expanding the addressed topic.

From an Orthodox perspective, the volume is both original and necessary. It is original because it extends its field of investigation by dealing with sources from Old Testament pneumatology, patristics, liturgy and iconography. Its originality is the result of the necessity of such an approach, which cannot be limited to new testamentary texts, but must take into account both the Jewish context of Christ's preaching and the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church throughout history.

According to Orthodox theology, "the descent of the Holy Spirit is what gives real existence to the Church" (Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae) and marks the beginning of the Church. In other words, the life of the Church is related to the moment of Pentecost and the work of the Holy Spirit throughout the ages in the Church. We cannot think of the Church's life without the work of the Holy Spirit. But the life of the Church is not only about the work of the Holy Spirit, but also the manifestation or revelation of God. Setting these understandings as a starting point, even some of the principles of Orthodox hermeneutics, as they are synthesized by Father John Breck, state that the word of God must be understood as a theandric or divine-human reality. For Orthodox Christians, Scripture is God's word to His creation and not just a human word about God, which implies a cooperation between God and the human person. To be sure, the Word of God contained in scriptural text is conditioned by the limits of human understanding and communication. That is why Scripture must be "interpreted anew in every generation".

Similar to the writing of Biblical texts, interpretation is also a synergistic effort, in which the inspirational work of the Holy Spirit guides and illuminates the mind of the reader and hearer, a fact that is very clearly expressed in the Orthodox Liturgy, through the prayer before reading the Gospel: "Let it shine in our hearts, oh, Lord, Lover of people, the pure light of knowing Your Deity and let our eyes be open for understanding your blessed commands...". We see in the Orthodox Liturgy that the human contribution to this synergic process is dependent on the initiative of God. The Church is the right place for interpreting Scripture, as well as for preaching and celebrating the Word of God. We see how exegesis, from an Orthodox perspective, is a function of the communion of serving and confessing faith. While personal interpretations are welcome and encouraged, however, these

interpretations lose their claim of being authoritative if they are separated from the connection with the Church and Tradition<sup>1</sup>.

The Table of Contents is divided into four parts: Part One (Biblical Scholarship in Serbia), Part Two (Papers from the Symposium), Part Three (Contributions from the Seminars), Part Four (Reflections) and an Appendix, which leads to a total of 24 papers.

This arrangement is clearly justified by the sequence of presentations in the Symposium, but in order to understand the Jewish context of the New Testament writings, it is necessary to read the three studies devoted to the role of God's Spirit in early Judaism. In the first one, written by Rodoljub S. Kubat, about *The Spirit in the Wisdom of Solomon* (pp. 287-308), the author deals with the etymology of the Hebrew word *ruach* and its Greek equivalent, πνεῦμα after presenting the Wisdom of Solomon and its origin, and the issues of dating, authorship, literary genre and the recipients (probably Hellenized Jews). He then investigates references to the Spirit in the Wisdom of Solomon and distinguishes more aspects of the issue. In conclusion, he points out that the author of the Wisdom of Solomon "enriched the term 'spirit' in a metaphysical-cosmological sense" in comparison to Old Testament texts, but it remains an ambiguous term (p. 306-308). *James Buchanan Wallace*, in his contribution (p. 309-340) on the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, a (probably) Jewish text of unknown date and provenance, tries to highlight "three facets of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*' pneumatology that early Christians would have found attractive": the damage brought on humanity by evil, demonic spirits; that a divine spirit produces moral transformation, and that the outpouring of the divine spirit upon humanity is connected to the Messiah (p. 339). This connection fits nicely with NT traditions that portray Jesus as the one who casts out evil spirits and is the mediator of the Holy Spirit in the early Christian community. In his contribution on ancient Jewish views about the Spirit, *Carl R. Holladay* analyses the work of Philo of Alexandria (p. 341-363). As a result, he observes that "one of the most intriguing features of Philonic thought is the fluidity of the term πνεῦμα" (p. 358).

Three pairs of the main papers are concentrated on the three most important witnesses for the Holy Spirit in the New Testament: Luke, John, and Paul.

Both of the two main papers in this volume that deal with Luke focus on a theological interpretation of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts, but they do so by emphasizing different aspects. *Daniel Marguerat* concentrates his investigation on the role of the Holy Spirit in the church according to Luke-

<sup>1</sup> Fr. John Breck, "Orthodox Principles of Biblical Interpretation", in: *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 40 (1996), p. 77-93.

Acts. Therefore, he starts with an analysis of the Pentecost story because “the coming of the Spirit occurs at Pentecost” (p. 113). He underscores that by reaffirming the words of the Apostle Peter in Acts 2.33 Luke “articulates three affirmations: 1. the Spirit only appears after the Resurrection; 2. it emanates from the Father, and 3. it is transmitted by the Son” (p. 115). In his interpretation of Acts, D. Marguerat focuses on the activity of the Spirit in the Church emphasizing “the founding role of the Spirit who builds the Church as a missionary community and endows it with unity” (p. 127).

In his contribution, *Christos Karakolis* tries to answer the question: Is the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts to be understood as a personal entity or an impersonal power? (p. 87-109). He brings into the discussion a controversial debate in contemporary Western exegesis on the “personal” character of the Holy Spirit. While in the ancient Church the theological debate about the Holy Spirit was much more focused on the divinity than on personhood and in Orthodox theological tradition the answer to this problem has been unanimous (“The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity and consequently a real person”), however, the mentioned contemporary pneumatological question remains a challenge to Orthodox theologians, “not least because it disputes theological principles and understandings that in the Orthodox tradition have not been called into question for many centuries or have never been thought about at all” (p. 88). Ch. Karakolis examines the references to the Holy Spirit in both Luke and Acts and compares them, on the one hand, with those of other characters of the narrative, and, on the other hand, with other relevant, parallel semantic and narrative elements in Luke-Acts. He clearly shows that in Luke-Acts the Spirit is understood and presented as “a distinctive narrative character”, that “the Holy Spirit lives continually within the people of the historical time of the church” and that the Holy Spirit has a very important impact upon the lives of all members of the Christian church (p. 106-108).

In addition to Luke, Matthew and Mark also testify to the Holy Spirit in their Gospels. These testimonies are discussed by *Armand Puig I Tàrrach* in his paper on the Holy Spirit and the evil spirits in the Ministry of Jesus (p. 365-393). The conclusions of Armand Puig I Tàrrach’s paper are very important to understanding the role of the presence of the Holy Spirit and the evil spirits in the ministry of Jesus (p. 389-393). Although evidence for the work of the Holy Spirit and the Church in the Gospel of Mark is scarce, *Joel Marcus* nevertheless makes obvious in his paper that “the interrelated realities represented by these terms (πνεῦμα and ἐκκλησία) are very much at home in the Markan narrative and, one would suppose, in the Markan world” (p. 395-403).

The Gospel of John contains the most distinguished feature of New Testament pneumatology. The Holy Spirit is identified as the παράκλητος (John 14.16, 26; 15.26; 16.7). Nevertheless, more is told about the Holy Spirit in John after Christ's Resurrection and the Apostle's commission to forgive or retain sins (John 20.19-23). In his contribution, *Pedrag Dragutinović* (p. 129-147) examines this text as a prominent text with regards to the theme of the Holy Spirit and the church. He emphasizes that the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church is not an individualistic experience, but it establishes the Church as a loving community. In his contribution (p. 149-171), based on his monograph on the Farewell Discourses, *Andreas Dettwiler* examines every reference to the Spirit-Paraclete from this part of the Gospel, to clarify the semantics it entails. His concluding remarks are to be taken into account: "virtually all the pneumatological passages in John emphasize the close relationship to the Christ"; "according to John 14:26, the main function of the Paraclete is to offer the community of disciples a retrospective understanding of the true meaning of the figure of Christ; and that the Spirit-Paraclete is not only a narrative object of one of the Johannine Easter stories (20.19-23) but secretly its main hermeneutical subject" (p. 170-171).

*N.T. Wright's* contribution uses both John and Paul to show that the idea of a New Testament pneumatology is rooted in the Biblical and ancient Jewish expectation of God's return to his people at the end of time (p. 73-86). N.T. Wright detects this link already in the statement in the prologue of John's Gospel: "the Word became flesh, and dwelt in our midst" (John 1.14). N.T. Wright emphasizes that "for John the Spirit is again and again the one through whom the reality of the son's incarnation becomes present, operative and effective in his followers" (p. 81). His conclusions are challenging, especially when he says that: "most Western churches, including my own, have not taken seriously enough the challenge which is there in both Paul and John to understand the full divinity of the Spirit and consequently the actual 'divinization' of the Christian community". Also, the churches in the modern East, no less than the modern West - he says - need to embrace more fully the Gospel's challenge, because the Spirit comes not only to guide the church into all truth, lead, help and direct, but also to enable the church to save the world from sin (p. 85).

The two contributions devoted to the Holy Spirit in Paul are by *John Fotopoulos* (p. 173-186) and *Volker Rabens* (p. 187-220). On the one hand, J. Fotopoulos distinguishes between "the Holy Spirit as gift to the believers; the Holy Spirit as dwelling/living in the believer; the Holy Spirit engaged in action in the believer; and finally the Holy Spirit as personal God (and thus a person of the Holy Trinity)" (p. 176). He identifies these four themes

as reflecting the Orthodox Christian perspective on Paul and the Spirit (p. 186). On the other hand, V. Rabens focuses on “the transforming work of the spirit from the perspective of deification or theosis”, a topic that has also received interest in Western exegesis in more recent times.

Special attention is paid to “Reception History”. This section is of particular interest, not only because the controversy around the *filioque* became significant for the process of separation between the Eastern and the Western church, but especially in order to see how patristic authors used and understood New Testament texts in their preaching on the Holy Spirit. An important remark in *Katharina Bracht’s* contribution (p. 231-250) is that “Augustine and other ancient Christian theologians used quotations or allusions to Biblical texts... to express their own understanding of the Holy Spirit” and this combination seems to be typical for the church fathers. The Orthodox perspective on this theme has been expressed by *Demetrios Bathrellos* in his contribution (p. 221-230). He focuses on one single author from the late Byzantine period, St. Symeon of Thessalonica († 1429), and investigates the Biblical quotations Symeon used in order to support his theology of the Holy Spirit. A study that brings out the patristic sources that inspired Symeon is still missing. Other contributions to Reception History belong to *Harald Buchinger* (“The Holy Spirit and the Church in Liturgy: A ‘Western Perspective’”, p. 251-284), *Taras Klomych* (“From Maranatha to Epiclesis? An Inquiry into Origins of Spirit Invocations in Early Christianity, p. 427-440”), and *Tobias Nicklas* (“A Church without Spirit? Pneumatology in the Writings of Ignatius of Antioch”, p. 405-426).

I hope that the efforts of the organizers of this Symposium and of the contributors to this volume will come to fruition in further research on this issue and its expansion from a patristic perspective. I would suggest that, in order to speak of Reception History, one must bring more patristic authors into the discussion. Until further research dedicated to this issue from a patristic perspective is undertaken, the volume edited by Richard W. Bishop, Johan Leemans, and Hajnalka Tamas<sup>2</sup> is essential.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard W. Bishop, Johan Leemans et al. (eds.), *Preaching after Easter: Mid-Pentecost, Ascension, and Pentecost in Late Antiquity*, (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 136), London – Boston, Brill 2016.