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The Living God¹

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1. The Trinity doctrine in jeopardy

The liberal theology of the nineteenth century deviated especially on four points of traditional Pneumatology: (i) the godliness of the Holy Spirit was not denied, but within the framework of a pantheistic idea of identity, the Spirit of God and the spirit of the human being were seen as two sides of the same reality, which in fact meant that the Spirit of God and the spirit of the Christian community were put on an equal footing; (ii) within this context, the personal character of the Holy Spirit could not be maintained, because the Spirit was better understood as a particular quality that was specific to God and to people (creativity, consciousness, meaningful potentiality), than as the Spirit being thought of as a person; (iii) the unity between Christ and the Spirit that is taught in the New Testament, is either diminished to mean that the Spirit is the influence of Jesus acting on the spirit of the congregation, or is converted to mean that the relationship between Christ and the Spirit is merely a particularisation of the general relationship of the Spirit with all people; and iv) the teaching of the triune nature of God is either completely neglected, or wisely interpreted in the sense of the Hegelian dialectic of the Spirit, or understood in the form of a modalistic presentation of the economic Trinity doctrine as the expression of the versatility of the human experience of God (Schleiermacher).

In the twentieth century, there has been fierce reaction against this representation of affairs on the one hand, especially by Karl Barth and those of his conviction, but on the other hand, in this regard there is also a strong current in theology that can be traced to the nineteenth century. A theologian such as *Tillich*, who leans strongly towards Idealism, immediately comes to mind here. The concept of 'spirit' plays a big role in his theology. He also thinks from the point of view of the unity between God's Spirit and the spirit of man. The divine Spirit is present in all life

1 Translated from Jonker, W. 1977. *Christus die Middelaar: Wegwysers in die Dogmatiek*. Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel. 12-23; and Jonker, W. 1981. *Die Gees van Christus: Wegwysers in die Dogmatiek*. Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel. 102-134

as the immanence of God in the reality of the world, although Tillich emphasises in a particular sense the mutual dwelling in each other of the Spirit of God and the spirit of man. The divine Spirit carries and moves the human spirit, and the human spirit is grounded in the divine Spirit. The divine Spirit could even be called the depth dimension of the human spirit, the infinite basis of the existence of the human spirit. Even if Tillich does not wish to declare that the Spirit of God and the human spirit are identical, the Spirit of God is the source of power and meaning, from which the human spirit lives and through which the human spirit can be raised on occasion to an unprecedented experience of unity with oneself, especially when it is driven out of him/herself by the divine Spirit in order to 'stand outside of him/herself' (ecstasy). On such occasions the human spirit is in the grip of the divine Spirit and it is opened up to inspiration and fulfilment with love and faith and an experience of self-transcendence. Such experiences with the divine Spirit are not limited to Christianity. This happens particularly where there are spiritual communities of people (for example, with mystics, religious groups such as Islam, humanists and even Marxists). Even if the Spirit of Christ is the norm that ought to be attached to such experiences, the divine Spirit is not at all bound to Christ. Tillich mentions the 'latent church' that is present in every place where the Spirit moves people.

What is noticeable here, is that for Tillich, the divine Spirit is not a person, but rather the power of the Unconditional which in itself also includes the basis of personality that finds expression in the human spirit. The divine Spirit and the human spirit are certainly distinguishable from each other but belong to the same reality. Within this pan-and-theistic conception of Tillich, there is no room for the traditional utterances about God or the Trinity. Tillich finds the Trinity doctrine to be confusing, but he wishes to acknowledge that there is an element of truth therein, in as far as it tries to provide an answer to the multi-faceted nature of human need.

Pannenberg also moves within this pan-and-theism school of thought. It is certainly true that Pannenberg argues at length that the Holy Spirit is a person, because the Spirit is understood by the believer as a Subject that has control over him and that is located outside of himself. It is, however, a question of whether he means more than that the believer in his experience with the Spirit is aware that he has to do with God Himself, which cannot, for his consciousness, be described in any other way than in personal terms. For Pannenberg, the Spirit is the life force and the principle of life in all that lives, and therefore also in a particular way, the creative principle of life in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Therefore He is also the power of the resurrection from the dead, of which all believers are now a part. Pannenberg uses different terminology from that of Tillich

and he thinks, in more than one respect, within a different framework, but fundamentally they are, however, related in their common acceptance of the idealistic presuppositions. In fact, he is even more radical than Tillich in his conception of the unity between the divine and the human spirit. He criticises Tillich because Tillich distinguishes too strongly between the Spirit of God and the human spirit and thus ends up stating that the human spirit can participate in the Spirit of God only in moments of ecstasy, as if the Spirit of God could be a separate dimension next to the human spirit. The human spirit is always a part of the divine Spirit, which is the force from which the human spirit lives. Pannenberg also joins Teilhard de Chardin, who understands the Spirit as the energy behind the evolutionary process that reaches out to the point of Omega, although he does also criticise Teilhard on certain technical points. In any case, Pannenberg rejects emphatically the idea that the Spirit of God must only be understood soteriologically or that the Spirit must relate in a particular sense to man's intellect or his ability to understand. The basic function of the Spirit is the healing and strengthening of the forces of natural life, that are in all respects dependent upon God and that remain open to Him. The soteriological task of the Spirit is to make people aware of the life of the Spirit and in this way to ensure that they participate in this life to a greater extent. In the church, the creative forces of the human spirit are healed and increased by the knowledge of the life and the fate of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, in regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, Pannenberg also moves within this framework. His relationship with Hegel is clear in his point of view that the existence of God is closely involved in the history of the creation. Pannenberg can even say that, although God is not, in the strictest sense, dependent upon the world, He does nevertheless wish to actualise himself freely in the history of the world, by means of the incarnation and in the activities of the Holy Spirit. This means that Pannenberg has a tendency to move in the direction of an economic Trinity doctrine. However, he does this in an unusual way, because he begins with the statement that the truth can always only first be known 'at the end', by which it appears that what is visible at the end has always been, as it is known to be. In this way, God will only be properly recognised as He is when He is resurrected from the dead, but then it will also be clear that He has always been the same as He is when He is resurrected from the dead. In light of this, it can also be said that we learn to know God, in a historical sense, as the Trinity (through Jesus Christ and the actions of the Spirit), but when the full reality of this becomes visible at the end, it will also be clear that this had to have been so in the eternity of God. In this way, Pannenberg takes the trouble to retain the traditional terminology in

relation to the doctrine of the Trinity, although within the framework of his wisdom, everything takes on a new content.

We find the most outspoken proponents of a pan-and-theistic interpretation of the Christian faith in the so-called *process theology*. The basic idea of process thought is that everything is in a continual process of becoming. God is understood as the world-soul, the consciousness of the universe, His relationship with the world more or less comparable to the human soul or spirit to its body. As such, God is Himself an organism within the sphere of space and time, involved in the process of growth which is the result of his connection to the world reality, in which He constantly has new experiences through that which is happening. Because God can be understood as the consciousness of everything that happens, and because man with his own consciousness is part of the consciousness of God, which is an occurrence itself, man is enabled not only to know the world as it is, but also to know God in and behind the world without any particular revelation. Therefore the world, and in particular, mankind, in a sense, takes up in process thought the same place that the Son takes in relation to the Father in traditional Christian doctrine. Through his essential relationship to God, mankind is deified, and he has no need of any revelation from outside. He is God's revelation and can of himself take part in the consciousness of God. At the same time it can also be said that the spirit of man takes the place of the Spirit of God in the traditional Christian doctrine, because man has, through his spirit, a direct share in the knowledge of God.

There is no more room here for the personality of the Spirit or even for the traditional Trinity doctrine. The entire world history is understood as a process of incarnation and the Holy Spirit is interpreted as the immanence of God in the whole world. For the Trinity doctrine, comprehension at most can be offered as an attempt to give expression to the reality of God's involvement in human history and in the universe. And yet, with this, it is completely reversed, and often also opposed. Instead of this, one could rather talk about a bipolarity in God, in other words, that on the one hand, God is primordial in Himself as God, and on the other hand, He is connected to the world. The 'transcendence' and the 'immanence' of God do not need to find expression in the concept of a trinity in God, but can be better understood if one begins from the premise that God is the *one* personal God who is in the most profound way involved with the world. Actually, it is more plausible for the process theologians to talk about the incarnation of the Spirit than that of the Son. Jesus is understood as the *only* person in whom the true immanence of the Spirit finds its focus point. The process theologian fully supports a Spirit-Christology, in terms of which the divine nature of Christ is interpreted as the presence of the Spirit in

Him. Upon occasion, process theologians have also expressed the opinion that Christianity has now arrived in an after-Christianity stage, because the emphasis today is no longer on Christianity as a religion of salvation, but rather on Christianity as a religion of creativity (Maynard Kaufman). Furthermore, in circles other than that of the process theologians, we hear about the Spirit speaking in a manner that strongly recalls the 19th century. Lampe understands the term 'Spirit' as an indication of God who makes himself known to man in a continuous history of incarnation in the human spirit. He finds the idea of the incarnation of the Second Person of the divine Trinity unnecessary. At best, what can be said about Jesus is that He is the archetype and even the source of the new life of the Spirit of God in the spirit of man. The Spirit Himself is also no separate 'hypostasis' in God, but simply an indication of the immanence of God Himself in the human spirit.

Perhaps less sagacious, but still related to what we have heard here, Hendrikus Berkhof also says that the Holy Spirit should not be understood as a separate 'person' in God, but simply as an appellation of God Himself in his 'acting' presence. The Spirit in the Scriptures is, according to Berkhof, not an autonomous Being next to God the Father and Christ, but a predicate to God and Christ, meant to describe the fact and manner of their activities in the world.

Therefore, Berkhof wishes rather to discard the appellation of the Holy Spirit as a 'person'. In his view, in the naming of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, it is not about three persons in the modern sense of the word (a concept that must necessarily lead to tri-theism) and also not about the three *hypostases* or independent entities within the one being of God, but about the *one* movement of the *one* God in creation and recreation which cannot be expressed in any other way than by these three names. God is only *one* person, but He meets with us in the Son and in the Spirit of the Son. By this, Berkhof does not mean that the Spirit is impersonal – not an impersonal power in any event – because the Spirit is still God Himself whom we meet as the personal God. The Spirit is, however, not a person next to the Father. At most, one can say that the Spirit is a person in his relationship to us, but not in his relationship to God.

In his explanation, Berkhof leans strongly on H. Wheeler Robinson, who followed the same route in his well-known 1928 work, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*. His thought is also related to that of H. P. van Dusen (in his book: *Spirit, Son and Father*, 1958) and that of Ingo Hermann (*Kyrios und Pneuma*, 1961). In all three it is about the fact that the Spirit is simply understood as a different name for God Himself, or for the being of God. Together with Hermann, Berkhof does not only

reject the personal character of the Spirit, but also speaks of a dynamic identity or an experiential identity of Christ and the Spirit. This leads him to the conclusion that it is much more biblical to replace the traditional Logos-Christology with a Pneuma-Christology, which means that it is the presence of the Spirit in and through Christ that makes him the Son of God. In the same way, it also leads him to the conclusion that the Spirit must be understood as the Spirit of Christ, as the acting power of the glorified Christ. Even if Berkhof does not wish to talk in all respects about an identity of the glorified Christ and the Spirit, it is nevertheless clear that he also does not want to see the Spirit as a person next to Christ, just as he does not want to see the Spirit as a person 'next to' the Father.

This, however, means that Berkhof must abandon the Trinity doctrine, as we have already seen in the case of Wheeler Robinson. As he himself formulates it, he can no longer see the Trinity doctrine as a description of the 'structure of God', but rather as a description of the structure of the covenant. The three names, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are a summary description of the covenant that was carried out between God and mankind, and in which the Son and the Spirit were decisively involved. One would actually be inclined to say that Berkhof's conception of the Trinity comes down to a dual action of the Spirit of God in Christ and in the believers. But with that, he opted for a modalistic conception of the Trinity, as is also clear from his sympathy for Marcellus of Ancyra.

There are noticeable similarities between the viewpoint of Berkhof and that of J. D. G. Dunn. Dunn also opts for a Pneuma-Christology and says that the deity of Jesus Christ was nothing other than a function of the Holy Spirit. In regard to the glorification of Christ, he also starts from the fact that believers experience Christ and the Spirit as a unity. This means that the Spirit, who is impersonal in Himself and can hardly be distinguished from the Logos before the incarnation, is received by the personality of Jesus. The Spirit comes to us through the funnel of the glorified Christ and is stamped by the personality of Jesus. Because of this, Dunn also has serious questions with the traditional Trinity doctrine, even if he, as a New-Testament scholar, expounds less fully on this than Berkhof himself does.

2. The Trinity doctrine in the foreground

In his reaction to the theology of the nineteenth century, Karl Barth follows another radical path. Against the Idealism and identity thought in all of its forms, he emphasises very strongly the qualitative distinction between God and man. God is God, and it is madness to think that we can talk about God just by talking in a higher tone of voice about man and his

experiences. God is not obviously present in our religious consciousness, spiritual depth or moral situation, because He transcends all of this and even stands against all of this. God can only really be met when He, as the Wholly Different, the Everlasting and Unending, meets us without, in such a meeting, ceasing to be what He is in Himself. Knowledge of God can only come into existence when God Himself conveys his Word 'directly from above' and also ensures that man is able to hear it. Even then, the Word still remains inalienably God's Word, which cannot be locked up in human words or thoughts, but which must be spoken by God again and again. There is no continuity between God and man (as is proposed in the Roman Catholic understanding of the syn-analogy or *analogia entis*) through which man can come to a knowledge of God outside the actual revelation of God. Only when and where it suits God does the Word of God that has touched time and history in Jesus Christ become audible to man in the 'eternal moment' of God's liberal speech. Although Barth emphasises very strongly in his first period that this Word of God is the Word of God's judgement on man with his pride, self-satisfaction, morality and religiosity, it was still clear from the beginning that it was at the same time also the Word of God's *mercy*. In the moment of meeting with this Word, faith is called upon in man as an answer, through which man casts himself upon the promises of God.

The position taken by Barth is that faith is not a general human possibility as was proposed during the nineteenth century, but rather a wonder and a deed of God that came into being through the revelation of God. For this reason, all theology must keep itself busy with the revelation of God, and not with the subjective conditions and experiences of man. This revelation of God is Christ Jesus, and we receive notice of this through the Holy Spirit. In 1927, Barth published his so-called 'Prolegomena', in which he tried to explore the way that the Word should be followed by an authentic theology of the Word, and he spells out especially that theology must start with the fact that God revealed himself in Christ, and with the reality that that revelation is received through the faith that is worked by the Holy Spirit. In the self-revelation of God to mankind, three specific moments are identifiable: God makes *Himself* as the Lord, known to man; He does this in *Jesus Christ*; and He makes *Himself known to man through the Holy Spirit*. These three moments are linked to the fact that God is triune: as the Father He reveals himself; He does this in Jesus Christ, his son; and He makes *Himself known to man through the Holy Spirit* as the 'subjective reality and possibility' of the revelation of God allowing man to share in the knowledge of the self-revelation of God. God can only be known through God. We also have to do with an act of God Himself in man's knowledge of God. Barth therefore wishes to recount the revelation

of God in none other than Trinitarian terms. This means that for Barth, the Trinity doctrine is not only in the foreground, but can be seen even as the short understanding of the entire dogma. Different from Schleiermacher, who places the Trinity doctrine right at the end of the doctrine of faith, Barth places it right at the beginning of his dogma. The God of the Bible is the triune God, because He is the living God who has revealed Himself to man.

By taking his point of departure in Trinity doctrine in this way, Barth made room from the beginning for the deity of the Holy Spirit and for the own task of the Spirit in the meeting of God with mankind. One of Barth's greatest points of criticism against Roman Catholicism and neo-Protestantism, but later also against existential theology, is precisely because they did not allow the Holy Spirit to come into its own. For that reason they had to construct in an unlawful manner a continuity between God and man that could serve as the basis for the community between God and man, while it is still, according to Scripture, the Holy Spirit that establishes this community. During the course of the development of Barth's own theology, there is still more stated about the Holy Spirit. Whereas, in his early periods, there was often a fear that he left little room in his theological framework for the Holy Spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit; and whereas even later it was said that Barth could not offer sufficient space to the Holy Spirit because of his concentration on Christology, it does nevertheless seem that he certainly wanted to give a great deal of attention to the Holy Spirit within his theological thinking. It is, however, true that, within his frame of thought, he could do this only in a particular way, and in fact in such a way that the Holy Spirit can be seen as connected with Christ in the most intimate way.

The most notable characteristic of Barth's theological thought is its Christocentrism. In the *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, he worked out his foundational concept from various different points of view, that Jesus Christ is the actualisation and the realisation in time and history of the eternal decision of God, to be the God of mankind and God-with-mankind. Barth has a dynamic concept of God, in contradiction to the static concept of God found in scholastic thought. He understands the being of God not as a passive being, but as a being-in-action, or also, as *being* in a continual state of becoming, *being* thus seen as a continual occurrence. This is what Barth understands by the 'Geschichlichkeit' of God, the suitability of his being. In terms that remind one of existential philosophy, Barth can present God's being as God's own voluntary decision. In the occurrence of God's freely-done self-determination, He actualises Himself as a person. As the living God, God lives through a history, the history of his freedom. Out of pure love, God thus 'destined' himself and made the choice to be the

God of mankind. God's voluntary primal decision (*Gnadenwahl*) was his decision to be merciful to man in Christ Jesus. With this decision, which is at the commencement of all of God's works with man, God identified himself irrevocably with man, so that God can never again be without man, and man can never again be without God. In Christ, God and man are ontically together in an unbreakable unity. Because mankind, with whom God identifies Himself in this way, is the sinner, it means that this choice of God to be the God of mankind implies that God chose death for Himself (because death is the wage of sin) and life for mankind. Thus the cross of Christ is the gift of the self-sacrifice of God, already entered into the eternal decision of God about Himself and about man. This is the price of sin and the judgement over the darkness. This judgement and death, however, at the same time mean both life and the light for man: in Christ Jesus man is raised from the dead and elevated as God's obedient ally. In Christ, the total victory over sin and death is an accomplished fact. Because the whole of humanity is included in Christ, the salvation that is present in Christ is the salvation of the entire humanity and the whole world. Although it is still hidden and will come to revelation only eschatologically at first, the triumph of God's mercy in Christ Jesus is already a *fait accompli* that cannot be frustrated or undone by anyone or anything.

It is this eternal reality that is brought to the knowledge of mankind by the Holy Spirit. According to Barth, the Holy Spirit is God Himself in his revelation to man, God himself as He makes Himself and salvation in Christ known to man. Barth can understand the entire history of salvation as the revelation of God. The incarnation of the Word and the outpouring of the Spirit are in reality two moments in the outward revelation in time of what God in his eternal primal decision has already decided about Himself and man. As the manifest being of what the eternal Word of God in Christ is, the Spirit is simply the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit unlocks man for the knowledge of God. He makes what in Christ is the reality of man, subjectively his own. Without the Holy Spirit there is no knowledge of God that is possible. Through the Holy Spirit, however, there is no other knowledge of God than the knowledge of God in Christ. After all, the Spirit has no task other than to convey what is eternally already a reality in Christ, both noetically and applicatively, in man's consciousness and existence. This means that Barth sees the Holy Spirit in the closest possible unity with Christ. Although he does not use the expression that Christ and the Holy Spirit are identical with each other, as we have heard before from Ingo Hermann and others, it is also clear that Barth distinguishes between Christ and the Spirit only as two moments in the one action of God's self-revelation. In addition, it is undeniable that Barth, as a result of his Christocentrism, consistently gives Christ a certain priority over

the Spirit. Everything in his doctrine centres on Christ. Therefore, in Barth's formulations, the Holy Spirit is also the Man of the glorified Christ through which He subjectively communicates to man what is objectively a reality in Himself. All emphasis falls upon Christ's presence in the present. Undoubtedly, in this, Barth joins J. C. Blumhardt, who practised his pastorate in the conviction that the living Christ himself is present and active in his Spirit, so that in a certain sense it can be said that the Spirit is none other than the risen and mighty Lord Jesus Christ himself. In any case, the glorified Jesus is the subject of the Spirit for Barth, and for him also, the Spirit is the second mode of Christ's parousia.

This complete unity between Christ and the Spirit obviously also goes hand in hand with Barth's conception of the Trinity. Although Barth takes as the starting point of his Trinity doctrine the revelation of God in Christ and through the Spirit, that is, in the economic Trinity, he is still very outspoken about the fact that God is eternal in Himself as He reveals Himself in time. God has been the Three-in-one from eternity. Behind the economic Trinity is the Trinity of Beings. If this were not so, God would have been dependent on history for the unfolding of His being as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (as Hegel wanted), or the Trinity of God would have had to be understood in a modalistic way (the way in which we know God), while in His own essence, He is most likely not like that (the direction in which Schleiermacher moved). Nevertheless, even though Barth also supports very strongly the fact that God in Himself has been triune from eternity, he leaves absolutely no ambiguity about the fact that Father, Son and Spirit are one. The mere fact that he (originally in relation to Augustine and Calvin) has a problem with the concept of persons in the doctrine of the Trinity and he prefers to speak of these 'ways of being' of God, just as he also says that God repeats himself three times in his 'ways of being' – as Father, Son and Spirit – shows how important the unity of God is for him. Barth would like to make the concept of 'person' applicable to the triune God rather than separately to the three ways of being of God. The three ways of being are defined by him as three moments in the one act of God's revelation which, for Barth, coincides with the essence of God.

It is no wonder that Barth has been accused several times of being 'modalistic' in his conception of the Trinity. The reason behind the accusation is the belief that Barth does not bring out the independence of each of the three divine Persons clearly enough. This criticism comes mainly from those who tend more towards the direction of a common conception of the trinity of God, in which a strong emphasis is placed on the fact that in God there really are three distinct and independent Persons who together constitute the one Being of God. These people are of the opinion that Barth, just like Karl Rahner, thinks too much from the point

of view of the unity of God and then tries to reconcile this with the trinity of God's revelation – an approach that is typical of Western theology since Augustine. Out of fear of tri-theism, they move too closely into the neighbourhood of modalism. In contradiction to this, they would much rather begin from the trinity of God's revelation and ask how these three Persons can be one in essence, and indeed in such a way that the danger of tri-theism can be avoided. It is clear that this kind of thinking would like especially to put the emphasis on the Trinity of Revelation and therefore also on the fact of God entering into and involvement in history, without wanting to deny that there is also such a thing as a Trinity of Being. Apart from a number of theologians from the Anglo-Saxon world and someone like Thielieke, who proposes these kinds of views without giving evidence of much philosophical influence, one may think here especially of Jürgen Moltmann, in whom the influence of Hegel is very clear, and of Roman Catholic theologians such as Heribert Mühlen, Juan Luis Segundo, and Joseph Bracken among others, some of whom openly look for association with American process thinking. In the 'community approach' of the Trinity, the Eastern tradition is approached, rather than the Western tradition. The main emphasis is not on the numerical unity of God, but on the unity of love and fellowship that exists between the three divine Persons, which is comparable to the unity of purpose, love and fellowship between a man and a woman, in spite of their being two people. Heribert Mühlen in particular makes much of the unity of communion between the three divine Persons and then says that the Holy Spirit is actually the Deity of God, the divine unity in person, the one Person who exists in the two Persons of the Father and the Son (and he also uses the image of a child who is also the unity-in-person of the father and mother who jointly create him).

The accusation that Barth thinks modalistically is, however, not so easy to prove. The term 'modalism' may have different nuances in meaning. Barth is no modalist in the sense in which Schleiermacher suggests, with his view that man projects the idea of a trinity onto God from his experience with God. For that, he emphasises the Trinity of Being too strongly. If what is meant by the accusation is that Barth does not maintain the personal independence of the Father, Son and Spirit side by side, then it is a question whether this criticism does not actually affect the entire Western tradition since Augustine. Although Barth uses more dynamic terms to express the distinction between Father, Son and Spirit than has traditionally been the case, he quite evidently does not mean to ignore the differences. One would in any case not be able to conclude, from the way Barth talks about the Holy Spirit, that he would agree with Berkhof that the Holy Spirit is more or less just another name for God in his active

presence. Without any doubt, the Holy Spirit is for Barth a third way of seeing God that is distinct from his ways of seeing Him as the Father and as the Son. It is true that Barth does not want to speak of the Holy Spirit as a separate 'individual personality' next to the Father and the Son and that in any case he has no room for the community representation of the Trinity. In this, however, he remains within the Western tradition.

One sometimes gets the impression that the accusation of modalism directed at Barth means more than criticism against what is felt to be a specific static element in Barth's concept of God, despite his great emphasis on the 'Geschichtlichkeit' of God. Moltmann especially holds it against Barth that the Trinity for Barth would amount to a 'closed circle in heaven', while he himself would prefer to think of it as an event on earth. With this, he opts for a representation of the Trinity that offers room for the involvement of God in history in the sense that God is, so to speak, first constituted in history and what happens to Himself in it, rather than the Trinity. In any case, this is his position in *Der gekreuzigte Gott*. Although he comes back to this extreme formulation in his later works, the trend of his thinking is still clear: he wants to treat the doctrine of the Trinity as the hermeneutic tool for understanding the biblical message of God entering into the history of human suffering. He wants to think more radically dynamically than Barth does, and therefore aligns himself more closely with Hegel than with Barth. Although he therefore recognises in his later works, such as in *Kirche in der Kraft des Geistes*, that behind the economic Trinity there is also an Essence Trinity (otherwise we would not know whether we are really with God Himself in the cross and in the work of the Spirit), he wants to hold very strongly to the fact that God is not in Himself a closed and perfect being who is in no way 'open' to development and influence through history. The Trinity of glorification will be different from the Trinity of origin. In the course of his history with the world, God takes up the creation in his glory through the mission of the Son and the Spirit, so that the end will be much more than the beginning. It seems that Moltmann moves in this way in the direction of the pan- and- theistic conceptions that we also find in Process theology. His acceptance of a community conception in connection with the unity of the trinitarian God is subservient to the eschatological expectation that in the Son and the Spirit the entire created reality will at last be freed and absorbed into the unity of God.

Such thoughts are also found in Jüngel, who is far less critical of Barth than Moltmann and Pannenberg are, but still goes much further than Barth does in his association with Hegel. Where Barth thought from the concept of revelation in his doctrine of the Trinity, and therefore understood the economic Trinity as the disclosure of what previously existed eternally in

God (in which the static element of the eternally constant being of God is present), Jüngel thinks from the point of view of love as the essence of God. However, in the process of God's self-sacrifice in love, there is a growth and an increase in love, and exactly this happens in God's dealings with man and the world in the unfolding of the economic Trinity when God enters into history. Thus God's being itself is involved in a process of change and enrichment. There are undoubtedly important differences between Jüngel and Moltmann as theologians, just as there are also important differences between them and Pannenberg and Berkhof. It does, however, seem as if there is a connecting factor that means that they are all, despite differences in emphases and points of view, inclined to move in the same direction. This is the strong emphasis on the involvement of God in history and the meaning it has not only for man and the world, but also for God himself. This means that a search is made for a representation of the Trinity that makes room for God's entry into history and for everything, including Himself, that is connected with it. Somewhere, Barth is the origin of this movement in the thinking, because his emphasis on the *Geschichtlichkeit* of God is probably the inspiring factor behind this development. The accusation of modalism that is sometimes levelled against him is then meant only to say that even Barth's understanding of the *Geschichtlichkeit* of God still contained too many static elements.

3. Relative independence of the Holy Spirit?

The question of whether Barth succeeds in giving the Holy Spirit its own character and task within the Trinity of God is focused on the question of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Christ. From his Christological concentration, Barth allows the work of the Spirit to merge into the noetical and applicative realisation of the salvation that is present in Christ. In the earlier parts of the *Kirchliche Dogmatik* ('KD'), one gets the impression that the Spirit simply performs a mediating function with a view to generating the faith through which the revelation in Christ is recognised and accepted. In the later sections, however, it becomes clear that Barth understands, by the revelation that takes place in Christ, nothing less than the total realisation of salvation in all of humanity and in all creation. This means that he understands and paints the Holy Spirit as the presence and activity of Jesus Christ Himself, in a certain sense the extended arm of Christ or Christ Himself in the power of his resurrection, which is the revelation of the triumph of God's grace carried out in the reality of the whole world (KD IV/2:360ff.). For Barth, the Holy Spirit is the power of the glorified Christ that produces the full meaning of the reconciliation. For him, there is a clear analogy between the work He performs in relation to the human nature of Christ, and the work He performs in relation to all of humanity.

According to Barth, the Holy Spirit is the bond that connects humanity and the Deity of Christ. Because the humanity of Christ is nothing but the flesh, the old humanity, the Holy Spirit must cleanse and purify the humanity of Christ and make it obedient so that His humanity can reflect the full glory of God. The Holy Spirit now performs exactly the same task in the rest of humanity. There is nothing that the Spirit has done to the humanity of Christ that He will not also do to the rest of the human race, so that all of mankind will eventually display the image of the Son. What the Spirit did when He united the human nature of Jesus with the eternal Word of God in the virgin birth, He does in an analogous way when He assumes the totality of the human race in unity with the Son of God. Thus the incarnation becomes a prototype of faith. Humanity as such, received by grace, shares in the unity with God that Christ as the Son possesses by nature (cf. Rosato: *Karl Barth's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 151ff.).

The critical question that is being asked from different sides, however, is whether Barth does not let the Spirit get completely absorbed in his involvement with Christ. Doesn't the Spirit have an own function and meaning that is distinct from Christ, or is He completely 'subordinate' to Christ and only definable through Christ? It is true that Barth says that what the Spirit does in the union of the Deity and humanity of Christ, and what He then does in an analogous way in the union of all humanity with God in Christ, is the same as what He does as a bond of love between the Father and the Son in the immanent Trinity. With this, therefore, he defines the function of the Spirit in broader terms than only from the viewpoint of Christ. This does not, however, diminish the fact that even then the attention remains completely focused on Christ, because the most important thing that Barth can say about God is that He is the human God whose primal decision it was to be the God of the people. It is no wonder that the reproach of 'Christomonism' has come up again and again in connection with Barth. And the reproach of Christomonism also points to the fact that the Spirit has no content of its own other than in Christ.

It is well known that the spiritualist groups throughout the centuries, from Montanus to the modern Pentecostal movement, always try to accentuate the own meaning of the Spirit next to Christ. For them, the Spirit is not only the instrument of Christ or the power through which He works in the world, but a Person in his own right who has his own initiative and adds something to what happened in Christ by carrying it further and greater to do works as Christ did (John 14:12). The outpouring of the Spirit is understood as a new fact of salvation together with the cross and resurrection of Christ, which ushers in a new era. The Spirit is a separate reality in God with whom a separate relationship and communion is possible, admittedly only on the basis of Christ's work of salvation

and therefore mediated by Christ, but still something more than just the relationship to Christ. In Eastern theology also, the Holy Spirit is assigned its own meaning next to Christ. In connection with the discussion around the *filioque*, Eastern theology repeatedly accuses the West of binding the Spirit too exclusively to the Son and making too little of the Spirit's own scope, which just like Christ, has its origin in the Father and so it is, so to speak, a second arm of the Father with which He draws the world to Him, and is not (as Barth would say) just the arm of Christ. The Roman Catholic theologian Rosato expresses this criticism of Barth by saying that his theology is stamped too exclusively by the *filioque* and not sufficiently by the *a patre*, by means of which Barth's Pneumatology becomes a function of Christology and has no meaning of its own.

It is remarkable that the sharpest monologue against Barth on this point comes from the reformed theologian A. A. van Ruler. As a young theologian, Van Ruler was profoundly influenced by Barth and a first Christological phase can also be distinguished in his theology. Little by little, however, he defended himself more and more consistently against Barth's 'Christomonism', and this in particular also affects the way in which Barth relates Christ and the Holy Spirit to each other. Van Ruler wants to ensure that full justice is done to the own meaning and 'relative independence' of the Holy Spirit next to and opposite Christ. Therefore he wants to understand the Spirit not only as the Spirit of Christ, but also as the Spirit of the Father and the Son. When the New Testament calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Christ, he believes it is not to identify the Spirit with Christ, as Barth does, but actually, quite the opposite, because it is the Spirit who 'poses' the Messiah and makes of Him what He is. Berkhof distinguishes between two ways in which the relationship between Christ and the Spirit is presented in the New Testament: on the one hand (especially in the synoptic Gospels) the Spirit is presented 'als hebbende een goddelijke prioriteit boven Jezus, en Jezus also de drager van die Geest'; and on the other hand (especially in Paul and John), Christ is presented as the One who sends the Spirit and who 'has' the Spirit. According to Berkhof, the first point of view (Jesus as bearer of the Spirit) has been particularly neglected by the church and traditional theology, while it has been brought to the fore by the adoptionists, the free-spirited Protestants (and we can add: spiritualism) (cf. *De Leer van de Heilige Geest*, 17ff.). If we deal with this framework of the double point of view of the relationship between Christ and the Spirit, we will have to say that Barth especially places the second point of view in the foreground: for him the Spirit is the extended arm of Christ, and Christ completely possesses the Spirit. Van Ruler, on the other hand, wants to call attention to the first point of view, that it is the Spirit that 'poses' the Messiah and validates

him for his work of service. This means that Van Ruler (like Berkhof in fact, even though there are big differences between the two) assigns a certain 'divine priority' to the Spirit above the Messiah.

The *filioque* is not contested by Van Ruler, but it is considered to be of less importance. He tends to relate the Spirit more directly to the Father than to Christ and likes to formulate it in such a way that the Spirit as God's eschatological gift that is poured out from the end is primarily related to the Kingdom of God and that his relationship to Christ actually goes over to his relationship to the Kingdom of God: Christ is the Messiah through whom the Kingdom will come, and therefore the Spirit has to do with Him. Van Ruler also says that the work of the Spirit is more comprehensive than the work of Christ, because the work of reconciliation through Christ is performed only once, while the work of the Spirit spans the ages and gives its expansion to the Kingdom of the Messiah. Admittedly, he says that the Spirit, just like the Messiah, should be considered as an 'intermezzo', a necessary interlude for the sake of sin, and that both the Son and the Spirit will once again return in God himself when the Kingdom is handed over to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24). It is clear, however, that he assigns a wider task to the Spirit than to Christ, because it is the Spirit that drives the renewal work of the Messiah into human life and thus prepares for the eschaton, the day on which God and His creation will stand to face each other without any mediation. Everything ultimately boils down to this for Van Ruler, because this is God's eschatological purpose. For God it is about man, not about the Messiah or the Spirit. Christ is not the sense of history (as Berkhof believes), but man is the sense of history. Van Ruler can specifically formulate that everything in the Bible *revolves around* Christ, but that deep down it is not all *about* Christ. For God, it is ultimately about the Empire, about the world, about creation. In this connection, the Spirit plays a role that cannot be defined solely from the role of the Messiah. It has its own meaning that must be fully respected, because in the end it is the Spirit that connects creation and consummation and thus allows God to be everything and in everyone.

In this connection, Van Ruler's conception of the difference between the Christological and the pneumatological structure in theological thought must also be mentioned. Everything Christ does, he believes, eliminates the activity of man. In contrast, man can only stand by passively and receive it. This applies, for example, to the vicarious suffering of Christ and the reconciliation He brought about between God and man. Christ's work also bears the character of finality. In it, all was decided about man, and he was dealt with once and for all.

However, when it comes to the pneumatological aspects of salvation, man is again fully involved, with his full responsibility. In Christ, man is involved only in the form of an impersonal human nature (the anhypostasis). However, in Pneumatology, the human being is included as a person. Then, Van Ruler believes, there must even be talk of a 'theonomic reciprocity' between God and man, and he dares to say that one can even speak of 'one hundred percent synergism' here, because man must cooperate fully with the Spirit of God in the appropriation of salvation. From this it would also be possible to explain why the work of the Spirit in man always has a flawed character and remains a torso in contrast to the finality of Christ's work, because man is involved in it in his stubbornness and carnal nature (*Structuurverschillen*, Theol. Werk I:175ff.). The intention of these bold expressions of Van Ruler is not to advocate synergism in the old, well-known meaning that the word has in soteriology, but to give expression to the own nature and character of the work of the Spirit in distinction from that of Christ.

Van Ruler has no trouble accepting the immanent Trinity, but he does not have much to say about it. What interests him more is what he calls the 'spread' in the Trinity. By this he means that each of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit has a different task. The result is that he emphasises the diversity of the three Persons more than he emphasises their unity. With this, he moves in the direction of the Eastern tradition because, in his thinking, there are, in fact, other points of contact with Greek thought in regard to the Spirit. As a criticism against Van Ruler, it has been mentioned that in response to Barth's Christomonism, he leans heavily towards a Patrocentrism or even a Patromonism, because the Kingdom is so central to his thinking, and since the Kingdom is the Kingdom of the Father (at least eschatologically), this means that the Father is central throughout his theology. Others again have asked the question of whether he does not open the door to spiritualism and mysticism when he places so much emphasis on the independence of the Spirit next to and even opposite to Christ. The question is not taken completely out of the blue when one thinks of Van Ruler's love for the Closer Reformation and the mystical pull in the piety of the movement. In his last years, however, Van Ruler became increasingly critical of both mysticism and the revolutionary trends in theology, which in his opinion were connected with a 'baptist' climate that was beginning to gain the upper hand in theology. It is as if Van Ruler then drew back from certain possibilities that could lie locked up by implication in the direction in which his own thinking about the independence of the Spirit moved. However, his thinking never came to a complete conclusion.

That Van Ruler talks about a certain 'spreading' in the Trinity and believes that both the Messiah and the Holy Spirit will once again return

in God himself is linked to an attempt on his part to drop the emphasis on the economic Trinity in contrast to such an emphasis on the Trinity of Being, that the diversity of the work of the Father, the Son and the Spirit does not properly come into view. We see this tendency quite often in the newer theology which is coming to the fore. Berkouwer points out that, long before Karl Rahner made his famous statement that the economic Trinity is the Essence Trinity, Noordmans had already said more or less the same thing, just in other words. Also, the intention of Noordmans is to think from the view of the economic Trinity and thus bring to the fore the diversity in the outward works of God (creation, salvation and re-creation) rather than their unity. This leads also to his emphasising, more strongly than Barth does, the unique nature of the work of the Holy Spirit as distinct from the work of Christ.

Noordmans is less inclined than Van Ruler to make Pneumatology independent of Christology. He also maintains the *filioque* more clearly than Van Ruler does. Still, he wants to give the Spirit a certain 'room to play', which means that his Pneumatology does not become a function of Christology like that of Barth. The most striking aspect of his Pneumatology, and the point at which he is farthest from Barth, is the way in which he understands the Holy Spirit as the interpreter of Christ in his early work *Gestalte en Geest*. According to him, it is typical of the Holy Spirit that in history He erects figures that are used by Him as instruments in the service of salvation, but that He always breaks the figures down again when they are no longer suitable for their service. So it was with the kingship in Israel, but so it is also with the Messiah himself, with the apostolate and with all figures of the New Covenant.

The Spirit does take out what belongs to Christ and shares it with the church throughout the ages, but it always happens according to the pattern that forms that were once built up and used are broken down and rebuilt in the translation and interpretation work of the Spirit, so that the continuity between Christ and the forms that are built after Him in history will not be clear to everyone, only to the spiritual man. The Holy Spirit – in continuity with Christ – really does new things in history. For example, the Spirit leaves behind the apostolate of the Twelve and calls Paul as an instrument of the Spirit to build the bridge to the heathens. The four Gospels are 'displaced' by the letters of Paul, and so forth. Thus the Spirit bends and conjugates again and again the revelation of God in Christ in new forms throughout the ages. In this way there is room for the Holy Spirit to play against Christ, and although it is Noordmans's intention that the new forms can always be measured against the yardstick of the earthly and glorified Christ, it is clear that in his Pneumatology there is room for a vision of the freedom of the Spirit that makes him particularly

interesting for theologians, who especially like to understand the work of the Spirit as the cultivation of the history of liberation. It would be possible to connect Moltmann and Noordmans in a certain way through the idea that the Spirit is the future-creating, life-giving Spirit that fills history with a revolutionary élan.

There is probably not a single Christian theologian who will not confess that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. However, it is clear that there are differences regarding the way in which this should be understood. In the various attempts to defend a 'relative independence' of the Spirit vis-à-vis Christ, it is not about the denial of the bond between Christ and the Spirit, but about the desire to give the work of the Spirit wider dimensions as only the mediation between Christ and the believers. However, the question remains whether until now a way has been found to express this, without falling into some form of spiritualism that weakens the bond between Christ and the Spirit.

4. Guidelines

When we have to determine the course of our own thinking in relation to the present discussion in the light of the Scriptures, there are a few things that are of decisive significance to us:

The Holy Spirit

(i) The Holy Spirit is consistently associated with God Himself in the Scriptures, so that it can be said that the Holy Spirit is God himself in his revealing, self-communicating and acting presence. In the Old Testament, the power of creation is attributed to the Spirit of God in numerous places, as well as the granting of all kinds of extraordinary gifts and powers to people, the inspiration of the prophets and the spiritual renewal of the people of God. In addition, it is clear throughout that what is thus attributed to the Spirit of God is essentially said of God himself. Sometimes the term 'Spirit of God' can indeed refer to the 'inside' of God (Isa. 40:13; Isa. 30:1), or also to the presence of God from which no man can escape (Ps. 139:7–10). In certain cases, it also becomes clear that the Spirit is simply a parallel expression for the 'I' of God (Isa. 63:10ff.; Ps. 51:13; Hag. 2:4 – 5). The Spirit belongs to God as his hand, his word, and his voice belong to Him. It is not 'something' next to God that can be thought of as apart from Himself, but God Himself in His active presence.

We also find this equating of the Spirit with God Himself in the New Testament. There are obviously all kinds of differences between the Old and the New Testament in their statements about the Spirit. The New Testament presupposes in more than one respect the developments

surrounding the representation of the Spirit as it occurred in the inter-testament periods. This includes, among other things, the stronger tendency towards hypostatisation of the Spirit and a clearer distinction between the Spirit of God and the good and bad spirits that are created. However, regarding the fact that in the Spirit we really have to do with God himself, there is no difference. In the communications regarding the conception of Christ (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:35), the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:13–17), the filling of Jesus with the Holy Spirit (Luke 2:40; 4:1, 14, 18; 11:20; Acts 10:37–38 etc.) and the outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2, cf. Joel 2), it is clear that we are dealing with a way of speaking about the Holy Spirit which is fully in accordance with the way in which the Spirit is also spoken about in the Old Testament. The Spirit is simply the power of God himself in his creative, uplifting, miracle-working and redemptive activity, the way in which God intervenes in human life and in history. Between God and the Spirit no distinction can be made, because the Spirit is, in the New Testament as well as in the Old, the Spirit of God himself.

(ii) The Bible does not think pantheistically in any way at all. The Spirit of God is therefore not thought of as the connecting element between God and the world. The representation of the Spirit as a sort of divine fluid by means of which the world is permeated, and God and man are connected to each other, is foreign to both the Old and the New Testament. Such thoughts would later become more prevalent in Judaism through the influence of the Stoics, but the Old Testament, just like the New, distinguishes very clearly between God's Spirit and the created reality (cf. Isa. 31:3). Even if the Old Testament teaches that the spirit of man and animal is borrowed from God and returns to Him when they die, there is still no question of an identification of the Spirit of God with the spirit of man or of animals. There is no mention in the Bible of a unity between God and man through which man would in any respect become a divine being. The Scriptures emphasise the singularity of the Spirit of God in relation to the spirit of man (or as Barth would say in the footsteps of Kierkegaard: 'the qualitative distinction'). Eduard Schweizer notes that this is probably the greatest difference between the Old Testament and the East Asian religions, that God in the Old Testament is not understood as the last world that man discovers once he has realised that man is one with the Universe of which God is the life and the power. Also, according to the Old Testament, one cannot discover God if one goes deeply only into one's own spirit (*Heiliger Geist*, 24). The Spirit of God is not a common element that God and man possess together. The Spirit is God himself in his majestic, transcendent, and yet, at the same time, immanent relationship to man.

Already on the basis of this, we can say that the entire idealistic direction of thought, as we have seen it enter into theology since German

Idealism, and as it has still been propounded in our time by Tillich, Pannenberg and the Process theology, has no basis in the Scriptures. This is the result of a form of intellectual thinking that is of Greek rather than of Hebrew origin. The entire twilight field of a romanticised one-on-one thinking of God and man as it appeared in nineteenth-century identity thinking was rightly cleared up by Karl Barth and dialectical theology. Barth did this by denying that there is any direct identity or continuity between God and creation or between God and man. The mediation between God and man takes place through the Spirit of God that is God himself, so that there always remains a qualitative distinction between man and the Spirit of God. Even the unity between God and man in Christ Jesus is not, for Barth, a direct identity, but an indirect identity mediated by the Holy Spirit, just as the Holy Spirit, in an analogous way, ultimately unites all humanity and all creation to Christ and is also connected to God himself. Barth therefore consistently understands the Holy Spirit as the principle of unity between God and man, but nowhere in such a way that the transcendence of the Spirit is affected. One could argue with Barth about the intellectual apparatus he uses in his theological thinking, but with regard to his maintenance of the Deity of the Spirit and his rejection of identity thinking according to the pattern of pantheism or even pan-and-theism, he is completely correct.

(iii) In regard to the question of the personal character of the Holy Spirit, we will have to give a reasoned answer in the light of the Scriptures. In by far the greatest number of places in which the Holy Spirit is referred to in the Scriptures, He is spoken of in terms that apply to a power or an operation rather than to a person. Specifically, as far as the Old Testament is concerned, it is difficult to maintain that it speaks explicitly of the Holy Spirit as a person. It is true that in the Old Testament personal qualities are attributed to the Spirit. It is said of the Holy Spirit that He speaks (2 Sam. 23:2), that He teaches (Neh. 9:20), that He leads the people of God (Ps. 143:10), that He is grieved (Isa. 63:10), and so forth. From this it is clear that the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament is sometimes thought of and represented as a person. However, if we simply want to remain on the level of the Old Testament, we must think about the phenomenon of personification. Scheepers points out that the fact that according to the Old Testament, the Spirit of God goes out from Him and remains on the people does not mean that in the time of the Old Testament, the Spirit was thought of as a person next to the person of Yahweh. The word, the arm and the face of God can also be spoken of in such terms of personification. Hebrew thought seems to have had room for considering things such as the face of God, the Name of God, the angel of God, the word and the wisdom of God as personified 'extensions' of God, without the unity of God

thereby being compromised. The Old Testament still barely recognises a principled distinction between an operation that emanates from a person and an independent power that must be considered a 'separate' person. We will have to assume that the Old Testament does not yet speak in an explicitly trinitarian way. With G. A. F. Knight, however, we will be able to say that the personification of the Spirit and possibly also a specific form of hypostasis of the spirit in the Old Testament prepared the way for a fuller revelation regarding the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, because it shows that the Old Testament does not understand the unity of God in a rigid and closed way that excludes the trinitarian revelation of God in the New Testament. As far as the Old Testament itself is concerned, it is likely that we should think of the Spirit as the presence and operation of the personal God. The personal terms thus do not mean that the Spirit is understood as an 'own' person, but as the living and active presence of God himself who is thought of as a person.

The main difference in the way in which the New Testament speaks about the Holy Spirit in comparison with the Old Testament is that the New Testament speaks from a situation in which the fulfilment of the promises of the Old Testament concerning the Spirit has already taken place. This applies not only to the promise that the Messiah will be anointed with the Spirit (Isa. 61; Luke 4), but also to the promise that the Spirit will be poured out on all flesh (Joel 2; Acts 2). The New Testament therefore speaks of the Spirit as the eschatological gift of God that came in the last days to live in the people of God and to implement the new covenant in the relationship between God and the people. The core of the message of the New Testament is that the great salvation-historical turning point came with the coming of the Messiah and with the outpouring of the Spirit. It is now in connection with this great development that the Spirit is spoken of in a way that does connect with what was said about Him in the Old Testament, but which nevertheless goes far beyond that.

In the New Testament as well, there are still a large number of expressions in which the Spirit is referred to in an impersonal way, such as 'received' (Acts 2:38; 8:15, 17, 19; 10:47; 19:2), or that the Spirit comes upon people (Acts 1:8; 19:6), or that the Spirit is 'poured out' (Acts 2:17, 33; 10:45 etc.), which would make one think that the Spirit is understood as the power of God or an action that proceeds from Him. Even Paul, in whose letters we find, just as in the Gospel of John, the culmination of what the New Testament teaches about the Holy Spirit, speaks in impersonal terms about the Spirit (cf. for example, the expression that the Spirit 'must not be quenched' in Thess. 5:19, or the statement that we are all 'filled with the same Spirit' in 1 Cor. 12:13). In a passage such as 1 Cor. 2:4ff., the concepts *pneuma* and *dunamis* even alternate. From this, theologians such

as Bultmann, Schweizer and others deduced that Paul, under the influence of the Hellenistic pneuma proposal, thinks of the Spirit as a specific sphere of influence that gains dominion over man. However, it is inconceivable that Paul would have been to such an extent under Greek influence in his thinking about the Spirit.

At the same time, it cannot be denied that Paul often speaks of the Spirit in personal terms. So Paul knows very well that the Spirit can be grieved (Eph. 4:30), that the Spirit has a specific will (1 Cor. 12:11) and intention (Rom. 8:27), that the Spirit loves (Rom. 15:30), teaches a person (1 Cor. 2:13) and leads (Rom. 8:14), just as He also testifies with the human spirit (Rom. 8:16) and enters into prayer for the believers (Rom. 8:26). A similar expression is also used by John, especially in his expositions about the Paraclete (cf. John 16:7–14; 14:26; 15:26, and others). However, many proponents of the New Testament are of the opinion that we are also dealing with personifications. They point out that Paul can also talk about sin, the law, the flesh and death in personal terms, while thinking of these things as forces that influence and control human life. Even if this were true, it still does not mean that Paul holds the Greek view. We can assume that he would also have thought about the Spirit from the point of view of the Old Testament. In that case, he would not have thought of the Spirit as an impersonal sphere of influence, but as the personal power of God himself.

Obviously, however, much more needs to be said than this. It is indeed true that the Holy Spirit is God himself and that, for that reason, he can be spoken of in personal terms. However, the way in which the Holy Spirit is spoken about in the New Testament indicates something more. Namely, in different places in the New Testament, there is a distinction between God and the Spirit to such an extent that it is impossible to escape the conclusion that, without taking away from the fact that the Spirit is God himself, there is a relationship between the Spirit and God which is in itself of a personal nature. One thinks here for example, of 1 Cor. 2:10ff., where it is attributed to the Spirit that He investigates the depth of God and that He reveals this to man. It is clear that this statement is the sign of a comparison between the role that the human spirit plays in man, and the function that the Holy Spirit plays in the revelation of God. That the Holy Spirit is therefore God himself and belongs to God, just as man's spirit belongs to him and is his own self, will indeed be what Paul means. Yet Paul nonetheless distinguishes between the Holy Spirit and God Himself. The Spirit is the way in which God announces Himself to the outside. In the Spirit, man has to do with God himself, surely, but then also with God in a specific way. We find the same in Rom. 8:26–27, where Paul says that the Spirit intercedes with God for the believers. Such a statement is impossible,

unless Paul assumes that the Spirit and God Himself can be distinct from each other in such a way that the Spirit himself has a relationship with God that can be understood as an interpersonal relationship. This impression is strengthened by the cumulative testimony of texts such as Rom. 8:16 and Gal. 4:6, in which the Spirit is spoken of as the One who lives in the believers, makes them aware of the fact that they are the children of God, bears witness with their spirit and himself calls out in them: Abba, Father! Once again: the Holy Spirit is God Himself, there can be no doubt about that, as is also clear in 1 Cor. 3:16, where, according to Paul, God and the Spirit can simply alternate with each other. But: the Spirit is God as He lives in the believers, as He works in them, testifies, prays and establishes a relationship with the Father. And in that, in Paul's opinion, He is distinct from God the Father himself.

(iv) The full picture of what the New Testament teaches about the personal character of the Holy Spirit can come into view only if we take into account what the New Testament teaches about Christ and his relationship to the Father and the Spirit. That Christ is called the Son in the New Testament, and that nothing less is meant by that than that He really is God Himself who comes to us in the flesh (cf. John 1:1–14) poses the problem in all seriousness of how God should then be thought of, if on the one hand it is confessed that He is *one*, while on the other hand it is also proclaimed about Him that He has revealed Himself at the same time as both the Father and the Son. The confession of the Deity of Christ raises the question of the Trinity, and because of this, the confession regarding the Holy Spirit is also placed in a new context. In a manner of speaking, we can say that the profile of the Holy Spirit becomes properly visible in the New Testament only in the light of the revelation of God in Christ. That is why it is wrong to go into the Pneumatology of the Old Testament or to make the Old Testament statements about the Spirit decisive for teaching about the Spirit, as is often done in recent times in theology, without taking full account of the fact that our knowledge of the Holy Spirit flows from the revelation in Christ. If one thinks about the Spirit mainly from the point of view of the Old Testament, one may easily get stuck in the belief that the Spirit is the giver of life to all things (Pannenberg) or that the Spirit is the Spirit of political liberation (political theology) or that the Spirit is just another name for God in His acting or doing presence (Berkhof). It is extremely difficult to come to conclusions about the personal character of the Spirit on the basis of the Old Testament alone. However, all of this becomes different if we think about the Spirit from the point of view of the New Testament. From the great acts of salvation of God that the New Testament speaks of, we learn to know the Spirit as the eschatological gift that is closely connected to Christ, as the Spirit of the Father and the Son

that confesses together with the Father and the Son and is placed on the same level (cf. the triadic formulas, Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:13; Eph. 4:4–6, and numerous places where the same activity is attributed to the Father and the Son and the Spirit, such as the resurrection, for example: Acts 2:24; Eph. 1:20; Rom. 1:4; 1 Pet. 3:18; Luke 24:34; Acts 17:3, or the revelation: John 7:16; 3:32–34; John 16:13). It is not just the numerical preponderance of the New Testament statements about the Spirit over those of the Old Testament that makes it important to look at the Spirit from the New Testament. This is also the way in which the Spirit is mentioned next to the Father and Christ, which makes it impossible to think that the personal traits assigned to the Spirit in the New Testament can be mere personifications. The Spirit is distinct from the Father and the Son in the same way that the Father and the Son are distinct from each other, without any thought that the unity of God may be threatened. In essence, this is really all that the traditional doctrine of the Trinity is trying to say. When in the doctrine of the Trinity the Spirit is spoken of as a ‘person’, what is meant is that the Holy Spirit is a separate person next to the Father and the Son in the modern sense of the word ‘person’, as it has been known since the eighteenth century, namely, a separate individual with his own self-awareness and autonomous self-determination. If this is how the Spirit is thought of (and many naive Christians probably think this way about the Spirit when they hear that He is spoken of as a person), it must necessarily lead to tri-theism. If we speak of the Spirit as a person within the context of the Trinity doctrine, we mean that the Spirit of the Father and the Son must be distinguished separately and seen as a ‘subject-centre’ within the life and action of the one God. The Spirit is not an impersonal force or sphere of influence. The Spirit is God Himself. But the Spirit is not only God in his acting/doing presence, but a specific way in which God is God next to the ways that the Father and the Son are also God. Anything less than that would bring us into conflict with Scripture and land us in the waters of modalism.

(v) This becomes even clearer if we note the relationship between Christ and the Spirit. Especially in the writings of John and Paul, it becomes clear that the spirit is the Spirit of Christ, the eschatological gift that could only be given after the suffering and exaltation of Christ (John 7:39; Gal. 4:4–6). When John in John 7:39 says that the Spirit was not yet there, because Jesus was not yet glorified, he obviously does not mean that the Holy Spirit did not yet exist. This would have been impossible against the background of the Old Testament teaching about the Spirit of God and the message of the synoptic Gospels and of John himself regarding the anointing of Jesus with the Spirit (John 1:32–33). What he means, rather, is that the specific mode of presence and operation experienced by the Holy Spirit in the

congregation since the day of Pentecost was not yet known. This became possible only when Jesus as exalted Lord received the Spirit as a gift from the Father and poured it out on the congregation (Acts 2:33), when the Father sent the 'other Comforter' to the disciples after Jesus' prayer (John 14:16 etc.), when Jesus baptised the congregation with the Holy Spirit and with fire as was repeatedly envisioned (Acts 1:5). The new way in which the Spirit is present in the new dispensation and works in the congregation and the world is therefore closely connected to the salvation–historical turn that took place in Christ. When the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is explicitly and implicitly called the Spirit of Christ (cf. Rom 8:9; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19 and the statements of John about the Paraclete), then, in the first instance, it is connected with the salvation–historical connection of the new presence and activity of the Spirit to the action, death and glorification of Christ. The Spirit does not cease to be the spirit of God as He was proclaimed in the Old Testament, but He is revealed in the new dispensation as the Spirit of the eschatological salvation given in Christ. It is He who anointed and empowered Christ for his work of salvation, and it is He who is poured out as the Spirit of the Son by the Son to effect salvation in its entirety. That is why Christ and the Spirit are involved and connected to each other in the most profound way. In Christ, the eschaton, the new creation, becomes a reality, but this eschatological reality of the new creation is effected in and by the Spirit.

For this reason, it is understandable that in the New Testament there are expressions that make it seem as if Christ and the Spirit are identified with each other. This applies especially to 1 Cor. 15:45 (in which Christ is called a life–giving Spirit) and 2 Cor. 3:17 (in which it is simply said: 'The Lord is the Spirit'), while one must also think of some of the Paraclete's statements in which the Spirit is presented as the 'alter ego' of Christ (John 14:18, 23, etc.). In Paul, the same things are said alternately of Christ and of the Spirit, such as, for example, that the believers are 'in Christ', or that they are 'in the Spirit', that Christ lives in them or that the Spirit lives in them (cf. Rom. 8:9 – 10; Rom. 6:1 and Gal. 5:22, among other examples). It is on the basis of such texts that different theologians have come to the conclusion that the Spirit of Pentecost is nothing other than the resurrected life of Christ, that Christ and the Spirit are identical, that the Holy Spirit is nothing other than a predicate to Christ to express his active and redemptive presence, and so on. Sometimes it is said that for the believers there is an experiential identity between Christ and the Spirit. However, sometimes it is also called a dynamic, functional or existential identity. Despite all sorts of reservations that are made at times, this vision often results in its being said that the Spirit should not be thought of as a separate person that is distinct from Christ. We are also reminded

of Dunn's position that the Holy Spirit is the Deity of Jesus, and that Jesus is the personality of the (previously impersonal) Holy Spirit. All sorts of problems with the doctrine of the Trinity flow from these views.

However, when we assume that the unity between Christ and the Spirit in the New Testament is connected with the involvement of Christ and the Spirit in the one reality of eschatological salvation, there is no reason at all to talk about an identity of Christ and the Spirit. This was convincingly demonstrated by Ridderbos and Versteeg. In the texts 2 Cor. 3:17 and 1 Cor. 15:45, it is always about the contrast between the old dispensation and the new, between the Adamic man and the eschatological Man, or between the dispensation of the law in Moses and the dispensation of the Spirit in Christ. In both cases it is about a unity between Christ and the Spirit that should be typified rather as a salvation-historical or an eschatological unity if data is thought of as all kinds of other forms of identity. Christ and the Spirit are so directly involved in salvation that whoever has to do with Christ also has to do directly with the Spirit, and vice versa. In contrast to Adam, from whom the dispensation of death proceeded, Christ can rightly in 1 Cor. 15:45 be called a life-giving Spirit, not because Christ and the Spirit are identified, but because the Last Adam shares in the dispensation of the life-creating Spirit. In the reality of the new dispensation, Christ and the Spirit are so closely connected that Paul can say, *so to speak*, that the Lord is the Spirit, only to distinguish between the Lord and the Spirit again (cf. 2 Cor. 3:17).

To conclude from this that the Holy Spirit is not a separate person – in the trinitarian sense of the word, as we have explained – next to Christ, is to miss the statements in which the Spirit is deliberately not separated from Christ, both in his existence and in his task. Apart from the triadic formulas, one may think here of 1 Cor. 12:3, in which it is said that the Spirit teaches one to confess Christ in the right way, or statements to the Paraclete in which the Spirit is pertinently called an 'other' Comforter and in which his task is described as testimony concerning Christ, the glorification of Christ, and so on. The doctrine of the Trinity means nothing other than to do justice to this expression of the New Testament. It wants to express the nuanced way in which the New Testament talks about the unity and the trinity of God. And for that reason, the doctrine of the Trinity is unyielding.

(vi) In our interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity it is essential to move between the ideas of modalism on the one hand and tri-theism on the other. There is talk of modalism all over where the personal character of the Father, the Son and the Spirit is denied or only typified as forms of appearance of God to the outside, without this being grounded in the

essence of God himself. We speak of tri-theism when the three persons in God are independent of each other in such a way that they become three separate individuals. The way between both perceptions is that one must hold firmly to the contention that the three persons of Father, Son and Spirit belong to the eternal essence of God as three distinct personal attitudes, but that their personal character does not mean that they are three independent individuals who exist side by side. When we speak of the Father, the Son and the Spirit as 'persons', we mean that the Father, the Son and the Spirit are three distinct subject-centres within the one being of God who mutually stand in a specific relation to each other and which are distinguished from each other by their personal 'characteristics' (Fatherhood, Sonship, Bond of love between the Father and the Son) and the different ways in which they share in the common works of God outwardly, these being creation, reconciliation and redemption. In each of the Father, the Son and the Spirit we have to do with the personal God himself, so that our relationship to God always remains personal. Our relationship to God can never be other than a relationship with all of the Persons in God at the same time. As all of the works of God outwardly always emanate *from* the Father and take place *through* the Son and *in* the Holy Spirit, so the relationship of man to God is always a relationship in the Spirit through Christ to the Father, or through the Spirit and in Christ to the Father. It is not possible to have a 'private' relationship with the Spirit or with Christ that is not at the same time a relationship with the triune God.

In our opinion, Barth moves within this traditional conception of the Trinity. Barth cannot be so easily accused of modalism. Still, it is a question whether Barth does not show a certain narrowed view of the Trinity in the way in which he understands the Holy Spirit exclusively as the Spirit of Christ. With Barth, the Holy Spirit as subject largely disappears behind Christ as the acting subject, just as the Father fades into the background in his consistent Christocentrism. It is ironic that Barth, who did so much to emphasise the trinity of God and bring it to the fore in theology, is less trinitarian than Christocentric in his own thinking. For Pneumatology, this indeed means that, practically speaking, it becomes merely a function of Christology. The Spirit is understood as the resurrection power of Christ, as the power of Christ's work of salvation. Thus, the person of the Spirit does not get enough of its own accent next to the person of Christ. The 'we' of John 14:23, which cannot be understood otherwise than trinitarian, is thus narrowed, because for Barth the Spirit is the second form of the Parousia of Christ. The Spirit may not only be understood as a mode of the presence of Christ, but as the 'other' Comforter. The 'two-ness' of Christ

and the Spirit must remain upheld, however strong the emphasis is on their unity as two views of the one God.

One can understand the reaction that arose against Barth's inclusion of Pneumatology in Christology. We see this with those who advocate a community conception of the Trinity, but also with Van Ruler and Noordmans and with all those who want to place more emphasis on the own identity of the Spirit in distinction from Christ. In all kinds of new studies on Pneumatology, questions are asked about the specific peculiarity of the Spirit in distinction from Christ. Obviously, different points of view are put forward. In more than one, however, the thought that was already present in the writings of Augustine, that the Holy Spirit is the bond of love between the Father and the Son, is again reverted to. The conclusion is then drawn from this that the work of the Spirit outwardly is in accordance with its function in the inner trinitarian connection. This means that the Spirit is active in the world as the Spirit of love or the Spirit of community. Although this thought also plays a role in Barth, it is not developed as completely in his work as it is in Heribert Mühlen, Moltmann or Jüngel. In various studies of his, Jan Veenhof also comes back to the fact that the Spirit is the great 'Bridge Builder', because He not only connects God and man in love and reconciliation, and not only connects man and man to each other across all borders, but also connects the church of today with the contemporaries of Jesus.

The purpose of this search for the Spirit's own identity is evidently not to make the Spirit independent of Christ. At the heart of the matter, Barth's message that the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ is not doubted or disputed. However, this is the way in which the 'relative independence' of the Spirit is compromised for him, which forces him to search in all kinds of ways for a greater understanding of the 'dispersion in the Trinity' and a greater 'play-space for the Spirit'. We can completely agree with that, provided that the boundaries that exist here are not crossed again and the Spirit is detached from Christ in such a way that the danger of tri-theism or spiritualism is threatened. In certain forms in which the community conception of the Trinity is presented, we realise that this is indeed the case. The idea of 'God as a committee' (Come) is unacceptable to us, because it tends towards tri-theism. But even with Van Ruler and Noordmans, one must remain aware of the possibility that – undoubtedly contrary to their own intention – the Spirit can be granted a freedom towards Christ which can pave the way to spiritualism.

What is valuable about Van Ruler and Noordmans is that they want to draw attention to the breadth of the work of the Spirit and also to its dynamic character. We pass by here regarding Van Ruler's peculiar

reference to the Son and the Spirit as an 'intermezzo' and the possibility that a form of Patromonism may be present in it, which threatens the full quality of the doctrine of the Trinity. For us, it is more about the attempt of both Van Ruler and Noordmans to say something more about the Spirit than is possible with Barth. We believe that deep down they are not opposed to Barth, but instead complement Barth in a way that should not be overlooked. Barth rightly emphasised that the Spirit is the Spirit of revelation, and for him revelation and salvation simply coincide. But it is not sufficient for Barth that the Spirit spans the ages with His work of revelation and salvation, and that in addition, with His many forms, he drives salvation in Christ into existence in a dynamic way in history (as Van Ruler states) and so the salvation in Christ in history is not 'inflected and conjugated' (as Noordmans says). With Van Ruler there is an extremely valuable vision of the Kingdom present which is missing with Barth. With Noordmans there is a stronger accent on the dynamic of the Spirit in history than there is with Barth. With Barth, history too easily disappears from the field of vision. Within the framework of what he calls the 'Geschichtlichkeit' of God, everything is always current, but there is not much room for development, growth and for the 'play-space of the Spirit'. Here again, we encounter a central weakness in Barth's theology which not only results in man and Christ being too closely related to each other to make any room for history, but also means that the Spirit and Christ are too closely involved with each other to make history come true.

Once again: the search for the Spirit's own identity is meaningful, provided that the boundaries are not crossed. The boundaries are crossed when Christ and the Spirit are separated from each other, and this often manifests itself in such a way that the Word and the Spirit are separated from each other, that the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith are separated from each other, that the facts of salvation in history and the life of the congregation are separated from each other under the power of the Spirit. In modern times, we see, both in the Pentecostal movement and in specific forms of revolutionary theology, examples of an independence of the Holy Spirit towards Christ and the Word. One can argue about the question of whether the traditional reformed belief that the Spirit is not always and under all circumstances bound to the Word, did not, among other things, contribute to the fact that such movements fall onto favourable soil today. However, through this, the primal intention of the reformed Reformation was given up rather than realised. It is important that, whatever we may say about the freedom of the Spirit of God, we must hold fast to the testimony of the Scriptures that the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and therefore the Spirit of the Word of God.

5. The relationship from Christ to God

The first Christians confessed in a spontaneous manner that they believed in one God, the Father, that revealed Himself through his Son, Jesus Christ, and gathered a congregation for Him through his Holy Spirit in whom He lives. This faith is confessed in terms of what was borrowed from the writings from the apostles and their learners during the first generations after the death of the apostles, without thinking about all the questions that could be brought to the fore. Neither in the writings of the New Testament itself or in the writings of the 'Apostolic Fathers' from the time after the death of the apostles do we note that the confession with regard to Christ and the Holy Spirit caused any problems for the Christians in the sense that the unity of God was compromised. Admittedly, the Christians experience this as a big secret that the One True God revealed himself through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit and came to live among people, but the intellectual question with regard to how the One True God can have a Son and can manifest Himself through the Holy Spirit as a distinguishable divine being is not yet revealed. It is only when a confrontation between the Christians on the one hand and the Jews and Greeks on the other occur that the mature consideration of the representation of God become an acute matter for the Christians. For the Jews the Christian faith was a betrayal against the monotheistic faith in God of the prophets. They interpret the Christian honouring of Jesus Christ as the Lord and the call of his Name during prayer as ditheism. According to the Jewish opinion, the unity of God can be understood only as a numerical unity and a solitude of God in Himself so that it is impossible for Himself to step away from Himself. Even the wise speculations from someone like Philo, who spoke about the Logos or wisdom of God as a sort of intermediate being between God and the created world (especially on the basis of Proverbs 8:22–31), would not have been able to judge the Christian faith otherwise. The Logos of Philo is God's first creation and has nothing to do with the revelation of God or the Biblical thought that the Word of God is God and also the intercessor between God and people (see Jhn 1:1 gospel; 1 Jhn. 1). In his work 'Dialogue with Trypho', from the second half of the second century, Justin the Martyr gives an insight into the fierce struggle that existed between the Jews and the Christians with regard to the confession of Christ as God and Lord. The Christians also had to endure strong critique from the wise thoughts of the Greeks. From the Greek opinions about the transcendence and immutability of God it is silly to think that God could become human. From the writings of Origen such as 'Contra Celsum' it also turns out that the Greek combatants of the Christian confession of faith experienced it as an anomaly that the historic figure of Jesus of Nazareth could be honoured as God and also maintain that they are not guilty of dishonouring God. All

of the intellectual problems that would be brought in against the Christian confession of the godly son ship of Christ throughout the ages were brought to the fore with clarity during the first few generations.

The Christians defended themselves against these arguments by holding on to the fact that the confession of Christ does not bring the unity of God nor His immutability and transcendence in jeopardy. In their attempt to defend and explain this point of view in the wise language and concepts of their time, we have to see the birth of the first fully-fledged 'theological thoughts' in the sense in which this thought is still used today. For the sake of the clarity we take these attempts in connection with the question as to how to rhyme the unity and transcendence of God with the confession of Christ as the Son of God. The first attempt tries to leave the unity and transcendence of God untouched by understanding the confession of Christ and that He cannot be placed together with God on one level. In the relationship between God and the creation, Christ is placed on the side of creation against God so that there can be no mention of deitism because Christ is not really God. The second attempt tries to let unity and transcendence prevail by associating Christ with God so that He is placed on God's side in the relationship between God and creation. There is no question about deitism but the danger is that Christ will not really be understood as a person. In light of what we said previously, the first attempt can be showed as ebionism of impact while the second one is docetic. While the church did not go for either one of these ways, they found a satisfactory way to answer the problem of the relationship of Christ to God through the confession of God as the Triune.

5.1 Christ is distinguishable from God and subordinate to Him

In their attempts to think the Christ confession through theologically it was obvious that the Christian Apologetics – who could be seen as the first Christian theologians – would serve them with Greek philosophical terms. It was said often that they robbed the Christian confession of its meaning and brought it completely under the attachment of Greek thought (for example, the famous dogma historian, Harnack). This is, however, definitely an exaggeration. Nobody will want to deny that the Greek thoughts and terminology had a big impact on the theological thoughts of the first centuries. It is, however, clear that the theology was able to keep the Biblical confession regarding Christ pure against the sucking power of the Greek philosophical thoughts and that the formulated dogmata from the church restricted the confession in a remarkable way against the Greek philosophical thoughts. Unfortunately, there was no clarity from the beginning with regard to the issues in question and thus Greek ideas were used in an unauthorised way, which caused damage to the truth that

the confession wanted to bring in trying to reach an accountability of the Christian confession. This is the case when making use of the *Logos*-concept in the Christology of the Apologetics. This concept forced itself implicitly onto the first theologians, since it is not only used in the Gospel of John and in the first Letter of John as a sign of Christ, but also played a role in the stoicism and Platonic philosophy during that time. It was also used by Philo to explain the universal meaning of Judaism and his monotheistic concept of God. The Apologetics did not have a liking in the difference between John and the Greek philosophy or Philo. When John refers to Christ as the *Logos*, it is clear that He indicates Himself as God in his personal revelation, as the Only-begotten that is in the bosom of the Father and declares Him because He was in the beginning with God and is self-God (see Jhn. 1:1–14). For John, the Word became flesh meant that God personally took on our human flesh and that He could do it since He possessed the distinction between the *Logos* and the Father ‘from the beginning’ and ‘in Himself’. For John, the *Logos* is a person, the Creation intercessor, the Revelation and the One through whom grace and truth become a part of the lost humanity.

The *Logos*-concept is used in a totally different manner in Greek philosophy and by Philo. In the Greek thoughts with names in the Platonism, the *Logos* is understood as the reasonable concept that is present in the entire cosmos and is equated with the immanence of the transcended God. As divine reason the *Logos* is the principle that binds God as the undivided One (*to hèn*) with the multiplicity of the material reality. God is thought to be a pure spirit. In the entire reality of the world there are degrees of proximity to God. Matter is the furthest away from God and is typified as non-signal. The more spiritual the reality becomes, the more it is part of the signal of God and the closer it stands to Him. The *Logos* is now the divine, spiritual or reasonable principle in the world that binds it to God. The *Logos* is, however, not God Himself. It is an emanation out of God but it stands on the same line as the reality of the world and not with God.

We have already stated that the *Logos*-concept of Philo had the same meaning as that of the Gospel of John. The mistake that the Apologetics made was to serve themselves too easily with the *Logos*-concept without distinguishing enough between the content that was given to it in the Bible and also outside the Bible. They joined Philo to be clear that the *Logos* was nothing more than the Wisdom that was already spoken about in the Old Testament, which found expression in the law of Moses and that was also the source of everything that is true in the pagan philosophy (Justin the Martyr and Tatian among others). The same *Logos* would become flesh in Christ. On the basis of this they could draw the conclusion that the

Christianity is the 'true philosophy', because the message comes from the reincarnated Logos.

They tried achieving an apologetic benefit in this way, but the price was very high. By talking about the Logos in this way, they had to fill up the Logos-concept with content that Platonism and Philo – who also thought like Plato at this stage – attached to it. They are also going to start thinking about the Logos as the 'logical power' that is present in God (*Logos endiathetos*) which is sent out by Him to represent his immanence in the reality of the world (*Logos proforikos*). This, however, means that they will be thinking about the Logos in *impersonal terms*. Even if Justin talks about the Logos or Wisdom as the pre-existing Son, Servant or Descendent of God, it is clear that he meant that the Logos is a personified aspect of God, the source of all wisdom, order and morality in the cosmos. Tatian also spoke about the Logos as the logical power that existed before creation in God and that it was sent as a deed from God to build a bridge between God and creation. These opinions stay almost exclusively within the sphere of Platonism. The Logos is the principle of God's wisdom that can appear in the prophets and other persons. It appeared in an exceptionally concentrated manner in Jesus of Nazareth and revealed his entire fullness.

Together with this comes the further consequence that the Logos should be understood and thought about as *subject to God*. Even though he calls the Logos a 'second God' (*deuteros Theos*) in connection with an expression of Philo, it is subject to God and serves Him in everything. The more people thought in Platonic terms, the more the Logos was thought to be on the side of the creation as '*Logos proforikos*', since it was an emanation from God just like the entire creation. These thoughts led to the answering of the doubts of the Jews and Greeks against the Christian confession by showing that the unity and transcendence of God was not endangered by the confession of Christ, simply because *He is not on the same level as the Father but rather is subject to God*.

Even someone like Origen (where lots of other sound could be heard) said that although the Logos is the Son of God who was born from a deed of eternal generation by the Father, is not equal to the Father. According to Origen, the Son is one being with the Father (*homo-ousios*), but that They are still unequal in power and scope. The Son is subject to the Father, because He is not undone (*aggenetos*) like the Father. He was caused by the Father (*aitiatos*) and thus can even be called a creature (*ktisma*). The Father is the true God (*ho Theos*), but the Son is only *Theos* (without the article). When looking from the human side, the Son is infinitely exalted, but when looking from the side of God, He is the first link in the line of emanations. Origen was certain that Christ should not be worshipped like

the Father – an opinion that is logical if you realise that Origen saw the *Logos* as a type of being in between God and human and Christ as a person who was fulfilled by the *Logos* in an exceptional manner; do not stand unambiguously on the side of God.

In the meantime, it is necessary to note that it is not just via the handling of the *Logos*-concept that the Greek Concept of God had an impact on the early Christian theologians. This was also the case at the school of thought that was known as *monarchianism*, since it emphasised the transcendence and sovereignty of God – and thus also a form of monotheism – who lent its power to the Greek representation of God. Monarchianism distinguishes between *dynamic* and *modalistic* monarchianism. We will come back to the modalistic monarchianism. We first place the focus on dynamic monarchianism since it also involved the subordination of Christ to God from the outspoken intention to ensure that the unity and transcendence of God would not be brought into jeopardy through the confession of Christ.

This direction in Christology is usually called *subordinationism*. The things it worked with have travelled a long way in the early Christian thoughts. We already indicated that Christ was seen as a normal person in the Christology of the ebionites who had special gifts and who were adopted by the Father as his Son at a certain stage in his life – for example, at his baptism. Similar adoption thoughts occurred widespread during the second century in the church (for example, in the ‘Shepherd of Hermas’). Dynamic monarchianism agrees with this and emphasises that Christ was a person despite the unique and unsurpassed meaning that He had. The special meaning that Christ has comes from the fact that the Holy Spirit equipped Him with extraordinary powers (*dynameis*) at his baptism so that He could perform miracles, take a Holy walk and be an example of virtue for all people (Theodotus the Tanner, Theodotus the Money Exchanger and Berillus of Bosra). On this point of view, it becomes possible to maintain the exceptional meaning of Christ on the one hand while He is still delimited from God on the other hand.

This subordinationism became fully developed in the thoughts of Paul of Samosata, Lucien of Antioch, and finally the famous Arius. Paul of Samosata was actually the first consistent unitarian. According to him, God is only one person while the *Logos* and *Sophia* that can be distinguished in God are His characteristics. The *Logos* that is visible in Christ is nothing more than the impersonal power of reason of God that lived in Christ like a temple. This gave exceptional qualities to Christ but regarding his nature, He was from beneath. Lucien speaks in the same way about Christ. To add to what Origen said, he called the *Logos* ‘a creature’ because God is the

only Unborn along whom there is nothing that is not created. Arius also states that the Logos which took on Christ's form was created by God's will and advice out of nothing. He distinguishes between the *Logos* which is present as the power of reason in God and the *Son-Logos* which is a creature and that became alive in Christ. With regard to the Son-Logos one can say that He had started out as a creature and that there was a time when He did not exist. He is in all aspects unequal to the Father. Truly He is a perfect creature that was created by God before creation to serve as an intercessor at the start of creation, but as a creature He was subject to all kinds of limitations. Arius proceeds from the view that the Son-Logos took the place that the spirit of each person takes. Therefore he argues that since the Bible talks about the predisposition of development of Christ as well as the weakness, suffering and even the death of Christ, it is clear that the Son-Logos was not perfect and thus could not be God.

Arius is so filled with the Greek philosophy on the transcendence of God that it is impossible for him to believe that God Himself could take on the flesh of Christ. This would place God in the dust in an illegal manner. That is why he tries to understand the Son-Logos as an intermediate being between God and the dust. When he sometimes talks about Christ as 'the only-begotten God' or even as 'strong God', they remain transferable terms for him, and he suggests that even judges could be called 'gods' in the Bible sometimes. Arius argued that Christ earned these titles for Himself because, while having a reasonable free will like any other being and while being susceptible to error, he still persisted in doing good. This astounding fact presents itself that Arius who fought against the Logos-Christology out of fear for the Polytheism and who wanted to hold on to the absolute unity of God, made a semi-god out of Christ that stood between God and the people.

5.2 Christ is a form of appearance of God

Like we said, the second attempt to bring the confession of Christ into agreement with the unity and transcendence of God, led to the complete identification of Christ with God and the Father, in order to fully exclude the danger of ditheism.

We see this with names in the *modalism*, a school of thought that is usually placed under one heading of the monarchianism together with subordinationism. Just as the subordinationism (or dynamic monarchianism) wanted to defend against the danger of deitism and wanted to uphold the sovereignty of God, modality also wanted to. In contrast to the dynamic monarchianism, the modalistic monarchianism emphasises that Christ is not subjective to the Father but rather *is* God, so

that one cannot speak about two Gods but only about one God who reveals Himself in different ways (*modi*).

Noëtus learned that Christ is the Father and that the Father became flesh, died and arose. He would have said that it is one and the same God that is visible and invisible, limited and unlimited, powerless and powerful, born and unborn, mortal and immortal. Tertullian gave Noëtus the mock name of *patripassian*: 'the one who caused the Father to suffer'. In history, modalism was often called *patripassianism*. According to Tertullian, Praxeas would say that the Father made Himself like the Son by adopting a body, or also that the Son emerged from Himself because nothing is impossible for God. Also, Callixtus, bishop of Rome, declared that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one and the same (*hèn kai tò auto*) and that the Spirit who became flesh in the Son, is the same as the Father.

The most famous representative of modalism was Sabbelius. Modalism is often called 'Sabellianism'. His point of departure is the one personality of God. The same God is Father, Son and Spirit at the same time so that it is only a difference in name when referring to God in these three ways. Father, Son and Spirit are the three *modi* or forms of revealing of the one person of God or also three energies in God that appears in successive steps of revealing that God could reveal Himself first as the Father, then as the Son and finally as the Holy Spirit. God isn't Father, Son and Holy Spirit at the same time but reveals Himself consecutively under these three *prosopa* (masks). Sabbelius thus learns a trinity of revealing and not a trinity of creatures. Therefore he makes use of suggestions from the Stoicism school of thought where it was customary to bring reconciliation between the multiplicity of gods and the idea of one God by distinguishing between the one divine being (*ousia*) and a multiplicity of forms of revealing (*prosopa*).

This presentation of the relationship between Christ and the Father should necessarily lead to docetism. In the case where Jesus relates to God in a massive way and He is called only one of God's 'masks', his historical, human existence becomes unimportant. He is being described only in terms of his Godliness. This means that the suffering and death of Christ should only be understood as something that happens with a certain revelatory form of God, behind which the unknown and hidden *ousia* of God still remain untouched. Modalism could therefore not be seen as a successful attempt in answering the critique against the confession of Christ, since it tried to uphold the unity of God in such a manner that the humanity of Christ became meaningless, while also experiencing big problems in upholding the transcendence of God should the statement that God became human, suffered and died be taken seriously.

It is, however, not only the modalism that leads to doctrinal views. Even a theologian such as Origen, who fought against Sabellius, could not always escape doctrinal representations. He could not ascribe to the fact that the Logos, which is immutable as God, could have a direct connection with a mortal body. That is why he advocated the theory that the human soul of Jesus was necessary as a link between the Logos and the body of Christ. This soul would have been pre-existent and also spotless and pure while staying in the closest connection with the Logos throughout many centuries. Origen states that every nature kept its own characteristics at the uniting of the human and divine natures in Christ. The unchanged soul of the Logos could not suffer and therefore the human soul of Jesus suffered and died. As a result of the intimate uniting of Jesus' soul with the Logos, it possesses capacities that elevate it high above the normal human soul. According to Origen, the body of Christ would have a wonderful nature because it was changed into something spiritual and divine and had the ability to take on the form of any characteristic or shape that the Logos deemed necessary to make Himself visible. The humanity of Christ was made divine by uniting it with the divine nature. After the resurrection the deification process is set forth, by practically elevating the humanity of Christ into the Deity of the Logos.

Although there is a big difference in how the Docetism appeared in the gnostic groups and the Docetism trends of modalism or from theologians such as Origen, they all share a common point and that is that they could not let justice be done to the humanity of Christ. Any seepage away from the true humanity of Christ affected the heart of the gospel for the realisation of the Old Church. Thoughts in this direction were in abundance. The bare fact that we can quote Origen as an example in both the subordinationism and the Docetism show how unclear the Christology thoughts was in the first centuries.

5.3 The Trinitarian confession

Clarity with regard to the relationship of Christ to God could be acquired only when the church pushed through until the Trinitarian confession of God. Through the Trinitarian confession it becomes possible to hold onto the distinction of Christ from God the Father, and also to his unity with God the Father. At the same time it also becomes possible to confess the incarnation without the unity of transcendence of God being affected by it. The Trinitarian confession of God is a pure Christian confession that is the fruit of the revelation of God in the history. This holds nothing less than a total break from both the Judaistic and Greek representations of God. The answer of the church on the criticism on the side of the Jews and Greeks exists in that the church made it clear on the basis of the gospel that people

need to think in another way about God, his unity and transcendence other than how it happened in Judaism and in Greek philosophy and that the incarnation should be understood on its own within the framework of a Trinitarian Concept of God.

According to the Biblical thought, God is not a being that is locked up in his loneliness, but He is the living God that can step outside with his revelation and that can relate Himself with his creation because He possesses wealth within Himself of a multiplicity in his existence as Father, Son and Holy Spirit that is one but should also be distinguished from each other. That is why it is not difficult to understand from the Trinitarian confession of God that God could become flesh in the incarnation without problems occurring in connection with the unity of God. Likewise it is not difficult to relate the incarnation and the transcendence with each other from the Christian faith in God. God does not stand against his creation, like in the Greek opinions, so that He cannot relate with it. In the incarnation God only 'came to his property' (John 1:11). There is no unbridgeable gap between God and the created that makes the incarnation impossible in advance, and the transcendence of God is also not lifted up by his presence in the flesh.

It remains the incomparable earning of the council of Nicea (325) that the foundation of the Christian Trinitarian confession lied and cut off the Christological fallacies to the right and left that were linked together with the acceptance of a Greek-philosophic concept of God. The council confessed unequivocally that the Logos who became human, is one being (*homo-ousios*) with the Father and thus is God Himself. The deliverance of the council sounds as follows: 'We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, born from the Father, the only-begotten Son, this is from the being of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one of being with the Father, through Whom everything was made, both that in heaven and on earth; who came down for our people and our salvation and became human; who suffered and resurrected on the third day and ascended into heaven...'

Together with the statements of this council every form of subordinationism and ebionitism were condemned in clear terms. Not only Arius but also plenty of statements that occurred with Origen are rejected. Modalism is also implicitly rejected at the same time, since the twoness of Father and Son is emphasised explicitly. The council also condemned the thought that the Logos would be subject to any change at the end of his statements. The Docetism is furthermore clearly excluded. The council moves directly from the statement that the Son is one being with the Father to immediately stating that He suffered. Even though it

was not the actual point of view of the council, the Trinitarian confession holds an answer to the problem to which the Docetism tried to provide an answer to. Only through the distinction in God's being does it become possible to talk about the suffering and death of the Son of God, without falling into patripassianism.

A hefty fight regarding the decision of this particular council followed in the decades after the council of Nicea. Many rejected it because they secretly held the conceptions of the subordinates while others believe that the council did not distance itself enough from the modalism. Athanasius, who was the actual father of the orthodox confession of the trinity of God, defended the decisions of Nicea and especially the term *homo-ousios*. Athanasius could not make use of the terminology of the ecclesiastical doctrine of the Trinity. The terms *ousia* and *hupostasis* were used as synonyms at the council of Nicea and also as an indication of the concept of being. Clarity with regard to how the relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in their unity and distinction of each other should be formulated broke through only slowly. The so-called three Cappadocians, Basil the Great, Saint Gregory of Nyssa and Saint Gregory of Nazianse, made a huge contribution.

Following in the footsteps of thoughts that were spoken earlier by Tertullian, they decided to use the term *ousia* only for the one divine Being that existed as Father, Son and Spirit, while the term *hupostasis* was used as an indication of the persons in the divine Trinity. It could be stated clearly that God is one Being that reveals Himself in three Persons (*mia ousia treis hupostaseis*). The second ecumenical council of Constantinople (381) also expanded on some of the points made by Nicea, for example, through adding the confession regarding the Godliness of the Holy Spirit.

With the formulation of the Trinitarian confession the first big problem of Christology – the relationship of Christ to God – was decided for the church.