

of approaches may be noted, each of which can be set against a different backdrop.

1 *Liberation theology* develops a distinctive approach to suffering, based on its emphasis upon the poor and the oppressed (see pp. 89–91). The suffering of the poor is not viewed as passive acquiescence in suffering; rather, it is seen as participation in the struggle of God against suffering in the world – a struggle which involves direct confrontation with suffering itself. This idea, in various forms, can be discerned in the writings of Latin American liberation theologians.

However, it is generally thought to find its most powerful expression in the writings of black theology, especially those of James Cone. The sequence of the cross and resurrection is interpreted in terms of a present struggle against evil, conducted in the knowledge of God's final victory over all suffering and that which causes it. Similar themes can be noted in the writings of Martin Luther King, especially his "Death of Evil upon the Seashore" (1956).

2 *Process theology* locates the origins of suffering and evil within the world in a radical limitation upon the power of God (pp. 214–15). God has set aside the ability to coerce, retaining only the ability to persuade. Persuasion is seen as a means of exercising power in such a manner that the rights and freedoms of others are respected. God is obliged to persuade every aspect of the process to act in the best possible manner. There is, however, no guarantee that God's benevolent persuasion will lead to a favorable outcome. The process is under no obligation to obey God.

God intends good for the creation, and acts in its best interests. However, the option of coercing everything to do the divine will cannot be exercised. As a result, God is unable to prevent certain things happening. Wars, famines, and holocausts are not things that God desires; they are, however, not things that God can prevent, on account of the radical limitations placed upon the divine

power. God is thus not responsible for evil; nor can it be said, in any way, that God *desires* or *tacitly accepts* its existence. The metaphysical limits placed upon God are such as to prevent any interference in the natural order of things.

3 A third strand in recent thinking on suffering has drawn upon *Old Testament* themes. Jewish writers such as Elie Wiesel (born 1928), retaining at least the vestiges of a belief in the fundamental goodness of God, point to the numerous passages in the Old Testament that *protest* against the presence of evil and suffering in the world. This approach has been picked up by a number of Christian writers, including John Roth, who has named the approach "protest theodicy." The protest in question is seen as part of the faithful and trusting response of a faithful people to their God, in the face of uncertainties and anxieties concerning God's presence and purposes in the world.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit really deserves a full chapter in its own right. The Holy Spirit has long been the Cinderella of the Trinity. The other two sisters may have gone to the theological ball; the Holy Spirit got left behind every time. But not now. The rise of the charismatic movement (see pp. 81–2) within virtually every mainstream church has ensured that the Holy Spirit figures prominently on the theological agenda. A new experience of the reality and power of the Spirit has had a major impact upon the theological discussion of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Models of the Holy Spirit

"God is spirit" (John 4: 24). But what does this tell us about God? The English language uses at least three words – "wind," "breath," and "spirit" – to translate a single Hebrew term,

ruach. This important Hebrew word has a depth of meaning which it is virtually impossible to reproduce in English. *Ruach*, traditionally translated simply as "spirit," is associated with a range of meanings, each of which casts some light on the complex associations of the Christian notion of the Holy Spirit.

- 1 *Spirit as wind*. The image of "wind" suggests power, movement, and uncontrollability, all of which correspond to aspects of the biblical idea of God. Old Testament writers are careful not to identify God with the wind, and thus reduce God to the level of a natural force. Nevertheless, a parallel is drawn between the power of the wind and that of God. To speak of God as spirit is to call to mind the surging energy of the "Lord of Hosts," and remind Israel of the power and dynamism of the God who led Israel out of Egypt through a powerful wind which divides the Red Sea (Exodus 14: 21). Here, the idea of *ruach* conveys both the power and the redemptive purpose of God.
- 2 *Spirit as breath*. The idea of spirit is associated with life. When God created Adam, God breathed into him the breath of life, as a result of which he became a living being (Genesis 2: 7). The famous vision of the valley of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37: 1-14) also illustrates this point: the bones only come to life when breath enters into them (Ezekiel 37: 9-10). The model of God as spirit thus conveys the fundamental insight that God is the one who gives life. *Ruach* is often linked with God's work of creation (for example, Genesis 1: 2; Job 26: 12-13, 33: 4; Psalm 104: 27-31).
- 3 *Spirit as charism*. The technical term "charism" refers to the "filling of an individual with the Spirit of God," by which the person in question is enabled to perform tasks which would otherwise be impossible. The gift of wisdom is often portrayed as a consequence of the endowment of the Spirit (Genesis 41: 38-9; Exodus 28: 3, 35: 31; Deuteronomy 34: 9).

Similarly, the calling of a prophet also rests upon an endowment with the Spirit (Isaiah 61: 1; Ezekiel 2: 1-2; Micah 3: 8; Zechariah 7: 12), which authenticates the prophet's message – a message which is usually described as "the word [*dabhar*] of the Lord."

The debate over the divinity of the Holy Spirit

The early church found itself puzzled by the Spirit and unable to make much in the way of theological sense of this area of doctrine. This is not to say that the Holy Spirit did not play a prominent role in the early church. The second-century writer Montanus, who is known to have been active during the period 135-75, is an example of a theologian operating in the early period of the church who focused on the activity of the Spirit. The leading ideas of Montanus are known chiefly through the writings of his critics, with the result that our understanding of Montanism may be somewhat distorted. However, it is clear that Montanus placed considerable emphasis on the activity of the Holy Spirit in the present, and particularly on the role of the Spirit in relation to dreams, visions, and prophetic revelations. It is even possible that Montanus may have identified himself with the Holy Spirit, seeing himself as the source of a divine revelation which was not otherwise available. However, the evidence for this assertion is ambiguous.

The relative absence of extensive discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in the first three centuries reflects the fact that theological debate centered elsewhere. The Greek patristic writers had, in their view, more important things to do than worry about the Spirit, when vital political and Christological debates were raging all around them. This point was made by the fourth-century writer Amphilochius of Iconium, who pointed out that the Arian controversy had first to be resolved before any serious discussion over the status of the Holy Spirit could get under way. The theological development of the early church was

generally a response to public debates; once a serious debate got under way, doctrinal clarification was the inevitable outcome.

The debate in question initially centered upon a group of writers known as the *pneumatomachoi* or "opponents of the spirit," led by Eustathius of Sebaste. These writers argued that neither the person nor the works of the Spirit were to be regarded as having the status or nature of a divine person. In response to this, writers such as Athanasius (c.293–373) and Basil of Caesarea (c.330–79) made an appeal to the formula which had by then become universally accepted for baptism. Since the time of the New Testament (see Matthew 28: 18–20), Christians were baptized in the name of "the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Athanasius argued that this had momentous implications for an understanding of the status of the person of the Holy Spirit. In a letter to Serapion, Athanasius declared that the baptismal formula clearly pointed to the Spirit sharing the same divinity as the Father and the Son. This argument eventually prevailed.

However, patristic writers were hesitant to speak openly of the Spirit as "God" as this practice was not sanctioned by Scripture – a point discussed at some length by Basil of Caesarea in his treatise on the Holy Spirit (374–5). Even as late as 380, Gregory of Nazianzus (329–89) conceded that many Orthodox Christian theologians were uncertain as to whether to treat the Holy Spirit "as an activity, as a creator, or as God."

This caution can be seen in the final statement of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit formulated by a Council meeting at Constantinople in 381. The Spirit was here described, not as "God," but as "the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, and is worshiped and glorified with the Father and Son." The language is unequivocal: the Spirit is to be treated as having the same dignity and rank as the Father and Son, even if the term "God" is not to be used explicitly. The precise relation of the Spirit to Father and Son would subsequently become an item of debate in its own right, as the *filioque* controversy indicates (see pp. 247–9).

The following considerations seem to have been of decisive importance in establishing the divinity of the Holy Spirit during the later fourth century. First, as Gregory of Nazianzus stressed, Scripture applied all the titles of God to the Spirit, with the exception of "unbegotten." Gregory drew particular attention to the use of the word "holy" to refer to the Spirit, arguing that this holiness did not result from any external source, but was the direct consequence of the nature of the Spirit. The Spirit was to be considered as the one who sanctifies, rather than the one who requires to be sanctified.

Second, the functions which are specific to the Holy Spirit establish the divinity of the Spirit. Didymus the Blind (died 398) was one of many writers to point out that the Spirit was responsible for the creating, renewing, and sanctification of God's creatures. Yet how could one creature renew or sanctify another creature? Only if the Spirit was divine could sense be made of these functions. If the Holy Spirit performed functions which were specific to God, it must follow that the Holy Spirit shares in the divine nature. This point is stated with particular clarity by Basil of Caesarea:

All who are in need of sanctification turn to the Spirit; all those seek him who live by virtue, for his breath refreshes them and comes to their aid in the pursuit of their natural and proper end. Capable of perfecting others, the Spirit himself lacks nothing. He is not a being who needs to restore his strength, but himself supplies life. [...] Souls in which the Spirit dwells, illuminated by the Spirit, themselves become spiritual and send forth their grace to others. From here comes foreknowledge of the future, understanding of mysteries, apprehension of what is hidden, the sharing of the gifts of grace, heavenly citizenship, a place in the chorus of angels, joy without end, abiding in God, being made like God and – the greatest of them all – being made God.

For Basil, the Spirit makes creatures both to be like God and to be God – and only one who is divine can bring this about.

Third, the reference to the Spirit in the baptismal formula of the church was interpreted as

supporting the divinity of the Spirit. Baptism took place in the name of the "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28: 18–20). Athanasius and others argued that this formula established the closest of connections between the three members of the Trinity, making it impossible to suggest that the Father and Son shared in the substance of the Godhead, while the Spirit was nothing other than a creature. In a similar way, Basil of Caesarea argued that the baptismal formula clearly implied the inseparability of Father, Son, and Spirit. This verbal association, according to Basil, clearly had considerable theological implications.

The recognition of the full divinity of the Spirit thus took place at a relatively late stage in the development of patristic theology. In terms of the logical advance of doctrines, the following historical sequence can be discerned.

- Stage 1 The recognition of the full divinity of Jesus Christ.
- Stage 2 The recognition of the full divinity of the Spirit.
- Stage 3 The definitive formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, embedding and clarifying these central insights, and determining their mutual relationship.

This sequential development is acknowledged by Gregory of Nazianzus, who pointed to a gradual progress in clarification and understanding of the mystery of God's revelation in the course of time. It was, he argued, impossible to deal with the question of the divinity of the Spirit until the issue of the divinity of Christ had been settled.

The Old Testament preached the Father openly and the Son more obscurely. The New Testament revealed the Son, and hinted at the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Now the Spirit dwells in us, and is revealed more clearly to us. It was not proper to preach the Son openly, while the divinity of the Father had not yet been admitted. Nor was it proper to accept the Holy Spirit before [the divinity of] the Son had been acknowledged. [...] Instead, by grad-

ual advances and partial ascents, we should move forward and increase in clarity, so that the light of the Trinity should shine.

Augustine of Hippo: the Spirit as bond of love

One of the most significant contributions to the development of the theology of the Holy Spirit (an area of theology occasionally referred to as *pneumatology*) is due to Augustine. Augustine had become a Christian partly through the influence of Marius Victorinus, who had himself converted to Christianity from a pagan background. Victorinus had a distinct approach to the role of the Spirit, as can be seen from a hymn which he had penned:

Help us, Holy Spirit, the bond [*copula*] of Father and Son,
When you rest, you are the Father; when you proceed,
the Son;
In binding all in one, you are the Holy Spirit.

Although the theology of these lines seems modalist (to anticipate a trinitarian heresy we shall explore presently; see pp. 244–5), an idea of considerable importance is nevertheless expressed: that the Spirit is the "bond of the Father and the Son [*patris et filii copula*]."

In his treatise *On the Trinity*, Augustine insists upon the distinctiveness of the Spirit; nevertheless, despite this distinctive identity, the Spirit is what is common to the Father and Son. The Father is only the Father of the Son, and the Son only the Son of the Father; the Spirit, however, is the Spirit of both Father and Son, binding them together in a bond of love. In his discussion of this point, Augustine concedes that Scripture does not explicitly state that the Holy Spirit is love; however, in that God is love, and the Spirit is God, it seems to follow naturally that the Holy Spirit is love.

Scripture teaches us that he is the Spirit neither of the Father alone nor of the Son alone, but of both; and this suggests to us the mutual love by which the Father and the Son love one another. [...] Yet

Scripture has not said: "the Holy Spirit is love." If it had, much of our inquiry would have been rendered unnecessary. Scripture does indeed say: "God is love" (1 John 4: 8, 16); and so leaves us to ask whether it is God the Father, or God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit, or God the Trinity itself, who is love.

Augustine regards the Spirit as the bond of unity between Father and Son, on the one hand, and between God and believers, on the other. The Spirit is a gift, given by God, which unites believers both to God and to other believers. The Holy Spirit forges bonds of unity between believers, upon which the unity of the church ultimately depends. The church is the "temple of the Holy Spirit," within which the Holy Spirit dwells. The same Spirit which binds together the Father and Son in the unity of the Godhead also binds together believers in the unity of the church.

The functions of the Spirit

What does the Holy Spirit do? Many theologians have tried to provide brief summaries of the work of the Spirit: for example, Basil of Caesarea's succinct statement: "Through the Holy Spirit we are restored to paradise, led back to the Kingdom of heaven, adopted as children, given confidence to call God 'Father' and to share in Christ's grace, called children of light, and given a share in eternal glory." The Christian tradition has generally understood the work of the Holy Spirit to focus on three broad areas: revelation, salvation, and the Christian life. In what follows, we shall provide a brief indication of the richness of the Christian understanding of the role of the Spirit in each of these three areas.

The illumination of revelation

There has been a widespread recognition of the pivotal role of the Spirit in relation to the making of God known to humanity. Irenaeus wrote of the "Holy Spirit, through whom the prophets prophesied, and our forebears learned of God and the righteous were led in the paths of justice." Similarly, in his 1536 commentary on the gospels, Martin

Bucer (1491–1551) argues that revelation cannot occur without the assistance of God's Spirit:

Before we believe in God and are inspired by the Holy Spirit, we are unspiritual and for that reason we are completely unable to apprehend anything relating to God. So all the wisdom and righteousness which we possess in the absence of the Holy Spirit are the darkness and shadow of death.

The task of the Holy Spirit is to lead into God's truth; without that Spirit, truth remains elusive.

The role of the Spirit in relation to the most important theological source of the Christian tradition is of particular importance. The doctrine of the "inspiration of Scripture" affirms that the Bible has a God-given authority by virtue of its origins. This doctrine, in various forms, is the common tradition of Christianity, and has its origins in the Bible itself, most notably the affirmation that "every Scripture is God-breathed [*theopneustos*]" (2 Timothy 3: 16).

In Protestant theology, however, the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture serves an additional purpose – that of insisting on the primacy of Scripture over the church. Whereas more Catholic writers point to the formation of the canon of Scripture as indicating the authority of the church over that of Scripture, Protestant writers argue that the church merely recognized an authority which was already present within Scripture itself. The *Gallic Confession* (1559) illustrates this point well:

We know these books to be canonical, and the sure rule of our faith, not so much by the common accord and consent of the Church, as by the testimony and inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to distinguish them from other ecclesiastical books which, however useful, can never become the basis for any articles of faith.

Yet it is not simply God's revelation which is linked with the work of the Spirit; the Spirit is also widely regarded as being involved in the human response to that revelation. Most Christian theologians have regarded faith itself as the result of the work of the Holy Spirit. John Calvin (1509–64) is

one writer who draws attention to the pivotal role of the Spirit in revealing God's truth and applying or "sealing" this truth to humanity.

Now we shall have a right definition of faith if we say that it is a steady and certain knowledge of the divine benevolence towards us, which is founded upon the truth of the gracious promise of God in Christ, and is both revealed to our minds and sealed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

The appropriation of salvation

We have already noted how patristic writers justified the divinity of the Spirit with reference to the functions of the Spirit. Many of those functions relate directly to the doctrine of salvation; for example, the role of the Spirit in sanctification, making humanity like God, and divinization. This point is particularly important within the eastern Christian churches, with their traditional emphasis on deification; the western concept of salvation, which tends to be relational rather than ontological, nevertheless finds room for a role for the Spirit. Thus, in Calvin's doctrine of the application of salvation, the Holy Spirit plays a major role in relation to the establishment of a living relationship between Christ and believer.

The energization of the Christian life

For many writers, the Holy Spirit plays an especially important role in relation to the Christian life, both the individual and the corporate life. The fifth-century writer Cyril of Alexandria (c.378–444) is one of many to stress the role of the Spirit in bringing unity within the church.

All of us who have received the one and the same Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit, are in a sense merged together with one another and with God. [...] Just as the power of the holy flesh of Christ united those in whom it dwells into one body, I think that, in much the same way, the one and undivided Spirit of God, who dwells in us all, leads us all into spiritual unity.

However, any properly Christian understanding of the role of the Spirit will go far beyond this, and will include reference to at least two other areas.

First is the "making real" of God in personal and corporate worship and devotion. The importance of the role of the Spirit in relation to Christian prayer, spirituality, and worship has been stressed by many writers, classic and modern. Second is the enabling of believers to lead a Christian life, particularly in relation to morality. Martin Bucer thus draws attention to the necessity of the Spirit, if believers are to keep the law.

So those who believe are not under the law, because they have the Spirit within them, teaching them everything more perfectly than the law ever could, and motivating them much more powerfully to obey it. In other words, the Holy Spirit moves the heart, so that believers wish to live by those things which the law commands, but which the law could not achieve by itself.

Yet the Christian life is corporate, not just individual, and it is important to note the ecclesiological dimensions of the work of the Holy Spirit. Since the Second Vatican Council (1962–5), many Catholic theologians have explored the role of the Spirit in shaping and sustaining Christian community, and fostering its witness in the world. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) thus speaks of the church as both "the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit."

The Spirit prepares people, and goes out to them with his grace, in order to draw them to Christ. The Spirit manifests the risen Lord to them, recalls his word to them and opens their minds to the understanding of his Death and Resurrection.

Growing interest in the theology of mission, linked with an increasing awareness of the importance of tracing God's imprints in other cultures and faiths, has led many to explore the role of the Spirit in the world, preparing the way for the proclamation of Christ (pp. 262, 434–5).

Having discussed the doctrine of God in general, our attention now turns to the more complex area of the doctrine of the Trinity, which seeks to give expression to a sequence of distinctively Christian insights concerning God.