

The Spirit of God in Biblical Literature
Irving F. Wood
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We are thankful to the author of this volume for having given us in it a continuous and comprehensive discussion of the Biblical doctrine of the Spirit of God. Apart from the articles in the Bible dictionaries, no attempt has been made in recent times, so far as we are aware, to deal with the subject in its whole extent after a purely inductive fashion. The book gives even more than the title promises for it includes a much-needed discussion of the development of the doctrine in the period between the two Canons, both in its Palestinian and Alexandrian form. The work of all future students in this field has been made easier by the pioneer work the author has done. There is more here than a mere collection and classification of exegetical facts. Dr. Wood endeavors to trace the historical nexus between the facts, and does so with a considerable degree of independence of judgment and penetration. He is well acquainted with the extensive modern literature on the subject and makes a circumspect use of it. In view of these undeniable merits we all the more regret that the author's work is vitiated by what we must consider fundamentally wrong principles. He follows the chronological redistribution of the Old Testament writings based on the current critical hypothesis. All his historical constructions stand or fall with this. If ever the hypothesis in question should lose its present vogue, the work would have to be all done over again. But what is even more serious, in our opinion, is the purely phenomenistic spirit in which the author proceeds from beginning to end. The title it will be observed introduces the work as "A Study in the History of Religion." This means that the Biblical facts are placed on a line with all extra-Biblical groups of facts in the history of religion. The element of an objective special revelation is left out of account entirely. While this might be permissible, if a purely apologetic valuation of the Biblical phenomena in comparison with those of other religions were intended, the matter becomes entirely different where, as is the case here, an explanation of the at least proximate origin of the phenomena is attempted. Where Dr. Wood alludes to the causality back of the facts he does so in terms like the following: "The origins of the idea of the Spirit lie in the common ground of early religious concepts. The growth of it may be explained by laws which we find working in all early religions. . . . If there is ever a providence in the history of human thought, surely here is a place where it may be seen" (p. 37). This powerful conviction (viz., that his message came from Jehovah), with its accompaniment of a strong emotion, was not resolved by the prophet into elements of patriotism, reflection, logic and religious feeling, but taken entire, just as he experienced it, for a divine gift" (p. 44). "The growth of high religious ideas has always been due to personal religious insight, whether one calls that insight genius or inspiration. . . . It would be possible to divide, not religions indeed, for they are always complexes of the lower and the higher, but religious conceptions into lower and higher according as they were the gradual developments of religious thoughts influenced by environment or the sudden transformation of old ideas in the mind of some religious genius. Such a division would be the modern correlate of the old distinction between natural and supernatural religion. The former might be called racial religious concepts; the latter personal religious concepts. The new ideas of the Spirit were the Pauline, the old those which we may, for want of a better name, call primitive Christian" (pp. 151, 152). "All the manifestations have alike a psychological basis. Even such phenomena as visions and the speaking with tongues are in reality as much the augmentation of natural powers as are wisdom and boldness of utterance" (p. 172). "As the story of Cornelius lies at present in the narrative the impression is conveyed that the message of the Spirit to Peter contained information supernaturally supplied:

Three men wait thee, go with them, nothing doubting, for I have sent them. We certainly cannot say with any assurance, however, that this would be the interpretation of the facts, if we had them as they occurred" (p. 184). It is obvious that under such conditions revelation can be nothing more than the invisible reverse side, the background of divine immanence to the psychological processes. It breaks at no point through the web of phenomena. In other words, all revelation is reduced to the category of natural revelation, as the quotation given above from pp. 151, 152, itself intimates. Now we submit that for everybody who truly believes in an objective revelation and to whom this revelation is a supernatural reality projected into the phenomenal world, a discussion based on premises like the above must from the outset fall under the judgment not merely of being inadequate, but of necessity false and distorted.

The book is divided into two parts, one dealing with the Spirit of God in Hebrew Thought, the other with the Spirit of God in New Testament Thought. The subdivisions of Part I discuss the writings before the Exile, the Origin of the Conception, the Canonical writings after the Exile, the Palestinian-Jewish writings, the Alexandrian-Jewish writings. Those of Part II are devoted to the Synoptical Gospels, the Primitive Christian Conception, the Pauline writings, the Johannine writings, successively. In each chapter a careful classification of the various aspects of the usage is given, and the aspects present in or absent from each period are pointed out by means of a continuous comparison. The course of development found may be briefly outlined as follows: The earliest phenomena to which in recorded history the idea of the Spirit is applied are those of ecstatic prophecy. From this it extended to warlike prowess already in the same early period. The later prophets in their reaction against the older and cruder forms of prophecy used the conception of the Spirit less and less, till in the Deuteronomic period it disappears entirely as a designation of the source of prophecy. A third stage was entered upon where the idea was transferred from the subjective to the objective side, and the Spirit became = God active in the human life, which usage then in the exilic period received a cosmical as well as a large historical application, the latter both in the retrospective and in the prospective Messianic sense. In the postexilic period the use of the idea on its charismatic side, as of an experimental reality, disappears owing to the Deistic tendency of Judaism, although as a traditional idea relating to the past it remained. Alexandrian Judaism added no new element, but repristinated under the influence of Greek mantic conceptions the notion peculiar to the crude stage of early Hebrew prophecy, applying this notion to all Old Testament prophecy. In the New Testament the influences of the Spirit, since long associated with the Messiah, are felt to have become a present reality. While this allowed of wide expansion, at first only strongly emotional experiences were attributed to the Spirit. The operation of the Spirit remains confined to man as in the earliest Hebrew stage. To the cosmic sphere it is not again extended during the entire New Testament period. The author, in noting this, expresses the belief that Christian theology has followed the New Testament in this limitation (a strange statement) and the hope that it will never do otherwise, because the Spirit of God belongs of right only to the action of God in human hearts, such being its New Testament meaning and its only correct use. Finally, in Paul the idea of the Spirit reaches its highest and final stage of development, inasmuch as he makes it cover the entire ethical and religious life and conceives of the Spirit as an abiding possession of the believer. To this the Johannine type of thought has added nothing new. In point of fact, it has not fully reached or reproduced the rich Pauline content of the idea. For, although the Spirit here likewise is an abiding gift, and the conception of occasional charismatic operations, which still stands side by side with the new meaning in Paul, has, on the whole, dropped out, nevertheless, with the exception of chap. 3:

3-8, the Spirit is not represented in John as the origin of the Christian life; there being substituted for this the direct mystical relation to Christ and God, and the work of the Spirit is rather prophetic than ethical, a work of instructing in and witness-bearing to the truth for the development of the kingdom of the Messiah.

It is impossible for us to review every single link in this construction. We confine ourselves to touching upon a few of the most important points. Objection might be raised to the comparative isolation in which the author keeps his subject, confining himself strictly to the Spirit of God, and avoiding the investigation of the allied subject of the Spirit-nature of the divine as such. He calls attention to the fact that the Spirit is seldom used for God *ab intra*. But the fact remains that God is called Spirit, and that in what Dr. Wood considers the earliest accessible period. Of course it is quite possible to maintain that the several representations of God's being Spirit, of His having Spirit, and of His sending Spirit are entirely separate and distinct in their roots, but in that case it would not have been superfluous to state this explicitly, so as to prevent confusion of thought. In our view, Isa. 31:3 (a passage not referred to by Dr. Wood) shows how close the "static" and the "dynamic" usage of the Spirit may occasionally lie together. Another point on which the investigation might to advantage have been pushed farther concerns the relations between the Spirit of God and the notion of wind. The author cursorily refers in a footnote to Wendt's use of this as the starting-point of the development, but prefers himself to recur upon the idea of "breath," leaving the other view and its possible relations to his own theory undiscussed.

To the Spirit as the basis of physical life in man Dr. Wood finds for the pre-exilic period only one reference, viz., Gen. 6:3, although on account of the uncertainty of interpretation he is compelled to place a mark of interrogation even here. As to the Spirit acting upon external nature outside of man, he draws the somewhat artificial distinction that in the pre-exilic period this action, while terminating upon external nature, appears always in connection with man, whereas in the exilic and postexilic periods the Spirit is represented as operating upon nature altogether apart from man. We touch here upon a more or less doubtful element in the author's argumentation. Though not oblivious of the distinction between non-occurrence of a certain usage in a group of writings and ignorance of the period represented by these writings with the usage in question, he yet, in point of fact, sometimes builds his conclusions on the identification of these two. In the New Testament the absence of explicit references to the cosmical functions of the Spirit is interpreted as indicating that these functions were no longer believed in, in deference to the Deistic trend of later Judaism. To us this seems extremely improbable, seeing that the cosmic significance of the Spirit's work was so plainly taught in the Old Testament.

In discussing the origin of the conception, the author adopts the view that it arose from the conjunction of the two factors of a waning polydemonism which began to subordinate the other divine beings to the one supreme God, and of a "divine psychology" which represented the impact of God upon man as produced by "the breath of God." The question arises whether, if the former had been an influential factor in the production of the idea, the personal distinction between God and the Spirit ought not to have been much more plainly apparent than it actually is at the first. In the author's own opinion the personality of the Spirit is an idea not reached by even the most advanced New Testament teaching. The Spirit, he says, was personal indeed, but only because God, who is the Spirit in a certain aspect, is personal. This fails to do justice to Rom. 8:27, where the personality of

the Spirit is implied in a relation which contradistinguishes Him from God.

We are glad to note that the author does not follow in the wake of the modern tendency to deny to the Old Testament entirely the idea of an operation of the Spirit in the specifically ethical and religious sphere. He recognizes distinct preformations in the prophetic literature and the Psalms of the later Pauline development.

In the chapter on the Synoptic Gospels the importance of the Spirit for the consciousness of Jesus is minimized. This not merely in the sense that the Pauline idea of the Spirit as the author and bearer of the entire religious life is declared to be absent from our Lord's teaching. Where the Johannine discourses are not admitted in evidence, and moreover a distinction is drawn between the synoptical coloring of Jesus' words and their original intent (e.g., Matt. 7:11, preferred to Luke 11:13), no other conclusion could be expected. But Dr. Wood goes farther than this. He believes that Jesus had a positive motive for not reaffirming or further developing the Old Testament beginnings of the Pauline doctrine, viz., the desire "to have his disciples brought into direct and immediate connection with God Himself. Even so thin a veil as the idea of the Holy Spirit might tend to obscure the relation" (p. 136). If this be correct, we must wonder that the Spirit is mentioned by our Lord at all, even in a charismatic aspect, for the religious and charismatic cannot be kept sharply separated. In point of fact, the author reduces also the charismatic Spirit as consciously possessed by Jesus to far narrower proportions than are usually allowed for it. In the saying of Matt. 12:28, about the casting out of demons by the Spirit of God, the Lucan reading "by the finger of God" is preferred. Unfortunately, the reference to the Spirit remains in the immediately following statements about the sin committed, the word spoken against the Spirit. Inasmuch as these latter statements are continuous with the former utterance, it follows that Jesus, even if He said "the finger of God," must have conceived of this as working in the concrete through the Spirit of God. Dr. Wood endeavors to escape from this by making the Spirit in the second utterance refer not to the Spirit of miracles in particular, but to the Spirit as the principle of Jesus' Messianic work in general. We cannot consider this a plausible exegesis. The contrast between the sin against Jesus and the sin against the Holy Spirit compels us to take the Spirit here a definite extraordinarily palpable manifestation of the supernatural in Jesus' work. But even if the exegesis were allowed, at any rate the casting out of demons and the miracles would retain their place as parts of the Messianic work and in so far as operations of the Spirit. Considering how large a part the miracles played in our Lord's activity, it will be hard to maintain that the Spirit did not, at least as the charismatic Spirit, have a prominent place in His consciousness. This is confirmed by Luke 4:18, where in the enumeration of the effects of the Spirit-anointing the miracles are certainly included.

The place of the Spirit in the baptismal formula, Matt. 28:19, as well as in the accounts of the temptation of Jesus and of the nativity, is considered as in all probability due to the influence of early Christian tradition, not to the teaching of Jesus Himself. We note that on the last-mentioned point, the account of the nativity, the author does not follow in the wake of those modern writers who find in the story a reflex of the pagan notion of a physical begetting of children on the part of the gods, but rather an attempt to avoid and protest against such offensive physical conceptions largely current among the Syrian peoples, by means of that conception of the Spirit which the Hebrew religion had developed.

In connection with this whole subject, the place of the Spirit in the synoptical teaching of Jesus, attention may be called to the following remarks of Kattenbusch (*Das Apostolische Symbol*, II, 673): "I consider it nevertheless probable that the reference to the Pneuma or the promise of the same did not play so small a role in the teaching of Jesus as might be inferred from the Synoptists. . . . The whole Messianic conception was so indissolubly linked with that of the Spirit, that the idea of the Spirit inevitably would become one of the prominent ideas in the consciousness of Jesus. But this idea in its popular form lay open to the same objection as the Messianic idea. Jesus could neither without more accept it nor without more reject it. . . . By the whole manner of his activity, by everything He taught concerning God, He endeavored to explain, and in the end actually taught, that the Spirit was something more, and at bottom something different from what the people believed."

The great problem in the New Testament development of the doctrine of the Spirit concerns the genesis of the Pauline doctrine of the Spirit as the author and permanent bearer of the entire ethical and religious life. The author criticizes the various theories that have been offered in solution of the problem and concludes that the most plausible view is as follows: Paul reached his doctrine as a result of the combination of the two principles that the Spirit witnesses for and advances the Messianic kingdom, and that the most impressive witness, the most effectual force for the propagation of this kingdom lie in the religious and ethical life of the believer. We do not intend to deny that this was actually a determinative factor in the shaping of the Apostle's thought. But as an explanation of the complicated Pauline doctrine of the Pneuma, in its religious and ethical significance as a whole, we think it wholly inadequate and misleading. The proof for this lies in the observation that Paul's doctrine of the $\sigma\alpha\rho\chi$ is equally comprehensive in its ethical and religious reference as that of the Pneuma. Unless, therefore, we assume that the notion of the $\sigma\alpha\rho\chi$, ethically and religiously applied, was in the apostle's teaching an afterthought, subsequently developed by way of antithesis out of the already matured ethical and religious conception of the Spirit, it is reasonable to believe that in their very origin these two ideas were interdependent. The antithesis $\sigma\alpha\rho\chi$ - $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$ must in itself have had something to do in Paul's mind with that expansion of the Spirit-idea which is so characteristic of his teaching. Two further elements, it seems to us, will have to be taken into account in every attempted solution. On the one hand, the Pauline identification between the Spirit and the glorified Christ would naturally tend toward making the operation of the Spirit coextensive with the whole life of the believer, inasmuch as for Paul the personal Christ possessed such an all-pervading influence over the religious and ethical life. On the other hand, the Pauline conception of the eschatological state as having in principle begun would lead to the same result, because the Pneuma is the specific element of the heavenly state, and the Christian, being in the heavenly state, could not but be in the Pneuma in the most comprehensive and permanent sense. It is a pity, we think, that the author has not put the question more in detail as to what significance the Spirit has with Paul for the eschatological state, both for the resurrection-life and for the resurrection-event, and what is the connection between this and the peculiar functions the Apostle ascribes to the Spirit in the creation and development of the life of the believer on earth.

In conclusion we would ask, whether it is quite true that Paul "never places the Spirit in any connection with the glimpses he had of the cosmic relations in the purposes of God"? (p. 212). Rom. 8:21-23, in a context pervaded by the idea of the Spirit as the principle of liberty, might point to a different conclusion.

In the bibliography at the close a place ought to have been given to Giesebrecht, *Die Berufsbegabung der Alttestamentlichen Propheten*, pp. 123-159. Of typographical mistakes we note Deut. 4:22 (for 32) on page 53, and ἀγιον for ἀγιου, παντος for παντες on p. 63.