

## Abstract

This chapter seeks to show that mysticism is not about the rarefied experience of certain spiritual athletes but the Holy Spirit's ordinary or common call to transformation of every Christian into a potentially extraordinary 'second Christ'. The author contends that in Christian teaching the Spirit hides himself but in this age is made known in the faces of transformed Christians—saints and mystics—as little 'christs'. The Spirit is said to be the author of the Body of Christ in which Christians are called to put on Christ, living lives headed by the Spirit, as 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 Pet. 1: 4). Examples are drawn from the mystical and liturgical tradition in Christian East and West: Symeon the New Theologian, Seraphim of Sarov, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, as well as in baptismal and eucharistic theology and especially in the work of Augustine.

## Keywords

Holy Spirit, pneumatology, mysticism, Seraphim of Sarov, John of the Cross, Augustine, sacraments, deification, spirituality, Symeon the New Theologian, Teresa of Avila

## Pneumatology

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And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit

(2 Corinthians 3: 18 [RSV])

### *INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF MYSTICAL THEOLOGY TO THE SPIRIT?*

More than any other topic of systematic theology, pneumatology seems to be naturally bound up with Christian mysticism. Indeed, at least one traditional understanding of the field of ‘spirituality’ is that it consists in the study of so-called ‘spiritual writers’ or ‘mystics’. These mystical writers are often thought to have a unique, even rarefied, experience of the Holy Spirit, which is ineffable and unmediated but also wholly universal linking them to pneumatics in all ages regardless of their specific history and doctrine. That is to say, they are said to have had an immediate vision of God, a particular *sui generis* consciousness, even speak in certain distinct ways and possess particular *rare* spiritual gifts that set them apart from the run of the mill ‘unspiritual’ Christian.

From the thirteenth century onwards there was, as Michel de Certeau (1925–86) famously argued, a turn away from the traditional ecclesial vision of the mystical or *mustikos* being connected to Christian initiation into the ‘holy mysteries’ of the liturgy and scripture by which, following Dionysian Corpus (fifth–sixth century), the human being ascends to God understood as the unspeakable (Waaïjman 2002: 355). Then at the dawn of the modern era, in the late sixteenth century, ‘a new epistemological “form”’ appeared with texts that were characterized as ‘mystical’, distinguished from other texts whether they were biblical commentaries or theological treatises (de Certeau 1995: 16). Attention is paid to certain ‘extraordinary’ individuals or ‘mystics’ (later called ‘mystical doctors’), not so much saints as adepts of the interior life, enigmatic and mysterious in their soul’s inwardness and fervent feelings, who teach an ‘extraordinary’, ‘experimental’, ‘affective’, and ‘practical’ doctrine gleaned from a close analysis of their visions or prophecies and peculiar actions and language (de Certeau 1995: 76, 107, and see Waaïjman 2002: 359). A new science of ‘mysticism’ develops to order and systematize all these varied phenomena chronicled in various texts and it ‘produced its discursive forms, specified its procedures, articulated its own itineraries or “experiences,” and attempted to isolate its object’ (de Certeau 1995: 76). A phenomenon that was once ecclesial and reflected the ‘theological institution’ (de Certeau 1995: 107) comes to be alienated from its own sources. Yet in little more than a century, the whole colossus fell by its own weight since it was ‘never anything but the unstable metaphor for what is inaccessible’ (de Certeau 1995: 77). It left in its wake the perception that mysticism either deals with religious hysterics and superstition or supernatural athletes divorced from the life of the ordinary Christian (see Waaïjman 2002: 356).

*THE MYSTICAL: THE ORDINARY-EXTRAORDINARY  
PATH OF TRANSFORMATION IN THE SPIRIT OF  
CHRIST*

It is this approach to mystical theology and mysticism that I want to avoid in this chapter. It is not just due to the undeniably exceptional nature of the mystic's 'experience' that they play a unique role within Christian tradition but because historically and theologically from a Christian perspective the witness of these saints and spiritual/mystical writers points to the very source of new life in Christ by the will of the Father: the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ. I shall argue in this chapter that in the main line of Christian tradition in East and West the mystical is the universal, uncreated, and ordinary-extraordinary presence of the Holy Spirit throughout creation who dwells, in particular, in human beings as his chosen vessels of divine glory. This Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of freedom, and in him all human beings are called to behold a vision of the glory of the Lord in the image and likeness of Jesus and, in seeing this radiation of sanctification, the human being who beholds it can become transformed from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3: 17–18) so that they reflect and become as Christ himself, simultaneously truly human and truly divine, fully alive. The saints and mystical writers, more simply 'theologians' proper, are simply those people who testify to the power of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ. They witness to this ordinary-extraordinary transformative path of the Spirit of Christ, the path of divinization, to become 'christs' in Christ, open to all creation.

Mysticism and ‘mystics’ like Teresa of Avila (1515–82) are, then, quite ordinary in the Christian experience, as Karl Rahner (1904–84) argued, insofar as what is remarkable or extraordinary is the holy ‘mystical foundation’ of holiness of human existence in which the transforming Spirit dwells (Rahner 1993: 362). A human being as spirit is founded on and for and towards God in Christ through the Spirit of Christ and towards the transforming vision of God. As Basil the Great (329–79) writes of the Holy Spirit,

All things thirsting for holiness turn to Him; everything living in virtue never turns away from Him. He waters them with His life-giving breath and helps them reach their proper fulfillment. He perfects all other things, and Himself lacks nothing [...] He is the source [*genesis*] of sanctification, spiritual light, who gives illumination to everyone using His powers to search for the truth—and the illumination He gives is Himself.

(*On the Holy Spirit*, 9.22; Pruche 1968: 324–5/Anderson 2001: 43; on Basil see van Rossum 2011: 25–8)

If, as Rahner claimed, mysticism is part of the basic trajectory of the human then the witness of mystical writers is, unsurprisingly, echoed early on in the worship and hymnography of the Church and so it is, as it were, the open secret of the saints to which all Christians are called. Theology, and mystical theology, in particular, simply cannot be separated—without hermeneutic violence—from spirituality (see McIntosh 1998). All Christians, according to this line of argument, are called to live out the mystical existence, which is the theological existence, by their baptism into Christ and their chrismation/confirmation through the Spirit by the will of the Father. To adapt a famous verse (Num. 11: 29): ‘Would that all the Lord’s people were mystics, that the Lord would

put his spirit upon them!’ Moreover, if all theology is a living out of the spiritual path, life in Christ through the Spirit, the path of transformation, then all theology is mystical for all Christians are called to the contemplation, experience, and expression of the divine mysteries (Lossky 1991: 8–9).

This approach to ‘mystical theology’ is one that is taken for granted in much of Eastern Orthodoxy, though the whole corpus of Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–88) shows its ecumenical thrust. It is my hope that I can show in Western writers, through comparing them to a variety of Eastern theologians, the ecclesial—i.e. mainstream—and ecumenical character of mystical theology in East and West, precisely because it points to the common message of the Church in East and West which is the call to the ordinary-extraordinary path of becoming transformed into Christ through the Spirit of God. I will trace this ecclesial character of mystical theology, developing through the mystical writers a pneumatology which will trace the difficulty of talking about the Spirit as he ‘hides himself’ and always kenotically puts the other persons of the Trinity forward as well as leads the Christian into a flourishing of their personhood. I will look at the following aspects of pneumatology: the Christoform shape of the Spirit; the Spirit’s role in nourishing growth or transformation into Christ; how the Spirit leads the Christian into illumination and deification, conformity into Christ, and is the means by which the Trinity is stamped on the soul and sees the things of the spiritual world; and lastly how the Spirit is the author of the Body of Christ in which Christians are called to put on Christ, living lives headed by the Spirit, as inheritors of the divine nature.

## *THE DIFFICULTY OF DISCERNING THE SPIRIT*

There is something especially ‘difficult’ in the doctrine of the Spirit (Congar 1983; Kärkkäinen 2002, 2010; Wainwright 1997; Rogers 2005, 2009), as Gregory Nazianzen (330–90) pointed out (*Oration* 31.2; Williams and Wickham 2002: 117). It was comparatively late in Church history (late fourth century) and due to the work of Gregory himself that we begin to have widespread explicit and unambiguous assertions of the fact that the Spirit is not only divine but with the Father and the Son equally and truly ‘God’. Gregory tells us that the old covenant made known the Father but the Son was only known in it through shadows and by types. Then in the new covenant the Son was made manifest but we have only had a glimpse of the Spirit’s Godhead (*Or.* 31.26; Williams and Wickham 2002: 137) and that has come through a slow realization of his presence in our midst as the Church where from age to age he gradually gives us a clearer manifestation of himself. Indeed, there are certain truths, Jesus said, his disciples could not yet bear, amongst which was ‘the *Godhead* of the Spirit, which becomes clear at a later stage, when the knowledge is timely and capable of being taken in’: ‘light shines on us bit by bit’ (*Or.* 31.27; Williams and Wickham 2002: 138; cf. Florensky 1997: 83–91, 99–101). But why might it be so difficult to discern the character of the Spirit?

Vladimir Lossky (1903–58) observed that some of the difficulty of speaking about the Spirit is that he is the only divine person whose image is not made known in another. The divine persons make themselves known by bearing witness to one another. The Father thus is imaged in the Son who is his perfect image (Col. 1: 15) and the Spirit is the image of the Son in that he makes known the Son as the ‘Spirit of Christ’ (Rom. 8: 9) and ‘Spirit of the Lord’ (2 Cor. 3: 17). Thus Jesus says in John, ‘But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds

from the Father, he will bear witness to me' (John 15: 26). The Spirit 'remains unmanifested, hidden, concealing himself in his very appearing' (Lossky 1991: 160). Indeed, when we hear about the Spirit, it is usually through his transformative effects and his relationship to the other persons. The Holy Spirit is the one whom Jesus calls 'living water' (John 7: 38–40; cf. Num. 20: 2–13, Isa. 12: 3 and 44: 3, 55:1), 'the Spirit of truth' (John 14: 16–17; cf. 1 John 5: 7), and 'the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name' (John 14: 26). Now the Son sends the Spirit (John 15: 26) but he does this in consort with the Father (John 14: 26) and so the Spirit proceeds (at least in the divine economy) from them both as from one source. We see this when Jesus breathes on his disciples ('Receive the Holy Spirit': John 20: 22) and by the fact that it is in the Son's name that the Father sends the Spirit (John 14: 26) who witnesses to him (John 15: 26).

We see this curious unconcealed concealing of the Spirit, known but unknown through the other persons and through his effects, in the opening of one of the classics of Eastern Christian mystical writings, *Hymns of Divine Love* by Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022), where Symeon invokes the Spirit:

Come, true light (John 1: 9). Come, eternal life (1 John 5: 20). Come, hidden mystery (Eph. 3: 9). Come, nameless treasure. Come, ineffable reality. Come, incomprehensible face. Come, everlasting exultation. Come, unfading light. Come, trusty expectation of all who are saved. Come, awakening of those who sleep. Come, resurrection of the dead (John 11: 25). Come, Mighty One who always creates, who re-creates and who transforms all things by his will alone. Come, invisible, and untouchable,



and in every way intangible. Come, You Who always remain immutable, and Who at every hour are wholly altered, and are coming to us who lie in hell, You who are above all the heavens (Eph. 4: 10). Come, most beloved name repeated again and again, a name entirely forbidden for us to speak or to know the very person You are, the kind or quality. Come, eternal joy. Come, imperishable crown (1 Pet. 5: 4). Come purple of our great God and King. Come, crystalline cincture set with gems. Come, unapproachable sandal. Come, royal, purple robe and truly autocratic right hand! . . . Come my breath and my life (Acts 17: 25). . . . I thank You because You have become one spirit with me (1 Cor. 6: 17), unmixing, unmoved, immutable God over all things . . . For You have never been hidden from anyone, but we always hide ourselves from You, not wishing to come to You. For where would You hide, You who nowhere have a place to rest? Why would You hide? You who never turn away anyone at all, and You do not turn from anyone of them. And so now Master, dwell in me and inhabit me, and remain continually inseparable in me your slave, until my death, Good One, so that I also may be found both in my departure and after my departure in You (Phil. 3: 9), Good One, and I shall reign with You (2 Tim. 2: 12), God over all things!

(*Divine Eros: Hymns*, ‘Mystical Prayer’; [Griggs 2010](#): 33–4 and see Greek text at

[Koder 1969–73](#))

Symeon at first invokes the Spirit as a ‘hidden mystery’ and eternal ‘nameless treasure’ who, in one of the best known prayers in Eastern Orthodoxy, are ‘present everywhere,

filling all things' ('The Trisagion Prayers'; McGuckin 2008: 338 and see van Rossum 2011: 28–30). But as his invocation goes onwards we see that many of the things which he denotes the Spirit with, such as creation and redemption or re-creation (Col. 1: 15–20), are also things which we only receive through Christ himself. Indeed, the Spirit, is called the 'resurrection of the dead' by Symeon when we know that it is Christ himself who takes this name (John 11: 25). Symeon tells the Spirit that he will be found in him or will have his going out and going in the Spirit (Phil. 3: 9), reign with him (2 Tim. 2: 12) and refers to him as 'God over all things' (Rom. 9: 5). Likewise, the Spirit is said to be the royal purple, and the right hand of God, the divine crown and even the sandals mentioned by John the Baptist (John 1: 27). All of these things are identified with Christ, as the King, the Pantocrator. Symeon is not playing the Spirit over against Christ. What he is showing, and I shall elaborate this in this chapter, is that the Spirit is the 'Spirit of Christ' (Rom. 8: 9) who comes from the Father and he holds that as Christians we only have new life in Christ through the Spirit when he dwells in us uniting with our spirits. The Spirit is said never to 'hide' but we hide from him. Yet because he is everywhere present, for the unilluminated, he is nowhere, effectively hidden in plain sight. To use Symeon's language, he 'dwells' in us (or should we say 'hides'?) and clothes us and makes us as Christ. The saints and mystics—persons in the transformative process of salvation or deification—then are the place where Christians see the face of the Spirit and it is the face of Christ who shows us the Father.

## *THE KENOSIS OF THE SPIRIT*

Who bears witness to the Spirit? No other divine person. Rather, he kenotically empties himself and his very person is hidden, mysterious, unmanifested, concealed, for he exists for Christians as one whom is the bearer of the truth that comes ultimately from the Father of Christ. He incorporates us into the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12: 12–13) and clothes us in his resurrection (Rom. 8: 11). The Spirit is hidden precisely because he is the personal medium of the spiritual life, the transformation of the human being into adopted sons and daughters of God through the Son of God, ‘Christ’s’. The one ‘in whom we live and move and have our being’ (Acts 17: 28), as Symeon reminds us. Indeed, in Hebrew, ‘spirit’ is *ruah*—wind or breath—and in Greek *pneuma* has the same sense and so we have this elusiveness of the wind (John 3: 8).

The Spirit, according to this sort of Christian theological view, is something that at first one can only know by its effects just as at dawn when the sun rises over the mountains one sees all of the world illumined before one through the sun’s rays but not the source of the illumination and the rays itself. The disk or orb of the sun only comes at sunrise. So too the person of the Spirit himself will only be known face to face at the dawn of the Kingdom (Florensky 1992: 81, 92). Thus, there is an absence of the ‘personal revelation’ of the Spirit. In scripture and tradition, one sees much about the hypostatic action of the Spirit, the grace sent to illumine human beings (e.g. in prophecy), but this ‘grace-bestowing action’ is impersonal and is not the same thing as the unique ‘personal word’ of the Spirit, the ‘Holy Spirit himself or his personal presence’. The Spirit remains shrouded in mystery in this age, but revealed through the gifts he gives to the saints, the cloud of witnesses to Christ, through the Church as a perpetual Pentecost (Bulgakov 2004: 173–5).

Lossky put this well using an Eastern liturgical image when he observed that the Spirit is the ‘sovereign unction’ or ‘Chrism’ that rests upon the King, Jesus Christ, God’s beloved Son with whom he is well pleased (Matt. 3: 16–17, Luke 3: 21–2) and that it is through him that Christians, as those who are anointed in chrismation as little ‘Christs’ immediately after baptism are called to ‘reign with him in the age to come. It is then that this divine Person, now unknown, not having his image in another Hypostasis, will manifest himself in deified persons: for the multitude of the saints will be his image’ (Lossky 1991: 173). The Spirit is the ‘light of God’s face’ (Bulgakov 2008: 50) and between the times, the saints, the ‘mystics’ give a brief glimpse of the face of the Spirit.

## *THE SPIRIT SHINING IN THE FACE OF THE SAINT:*

### *THE CASE OF SERAPHIM OF SAROV*

This shining of the Spirit in the transformed faces of the saints who move from glory to glory as they put on Christ can be seen particularly well in the celebrated Russian spiritual teacher St Seraphim of Sarov (1754 (or 1759)–1833) (Kontzevitch 2004 and de Beausobre 1996). Seraphim was a late eighteenth-century–early nineteenth-century hermit and practitioner of hesychastic prayer near Sarov in the central part of European Russia. During the years of Seraphim’s monastic training he had various visions of Mary accompanied by the Apostles, angels, and finally of Jesus himself. During one such vision as a deacon serving in the church, he says that all of a sudden he was ‘illuminated by a ray of light, as it were from the sun; and when I looked at the light I saw Our Lord and God Jesus Christ appearing like the Son of Man in glory and radiating indescribable light,

surrounded by the heavenly host, angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim, as many as a swarm of bees' (Chichagov 1903: 56 in Ware and Shukman 2018: 50). This light imagery, typical of older hesychastic literature, is quite common but it pervades the accounts of Seraphim's teaching where the transformative energy or gracious power of the Holy Spirit is often described as fire, the sun, and light (Chichagov 1903: 113–14, 122, 126 in Ware and Shukman 2018: 103-04, 111, 114-15). We are likewise told that if we are to receive the eternal light of God and 'feel' it with our 'hearts' we must turn from visible and sensuous things and plunge the mind into the heart and cry out to God with the Jesus Prayer (Chichagov 1903: 126 in Ware and Shukman 2018: 114). Furthermore, it is said regularly by his disciples that he was illumined by uncreated light sometimes accompanied by the saints, especially the Mother of God who called him her 'favourite one' and 'beloved' and treated him as one of the saints, a Spirit bearer (Chichagov 1903: 323ff., 362, 389 in Ware and Shukman 2018: 293ff., 329, 352). The most famous example of identification of light and the Spirit with a Christiform life is (in longer and shorter recensions) 'A Conversation of St Seraphim of Sarov with Nicholas Motovilov Concerning the Aim of the Christian Life' (see Shukman 2005: 47–57 and Strizhev 1999) where Seraphim has a dialogue in the snowy woods with a disciple, the merchant Motovilov (1809–79).

Seraphim begins the conversation by saying that prayer, fasting, vigils, and all other good Christian acts such as alms giving are not the aim of the Christian life but are simply a means to its main end: 'to acquire the Holy Spirit of God' (Jones 1973: 42 [shorter version]). Seraphim says that Christians in acquiring the Spirit which is grace-giving and eternal are like smart business people acquiring capital for future investment.

Virtuous acts performed for the sake of Christ confers on one's soul the grace of the Holy Spirit just as selling earthly goods attains capital. The fire of the grace of the Holy Spirit which is like light 'prepares in our soul and body a throne for the all-creative presence of God' just as Paul says the human being becomes a 'temple of the living God', quoting Leviticus (2 Cor. 6: 16; Lev. 26: 12) (Jones 1973: 44–5, 46).

We are reminded here of Teresa of Avila's *Interior Castle* (1577) (see Tyler and Howells 2017), of how in prayer, in the hiddenness of stillness, the soul is united with God like a silkworm weaving around itself a cocoon from which emerges a butterfly. The silkworms require nourishment before they spin silk around themselves making tight little cocoons, in which they 'bury themselves', and they get this from mulberry leaves upon which they feed until they are full grown. The soul, in a manner akin to the silkworm, takes 'heat which comes from the Holy Spirit' given to it by God but this is given to it by the 'remedies' for its sins and temptations God left in the Church, including good books, sermons, frequent confession with obediences and penance, and all other good works. Through these divine aids the soul 'begins to live and nourishes itself on this food, and on good meditations, until it is full-grown' (*Interior Castle*, 5.2; Peers 1961: 104–6 and Alvarez 1998) and then having spun its house it enters in to die. But what is this house? We will return later to Teresa's image to answer this question.

Returning to the *Conversation*, Motovilov asks how and where he can see the Spirit in the world and himself: 'How am I to know whether he is with me or not?' Seraphim says that humans have wandered from the Spirit-filled state of the early Christians which was like Eden where human beings literally saw, walked, and held conversation with God (Gen. 3: 8): 'Men saw God and the grace of his Holy Spirit, not in sleep or in a dream, or

in the excitement of a disordered imagination, but truly, in the light of day' (Jones 1973: 47). The extraordinary experience of God in Eden and in the early Church was quite ordinary! After his resurrection, Jesus gave to his Apostles by breathing on them the ordinary-extraordinary mystical power of the Holy Spirit, the light which enlightens all. The Spirit which was lost by Adam is available once again to all in the Church in baptism and chrismation through 'The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit' (Jones 1973: 48: this liturgical formula is pronounced during chrismation in the Byzantine rite). We have simply become dead to its presence. Moreover, wherever the Spirit is, there likewise is the Father and the Son so that in baptism and chrismation we have the whole Trinity, the Kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, dwelling within us (see Plekon 2013: 5 and 10 n. 5): 'The grace of the Holy Spirit, given at Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, continues to shine in our heart as divine light in spite of our falls and the darkness of our soul. It is this grace that cries in us to the Father: "Abba, Father!" [Rom. 8: 15] and who reclothes the soul in the incorruptible garment woven for us by the Holy Spirit' (Zander 1975: 89 [long version]).

The Apostles, Seraphim claims, 'were consciously aware of the presence in themselves of God's Spirit'. Yet Motovilov is still not convinced by this mystical witness from scripture and tradition and he asks how he can recognize the 'true manifestation' of the Spirit (Jones 1973: 51). Here Seraphim takes Motovilov firmly by the shoulders so he too in his ordinary life can see and experience the extraordinary divine Spirit as he, Seraphim, sees him all the time: 'We are both together, son, in the Spirit of God! Why lookest thou on me?' Upon being touched by Seraphim, Motovilov claims he immediately saw Seraphim and then himself, like Moses (Exod. 34: 29–35) descending

from Horeb, Christ on Thabor, and numerous Desert Fathers (Florensky 1997: 73–7), shining with uncreated divine light: “I cannot look, father, because lightning flashes from your eyes” . . . “Fear not, my son; you too have become as bright as I. You too are now in the fullness of God’s Spirit; otherwise you would not be able to look on me as I am” (Jones 1973: 51). According to Seraphim, it is not only the mystic saint who shines with the Holy Spirit but every Christian, as one of God’s people, the saints, who are simply what we often call ‘mystics’.

The ‘uncreated divine light’ related by Motovilov is the Holy Spirit and its experience through the ‘spiritual senses’ (on this tradition: Gavriilyuk and Coakley 2012 and McInroy 2014) is at the heart of hesychasm or the tradition of the ‘prayer of the heart’ (or ‘mental prayer’) in Eastern Orthodoxy. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) in the ‘Hagioritic Tome’ (1340) argued that the intellect perceives one light which is uncreated and the senses another created light. Sight and intellect, he says, do not ordinarily perceive the same light, but each ‘operates to the limit of its nature in what is natural to it’. Now the saints are those possessed of spiritual ‘grace and power’ and they can uniquely see both created and uncreated light with the ‘sense of sight and with the intellect’ in a union that ‘surpasses both sense and intellect’ (‘The Declaration of the Holy Mountain in Defense of Those who Devoutly Practice a Life of Stillness’, §6; Palmer et al. 1979–95: iv. 424; and Theodoropoulos 1957–63). Symeon the New Theologian writes likewise: ‘How shall I describe, Master, the vision of your face,/ how shall I tell the unutterable contemplation of your beauty?/ [...] And so as I began, Master, meditating on these things,/ suddenly You appeared from above, much greater than the sun,/ and You shone from the heavens down as far as my heart, (2 Cor 4:6) [...] Oh



awesome wonder seen doubly with the double eyes of both body and soul!’ (*Divine Eros: Hymns*, 25, ll.1-2, 9-11, 60-1; Griggs 2010: 194-96; cf. *The Discourses*, 28.4; de Catanzaro 1980: 298 (where Christ is light)).

Seraphim tells Motovilov that he had been praying ‘mentally’ to God that Motovilov might see ‘clearly with bodily eyes’ the descent of the Spirit upon them, the light of the glory of God (Jones 1973: 52). Motovilov then claims that though they are sitting in the ordinary snowy woods in the middle of winter he feels an extraordinary warmth like a flame in the snow and smells an unearthly fragrance. He is told that not only is he seeing and feeling the Holy Spirit but he is smelling the ‘fragrance of God’s Holy Spirit’ (Jones 1973: 55) who is the interior Kingdom, the hidden promise of a new transfigured creation, transforming them from within (Jones 1973: 56). In a 1933 homily entitled ‘The Flaming Coal: Oration on the Centenary of the Passing of St. Seraphim of Sarov’, the great Russian theologian Sergii Bulgakov (1871-1944) said that Seraphim was a ‘spirit-bearer’ chosen by Mary as the Mother of God who is *the* Spirit-Bearer who appeared to him with the saints more frequently than to any other saint as she recognized him as one of her own kind who manifests the glory (i.e. the Spirit) of the Kingdom: ‘That light of Tabor in which the Lord manifested His glory to His disciples by the action of the Holy Spirit and which He manifests to His chosen, was manifested by St. Seraphim to his spiritual friend, to whom he showed an image of the transfiguration of the world, the new creation, the new heaven and new earth, under the action of the Holy Spirit, here, on earth’ (Bulgakov 2008: 46-47). Thus, like Symeon before him, we see in Seraphim that the face of the Spirit is revealed by his indwelling in the saint or mystic who, in putting on Christ, conforming himself to Christ through the life of the Spirit through fasting,

vigils, prayer, and almsgiving, reveals God with His Kingdom that is to come shining from his life, deeds, and (literally) face.

## *THE 'SPIRIT OF CHRIST' AND THE SAINT AS 'SECOND CHRIST'*

As Georges Florovsky (1893–1979) noted on the *Conversation* in a 1963 letter, we must avoid the temptation of playing ‘pneumatic’ over against ‘Christological’. The story of Seraphim and Motovilov is ultimately one showing us how Christ and the Spirit find their right balance in spiritual life. One can never have the Spirit without Christ since the Spirit and his gifts ‘can be acquired only in the name of Christ’ (Gallaher and Ladouceur 2019: 237). In the order of salvation, there is no higher name than Christ, for you only can address the Father God in Christ’s name. But the calling of ‘Abba! Father!’ (Rom. 8: 15) by us can only be itself in and through his Spirit, the ‘Spirit of Christ’ (Rom. 8: 9 and see [Coakley 2013](#): 111–15), for ‘Pentecost is the mystery of the Crucified Lord, Who rose again to send the Paraclete’, realizing his living and salvific body through his saints (Gallaher and Ladouceur 2019: 238).

Seraphim, then, is another or second Christ (*alter Christus*), akin to Francis of Assisi (1182–1226) (See Van Os 1974 and de Campagnola 1971). As Christians, being baptized into the body of Christ, through one’s participation in his death and life through the Spirit, one is potentially transformed into another Christ (*Christianus alter Christus*). This is expressed neatly by Angelus Silesius (c.1624–77): ‘Because my savior once welcomed humanity / I too now sit, in him, at God’s right hand like he’ (*The Wanderer*,

1.220; Pelz 2001: 21). Through the Spirit, shining in glory in the deeds and physical body of the saint or mystic, one has Christ not only in his head but also his body (Gallaher and Ladouceur 2019: 238). As Augustine (354-430) put it: 'For Christ is not in the head *or* in the body, but Christ is wholly in the head *and* in the body' (*Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 28.1; Rettig 1993: 3, *PL* 35.1622). To return to Teresa of Avila's image, she tells us that the silkworm that feeds on nourishment in its cocoon so that it eventually is transformed into a butterfly is an image of the soul feeding on the warmth of the Spirit through the divine ecclesial aids given it whose life is hid in Christ in God (Col. 3: 3). Its house or cocoon *is Christ* ('he will be our Mansion') (*Interior Castle*, 5.2; Peers 1961: 105) so that, as Rowan Williams observes about Teresa, 'we are in fact spinning a cocoon around ourselves: by emptying the self we "build" Christ around us' (Williams 1991: 128). The soul is 'hidden in the greatness of God and closely united with him' and when it emerges from this suspension of the Prayer of Quiet, the presence of Christ *in God*, becoming perfect in its love for the neighbour and so truly loving God, it is transformed into a 'little white butterfly', a new being in Christ through his Spirit (*Interior Castle*, 5.2; Peers 1961: 105–6, 114–17) just as with Seraphim we see that through the acquisition of the Spirit, the life of the prayer of the heart, cultivating quietude, one is transformed into a second or another Christ.

## *THE SPIRIT AS DIVINIZER: THE CASE OF JOHN OF THE CROSS*

This revelation of the Spirit in the deified human being who is transformed into Christ in our midst is also seen in one of the great classics of Western mystical writing: St John of the Cross (1481–1534) (see [Howells 2002](#)). We learn as much in John about the nature of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity as we do about theosis. There is no opposition in him of ‘spirituality’/‘mysticism’ and doctrinal theology (A. N. [Williams 2014](#): 523).

The mystical ordinary-extraordinary process of union or deification, for John, is articulated in the form of God’s transformation of the soul through his embrace and wounding of it in the fire of love as Bride to a Bridegroom whereby the Trinity is revealed at its core and the soul is shown to be as if it were God himself in its union. The imagery is erotic unlike in the case of Seraphim—God is even shown to be vulnerable in an inspired love chase of Bride with Bridegroom—but once again, like Seraphim, we see how the Spirit plays a crucial role in conforming the human person to God in Christ and that this involves a transformation: a transfiguration, a becoming light by light. For in Christ’s light one shall see and be light.

We learn from John that ‘The power and the tenacity of love is great, for love captures and binds God himself’ (*Spiritual Canticle*, 32.1; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 599 and see [López-Baralt and Pacho 1991](#)). The love which John speaks of is the love of the soul or Bride for the Son of God, Jesus Christ, as the ‘Bridegroom’, but this love is divine since the Son of God ‘is the principal lover’ (*Spiritual Canticle*, 12.2–3, 31.2; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 516, 596) and the ‘living flame of love’ is the Holy Spirit (of which more later) (*The Living Flame of Love*, 1.1; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 641). John’s *Spiritual Canticle* (1584), inspired by the *Song of Songs* medieval commentary tradition, is dedicated to the soul and her Bridegroom. God is said

to be aroused at the soul who is compared with a woman with flowing hair (*Spiritual Canticle*, 31; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 475 and see 595ff.).

God, John says, gazes at the ‘hair’, which is the soul’s love, fluttering at its neck and is ‘captivated’ and sees her ‘eye’, that is, her faith, and her ‘single-hearted fidelity’ so touches him that the ‘eyes of her faith so tighten . . . the bonds of his captivity as to cause a wound of love’ (*Spiritual Canticle*, 31.2–9; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 596–8). God is the ‘prisoner’ of the soul and he ‘is surrendered to all her desires . . . those who act with love and friendship toward him will make him do all they desire . . . by love they bind him with one hair’ (*Spiritual Canticle*, 32.1; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 599). Yet no credit is due to the soul in attracting the love of God in Christ (*Spiritual Canticle*, 32; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 599–601) through its love since he first loved his creation in creating it and then in redeeming it by taking flesh because of it (*Spiritual Canticle*, 31.8; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 598).

The soul is so elevated by God’s love which graciously makes her pleasing to him (‘By infusing his grace in the soul, God makes it worthy and capable of his love’) (*Spiritual Canticle*, 32.5; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 600) that she is united, indeed, divinized (‘make her his equal’) (*Spiritual Canticle*, 32.6; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 600) by that love which joins and binds the soul and God that ‘it unites and transforms them . . . that even though they differ in substance, in glory and appearance the soul seems to be God and God seems to be the soul’ (*Spiritual Canticle*, 31.1; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 595). God loves the soul in Christ and because in Christ, as the Son of God, he loves it ‘in himself, with himself, that is, with the very love

by which he loves himself” and this is the Holy Trinity itself (*Spiritual Canticle*, 32.6 and see 39.4; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 600 and see 623).

John teaches that the Word, the Son of God, together with the Father and Spirit is hidden by his essence, he is present in the ‘innermost being of the soul’ (*Spiritual Canticle*, 1.6; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 481 and see *Living Flame*, 1.15 and 4.14; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 646, 713). This Trinitarian mark to the soul in Christ is explored in John’s poem and commentary, *The Living Flame of Love* (1591), which is ‘Stanzas the Soul Recites in Intimate Union with God’ (*Living Flame*, prologue, 4; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 639). The soul insofar as it draws near to God, finds God at its centre, is glorified by the flame of love, and left with the impression of God as Trinity in its inner being. That which marks the soul, wounds it, deifies it, is love itself, the ‘living flame of love’ of the poem title who is the Holy Spirit as the ‘Spirit of its Bridegroom’, Christ (*Living Flame*, prologue 2 and Stanza 1, 1-3; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 639, 641):

O living flame of love  
That tenderly wounds my soul  
in its deepest center! Since  
now you are not oppressive,  
now consummate! If it be your will:  
tear through the veil of this sweet encounter!

(*Living Flame*, Stanza 1; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 641)

The centre of the soul is found through the Spirit of God, love itself. When the soul has reached God with the full ‘capacity of its being and the strength of its operation and inclination’ it then finds its final and deepest centre in God himself as Trinity and knows, loves, and takes joy in God who is itself (*Living Flame*, 1.12; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 645). The veil of mortal life is torn aside by the encounter with the flame of the

Spirit (*Living Flame*, 1.1; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 641) and it raises up the soul to the ‘activity of God in God’ (*Living Flame*, 1.4; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 642). The soul now in its workaday world lives in God spiritually and experiences the extraordinary life of God in himself becoming ‘transformed into a flame of love in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are communicated to it’ and, without confusion of the divine and the human, it enjoys ‘a foretaste of eternal life’ (*Living Flame*, 1.6; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 643 and compare Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, 7.1; [Peers 1961](#): 209–10 and [Plekon 2013](#): 4–5).

This state is the state of union, for ‘love unites it with God’ (*Living Flame*, 1.13; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 645). The Christian, like St Paul, can say ‘that he does not live but Christ lives in Him. [Gal. 2: 20] In accord with this likeness and transformation, we can say that his life and Christ’s were one life through union of love’ (*Spiritual Canticle*, 12.8; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 518). In this state, the soul is wounded at its centre and by this wounding it is illuminated, radiated in its being with light, the flame of love, the Spirit, which ‘transforms it in its whole being, power, and strength, and according to its capacity, until it appears to be God’. John uses the image of a pure and clean crystal that has light shone upon it. The more intense the degree of light shining on the crystal then the more light the crystal has concentrated within it and the brighter it becomes so that it can become ‘so brilliant from the abundance of light received that it seems to be all light. And then the crystal is undistinguishable from the light, since it is illumined according to its full capacity which is to be appear to be light’, that is, the crystal *seems* to be God himself (*Living Flame*, 1.13; [Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991](#): 645). One is reminded here of the accounts of Seraphim and Symeon on

the saint or mystic shining with the light of the Spirit as if she were transparent. As Basil the Great writes: ‘When a sunbeam falls on a transparent substance, the substance itself becomes brilliant, and radiates light from itself. So too Spirit-bearing souls, illumined by Him, finally become spiritual themselves, and their grace is sent forth to others’ (*On the Holy Spirit*, 9.23; Pruche 1968: 328–9/Anderson 2001: 44). The saint or mystic in being brought out into the ordinary-extraordinary path of transformation becomes transparent by the Spirit and becomes a second Christ in our midst with the Holy Trinity (‘the Kingdom’) dwelling within us irradiating and warming those who come near them like a flame in the snow.

## *BAPTISM AND THE DESCENT OF THE SPIRIT: THE OPEN SECRET OF THE SAINTS*

It might be thought at this point that I have contradicted the argument I set out at the beginning that ‘mysticism’ is not about the experience of certain unique mystical adepts but it is the ordinary-extraordinary open secret of the saints, all God’s people as ‘mystics’. In fact, what we have just seen about pneumatology and its links to Christology and deification in Symeon, Seraphim, Teresa of Avila, and John of the Cross is underlined by a reading of sacramental theology where all alike participate in Christ through his Spirit. Salvation, accomplished first through the cross and resurrection, can be understood as the deifying work of Jesus Christ realized in and through his living Body, the Church, but effected ultimately by his Spirit at Pentecost creating the saving Body of the Church by the will of the Father. This gift is given (at least partially) through



various sacramental actions, above all through the Sacrament of Baptism, which is traditionally understood as the well-spring of the Church. In short, the mystical life is the sacramental inheritance of all Christians who live through the Spirit of Christ, even if this is only actualized in its fullness by a few ‘mystics’.

Baptism, which is in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2: 38; cf. 19: 5 and 1 Cor. 1: 12–15) and the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6: 11), that is, Trinitarian baptism (Matt. 28: 19), is a new birth ‘of water and the Spirit’ (John 3: 5) granting not only forgiveness of sins but also the gift of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 6: 1–4), as can be seen from Christ’s own baptism (Matt. 3: 13–17; Mark 1: 9–11; Luke 3: 21–2; John 1: 31–4). No longer is one headed by the devil as sons of the old man but in baptism one becomes, in the Christian understanding, headed by the new man Jesus Christ through his Spirit (cf. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adv. Haer.* 5.20.2, [Rousseau et al. 1965–82](#): 260). The image of Christ, that is, the image of God in whom one was made, is renewed in being conformed to the pattern of Christ’s death on the cross. But in becoming conformed to his death one hopes as a Christian in like manner to become partakers of his resurrection and preserving the gift of the Spirit, increasing the grace given to one as a talent, one might receive the high calling and be numbered with the first-born whose names are written in heaven in Jesus Christ, the Lord and Saviour. In short, in becoming one with Jesus Christ in baptism, that is, in putting on Christ by baptism (Gal. 3: 27), as a Christian one believes one become sons of God, ‘christs’ in Christ by adoption by the Father through the anointed seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, as Cyril of Jerusalem (c.313–86) says on chrismation: ‘Now that you have been baptized and have put on Christ, you have been shaped to the likeness of the Son of God. . . . You have become christs now that you have received the sacramental

sign of the Holy Spirit' ('Mystagogic Catechesis 3: Concerning the Anointing with Chrism', 1; [Yarnold 2000](#): 176).

But this renewal of the Christian's being in the Spirit, as an adoption by the Father in Christ through the Spirit, which is baptism, is not, as Alexander Schmemmann (1921–83) observed, simply an isolated 'affair between the priest and the baptizand' ([Schmemmann 1995](#): 42), for, in baptism and then chrismation, the whole Church is renewed through the Spirit as the Body of God. The fact that the Church itself is renewed in its being by each baptism as a permanent and personal Pentecost can be seen from one of the diaconal petitions of the Great Litany of the Order of Baptism in the Eastern Orthodox Church: 'That we may be illumined by the light of understanding and piety, and by the descent of the Holy Spirit' ([Hapgood 1996](#): 276).

But how could baptism and chrismation not affect the Church since to be incorporated through the Spirit *into* Christ's body, which has many diverse members chosen by Christ himself who is its head, is covalent with being baptized *into* the Church? In other words, baptism cannot but be a corporate act since it is a form of incorporation! As the first prayer for the Reception of the Catechumenate in the same Byzantine rite puts it: 'Inscribe him (her) in thy Book of Life, and unite him (her) to the flock of thine inheritance' ([Hapgood 1996](#): 271). This is not simply a peculiar Eastern Christian emphasis. In the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, we see the same basic ideas in its rite of infant baptism—albeit in an Augustinian key—of salvation being tied up in the action of the Spirit in baptism which is an incorporation into the Church. Baptism is said to be for the 'mystical washing away of sin' and 'spiritual regeneration' and the minister calls on God to 'wash him and sanctify him with the Holy Ghost; that he

being delivered from thy wrath, may be received into the ark of Christ's Church' and finally being faithful may come to everlasting life (Book of Common Prayer 1918: 293–4).

## *THE CHURCH AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE EUCHARIST*

Continuing with this grounding of mystical theology and pneumatology in the basics of sacramental life, we see that Christians are baptized so that in the waters and in their anointing and their reception of the bread of heaven, they might thereby receive the Holy Spirit and become living and, indeed priestly (1 Pet. 1: 22–2: 10), members of Christ's own Church growing into the full stature of Jesus Christ, drinking of 'one Spirit' to become one Body of many members (1 Cor. 12: 13–14; cf. 12: 27, Gal. 3: 27–9).

Furthermore, the apostles were sent off in the Great Commission by Christ to 'make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Matt. 28: 19) and this commandment was understood, in the light of Pentecost, as the incorporation of the baptizand into a community which, in its teaching, fellowship, breaking of the bread, and constant prayer, anticipated as a foretaste the Kingdom of the Coming One, Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of God, as Paul wrote, is not a matter of food and wine but 'righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 14: 17). Thus there is a deep connection between the ideas of the Holy Spirit and the Kingdom and this profound link is found in the liturgy and the sacraments, which are

outward manifestations of the Kingdom of God in Church life. But the fullness of the acquisition of this Kingdom comes only through the Spirit (Florensky 1997: 101–2).

This vision of the Kingdom as intrinsically pneumatic and eucharistic can be seen in the baptism and subsequent life of the three thousand who were converted at Pentecost: ‘So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers’ (Acts 2: 41–2). Baptism presupposes the eucharist as its crown (Schmemmann 1995: 116), for baptism is the door of the Church through which in participating in the eucharist one is given a foretaste of the Heavenly Kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, as Boris Bobrinskoy (b. 1925) writes:

The Eucharist is at once the advent of the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit which we reach by Trinitarian Baptism, and the place where the Church manifests herself and renews herself. Baptism is, therefore, at once the door of the new life, the gift of the Spirit, the source of Trinitarian grace and the door of the Church, in which Baptism is accomplished.

(Bobrinskoy 1971: 128–9)

But all of this is to make a more fundamental point which is that it is impossible to extricate the persons of the Spirit, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, and their Father. As Symeon the New Theologian observes, Jesus himself is the door to salvation (John 10: 7–9). In turn, the grace of the Spirit is the ‘key of knowledge’ to that door of salvation, eternal life which is given through faith, producing knowledge and understanding of the

Father and Son through illumination, and opening our closed and veiled minds ‘through many parables and symbols . . . as well as by clear proofs’. But one first sees this enlightening of one’s mind—given to one in the purification and illumination of baptism where one is born from on high and anew as children of God—in Christ’s breathing on the disciples giving them the Spirit and the power to forgive sins (John 20: 22–3), Finally, the owner of the house is the Father in which there are many rooms (John 14:2). But one cannot come to him except through the Son (John 14: 6) and, as was said, one comes to the Son through the Spirit (John 15: 25, 16: 7, 13): ‘Do you see how through the Spirit, or, rather, in the Spirit, the Father and the Son are made known inseparably?’ (*The Discourses*, 33.3–6; [de Catanzaro 1980](#): 341–4; for Greek see [Krivochéine 1963–5](#)).

## *AUGUSTINE AND THE REALIZATION OF THE ‘BODY OF THE ONE DOVE’*

Yet is the position I have argued unique to the East? In fact, it is upheld by Augustine (354–430), perhaps the quintessential Western theologian, who holds that the ordinary-extraordinary Christian life is quite simply mystical in that it is an ever-greater realization of the Body of Christ in the world through the actions of his Spirit (see [Ratzinger 1998](#)). The Holy Spirit, for Augustine, is the common Spirit of the Father and Son who ‘shows forth the communion’ (*Trin.* 15.19.37; [Mountain and Glorie 1968/Hill 1996](#): 424) of God who is love in essence (1 John 4: 8). The Spirit is the common love by which the Father and Son love one another and so is ‘distinctively (*proprie*)’ called love (*Trin.* 15.19.37.142; [Mountain and Glorie 1968/Hill 1996](#): 424), in other words, *Deus ergo ex*

*deo est dilectio* (love therefore is God from God) (*Trin.* 15.17.31.108; Mountain and Glorie 1968/Hill 1996: 420). As love, the Spirit is the unifying person of God, love as the *communio* of the Father and the Son, such that Augustine even goes so far as to claim that in a manner of speaking (*f. et symb.*, 9.19; Russell 1955) the Spirit as the love subsisting between Father and Son is the Godhead (*deitas*) of the Trinity. We may not only say then ‘God is Love’ (1 John 4: 8) but also ‘Love is God’ (*Trac. Ep. Jo.* 7.6, 9.10; Burnaby 2006, but see *F. et Symb.*, 9.19; Russell 1955). This Spirit, Love itself, is called variously by Augustine: the ‘gift of God’ (*Trin.* 4.20.29, 5.11.12, 15.17.27; Mountain and Glorie 1968/Hill 1996: 174, 197, 418, and *Ench.* 31.17; Evans 1953, and *F. et Symb.*, 9.19; Russell 1955), the ‘will of God’ (*Trin.* 15.20.38; Mountain and Glorie 1968/Hill 1996: 425–6), the fountain of love/life (*Trac. Ep. Jo.* 7.1, 6; Burnaby 2006), the fire of love (*Sermons* 6.1–2 [Denis]; Kavanagh 1947 and 227; Hill 1993a) and the bond of communion between the Father and the Son (*Sermon* 71.18; Hill 1991, cf. *Trin.* 5.11.12; Mountain and Glorie 1968/Hill 1996: 197).

The Church is the house of the Spirit built up in and by the donation of the love of Christ (*Trin.* 15.19.34; Mountain 1968/Hill 1996: 422–3, *Ench.* 15.56; Evans 1953, *Sermon* 71.28; Hill 1991, *Jo. Ev. Tr.* 26.13.1–2, 27.6; Rettig 1988) who is the same Spirit of love who abides in the Christian and the Christian in him: ‘So it is the Holy Spirit of which he has given us that makes us abide in God and him in us. But this is precisely what love does. He then is the gift of God who is love’ (*Trin.* 15.17.31; Mountain and Glorie 1968/Hill 1996: 420–1). Christ did not send this gift of the Spirit once but ever sends him into the world so that those who are Christians may be ever transformed, recreated anew as his Body, the Church imaging the triune life of God as ‘the gathering

of Unity' (*Sermon* 71.37; Hill 1991: 269). In cleaving to one other, one cleaves to him and he to the Christian, in other words, "God is love, and he that abideth in love, abideth in God and God abideth in him." There is a mutual indwelling of the holder and the held: your dwelling in God means that you are held by him, God's dwelling in you means that he holds you, lest you fall. Think of yourself as being made a house of God' (*Trac. Ep. Jo.* 8.14; Burnaby 2006: 327). The Church, then, is quite simply, a perpetual Pentecost (cf. *Civ. Dei* 20.17; Bettenson 1987), a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit made up of the saints/the mystics in whom one sees that Spirit of Christ as little 'christs'. This Spirit who brings one together is he who is the Gift given by Christ as saving grace in the death and resurrection of Baptism and poured out in the anointing with chrism in confirmation/chrismation and ever after in all the sacraments of God (cf. *Trin.* 15.26.46; Mountain and Glorie 1968/Hill 1996: 431).

According to Augustine, we see God as Trinity, wise love (wisdom-love) in the Spirit (Williams 1990: 327), pre-eminently in our becoming members of the Body of Christ, as the *imago Trinitatis*. But how did he think Christians become the Church? The Holy Spirit is active in the sacraments as we saw earlier with baptism but this is also particularly true for the eucharist, which builds up the Church. Augustine exhorts his auditors to partake of the sacraments so that they may be joined in thankfulness to one another in love and become the Body of Jesus Christ (e.g. 'eat what binds you together' (Sermon 228B; Hill 1993a, 262), 'empty your heart of earthly love and you shall drink of the love divine: charity will begin its dwelling in you, and from charity nothing evil can proceed', and 'God's Spirit calls you to drink of himself' (*Trac. Ep. Jo.* 2.8, 7.6; Burnaby 2006: 274, 315)). As the Body of Christ, the Church reflects the very life of God, which

is one of praise, insofar as praise is total self-giving love and wisdom in this love, which is communion in the Spirit (Williams 1990: 327).

In the love of the Spirit, the Church discovers itself anew as the very mystery of the triune God in Christ, enacted on the altar of God. In other words, Christians hold they discover their lives as Trinitarian and Christological precisely insofar as they are eucharistic lives of self-giving praise and thanks, which is the 'wise love' of God. The life of the Spirit one receives as a Christian, then, in partaking of the sacraments is their own life as the one life in Christ as the God-man, the great High Priest, the offerer and offered in whom they have the royal priesthood of the eternal Kingdom of God (e.g. 'What you receive is what you yourselves are' (Sermon 229A.1; Hill 1993a: 270, cf. Sermon 6.1; Kavanaugh 1947, Sermon 227; Hill 1993a, Sermon 272; Hill 1993b and *Civ. Dei* 10.6, 20; Bettenson 1987)). Quite simply, in the reception of the eucharist, one is *in Christ* and to be in union with him with one's fellow Christians is to be a second Christ through his Spirit.

For Augustine, one is bound together in the life of faith and hope expressed as a love that strives to understand the depths of the wise love of God by participation in the mysteries of the Church. This love which is life is Jesus Christ in communion for eternity with the Father and the Spirit and now given to Christians as themselves in the Body of Christ and Fountain of Immortality. Using an ancient image, Augustine, in his homilies to the newly illumined about to partake of the eucharist, often will describe graphically how one becomes the Church, as the wise love of God in the Spirit, in the partaking of the sacraments. The initiates/catechumens are like many grains of wheat that were turned



into one loaf of bread finally being sprinkled and kneaded at the font and then baked into ‘the bread of the Lord’ by the fire of the Holy Spirit (chrism):

Now consider what you have received, and, since you see that it was made into one when it was made what it is, be you also at one, be united in love; be united in holding the same faith and the same hope; be united in undivided charity. When heretics receive this sacrament, they receive testimony against themselves, because they strive for division; whereas this bread betokens unity. And at one time, the wine also was many grapes, but now it is one. The pleasant wine in the chalice is one, but it was not one until it had been crushed in the wine-press. In the name of Christ, you have now, as it were, reached the chalice of the Lord, but you did not reach it until you had been rendered humble and contrite through fasting and labours. You are there on the table; you are there in the chalice. You are this body with us, for, collectively, we are this body. We drink of the same chalice because we live the same life.

(Augustine, *Sermon* 6.2; Kavanaugh 1947: 322–32; *Sermon* 229; Hill 1993a: 265–8)

Christ, then, according to Augustine, gives to ordinary Christians in these sacraments his very life, the mystical gift of the Spirit as a wise love who recreates one as his temple, members of his Body, each person serving the other in, by, and through the love of Christ with particular spiritual gifts (*Trin.* 15.19.34; Mountain and Glorie 1968/Hill 1996: 422–3) becoming transformed into ‘christs’ in Christ through his Spirit. To be sure, Augustine so fully emphasized the pneumatic aspect of the Church, the members of the spiritual

Body communing in love in each other as God communions in them and they in him and he in himself, a communion of the saints just as mystical as the experiences of Sts Symeon and Teresa, that, in a marvellous phrase in his *De Baptismo*, he described the Church, as ‘the body of the one dove (*unicae columbae corpore*)’ (*Bapt.* 4.20.28; cf. 3.18.23 and 5.16.21; [Petschenig 1908](#)/King [1999](#): 459; cf. 444 and 470).

## *CONCLUSION: THE CALL OF ALL TO THE MYSTICAL PATH*

Pneumatology, therefore, in a mystical theological key, is the study of how the Holy Spirit hides himself, empties himself, in putting forward the other persons of the Trinity and in being the medium of spiritual and ecclesial life. But in revealing himself in concealing himself, Christians confess that they see him in the faces of their fellow saints and in the story of the extraordinary ordinariness of their life as adopted sons and daughters of God, in the process of illumination and deification becoming transformed in Christ as ‘christs’ through the Spirit from glory to glory, given to them not only in the extraordinary union of some with God in contemplative prayer, but in the life of the sacraments open to all where they partake of the Spirit. And in drinking of the Spirit, they believe they become ever more every day more perfectly conformed to the life of Christ by the loving will of the Father which is, at its very simplest, what it is to be a mystic: a Christian.

Suggested Reading

Bulgakov (2004); Coakley (2013); Congar (1983); Kärkkäinen (2002, 2010); Lossky (1991); McIntosh (1998); Rogers (2005, 2009); Waaijman (2002); and Wainwright (1997).

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