

The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit in the General Epistles and the Book of Hebrews¹

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Introduction

Few discussions of the New Testament pneumatology focus on either the General Epistles² or the Book of Hebrews³ where references to the Holy

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² The letters of James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2 and 3 John; and Jude are known collectively as the General or Catholic Epistles on the grounds that they were originally addressed to early Christians in general rather than to specific individuals or congregations. See Philip B. Harner, *What Are They Saying About the Catholic Epistles?* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2004), 1.

³ While Hebrews has been included among the letters of Paul since ancient times, its placement between the letters of Paul and the General Epistles reflects awareness among earlier scholars of the work's distinctiveness (James W. Thompson, *Hebrews* (ed. Mikeal G. Parsons and Charles H. Talbert; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 4.) The book identifies neither the author nor its recipients. There is absence too, of normal epistolary conventions. There are few clues for its dating or location. Though many maintain that Hebrews is a letter written to Jewish Christians who were tempted to return to Judaism, the book gives rather a coherent reorienting picture of the issues any Christians living during the time were facing. Hebrews challenges every reader with a vision of reality, an understanding of Jesus Christ, and a sense of Christian identity and hope in a world of ambiguity and uncertainty. See Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (ed. C. Clifton Black; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 1-3; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 7, 20-21. In light of these observations, this study purposefully includes the book of Hebrews in a discussion of pneumatology along with that of the General Epistles. While

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Spirit are rare, brief, and passing—seemingly more of an aside than a well-defined focus. Since the clearest emphasis on the lively activity of the Holy Spirit in the early years of the Church is found in the writings of Luke, Paul, and John’s Gospel,⁴ what more could these oft “forgotten books in the back of the New Testament”⁵ bring to the discussion? What do they have to say on pneumatology? What more might they tell us about the Holy Spirit within the early Church—or within normative Christian experience? What model, if any, would they provide? What further insight might they give into the Church’s pneumatology as its members encountered the challenges of the Greco-Roman world, the variety and ferment of its own expanding membership, the emergence within of subtle enervating heresies, and the articulation of its beliefs and praxis? What continued link between the Spirit’s descent at Pentecost and the church’s sustained vision of the resurrected Christ would we observe? Any inquiry into the pneumatology of the General Epistles or the Book of Hebrews inevitably asks such questions—and more. We begin by placing these books in historical context.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost enabled the early Church to envision (as well as experience and proclaim the benefits of) the

not a General Epistle as such, the message of Hebrews is nevertheless addressed to early Christians in general rather than to specific individuals or congregations. In doing so this author does not deny Pauline authorship of the book.

⁴ Gary M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), xi.

⁵ In comparison to the rest of the New Testament writings, the General Epistles and the Book of Hebrews for the most part have been neglected with regard to discussions on many New Testament matters. It is felt that one can hardly find an elaborate theology in such short letters like the General Epistles. Recent scholarship however, is bringing a greater understanding of these books as well as a deeper appreciation for their rich contribution to Christian faith and life. See *ibid.*; Craig L. Blomberg & Miriam J. Kamell, *James* (ed. Clinton E. Arnold; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 21-35. The enigmatic nature of Hebrews together with its breadth of ideas, stately flow of argument (the longest sustained argument in the NT) and challenging assertions have likewise led it to be a neglected part of New Testament theological reflection. See Marie E. Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2002), 3-17; Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 1-3; William G. Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence: The Book of Hebrews Speaks to Our Day* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1979), 9-11; George R. Knight, *Exploring Hebrews: A Devotional Commentary* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 2003), 21; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 3-20.

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exaltation and coronation of Christ (Acts 2:1-36). The Spirit was to fall on all because Jesus was Lord of all (Acts 2:36). The Spirit's coming shattered the church's understanding of reality with a new image of Jesus and discipleship. The Holy Spirit was a worldview transforming sign from heaven (Acts 2:16-22; cf. Eph 1:13; 4:30; Heb 2:4; 6:4, 5). Thus the Spirit's descent animated the Church's identity and zeal for mission to the world, so much so that the Church literally burst upon the Greco-Roman world (Acts 2:40-47; 4:4; 5:14; Col 1:23; cf. Acts. 28:30-31; 1:8). Within one generation the gospel of the exalted Christ reached across the civilized world turning it upside down (Acts 17:6). This incredible expansion was not without opposition both from the Greco-Roman world, which the Church sought to win, and from the ferment of enervating heresies within her own community. How could the Church sustain momentum and maintain spiritual/doctrinal integrity against these counter realities? How could she sustain her vision of the exalted Christ? Would matters of the Spirit still factor large?

The answer in part is found in the General Epistles together with the Book of Hebrews. Written in the turbulence of the above-mentioned challenges, their respective messages unfold theological and practical concerns during the chaotic years at the beginning, the close, and throughout first century Christian writing.⁶ They reveal, so to speak, "a

⁶ James is the first of the so-called Catholic or General Epistles and likely provides one of the earliest New Testament documents written—perhaps the first Christian writing of any kind of which we know of very early Jewish Christianity—suggesting to the modern reader that these are our roots. Scholars place James' death in A.D. 62 and suggest the letter may have been written somewhere before the apostolic council in Jerusalem (A.D. 48-49). The thinking is that if the letter had been written after the apostolic council in Jerusalem it surely would have mentioned the issues from that momentous occasion. Thus the letter was most likely written in the early to mid-40s. See Andrew Chester, "The Theology of James," in *The Theology of the Letters of James, Peter, and Jude* (ed. James D. G. Dunn; Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1994), 1-62; Harner, *What Are They Saying About the Catholic Epistles?*, 1-20; D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Epistles of James: Tests of Living Faith* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1979), 39-41; Kamell, *James*, 35; Ralph P. Martin. "The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter," in *The Theology of the Letters of James, Peter, and Jude* (ed. James D. G. Dunn; Cambridge: University Press, 1994), 63-168. The letters of Paul are also quite early with scholars placing Galatians as early as A.D. 48 (see Carl P. Cosaert, *Galatians: A Fiery Response to a Struggling Church* [Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2011], 19-22). On the other end of the century's spectrum, the Epistles of John highlight spiritual and ecclesiastical issues at the close of the first century.

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theology on the run⁷ where much is assumed, tacit, unfinished. Throughout, significant elements of faith regarding the Holy Spirit emerge by way of passing comments or brief points made during the course of arguments.

The Church's pneumatology however, is more pervasive than the few references might suggest. Each writer worked within a larger triune God mindset; where two persons of the Godhead could be related together and by implication includes the third.⁸ The implications of this Trinitarian mindset comprise distinctness of persons, ontological equality/oneness, and role diversity: in other words, the three members of the Godhead equally share in the divine being.⁹ Christian experience in effect, is envisioned as one with the Triune God. It means—from the standpoint of the Godhead—Triune atonement (Heb 9:14; 10:29-31), invitation to know the Triune God (Acts 2:38-39), Trinitarian salvation (Rom 5:5-6; 8:9, 11; Eph

⁷ The experience of each leader/writer together with the Holy Spirit led to corresponding Spirit guided theological reflection and exhortation, which in turn would mold the church's understanding and way of life (experience).

⁸ Within the same thought context, the authors may casually refer to the different members of the Trinity. Four kinds of scriptural material express this triune God (Trinitarian) mindset. These comprise passages that include: 1) Jesus and the Father (Matt 1:23; 2:15; 7:21; 10:32-33; 11:27; 27:43; Mk 14:36; Jn 1:1, 14, 18; 5:17-18; 6:40, 47; 8:18-19, 38; 10:15, 36; 11:4; 13:3; Rom 1:3; 1 Cor 1:3; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 2:5-11; Col 1:15-20; 2 Th 1:2, 12; Phlm 3; Heb 1:1-8; 2 Pet 1:2, 16-17; 1 Jn 1:2-3; 2:22-24); 2) Jesus and the Spirit (Matt 1:18; 3:17; 12:28; Lk 1:35; 3:22; 4:1-14, 18; 10:21-24; 11:13, 20; 12:11-12; Jn 1:32-33; 7:37-39; 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-15; 20:21-23; Acts 2:33; 10:38; Rom 8:2; 9:1; Gal 3:14; 5:5-6, 22-24; Eph 1:13-14; 3:5-6; Heb 9:14; 1 Pet 1:11); 3) the Father and the Spirit (Matt 10:20; Lk 11:13; 24:48-49; Acts 1:4-5; Rom 5:5; 8:27; 15:13; 1 Cor 2:4, 5, 10-14; 3:16; 6:19; 14:2; 2 Cor 5:5; Eph 6:17; 1 Thess 4:8; 2 Pet 1:21); and 4) all three persons (Matt 1:20-23; 28:19, 20; Lk 1:35; 24:49; Jn 1:32-34; 20:21-22; Acts 1:3-5, 7-8; 28:23, 25; Rom 1:1-4; 15:30; 2 Cor 1:4-6; 13:14; 1 Thess 1:3-5; 5:18-19; Heb 3:7-12; 6:1-5; 10:15-22, 29-31; Jude 19-25; Rev 1:4-6; 4:1-5; 12; 14:6-13; 22:1-17). It is not necessary that they all be in the same verse or with a triune formula or triadic structure. Furthermore, most of the New Testament books begin and end with references to two or three persons of the Trinity. This literary *inclusio* means that the view of God included in these materials brackets the book. For the most part the General Epistles either begin and end or just begin with references to two persons—Jesus and the Father. Every book but 3 John begins with at least two members of Triune God. Hebrews, 1 John, and Jude clearly express the Trinitarian literary *inclusio*. First Peter and Jude place all three members of the Triune God together in one thought unit. See Coppedge's discussion Allan Coppedge, *The God Who Is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 19, 20, 23-52.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 33, 34.

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2:18, 21-22; 1Pet 1:2), Trinitarian witness of salvation (1 Cor 6:11; Heb 2:3-4), and Trinitarian assurance of salvation (Rom 8:14-17; Gal 3:3-6; 4:6).¹⁰ From the standpoint of the believer, it includes a Triune understanding of spiritual things (1 Cor 2:12-13, 16), an abiding in the Triune God (1 Jn 3:23-24; 4:13-15), a Triune growing and building up in faith (Jude 20-21), Trinitarian test of the spirits (1 Jn 4:2-3), praying with Triune intercession (Rom 15:30; 8:26-27; Jude 20-21), Triune discipleship and making disciples (Matt 28:19, 20; Eph 3:14-19; 5:18, 20), the Trinity and spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:3-6), Trinitarian ministry (Rom 14:17-18; 15:16), a Trinitarian ecclesiology (Eph 4:3-5), and Trinitarian peace and grace (Rev 1:4-6), the future in Trinitarian hands (Rev 1:4-6; 14:6-13; 22:1-17), and Triune doxology (2 Cor 13:14).¹¹ Obviously the reality of the Holy Spirit is assumed throughout this view of triune God reality—therefore not needing either specific or considerable mention in any of the documents.

Furthermore, the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the General Epistles and the book of Hebrews unfolds against backdrop discussions of Christology, theological/praxis orthodoxy, unity, ethics, identity and worldview, character, trials and adversity, suffering, church and state, revelation and inspiration, soteriology, spiritual warfare, the heavenly sanctuary in view of the passing away of the earthly, ecclesiology/community, the covenants, personal and corporate lifestyle, assurance, perseverance, hope, spiritual disciplines, the mission and message of the Church, and truth. References to the Holy Spirit throughout these numerous (and interconnected) themes reveal a *pneumatology* where the reality of the Holy Spirit is integral to every aspect of Christian thought, life, hope, and apologetics. Together these vibrant writings reveal the complex world of first century Christianity and provide a sober look at the early Church's Spirit-driven life in spiritual, doctrinal and ethical terms. In unique, yet complementary ways, each work unfolds the Church's profound pneumatology. Each expresses ideas that were basically around simultaneously. The phenomenon of the Spirit which each document

¹⁰ Ibid., 50.

¹¹ Ibid., 51.

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unfolds underscore how biblical pneumatology is more a matter of divine revelation and inspiration than it is a matter of the church or its growth in the first century.¹²

This study briefly reviews both the content and broad implications of each document's references to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. With these distinct insights in view, an outline summary of theological and practical themes of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the General Epistles can be observed. Except for the Book of Hebrews (which appears last in this study), the order each book is explored follows its position of the books in the traditional canon rather than sorted chronologically.¹³ This is to avoid suggestion of a developmental pneumatology during the church's formative and often chaotic early years. The General Epistles together with the Book of Hebrews have more to offer than often thought. They can and must play a distinctive role in the contemporary discussion and formulation of pneumatology in Christian faith.

The Holy Spirit in James

The letter of James hardly ever appears in discussion of New Testament pneumatology.¹⁴ The word *pneuma* occurs only twice in the book (James

¹² Important questions regarding New Testament pneumatology include: Is there a chronological development of thought and understanding or are the ideas basically around simultaneously? Are the concepts of the Holy Spirit in the different letters quite different? How much is biblical pneumatology a matter of the church? How much is it divine revelation and inspiration?

¹³ When affirming canon, we accept the biblical canon in its final form as the locus of Scripture and the basis of Christian doctrine. A final-form canonical approach is crucial to the interpretative task of Scripture and honors the nature of Scripture as it has been providentially preserved and handed down to the church by the Holy Spirit throughout Christian history.

¹⁴ Richard Bauckham, "The Spirit of God in us Loathes Envy," (James 4:5), in *The Jewish World around the New Testament: Collected Essays I* (ed. Richard Bauckham; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 421. Questions loom over whether James has any theology at all or even a discernable outline. See Chester, "The Theology of James,"), 3; Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 22-57; Kamell, *James*, 23-26. Chester writes: "James' theology is limited in many respects. He says nothing for example about the spirit and does little more than hint at an understanding of other themes, such as Christ, God, baptism, worship, and organization . . . his understanding of the law is very positive . . . it is sin, the human condition, and misuse of speech that James sees as the fundamental problems that need addressed. These and other ethical concerns permeate the whole letter, while the eschatological context and perspective are important for these issues

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2:26; 4:5) and only one reference could conceivably refer to the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God.¹⁵ “Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: ‘He jealously desires the spirit/Spirit which He has made to dwell in us?’”(James 4:5). The question is whether the word *pneuma* refers here to the divine Spirit or to the human spirit?¹⁶ Problems of translation and the source from which James drew his thoughts make this a challenging passage.

The passage in question appears within a discussion of the turbulent manifestations of worldliness and an adulterous friendship with the world among God’s people.¹⁷ The context leading up to this verse affords repeated references to man’s inner attitude (spirit?) and drives. James has not yet directly alluded to the Holy Spirit in his epistle so a sudden appearance here is rightly questioned.¹⁸ On the surface then, the context seems to suggest it is best to understand “spirit” as the human spirit for James has just finished calling his audience “adulteresses” in their relationship with God and is not likely to be thinking of the Holy Spirit living in them at this point.¹⁹ This verse would be an amplification of the theme picked up from verse 2 of the destructive power of human desire and envy, rather than that of God’s jealous relationship with His people. It would then be translated—“The (human) spirit which He (God) has made to dwell in us is one which feels passionate envy.” In articulating such, James would not

and in their own right for James. Above all, while James says little about faith and justification, and is mostly negative about faith, he has a highly positive, if not particularly profound, theology of works. It is this especially that shows that James’ theology is rooted in the concrete, specific issues of how people live in relation to each other in everyday life,” (Chester, “The Theology of James,” 44, 45).

¹⁵ Bauckham, “The Spirit of God in us Loathes Envy (James 4:5),” 421.

¹⁶ Four possibilities to James’ intended meaning include: 1) the human spirit is the main object of the verb (He [God] yearns enviously for the spirit which He caused to dwell in us); 2) the divine Spirit is the object of the verb (He [God] yearns enviously for the Spirit which He caused to dwell in us); 3) the human spirit as the subject of the main verb (The spirit which he [God] made to dwell in us longs enviously); and 4) the divine Spirit as the subject of the main verb (The Spirit which he [God] made to dwell in us yearns enviously). See Hiebert, *The Epistles of James: Tests of Living Faith*, 256, 257. McCartney provides one of the clearest outlines of the issues needing to be resolved as well as making choices among the options (Dan G. McCartney, *James* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009], 209-219).

¹⁷ Hiebert, *The Epistles of James: Tests of Living Faith*, 239-267.

¹⁸ Kamell, *James*, 192.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

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be suggesting a dualism, but instead that it is the same human spirit (which God has placed within man) that can bring forth good and evil, virtue or vice.²⁰ This reading would suggest two spirits at war within individuals for the allegiance of human beings—a basic reality of fallen human nature (c.f. Rom 7:14-25).²¹

Although some assert that *pneuma* here does refer to God's Spirit, the only other use of the term in James clearly means the human spirit (James 2:26). Nevertheless, numerous commentators suggest that this passage refers to the Holy Spirit's reaction to the believer's envious worldliness.²² It is possible that man's envy of the world, which expresses hostility toward God (James 4:4), is met by God's own enmity towards human envy—via the Holy Spirit. In this case, a reference to the human spirit would be an unnecessarily indirect way of pointing to God's own opposition to envy.²³ *To pneuma* then would refer to the divine Spirit rather than the human spirit. If one understands the tenth commandment as in view here ("thou shalt not covet") as per the preceding argument, it is possible that spirit could mean the Holy Spirit who speaks authoritatively through that commandment against the covetousness at play both in the human heart and in the early Christian community. Or, following James' discussion forward toward his ensuing reference about God giving "a greater grace" to the humble (James 4:6) one could conclude that God's jealousy is surpassed by God's grace²⁴—which again could open the way for understanding *to pneuma* as being the Holy Spirit. If James does have the Spirit in mind in the passage, he provides an early insight into the interior work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the grace, which God gives to those who are humble.

Some suggest that the way in which James 3:13-18 refers to the wisdom that "comes down from above" and produces the fruits of ethical qualities in Christians resembles the Pauline understanding of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).²⁵ In this view, wisdom in James would be effectively equivalent to the Spirit in the New Testament. This idea would complement the

²⁰ Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, 227.

²¹ PHEME PERKINS, *First and Second Peter, James, and Jude* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1995), 124.

²² See BAUCKHAM, "The Spirit of God in us Loathes Envy," (James 4:5), 428, 429; HIEBERT, *The Epistles of James: Tests of Living Faith*, 254-257.

²³ BAUCKHAM, "The Spirit of God in us Loathes Envy," (James 4:5), 429.

²⁴ MCCARTNEY, *James*, 216.

²⁵ BAUCKHAM, "The Spirit of God in us Loathes Envy," (James 4:5).

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understanding of *to pneuma* in 4:5 as being the Holy Spirit, i.e., “both the wisdom from above of 3:13-18 and the Spirit of 4:5 are opposed to envy.”²⁶ While there are interesting parallels between what Paul lists as the gifts of the Spirit (compare 3:17-18 and Gal. 5:22-3) as well as wisdom and spirit used in parallel in Jewish texts, to speak of James as having a “wisdom pneumatology” per se goes beyond the evidence.²⁷ However, since James does begin with a reference to two members of the Godhead: Jesus and the Father (James 1:1) one can rightly assume James is working within the larger triune God thought context as per above. This being so one could assert that the Holy Spirit is integral to James’ argumentation while not specifically named. If so (and it likely is), the wisdom which James speaks as coming from God or coming from above could be understood as taking place via the person and work of the Holy Spirit.²⁸ This would be tacit reference to the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, which brought divine resource in His train. Wisdom for James then would function much like the Spirit does elsewhere in the New Testament.²⁹ This may explain why there is no unambiguous reference to the Holy Spirit in the book.³⁰ This understanding however, would not necessitate *to pneuma* in 4:5 being a reference to the Holy Spirit.

If James does have the Spirit in view, the work provides an early insight into the interior work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the grace, which God gives to those who are humble. Nevertheless the book reflects the Trinitarian thought mix, which includes the Spirit in its purview.

The Holy Spirit in 1 Peter

An Eschatological Ministry

While some would suggest that the Holy Spirit does not figure prominently in 1 Peter,³¹ the epistle begins with an extended threefold

²⁶ Ibid., 430.

²⁷ Chester, “The Theology of James,” 39. Compare with Bauckham, “The Spirit of God in us Loathes Envy,” (James 4:5), 429.

²⁸ See discussion Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 51-56; Ralph P. Martin, *James* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), lxxxvii-xciii.

²⁹ McCartney argues that any linkage of the “spirit” with “wisdom” in James points not to the Holy Spirit, but the presence of God in divinely given wisdom, i.e., to the spirit of wisdom (McCartney, *James*, 214-215.).

³⁰ Kamell, *James*, 257.

³¹ Martin, “The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter,” 117.

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“Trinitarian structure”³² consisting of parallel prepositional phrases, which includes the Father, the Spirit, and Jesus:³³ “who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure” (1 Pet 1:2). The epistle closes with references to two members of the Trinity—Jesus and the Father (1 Pet 5:10). This opening and closing set the context for understanding all of the material in the book in light of the three persons of the Godhead.³⁴ There is a clear view of the Triune God at play throughout the document. Everything that follows its opening assumes this Trinitarian vision and includes a Holy Spirit connection in all that is said. It is a given that within the Church’s Trinitarian vision the Holy Spirit is viewed as a distinct person who ontologically shares the divine being. The role of the Holy Spirit is thus more pervasive than the epistles’ few references might suggest.³⁵

First Peter displays most of the main elements of the Holy Spirit’s work in relation to the believer which one finds mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament. And much of what unfolds appears to mirror Pauline tradition in particular (cf. 1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19; 1 Thess 4:7-8; 2 Thess 2:13).³⁶ However, the epistle is strikingly original and comparably creative with regards to the Holy Spirit’s function in Christian experience and life.³⁷ Here readers are encouraged to think of themselves as living in the new age of God’s salvation heralded by the prophets and brought to reality by Christ (see 1 Peter 1:10-11). This suggests that the Spirit’s ministry is “eschatological.”³⁸ The person and work of the Holy Spirit unfolds within four broad areas: 1) salvation and becoming a disciple of the triune God (1 Pet 1:2, 23); 2) Christology (1 Pet 1:11; 3:18); 3) gospel proclamation (1 Pet 1:11; 3:18); and 4) suffering, trials, adversity (1 Pet 4:14).

³² Perkins, *First and Second Peter, James, and Jude*, 27, 28.

³³ Earl J. Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2000), 31. First Peter is placed primarily in the last half to third of the first century, see *ibid.*, 3.

³⁴ See discussion of the Trinitarian structure of the New Testament books in Coppedge, *The God Who Is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God*, 34-35.

³⁵ Martin, “The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter,” 119.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 117, 118.

³⁷ Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 4.

³⁸ Martin, “The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter,” 119.

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In one of the clearest Trinitarian passages of the New Testament, one that speaks on the purposes of God, the atonement of Jesus, and sanctification by the Spirit (1 Pet 1:1, 23),³⁹ salvation and discipleship are envisioned as a triune experience.⁴⁰ Each member of the Godhead communicates “grace” and “peace” to believers (1 Pet 1:2d; cf. Rev 1:4-6; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2).⁴¹ Yet within this triune mix the process of salvation or “making holy” (*hagiasmos*) is clearly asserted as the Spirit’s domain (1 Pet 1:2). Within biblical imagery “holiness” is the chief attribute of God. Peter thus identifies the Spirit as both a distinct person and with the essential being of God (cf. 1 Pet 1:2 and 1:15-16). This “making holy” includes the Spirit’s cleansing work in applying the atonement accomplished by Christ to the sinner.⁴² Christian life begins now by the power of our share in Christ’s resurrection and regeneration by the Holy Spirit (1 Pet 1:23; cf. John 3:3-8).⁴³

The Spirit’s work in salvation further includes the activity of the prophets, the proclamation of the good news, and an abiding divine presence as a source of hope (1 Pet 1:10-12; 4:14). By implication, the injunction to live holy lives and to exhibit honorable and loving conduct—despite one’s difficulties—is made possible by the presence of the Spirit (1 Pet 1:15, 22; 2:12).⁴⁴ This is how one becomes a disciple of the triune God.⁴⁵ The Holy Spirit plays an important role in Christian initiation⁴⁶ along side of Christ’s redeeming blood. He plays a role too in being born again through the imperishable word of God (1 Pet 1:12, 23-25; cf., John 3:8). The person and work of the Holy Spirit is the effective mediating source of divine grace and peace (1 Pet 1:2; cf. Rev 1:4-6).

³⁹ Coppedge, *The God Who Is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God*, 43.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁴¹ This promise of grace and peace from the triune God implies three distinct and separate persons, each being on equal ground ontologically, and each capable of communicating these divine blessings.

⁴² Robert Harvey & Philip H. Towner, *2 Peter & Jude* (ed. Grant R. Osborne; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 49.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴⁴ See discussion Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 32.

⁴⁵ Coppedge, *The God Who Is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God*, 42-44, 50.

⁴⁶ Perkins, *First and Second Peter, James, and Jude*, 24.

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The Spirit of Christ

The epistle provides an unusual combination of themes with respect to the Spirit in relation to Christ.⁴⁷ It asserts that the Spirit that dwelt in the prophets was Christ's Spirit, i.e., "the Spirit of Christ in them" (1 Pet 1:11). This is not to be read principally Christological as the activity of the pre-existent Christ, but rather eschatologically as the divine Spirit who speaks of hidden things to come—in this case Christ. This is an objective genitive "Spirit [prophesying] about Christ."⁴⁸ The work of the Spirit here is both revelatory and dynamic. It is not quite the same as the mode of inspiration and interpretation of the Scripture which is outlined in 2 Peter 1:19-21.⁴⁹ The model for Christian living in 1 Peter is Christological in empowerment, model, and intimacy—for Christ is the chief shepherd and guardian of the flock (1 Pet 2:25; 5:1-5). The Spirit plays a fundamental effective role in these realities—enabling one to love the unseen Christ (1 Pet 1:8). The Spirit was an active agent in the resurrection of Christ (1 Pet 3:18). This is in contrast to Hebrews 9 where it was through the eternal Spirit that Jesus offered himself without blemish to God (Heb 9:14). Thus the Spirit would play a unique role in both the substitutionary atonement of Jesus and His glorious resurrection.

The link between "the Spirit sent from heaven" (1 Pet 1:12) and gospel proclamation (1 Pet 1:12) echoes Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36) and implies that gospel proclamation by the Spirit is being made to the present generation (Acts 2:39). The author would have personal knowledge of these realities. Through the Spirit the gospel has been preached to Christians who have already died (1 Pet 4:6).⁵⁰ The Spirit was also active in pre-flood appeals to the antediluvian world (Gen 6:3) in the rebuke of demonic spirits (1 Pet 3:18, 19).⁵¹

⁴⁷ Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 50, 51.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁴⁹ Martin. "The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter," 118.

⁵⁰ See discussion of options: Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 173-176. The dead are disobedient spirits of 3:19 or those who dwell in the abode of the dead (either the righteous or all those deceased). The dead are the spiritually dead. The dead are Christians who died prior to the Lord's coming. Richard chooses the third option asserting that the dead refers to Christians who have already died.

⁵¹ There is question as to whether "spirits in prison" refers here to "human spirits" or to "demonic spirits." The context implies the latter, i.e., angels, authorities, powers being made subject to Christ following the resurrection and subsequent ascension (1 Pet 3:22; cf. Eph 1:20-22; 6:12) as elsewhere "demonic spirits" are spoken of as currently imprisoned (2

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Helping Hurting Believers

Suffering is a paramount theme throughout the epistle and in view of it the author unfolds a theology of suffering.⁵² Peter addresses the issue of Christians in a non-Christian society and offers a challenging discussion of sociopolitical thought,⁵³ i.e., church and society. Christians have a duty toward the state, non-Christian neighbors, and all human beings (1 Pet 2:17). A broad strategy of nonviolent resistance and gentle defense is outlined. It is in the living presence of the Spirit that sufferers already possess something of the glory that is to be revealed with Christ (1 Pet 4:14).⁵⁴ This is true for both the individual and believing community. In this challenging context of suffering and the need for orientation and patient perseverance, the Spirit's ministry in the life of the hurting believer takes on a practical and pastoral character. Persecuted believers are comforted in their trials by the assurance that the divine Spirit rests as a protecting shield over them. This strengthening of the Spirit in time of stress is in line with what is promised in other New Testament documents—Matthew 10:19-20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11-12.⁵⁵ Given the larger biblical witness one would assume that the Spirit's protective shield has to do with truth, courage, perseverance, hope, and witness rather than any physical protection (cf. Acts 4:31; 7:55).

In view of the heightened pagan-Christian conflict or tension, 1 Peter addresses the Christian reality of a new life that resulted from the Father's call, the Spirit's sanctifying activity, and Jesus' obedient submission of his life for the salvation of the believer (1 Pet 1:2).⁵⁶ Believers have been called by God out of the pagan populace and, like the Jews of the time, as a result of divine election live in communities among the Gentiles, that is the *diaspora* (1 Pet 1:1, 2). The book underscores "the fact that as a result of God's call through the Christ-event, mercy was conferred on humanity and

Pet 2:4, 5; Jude 6), while humans are currently dead" (1 Pet 4:6). Scripture will refer to angels as spirits (Heb 1:7). This would imply that the Spirit's contending in Genesis 6:3 is not just with human beings but includes the larger context of the great controversy in opposition to and judgment against demonic powers that were influencing the antediluvian world. Interestingly Jesus via the Spirit engages demonic spirits (1 Pet 3:18, 19) while Noah via the Spirit engages human beings (2 Pet 2:5).

⁵² Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 16.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Perkins, *First and Second Peter, James, and Jude*, 72.

⁵⁵ Martin, "The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter," 118.

⁵⁶ Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 18.

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a new people constituted. By means of the death and resurrection of Jesus, whether employing the imagery of ransom, purification, conversion, or new birth, the author establishes the basis for the community's unity, strength, and source of life. Though tested and in religious exile, it is nonetheless a house built of living stones, along with the rejected, chosen, and precious salvific stone. It is a chosen race, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation (1 Pet 2:4-5, 9).⁵⁷ In this context pneumatology touches matters of Christian self-identity and *being*. Ecclesiological implications abound.

First Peter thus places the person and work of the Holy Spirit squarely in the experience of salvation and what it means to become a disciple of the triune God (1 Peter 1:2, 23) as well as Christology (1 Pet 1:11; 3:18), Gospel proclamation (1 Pet 1:11; 3:18), and suffering, perseverance, self-identity (1 Pet 4:14).

The Holy Spirit in 2 Peter

Spirit Engendered Truth

While considered an “elaborately constructed polemic document”⁵⁸ and “on the fringe” of New Testament thinking,⁵⁹ 2 Peter nevertheless opens with the Trinitarian mindset which pervades the New Testament by referring to two members of the Godhead, Jesus and the Father (2 Pet 1:1, 2). Later, and within the same chapter it is the Father and the Spirit who are placed together (2 Pet 1:21). In this context the Spirit is referred to as *pneumatōs hagiou* linking the Spirit with the fundamental reality of God—holiness. All the implications of divine personhood, ontology, and diversity of the person and work of the Spirit in this thought matrix are assumed and implied.

Second Peter is a homily on Christian growth set in the context of threats to Christian stability from heretical teachings.⁶⁰ The bold claims and fictitious anecdotes of false teachers were confusing the churches with notions that God's Spirit was speaking a fresh message through them.⁶¹ There were accusations that the apostles' had been following cleverly invented stories (2 Pet 1:16). There was need to assert the reliable

⁵⁷ Ibid., 20.

⁵⁸ Martin, “The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter,” 146.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 146, 147.

⁶⁰ Dick Lucas & Christopher Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude* (ed. John R. W. Stott; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 18.

⁶¹ Ibid.

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eyewitness of the apostles' gospel preaching (2 Pet 1:16-18).⁶² The book's purpose is threefold: 1) to expose false teachers for what they are; 2) to link the words of the apostles with those of the prophets; and 3) to set before the churches the conditions of survival when doctrinal and moral perversions infiltrate their fellowships.⁶³

The question is what can Peter put before the churches to counter the influence of the new voices being heard everywhere, especially when his own voice would soon be silent (2 Pet 1:14)? The answer is the apostolic eyewitnesses, which Peter sets against the firm backdrop of Spirit engendered truth through the reality and certainty of the prophetic word (2 Pet 1:12-21). This is perhaps the greatest single treasure within this short letter regarding a number of theological issues: pneumatology, revelation and inspiration, prophecy and the *eschaton*, Christology, spiritual life, and assurance.⁶⁴ The "prophetic word" (2 Pet 1:19) remains forever God's Word. It is not merely the prophet of long ago who speaks (as per 2 Pet 1:17, 18), but the living God Himself via the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21). The Spirit has spoken and continues to speak via the Word of truth already given. And if this is so, one is wise not to attempt to reinterpret what the Holy Spirit says as though they are now in possession of some superior wisdom. The Spirit continues to speak through the prophetic Word, which He initiated, rather than in a fresh message through new teachers. Believers are to be anchored in the Word of God⁶⁵—and thus the Spirit's guiding influence.

Christian Life and Ethos

Peter's call to trust God's witness and pay attention to the Scriptures is followed by his assertion that the message of Scripture originates with the Holy Spirit of God (2 Pet 1:20, 21). Here we find the Holy Spirit in relation to the inspiration of Scripture and prophecy in particular. "We can have utter confidence that God truly speaks to us in His Word because both the divine revelation given to its authors and their interpretation of its was direct by the Holy Spirit."⁶⁶ The text describes a divine-human partnership

⁶² Towner, *2 Peter & Jude*, 61.

⁶³ Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude*, 18.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 23, 24.

⁶⁶ Towner, *2 Peter & Jude*, 70.

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not that of equals but as a powerful, energetic superintendence by the Spirit: “men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁷

These insights into the person and work of the Holy Spirit appear against the backdrop of an ill-defined spirituality. More than correct doctrine or the reliability of the biblical message is in view. It is Christian life and ethos that is nuanced. Peter understands that we have miraculous resources for Godly living (2 Pet 1:3-4). We have everything we need for life and godliness. One of those heavenly resources is the comprehensive nature of the revelation given to believers (2 Pet 1:16-21; 3:1-2).⁶⁸ The Holy Spirit brings divine resources for here and now via and alongside of God’s Word. Ultimately genuine spiritual life is linked to the true voice of the Holy Spirit via the prophetic word (2 Pet 1:19).

The reference of the Holy Spirit at the end of chapter 1 provides an interpretive hinge relating both backward and forward in the author’s discussion regarding the accusations by false teachers who suggest God’s Spirit is speaking a fresh message through them. Not only does the Spirit continue to speak through the prophetic word, which He initiated, but also genuine spiritual life is linked to the true voice of the Holy Spirit via the prophetic word.

The Holy Spirit in 1, 2, 3 John

Fourth Gospel Backdrop

Within the Johannine Epistles, only 1 John refers directly to the person and work of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹ Even there the prominence and role of the Holy Spirit does not appear to be a key theme. Any theology of the Spirit in 1 John appears restrained⁷⁰ against a generally *theocentric* feel of the epistle—suggesting the writer may be more preoccupied with the “Godhead” itself than with individual members of the Godhead.⁷¹

⁶⁷ The prophets raised their sails so to speak. The Holy Spirit used human beings as His authors and worked through their personalities. Verse 21 affirms what Peter stated in verse 20, that the prophets did not by themselves “think up” what they then proclaimed as the Word of the Lord. They were divinely inspired. The Holy Spirit spoke to and through them to deliver the truth of God to His people.

⁶⁸ Towner, *2 Peter & Jude*, 32.

⁶⁹ Twelve times in all within five verses: 1 John 3:24; 4:2, 13; 5:6, 8. Themes in 2 and 3 John have pneumatological implications.

⁷⁰ Steven S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John* (vol. 51; Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1984), xxix-xxx, 250.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, xxviii.

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However, 1 John reveals a community struggling for a balanced understanding of the person of Jesus.⁷² The author seeks a balanced Christology. There were some who emphasized the divinity of Christ, while others exaggerated the humanity of Jesus.⁷³ The historical and life-giving Jesus is obviously central to the writer's vision of the doctrine of God. This may further explain some of the constant ambivalence of John's reference to the Spirit (i.e., anointing, seed, born, abide in you, etc.).

Needless to say because 1 John does not include an extensive or unrestrained body of material on the Holy Spirit, the pneumatology expressed therein has not received the same degree of scholarly attention as that of the Fourth Gospel.⁷⁴ Frequent points of contact between 1 John and the Fourth Gospel, however suggest 1 John might reflect to a smaller scale both the structure and content of the Gospel.⁷⁵ Common themes in 1 John and the Farewell Discourse of John 14-17 are evident.⁷⁶ One of these thematic links is the gift of the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:13; John 14:16-17).⁷⁷ Both books begin with Christology (the incarnation), themes of divine light, and the reality of fellowship with God (1 John 1:1-7; John 1:1-14). Both books highlight love to God and love for one another (1 John 3:16-18; 4:7-12; John 3:16; 13:34, 35; 14:15-31; 15: 15:9-19). Both books highlight the atoning work of Christ (1 John 4:9, 10; John 3:14-17). More specifically both books focus on the reality of the Holy Spirit in relation to the new birth experience (1 John 3:9; John 3:5-8). Reading the letters against the backdrop of the Fourth Gospel highlight the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as of fundamental concern for 1 John indicating that any dealing with this

⁷² Ibid., xxiii, xxvi.

⁷³ Ibid., xxvi. Those with a high view of Jesus appeared to have a low view of the law, while those who had a low view of Jesus had a high view of the law.

⁷⁴ Donald W. Mills, "The Holy Spirit in 1 John," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal*, 4, (Fall 1999): 33. It is suggested that 1 John de-emphasizes the role of the Spirit and that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is not a key theme.

⁷⁵ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, xxix.

⁷⁶ Ibid., xxix-xxx. Common themes in 1 John and the Farewell Discourse include: A) the Godhead and the Christian: love of the father (1 John 4:16; John 1:21); abiding of the son (1 John 3:24; John 15:4); the gift of the Spirit (1 John 4:13; John 14:16-17); B) the Christian and the Godhead: mutual indwelling (1 John 3:24; John 14:20); forgiveness (1 John 1:9; John 15:3; 13:8); eternal life (1 John 2:25; 17:2); righteousness (1 John 2:29; John 16:10); and C) conditions for Christian discipleship: renounce sin (1 John 1:8; 3:4; John 16:8); obedience (1 John 2:3; 3:10; John 14:15); rejection of worldliness (1 John 2:12; 4:1; John 15:19); keeping the faith (1 John 2:18; 5:5; John 17:8).

⁷⁷ See Smalley, *ibid.*, xxx.

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epistle must reckon with it its pneumatology.⁷⁸ While guarded and indirect, what the epistle does say about the Holy Spirit is significant.⁷⁹

In keeping with New Testament Trinitarian thought context 1 John begins and ends with references to two persons of the Godhead—Jesus and the Father (1 John 1:3; 5:10). 2 John likewise opens with reference to Jesus and the Father (2 John 3, 9). Only 3 John has a reference to God without any specific reference to the Father, the Son, or the Spirit. As per above the implications of divine personhood, ontology, and diversity of the person and work of the Holy Spirit within this Trinitarian thought matrix are assumed and implied. First John never refers to the Spirit as the “Holy” Spirit.⁸⁰

Pneumatological Crisis

Despite the aforementioned paucity of references to the Spirit, 1 John gives evidence that at least one of the theological/experiential crises facing the churches in John’s community was *pneumatological*.⁸¹ Two broad areas of the Spirit’s person and work are articulated in response to this conflict, which provide “vital marks of authentic pneumatology.”⁸² One is theological, Christological, the other experiential, praxis.

First, there is the major role of the Holy Spirit in bearing witness to the significance of the earthly life and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ (1 John 5:5-8).⁸³ Jesus is the One who “came” into human history “with the water and with the blood.” The “water and blood” refer to the terminal points in Jesus’ earthly ministry: His baptism and His crucifixion.⁸⁴ Historically Jesus “came” into His power by the “water” of His baptism and even more so by the “blood” of His cross.⁸⁵ These are empirical truths regarding Jesus in whom faith is placed (1 John 5:5),⁸⁶ and which the Holy Spirit affirms (1 John 5:6). Two important and closely related truths are affirmed: “(1) the

⁷⁸ Mills, “The Holy Spirit in 1 John,” 33.

⁷⁹ Daniel L. Akin, *1, 2, 3 John* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 34.

⁸⁰ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 211.

⁸¹ Mills, “The Holy Spirit in 1 John,” 34.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 34-36.

⁸⁴ Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, 196.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Robert W. Yarbrough, *1-3 John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 280-286.

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human Jesus cannot be ontologically separated from the divine Christ, for they are one person, the Son of God, and (2) the same person who was baptized was also crucified, Jesus Christ.⁸⁷ Thus one person, Jesus Christ, came through both the baptism and crucifixion. Again, these are truths to which the Spirit testifies both objectively and experientially for the believer (1 John 5:6). The context suggests that this double witness to which the Spirit testifies is to highlight the latter, i.e., the blood—Christ’s atoning work on the cross. This suggests “any view of pneumatology that de-emphasizes the propitiatory work of Christ on the cross is suspect.”⁸⁸

Furthermore, as the custodian and guarantor of these Christological truths, the Spirit does not do this by mere subjective feeling, intuition, or experience, but as He bears witness of Christ who has acted in history.⁸⁹ The Spirit brings believers back to what they have heard from the beginning (1 John 1:1). In this context the Spirit is also the virtual presence of the absent Christ.⁹⁰ His witness in the believer summarizes Jesus’ ongoing self-disclosure until He returns.⁹¹ As such, John’s assertion that “there are three that testify” (1 John 5:7) affirms that there are three foundational underpinnings to Christ’s historical earthly self-disclosure—water, blood, and Spirit—i.e., baptism, crucifixion, and Pentecost.⁹² The Spirit was at work during each of these defining historical Christ-events. The Spirit is given priority over the witness of “water and blood” because He testifies through them (1 John 5:6). While “water and blood” give witness of Christ as non-personal historical events, the Spirit does so as a personal being.⁹³ The Spirit’s witness in relation to Christ’s baptism and crucifixion give them an enduring living witness and power.

Second, there is the vital role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.⁹⁴ It is the Holy Spirit who brings: 1) the new birth and its genuine fruit (1 John 3:9-10);⁹⁵ 2) the assurance of eternal life and hope at Christ’s

⁸⁷ Mills, “The Holy Spirit in 1 John,” 35.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, 284.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 285.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 284.

⁹³ See discussion, Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 281.

⁹⁴ Mills, “The Holy Spirit in 1 John,” 34, 36-50.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 36-40.

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return (1 John 3:24; 4:13);⁹⁶ 3) the ability to remain in the truth (1 John 2:20, 27);⁹⁷ and 4) the discernment between truth and error (1 John 4:1-6).⁹⁸

Agent of New Birth

According to 1 John the Holy Spirit is the agent of the new birth as well as the practical evidence of it: “No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9; cf. John 3:3-8). Parallels with the Fourth Gospel are evident. No one reading the phrase “born of God” would have missed the association with the Holy Spirit (John 3:5).⁹⁹ Spiritual regeneration is the means of divine sonship (cf. 1 John 2:29; 3:1, 10). The use of the perfect tense *gegennēmenos* “born” indicates not only the initial act of Christian rebirth, but also its continuing results (1 Jn 3:9).¹⁰⁰ The words “his seed abides in him” point to the divine nature, which is implanted in the person who is spiritually reborn, and which is responsible for Christian growth and obedience (1 John 3:10).¹⁰¹ From the standpoint of Johannine theology the “seed” refers to the Holy Spirit.¹⁰²

Twofold Assurance

In 1 John 3:24 and 4:13, the work of the Spirit is described as bringing assurance to the believer who may question their standing with God—evidently one of the larger reasons for the epistle.¹⁰³ It is the knowledge of the indwelling Spirit that gives the believer assurance of his or her membership in the family of God: “The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us” (1 John 3:34); “By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His

⁹⁶ Ibid., 40-42.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 42-45.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 45-50.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 38.

¹⁰⁰ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 172.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 173. As opposed to Yarbrough who asserts “seed” denotes the believer’s status as God’s offspring rather than any message received, one’s anointing, or the Holy Spirit (Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, 195).

¹⁰² Mills, “The Holy Spirit in 1 John,” 38.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 40.

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Spirit” (1 John 4:13). The primary evidence of our mutual abiding experience in God is the presence of the Spirit in our lives.

Here the pneumatology of 1 John grants a twofold assurance: we are present possessors of the life of God, and we can enjoy a sense of confidence that we are identified as being in Christ. This is not a subjective feeling but is “knowledge obtained by drawing a conclusion based on facts. When one possesses the Spirit of God, it is divine evidence of the reciprocal relationship, enjoyed and experienced. (cf. Rom 8:16).”¹⁰⁴

Safeguard Against Apostasy

The Spirit’s ministry of safeguarding one against apostasy is expressed in the vivid imagery of “anointing”:¹⁰⁵ “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know” (1 John 2:20); “As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him” (1 John 2:27). A word-play takes place here in which the terms *antichristos*, *Christos*, and *chrisma* are all being used to explain the difference between secessionists from the faith and those who are faithful to the Gospel.¹⁰⁶ Believers are to be encouraged because they have received an anointing from “the anointed one,” here called the “Holy One.”¹⁰⁷ Origin, character, and communion are all involved. Jesus sends the Spirit (cf. John 14:16, 26; 15:26; Acts 2:33). It is the Spirit who abides in the believer (cf. John 14:17). It is the Spirit who teaches the truth (cf. John 14:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6). It is the Spirit who enables one to continue in Jesus’ word and confess Him as the Christ (cf. John 6:60-71; 1 John 3:24-4:2, 6). In 1 John the Word and Spirit complement each other. The proclamation of the gospel is an objective exercise (cf. 1 John 1:1-3, 5), whereas the anointing of the

¹⁰⁴ Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, 169.

¹⁰⁵ Old Testament nuances linking the Holy Spirit with anointing are assumed (Exod 29:7; 30:25; 40:15; 1 Sam 16:13; Isa 61:1). Peter says in Acts 10:38 that God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit. Anointing here is a reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit which is “the characteristic endowment” of believers (Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 106).

¹⁰⁶ Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, 117.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* In keeping with John 14-17 and Acts 2 where Jesus is the One who sends the Holy Spirit, the primary Christological interpretation of “from the Holy One” in v 20 is to be assumed. See Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 124.

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Spirit is subjective, personal, inward—but also objective in that it is real.¹⁰⁸ The Spirit “manifests himself objectively in the life and conduct of the believer”¹⁰⁹; inspiring a true confession of Jesus and enabling one to act righteously. The Spirit bears witness to God’s indwelling presence without *explaining* this phenomenon.¹¹⁰

In 1 John 2:20, 27 the abiding presence of the Spirit (the “anointing”) assures one of discernment in his or her struggle with the legion of antichrists (1 John 2:18).¹¹¹ The Spirit enables one to know God. The Spirit mediates the knowledge of God. The Spirit invalidates the authority of false teachers. The Spirit assures a proper doctrine of Christ. The Spirit enables one to remain in the truth. The Spirit brings personal and corporate assurance. The anointing of the Spirit is an established fact for every believer.

Spiritual Discernment

Finally there is the matter of the Spirit and spiritual discernment in relation to competing spirits or spiritual warfare (1 John 4:1-6). John asserts that there is the “Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood” (1 John 4:6), a divine Spirit and a diabolic spirit (1 John 4:2a, 3b) who manifest themselves in human behavior specifically in relation to true and false confessions of faith. Given this conflict between the two spiritual realms, and perhaps two spiritual beings (the Holy Spirit and Satan, though in opposition, the structure does not put them on a par),¹¹² John exhorts one to test all spirits to determine their truthfulness. Believers are warned not to believe every spirit as if he were the Spirit of God (1 John 3:24). Believers dare not be indiscriminate and accept everyone who claims that the Spirit directs his or her teachings.

Two criteria are given for making this determination: the content of the teaching, and the character of the audience.¹¹³ The first is Christological: Who is Jesus Christ? What does this spirit say about Jesus Christ? Does he confess Christ’s incarnation—that He came in the flesh? The true Spirit-inspired is one who affirms the historicity of Christ’s appearance, i.e., His

¹⁰⁸ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 124.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 212.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 211.

¹¹¹ Mills, “The Holy Spirit in 1 John,” 44.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 47; Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 224.

¹¹³ Mills, “The Holy Spirit in 1 John,” 45.

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incarnation. More precisely, this confession concerns Christ's humanity together with its salvific importance.¹¹⁴ God actually came to earth, permanently taking upon Himself human nature (1 John 1:1-4; cf. John 1:14; 6:51-55).

The second is ecclesiological: Who listens to whom? What is the nature or character of the audience? John writes: "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:4b-6). "He who is in you" refers to the Spirit. "He who is in the world" refers to the "spirit of antichrist." Heretics "align themselves with the world and speak the language of the world as evidenced in the denial of Christ."¹¹⁵ True believers align themselves with the Spirit and receive only what the Spirit says regarding Christ. In other words we listen to those who speak our own language. This points to the true character of the listener(s) in response to the correct confession of Jesus as much as it does the content of that confession itself. This too, is evidence of the Holy Spirit's work within the community of faith in that He creates that community of spiritual discernment. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned via the Spirit.¹¹⁶ The greater Spirit of God who lives within believers renders the world powerless. Through the Spirit the Church recognizes its own and listens to their message, which originates in the Spirit and reflects the Spirit's perspectives. He who belongs to God hears what God says. This is how we know the Spirit of truth from the spirit of falsehood.

John's first epistle unfolds a *pneumatological* crisis in which the Holy Spirit's person and work become key. In this context the Holy Spirit plays a key role in Christ's self-disclosure in the world (1 John 5:6, 8)—baptism (water), crucifixion (blood), and exaltation/coronation (Spirit, i.e., Pentecost). In keeping with the epistle's Fourth Gospel backdrop (both in structure and content) the Holy Spirit's role in the "new birth" experience (1 John 3:9) along with its genuine moral/spiritual fruitage is highlighted (1 John 3:7-24). The "anointing" (of the Spirit) engenders assurance of eternal life and confident hope of Christ's soon return as well (1 John 2:20, 27, 28;

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 47.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 48.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 49; Smalley, *I, 2, 3 John*, 226-230.

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3:24). One's ability to remain in the truth and discernment between truth and error (or true and demonic spirits) is likewise linked to the Spirit's work in both the individual and church community (1 John 4:1-3).

The Holy Spirit in Jude

Divine Keeping Power

Jude is basically a polemical document¹¹⁷ in which argument and arrangements of material are closely woven in artistic style. The twenty-five verse epistle follows a well-known pattern of "text and interpretation" in which an authoritative text is followed by an interpretive application to the reader's own day.¹¹⁸ This implies theological/ethical¹¹⁹ reflection on implications of biblical materials in a contemporary context. Elements of faith regarding *pneumatology* emerge through the running argumentation. In keeping with the other General Epistles and Hebrews, Jude opens with typical Trinitarian thought by referring to at least two members of the Godhead: Jesus and the Father (Jude 1). Eighteen verses later the Spirit, the Father, and the Son appear in close connection: "But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life" (Jude 20, 21). Positively growing as a disciple means building oneself up in the faith (Jude 20). Jude presents this reality of building oneself up in the faith as a "trinitarian challenge."¹²⁰ As per 1

¹¹⁷ Martin, "The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter," 66. Some suggest Jude is the most neglected book in the New Testament and has not been widely valued by modern scholarship or most Christian readers until most recently (Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude*, 164). The close relationship between 2 Peter and Jude is easy for any reader to see. Parallels include (ibid., 159): 1) the Christian faith as already in existence as a settled and final body of saving truths; 2) the presence of godless teachers in positions of authority within the churches; 3) the new teachers are antagonistic and scoffing towards the heart of the gospel itself as well as particular articles of Christian faith; 4) the need for faithful Christians painstakingly stand firm in evil times; 5) church members are urged to make steady progress in their knowledge of God; 6) there is urgency for them to write to their dear friends; 7) the havoc created in the churches by present day Cains, Balaams and Korah's reflects the reality that it has all happened before and Scripture's record of these events serve as a warning for us; 8) there is unwavering belief that Jesus is the reigning Lord of the Church. So many parallel themes raise questions as to distinctive contributions, if any that Jude in particular might make (Martin, "The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter," 67).

¹¹⁸ Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude*, 159.

¹¹⁹ Gene L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 18.

¹²⁰ Coppedge, *The God Who Is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God*, 45.

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and 2 Peter, all the implications of divine personhood, ontology, and diversity of the person and work of the Holy Spirit are assumed and implied in this thought matrix.

As Jude begins and ends with the theme of being kept by divine power (Jude 1, 24-25)¹²¹ the assumption is that the Holy Spirit plays a crucial role providing divine power. More specifically, two insights emerge into Jude's *pneumatology* regarding the aforementioned growth in faith: 1) the person and work of the Holy Spirit in relation to Christian orthodoxy, unity, and worldview (Jude 20); 2) the person and work of the Holy Spirit in relation to Christian spiritual discipline and growth (Jude 21).

Orthodoxy, Unity, and Worldview

In a section that might be termed "signs of the times" Jude invites readers to remember how the Apostles spoke about life in the last times where mockers would arise and individuals would follow their own desires. There would be grumbling and faultfinding. There would be freethinking and loose theology. The combination of these enervating realities would bring damaging effects on Christian life (Jude 15-18). Jude asserts that the individuals against whom he writes are the very men whom the Apostles have warned against. They divide. They follow mere natural instincts. And they do not have the Holy Spirit (Jude 20). The implication is that in their twisted theology, these men not only misquote Scripture, but also are actually claiming that the Holy Spirit is guiding them in their lawless rebellion against both truth and church leaders. In the process they assert that anyone reluctant to follow them (the false teachers) would not have the Spirit at all. Jude turns this argument on its head stating that it is self-proclaimed "Spirit-led" people who do not have the divine Spirit and that their ideas are not open to the Spirit but to their own lower desires.¹²² Proof for this assertion is based on the writer's "text and interpretation" pattern, which keeps readers coming back to biblical referents.

¹²¹ Martin, "The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter," 66. Verse 1 uses the word *tereo* while verse 24 uses the word *phulasso*.

¹²² Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude*, 217.

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Since Jude consistently castigates the false teachers for immorality, slavery to passion, self-interested flattery and the like,¹²³ Christians in Jude's day must have been taught that the "life in the Spirit required a serious moral transformation."¹²⁴ The Greek word "worldly-minded" *psychikoi* is derived from the word *soul* and can mean what is merely natural. However, in contrast with what Jude assumes as the essence of being *spiritual* his use of *psychikoi* implies that he views such individuals as not spiritually mature—that they are not Christians.¹²⁵ If you apply Jude's logic (Jude 19, 22-23) it would mean that if a person does not have the Spirit, that person is no believer.¹²⁶ This would resonate with Pauline thought where one is not a Christian unless they have the Spirit (Rom 8:9; cf. Gal 3:3-5; 4:6). It also underscores the reality that moral dysfunction is proof of Holy Spirit absence in the life.

Spiritual Discipline and Growth

The three linked verbs "building," "praying," and "expecting the mercy of Jesus" are a syntactical arrangement suggesting an intimate connection and which emphasizes the human endeavor needed to ensure divine protection.¹²⁷ The phrase "keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21) appears to be the focus of the complex sentence suggesting that God's love is not only the source of the believer's election but also the protection of the faithful.¹²⁸ The reference to the Holy Spirit in relation to prayer (Jude 20) opens a window into spiritual discipline and experiential realities of spiritual life, growth, and perseverance. The preposition phrase "in the Holy Spirit" can designate a variety of situations including prophetic/apocalyptic inspiration (cf. Rev 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10; Eph 3:5) as well as the believer's life in the Spirit (cf. Rom 8:9-11; Eph 2:22).¹²⁹ Both the authenticating

¹²³ Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 20. What moves them is not the Spirit (Jude 19), which is the source of Christian virtue, but rather base, animal instincts (Jude 10), which results in ungodly lives (Jude 4, 15, 18).

¹²⁴ Perkins, *First and Second Peter, James, and Jude*, 144.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹²⁶ Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude*, 217.

¹²⁷ Martin, "The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter," 79.

¹²⁸ Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 119; Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 291, 292.

¹²⁹ Some suggest that here Jude means prayer in a Spirit-given tongue (glossolalia) but this is doubtful. See Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 293; Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 483; Towner, 2

activity of the Spirit and the Spirit's activity in the believer who comes to God in prayer is in view here. In sharp contrast with the heretics who are devoid of the Spirit (Jude 19) what explicitly marks the community of believers is the possession of the Spirit and communion with God through His agency.¹³⁰ The context gives the sense that it is "by means of prayerful invocation of God's Spirit that believers will remain in God's domain where they will receive protection in view of Jesus' return."¹³¹ Jude affirms the activity of prayer as intrinsic to Christian life. "Believers cannot keep themselves in God's love without depending on him by petitioning him in prayer. Love for God cannot be sustained without a relationship with him, and such a relationship is nurtured by prayer."¹³² The sphere of this activity is the Holy Spirit.¹³³

Jude contains one of the few yet important Trinitarian passages which mentions the three members of the triune God together (Jude 20, 21). The Holy Spirit is seen in relation to Christian orthodoxy, unity, worldview, ethics (Jude 19, 20) as well as Christian spiritual discipline and growth (Jude 21). In doing so the epistle unfolds spiritual growth as a "Trinitarian challenge."

The Holy Spirit in the Book of Hebrews

Reorienting Vision of Reality

With the longest sustained argument in the New Testament Hebrews provides "one of the earliest examples of Christian theology as faith seeking understanding."¹³⁴ The concepts are powerfully argued, difficult, sweeping, enigmatic—not the easiest book in the Bible to understand. Nevertheless its purpose is both plain and basic: it is a "word of exhortation" (Heb 13:22) inviting a positive personal response to Jesus Christ. It is more a sermon that has been adapted to letter format than a standard epistle or theological

Peter & Jude, 226.

¹³⁰ Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 121.

¹³¹ Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 293.

¹³² Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 483.

¹³³ Towner, *2 Peter & Jude*, 225.

¹³⁴ Thompson, *Hebrews*, 3. While far from the most popular book in the New Testament, Hebrews nevertheless has played an important role in shaping the faith of the Christian Church—including liturgy theology, and practical application to life. It is one of Scripture's most beautifully written, powerfully argued, and theologically profound writings. See Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 1.

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treatise.¹³⁵ It has long been asserted that Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians who were tempted to return to Judaism.¹³⁶ In effect though, the book provides a coherent reorienting picture of the issues any Christians living during the time were facing.¹³⁷ It explains what the exalted Jesus has been doing for believers since His ascension, and why that matters now. In the process readers are challenged with a vision of reality, an understanding of Jesus Christ, and a sense of Christian identity and hope in a world of ambiguity and uncertainty.¹³⁸ They are invited to see beyond the realities of this visible world and take refuge in the promised certainty of the ultimate triumph of God in Christ (chapters 1, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13). In doing so, the book posits a worldview.¹³⁹

Though Hebrews makes only seven references to the Holy Spirit (Heb 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8, 14; 10:15, 29) pneumatology is nevertheless integral to its vision of reality. The writer asserts how the Holy Spirit brings divine confirming witness of the definitive word spoken through Christ: “After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will” (Heb 2:3,4; cf. Heb 1:1-2; Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12).¹⁴⁰ The verbal testimony of those who originally heard Jesus along with the Spirit-inspired deeds of His contemporary followers validated the truth of Christ’s message. These evidences of the miracle working power of the Holy Spirit are joined by the other distributions (*merismoi*) of the Holy Spirit, which

¹³⁵ Knight, *Exploring Hebrews: A Devotional Commentary*, 13.

¹³⁶ Thompson, *Hebrews*, 7.

¹³⁷ I.e., drifting from the Christian message (Heb 2:1); being tempted to unbelief (Heb 3:7-12); hardening one’s heart against the Spirit’s appeal (Heb 3:13-15); failure to grow spiritually (Heb 5:11-14); crucifying the Son of God afresh ((Heb 6:6); spurning the Son of God (Heb 10:29); insulting the Spirit of grace (Heb 10:29); and refusing God’s warnings (Heb 12:25). Some had quit going to church (Heb 10:25) and some even publically renounced Christ and fallen away (Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-31). Some had lost sight of the hope of Christ’s return (Heb 9:7, 8; 10:36-39) and some had lapsed morally (Heb 12:12-16; 13:1-6) or had neglected the Sabbath (Heb 4:9-11). In light of these realities Hebrews seeks to reorient a community that has been disoriented by the chasm between their Christian confession of triumph in Christ and the reality of suffering that they were presently experiencing. See *ibid.*, 20.

¹³⁸ See Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 1-3; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 7, 20-21.

¹³⁹ Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 2. Readers are confronted with a real world, which most would consider imaginary.

¹⁴⁰ Greek “gifts” is *merismos* (distribution) rather than *charisma*.

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refer to an inward experience compared to the aforementioned outward phenomenon.¹⁴¹

If these Holy Spirit empowered confirmations have indeed occurred, then God has acted in Christ among believers and they “are faced with a reality—and a demand—from which they truly cannot ‘escape’” (cf. Heb 2:3).¹⁴² This passage is key to the argument of Hebrews as a whole and as such it places the person and work of the Holy Spirit at the very heart of the Christocentric reality which the book advances. The definitive expression of the divine will (*thelēsin*) in relation to the Holy Spirit’s distributions describes the active exercise of will, i.e., continued intentional action.¹⁴³ The Holy Spirit as both gift and Giver is still with the Church—still casting vision regarding the exalted Christ. Echoes of Pentecost are evident (Acts 2:1-36).¹⁴⁴

Applying Scripture Today

Elsewhere Hebrews places emphasis upon the Holy Spirit as the source of Scripture’s inspiration (Heb 3:7, 9; 9:8; 10:15).¹⁴⁵ The Holy Spirit speaks through the written word enabling Scripture’s message and appeal to remain current and contemporary.¹⁴⁶ “Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, “TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS” (Heb 3:7; cf. Psa 95:8-11; 106:33). Because of the Holy Spirit, the words of Scripture are “living words” and have power (cf. Heb 4:12). Scripture is not simply revelation in the past,

¹⁴¹ Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 40. The writer seems to imply that the readers are aware of those gifts mentioned elsewhere in Scripture (1 Cor 12:4-11; Rom 12:6-8; Eph 4:7-16).

¹⁴² Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 89.

¹⁴³ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 62; Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, 40.

¹⁴⁴ There are echoes of Pentecost here as Peter used the expression “miracles and wonders and signs” in his sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:22). This placing of signs and wonders (and miracles) together occurs nine out of the 12 times found in the NT in the book of Acts and occurs in the first fifteen chapters of Acts which relate the early growth and spread of the Church (Acts 2:19, 22, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:12).

¹⁴⁵ Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, 38.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 57; Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 113.

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but the present ongoing Word of God. The Holy Spirit speaks in the present.¹⁴⁷ “just as the Holy Spirit says.” The Holy Spirit interprets Scripture for today (see Heb 9:8).

In Hebrews 3:7-11 the author of Hebrews repeats 5 verses from Psalm 95. Then he explains the passage (which is the main subject for Hebrews chapters 3 and 4). He introduces reference to Psalm 95 with the words: “as the Holy Spirit says” (Heb 3:7). Two meanings are possible: 1) Although David wrote that Psalm (Heb 4:7), the Holy Spirit inspired him to write. This would mean that the Scripture’s origin is not human, and its authors did not just write from their own initiative or intelligence (cf. 2 Pet 1:20, 21). Scripture then is the Word of God; 2) The Holy Spirit is saying these very things again, now. These are not just some words that God spoke long ago. God’s Word is active and alive today (cf. Heb 4:12), and its message is ever contemporary, for “Today.”

The author undoubtedly believes both and so the message of the Psalm still warns. Believers must obey God’s message from the past—“Today, as they hear his voice.” This is so because of the Spirit’s activity both past and present. The Holy Spirit is principally One who both inspires Scripture and interprets it for contemporary believers.¹⁴⁸ He speaks to man by means of the inspired Word of God.¹⁴⁹ In this context He even speaks to those reading the Book of Hebrews.¹⁵⁰ Because this is so, it is always “Today” that one is to both hear and keep his or her heart open to the Holy Spirit’s appeal (Heb 3:7, 13, 15; 4:7).¹⁵¹ This moves the Holy Spirit’s interpretation of and appeal from the Word of God into the very depths of the human self: heart, soul, spirit, mind, motives, conscience (see Heb 3:7, 8, 10; 4:12; 9:8, 9, 14).

Interior Transformation

This generative and interpretive work of the Spirit in relation to Scripture encompasses deep typological and soteriological aspects of Israel’s sanctuary relative to the believer’s experience of worship and conscience: “The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing,

¹⁴⁷ Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 113.

¹⁴⁸ Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, 57.

¹⁴⁹ Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 91.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 114.

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which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience” (Heb. 9:8, 9). This revealing of the deeper meaning of the text has the technical meaning of a revelation of hidden mysteries.¹⁵² Here the Holy Spirit reveals the limitations of the ministry of the Israel’s sacrificial system as well as its deeper meaning in relation to fulfillment in Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who unlocks how the earthly sanctuary accomplished the purpose for which God created it, but even more so how only the sacrifice and ministry of Christ would eliminate once-for-all the problem related to sin and condemnation.¹⁵³ As one who so speaks and interprets the Word of God in relation to Jesus’ sacrifice and priestly ministry, the Holy Spirit is clearly involved in the work of life-transforming redemption on a very practical, interior level (heart, thought, motive, conscience).¹⁵⁴

Reference to the new covenant promise of Jeremiah provides yet another glimpse into the Spirit’s role with regards to interior transformational aspects of redemption: “And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, ‘THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,’ He then says, ‘AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE’” (Heb. 10:15-17). This is the third time in Hebrews where the Holy Spirit is said to speak or reveal through Scripture (cf. Heb 3:7; 9:8). Jeremiah nowhere places the hope of this profound experience in the context of the Holy Spirit. Ezekiel does, but not Jeremiah (cf. Ezek 36:23-27; 37:1-28; Jer 31:31-34). And yet Hebrews ascribes Jeremiah’s prophecy to the Holy Spirit:¹⁵⁵ and by implication the realization of the very experience to which the prophesy points. Evidently it is not only the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus that brings about such an interior change in humanity and the removal of sin. Such interior transformation and release from guilt falls within the Holy Spirit’s realm as well (cf. 6:4, 5), at least here in terms of the Holy Spirit bringing to one’s consciousness the conviction of the profound work of Christ and

¹⁵² As per the Greek *dēlountos tou penumatos*, i.e., to make something known by making evident what was either unknown before or what may have been difficult to understand (cf. Psa 50:6; Dan 2:5-47; 1 Cor 3:13). See Thompson, *Hebrews*, 184.

¹⁵³ Knight, *Exploring Hebrews: A Devotional Commentary*, 153.

¹⁵⁴ Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 243.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 283.

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how with the completion of His sacrificial work the promised era of the new covenant has commenced—something each believer can experience, “Today!” If this is true, then any believer who responds to the Holy Spirit’s prompting on these matters can realize the full assurance of hope which Jesus alone brings (cf. Heb 6:11).

The individual who rebels against God during this time of new covenant opportunity rejects the person of Christ, the work of Christ, and the person of the Holy Spirit—thus placing themselves in spiritual and eternal jeopardy.¹⁵⁶ “How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?” (Heb 10:29). The contrast posed between insults hurled (*enubrizō*) at the Holy Spirit and the grace granted by the Holy Spirit highlights the personhood of the Holy Spirit who can be intentionally insulted. This implies that any speaking by the Holy Spirit (Heb 3:7; 9:8; 10:15) in relation to the incredible truths about Christ is done so personally. It is a Person who addresses persons—believers. And one’s response to this Person will ever be personal. The implication is that such personal insult can result in the loss of Holy Spirit’s personal work of grace in the life (cf. Heb 6:4, 5 where “been made partakers of the Holy Spirit” is set in the context of “falling away”).

The Spirit of Grace

The phrase “Spirit of grace” (Heb 10:29) draws together for the first time two terms, each which points to the presence and power of God among humans.¹⁵⁷ In Hebrews, the Spirit speaks through Scripture (Heb 3:7; 9:8; 10:15). The Spirit is the source of the many gifts distributed to believers (Heb 2:4). One becomes a partaker of the Holy Spirit when he or she accepts Jesus Christ (Heb 6:4). Here the Holy Spirit and “grace” (*charis*) are connected. The Spirit is the source of grace (cf. Zech 12:10). The Spirit is an expression of divine grace.

When one traces the term *charis* through Hebrews this connection between the Spirit and grace becomes evocative. It was by the grace of God that Christ tasted death in behalf of all (Heb 2:9). Those who belong to Christ can “approach the throne of grace” and “find grace” to help in time

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 295.

¹⁵⁷ Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 265.

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of need (Heb 4:16). There is warning against “falling short of the grace of God” which is the grace of an “unshakable kingdom (Heb 12:15, 28). One’s heart can be strengthened by grace (Heb 13:9). A benediction of grace rests upon every reader (Heb 13:25).

At the minimum, insulting the “Spirit of grace” would mean insulting everything that has come from God.¹⁵⁸ But on the other hand, welcoming the “Spirit of grace” would mean not just receiving all that comes from God, but actually opening one’s way via the Spirit to the very “throne of grace” where divine helping grace through our great High Priest is anchored, offered, and sure. It is there at the “throne of grace” via “the Spirit of grace” that the interior transformational work in relation to the new covenant experience is fully realized in the heart (Heb 10:15; 13:9).

Falling Away or Holding Fast

Pneumatology is integral in yet another discussion of how the enormity of apostasy is measured by the greatness of the experience of God it abandons.¹⁵⁹ “For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away” (Heb. 6:4, 5, 6a). The series of aorist participles describes a singular event in the lives of the readers. The cumulative effect of this list is to recall the enormity of the conversion experience as personal participation in an unrepeatable event in which they became participants in the victory of Christ.¹⁶⁰ What lies behind all these images is the church’s claim to have received the Spirit of God.¹⁶¹ To be a “partaker of the Holy Spirit” (cf. 3:14 “partakers of Christ”) is to receive the heavenly power of the new age. Again, the Holy Spirit is integral to profound spiritual realities of the most powerful and transforming interior experience. Sharing (*metochous*) in the Holy Spirit implies an experience that is realized in fellowship with other believers (6:4).¹⁶² Implications for our understanding of the Holy Spirit in relation to empowering grace (Heb 4:16) and perseverance (Heb 3:6, 14; 4:14; 10:23) are obvious. Both

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 163.

¹⁶⁰ Thompson, *Hebrews*, 133, 134.

¹⁶¹ Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, 85.

¹⁶² Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 159.

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“falling away” and “holding fast” have obvious *pneumatological* significance.¹⁶³ People are capable of turning away from their own most powerful and transforming experience with the Holy Spirit. Likewise they are capable of holding it fast through continued faith in Christ.

Interior Application of Christ's Atonement

A possible reference to the Holy Spirit in partnership with Christ in providing an unblemished sacrifice for sin is found in a discussion of the unique saving work of Christ: “For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb 9:13, 14). Many suggest that the word “spirit” describes not the Holy Spirit, but the selfhood or person of Jesus, who, by virtue of His resurrection, is eternal (cf. Heb 7:16).¹⁶⁴ No doubt, the trajectory of the author’s argument does revolve around Christ’s eternal personhood in the context of the power of an indestructible life (Heb 7:16). It is because Jesus continues forever (does not die) that He holds His priesthood permanently (Heb 7:23). In the

¹⁶³ While this is one of Hebrews’ hard statements, the conditionality of the Spirit’s possession should come as no surprise. Because the book’s warning passages seem to suggest that apostasy is a real danger (an not merely hypothetical), all the Holy Spirit related blessings enumerated in Heb 2:1-4 and Heb 6:4-6 can be lost. The gift and gifts of the Holy Spirit are not final for believers, since God’s continuing work among them through the Holy Spirit is contingent on their staying the course, i.e., holding to their profession of the exalted Christ and who they are in Him (Heb 4:14; 10:23). Nowhere in Scripture can the idea be found that the reception of the Spirit denotes an irrevocable transaction. This was true also in contemporary Jewish literature and Jewish “retributive pneumatology” of the Second Temple period and beyond (Martin Emmrich, *Pneumatological Concepts in the Epistle to the Hebrews: Amtcharisma, Prophet & Guide of the Eschatological Exodus* [University Press of America, 2004], 69).

¹⁶⁴ English translations that capitalize “Spirit” in v. 14 presuppose a Trinitarian reference. In the original Greek all the letters were written uniformly, so one cannot determine exactly what the author intended except by context. So what the author means by the expression “eternal spirit” is not clear. The absence of the article from *penumatosaioniou* could suggest that this is a power possessed by Christ—His own spirit. It could also suggest that while truly man, Jesus would remain in unbroken connection with God. It is also possible that the author intends to describe the mode of Christ’s offering, i.e., via the eternal Spirit. See Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, 112; Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 235, 236; Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, 261, 262.

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immediate context the author speaks of “eternal redemption” (Heb 9:12) and “eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15). Elsewhere he refers to “eternal salvation” (Heb 5:9), “eternal judgment” (Heb 6:2), and “eternal covenant” (Heb 13:20). Each of these adjectival references however, has personal dimensions in the context of the believers’ experience as well as the one mediating such an experience to individual and corporate life.

While the eternal personhood of Jesus is integral to the ensuing argument, so is the reality that the purification of the flesh by the blood of goats and calves or the ashes of a heifer does not adequately address the human dilemma of defiled conscience. What was lacking in earthly sacrifices was the perfection of conscience, i.e., interior cleansing (Heb 9:9-10). The “once for all” (Heb 7:27; 10:10; 9:26) Christ event however, provides an eternal redemption (Heb 9:12) which in effect cleanses one’s “conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb 9:14). But how is this so? Clearly this is interior heart work, which we have already seen Hebrews posits as facilitated by Holy Spirit in personalizing the better work of Christ. One does not become perfect in conscience merely because Jesus lives forever, i.e., is eternal. He or she experiences such profound cleansing on the deepest level of conscience and spiritual awareness: both because the eternal Christ who died for their sins lives forever, and because the Holy Spirit (or “eternal Spirit”) brings the effective power of Christ’s crucifixion and ascension (i.e., his mediatorial work at the right hand of the throne of majesty in the heavens) to one’s inner most being.

We must catch the thread of inner and outer defilement and cleansing running throughout the discussion (Heb 9:13, 14, 22, 23; 10:2, 22). This cleansing is absolutely dependent on the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. The blood of Christ does that which the blood of goats and calves could not do. This is so because the Holy Spirit effects the application and implications of Christ’s blood to the soul.

Even though we could be more certain if the author had written “Holy Spirit” instead of “eternal Spirit,”¹⁶⁵ we know that Christ’s entire ministry was in partnership with the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁶ Christ’s incarnation was a Holy

¹⁶⁵ Compared with biblical references to “eternal God” (Deut 33:27; Rom 16:26; 1 Tim 11:17) the phrase would assert the Spirit’s eternal nature as part of the triune God.

¹⁶⁶ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 205, 206; Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 251, 252.

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Spirit phenomenon (Matt 1:20; Luke 1:35). Christ's baptism was a Holy Spirit anointing (Matt 3:16, 17; Mark 1:9-11; cf. Acts 10:38). Christ's ascension and coronation as High Priest was a Holy Spirit phenomenon as per Pentecost (Acts 2:1-39). Christ's entire ministry was Holy Spirit driven, Holy Spirit engaged, and Holy Spirit bathed (Luke 4:1-2, 18; cf. Isa 61:1; 42:1; John 3:34). While the four Gospels say nothing about the Holy Spirit's role in the sufferings of Christ, John's first epistle asserts that the Spirit gives testimony of each of significant turning points of Christ's life—baptism, death, and ascension (1 John 5:7).¹⁶⁷ Likewise Revelation affirms an organic link between the slain-but-resurrected and now exalted Christ and the partnering role of the Holy Spirit in each of these experiences, i.e., by its imagery of a Lamb standing as if slain having seven eyes and seven horns—which are the seven Spirit's of God sent out into all the earth (Rev 5:6).¹⁶⁸ As the Holy Spirit was at work during each of these Christ-events (baptism, crucifixion, and ascension as per 1 John 5:7), it is very likely that He played a profound role in the moments of Christ's offering Himself without blemish to God on the Cross. If so, the phrase "eternal Spirit" would hint of the spiritual mystery of how divinity could both die and come to life as well as to how Christ's offering would be both unblemished and bring in eternal redemption.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ See discussion below of 1 John 5:7 in this paper's section "The Holy Spirit in 1, 2, 3 John."

¹⁶⁸ Revelation unfolds Pentecost realities in apocalyptic imagery. The Lamb's horns and eyes are an organic part of who Christ is as the slain-resurrected-exalted Lamb. When you see the Lamb, the Spirit is present and evident. Wherever the Lamb goes, whatever the Lamb does, the Spirit is present and at work. The Spirit qualifies essential features of the Lamb's being and work. Likewise the Lamb qualifies essential features of the Spirit's being and work. The "sevenfold Spirit" is so closely identified with Christ that they are as if they are one. This does not diminish or blur the Spirit into the person of Christ or make them one in essence. Rather it accentuates the context in which the Spirit's work is envisioned in the Apocalypse. Christ and the Spirit work in the same way and do the same things in relation to the world even when the emphasis and role is different.

¹⁶⁹ Bruce suggests that while Christ's self-sacrifice is certainly described as being "a spiritual and eternal sacrifice," more is intended. Behind the author's thinking lies Isaiah's Servant of the Lord who yields up his life to God as a guilt offering for many, bearing their sin and procuring their justification (Isa 58:6-12) because the Holy Spirit has been placed on Him (Isa 42:1; cf. Isa 61:1). It is in the power of the Holy Spirit that the Servant accomplishes every phase of his ministry, including the crowning phase in which he accepts death for the transgression of his people (Bruce, *The Epistles to the Hebrews*, 251, 252).

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As with other New Testament documents explored in this article, Hebrews begins and ends with a Trinitarian thought context with all that that thought mix implies regarding the Holy Spirit (Heb 1:1f; 13:20, 21). Hebrews makes it clear that all three persons of the Trinity are involved in the atoning work that stands behind our salvation (Heb 9:14; 10:29-31).¹⁷⁰ Hebrew's "Spirit" is the "Holy Spirit" (Heb 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8; 10:15) further linking the Spirit with the essential nature of God and all that God seeks to bring into the lives of His people—holiness.

The person and work of the Holy Spirit is integral to the Book of Hebrews' explanation of what the exalted Jesus has been doing for believers since His ascension, and why that matters now. Its mere seven references to the Holy Spirit (Heb 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8, 14; 10:15, 29) place pneumatology at the very heart of the Christocentric reality (worldview), which the book advances.¹⁷¹ Through the Spirit the written Word still speaks ("Today") to heart, mind, and conscience—encompassing the interior work every believer must experience. The Spirit partners with Christ in realizing the hope of a cleansed conscience in keeping with the interior application of Christ's shed blood (Heb 9:14).

Conclusion

The General Epistles together with the Book of Hebrews provide robust insight into the first century Church's pneumatology as its members encountered the challenges of the Greco-Roman world, the variety and ferment of its own expanding membership, the emergence within of subtle enervating heresies, and the articulation of its beliefs and praxis. The person and work of the Holy Spirit unfold against the backdrop of numerous (and interconnected) concerns, which these diverse yet complementary writings engage.¹⁷² While references to the Holy Spirit are rare, brief, and

¹⁷⁰ Coppedge, *The God Who Is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God*, 42, 125.

¹⁷¹ This is in keeping with how the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost enabled the early Church to envision, experience, and proclaim the benefits of the exaltation and coronation of Christ (Acts 2:1-36). The Spirit's coming shattered the church's understanding of reality with a new image of Jesus and discipleship. The Holy Spirit was a worldview transforming sign from heaven (Acts 2:16-22; cf. Eph 1:13; 4:30; Heb 2:4; 6:4, 5).

¹⁷² I.e., Christology, orthodoxy, trials and adversity, church and state relations, revelation and inspiration, soteriology, spiritual warfare, the heavenly sanctuary in view of the passing away of the earthly, ecclesiology, the covenants, personal and corporate lifestyle (character and ethics), assurance, perseverance, spiritual disciplines, mission and message

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passing—seemingly more of an aside than a well-defined focus—they nevertheless reveal the Church’s profound pneumatology where the reality of the Holy Spirit was integral to every aspect of Christian thought, life, hope, and apologetics. They demonstrate how the possession of the Spirit as a mark of the new life in Christ forms part of the primitive gospel preached by the apostles. Throughout their evident “theology on the run” these writings reflect a larger New Testament Trinitarian thought context which is expressed with literary *inclusion* affirming the Holy Spirit’s crucial role in a triune experience:¹⁷³ from the standpoint of God—triune atonement, triune invitation, triune witness, and triune assurance; from the standpoint of the believer—triune understanding of spiritual things, triune abiding, triune growing in faith, triune experience of prayer, discipleship, spiritual gifts, ministry, and worship.

With only one possible (and much debated) reference to the Holy Spirit (James 4:5), James hardly ever appears in discussions of New Testament *pneumatology*. If he does have the Spirit in view, James provides an early insight into the interior work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the grace, which God gives to those who are humble. Nevertheless the book reflects the Trinitarian thought mix, which includes the Spirit in its purview.

First Peter begins with an extended Trinitarian structure (1 Pet 1:2). It places the person and work of the Holy Spirit squarely in the experience of salvation and what it means to become a disciple of the triune God (1 Peter 1:2, 23) as well as Christology (1 Pet 1:11; 3:18), Gospel proclamation (1 Pet 1:11; 3:18), and suffering, perseverance, self-identity (1 Pet 4:14).

With clear Trinitarian nuance Peter’s second epistle’s opening begins with God and Jesus and ends with the Spirit and God (2 Pet 1:2, 21). The appearance of Holy Spirit in verse 21 provides an interpretive hinge relating both backward and forward in the author’s discussion regarding the accusations by false teachers who suggest God’s Spirit is speaking a fresh message through them. This second epistle powerfully nuances the Spirit’s relation to the origin and authority of Scripture (2 Pet 1:19-21). The Spirit continues to speak through the prophetic word, which He initiated. Genuine

of the Church (worldview and identity), truth, etc.

¹⁷³ Every book but 3 John begins with at least two members of Triune God. Hebrews, 1 John, and Jude clearly express the Trinitarian literary *inclusio*. First Peter and Jude place all three members of the Triune God together in one thought unit in some of the clearest and strongest Trinitarian language in the New Testament.

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spiritual life is linked to the true voice of the Holy Spirit via the prophetic word. The Spirit brings spiritual resources for here and now via and alongside of God's Word (2 Pet 1:3).

John's first epistle exhibits a restrained pneumatology in light of its larger theocentric context and Christological focus. Nevertheless, it unfolds a *pneumatological* crisis in which the Holy Spirit's person and work become key. There are marks of authentic pneumatology in relation to the question of who Jesus really is (1 John 4:1-15). The Holy Spirit bears witness to the earthly life and sacrificial death of Jesus (1 John 5:5-8). He plays a key role in Christ's self-disclosure in the world—baptism (water), crucifixion (blood), and exaltation/coronation (Spirit, i.e., Pentecost). In keeping with the epistle's Fourth Gospel backdrop (both in structure and content) the Holy Spirit's role in the "new birth" experience (1 John 3:9) along with its genuine moral/spiritual fruitage is highlighted (1 John 3:7-24). The "anointing" (of the Spirit) engenders assurance of eternal life and confident hope of Christ's soon return as well (1 John 2:20, 27, 28; 3:24). One's ability to remain in the truth and discernment between truth and error (or true and demonic spirits) is likewise linked to the Spirit's work in both the individual and church community (1 John 4:1-3).

Jude's brevity belies its profound contribution to New Testament pneumatology. It contains one of the few, yet important, Trinitarian passages which mentions the three members of the triune God together (Jude 20, 21). In doing so the epistle unfolds spiritual growth as a "Trinitarian challenge." The Holy Spirit is seen in relation to Christian orthodoxy, unity, worldview, ethics (Jude 19, 20) as well as Christian spiritual discipline and growth (Jude 21).

Hebrews' mere seven references to the Holy Spirit (Heb 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8, 14; 10:15, 29) place pneumatology at the very heart of the Christocentric reality (worldview), which the book advances. The Spirit provides divine confirming witness of the preaching of Christ. Through the Spirit the written Word still speaks ("Today") to heart, mind, and conscience—encompassing the interior work every believer must experience. The Spirit unfolds insight and understanding into sanctuary typology and affirms the new covenant promises as realities to be personally experienced. The Spirit partners with Christ in realizing the hope of a cleansed conscience in keeping with the interior application of Christ's shed blood (Heb 9:14). As the "Spirit of grace" (Heb 10:29) the Holy Spirit is the active agent "at the throne of grace" (Heb 4:16) enabling the

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believer's reception of mercy and grace to help in the time of need. The person and work of the Holy Spirit is integral to the book's explanation of what the exalted Jesus has been doing for believers since His ascension, and why that matters now.

These brief insights from some of the New Testament's earliest and latest first century documents reveal how integral the Holy Spirit is to every aspect of Christian thought, life, hope, and apologetics. Through the Holy Spirit "divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Pet 1:3). In the gift of the Holy Spirit we have everything we need. Through the Holy Spirit we taste "the good word of God and the powers of the age to come" (Heb 6:5). There can be great assurance, hope, and spiritual life because "greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

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