

**Another Paraclete: The Holy Spirit in John's Gospel**  
(A working paper)  
**Wilson Paroschi, PhD**

There are important differences between John and the Synoptics concerning the theme of the Holy Spirit. The fact that John writes from the perspective of his own time, rather than from that of Jesus Himself as the other evangelists do, perhaps helps to explain some of the differences. For John, the coming of the Spirit was a past event (John 7:39) and His presence in the life and mission of the church was still more essential than that of the incarnate Christ (16:7), hence what he says about the Spirit takes new dimensions of details and significance. This essay consists in a brief study on what the Fourth Gospel says about the Spirit. It is divided into three parts: the Johannine teaching on the Spirit in the narrative sections of the Gospel (chaps. 1-13, 18-21); the passages—unique to John—that refer to the Spirit as the Paraclete and that are found in the so-called Farewell Discourses (chaps. 14-17);<sup>1</sup> and the alleged grammatical evidences of both the personality and the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The essay ends with some short considerations on the relevance of the discussion to SDA theology and doctrine.

**The Spirit in the Narrative Sections**

Even if he is not the NT writer who most refers to the Holy Spirit, John stands out among the evangelists not only in number but also in scope and relevance of the references.<sup>2</sup> In the Synoptics, as in the OT, the Spirit is not so much an independent or distinct entity, but God's power in operation. The

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<sup>1</sup> Besides "Paraclete," other expressions used in the Farewell Discourses are "Spirit of Truth" and "Holy Spirit." In the narrative sections, John refers almost exclusively to the "Spirit," with no qualification of any kind. The only exception is John 1:33, where John the Baptist announces that Jesus would baptize with the "Holy Spirit." It is interesting, therefore, that the only occasion outside chaps. 14-17 in which the evangelist uses terminology other than "Spirit," the reference is to something that Jesus would do some time (not specified) in the future.

<sup>2</sup> In John, there are nineteen references to the Spirit altogether, including those that concern the Paraclete (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), against twelve references in Matthew, six in Mark, and sixteen in Luke. In the case of the individual authors, Paul is the NT writer who most refers to the Holy Spirit (114 times, including Hebrews); Luke comes next (106 times, most of them in Acts). No individual author, however, has contributed more to the church's understanding of the person of the Holy Spirit than John, especially in the Gospel.

fundamental idea is that of empowerment or qualification to some specific activity.<sup>3</sup> So, Jesus is empowered by the Spirit to the fulfilment of His messianic mission (Matt 3:16; 12:18, 28; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; 4:14, 18; cf. Acts 10:38), which includes sharing this same gift (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; 11:13), especially with the disciples, so that they could also perform the work that would be required from them (Luke 24:49; cf. Matt 10:20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12).<sup>4</sup>

In John, the situation is completely different, though without any contradiction. Not that the idea of empowerment is not present; it is, but always implicitly, as in the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus at His baptism (John 1:32-34). In John's Gospel, the phenomenon consists more in a sign to John the Baptist than in Jesus' empowerment to ministry. The Baptist is recorded as having received a divine revelation that allowed him to identify "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (vs. 29), who would come next (vs. 30) and would baptize with the Holy Spirit: "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (vs. 33). In view of 3:34, however, it is probable that the evangelist also saw the episode in terms of a supernatural empowerment: "He whom God has sent utters the words of God, for He [God] gives the Spirit [unto the Son] without measure." In order to baptize with the Spirit and give the Spirit to His disciples, Jesus has to be full of the Spirit, something that John, however, only seems to assume, possibly in connection to Jesus' baptism itself.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "It must be accepted that the major background for the synoptic presentation of the Spirit's work is the OT" (Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1981], 525). On the basic concept of *rûḥ* in the OT, see M. V. van Pelt, W. C. Kaiser Jr., and D. I. Block, "*Rûḥ*," *NIDOTTE*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 3:1073-1078.

<sup>4</sup> This concise summary does not take into consideration several important questions about the Spirit in the Synoptic Gospels. For fuller discussions, see Guthrie, 514-526; C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition*, 2<sup>d</sup> ed. (London: SPCK, 1966); and esp. Craig S. Keener, *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts: Divine Purity and Power* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> The phrase, "for he gives the Spirit without measure" (vs. 34b), is difficult, for neither the subject (whether the Father or the Son) nor the recipient (whether the Son or the believers) of the verb "to give" is mentioned. However, when it is read in connection to the following statement (vs. 35), the idea that it is the Father who gives the Spirit without measure and that it is the Son who receives it seems preferable. This is what

The fact that John never mentions Jesus performing miracles through the power of the Spirit perhaps has only to do with his emphasis on Jesus' divine nature, as his silence about Jesus' virginal birth seems to be due to the importance he gives to Jesus' incarnation, which fits better the concept of preexistence.<sup>6</sup> John, however, is careful enough to tie Jesus' miracles (*sēmeia*) not only to His divine sonship (the preexistent Son of God) but also to His messianic character (20:30-31), which somehow does preserve the notion of supernatural empowerment (cf. At 10:38). Once again, the evangelist may only be assuming that which is explicit in the other Gospels.

It is likely that the idea of empowerment is also present in Jesus' act of blowing the Spirit on the disciples at the moment He entrusts them the evangelical commission (John 20:21-22). It is true that nothing is said about the purpose of sending them to the world and the following comment refers to the forgiveness of sins (vs. 23), but it is difficult to interpret the episode without relating it to Luke 24:45-49 (cf. Acts 1:8).<sup>7</sup> The passage, however, presents some difficulty in view of the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, which has led several scholars to conceive two grantings of the Spirit, one to the believers in general, here represented by the disciples, and another ten days after the ascension (Acts 2). In the first case, as Brown argues, Jesus' act of blowing (*emphysaō*) the Spirit would be an allusion to the creative blow of God mentioned in passages such as Gen 2:7 and Ezek 37:5-6 (cf. Wis 17:11). The meaning of the Johannine expression, then, would be that as God in the beginning blew the spirit of life upon humanity,

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most commentators think. For references, see Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:582-583.

<sup>6</sup> Not that there is no room to the virgin birth in John's theology, but "there exists no suggestion of pre-existence as with the concept of incarnation, whereby a figure who was previously with God takes on flesh" (Wilson Paroschi, *Incarnation and Covenant in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel (John 1:1-18)*, EUS [Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2006], 9 n. 4). Raymond E. Brown adds: "Incarnational thought is indicative of pre-existence Christology ... and works reflecting that Christology [cf. Phil 2:7; John 1:14] show no awareness of or interest in the manner of Jesus' conception" (*The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, rev. ed., ABRL [New York: Doubleday, 1993], 141).

<sup>7</sup> For Werner G. Kümmel, however, the gift of the Spirit in John 20:22 has to do only with the forgiveness of sins. He argues that John "says nothing at all of the divine Spirit's enabling one to perform miraculous deeds" (*The Theology of the New Testament according to Its Major Witnesses: Jesus, Paul, John*, trans. John W. Steely [Nashville: Abingdon, 1973], 313).

so in the moment of the new creation He blows the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, granting them eternal life.<sup>8</sup> Herman Ridderbos, on the other hand, though conceding that the reference is to the disciples' empowerment for mission, does not see here any allusion to Pentecost, as in John 7:39. For him, 20:22 speaks of a more limited giving of the Spirit to the disciples only, and not of His outpouring upon "all flesh" indistinctly as in the episode of Acts 2 (cf. 17).<sup>9</sup>

The importance of John 7:39, however, cannot be minimized. For John, the Spirit could not be given before the ascension and glorification of Jesus (cf. Acts 2:32-33); the glorification would be confirmation by the Father that the Son had completely fulfilled His mission (John 17:4-5). It is for this reason it was to the disciples' advantage that Jesus went to the Father (16:28), because if He did not go, the Spirit would not come (vs. 7).<sup>10</sup> This explains Jesus' expectation that the disciples rejoiced upon His departure (14:28; cf. 17:13). In addition, the missiological purpose of the gift in 20:22 cannot be neglected (cf. vss. 21-23), even if the emphasis falls on the forgiveness of sins. And, finally, there is no evidence that the disciples had initiated the apostolic mission except after Pentecost. On the contrary, they still nurtures doubts (vss. 24-25), fear (vs. 26), and some of them seemed tempted to return to

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<sup>8</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 2 vols., AB (New York: Doubleday, 1966-1970), 2:1037.

<sup>9</sup> Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 643. A third hypothesis is that John was not aware of Pentecost: while Luke records the episode as having occurred ten days after Jesus' ascension, John thought it had taken place later on the resurrection day (so, C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 2<sup>d</sup> ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978], 570). Though convenient to a sectarian view of John's Gospel, still rather common in some circles, this hypothesis is definitely not the best way to understand the peculiarities of Johannine theology. On the relation of John's Gospel to Christian tradition as it appears in the other NT writings, see Stephen S. Smalley, *John: Evangelist and Interpreter*, 2<sup>d</sup> ed., NTP (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 187-229.

<sup>10</sup> John frequently associates Jesus' glorification with His departure from the world (7:39; 12:16, 23; 13:31-32; 16:14; 17:1, 5, 24) or with His "hour" (12:23, 27-28; 17:1), which is normally interpreted in relation to Jesus' death (e.g., Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 3 vols., trans. Kevin Smyth et al. [New York: Herder & Herder, 1968-1982], 2:382-383). Godfrey C. Nicholson, however, has convincingly shown that "the *hōra* of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel is not the hour of His death, but the hour of His return to the Father, in which hour the death played a part" (*Death as Departure: The Johannine Descent-Ascent Schema*, SBLDS 63 [Chico: Scholars, 1983], 147). He adds: "Just as the *hōra* of Jesus is not a reference to His death but to His return above to the Father, so too the 'glorification of the Son of man' does not refer to the death of Jesus but to something which the Father does to the Son, either coincident with or subsequent to, the return of Jesus above" (ibid., 149). For further information and references, see Paroschi, *Incarnation and Covenant in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel*, 140.

their old occupation (21:1-3). The blow of the Spirit in 20:22, therefore, perhaps should be taken merely as a symbolic anticipation, a kind of dramatized parable of something that would effectively be fulfilled only at Pentecost.<sup>11</sup> And there is little if any question that the account had a theological motivation.

According to James D. G. Dunn, by placing the gift of the Spirit at that moment, the apostle only wishes to affirm the continuity between Jesus and the Spirit. "The Spirit," he says, "is the other Paraclete (14:16-17) whose coming fulfills Jesus' promise to return and dwell in His disciples."<sup>12</sup>

Jesus words that those who believed in Him would do the same works He did, and even greater ones, because He was going to the Father (John 14:12), also seem to refer to the empowerment of the Spirit, especially when they are read in connection to 7:39 and 16:7. It is true that the matter in 16:6 is not the performance of miracles (cf. vss. 8-14), but this only reinforces the observation that the supernatural empowerment of the Spirit in John is not present but only in the background. On the other hand, it cannot be really stated that the "works" (*erga*) in 14:12 exclude miraculous signs,<sup>13</sup> but even if the reference is restricted to evangelistic works, this would be enough to interpret the text in terms of the coming of the Spirit. "What Jesus means," comments Leon Morris, "we may see in the narratives in

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<sup>11</sup> George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 325. D. A. Carson adds: "Unless one adopts a literalistic and mechanical view of the action, understanding the Holy Spirit to be nothing less than Jesus' expelled air, one is forced to say that the 'breathing' was symbolic" (*The Gospel according to John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 652).

<sup>12</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Christ and the Spirit*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 2:214. Rudolf Bultmann says basically the same, though certainly goes too far when he declares that, by combining Jesus' resurrection (of return) with the gift of the Spirit (14:16-20, 21-26; 16:12-24), John is reinterpreting "the traditional motif of the expectation of the Parousia," stripping it "of its original mythological character" (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971], 585-586). Based on texts such as John 14:3 and 21:22 (cf. 1 John 3:2), however, Ladd concludes that "Jesus' words about coming in the Paraclete and his eschatological coming reflect the tension between realized and futuristic eschatology" (340).

<sup>13</sup> There is a tendency to limit such "works" to the missionary accomplishments of the apostolic church (for references, see Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, SPS 4 [Collegeville: Liturgical, 1998], 399), but in John the term *erga* generally refers to the miraculous signs of Jesus (5:20, 36; 7:3; 9:3-4; 10:25, 32-33, 37-38; 14:10-12; 15:24), whereas the singular *ergon* describes His mission as a whole (4:34; 17:4). See discussion by Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 2:946-947.

Acts.”<sup>14</sup> And what secures such interpretation is the reference to the Son’s ascent to the Father, for the Spirit could not come while the Son was still there (7:39). The departure of the Son, therefore, was convenient to the disciples (16:7). It would allow this new phase of salvation history to be handled directly from heaven (14:28), thus avoiding the limitation imposed by the physical presence of Jesus.<sup>15</sup>

The Johannine presentation of the Holy Spirit takes on even more distinct contours in Jesus’ dialogue with Nicodemus (John 3:1-15). There, the Spirit is presented as a source of spiritual renewal, a function virtually absent in the Synoptics, though known in Jewish tradition both biblical (Gen 2:7; Ezek 37:5-6, 14) and extra-biblical (Wis 17:11). The point that is stressed by such texts is that God brings (new) life through the activity of the Spirit (cf. Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:3, 23). It is in this sense that Jesus’ words to Nicodemus—“unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5)—must be understood.<sup>16</sup> The explanation is given next: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (vs. 6). “Flesh,” therefore, is the reality of the first birth, whereas “spirit” is the reality of the new birth (cf. vss. 3, 7).<sup>17</sup> The idea is that, of themselves, humans do not

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<sup>14</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 574. See also C. K. Barrett, “The Parallels between Acts and John,” in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black (Louisville: WJK, 1996), esp. 171-172.

<sup>15</sup> The statement, “the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28) is difficult from the Trinitarian perspective. The reference, however, does not seem to be ontological, but functional with regard to the incarnate state of Jesus. That is, it must be seen together with 10:30: “I and the Father are one.” Ridderbos explains: “That the Father is ‘more’ than Jesus means only that His return to the Father is the beginning of a new dispensation of grace, one based in heaven and therefore coming down from the Father. This new dispensation will exceed the limitations of the dispensation represented by Jesus’ presence on earth (cf. vs. 12), just as the glory that Jesus will receive as the Son who returns to the Father will be greater than His earthly glory (17:5, 24), even though both issue from His oneness with the Father” (512).

<sup>16</sup> The closest Synoptic parallel is Mark 10:15 (=Luke 18:3): “Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” Though the form is similar, there is no mention of spiritual rebirth, but only the metaphorical use of “child” to express the concept of discipleship.

<sup>17</sup> The Greek *anōthen* (vs. 3) may mean “again/afew” or “from above.” Nicodemus understood it as “again” (vs. 4), but the most common meaning, also in John (3:31; 19:11, 23), is “from above;” this is also the meaning that fits better the vertical dualism of the Gospel (3:13, 31; 6:33, 38, 41, 50, 51, 58, 62; 8:23). Anyway, being born “from above” implies in being born “again,” though not the way Nicodemus understood it. Some even say that this is one of the several instances in which John intentionally uses words with double meaning (e.g., E.

possess spiritual life; such life is possible only through the inner operation of the Spirit of God.<sup>18</sup> And the final dialogue highlights that the condition to be met to receive this life is to believe in (*pisteuō eis*) Jesus Christ (vs. 15). The believer, then, belongs to a different order from that of the natural human being. In the Gospel's Prologue (1:1-18), John anticipates the concept of the two orders, the natural one and the spiritual one (1:13), as well as the role played by faith allowing the person to move from one to the other (vs. 12c). In fact, nobody can pass from one to the other. Whoever is born in the natural order remains there unless one is born again.<sup>19</sup> This change of order comes with a change of status: those who experience it become "children [*tekna*] of God" (vs. 12b). Both the new birth and the divine filiation, therefore, are gifts of the Spirit to those who believe in Jesus.<sup>20</sup>

Jesus' words to Nicodemus connect "water" and "Spirit" (John 3:5), which seems to evoke the theme of baptism.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps this is why baptism is mentioned in the same context (vss. 22-26).<sup>22</sup> In John 7:38-39a, "water" and "Spirit" are once again mentioned together. "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Now this he said," John continues, "about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive" (ESV). The difference, however, is that water here does not come with the Spirit (water + baptism), but represents a symbol for the Spirit

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Richard, "Expressions of Double Meaning and Their Function in the Gospel of John," *NTS* 31 [1985]: 96-112, esp. 103).

<sup>18</sup> Ladd, 326.

<sup>19</sup> "There is no evolution from flesh to spirit" (Edwyn C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, 2<sup>d</sup> ed., ed. Francis N. Davey [London: Faber & Faber, 1947], 204).

<sup>20</sup> Note how vss. 12-13 combine the idea of divine filiation to that of (new) birth, which means that, for John, son is the one who was born again ("of God" or "of the Spirit"). The relation between divine filiation and the Spirit, however, is more explicit in Paul than in John (cf. Rom 8:15-17; Gal 4:6).

<sup>21</sup> So, Kümmel, 312-313; Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:546-550.

<sup>22</sup> It is possible that in vs. 5 Jesus is making an allusion to proselyte baptism as practiced by Judaism, otherwise His words would not make much sense to Nicodemus. To Christian readers of the end of the first century, however, which supposedly was when John's Gospel was written, it is impossible that such words would not be seen in association with Christian baptism. For a brief discussion concerning whether proselyte baptism already existed in the first century, see Wilson Paroschi, "Acts 19:1-7 Reconsidered in Light of Paul's Theology of Baptism," *AUSS* 47 (2009): 80 n. 35.

(water = Spirit), whereas the future tense of the verb points to the Spirit's dispensation, that is, to the new age in the history of salvation that would follow the ascension and glorification of Jesus, "for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (vs. 39b). Whatever the specific meaning of waters flowing from within the believer (cf. 4:14), the notion of a renewing and transforming power cannot be altogether excluded.<sup>23</sup> Jesus' words refer to the abundant gift of the Spirit in the lives of those who believed in Him.<sup>24</sup>

Another passage that also seems related to Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus is 6:63: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (ESV). The first part of the text is difficult, but there might be no question that *pneuma* there refers to the Holy Spirit, and not to the human spirit, as the human spirit is in no way entitled to "give life" (*zōopoiēō*).<sup>25</sup> Such prerogative belongs to God's Spirit only (Isa 40:6-8; 2 Cor 3:6; cf. John 5:21; 1 Cor 15:45). The matter in the previous verses (John 6:60-62) is the inability of those who were listening to Jesus to understand the teaching about His death. It is likely, then, that Jesus wanted to emphasize that the natural person ("flesh"), that is, the person not yet renewed by the Spirit, is indeed unable to understand the meaning of His death, for spiritual matters can only be discerned spiritually (cf. 1 Cor

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<sup>23</sup> "The reference is to the refreshment and renewal of 'the inner person'" (Ridderbos, 274). Some scholars have suggested a different punctuation for John 7:38-39, one that makes Christ, not the believer, the source of such "rivers of living water" (e.g., C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953], 349). Even so, the notion of a life-giving and transforming power remains unchanged.

<sup>24</sup> Besides punctuation, vs. 38-39 present a second problem: there is no Scripture that speaks of living water flowing from the believer's heart (or of Christ, in case the alternative punctuation is adopted). What we have are passages such as Ezek 47:1-12, Joel 3:18, and Zech 14:8 that come a bit closer, but not to the point of matching Jesus' statement. For a brief analysis of the several solutions that have been suggested, see Kenner, 1:724-730. For a virtually full and well-documented analysis, see Germain Bienaimé, "L'annonce des fleuves d'eau vive en Jean 7:37-39," *RTL* 21 (1990): 281-310, 417-454.

<sup>25</sup> In the KJV and the NRSV, "spirit" comes in lowercase, making it a reference to the human spirit (cf. NKJV).



2:6-16).<sup>26</sup> If Jesus' words are "spirit and life," then only those who have been renewed by Spirit and that belong now to the spiritual order are able to understand them completely. The following verse (John 6:64) resumes the theme of faith, making it implicit that only the lives of those who respond with faith can be renewed. Instead of rejecting Jesus as "the bread that came down from heaven" (vss. 41, 51, 58), which is the only One that can actually give life to the world (vs. 51), those who respond with faith allow the Spirit to operate their new birth and transform them in spiritual persons, making them to understand the meaning of Jesus' death and to foretaste eternal life and the assurance of resurrection (vss. 27, 40, 47, 54).<sup>27</sup>

In conclusion, therefore, in John's narrative sections the Spirit is a life-giving power through which God regenerates and transforms those who believe. Through the Spirit, the believers are born again (3:3, 5-6), now as God's children (1:12-13), receive life, and can understand spiritual matters (6:63; 7:37-38). In some moments, the symbol of water is used possibly in connection with baptism (3:5) and with the purpose of stressing the abundance of the gift of the Spirit that is available to those who believe (7:38-39a). The idea of supernatural empowerment, typical of the Synoptics, is also present, but always in the background. When this happens, John's emphasis is more in the Spirit's witness to Jesus (1:32-34), as well as in the forgiveness of sins through the authority of the Spirit (20:22-23). John is also clear enough about the time of the Spirit's coming: Jesus would have first to be glorified (7:39b), otherwise the Spirit could not come (16:7). For the evangelist, the dispensation of the Spirit cannot

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<sup>26</sup> So, Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, ECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 219.

<sup>27</sup> Marianne M. Thompson comments: "If the Spirit is not given until after Jesus' death, what then are the implications for receiving life from Jesus during the time of His ministry? For elsewhere Jesus refers to His words as 'spirit and life' (6:63) and speaks of the life He confers as a present reality ('Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life,' 3:36; cf. 5:24; 6:47). Jesus warns that unless one is 'born by the Spirit,' that person will never receive life. To the extent that the Spirit and life are identified with each other, then the actual reception of life seems to be deferred until after Jesus' death. Consequently, when Jesus speaks of giving life (e.g., 3:5-8; 6:63), He speaks proleptically of a situation that will obtain only after His death. Similarly, Jesus' gift of the Spirit is subsequent to His death and glorification. Jesus' death and resurrection seal the effects of His ministry" (*The God of the Gospel of John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], 178).

begin before Jesus finishes His work.<sup>28</sup> The point, however, is not only chronological, but mainly theological. The glorification of Jesus means the confirmation by the Father that the mission of the Son was successful (17:4-5; cf. Eph 4:7-10; Rev 5:1-14).<sup>29</sup>

### The Spirit in the Farewell Discourses

In the Farewell Discourses (chaps. 14-17), there is a group of five passages that refer to the Holy Spirit as “Paraclete” or “Spirit of Truth” (14:16-17, 25-26; 15:26-27; 16:7-11, 13-15).<sup>30</sup> What distinguishes such passages, besides their location in the Gospel and distinct terminology, is that they are exclusive to John, have to do with the coming of the Spirit, and ascribe functions or traits that are completely different from those found in the narrative sections of the Gospel.<sup>31</sup> The predominant idea is that of an instructor, a witness, and a guide, which goes way beyond the concept of a life-giving and enabling power. In fact, in the case of John’s Gospel, such passages “provide the strongest evidence for conceiving of the Spirit as a distinct figure, an independent agent or actor,”<sup>32</sup> and are among those which have contributed the most to the development of Christian doctrine of the Spirit.

Among the functions ascribed to the Spirit in the Paraclete passages are teaching (14:26),

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<sup>28</sup> “What the evangelist means is that the Spirit of the dawning kingdom comes as the result—indeed, the entailment—of the Son’s completed work, and up to that point the Holy Spirit was *not* given in the full, Christian sense of the term” (Carson, 329).

<sup>29</sup> Two other passages that are sometimes interpreted in connection with the Holy Spirit are John 4:23-24 (“in spirit and truth”) and 19:30 (Jesus “released the spirit”) (so, Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John*, BNTC [Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005], 177-178, 478). In both cases, however, the arguments are not sufficiently convincing (see Morris, 239-240, 720-721).

<sup>30</sup> Despite the difference of emphasis and the parenthetical statement of vs. 12, from the syntactical standpoint John 16:7-11 and 13-15 could be considered only one passage, as there is no question that “Spirit of Truth” in vs. 13 is appositional to “Paraclete” in vs. 7.

<sup>31</sup> The fact that the term *paraklētos* is found only in the Johannine writings, and nowhere else in the NT, has generated questions about whether the tradition really goes back to historical Jesus (e.g., Bultmann, 552-555). The issue, however, is whether the other evangelists have not expressed aspect of John’s teaching about the Paraclete in different ways. For possible examples, see G. Braumann, “Advocate,” *NIDNTT*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 1:90-91.

<sup>32</sup> Thompson, 149.

guiding in truth, revealing things yet to come (16:13), and causing to remember what Jesus had said when He was with the disciples (14:26). The Spirit speaks, hears (16:13), glorifies (vs. 14), bears witness (15:26), and convicts concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:8). The Spirit is referred to as “another Paraclete” (14:16) that comes to replace Jesus (16:7), suggesting that He has prerogatives similar to those of Jesus, with the difference that His presence should be even more appreciated than that of Jesus’ Himself, perhaps due to the absence of special limitations (14:28; 16:7). The Spirit would also be free from temporal limitations, as He could be with the disciples forever (14:16). In addition, the Spirit comes from God (15:26; 16:7), that is, He is sent by God (14:26; 15:26) as John the Baptist (1:6; 3:28) and Jesus Himself (3:34; 6:29, 57; 7:29; etc.) were. Lastly, the Spirit can also be known and received (14:17; cf. 7:39) as Jesus could (1:12; 6:69; 10:14; 13:20).

All of this points to a distinct, independent figure, at the same time that conveys some divine attributes, such as the ability to transcend the boundaries of time and space.<sup>33</sup> It is true that in 14:18, right after referring to the coming of the Paraclete (cf. vss. 16-17), Jesus promises that He Himself would come back to the disciples, and there are those who have already claimed that the Paraclete is none but the glorified Jesus who would return to the disciples in a spiritual, invisible form.<sup>34</sup> Several commentators see this return of Jesus in connection to the Parousia (cf. vss. 1-3) or to His post-resurrection appearances, particularly the one in 20:19-23, when He gives the Spirit to the disciples (cf. vs. 19).<sup>35</sup> The reference that the disciples would not remain “orphans,” however, seems to imply that He

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<sup>33</sup> Note that the divinity of the Spirit can also be inferred from Jesus’ statement in John 6:63, as to give life (*zōopoieō*) represents a distinctly divine prerogative. As Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain say, “though John does not ‘say’ the Spirit is God, he certainly ‘shows’ that the Spirit is God” (*Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John’s Gospel*, NSBT [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008], 135 n. 3).

<sup>34</sup> E.g., George B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 2<sup>d</sup> ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906), 214-220; Ernest F. Scott, *The Fourth Gospel: Its Purpose and Theology*, 2<sup>d</sup> ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908), 343-349; Ian Simpson, “The Holy Spirit in the Fourth Gospel,” *Exp* 4 (1925), 292-299.

<sup>35</sup> Barnabas Lindars (*The Gospel of John*, NCB [London: Oliphants, 1972], 480) and F. F. Bruce (*The Gospel of John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 303) prefer to see here a reference to the Parousia, while Morris (578-

was alluding to the coming of the Spirit, as it is difficult to see how the distant Parousia (considering at least the time when the Gospel was written) or a few appearances during the interval of only forty days (cf. Acts 1:3) could solve the problem of the disciples' orphanhood. It seems more natural, therefore, to interpret Jesus' promise in connection to the coming of the Spirit.<sup>36</sup> In any case, Jesus and the Spirit cannot be the same person, as Jesus refers to the Spirit as "another Paraclete" (14:16), which, though pointing to an identity of function (cf. 1 John 2:1), retains the personal distinction between them.<sup>37</sup> The same distinction is present in other passages where Jesus and the Spirit are mentioned side by side (1:32-33; 7:39; 14:26; 15:26; 20:22). In fact, by saying that He Himself would come back to the disciples in the person of the Spirit, Jesus was probably only invoking the same concept of when He said: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (14:9; cf. vs. 11). That is, as the Father can be seen in the Son, the Son can come back in the Spirit. It is difficult not to conclude that the same oneness that exists between the Son and the Father (10:30) also exists between the Son and the Spirit.<sup>38</sup>

The meaning of the term *paraklētos* is highly controversial. Notwithstanding, whatever John had in mind when he used it, this only corroborates the idea that he saw the Spirit as an independent, or virtually independent, character, sent by God to replace Jesus and continue the work He had initiated.

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579), Keener (*The Gospel of John*, 2:973), and Lincoln (395) interpret the text in connection to Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. Barrett does the same, though he believes that that the text could also include an allusion to the Parousia. "It is ... by no means impossible that John consciously and deliberately used language applicable to both the resurrection and the Parousia" (*The Gospel according to St. John*, 464).

<sup>36</sup> So, Dunn, 2:214. See also Hartwig Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, HNT 6 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 632; J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 785; Köstenberger and Swain, 96.

<sup>37</sup> The Greek *allos paraklētos*, in John 14:16, admits two translations: "another Paraclete," indicating that the Spirit would be to the disciples that which Jesus Himself had been up until then, and "another, [that is] a Paraclete," what would eliminate the idea of a former Paraclete. In Luke 23:32, e.g., *heteroi dyo kakourgoi* means "two others, who were criminals," not "two other criminals." J. Behm, however, argues that the pleonastic use of *allos* not only is contrary to John's style but also is in disagreement with the exegesis of the Greek fathers ("*Paraklētos*," *TDNT*, 10 vols. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976], 5:800 n. 1).

<sup>38</sup> And if the Son and the Spirit are one, as the Son and the Father are one, is it not natural to conclude that the Father and the Spirit are also one? Note that in John 14:23 Jesus expands the concept that He Himself would come back in the person of the Spirit to include also the Father in such return. That is, in the coming of the Spirit, both the Son and the Father would come back and dwell in the believer (cf. vs. 17).

Though *paraklētos* functions as a noun, it is formally a verbal adjective related to the verb *parakaleō*, which literally means “to call to one’s side” (cf. Acts 28:20). In this case, *paraklētos* would have a passive nuance (“called to one’s side”) and would involve the idea of help or assistance. The most ancient evidence available, albeit scarce, shows that the term was used in legal contexts, meaning “legal assistant/helper in court.” In Latin, the equivalent term was *advocatus*, which is how the old Latin Christian writers and translators understood it.<sup>39</sup> Since *parakaleō* can also mean “to exhort/comfort” (cf. *paraklēsis*, “consolation/comfort”), some translators, as well as several Greek fathers, came to interpret *paraklētos* actively as “Counselor/Comforter.” This was the meaning preferred by Wycliffe, Tyndale and Luther, among others, and so the one most frequently found in Protestant tradition (cf. KJV).<sup>40</sup> The point is that none of such meanings suits well the Johannine *paraklētos*, except in 1 John 2:1, where the term refers to Jesus, though not as a title, and certainly means “advocate” (intercessor/mediator). With regard to the Gospel, however, things are completely different.

The notion of the Spirit as a legal defender may be present in texts such as Matt 10:20 and Acts 6:10, but not in the Fourth Gospel, especially in John 16:7-11, where the Paraclete’s role looks more that of a prosecutor or an accusing attorney trying to prove the guilt of the world. In addition, in Jewish law courts the role of the defense counsel was void, as it was the judge who conducted the questioning, while the defendant would only be allowed to have some witnesses for his/her defense. In 15:26, the Paraclete is depicted as a witness to Jesus, but not as an advocate.<sup>41</sup> Concerning the idea of a Comforter, there is not a single passage in John in which the Paraclete takes on such role. At best, the element of

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<sup>39</sup> Behm clarifies: “There is no instance of *paraklētos*, like its Lat[in] equivalent *advocatus*, being used as a t[echinical] t[erm] for the professional legal adviser or defender of an accused person in the same sense as *syndikos* or *synēgoros*. But the use of *paraklētos* for representative is to be understood in the light of legal assistance in court, the pleading of another’s case” (5:801).

<sup>40</sup> Some modern translations have opted for “Helper” (e.g., ESV, NASB, NKJV), which is definitely to be preferred in John over “Comforter” (BDAG, 766), though still lacks precision.

<sup>41</sup> See Raymond E. Brown, “The Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel,” *NTS* 13 (1967): 116-117.

comfort is present in the immediate context, as in 16:6 (cf. 14:18, 27; 16:20-22, 33), which precedes one of the Paraclete passages, but even so the Comforter is Jesus, not the Spirit.<sup>42</sup> John Ashton is emphatic in saying that “none of the possible meanings of ... [*parakaleō*], either active or passive, squares precisely with the various functions attributed to the Paraclete in the Gospel,” and that “these functions cannot be reduced to or summed up in a single comprehensive term that could then be substituted for *paraklētos*.”<sup>43</sup>

If *parakaleō* does not provide a satisfactory explanation, then the Johannine meaning of *paraklētos* perhaps has to be sought elsewhere. Several interpreters suggest a solution related to the Hebrew *mēlîš*, which is used in Job 33:23 with the sense of “intercessor” and translated in the Targums as *p<sup>e</sup>raqliṭā’*, which is nothing more than the Aramaic transliteration of the Greek *paraklētos*. The idea of a vindictory intercession, though not the word *mēlîš*, is also present in 16:20<sup>44</sup> (cf. 19:25), where the Job Targum once again uses *p<sup>e</sup>raqliṭā’*. In fact, *p<sup>e</sup>raqliṭā’* appears several times in rabbinic literature always with the sense of someone interceding for another,<sup>45</sup> which shows that the term was well known among not only Hellenist Jews but also Palestinian Jews. The Hebrew *mēlîš* is also found in the Qunram writings to designate an instructor or “interpreter of mysteries” (1QH10:13), besides an intercessor

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 117-118. Only a few contemporary scholars still see in John’s *paraklētos* some notion of comfort (e.g., J. G. Davies, “The Primary Meaning of *Paraklētos*,” *JTS* 4 [1953]: 35-38; James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God’s Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* [Nashville: B&H, 2006], 57-99). The legal meaning, on the other hand, finds more support (cf. NIV, NRSV). For a recent defense of such meaning, see Lochlan Shelfer, “The Legal Precision of the Term ‘*paraklētos*,’” *JSNT* 32 (2009): 131-150.

<sup>43</sup> John Ashton, “Paraclete,” *ABD*, 6 vols. (Nova York: Doubleday, 1993), 5:152. Ashton’s solution to the term itself is to keep the transliteration “Paraclete,” since it “provides a distinct and recognizable *name* for the personage identified in the Farewell Discourse as ‘the Spirit of Truth’ (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13) or ‘the Holy Spirit’ (14:26)” (ibid.). This was, e.g., the solution found by Jerome already in the fourth century in the Latin Vulgate (*Paracletus*). Due to different phonetic standards, the so-called New Vulgate (1974) has opted for *Paraclitus*. So also the New Jerusalem Bible (“Paraclete”). In 1 John 2:1, both Jerome and the New Vulgate have maintained *advocatus* (“advocate,” NJB).

<sup>44</sup> See the passage in the NIV.

<sup>45</sup> E.g., *m. Ab.* 4.11a; *Exod R.* 18.3; *b. B. Bat.* 10a; *Sifra* 277a. For comments, see esp. Shelfer, 142-145.

(1QH14:13).<sup>46</sup> That is, *mēlîš* seems to combine the functions of intercession and instruction. The same happens in intertestamental literature in relation to interceding angels,<sup>47</sup> and in the *Testament of Judah*, from the third or second century BC, the “spirit of truth” in human beings “testifies to all things and brings all accusations” (20:1-5).<sup>48</sup> In Hebrew thought, therefore, there are several antecedents that combine legal and instructional functions in a way that is not distant from the role ascribed to the Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel. The Johannine Paraclete, however, is not an angel or any other heavenly being, but the Holy Spirit Himself (14:26). The use of a technical term of Greek origin already employed in Jewish legal contexts should not obscure the distinct application the fourth evangelist makes of it.<sup>49</sup>

Some considerations on the instructional role of the Paraclete. According to John, the Paraclete would “teach [the disciples] all things” and remind them of everything Jesus had said (14:26). He would guide them into “all the truth” (16:13) and tell them only what He had received from Jesus Himself (vs. 14). That is, He would come as a witness to Jesus (15:26) with the only purpose of glorifying Him (16:14). The work of the Spirit, therefore, would be entirely centered on Jesus Christ, or perhaps it would be better to say that Jesus Himself would be the object of the Paraclete’s work, and this work, according to Gary Burge, “is the single most important feature of the Johannine Paraclete.”<sup>50</sup> Maybe this helps to explain the high and distinct Christology found in John, all the more so if compared to the one of the

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<sup>46</sup> The references follow the new standard adopted by Geza Vermes in *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Nova York: Allen Lane/Penguin, 1997).

<sup>47</sup> E.g., *1 En.* 9:3-11; 39:5; 40:6-7; 47:1; 68:4; 99:3; 104:1 (cf. 13:4-7; 15:2-3; 83:10; 89:76); *T. Levi* 3:5; *Jub.* 4:15; *Tob* 12:15. For comments, see esp. Behm, 5:810.

<sup>48</sup> See Howard C. Kee, “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” em *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., ed. James H. Charlesworth, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1983-1985), 1:800. Em *T. Jud.*, the “spirit of truth” is not the Spirit of God, as in John, but only a good spirit that opposes to the “spirit of error” that works in humanity.

<sup>49</sup> For further discussion on the meaning of *paraklētos*, see A. R.C. Leaney, “The Johannine Paraclete and the Qumran Scrolls,” in *John and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 38-61.

<sup>50</sup> Gary Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 41.

other Gospels. In the promise of the Paraclete, it is implicit that there would be new Christological dimensions and implications to be understood by the disciples (cf. 16:12), and that by saying what he says, the evangelist does it through the authority of the Spirit.

John was one of the greatest genius of the apostolic church, but despite his ability as an interpreter and theologian, his own Gospel is the result of the tacit work of the Spirit. This is why he did not limit himself to remember the historical facts involving the person of Jesus. He went beyond, attaching to those facts their meaning to the life and faith of the church, as wherever the Spirit works, the words and episodes of Jesus' life are repeated and interpreted (14:26).<sup>51</sup> It was not John, therefore, who arbitrarily rewrote the gospel traditions in view of the needs of his own time, appealing to the figure of the Paraclete to justify his own Christology as if it had little or nothing to do with the historical Jesus.<sup>52</sup> Even if his Gospel is different from the Synoptics on a number of issues, has been written according to his own vocabulary and literary style—instead of those of Jesus—and has a series of interpretations and personal reflections, nothing of this requires a negative assessment of the historicity of the account.<sup>53</sup> On the contrary, for John the facts can only be meaningful if they are authentic (cf. 20:30-31; 1 John 1:1-4), and it was the Spirit, not his own initiative, that made him to understand Jesus more correctly than those who are mentioned in the drama of the Gospel. This explains his teaching that

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<sup>51</sup> Kümmel, 318.

<sup>52</sup> Lincoln, e.g., declares: "The function of the Spirit is to witness to the significance of Jesus and its implications and thereby, as the Spirit of truth, lead believers into all the truth (15:26; 16:13). The evangelist's contemporizing interpretive narrative is part of this truth. And since the Spirit also takes what belongs to Jesus and declares it to His followers (16:14-15), from the point of view of the Gospel it is indeed Jesus who speaks in its narrative, not so much the earthly Jesus but the exalted Jesus who speaks through the Spirit to His followers' present needs" (47-48). Rather common in scholarly circles, this thesis was popularized through the application of redaction-critical technics to John's Gospel. The bibliography is extensive and includes: J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 3<sup>d</sup> ed., NTL (Louisville: WJK, 2003 [1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1967]), esp. 136-143; Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist, 1979), esp. 27-31; John Painter, "The Farewell Discourses and the History of Johannine Christianity," *NTS* 27 (1981): 525-543.

<sup>53</sup> On the historicity of John in contemporary research, see Wilson Paroschi, "Archaeology and the Interpretation of John's Gospel: A Review Essay," *JATS* 20 (2009): 67-88.



full understanding of Jesus was only possible after the resurrection (2:22; 12:16; 20:9). In fact, the Spirit is the continuing presence of Jesus guiding, teaching, and leading the church to a clearer understanding of Himself and His saving work, so that the church will also be able to understand the reason behind its own existence (20:20-22; 15:26-27).<sup>54</sup>

In conclusion, there is no question that in the Farewell Discourses John's concept on the Spirit broadens its scope and reaches new levels of significance. The title "Paraclete," possibly inspired on the Aramaic *p<sup>e</sup>raqliṭā'*—which in itself is a transliteration of the Greek *paraklētos* used in Jewish literature, sometimes to replace the Hebrew *mēliš*, to express notions of intercession and instruction—could have been chosen exactly because this conceptual broadening. Instead of only a power that regenerates and enables, the Paraclete seems more an "agent" of God<sup>55</sup> that comes to replace Jesus, the first Paraclete (14:26), and continue the work He initiated. This means that the Paraclete is comparable to Jesus in personality and activity.<sup>56</sup> The Paraclete also is not the glorified Jesus Himself, but the unity between both, which resembles the one that exists between the Father and the Son (10:30; 14:9), is attested by Jesus when He says that He Himself would come back through the Paraclete (vs. 18).<sup>57</sup> In addition, the coming of the Spirit parallels the coming of Jesus: as Jesus' ministry brought condemnation to those who did not believe (3:18-20; 9:39-41; 15:22-24), the Spirit's ministry would convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:8-11). As Jesus' ministry instructed and guided those who heard Him (6:63, 68; 7:16-18; 8:28; 18:20), the Spirit's ministry would teach all things to those who believed and

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<sup>54</sup> "The view or interpretation of Jesus given in this Gospel is the work of the Holy Spirit.... Only within the ambit of the Spirit's life and work does Christ live for the believer, and correspondingly, only there does the Christian or the church live and know who she is" (D. Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, NTT [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995], 139, 142).

<sup>55</sup> Thompson, 149.

<sup>56</sup> Burge lists sixteen similarities between Jesus and the Paraclete (141).

<sup>57</sup> "The Paraclete is the presence of Jesus when Jesus is absent" (Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 2:1141).

would guide them into all the truth, making them to remember everything that Jesus had said and sharing with them new knowledge (14:26; 16:13-15).<sup>58</sup> In other words, “John presents the Spirit-Paraclete as the successor of Jesus who carries on His revelatory work, sustaining the disciples after the rupture represented by Jesus’ death.”<sup>59</sup> It is not without a reason, therefore, that Christian theology sees the Spirit as someone with His own personality, and there is no other writing in the NT, or in the whole Scripture, that individually contributes the most to such understanding as the Fourth Gospel.

### **The Spirit and the Grammar**

In John, the Spirit is presented not only as an impersonal power or the manifestation of God or of Jesus, but as a personal Being distinct from both the Father and the Son. Since the time of the Reformation, one of the most recurrent arguments for the personality of the Spirit is based on the fact that eight times in the Farewell Discourses the Greek word *pneuma* (“spirit”), which is neuter, is followed by masculine pronouns when used in reference to the Holy Spirit. This happens in the following passages: 14:26 (*ekeinos*); 15:26 (*hos, ekeinos*); 16:7-8 (*autos, ekeinos*); 13-14 (*ekeinos* [2x], *heautou*). In some of the same passages, as it would be expected, there are four instances in which neuter pronouns are used: 14:27 (*ho, auto*), 26 (*ho*); 15:26 (*ho*). The same happens in 7:39 (*ho*). The typical argument is exemplified by Ladd: when John correctly uses neuter pronouns in connection with *pneuma*, there is no implication “either for or against the personality of the Holy Spirit. But, where pronouns that have *pneuma* for their immediate antecedent are found in the masculine, we can only conclude that the personality of the Spirit is meant to be suggested.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> The interpretation of the last part of John 16:13 is controversial. For details, see Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 2:1039-1041.

<sup>59</sup> Smith, 143.

<sup>60</sup> Ladd, 331. The references are extremely abundant. Examples include: J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1929), 2:500; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 96; Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 482; John

The question is relatively simple, which only increases the astonishment at the enormous popularity of the argument. In the end, what impresses the most is the easiness with which interesting ideas may be spread out without due assessment. The argument is that where the masculine pronoun *ekeinos* is used, the nearest noun is *pneuma*, which functions then as its antecedent. The antecedent of a pronoun, however, must be determined by grammar, not by proximity, and in all instances in which masculine pronouns are used, the grammatical antecedent is *paraklētos*, never *pneuma*, which is present in the text only as the apposition of *paraklētos*.<sup>61</sup> In addition, it is important to mention that several times in those same verses John uses neuter pronouns to refer to the Spirit, and he does so always when the grammatical antecedent is *pneuma*. That is, there is absolutely nothing unusual or meaningful in the way the apostles use pronouns in those contexts where he refers to the Spirit. The fact that *paraklētos* is masculine also has no implication at all concerning the personality (and much less the masculinity) of the Spirit. The gender of *paraklētos*, as well of *pneuma*, is nothing more than a linguistic accident and no theological conclusion can be drawn from something like this.<sup>62</sup>

Somewhat similar is the argument that tries to infer, not the personality, but the divinity of the Spirit from the adjective *allos* (“another”) used in John 14:16 (“another Paraclete”). Spiros Zodhiates, for

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Painter, *Reading John's Gospel Today*, 3<sup>a</sup>. ed. (Mitcham: Beacon Hill, 1986), 67; Morris, 583 n. 73; Guthrie, 531; Donald G. Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit: Works and Gifts* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 67; Michael Green, *I Believe in The Holy Spirit*, 2<sup>d</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 52. Among SDA authors, see Arnold V. Wallenkampf, *New by the Spirit* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1978), 9; Fernando L. Canale, “Doctrine of God,” in *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, CRS 12 (Hagerstown: Review & Herald, 2000), 134; Woodrow Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John W. Reeve, *The Trinity: Understanding God's Love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian Relationships* (Hagerstown: Review & Herald, 2002), 72.

<sup>61</sup> As Daniel B. Wallace declares: “The use of *ekeinos* here [chaps. 14-16] is frequently regarded by students of the NT to be an affirmation of the personality of the Spirit.... But this is erroneous. In all these Johannine passages, *pneuma* is appositional to a masculine noun. The gender of *ekeinos* thus has nothing to do with the natural gender of *pneuma*. The antecedent of *ekeinos*, in each case, is *paraklētos*, not *pneuma*” (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 331-332). For a more detailed discussion, which includes other NT passages where *pneuma* is supposedly followed by masculine grammatical elements (Eph 1:14; 2 Thess 2:6-7; 1 John 5:7), see idem, “Greek Grammar and the Personality of the Holy Spirit,” *BBR* 13 (2003): 97-125.

<sup>62</sup> Note that in Hebrew “spirit” (*rûḥ*) is feminine, while in German and most Romanic languages is masculine.

example, says: “Christ designates the Holy Spirit as ‘Paraclete’ (John 14:16), and He calls Him *allos*, another, which means another of equal quality (and not *heteros*, another of a different quality). Therefore, the Holy Spirit is designated by Jesus Christ as equal with Himself, God.”<sup>63</sup> Also traditional, though less common than the one about the personality,<sup>64</sup> this argument is even more precarious to the extent that it confuses activity or, at least, personality with divinity. By referring to the Spirit as “another Paraclete,” Jesus no doubt calls attention to the fact that the Spirit would continue the work He Himself had began and be “forever” with the disciples. The expression also may contain an allusion to the personality of the Spirit, as He would come to replace Jesus, but to take it ontologically as a reference to the equality of nature between Jesus and the Spirit is to go way beyond the evidence and impose on the word a meaning that it definitely does not have.

The argument makes an elementary linguistic mistake: to think that, because *heteros* usually involves qualitative distinction (e.g., Acts 4:12 [also mentions *allos*]; Rom 7:23; 1 Cor 14:21; 2 Cor 11:4 [also mentions *allos*]; Heb 7:11, 13, 15; Jude 1:7), *allos* also does. The fundamental notion of *allos*, however, is merely quantitative (e.g., “another parable” in Matt 13:24, 31, 33), unless it is used in opposition to *heteros*, which is the term that eventually establishes the qualitative differentiation anyway. This is what happens in Gal 1:6-7, where Paul says that the false gospel preached to the Galatian believers in his absence was not *allos*, but *heteros*.<sup>65</sup> Joseph H. Thayer so puts the question:

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<sup>63</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study New Testament: Bringing the Original Text to Life*, WSS (Chattanooga: AMG, 1991), 944. So also Richard C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, 12<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Trübner & Co., 1894), 358; Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, 4 vols. (New York: Scribner, 1887-1900), 2:244; Archibald T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 6 vols. (Nashville: Broadman, 1930-1933), 5:252; Francis D. Nichol, ed., *SDA Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 7 vols. (Hagerstown: Review & Herald, 1980), 5:1037; Wallenkampf, 14; Canale, 133.

<sup>64</sup> The argument seems to go back to Gregory of Nazianzus, one of the main supporters of the doctrine of the Trinity in the fourth century, who used to say that *allos* in John 14:16 points to the co-equality and consubstantiality between the Spirit and Jesus Christ (*Or. Bas.* 41.12).

<sup>65</sup> “*Allos* and *heteros* are here [Gal 1:6-7], as in Acts 4:12, not interchangeable; *allos* bears an additive connotation, while *heteros* has an adversative nuance” (K. Haacker, “*Heteros*,” *EDNT*, 3 vols. [Grand Rapids:

“*Allos* as compared with *heteros* denotes numerical in distinction from qualitative difference; *allos* adds (‘one besides’), *heteros* distinguishes (‘one of two’); every *heteros* is an *allos*, but not every *allos* is a *heteros*; *allos* generally denotes simply distinction of individuals, *heteros* involves the secondary idea of difference of kind.”<sup>66</sup>

Although the personality as well as the divinity of the Spirit can be demonstrated on the basis of other textual and interpretive connections,<sup>67</sup> both arguments above are a constant reminder of how easy it is to be mistaken even when one reproduces traditional concepts that are widely accepted. The popularity of an argument is not evidence of authenticity, which means that the majority is not always right. Christian theology has little, if any, to gain with the use of erroneous arguments or the attempt to impose on the text alien concepts, even if on behalf of a good cause. From the hermeneutical standpoint, to force the meaning of Scripture to justify right doctrines is no different from the attempt to promote spurious doctrines. As popular wisdom has it, the end does not justify the means. If truth cannot be clearly and correctly presented, then no primacy over against the error can be claimed.<sup>68</sup>

### Final Remarks

What is the relevance of the above discussion to SDA theology and doctrine? Despite the many unsettled questions, contemporary SDA belief in the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit does not seem

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Eerdmans, 1990-1993], 2:66).

<sup>66</sup> Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1896; reimp., Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 29.

<sup>67</sup> On the personality of the Spirit, Wallace says: “The view must be based on the nature of a *paraklētos* and the things said about the Comforter, not on any supposed grammatical subtleties” (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 332).

<sup>68</sup> Wallace acrescenta: “Grammatical basis for the Holy Spirit’s personality is lacking in the NT, yet this is frequently, if not usually, the first line of defense of that doctrine by many evangelical writers. But if grammar cannot legitimately be used to support the Spirit’s personality, then perhaps we need to reexamine the rest of our basis for this theological commitment. I am not denying the doctrine of the Trinity, of course,” Wallace is keen to stress, “but I am arguing that we need to ground our beliefs on a more solid foundation” (“Greek Grammar and the Personality of the Holy Spirit,” 125).

to be in disagreement to the evidence available in John's Gospel, particularly in the Farewell Discourses. Though mediating the spiritual presence of Jesus in the world, the Paraclete is not Jesus, much less a mere impersonal power or influence, but a person; in fact, an agent of God sent by the Father at the Son's request (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). Thus "both the Son and the Paraclete have the same source, the Father, but the Son has a role in the historical sending of the Paraclete,"<sup>69</sup> who is then invested with prerogatives and authority comparable to the Son's (16:13-15; cf. 12:49; 14:31), as He comes to replace Him. Instead of speaking on His own behalf, God speaks through prophets and His own Son (1:18; 8:18, 26, 28, 38; cf. Heb 1:1-2); so also, unable to speak by Himself in the context of a worldwide mission (John 17:18-21; 20:21-23), the Son does it through the Paraclete (16:14-15).<sup>70</sup>

In the Gospel of John, therefore, Pneumatology is tied to Christology and is deeply influenced by it. It is exactly because the Logos has entered history as flesh (1:14) that the Paraclete can come as Spirit (14:26; 17:2; 20:21).<sup>71</sup> Between One and the Other lies Jesus' death and resurrection, crowning His mission with success and granting the Spirit the right to come and finish His work (12:31-33; 17:4-5; cf. 7:39), which does not belong either to Jesus or to the Spirit, not even to the Father only, but to the three of them, because the three work together for the salvation of humanity (5:17, 19-21; 16:8-11). Hence to reject the Spirit as presented by John is to reject Jesus who promised Him, commissioned Him, and secured His coming. On the other hand, as already mentioned, the Fourth Gospel's Christology is also tied to Pneumatology and is deeply influenced by it. It is exactly because the Paraclete has come as Spirit that the One who entered history as flesh can be known as He really is, that is, as God (1:1, 14; 20:28). In John, there is no question that it is the Paraclete, and not the evangelist proper, who is the

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<sup>69</sup> Rodney A. Whitacre, *John*, IVPNTCS (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 357 (see also 359).

<sup>70</sup> See John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 423.

<sup>71</sup> See Stephen S. Smalley, "'The Paraclete': Pneumatology in the Johannine Gospel and Apocalypse," in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black (Louisville: WJK, 1996), 292.

true responsible for the high Christology found there. It is only through the Paraclete that the full meaning of Jesus' teaching about Himself can be apprehended (14:26; 15:26; 16:13), and it is because of this that John writes from the post-resurrection and post-Pentecost perspective. Without this, his Christological claims would make little or no sense at all (2:22; 7:39). The Paraclete is the guide, the instructor, and the witness behind his Christology. Hence it is not possible to reject the Christ who is God (1:1), equal to God (5:18), and one with God (10:30) without rejecting the testimony of the Paraclete (15:26) and, in final analysis, of God Himself (3:31-34; 5:36-38; 8:16-18), who sent both (14:26; 17:8; cf. 6:29).

On the other hand, since the Paraclete's instructional mission is centered in Christ, and not in Himself, perhaps we should content ourselves with a Pneumatology not so well defined as our Christology. After all, it was the Logos, not the Paraclete, who was made flesh, and the Christological knowledge we have derives mainly from the revelations brought by the incarnate Logos Himself (1:9-10; 20:30-31; I John 1:1-4), whose relevance is now made clear by the Paraclete. In a quotation that not always seems to be taken in its full force, Ellen G. White says: "It is not essential for us to be able to define just what the Holy Spirit is.... The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery. Men cannot explain it, because the Lord has not revealed it to them.... Regarding such mysteries, which are too deep for human understanding, silence is golden."<sup>72</sup> The Gospel of John certainly helps, and a lot, perhaps more than any other book in the Bible, but we should be careful not to make a dogmatic reading of the text, forcing it to say what it does not say but that would be convenient for a certain theological formulation. The supposed masculine pronouns, the ontological reading of *allos*, and an arbitrary interpretation of specific biblical expressions are enough to illustrate the point.<sup>73</sup> The cumulative evidence of Scripture,

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<sup>72</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1940 [1898 ed.]), 51-52.

<sup>73</sup> Even our Sabbath School lessons have contributed to popularize the idea that *allos paraklētos* in John 14:16 points to the divinity of the Spirit, and that the masculine pronouns in the Farewell Discourses indicate His

particularly the Paraclete passages, clearly indicates that the Spirit is a person. John's emphasis, however, is not on the person, but on the work of the Spirit, and it is there that we also should put our emphasis, especially because God was pleased to make us participants in this work (20:21-23). In fact, contrary to the incarnate Logos, the historical realization of the Spirit's work depends entirely on us. That is, it is not but through us that the Spirit manifests His presence in the world. In His promise of the Paraclete, Jesus referred to Him as "the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him." Then He added, "but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you" (14:17). More than a privilege, this is a sacred vocation, to be the instruments through which the Spirit accomplishes His mission on earth (cf. 15:26-27).

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personality (see *The Holy Spirit*, Sabbath School Study Guide, April-June, 2006, Teachers' Edition, 10, 14). Interestingly, when commenting on John 14:26, the traditional *SDA Bible Commentary* reads: "The antecedent is 'Comforter,' which in the Greek is masculine and hence calls for the personal pronoun 'he' (5:1039). The note on Rom 8:16 is even more emphatic: "When the Holy Spirit is referred to by the masculine name *paraklētos*, 'Comforter,' the masculine pronoun is used (see John 15:26; 16:7, 13). It is obvious that the personality of the Holy Spirit cannot be argued by the gender of the pronouns that may be used" (6:568). An example of a questionable interpretation is found in Canale, who states about the so-called Trinitarian formula of Matt 28:19: "The direct reference to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit clearly sets forth the threefold plurality of Divine Persons, while the designations of them all as the 'name' of God (in singular) clearly sets forth the oneness of the Divine Being" (138). Though Canale is not alone in drawing such conclusion from this text, specifically in relation to the second point "Matthew's language," explains John Nolland, "is equivalent to 'in the name of the Father and the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit'" (*The Gospel of Matthew*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 1269). In other words, it is unlikely that the use of "name" in the singular followed by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit should be taken ontologically, as if the three shared in the same divine name.