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Rough Draft

“India, Inwardness, and a Renewed Theology of the Holy Spirit”

The reflections leading to this paper began more than forty years ago when I was reading Jean Danielou’s *Salvation of the Nations*. In discussing the significance of India’s profound religious tradition, Danielou suggested that when Christianity more fully integrated India’s classic religious sensibility and insights there would be a renewed (and enlarged) theology of the Holy Spirit within Christianity. Some twenty years later Raimundo Panikkar’s *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Mankind* seemed to strongly point to India again for fundamental experience and insights into the Spirit. Panikkar suggested that Buddhism has a fundamental intuition into the silence of the Father, the monotheistic faiths have a fundamental insight into the Word, and India has a fundamental insight into the Spirit. What is the Indian catalyst for pneumatological insight? Does it come right out of the soil of India as it were? And how was this energy of the spirit released in a special way in the work of Dom Bede Griffiths?

Partly at least one can say that the very gift of India to the religious heritage of humankind is its strong sense of the immanence of the spirit. From the great mahavakya “tat tvam asi” of the Upanishads to the visionary evolutionary schema of Aurobindo, the path of inwardness, deep inwardness, is the way par excellence for India.

The western Christian notion of the Holy Spirit has been impoverished. A stronger pneumatology is one of the major theological task of our day. Kilian McDonnell, OSB, says we “await a more mature theology of the Spirit.” The Spirit is sometimes referred to as the forgotten person of the Trinity (or more officially—a crypto-subordinationist notion of the Spirit.) The Christian East has a stronger pneumatology—and Syrian Christianity which was very early implanted in India by St. Thomas has, of course, a unique role to play in the elucidation of a more developed Indian Christian pneumatology because of its stronger pneumatology.. The western notion of the Holy Spirit in modern times has been more limited to personal experience—often privatized and pietistic experience. But what is the role of the Spirit in the wider Divine economy? In what sense is the Holy Spirit related to the cosmos? No wonder we modern western Christians look back to Hildegard and are astonished at her notion of *sacra viriditas*—the sacred greenness which is the Holy Spirit in creation. But India would understand it immediately.

India’s profound sense of interiority goes far beyond the usual sense of personal subjectivity in the west. Modern western subjectivity tends to be personal and individualistic--emotional and often superficial. In terms of knowing, the West focuses on *manas* to a great extent, India and the classic East focuses on the deeper spiritual mind,

buddhi. The West has flourished in the exterior world—at the expense of developing interiority, especially in modernity. India excels in the interior world—and the exterior world has not developed as it has in the West, though globalization is rapidly changing the picture. Of course there are exceptions and India recognizes in a mystic like Meister Eckhart someone who has in a parallel way explored the depths of the soul. Kathleen Raine, the English poet and William Blake expert, put it aptly another way by saying the West concentrates on the individual while India concentrates on the relation of the individual to the whole. The West tends to see interiority as the opposite of exteriority. The East would see interiority as the most genuine way to exteriority. Interiority, for classic India, was in some sense “objective”—and ‘clearer’ and more basic than the phenomenal world itself. The phenomenal world had no value apart from the “One without second” which is the Self. This is certainly far from the Cartesian sense of the ego as a point of consciousness and everything else as “res extensa”. Western modernity is founded on this basic dualism.

(Material here on :

- A.) Bede on the Holy Spirit
- B.) the Holy Spirit as feminine—and India’s sense of the spirit as feminine.)
- C.) Samuel Ryan and others
- D.) other insights

The fullness of revelation is still being unpacked, as it were. Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum. The cosmic sphere is being wound, knit. Is time itself a string being wound into a “ball” also—like Bede’s golden string? Is there a connection, parallel, between macrocosmic and microcosmic dynamic of development here (see ft. Helen Thompson) It is not good theology to attribute specific and exclusive function to each person of the Trinity. All Trinitarian persons are involved in each function. Yet most of us grew up being told that the Father is the creator, the Son is the redeemer and the Holy Spirit is the sanctifier. Might we not talk about “Creation, New Creation and the energy of Completion”? Such ‘faceless’ terms may promote a type of modalism but we need revitalized ways to understand Trinitarianism.

Both Teilhard de Chardin and Aurobindo envisioned evolution as spiral-like dynamic.. There is an inner drawing to the center (radial energy) and an outer flowing dynamism toward the periphery (tangential energy)—the dialectic of the two creating the progressive dimension toward completion. To see the Holy Spirit as the energizer of the cosmic spiral is not far-fetched or exclusively modern. Gregory of Nyssa spoke of the Trinity as ‘the revolving circle of glory’—from like to like. (Against the Macedonians 22, in Opera, Werner Jaeger, ed. Leiden: Brill, 1954-) 3/1. 109 The Spirit is the energizer, the empowerer, the yeast of Kingdom, the energy that brings completion. Hildegard describes wisdom as “que circuiens circuisti”—that which circles encircling. Wisdom is Spirit. In fact, wisdom and spirit are both feminine. Is Spirit the tangential spirit of God—it circles encircling. Is the power of the Word in some sense radial—drawing us to the absolute point which at same time encompasses all.(the preceding two sentences I am very much wrestling with—I am not sure at all about this) The Holy

Spirit points us to Jesus Christ, the central axis of the on-going spiral of evolution. The outward flow is the ever-widening gyre, the inclusive energy of on-going integration.

Contemporary Catholic theologians of India are inclined toward what is being called “Spirit Christology”. It is articulated, for example, in the works of Ralph del Colle, Dennis Edwards, Walter Kasper and others. Spirit Christology has the value of shifting theological attention from the hegemony of Logos Christology which emphasizes the uniqueness and fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ. Spirit Christology does not dismiss Logos Christology but complements it. St. Paul himself realized the Incarnation was a “stumbling block to the Jews and a scandal to the Greeks.” But the Spirit reaches more gently and ultimately more inclusively –and, furthermore, is already “there”. It is the cosmic covenant as Fr. Bede put it. In John 16, 13 we are told that the Holy Spirit will lead us to all truth—even in supposedly unexpected places. Logos Christology needs to be complemented by Spirit Christology. Through a true opening to the Spirit western theology will rediscover its “left hand”—which it has been called as far back as Irenaeus. The left hand working with the right. Bheda/Abheda –(difference and non-difference) . If Logos is a Greek gift to Christian self-understanding, then Spirit is India’s gift.