

**The doctrine of the Spirit: A comparative
study on the views of Jürgen Moltmann,
Michael Welker and a Pentecostal perspective**

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Title

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Maria and my children Davide and Ester whose their love have encouraged me to complete this research.



DECLARATION

I, Danilo Consiglio, declare that the dissertation hereby submitted to the North West University for the degree Magister Theologia has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at any other university; that it is my own work in design and execution, and that all material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Proposed title and key words

Title: The Doctrine of the Spirit: A comparative study on the views of Jürgen Moltmann, Michael Welker and a Pentecostal perspective.

Key words: Holy Spirit, Pneumatology, Jürgen Moltmann, Michael Welker, Pentecostal, Integral Pneumatology, Realistic Theology.

1.2 Abstract

The focus of the study is to compare the doctrine of the Spirit of two reformed theologians to a Pentecostal perspective. This research will grasp the main points of the Pneumatological understanding of two twentieth century notable theologians: Michael Welker and Jürgen Moltmann, who dedicated in-depth studies on this topic. Then, to identify the continuities and discontinuities between their understanding and a Pentecostal one.

In fact, in the last few decades the need to study the topic of the Holy Spirit has been even greater and reformed theologians have had to face this problem. Beside them, the Pentecostal Movement is a recent movement that highlights the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and has only recently defined a theology about that. Furthermore, this research, in order to



understand the focus, will start from biblical presuppositions and will try to retrace a pneumatological reflection over the centuries to recover the impulse provided by the Pentecostal Movement in the last century.

1.3 Background

As evidenced by the theme, it is difficult to speak about the Holy Spirit; nevertheless, I will try to expose the way that his action could influence the world, the church and the believers. As a Pentecostal believer the complexity of the Holy Spirit, his Being and action, have always fascinated me and drawn me to undertake the process of obtaining a more in-depth knowledge.

The Holy Spirit is a person who is with me in every occasion and wants to live with me. Starting from this personal view, I thought to deepen these thoughts starting with the terms indicated in the Bible as *rûach* in Old Testament, which in many passages expresses "an immediate effect of the action of God" (Coenen *et al.*, 2000:1771) and literally means 'wind', 'breath' (Schökel, 2013:774), and *pneuma* used in the New Testament, which means literally 'breath', 'the blow of the wind', 'the air' (Coenen *et al.*, 2000:1771).

Next, I will deal with the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament before reaching the actual Pentecostal view, which obviously refers to the spiritual experience of Acts 2: this resurfaced in a comprehensive manner and without limitations at the beginning of the 20th century. The basis of this theology is the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer as his creative work (Arrington, 1998:84), which operates salvation as a new birth "from above" and, moreover, includes the charismatic manifestations that occurred at the time described in Acts 2 and in others verses.

After that, I will describe a Pentecostal view as a comparison with some non-Pentecostal theologies. This research will try to grasp the qualifying aspects of the pneumatological understanding of notable 20th theologians such as Michael Welker and Jürgen Moltmann. Welker was chosen because he



wrote about the comparison between pneumatology and Pentecostalism. He argued about the Pentecostal phenomena that “the power that conditions these experiences both in natural reality and in human minds is identified as “the Spirit” (Welker, 2006:2680). Furthermore, he tries to understand the Spirit by what he calls “Realistic Theology”, where he postulates how man feels the presence of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, it will “emerge the reality of God in contexts, dense of voltage, of the various fields of experience” (Welker, 1990:7).

In addition, I have chosen Moltmann because, when writing the Theology of Hope, he was in conflict with Wolfhart Pannenberg whom I have studied for my BA thesis.¹ He argued about Pentecostal experience that the differentiation “between ‘natural’ and ‘supernatural’ gifts is unbiblical and misleading because such an ontological differentiation between nature and the supernatural does not exist in the Bible. It is derived from medieval Aristotelian scholasticism” (Moltmann, 1994b:67). This is, for me, an interesting point of study.

Moreover, Moltmann tends to ensure that these differences should be underpinned and, in this way, he develops what will become a mainly eschatological theology known as the “Theology of Hope”. However, he invites people to experience the Spirit in their lives as the source of life, of energy and light (Moltmann, 1994a:19). It is like a hymn to life despite the various problems that affect life itself. This process is directed towards community and creaturely communion, and it is defined as “Integral Pneumatology”, since it goes beyond the anthropological pneumatology that sees God as the subject.

In this way, it is possible to compare the continuity and discontinuity of their understanding and a Pentecostal one. Regarding the Pentecostal vision, I will use the Systematic Theology of Rodman Williams to define the

¹ CONSIGLIO DANILO ROCCO. 2011. La dottrina dello Spirito santo secondo Wolfhart Pannenberg in confronto con le pneumatologie pentecostali. Aversa: Facolta' Pentecostale di Scienze Religiose, (Thesis – BA).



pneumatology of the Pentecostal vision, including the phenomenology of the Pentecostal Movement in Sicily, which is where I live. In order to achieve this scope, this research will consider the phenomenology as argued by Cox who, at the beginning of his research in Sicily, linked it “with fossilized Catholicism, olive groves and the Mafia” (Cox, 1994:192). This approach will be followed knowing that it is possible to experience difficulties due to the diversity of concepts relating to the Holy Spirit and further “the determination of common features of pneumatology is an extremely challenging task” (Kärkkäinen, 2012:1914).

In any case, I believe that it is not possible to have only one view regarding the work of the Holy Spirit, but different views that highlight different shared perspectives.

1.4 Problem Statement

In the New Testament, Luke, in the book of Acts, specifically Acts 2, writes about the Holy Spirit. Just a few verses in Acts 2:6-8: “And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished, saying, ‘Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ‘And how is it that we each hear *them* in our own language to which we were born?’” and Acts 2:38-39: “Peter *said* to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.’” (Bible, 1995)

These verses represent the experience of the Pentecostal people today. The Holy Spirit has come down and the diffusion of Him in the world and the promise that anyone can partake of Him. That experience did not end two thousand years ago, but in a certain way, still exists because “the law of



the Spirit is absolute, that is, without distinction to all and forever, it is the law of love that moves in absolute freedom"² (Consiglio, 2011:47). This continuity is evident today among Pentecostal people where there are the same manifestation that were present at the beginning.

People who deny this experience believe that Acts 2:38 is referring to biblical times only. Also why 1 Corinthians 13:8: "Love never fails; but if *there are gifts of prophecy*, they will be done away; if *there are tongues*, they will cease; if *there is knowledge*, it will be done away" (Bible, 1995) is interpreted in a different way. Anti-Pentecostal people believe that love will remain forever and that the gifts, the tongues, ceased after the Apostolic age. On the contrary, Pentecostal people argue that this experience is still present.

In any case, this research doesn't want to study Pentecostal and anti-Pentecostal views about tongues and the gifts, but to compare the theology of the Spirit of two theologians who have a complementary and not a conflicting vision with the Pentecostal one.

For this reason, the intention of this research is to assess how two important contemporary theologians namely Michael Welker and Jürgen Moltmann have embarked on this project with very significant publications; then their thoughts will be compared with the pneumatological Pentecostal perspective chosen.

Indeed, this research tends to describe as best as possible what is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the different perspectives indicated. However, "to reflect on the Holy Spirit is an amazing exercise" (Taylor, 1975:230), and that is because He always goes beyond what man can fully understand, since like the wind, you know his presence because you hear his sound, but you do not know whence He comes or whither He goes. This way of moving has brought diversity of visions and for this reason the specific questions to be answered in this study will be:

² Translated from Italian "la legge dello Spirito è assoluta, vale a dire: indistintamente per tutti e per sempre, essa è la legge dell'amore che si muove in assoluta libertà".



- Which terms are used to define the doctrine of the Spirit?
- How does Michael Welker understand the doctrine of the Spirit?
- How does Jürgen Moltmann understand the doctrine of the Spirit?
- How to understand the phenomenology of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in my land, Sicily, as indicated by Cox and to investigate something of the doctrine of the Spirit in a Pentecostal perspective?
- What continuities and discontinuities can be identified between the different ways to conceptualize the doctrine of the Holy Spirit?

1.5 Research problem, Aim and Objectives

The main aim of the research is to compare the theological point of view of the Holy Spirit of one of the Pentecostal Movements with the perspectives of Welker and Moltmann. In order to reach this aim, the following objectives will be pursued:

1. to know the biblical terms used to define the doctrine of the Spirit;
2. to identify and evaluate critically, the perspectives of the doctrine of the Spirit of Michael Welker;
3. to identify and evaluate critically, the perspectives of the doctrine of the Spirit of Jürgen Moltmann;
4. to deal with the Pentecostal view of the doctrine of the Spirit following Williams's Systematic Theology, the phenomenology in Sicily argued by Cox and indications about different Pentecostal movements by Kärkkäinen;
5. to compare the various perspectives listed considering the continuities and the discontinuities.



1.6 Central Theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of this research is that the Pentecostal understanding of the Holy Spirit differs from the views of Jürgen Moltmann and Michael Welker.

1.7 Research Design/Methodology

This research is done following the perspective of a Pentecostal Theology. Furthermore, the study will consider the Reformed views of the two theologians indicated. For this study, the methodologies applied will be of a comparative literary study. The materials obtained are restricted to the field of the doctrine of the Spirit. It will start with the terms used by the Bible to indicate the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments. After that, there will be a critical evaluation of the doctrine of the Spirit of Welker, Moltmann and the Pentecostal perspective with references to their respective works. Finally, there will be a comparison to define the difference. Then:

1. in order to identify the original terms of the Holy Spirit, some good dictionaries will be used (Coenen *et al.*, 2000:1771,2000 and Xavier Leon-Dufour, 2005:1232; Schökel, 2013:774; Jenni & Westermann, vol.3 1997:1218-1220);
2. in order to locate scriptural evidence of the Holy Spirit, the verses identifying and describing the Pentecostal Theology following some literatures (Arrington, 1998; Rodman, 2009; Ferrario, 2000; and others);
3. in order to critically evaluate Welker's vision of the Holy Spirit, information will be selected and categorized through analysis, interpretation and synthesis from books:
 - a. "Lo Spirito di Dio" (Welker, 1990);
 - b. The work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism (Welker, 2006);



- c. The Spirit in Creation and New Creation: Science and Theology in Western and Orthodox Realms (Welker, 2012);
 - d. God the Revealed: Christology (Stott & Welker, 2014);
4. in order to critically evaluate the Moltmann's vision of the Holy Spirit information will be selected and categorized through analysis, interpretation and synthesis from books:
 - a. "Lo Spirito della vita. Per una pneumatologia integrale" to analyzing the Moltmann's view (Moltmann, 1994);
 - b. "A Response to My Pentecostal Dialogue Partners," Journal of Pentecostal Theology 4 (Moltmann, 1994);
 - c. "La fonte della vita. Lo Spirito Santo e la teologia della vita" (Moltmann, 1998);
 - d. "La chiesa nella forza dello Spirito. Contributo per una ecclesiologia messianica" (Moltmann, 1976);
 - e. "The Holy Spirit and the Renewal of All Things: Pneumatology in Paul and Jürgen Moltmann" (Beck, 2017);
 - f. "Diaconia. Il servizio cristiano nella prospettiva del Regno di Dio" (Moltmann, 1986);
 - g. "Chi e' Cristo per noi oggi" (Moltmann, 1995);
 - h. "L'avvento di Dio. Escatologia Cristiana" (Moltmann, 2004);
 - i. "Teologia della Speranza" (Moltmann, 2017).
5. In order to describe the Pentecostal view of the Holy Spirit, concepts indicated in different books will be used (Arrington, 1998; Williams, 2009; and others);
6. In order to describe the pentecostal phenomenon Cox's argument about Pentecostal movement in Sicily will be analyzed (Cox, 1994);
7. In order to describe the differences in the Pentecostal movement, Kärkkäinen's argument will be analyzed (Kärkkäinen, 2012);



8. To analyze the continuities and discontinuities, critically the different views will be compared an indication will be given indication about what are the differences and what are the points in common.

1.8 Ethical consideration

As a comparative literature study this study is viewed as a low risk study without any direct or indirect ethical applications for any individuals. The ethical guidelines of the NWU will be followed and an ethical clearance certificate will be obtained.

1.9 Concept clarification

- **Holy Spirit:** “Third person of the Trinity through whom God acts, reveals his will, empowers individuals, and discloses his personal presence in the OT and NT” (Char *et al.*, 1198:2010).
- **Pneumatology:** refers to Christian theology; it is the study of the Holy Spirit. The word comes from the combination of *pneuma* plus *logos*. *Pneuma* is the Greek word that identifies the breath, and *logos* means “teaching about”.
- **Reformed:** “term used to refer to a theological tradition inspired by the writings of Giovanni Calvino (1509-64) and his immediate successors ... The expression is generally used preferring it to ‘Calvinist’ (which is used to indicate the position of the direct followers of Calvino)”³ (MCGRATH, 2010:577).

³ Translated from Italian: “termine usato per fare riferimento a una tradizione teologica ispirata dagli scritti di Giovanni Calvino (1509-64) e dei suoi immediati successori ... L'espressione viene generalmente utilizzata preferendola a <<calvinista>> (che si usa per indicare le posizioni dei seguaci diretti di Calvino)”.



- **Pentecostal Movement:** It was born in the twentieth-century, a movement “whose origin can be found at the turn of that century and whose growth has been phenomenal, namely, the Pentecostal and charismatic movements (Kärkkäinen, 1903:2017). Pentecostal Movement is referred to as “classical Pentecostal denominations, such as Assemblies of God or Foursquare Gospel, that owe their existence to the famous Azusa revival” (Kärkkäinen, 1914:2017). “The Pentecostal Movement (PM) is outlined as one of the most important and dynamic religious movements in the contemporary world; growing from zero to nearly five hundred million people in just 90 years. In 1993 its members became the most numerous family of Protestants and second in an absolute sense, after that of Roman Catholicism. Currently, this heterogeneous group is also formed by "charismatics" of different denominations and independent churches. If the term "Pentecostal" recalls the day of Pentecost narrated in Acts 2, the word "charismatic" refers to spiritual gifts and, in particular, to the gift of tongues”⁴ (Ferrari *et al.*, 2007:554).

- **Integral Pneumatology:** it is the perspective of Moltmann about the theology of the Spirit. He argues that life should be in the power of the Holy Spirit, and for this reason he invites people to experience the Holy Spirit to change people’s lives despite the various problems that affect life itself. This process directed at the community is defined, integral pneumatology.

- **Realistic Theology:** it is the perspective of Welker about the theology of the Spirit. He argues how man feels the presence of God in the

⁴ Translated from Italian: “Il Movimento Pentecostale (MP) si delinea come uno dei piu' importanti e dinamici movimenti religiosi del mondo contemporaneo. Crescendo da zero a quasi cinquecento milioni di persone in soli 90 anni, nel 1993 i suoi aderenti sono divenuti la piu' numerosa famiglia di protestanti e la seconda in senso assoluto, dopo quella del cattolicesimo romano. Attualmente, questo gruppo eterogeneo e' formato anche da "carismatici" di diverse denominazioni e di chiese indipendenti. Se il termine "pentecostale" richiama il giorno di Pentecoste narrato da Atti 2, la parola "carismatico" fa riferimento ai doni spirituali e, in particolare, al dono delle lingue.”.



power of the Holy Spirit. This presence will give power to the human beings reflecting God's glory.

1.10 Provisional classification of chapters

The introduction to the research serves as chapter 1 of the study. It introduces the research topic and entails the background, the research problem and the research questions, the aims and objectives of the study, the central theoretical argument, the methodology and the eventual structure of the research project that it will be given.

Chapter 2 will describe the meaning of the terms used in the Bible. How the Holy Spirit is indicated in the books of the Bible.

Chapter 3 will critically analyze the vision of the doctrine of the Spirit by Micheal Welker.

Chapter 4 will critically analyze the vision of the doctrine of the Spirit by Jürgen Moltmann.

Chapter 5 will critically analyze the vision of the doctrine of the Spirit from a Pentecostal perspective.

Chapter 6 will be dedicated at the continuities and discontinuities between Welker and Moltmann's views and that of the Pentecostal one.

Chapter 7 will consist of a summary of all discussion highlighted in this research.

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1.12 Schematic presentation

Research question	Aim and objectives	Research method
What are the continuities and discontinuities between Welker and Moltmann's doctrine of the Spirit and the Pentecostal one?	The main aim of this study is to make a theological evaluation of the different perspectives to have an idea of their vision	This theological study is critically done through analysis, interpretation and synthesis of the collected information.
Which terms does the Bible use? And how is the doctrine of the Spirit expressed?	The aim of this question is to understand the words that the Bible uses when the terms are used	In order to study and evaluate the terms that will be used, dictionaries and parts of Scripture are identified.
What are Welker's and Moltmann's visions?	To understand their visions we will analyze their works referring to the work of the Holy Spirit and how they understood his action	In order to understand both views, information will be collected analyzed, categorized and interpreted critically, keeping the Reformed tradition



What is the Pentecostal perspective of the Holy Spirit?	The aim is to understand a Pentecostal vision.	In order to understand the Pentecostal vision, the study will be done from the perspective of Pentecostal view.
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CHAPTER 2

THE MEANING OF THE TERM 'HOLY SPIRIT' IN THE BIBLE

Speaking of the Holy Spirit is not an easy concept. In the course of history the topic considered by every theologian has been the study of God or Jesus. Although the various Trinitarian discourses have been addressed following different directions, the Holy Spirit has always been considered marginally. The third article of the Apostolic Creed has never been taken very seriously during the centuries. Only in the last few decades has there been the need to speak, write and evaluate the work, the movement and the action of the Holy Spirit, thus laying the foundations for an increasingly detailed theological discussion.

There is a very important fact when talking about the Spirit, as He is a person and not a thing. In general, He is considered as a force, a power, just because He is not visible and because He does not have some characteristics as God has in the Father or in the Son. However, the Holy Spirit is a person at the same level as the other two persons of the Trinity, and Scripture is very clear about that one, and these will be the points of reflection that will be addressed.

In fact, the questions that will be answered are: Which terms does the Bible use to indicate the Holy Spirit? Are the same terms used in both the Old Testament and the New Testament? Do they always have the same meaning? What is the evidence that the Spirit is a person?



2.1 *The Holy Spirit at the semantic level*

To answer the questions indicated in the previous paragraph, it is necessary to understand which terms are used in the Scriptures and which characteristics do they have.

The term "spirit" has various facets because He belongs to different types of language such as philosophical, theological, psychological and anthropological. Obviously, the theological-biblical aspect of the term will be taken into consideration in order to enter into the fields that will lead the research in the discussion undertaken.

The Holy Spirit is indicated in the Bible by different terms. In the Old Testament, since the original language was Hebrew, He is expressed by the term *rûaḥ*, while in the New Testament the term used in Greek, the language of the New Testament, is *pneuma*.

2.1.1 *The Rûaḥ in the Old Testament*

The Hebrew word *rûaḥ* is present 387 times in the Old Testament and only 11 times it is expressed in Aramaic (all in the book of Daniel) (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1202). Nevertheless, it is possible to have a different meaning based on how it is understood within the text and context. It serves to understand, unequivocally, how the term is widespread throughout the Hebrew Bible, in fact, Raymond classifies the term in categories "for the multiplicity of uses"⁵ (2008:387).

In any case, the *rûaḥ* of God is a feminine word that does not have a precise meaning, in fact, it can mean "wind" or "breath" or "spirit". It is generally translated by spirit, even if it has a great variety of meanings. When referring to the wind, it seems "as mysterious as it is, an immediate effect of God's

⁵ Translation from Italian "per la molteplicità degli usi".



action”⁶ (Coenen *et al*, 2000:1771); “It is an invisible and mysterious force”⁷ (Pezzoni *et al.*, 2000:1771). However, one must be careful not to identify God with the “wind” because it would identify God with a natural force, and for this reason one needs to deepen one’s knowledge of God. Considering the term from its etymological point of view, the noun *rûah* “may belong to the category of onomatopoeic words ... and would then imitate the sound of whistling wind and excited breathing” (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1202).

Further Lys (cited by Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1202) “suggests the derivation that which is accessible and open to the air, that which is airy, then spacious”. In this way it is easy to understand the term *rûah* is often associated with the process of breathing.

Thus, the basic meaning is: “wind” and “breath”; but it should not be considered as the true essence of the wind “rather it is the power encountered in the breath and the wind, which whence and whither remains mysterious” (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1203).

The term “wind”, for instance, is used in a particular moment when Moses raises his staff to the Red Sea when a strong wind (*rûah*) came from the east⁸ and opened the sea to divide the waters and to allow the people of Israel to pass onto the other bank. Obviously, it is possible to have many references of this kind, and all are the ones with common characteristics.

In fact, the term, when associated with a noun, refers “on the one hand (a) to the direction, and on the other (b) to the magnitude of the wind’s movement” (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1203). In the previous example, obviously, the “wind” has its direction represented by the East, from the orient. Instead, an example of the second case can be found in some verses⁹ where the term is associated with the divine names Elohim and YAHWEH.

⁶ Translation from Italian «misterioso come è, un effetto immediato dell’azione di Dio»

⁷ Translation from Italian «è una forza invisibile e misteriosa».

⁸ Ex 14:21.

⁹ Cfr. Gn 1:2; Is. 59:19 (indicated by Ernst & Westermann).



Something similar happens when the term itself is associated with the verbs. In this case, the verbs are distributed “almost exclusively in two categories: (a) verbs of movement and (b) verbs of placing in motion” (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1204). Clearly, in the first case, Ernst & Westermann argue that the term is referred to the movement of the wind which can act in different ways: it breaks out¹⁰ or comes¹¹ or blows (Is 40:7 Bible, 1997:1204). Instead, in the second case, the term not only highlights the movement of the wind itself, but defines also a certain enigmatic power, and for this reason many verses are listed where it is used as a metaphor¹² or by a destructive force that moves trees¹³ or even the crash or breaking the mountains¹⁴ (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1204). For this last case, Schökel argues that *rûah* is a hurricane, “a strong/impetuous wind”¹⁵ (2013:774).

Undoubtedly, the meaning of the term can vary according to other contexts to which it refers, for example it may be the object of a human action or can be directly referred to the action of God as his activity in the world around us. This action is, moreover, verifiable both from the point of view of the punishment of his people¹⁶ and in his action to deliver them.¹⁷ Further, it is possible to understand it either in the creative activity of God himself¹⁸ or in the manifestations He has when He accompanies the theophanies¹⁹ (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1206).

Furthermore, the term *rûah* can be considered in the sense of “breath”, understood “as a force expressed in respiration” (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1207).

¹⁰ Cfr. Nm 11:31 (indicated by Ernst & Westermann).

¹¹ Cfr. Jr 4:12; Ezk 1:4; Hs 13:5; Job 1:19 (indicated by Ernst & Westermann).

¹² Cfr. Is 17:13; Jr 13:24; Ps 1:4 (indicated by Ernst & Westermann).

¹³ Cfr. Is 7:2 (indicated by Ernst & Westermann).

¹⁴ Cfr. 1 Ki 19:11 (indicated by Ernst & Westermann).

¹⁵ Translation from Italian “un vento forte/impetuoso”.

¹⁶ Cfr. Ezk 13:11 (indicated by Ernst & Westermann).

¹⁷ Cfr. Ex 14:21 (indicated by Ernst & Westermann).

¹⁸ Cfr. Am 4:13 (indicated by Ernst & Westermann).

¹⁹ Cfr. Ezk 1:4; Dn. 7:1 (indicated by Ernst & Westermann).



Nevertheless, it is not referring to the “‘normal’ breathing, a component of human life ..., but the particular process of breathing that expresses the human being’s dynamic vitality” (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1207).

Schökel argues that *rûah*, if considered with the meaning of waft or breath, means breath in the general sense of the term, that is life, and considers “the choice between different translations is the most stylistic” (2013:774) than substantial because the meaning of the other passage is fluid. It means that it is possible to choose different translations indicating the same meaning.

Without going into much detail there is a case where it is possible to diversify the word *rûah* with *n^ešāmā*.²⁰ It is useful to have an example where it is possible to have an idea of this meaning in a sense of bringing life that is linked with the second term.

Ezekiel 37, a well-known passage, speaks of a very large number of dry bones that were found in a valley. These bones, reuniting with each other, begun to be covered with flesh and muscles and later they are restored to life. In this passage, the meaning assumed by *rûah* is precisely that of “breath of life”. What Ezekiel does is blow on the dead and through the *rûah* of God, these bones return to life (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1209).

It identifies the same phenomenon, the same force tending to give life, life to man and animals.²¹ A devastating force “that bursts and envelops, coming from the outside of the human being, but which is also able to penetrate it without being able to stop it”²² (Ferrario, 2000:165). In fact, the difference between a dead man and a living man is that the latter breathes, he has life in himself.

It is also interesting to note the analogy with the creation of man in Genesis 2, where God himself blows and gives life. In this last case the term

²⁰ They describe same meaning of “breath of life”.

²¹ Cfr. Gn 2:7 (indicated by Ernst & Westermann).

²² Translation from Italian «che irrompe e avvolge, provenendo dall'esterno dell'essere umano, ma che è anche capace di penetrare in esso senza che la si possa arrestare».



used is *n^ešāmā*, however, in this case they are called “living beings ... are now called ‘flesh in which there is the breath of life (*rûah hayyîm*)’” (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1209).

Undoubtedly, there are many other passages where the term is referred to, and many of them consider it from the psychological point of view, indicating a wide spectrum of meaning in relation to the mind or emotions. Moreover, when referring to an anthropological profile, it is associated with the most important organ of man that is the heart, intended to be the centre of human life (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1211).

Furthermore, one aspect not to be overlooked is the great possibility given to some people to do supernatural things like interpreting dreams (Joseph in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon) (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1212).

The term *rûah*, in addition, can be associated with the names of God as Elohim or YAHWEH. Spirit of God was considered in two aspects: charismatic leadership and ecstatic prophecy. “In both contexts, *rûah* is a dynamically explosive force that overcomes a person and equips one for special acts for a brief period” (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1213) to reach, in some aspects, the meaning of demon or being understood as an impersonal force (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1211).

In exilic and post-exilic period, “the endowment of a chosen individual with the Spirit is supplemented by bestowal of the Spirit on the entire people of God” as indicated in Ezekiel and Joel (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1218).

It is important to understand that these concepts are mutually exclusive if they coexist unreconciled. In this new way of understanding the Spirit, it is relevant to analyze the verbs “to pour out” referred to in verses Ezk 39:39, Joel 3:1f and Is 44:3 and “to be emptied out” (Is 32:15) “portray *rûah* as a kind of fluid” all linked at prophetic proclamations and descriptions of salvation (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1219). These verses are used as a promise of an eschatological bestowal of the Spirit that will be fulfilled, specifically, at the event of Pentecost as told in Acts 2 and referred to in the Pentecostal



movement today. Concerning the verses in Ezekiel, this bestowal is available for all people and touches the part of the body that is the centre of the human life: the heart, portraying the possibility to change the orientation of life to God as a principal reference. Instead, the verses of Joel are referring to outpouring of the Spirit as a prophetic view. In fact, "to make dreams" and "to see visions" are terms that are connected to the old tradition that linked these events to the prophets. Ultimately, this vision of the *rûah* of God as a promise of salvation is considered under a vision of "blessing" indicating a growth of the people who are suffering (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1219).

Finally, the term *rûah* will be considered and indicated by "Holy Spirit" linking the Spirit to the meaning indicated by *rûah* and adding a special status that is "holiness". This term is translated in Greek as *pneuma* and it is used in the LXX version as well. More or less three quarters of all instances are referring to this Greek term and further, in this new cultural world will assume both philosophical and worldview concepts as used in the Greek vision (Ernst & Westermann, 1997:1219). But this is a new question that will be clarified in the next paragraph.

2.1.2 *Pneuma in the New Testament*

The Greek term *pneuma* is neutral gender and "indicates the energy-laden motion of the moving air"²³ (Coenen *et al.*, 2000:1770). From the Greek root *pneu*, as indicated in this text. It is possible to have derivatives with different meanings, for example:

- *pneō* can mean blowing or give off, like the wind or the air in general; 'emit' referring to odours or smoke; breathe or radiate;
- *pnoê* takes the meaning of breath, wind, blow; inspiration of a deity;

²³ Translation from Italian "indica il moto carico di energia che è proprio dell'aria in movimento".



- *ekpnéō* refers to exhaling, emitting puffs or even ceasing to breathe;
- *empnéō* instead can mean inspiring, breathing;
- *pneuma* means spirit and assumption, in fact, the sense of the air that moves with a certain energy that acts in this movement.

This last term, *pneuma* was also known before the apostolic period, and since pre-Socratic times it has incorporated all the other meanings, becoming an extremely important term that has in itself a meaning of something material (Coenen *et al.*, 2000:1770). In any way, Leon-Dufour argues that it "can evoke with equal precision both the cosmic image of the divine breath, whose rhythm regulates the movement of the seasons, and the effusion of the Holy Spirit that vivifies hearts"²⁴ (2005:1232).

As in the case of *rûah* and *nešāmā* in the Old Testament, also in the New Testament there is a connection between the two terms of the same language. This connection occurs between the term *pneuma* and psyche or soul. The first, in any case, is distinguished from the second one in having a sense of matter or material, in fact "in the Stoic philosophy the 'spirit of the soul' assumes the functions of this in the activity of the senses, of language and thought"²⁵ (Coenen *et al.*, 2000:1770) up to become the *pneuma*, that is a universal and fundamental principle that incorporates within itself the various essences giving it a certain appearance as the air, the fire, or the matter *eteria* that when pure becomes the *logos*, the god. (Coenen *et al.*, 2000:1770)

The term was therefore already in use in the Greek world, and going from Plato to Plutarch, was in vogue with meanings that, in popular religions

²⁴ Translation from Italian "può evocare con altrettanta esattezza sia l'immagine cosmica del soffio divino il cui ritmo regola il movimento delle stagioni, sia l'effusione dello Spirito Santo che vivifica i cuori".

²⁵ Translation from Italian "nella filosofia stoica lo « spirito dell'anima » assume le funzioni di questa nell'attività dei sensi, del linguaggio e del pensiero".



were also linked to magic or magical manifestations, even if the basic meaning was inspiration.

Once these assessments have been made, a question will arise: what is the relationship between the Greek and the Hebrew words? Translating the Hebrew word, do we have the same correspondence in Greek?

Such an observation can be traced back to the first Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, namely the LXX. In this Greek translation, which is the first translation made by Jews who knew their language very well, the Hebrew base of the term *pneuma* is almost always expressed with *rûah* and only in three cases it translates *nešāmâ* to mean breath or puff. In his translation, in several passages, the wind is indicated as the direct action of God and in its particular meaning of wind direction.²⁶ Instead, in the translated version it has the ephemeral character of the wind. Moreover, as in the Old Testament with *rûah*, also in Greek the term has not only the meaning of wind but breath. In this case it represents both human and animal breath and represents the life energy of man²⁷ or a group²⁸, qualities that idols cannot have²⁹ comparing God³⁰ and Christ.³¹ This force of life represents the life of man or even his orientation, a life given by God and which He takes up again³² when He wishes and returns back after death³³ (Coenen *et al.*, 2000:1771).

In contrast to Judaism, the body, in Greek thought, is considered something negative as the one that imprisons the soul, and for this reason it is perceived in Judaism, as separate from the body. For this, Philo "calls the body

²⁶ Cfr. Ezk 37:9; 42:16-20 (indicated by Coenen *et al.*).

²⁷ Cfr. Jdg 15:19 (indicated by Coenen *et al.*).

²⁸ Cfr. Nm 16:22 (indicated by Coenen *et al.*).

²⁹ Cfr. Jr 10:14 (indicated by Coenen *et al.*).

³⁰ Cfr. Ps 33:6 (indicated by Coenen *et al.*).

³¹ Cfr. Is 11:4 (indicated by Coenen *et al.*).

³² Cfr. Ps 104:29 (indicated by Coenen *et al.*).

³³ Cfr. Ec 12:7 (indicated by Coenen *et al.*).



a 'burden' that oppresses the spirit and holds it prisoner in earthly reality"³⁴ (cited by Coenen *et al.*, 2000:1772).

This is the most important difference between the Judaic and the Greek vision of the spirit. From the numerical point of view, in the New Testament the term is present 379 times from which derives the adjective *pneumatikós* (spiritual) that is "the invisible sphere in which the Holy Spirit imparts faith, reveals Christ, etc."³⁵

Throughout the New Testament the term therefore assumes a different value. Sometimes it refers to the devil³⁶ using giudaic terminology in Mark's gospel, indicating a psychic problem or, in the synoptics, to the One who carries it with excellence and possesses it, that is Jesus. At other times it refers to the promised gift given to the church with even the power and strength of fire (Coenen *et al.*, 2000:1774-1775).

In the book of Acts, however, it is considered as the fulfillment of the promise. Acts 2 is the expression of baptism that involves the outpouring of the Spirit given to the whole universal church by giving everyone the opportunity to go out into the world in mission to preach and make Christ known because the Spirit will testify about Christ Himself. Therefore, it mainly denotes the action of God in the church that will be further developed by Paul in his letters referring to spiritual gifts, in contrast to the spiritual with the carnal or even to become the anticipation of what will be fully received in the future. (Coenen *et al.*, 2000:1775-7)

John's theology makes much reference to the Spirit associated with the church. In fact, in his gospel, Brand *et al.* (2010:1200) argue that there are some passages of considerable importance and they are expressed in this way:

- the Spirit possesses Christ (1:32-33)

³⁴ Translation from Italian "chiama il corpo un "peso" che opprime lo spirito e lo tiene prigioniero nella realtà terrena".

³⁵ <http://greeklexicon.org/lexicon/strongs/4152/> Date of access: 20/02/2018.

³⁶ Cfr. Mk 1:26 (indicated by Coenen *et al.*).



- new birth (3:1-16)
- Jesus' departure (16:7-11)
- Filling believers after resurrection (20:22).

In this way, "the Christian community is anointed by the Spirit (1 John 2:20), and the Spirit assures the believer of the indwelling presence of Jesus (1 John 3:24)" (Brand *et al.*, 2010:1200).

2.1.3 *Spirit as a person*

The vision of the Spirit understood in the Old Testament as *rûah* and in the New Testament as *pneuma*, suggests that the Holy Spirit is a force. In fact, considering the characteristics of the terms, both in Greek and in Hebrew, they tend to propose, in most cases the sense of wind and breath. This would lead to an easy and logical conclusion, that is: "the Holy Spirit is a thing" or a "force" (Coenen *et al.*, 2000:1780). The problem arises if the above mentioned steps are evaluated superficially. However, He is a real person, besides being obviously God, if the Spirit will be evaluated in some of his actions, characteristics and qualities.

In any case, this personification is obvious when in the Trinitarian formulas He appears alongside the Father and the Son, as for example in the baptismal formula of Matthew: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: " (Bible, 28.19 KJV); or in 1 Corinthians 12: 4-6 (Bible, KJV) where there is a subdivision of actions among the persons of the Trinity: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." In these steps, of course, the Spirit is on the same level as the other persons of the Trinity and therefore is to be considered as a person and not as a force (Coenen *et al.*, 2000:1781).



Moreover, as highlighted by Coenen *et al.* (2000:1781), John's gospel considers Him as a divine person because He acts and has quality that only Father and Son can have and in the same time is distinct from them. In fact, He is represented as the Spirit of truth or who teaches, assists, reminds the disciples of everything concerning Christ and convinces of sin

Nevertheless, there are a lot of verses where it should be possible to realize how the Spirit is truly a person considering his actions or what He does:³⁷

- think (Rm 8:27);
- listen (Rm 15:20);
- want (1 Cor 12:11);
- teach (Jn 14:26);
- lead (Ac 8:29);
- intercedes (Rm 8:26-27);
- give loves and affection (Ac 15:30);
- attests that we are children of God (Ac 8:16);
- aggravated or saddened (Eph 4:30).

But for Coenen *et al.* (2000:1780), these intellectual activities are not enough to consider Him as a person, the authors consider more the comparison with the other persons of the Trinity than these activity of the Spirit.

2.1.4 *Vision of the Spirit throughout the history*

The Holy Spirit, as previously indicated, is a person who has been acting and working since creation, having a pre-eminent role in all biblical texts. He has been present since creation³⁸ and continues to be present throughout biblical history because He "testifies to the mobile, powerful and at the same

³⁷ Listed by the researcher.

³⁸ Gn 1:2.



time unavailable character of God's intervention in history"³⁹ (Ferrario, 2000:166).

Which history? Israel's history or other histories? Starting from the Old Testament, *rûah* was available in all the prophets and some other persons. Just after there was the promise for all people as indicated by Joel 2.28-32, and then She is as "the gift of the final time, which invests all believers, beyond the sexual barriers (sons and daughters), generational barriers (young and old), and social ones (male and female servants)"⁴⁰ (Ferrario, 2000:176).

This promise was fulfilled in Acts 2 and after the manifestation of the Spirit has always been present in the history of the church and has been received by many people of God. His action, his presence has never been lacking to believers. Perhaps the documentation in our possession is not much because it has been lost, destroyed or considered heretical, completely erased. However, the presence of the Spirit has always been active in every moment of human history.

What arose was a problem that led the church not to know how to properly evaluate the question of the Spirit. It is true that there was an attenuation, a weakening of the attention in this regard, certainly not for lack of the Spirit, but due to apologies or battles against other heretical doctrines or due to the attempts to define the key points of Christian doctrine starting from God and immediately afterwards starting from the divinity and / or dual nature of Jesus Christ, which therefore resulted in a lack of effectively clarifying the doctrine of the Spirit.

One of the first representatives who expressed the work of the Holy Spirit in the early church was Justin Martyr who, in responding to Emperor Marcus Aurelius, did not make sacrifices to the pagan gods and said: "If you want a proof that the Spirit of God, once with your people, left you and came

³⁹ Translation from Italian "testimonia il carattere mobile, potente e al tempo stesso non disponibile dell'intervento di Dio nella storia".

⁴⁰ Translation from Italian "il dono del tempo finale, che investe tutti i credenti, al di là delle barriere sessuali (figli e figlie), generazionali (giovani e vecchi/e), sociali (servi e serve)".



to us, come into our community and there you will see him drive out demons, heal the sick, speak in other languages and prophecies" (cited by Roberts *et al.*, 1988:240)

The same Irenaeus of Lyons, in some of his works, speaks of brothers who have prophetic gifts, therefore, non-normal manifestations in the various liturgical activities. Furthermore, it is not possible to forget a movement that spread in the middle of the second century, Montanism. Montanus was a theologian who was very attentive to what the role of the Spirit was in the church. He was a pagan priest who converted to Christianity and wanted to make a crusade to remedy the mundanity and organization that was being established in the ancient church. "His preaching ... gave to the flowering of a definite movement of the 'new prophecy' because of the importance given to the prophetic oracles and the exasperated expectation of the return of Christ".⁴¹ (Rinaldi, 2008:393) For this reason he tried to recover the spiritual gifts of the first century church, above all, focusing on dreams, visions and prophetic revelations. In various writings that attacked the Montanist practices, it is stated that during his cult people spoke in tongues and there was also a special emphasis on the gift of prophecy. The way Montanus acted was in contrast with that of the official church, so the news that exists of him comes, almost exclusively, from sources who were opponents.

The only push could come if someone started a certain type of question. For example, different authors and Eustathius of Sebaste himself argued that "neither the person nor the works of the Spirit should be considered as having the importance or the nature of a divine person"⁴² (McGrath, 2010:285). To this statement, Athanasius and Basil of Caesarea referred to the formula for baptism to defend the Spirit's personality.

⁴¹ Translation from Italian "La sua predicazione [...] diede luogo al fiorire di un movimento definito della 'nuova profezia' per l'importanza che vi si dava agli oracoli profetici and l'esasperata attesa del ritorno di Cristo".

⁴² Translation from Italian "ne' la persona, ne' le opera dello Spirito dovevano essere considerate come aventi l'importanza o la natura di una persona divina".



What was certain was that many patristic writers were hesitant to speak of the Spirit and to see him as God. There was prudence, therefore, which led to the definition of the Spirit as the giver of life proceeding from the Father in the formula of the Council of Constantinople of 381. In the text it is considered as an equal dignity of the Father and of the Son, even if they had avoided associating Him to God explicitly.

Other writers as Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil of Caesarea, Augustine of Hippo, emphasized in one way or in another the matters concerning the Spirit more and more. From this moment on, evaluations were born which later led to the consideration of the Holy Spirit's having a divine nature.

This process continued till Wesley and just after. During the twentieth century what became the most widespread movement in the world today, namely the Pentecostal movement, began. "The Pentecostals constitute the most interesting 'awakening' movement exploded within contemporary Protestantism".⁴³ (Bouchard, 1992:99) He was principal of "in the biblical school of Topeka (Kansas) between December 31, 1900 and January 1, 1901 and came across Agnes Ozman"⁴⁴ (Stretti, 1998:14) who began to speak in other languages after a period of study based on the biblical teaching of the baptism of Holy Spirit as indicated in the book of Acts. From there it began to spread throughout the world, though not in the same form. In fact, the Spirit began to act in the contexts in which people lived. For this reason the Pentecostal movement can not be considered homogeneous under this point of view, "the expression, in fact, indicates a plurality of subjects and positions sometimes very distant from each other, so it would be more appropriate to speak of 'Pentecostal movements'"⁴⁵ (Maselli, 1999:94). Culture, politics,

⁴³ Translation from Italian "I pentecostali costituiscono il più interessante movimento di «risveglio» esploso in seno al protestantesimo contemporaneo.

⁴⁴ Translation from Italian nella scuola biblica di Topeka (Kansas) tra il 31 dicembre 1900 e il 1 gennaio 1901 ed ebbe come protagonista Agnes Ozman.

⁴⁵ Translation from Italian l'espressione, infatti, sta ad indicare una pluralità di soggetti e di posizioni a volte molto distanti l'uno dall'altra per cui sarebbe più opportuno parlare di "movimenti pentecostali".



geography and society have determined his work in every state and in every region. Not, therefore, a well-defined brand but a varied form and activity in various contexts.

So, if from a practical point of view it has had different results all over the world, concerning the theoretical or rather theological part, the discussions are completely different. Already there was not much theological attention given to this scriptural phenomenon because it was thought that it was necessary to leave freedom to the Spirit and it was impossible to explain certain things, but now, especially under the pressure of Catholic literature, there is more theological concern about this doctrine. Pneumatology, that is the discourse on the Spirit, began to provoke an ever-increasing interest, leading to studies made by various theologians of various kinds.

Among these can be mentioned Michael Welker and Jürgen Moltmann.

2.2 Theologians Jürgen Moltmann and Michael Welker

Moltmann and Welker are both still alive and they are teaching at the university. They are internationally known and both are Germans. This paragraph aims to learn about their lives before tackling their theology for the topic indicated in this thesis.

2.2.1 Jürgen Moltmann

Moltmann was born in Hamburg in 1926 "into a fairly secularized Protestant family". (Theopedia.com, 2006)⁴⁶ Despite the Christian faith of the family, he devoted himself to other readings such as Lessing or Goethe. When the Second World War began, he was called into battle and during a bombing in Hamburg he saw a fellow soldier die near him. From 1945 he was a prisoner for three years and in this period he approached the Christian faith with

⁴⁶

<https://www.theopedia.com/Jurgen-moltmann> Date of access: 02/04/2019.



questions about life and death, on God and guilt. It was during this period that his vocation was born that, immediately after the war, led him to study theology in Göttingen and immediately thereafter to become an evangelical pastor. It is during his studies that he met his future wife Elizabeth Wendel (Ferrario, 2005).⁴⁷

In his experience of captivity in the war, a chaplain gave him the New Testament and the psalms to read which brought him closer to the faith. He himself said that it was Christ who found him and not vice versa (Jenkins, 2012).⁴⁸

Furthermore, his experience was important for the writing of the book, “God Crucified”, as claimed by himself in an interview made by Simon Jenkins (2012).⁴⁹

In his pastoral life, he came closer to the spiritual needs of the people because of what people experienced during the war and the consequences that followed. From the experience of war and later from being a pastor, he began to understand how it is not necessary to separate the figure of the pastor and university professor. In fact, he became a professor in Wuppertal first and Tübingen after, where he defined his theology in the book that was to make him famous: “Theology of Hope”. Through this new vision of theology, he tended to consider eschatology as the principal form of theological reflection, in fact, “Christianity is eschatology from the beginning to the end and not only in the appendix: it is hope, it is orientation and forward movement and therefore it is also a revolution and transformation of the present”.⁵⁰ (Moltmann, 2017:10) In this revolutionary theological vision, works like that have a certain ecumenical

⁴⁷ http://www.credereoggi.it/upload/2005/articolo146_107.asp Date of access: 02 Apr 2019.

⁴⁸ <https://highprofiles.info/interview/Jurgen-moltmann> Date of access: 02/04/2019.

⁴⁹ <https://highprofiles.info/interview/Jurgen-moltmann> Date of access: 02/04/2019.

⁵⁰ Translated from Italian “Il cristianesimo e’ escatologia dal principio alla fine e non soltanto in appendice: e’ speranza, e’ orientamento e movimento in avanti e percio’ e’ anche rivoluzionamento e trasformazione del presente”.



vision. In this way, he began to have a vision that is not strictly confessional as it was due to a reformed Protestant (Matthew, 2015).⁵¹

2.2.2 Michael Welker

Michael Welker, as Moltmann, is a German theologian. He was born in Erlangen, on 20 November 1947. He is protestant and senior professor at the University of Heidelberg. At this University he is teaching in different areas from Christology, creation, anthropology and other disciplines (uni-heidelberg.de, 2017).⁵² In an interview in a theological journal, 'Theological Autobiography' that took place in June of 1997, he answered to some students' questions. He replied and described himself. He is married and has twin daughters. He loves the colour blue and Bach or Corelli. He spent his life from childhood in Berlin, Grunstadt, Heideberg and Tübingen. He became professor in Tübingen, Münster and then in Heideberg. Furthermore, he would convince his neo-protestant colleagues that a biblical theology, working at an interdisciplinary level, is indispensable for our ecclesial and cultural situation" (Welker, 1998).⁵³ Furthermore, he describes how it should be important to distinguish in the Church between individualization and personal development, or between 'pluralism' and 'plurality' or 'relativism' or introduce a new concept of ecumenism to change the traditional one (Welker, 1998).⁵⁴ These are the concepts and motivation that distinguish him from the other reformed theologians.

⁵¹ http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2305-445X2015000100024, Date of access: 02/04/2019.

⁵² https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/fiit/personen/welker_en.html Date of access: 03/04/2019.

⁵³ http://michael-welker.com/bibliographie/welker_138.pdf Date of access: 03/04/2019.

⁵⁴ http://michael-welker.com/bibliographie/welker_138.pdf Date of access: 03/04/2019.



CHAPTER 3

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT ACCORDING TO MICHAEL WELKER

In his journey as a theologian, Welker could not miss some work that referred to the Holy Spirit. For him, the Spirit is something concrete; in fact he maintains in the preface of his main work focused on the Holy Spirit, *The Spirit of God, Theology of the Holy Spirit* that "the Holy Spirit is not a product of fantasy, nor a vague and numinous reality" (Welker, 1990:5).⁵⁵ For this reason, Welker states that it is possible to experience the Spirit so intensely that, to consider this vision of his by the name of 'realistic theology'. (Welker, 1990:6) To fully consider his vision of the Spirit, the concept of realistic theology according to Welker and the modes of action of the Spirit in the world and in writing will be explained below.

3.1 Realistic Theology. Definition and concepts.

What does Welker mean by realistic theology? What are the salient points of this way of seeing theology in relation to the Spirit?

Welker considers experience as the basis of his theology. In the experience, he considers the various contexts in which the experience of each

⁵⁵ Translated from Italian: "Lo Spirito Santo non è nè un prodotto della fantasia, nè una realtà vaga e numinosa".



individual happens and he compares the various experiences by evaluating the differences of the various experiences in order to try to understand what the reality of God is on one side and the creation of the other. The evaluation about creatural part is what God wants for people (Welker, 1990:6).

This reality of God tries to understand "in what way our experiences, our images of the world, our moral criteria and values must be illuminated and changed, if they want to be syntonik with the creation reality"⁵⁶ (Welker, 1990:6).

This approach does not consider the various abstract expressions that try to express God conceptually or try to explain Him and his revelation. In fact, it tends to oppose the methodology of the past, in which the various concepts remained not easily accessible but even superfluous. For this reason, the purpose of realistic theology is to make the reality of God understood, not based on concepts, but on experiences, which can happen at various levels and with the possibility that they may be conflicting with each other. (Welker, 1990:7)

3.1.1 Realistic Theology: its scopes and action in the world of the Spirit

Where does the Realistic Theology of Welker work? For the author, the contexts in which realistic theology operates are those found in today's world, ranging from moral to political or considering public opinion. The choice of these contexts is not casual because they are all contexts in which there can be a possible experience and where it is possible to grasp various differences and various relationships of experiences that can be reconcilable or not with each other. In fact, realistic theology tends to consider all these positive or

⁵⁶ Translated from Italian: "in quale modo le nostre esperienze, le nostre immagini del mondo, i nostri criteri e valori morali debbono essere illuminati e mutati, se vogliono sintotizzarsi con la realta' creaturale" (Welker, 1990:6).



negative bonds, these contrasts and these divergences in order to relate the various experiences that can be determined in real life (Welker, 1990:7).

However, these contexts in which it is possible to gain experience are found within a broader context, which is that of the world. In this way, according to Welker, it has come to accept models that have nothing to do with the presence of God. In fact, the secular world finds the discourse on the Spirit of God incomprehensible. Despite this, it is still possible to perceive the power of the Holy Spirit that still acts even if it is not recognized. However, there is greater scepticism than in the past (Welker, 1990:11).

Today's world, especially the Western world, has become secularized; it has moved away from that religious spirit that has been present for centuries. In this secularization, the work of the Spirit of God has been understood little and has reached the point of confusing it with the worldly spirits. In opposition to this secularized human condition, there are charismatic movements that have sought the experience of the Spirit. Their experience has led them to reflect on it and they have created theologies that operate in certain social spheres. Welker points out two modern theologies that highlight the action of the Spirit: the theology of liberation and the feminist one. (1990:11) According to his vision, they are born through the work of the Spirit, but are the answers that theologians and academics give to what is Jesus today for Christians and how the revelation of God can be present in certain contexts where there are certain needs and necessities (2014a:31). All this, if it is not seen within what is the perspective of Jesus and of all his earthly work as well as of all the possibilities of the Holy Spirit to intervene, become an observation from the outside and therefore only and merely ideology (Welker, 2014a:37).

Both the theologies highlight social issues in particular areas of the globe. In situations where no form of mercy was expressed, where the weak were abandoned and could not be integrated, where there were oppression and injustice, for Welker, the Spirit acted on men and women, on different people, with their beliefs and their ways of life, to try and bring about change.



For this theologian, "the multiplicity of movements corresponds to the abundance of the Spirit"⁵⁷ (1990:24). Their way of acting was aimed at bringing salvation in contexts where there were certain problems with the hope of giving answers. Which theme do they highlight? The reflection on certain social themes that start from biblical concepts and all the themes "are placed under the power inherent in the promise of the Spirit of justice"⁵⁸ (Welker, 1990:25).

So, Welker places all kinds of movements under the guidance of the Spirit who brings or wants to bring contextual change. The birth of these movements, for Welker, depends on local problems due to social conflicts, injustices or devastating practices that are applied to natural and cultural environments. Based on these facts, these movements seek support from some scriptural passages that tend to approve certain reactions. For example, the liberation of the Exodus is a biblical event that supports liberation theology. Thus, the oppression of the people of Israel leading to liberation from the oppressor lays the foundation for liberation theology, for liberation from social injustices that are present in certain places. In this way, the mercy of God and the promises of the Spirit are addressed to the weakest, the oppressed and the needy of society (Welker, 1990:26).

These assumptions have caused the Word of God to re-emerge and be re-evaluated for social purposes located in some areas of the planet where there was a strong discrimination between the poor and the rich, the weak and oppressors.

This happens because today's world tends to move away from God and bring injustice among men and women. However, the Spirit continues to manifest itself and seeks to make known the creative power of God, who has shown it in the creation and makes sure that the mercy of God is still manifested today towards the weak and the marginalized. (Welker, 1990:13)

⁵⁷ Translated from Italian, "la molteplicità dei movimenti corrisponde all'abbondanza dello Spirito".

⁵⁸ Translated from Italian, "si pongono sotto la potenza insita nella promessa dello Spirito della giustizia".



In this way, God puts himself in conflict and contrast with the powerful of this world using people, "near and far, of our time"⁵⁹ (Welker, 1990:13). The Spirit uses men and women by enabling them to take action by intervening where possible to manifest the power of God.

Everyone, however, does not accept this type of action of the Spirit, since many consider God not real or even dead or non-existent. This is the vision of the world that does not recognize Him, but is it possible to notice this action of the Spirit in a clear manner? (Welker, 1990:15)

It is through the Bible that it is possible to note the action of the Holy Spirit, which is shown in human reality in its descent among people and in its effusion; it really intervenes in everyday life (Welker, 1990:16). Thus, it highlights a way in which it is possible to understand the experience of God as well as understand his proximity.

3.1.2 The presence of God today in the charismatic and Pentecostal world

Today, the visible and evident presence of the Spirit can be found, for Welker, in the charismatic and Pentecostal movement. This movement highlights a profound experience of the reality and presence of the Spirit by living in joy and communion and experiencing this reality during worship through the preaching and glorification of God (Welker, 1990:17).

How does Welker consider this movement? For Welker it is "the most vital religious phenomenon of our time. Certainly, it is the most remarkable religious movement in history with the growth of millions of followers a year, and that despite the various estimates, it is certain that it has spread all over the world and in all denominations. For its growth it is concrete demonstration

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Translated from Italian, "vicini e lontani, del nostro tempo".



that the Holy Spirit can be experienced and is present today."⁶⁰ (Welker, 1990:18) This movement considers the Pentecost event as the focus of their faith. This event is characterized by baptism in the Holy Spirit (2014a:217).

Beyond the historical process that characterized it, Welker identifies some points in it that determine a certain success:

1. "Experimentation of the *reality and presence of God*;
2. New community awareness;
3. Reception of the gifts of the Spirit;
4. Opening to an ecumenical Christianity;
5. Experience of the '*baptism of the Holy Spirit*' followed by *glossolalia*

as an expression in a new form of language proper to prayer, which is inalienable for Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals"⁶¹ (1990:20-21).

These are distinctive elements that contrast the charismatic experience with that of the secular world. Despite this, Welker points out that some people doubt that this experience comes from the Spirit of truth, although these movements refer to the Spirit and given that they grow in a continuous way, having a great success (Welker, 1990:23)

The motivation of these doubts is determined by the fact that many within these movements refer to the sensationalism of the events known as *glossolalia* and healing which, by acting in an evident and spectacular way, determines a greater effect. Obviously, for Welker, these charisms have a biblical foundation. In fact, it is possible to find, biblically speaking, spectacular or sensational events, which tend to give knowledge of God and to have an

⁶⁰ Translated from Italian, "il fenomeno religioso più vitale del nostro tempo. Certamente, è il movimento religioso più notevole della storia con crescite di milioni di seguaci all'anno, e che nonostante le diverse stime, è certo che si è diffuso in tutto il mondo e in tutte le denominazioni. Per la sua crescita è dimostrazione concreta che lo Spirito Santo può essere sperimentato ed è presente oggi".

⁶¹ Translated from Italian, "Sperimentazione della *realtà e della presenza di Dio*; Nuova consapevolezza comunitaria; Ricezione dei doni dello Spirito; Apertura ad un cristianesimo ecumenico; Esperienza del '*battesimo dello Spirito Santo*' seguito dalla *glossolalia* come espressione in una nuova forma di linguaggio propria della preghiera, che è irrinunciabile per pentecostali e neopentecostali".



experience of the Spirit without any kind of confusion. Indeed, for Welker, "the theology of the Spirit should analyze the perceptible experiences of the Spirit with sobriety and realism, to interpret them and help them to understand them, and only then from here to question the direction of the spectacular action of the same Spirit"⁶² (1990:23).

Furthermore, inside the movement there is a conflict between theologians, indicated by Frank Macchia (a contemporary Pentecostal theologian), to distinguish theologically if the gifts of the Spirit are included in the sanctification process or the means to build the body of Christ - the church - through the gifts or *charismata* (2014a:218).

This obstacle has been overcome by making sure that the baptism of the Spirit considers both things, thus, it is part of the change that exists within the person and therefore of the process of sanctification, but also equipment for the gifts that serve the church. This process is called 'Spirit Christology'. The term identifies the involvement of Christology in the action of the Spirit. In fact, through Jesus there is the outpouring of the Spirit that leads to use the various forces of God's reign within the community and there is the influence of the theology of God's reign, bringing it to have a more eschatological vision (2014a:218-219).

Another concept in these movements is Dispensationalism that is a speculation about the fullness of time (2014a:219). This is a particular combination between the Spirit Christology and theological eschatology. All starts in the Old Testament with Joel who indicated the outpouring of the Spirit for all people without distinction and, through the exalted Christ, the different gifts are given to the people to strengthen the church (2014a:220). In this way, the Spirit Christology is linked to the reign where the church works and in the

⁶² Translated from Italian "la teologia dello Spirito dovrebbe analizzare con sobrietà e realismo le esperienze percepibili dello Spirito, per interpretarle e aiutare a comprenderle, e solo a partire da qui interrogarsi poi anche nella direzione dell'azione spettacolare dello stesso Spirito".



expectation of the coming reign, there is this eschatological negative prospective (2014a:221-222).

3.1.3 The different action of the Spirit in the various individuals with the power of the Spirit

At this point, a question is important: where does the Spirit intervene with power? Where does He manifest? "The Spirit reveals the power of God even in well-structured, constructive and pluralistic structures"⁶³ (Welker, 1990:29). This action has a unifying and not divisive or disruptive characteristic like that of Babylonian style. This action of the Spirit, for Welker, tends to enrich, gives concreteness and freedom to the individual who will no longer express himself with an individualism that makes the action of the individual empty. In fact, Welker highlights how, in diversity and in being unique, "the Spirit creates a field of multiple forces, sensitive to differences, where joy is cultivated for the creatural differences that make grow, and where the unjust diversities of humiliation, love, mercy and in meekness they are eliminated "⁶⁴ (1990:29).

In this context the communion of the Spirit is created in which harmony and unity are present. "It is said that the 'unity of the Spirit' not only tolerates differences and differentiation, but welcomes and cultivates all those differences that do not conflict with God's right, mercy and knowledge."⁶⁵ (Welker, 1990: 29) To prove this, Welker states some practical examples: one refers to the day of Pentecost; the other when, in proceeding with baptism, one

⁶³ Translated from Italian "Lo Spirito rivela la potenza di Dio anche dentro strutture ben compaginate, costruttive e pluralistiche".

⁶⁴ Translated from Italian "lo Spirito crea un campo di forze molteplici, sensibile alle differenze, dove è coltivata la gioia per le differenze creaturali che fanno crescere, e dove le diversità ingiuste dell'umiliazione, nell'amore, nella misericordia e nella mansuetudine vengono eliminate".

⁶⁵ Translated from Italian "Si dice che la 'unità dello Spirito' non solo tollera le differenze e la differenziazione, ma accoglie e coltiva tutte quelle differenze che non contrastano col diritto, la misericordia e la conoscenza di Dio".



becomes part of one body through the work of the Spirit, although there is diversity due to the fact that in this body there are several individuals. In these events is noted the unity of those present, although there is a differentiated multiplicity of the same individuals that obviously cannot be eliminated and tends to include everyone. This unity, which comes to be determined by means of the Spirit, leads to a union “with God in Christ ‘in the Spirit’ and is a simply breath-taking elevation and extension of the real human existence” (Welker, 2006:2650). This is how the work of the Spirit works perfectly inside man and Welker expresses it well in his text, which compares the human personality with the Holy Spirit. In fact, the unity so determined leads to a closeness to God. “God hears the Spirit of his Son into your heart, crying Abba!” (Gl.4:6; cf. Rm. 8:15). On the other hand, this unity, intimacy, and immediacy does not mean simplicity and uniformity. A rich personality in faith and a complex and lively community are constituted by the Holy Spirit” (Welker 2006:2648).

However, in addition to unity, one notices an important characteristic - diversity. Why diversity? Diversity because there are young and old, men and women, rich and poor as well as cultural and social differences among them.

Why multiplicity? Because it is defined by various individualities. In this context, and above all by referring to Pentecost, “the promises of the outpouring of the Spirit attest to a precise sensitivity to differences. They take into account the typical traits of individuals who found or prevent a ‘natural’ commonality”⁶⁶ (Welker, 1990:32) leading to consider the wealth that each individual has and trying to eliminate those differences that injustice produces among the various individuals. It is the Spirit, called the Spirit of Justice, who seeks to eliminate these inequalities and therefore the differences between the various individuals, along with God's justice, which tends to overcome these differences by administering rightly and justly. In fact, the “work of the Spirit is

⁶⁶ Translated from Italian “Le promesse di effusione dello Spirito attestano una precisa sensibilità alle differenze. Esse tengono conto dei tratti tipici degli individui che fondano o impediscono una comunanza ‘naturale’”.



pluralistic for the sake of righteousness and mercy and full witness to the glory of God"⁶⁷ (Welker, 1990:32) and only individualism endangers this pluralism.

3.1.4 Focus on Realistic Theology

According to Welker, the relationship between God and man or all creatures has been reduced to a simplistic one "*I-you* ... between God and 'man'"⁶⁸ (1990:45). New forms of thought have emerged which, for Welker, have blocked Christian theology and piety. However, only in a reality of the Spirit that is knowable, the presence of God is clearly mediated and theology is overestimated, and "primarily means a theology that takes seriously the different biblical traditions with their different '*Sitzen im Leben*' - traditions that have the experiences of God and the expectations of God, continuous and discontinuous, homogeneous or not directly reconcilable. Realistic theology starts from the assumption that no human experience can dispose of 'God in itself', God rather mediates his revelation in multiple human attestations of his presence "⁶⁹ (Welker, 1990:50).

Starting then from what people of God have experienced in the past, Welker makes comparisons with the experiences of the present and those of the future with "a rigorous scrutiny, based on the analysis of links and differences"⁷⁰ (Welker, 1990:50).

Finally, a theology that "in the attention to these links and these differences that characterize the experiences of God, and in the concentration

⁶⁷ Translated from Italian "operato dello Spirito è pluralistico per amore della giustizia e della misericordia e della testimonianza piena resa alla gloria di Dio".

⁶⁸ Translated from Italian "*io-tu* [...] tra Dio e l'uomo".

⁶⁹ Translated from Italian "vuole dire anzitutto una teologia che prende sul serio le diverse tradizioni bibliche con i loro differenti '*Sitzen im Leben*' – tradizioni che hanno per oggetto le esperienze di Dio e le attese su Dio continue e discontinue, omogenee o non direttamente conciliabili. La teologia realistica parte dal presupposto che nessuna esperienza umana può disporre di 'Dio in sé', Dio piuttosto media la propria rivelazione in molteplici attestazioni umane della sua presenza".

⁷⁰ Translated from Italian "un vaglio rigoroso, basato sull'analisi dei nessi e delle differenze".



on the primary testimonies of biblical traditions and secondary testimonies in our cultures, is intended to bring out in ever newer and more luminous the reality of God experienced or awaited"⁷¹ (Welker, 1990:51).

In short, realistic theology "renounces the illusion of having a single reference system on God and his power"⁷² (Welker, 1990:51). It gives vitality in many vital contexts that are not homogeneous. It also tends to criticize and broaden the I-you model by opposing object-based perspectives (Welker, 1990:51). Even the noblest soul can be corrupted by human egoism and therefore realistic theology considers the danger that can come from the outside and that influences man. For this reason, Welker emphasizes how it needs to abandon current moralism to bring closer to this outside power that generates salvation and enables people to feel the presence of the Spirit (1990:52).

3.2 Experiences of the Spirit

This section will consider the experiences of the Spirit of the past, referring to the biblical texts according to Welker.

In the Old Testament, the term Spirit is more difficult to understand because its meaning can take on different meanings: spirit, breath, breath and wind. Referring to the New Testament, he underlines how the meaning does not change; in fact taking as one of the possible meanings, the wind, he refers to a well-known text indicating that the wind blows where it wants.⁷³

In this way, Welker wants to underline how the Spirit is not easily knowable; on the contrary it seems elusive just like the wind (Welker, 1990:55).

⁷¹ Translated from Italian "nell'attenzione a questi nessi e a queste differenze che caratterizzano le esperienze di Dio, e nella concentrazione sulle 'testimonianze primarie' delle tradizioni bibliche e sulle testimonianze secondarie nelle nostre culture, è intenzionata a far emergere in termini sempre più nuovi e luminosi la *realtà* di Dio sperimentata o attesa".

⁷² Translated from Italian "rinuncia all'illusione di poter disporre di un unico sistema di riferimento su Dio e la sua potenza".

⁷³ Jn 3:8.



If Welker assures that it is true that the Spirit of God is not controllable, he also claims that He is at work from the beginning, as indicated in the biblical traditions of the Old Testament (1990:56).

Although the main feature that the Bible indicates is that of wind or breath, the Spirit, for Welker, has a personality and is not "such as Aristotle and Hegel cultivated with the notion of the spirit of God as grasped and reflected in the Jewish and Christian normative texts of the biblical traditions" (2006:2566). In fact, Aristotle had in mind an idea of the Spirit understood as a thinking and living power with creative abilities. "Spirit becomes an object of thought and that is thought to be identical."⁷⁴ (as cited in Welker, 2006) In this way, God is considered as a nous that is sometimes thought, sometimes reason or spirit. In his work, this clearly describes the tri-partition of the human being, Welker says that the "Nous signifies under stable statements connected with an interest in persuasion and conviction." (2014b:49) The motivation for this differentiation is determined by what Welker calls self-actualization of the spirit, indicating by this term the possibility of the Spirit to identify with the thought content and at the same time differentiate from it. For this reason, Aristotle considers two levels: a low one, in which the potentiality of thought was indicated, and a higher one, in which it was considered the actualized activity of the Spirit⁷⁵ (2006:2582).

With this differentiation, what should man aspire to? Obviously, to the activity of higher level because it is considered spiritual. "The stronger the self-actualization and the self-awareness." (Welker, 2006:2588) This way of seeing the spirit, as a cognitive operation of man, is obviously not biblically sustainable, therefore Welker responds to this definition with what he calls the bearer of the Spirit, who will bring justice, mercy and the "pouring of the Spirit is clearly connected to a new cognition of God and a renewal of spiritual insight

⁷⁴ Welker, 2006:2576, referenced in Book XII of the Metaphysics.

⁷⁵ "Aristotle does not only differentiate "the lower level of the potentiality to think from the higher level of the actualized activity of the spirit" (Welker, 2006:2581).



and proclamation (Ezek 39: 28-29; Joel 3: 8; Zech 12: 10 with 13: 4-5; Acts 2: 11)" (2006: 2609). Here then is how the Bible expressly indicates how the Spirit acts in people with purposes and motivations. In fact, Welker shows how the normal ways of understanding spiritual things, seen by the various philosophers, as dualism or conceptual figures, are not sufficient to understand what is the "pouring out of the Holy Spirit" and all the relationships that exist between the Christ resurrected with his body - the church - and the kingdom that will come (2014a:14).

3.2.1 The vision of the Spirit in the Old Testament and the choice of the anointed man

In the case of the Old Testament, there are moments in which Israel suffers greatly because it is oppressed by other peoples. For this reason, it cries out to God because it is threatened by these foreign armies. Welker emphasizes that the Spirit of God is not a warrior Spirit and it does not only take heroes or brave fighters just to make war. What He does is to act for the people freeing them from the consequences of their sin into which they had fallen to bring them to salvation. His action led to *"an unexpected, unpredictable renewal of the capacity for action and unanimity of the people, of a renewal of his capacity for resistance amid the common desperation of the turning point that results in the destiny of this same people"*⁷⁶ (Welker, 1990:58).

The Old Testament process is simple: the Spirit chooses a person to shake Israel in such a way as to make its people show attitudes of loyalty and solidarity. This choice can be found in the Bible in very precise terms, which Welker has highlighted: in Jdg 3: 7-11 with Otniel the Spirit "came upon him",

⁷⁶ Translated from Italian "un rinnovamento inatteso, imprevedibile, della capacità d'azione e di unanimità del popolo, di un rinnovamento della sua capacità di resistenza in mezzo alla disperazione comune della svolta che ne risulta nel destino di questo stesso popolo".



and in the same way with Jephthah in Jdg 11.29; in Jdg 6, 33-35 Gideon was "invested with the Spirit", then in 1 Sam 11.6ss the Spirit "invested" Saul. These are some verses describing how the Spirit comes on certain people to fill them with Himself, thus leading them to fight (1990:58-59). However, there are some questions that, according to Welker, must be considered, why should the Spirit fight? Why do conflicts occur? (1990:60)

First, the Spirit is the One who "saves from need and despair, not as a warrior spirit, but as" the Spirit of justice and mercy"⁷⁷ (Welker, 1990:60), who uses imperfect and mortal people to perform these deeds. What He does is to use the various characters to get Israel out of "*situations of uncertainty, fear, paralysis, and end up complaining only*"⁷⁸ (Welker, 1990 60). These actions bring back "the courage and the capacity for initiative in people. All this is to move people to 'spontaneous collaboration' and also to excite them, but not automatically "⁷⁹ (Welker, 1990:61).

So, the action of the Spirit tries to compact those people that were dispersed because of foreign domination. For this reason, the purpose of the Spirit is not to wage war, but to act in favour of his people.

Finally, Welker highlights a human factor. When a person is chosen, they are limited, deadly and imperfect as a human. God does not give them any certainty, no security, so sometimes they become distressed. This peculiarity emerges in many judges such as Gideon, who lives in insecurity and doubt asking God for different proofs, or in Jephthah, who makes an unworthy vow to secure God's help (Welker, 1990:62).

This choice by God through the Spirit does not elevate them to heroes or people superior to others. There is no perfection in them; the Spirit chooses

⁷⁷ Translated from Italian "salva dal bisogno e dalla disperazione, non come spirito guerriero, bensì come <<Spirito della giustizia e della misericordia>>".

⁷⁸ Translated from Italian "*situazioni d'incertezza, di paura, di paralisi, e finisce di lamentarsi soltanto*".

⁷⁹ Translated from Italian "rinascere nel popolo il coraggio e la capacità d'iniziativa. Tutto questo e' muovere gli uomini alla <<collaborazione spontanea>>, e anche entusiasmarli, ma non automaticamente".



them along with their weaknesses and fragility, with their doubts and, in spite of everything, they choose to meet their enemies (Welker, 1990:63). Their choice is made because their people give themselves to idolatry, to sin, and for this reason they are subjugated by foreign peoples. The descent of the Spirit on these chosen ones marks the end of this period of oppression as well as a new beginning.

3.2.1.1 Weakness and power of the people chosen by God

In the way of acting, people chosen by God work with great deeds in order to free their people in times of difficulty. In these phases, the Spirit acted as a comforter and gave strength to his people to resist foreign domination. In the story of Samson, says Welker, this judge's deeds could make one think of legendary heroes like Hercules (1990:71). In fact, this judge, after the anointing of the Spirit, wins over lions and slaughters enemies, breaks ropes and accomplishes great feats. Samson is chosen by the Spirit to demonstrate the superiority of an Israelite over the Philistine so much so that he appears to be a legendary figure. Moreover, he falls in love with a Philistine woman and therefore his choice is not approved by his people and his family. Finally, he makes compromises with the Philistines and this will lead him to die in the fight against them (Welker, 1990:71). Compared to other judges, his figure, at times, is imbued with dislike for what he does. In fact, as a Nazirite, he does not behave in a consecrated manner because he does what is forbidden, that is he has contact with dead animals or he has his hair cut, thus disobeying the vow made (Welker, 1990:71). Despite all, the power of the Spirit descends on him and his attitude changes. He no longer makes compromises and faces his enemies without fear. This kind of attitude is considered a change of identity (Welker, 1990:75).

With his attitude, Samson disliked his people and as a result no one would trust him. Through the Spirit he received strength and victories, and



those who initially discouraged him for his desecration, now reconsider his stature. For what he did, Samson is seen as a figure of integration within a people under threat and is also considered as the example of salvation, that is a person who is not the head of an army, but has the function of liberating his people, even if, Welker maintains, the initiatives for which this salvation takes place are not specified (1990:74).

3.2.1.2 The public image of these characters and their impotence

"The ancient testimonies on the action of the Spirit of God show a superordinate link between the attribution of powers and the reduction of the impotence of the characters invested by the Spirit."⁸⁰ (Welker, 1990:76) This attribution of powers places the person invested by the Spirit in a dimension that Welker calls 'beyond himself' because he has capacities and energies outside of normality (1990:76). His action is addressed exclusively to the people and this leads him to take a well-defined public image. In contrast to this public figure, the person invested by the Spirit also has a private life by which it is possible to notice that he is an insecure individual who sometimes feels abandoned (Welker, 1990:77).

Why does this happen according to Welker? For him, there is a contraposition between the great deeds that the judges perform by the work of the Spirit, who has filled them and endowed them with strength, and their being people like any other. This action or filling of the Spirit has not subjected them or possessed them. In fact, in them there is a free will so that their personality is maintained. Everything that happens, their deeds, and their behaviour takes place in a public way, everyone realizes it. The strength that God gives him, however, is not continuous (Welker, 1990:77).

⁸⁰ Translated from Italian "Le testimonianze antiche sull'azione dello Spirito di Dio mostrano un nesso sorprendente fra *attribuzione di poteri e riduzione all'impotenza dei personaggi investiti dallo Spirito*".



In this case, there is a question: "Does the descent of the Spirit upon a person ... lead initially to a state of impotence, rather than to an increase in power?"⁸¹ (Welker, 1990:79) Indeed, this aspect is evident in some cases in which a person can appear deprived of all power and have doubts at different times.

Gideon asked God twice for a sign through the fleece because he was insecure. This uncertainty of the filled with the Spirit is found in many stories. The one who is filled with the Spirit will always go in search of certainties or in search of victories. He must never count or rely upon a power that is always at his disposal. For this reason, his work is linked to moments when he is unable to do anything (Welker, 1990:80).

For Welker, this power is not continuous; it goes from its exercise to impotence, from various cycles of ups and downs, to moments of strong power, and this without ever cancelling the identity of these people. Moses himself, in Nm 11, asks for the help of 70 men to help him with his people, and for this purpose they will have his spirit. This is a collective action that, despite the goodness of the action, leads to bringing the people closer together. Despite this action leading to some disappointment among the people, Moses replied that this opportunity could be given to everyone (Welker, 1990:82).

In any case, the transformation by the Spirit in individuals leads to a new public vision of people. "What happened to Kis's son? Is Saul also anxious to be a part of the prophets?"⁸² (Welker, 1990:83)

These figures go out of their way, go into ecstasy and become unrecognizable when the Spirit descends on them, attracting public attention and recognition. In this case, they change identity, doing things they never would have done before and this is a concept that Welker has highlighted (1990:83).

⁸¹ Translated from Italian "la discesa dello Spirito su una persona [...] conduce inizialmente a una sua condizione di impotenza, anzichè a un aumento di potere?".

⁸² Translated from Italian "Cosa è accaduto al figlio di Kis? Anche Saul è entrato a far parte dei profeti?"



3.2.1.3 Spirit in different contexts

In the Bible there is another idea of the action of the Spirit that can be found when God sends a bad spirit or a spirit of temerity or error. In Jdg 9:23 God sent a wicked spirit between Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem who rebelled against him. This spirit does not lead to unity but to disintegration, to disunity among the people (Welker, 1990:85). This action of the spirit tends to break the closeness of the people. Furthermore, Welker does not consider only his collective action. In fact, there are cases in which this spirit acts only on a person. A well-known example, considered by Welker, is Saul. At the beginning, the Spirit descended on him and later He went away. In his torment, only David could free him through the use of a musical instrument and the harmony he created. For Welker, distinguishing the action of the two spirits, good and bad, is not always easy and for this reason it is necessary to discern them. The spirit of lying is identifiable within a community or a people and sometimes it is not easy to distinguish it from the good spirit if not for the discernment of the spirits. Welker even compares this type of action to Nazi propaganda since no one could support the opposite (Welker, 1990: 86).

From the biblical point of view, the distinction is clear in the vision of Micah, son of Imla,⁸³ who speaks in truth about the 430 prophets questioned by King Ahab to wage war on Gilead (Welker, 1990:87). Obviously, the king believes the 430 and not who, according to him, always brought misfortune. The truth was in Micah as a prophet of God. He was guided by the Spirit and the proof of the truth could only be discerned if the king had returned unharmed from the war. Because of his return, it would be understood that God had not spoken through Micah. However, the king died in battle. From this example it is possible to understand that the prophets knew the truth and this would be recognized publicly later. "It is characteristic of the workings of the Spirit and

⁸³

1 Ki 22; 2 Chr 18.



of the truth of the Spirit that they also express themselves in the face of those who do not welcome them, do not want to accept them, or even cannot perceive them"⁸⁴; this is the prophetic man (Welker, 1990:92). Sometimes he has no freedom because he is chosen by the Spirit to say certain things. "The evil spirit had been sent by God; misfortune was desired. For this reason, after the catastrophe it is necessary to start again to orient oneself according to the word and the will of God."⁸⁵ (Welker, 1990:96) There is therefore a new beginning.

3.2.1.4 The moments of the action of the Spirit

The first experiences of the Spirit happen in complicated moments and in conditions of necessity. They work directly in society in a specific and determined way to act in and remedy the removal of its people. This operation sometimes happens with an unprecedented or unexpected force given off by chosen people.

However, the term Spirit, that is *rûah*, referred to as the One who fills these figures, also means *wind* that is a source of energy and a force that moves things. There are few verses in which the meaning is literal, that is, wind in the atmospheric sense. This is why the Spirit, at times, will be understood as something indefinite or ungraspable, just like the wind (Welker, 1990:100).

Moreover, in some cases, there is uncertainty in the distinction between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man. In fact, in some contexts, the term, according to Welker, is referred to as 'Spirit of God' or 'Spirit of Wisdom' or only with the term 'Spirit', and understood as the spirit of man (1990:101).

⁸⁴ Translated from Italian "È caratteristica dell'operare dello Spirito e della verità dello Spirito il fatto che essi si esprimano anche di fronte a coloro che *non* li accolgono, che a ragion veduta non voglio accoglierli, o addirittura non possono accorglierli".

⁸⁵ Translated from Italian "Lo spirito cattivo era stato inviato da Dio; la sventura era voluta. Per questo, dopo la catastrofe è necessario ricominciare a orientarsi secondo la parola e la volontà di Dio".



Furthermore, his action can take place in certain people to give them certain qualitative capacities so that by experiencing the Spirit they can act for Him to operate in the construction or in the determination of places of worship and other functions too. Bezaleel, for example, was called for the construction of the sanctuary and some cult objects. It is about having sensitivity in the design by the craftsman who, thanks to the Spirit, creates complex things (Welker, 1990:102).

This means that God himself "takes care of the place, which God likes, expressive of his presence and his will to communicate with the people"⁸⁶ (Welker, 1990:102). Welker points out that the reference to the action of the Spirit sometimes has a certain ambivalence as with regard to nomenclature. In fact sometimes he calls these as gifts of mastery or wisdom and sometimes as gifts of the Spirit. In any case, it always means an action of the Spirit on people (1990:102-103).

In order to do everything, like the construction of the temple, the Spirit of God is always needed, which gives the right wisdom and knowledge for action. The Bible in the Old Testament is full of these examples, even when Welker tends to define the relationship between wisdom and reception of the Spirit from books that, as he says, "are on the edge of the canon"⁸⁷ (Welker, 1990:106), as is the book of Wisdom in chapter 7.

3.2.2 Relation between the Spirit and Messiah

Welker relates the Holy Spirit and his action to the long-awaited figure of the Messiah. His relations are of various kinds starting from the Old Testament.

⁸⁶ Translated from Italian "si prende cura del luogo, che a Dio piace, espressivo della sua presenza e della sua volontà di comunicare con il popolo".

⁸⁷ Translated from Italian "si trovano ai margini del canone".



3.2.2.1 The Messiah as a bearer of the Spirit

It has been noted that in the Old Testament the action of the Spirit has also manifested itself in trying to reconsolidate the compactness of a people in the face of threats coming from neighbouring peoples. From this point of view, the Spirit can be seen not as "a numinous reality but a force capable of transforming the conditions of real life"⁸⁸ (Welker, 1990:109). This action, however, highlights a prerogative of the Spirit that is to bring justice and peace avoiding the disintegration and disunity of a people.

The Spirit of justice wants to prevent internal and external conflicts that are caused by men (Welker, 1990:109) and acts through a man on whom the Spirit lies. The book of Isaiah⁸⁹ refers to this man that God has chosen and to whom He gives authority and establishes his Spirit. From him stems law, mercy and knowledge of God. All three steps relate these three realities determining the fulfilment of the law by the bearer of the Spirit (Welker, 1990:110).

In the law there are references to law and mercy, which is considered as a duty, a participation for those who are less fortunate, e.g. the weak and the poor. The relationship with God has these basic elements that should not be violated.

"The bearer of the Spirit achieves justice. He judges, decides what is right"⁹⁰ (Welker, 1990:113) and does not judge according to appearances. What He does, for Welker, is to link the right to mercy to establish law as a donor of justice that is what the weak and fragile do not have. In this way, there will be a condition of universal peace involving everything, animals and otherwise, making it clear that in all the earth there will be full knowledge of

⁸⁸ Translated from Italian "una realtà numinosa ma una forza in grado di trasformare le condizioni della vita reale".

⁸⁹ Is 11, 42, 61.

⁹⁰ Translated from Italian "Il portatore dello Spirito realizza la giustizia. Egli giudica, decide quello che e' giusto".



God (Welker, 1990:113). All these points come together and are connected to each other and no one should fail. Furthermore, this action of the Spirit is not reserved only for Israel, but is available to all peoples. This is Welker's idea by reading Isaiah 11.

However, what is the initial point of this action of peace and mercy? The basis is the laying of the Spirit on the bearer of the Spirit, also called servant of God (Welker, 1990:115). "The interdependence between law, mercy and knowledge of God and the differentiated universality of the working of the bearer of the Spirit and of the same Spirit surpass, correct and direct the current, generic but incisive conceptions of morality, the so-called common sensibility to the law and the so-called humanity."⁹¹ (Welker, 1990:121)

In this vision, Welker relates morality and mercy but does not identify them with each other. There is no equal morality for everyone. In fact, at times and in societies with different characteristics, when there are different ways of conceiving slaves or minorities, or there is contempt for different forms of thought, there is no morality. This is an obvious reality that may seem very strange because "the true and the good, the freedom, the equal, the fraternity, the attention for the dignity of the men, and so on"⁹² (Welker, 1990:121) depend on the moral.

This happens because morality can infiltrate corruptibility and corruption (Welker, 1990:121). For this reason, law, mercy and knowledge of God are indispensable for human coexistence (Welker, 1990:123). "The laying of the Spirit on his messianic carrier involves morality inasmuch as it confers a multiple determination." (Welker 1990:123) There is no talk of giving people a religious motivation, but the action of the Spirit leads to know God and

⁹¹ Translated from Italian "L'interdipendenza tra diritto, misericordia e conoscenza di Dio e l'universalità differenziata dell'operare del portatore dello Spirito e dello stesso Spirito, superano, correggono e orientano le concezioni correnti, generiche ma incisive, della morale, la cosiddetta comune sensibilità al diritto e la cosiddetta umanità".

⁹² Translated from Italian "alla morale interessano infatti il vero e il bene, la libertà, l'uguaglianza, la fraternità, l'attenzione per la dignità degli uomini, e via dicendo".



therefore to consider both mercy and law. This knowledge of God leads to searching for them and putting them into practice (Welker, 1990:123-124).

Ancient figures in the Bible, invested by the Spirit, led the people even in conflicts with foreign nations. The messianic bearer of the Spirit has different purposes: to bring peace to accomplish the law, to establish the right, to realize mercy and to spread the knowledge of God among all peoples. How? For in Is 42: 2 his way of acting is of one who does not shout or raise their tone, does not make his voice heard in the square. The bearer of the Spirit acts in a way that is unthinkable today. It is not propaganda, it does not go into the streets or uses public forms of political domination. His methodology, however, brings the crowds together and attracts everyone's attention. This happens thanks to the outpouring of the Spirit with which he asserts his sovereignty, obviously not as a commander, but as a servant of God. Characteristics of this servant, according to Welker, are impotence and contempt (1990:125-126).

He will be helpless because he will not use force but he will have the figure of a servant, the servant of God. This service of his will not be restricted to Israel, but will be extended to all so that everyone can receive true justice (Welker, 1990:128). Furthermore, He would be despised and rejected to be executed, the purpose being to attract attention and to be despised in order to give everyone justice (Welker, 1990:129).

He will be the servant endowed with the Spirit of God. His acting may be strange for us today. In fact, "the Spirit of God, the Spirit of justice and of peace, operates through a Messiah who does not know and does not want to politically impose, who does not know and does not want to respond to the canons typical of the public figure"⁹³ (Welker, 1990:133).

⁹³ Translated from Italian "lo Spirito di Dio, lo Spirito della giustizia e della pace, opera tramite un Messia che non sa e non vuole 'imporsi politicamente, che non sa e non vuole rispondere ai canoni tipici del personaggio pubblico".



3.2.2.2 The bearer of the Spirit and his settlement

The testimonies that support Jesus Christ as the bearer of the Spirit are found in the Bible where there are promises and events that refer to healing or exorcism (1990:175). Jesus of Nazareth gathers followers around himself and is filled with this power of the Spirit. However, "in what way and measure can we say that Jesus Christ, in whom ... dwells in 'all the fullness of the Divinity' (Col 1:9), asserts this fullness *through the Spirit* in a concrete way and concentrated in the conditions of human life?"⁹⁴ (Welker, 1990:176).

Welker, quoting Schierse, contrasts a modern opinion that considers the Spirit as 'the unknown God' because, being in the Trinity, He remains somewhat mysterious, and He contrasts it to another, to which He identifies himself, who sees Him as perceptible and real. Perception is only seen by looking at Jesus. In this way, we can have an idea of God's power for people, a strong and powerful testimony for those who will also become bearers of the Spirit (Welker, 1990:176-177).

This power of the Spirit, the power that makes even the dead resurrect,⁹⁵ "establishes Christ publicly"⁹⁶ (Welker, 1990:178). This power is public both before and after the death of Christ because it works with Him. Welker highlights this aspect because all that Christ has done is done by the power of the Spirit and publicly. However, there are also non-public moments in which the Spirit is at work such as the birth of Christ because of the virginity of his mother or the impulse that the Spirit gives to Jesus to go into the desert. However, through the temptation in the wilderness, Jesus demonstrates His power over Satan, and will continue to demonstrate it to the cross and later with His resurrection (Welker, 1990:179).

⁹⁴ Translated from Italian "in quale modo e misura si può dire che Gesù Cristo, nel quale [...] inabitava << tutta la pienezza della Divinità>> (Col 1,9), fa valere questa pienezza *tramite lo Spirito* in maniera concreta e concentrata nelle condizioni della vita umana?".

⁹⁵ Heb. 9:14; Rm 1,4.

⁹⁶ Translated from Italian "insedia il Cristo *pubblicamente*".



Welker lists some points in which it is possible to see the establishment of the Spirit, indicating some stories of Jesus' childhood⁹⁷ from which there are points of contact with the tradition of the Old Testament as the Davidic announcement or the various Messianic promises⁹⁸ (1990:179).

In this way, "by virtue of the Spirit, Christ is universally constituted"⁹⁹ (Welker, 1990:180). Therefore, faith founded by the Spirit and hope founded by the working of the same Spirit are realized in the expected experiences. As a result, Jesus becomes the promised Messiah upon whom the Spirit is laid (Welker, 1990:181), the One who is "invested by the Spirit"¹⁰⁰ (Welker, 1990:181). This happened with the opening of the sky and the filiation proclaimed by it. In this event the Spirit descends in the form of a dove and it is attested, "the Messiah as a single person and the person of Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah, but does not yet explicitly show the impact this person must have on the peoples"¹⁰¹ (Welker, 1990:182).

The connection between Spirit and Christ is seen from the messianic promises of the bearer of the Spirit who establishes the right of mercy and universal knowledge of God.¹⁰² Furthermore, "the public statements attributed to Jesus upon his person (in front of John and his disciples ['go and announced ...'], in front of the Pharisees, in front of the auditors gathered in the synagogue), as those made from the outside about him, referring to the bearer of the Spirit or making allusion to Him"¹⁰³ (Welker, 1990:185).

⁹⁷ Mt 1:18ss and Lk 2:35ss.

⁹⁸ (Is 7:14 or Lk 1:32s, 48ss).

⁹⁹ Translated from Italian "in virtù dello Spirito, il Cristo è costituito universalmente".

¹⁰⁰ Translated from Italian "è investito dallo Spirito".

¹⁰¹ Translated from Italian "conoscere il Messia come persona singola e la persona di Gesù di Nazaret come Messia, ma non manifesta ancora in modo esplicito l'impatto che dovrà avere questa persona sui popoli".

¹⁰² (Mt 11:15 and Lk 7:12; Is 42:1-4; Is 11,10 in Mt 12:18ss; Is 61 lo troviamo in Lk 4,16ss e nel battesimo indicati in Matteo Luca e Marco troviamo Is 11 e 42).

¹⁰³ Translated from Italian "la dichiarazione *pubbliche* attribuite a Gesù sulla sua persona (di fronte a Giovanni e ai suoi discepoli [<<andate e annunciate...>>], di fronte ai farisei, di fronte agli uditori radunati nella sinagoga), quanto quelle fatte dall'esterno su di lui, rimandano al portatore dello Spirito o vi fanno allusione".



3.2.2.3 The Messiah who hunts the demons

In the mission of the Messiah, there is not only the proclamation of the announced kingdom of God, but also the possibility of hunting demons or healing from diseases. This can happen because the Messiah is the One upon whom the Spirit of God is placed and who carries the sufferings and infirmities of people as indicated by the prophet Isaiah. Welker lists the steps that refer to the work of the Messiah that drives out demons. Mt 12:28 is the proclamation of the Kingdom of God because the demons are cast out. There is liberation also from possessions¹⁰⁴ and in some of them¹⁰⁵ the symptoms, according to Welker, are those of epilepsy (1990:186-8). In all cases their *"free will is excluded, the possessed damage themselves and the bystanders assist impotently"*. The syndromes provoked by the demons are recognizable with particular clarity in the story of *the healing of the demoniac of Gerasa* (Mk 5:1ss; Lk 8:26ff.; Also Mt 8:28ss)¹⁰⁶ (1990:188).

According to Welker, the problem of possession in people causes suffering, not allowing a normal life and full isolation due to the violent and uncontrollable behaviour of the possessed (1990:189-90). Only through Jesus the demons, after having recognized Him,¹⁰⁷ are driven away by the Spirit, thus freeing the people who lived in suffering and subjection to them. In this way, they are transformed, freed from the demonic powers and are healed from the evil from which they were afflicted. In this action, there is a renewal for the creature by the same Spirit who has freed them. Here, in this way, there is the advent of the kingdom in their lives (Welker, 1990:193) that goes against the disintegrating action of the demons.

¹⁰⁴ Mt 1:26; Lk 4:35 and Mk 9:17s.

¹⁰⁵ Mk 9:17; Lk 9:39 or Mt 17:15.

¹⁰⁶ Translated from Italian *"libera volontà viene esclusa, i posseduti danneggiano se stessi e gli astanti assistono impotenti"*. Le sindromi provocate dai demoni sono riconoscibili con particolare chiarezza nel racconto della *guarigione dell'indemoniato di Gerasa*".

¹⁰⁷ (Mk 1:23s and 5:6ss).



Thus, "through the power of the Spirit, men recognize their perdition, which goes beyond their suffering and their personal involvement, and from which they must be torn"¹⁰⁸ (Welker, 1990:199). However, with these powerful works done by Jesus through the work of the Spirit, there will be no clarity on the identity of Christ until the cross, that is until everyone can have access to this power (Welker, 1990:199).

3.2.2.4 Why is the blasphemy against the Spirit unpardonable?

Because of his actions against the demons made by Jesus, it was thought that Jesus practised witchcraft or He was demoniac.¹⁰⁹ To these accusations, He answers that Satan cannot drive Satan away.¹¹⁰ "The superior power that wins the demonic power and that Jesus claims for his liberating activity is the power of God that intervenes in the conditions of earthly life; it is the Spirit of God"¹¹¹ (Welker, 1990:202). Some verses later,¹¹² Jesus affirms how forgiveness is possible if someone speaks badly of the Son,¹¹³ but one would not blaspheme the Holy Spirit (Welker, 1990:202).

Welker expresses this concept by considering the Holy Spirit not as a force superior to other spirits, which was what the Pharisees claimed by saying that Jesus was the prince of demons and therefore of spirits (Welker, 1990:203). However, considering the Holy Spirit bound to the actions of Christ, healing and freeing the possessed brings down the Kingdom of God, and fully work for others. This explains the unforgiveness of the blasphemy against

¹⁰⁸ Translated from Italian "grazie alla potenza dello Spirito gli uomini riconoscono la loro perdizione, che va oltre le loro sofferenze e il loro personale coinvolgimento, e da cui devono essere strappati".

¹⁰⁹ (Mk 1:27-28 and 3:22 and also Jn 7:19-20).

¹¹⁰ Mk 3:23.

¹¹¹ Translated from Italian "La potenza superiore che vince il potere demoniaco e che Gesù rivendica per la sua attività liberante, è la potenza di Dio che interviene nelle condizioni della vita terrena, è lo Spirito di Dio".

¹¹² Mk 3:28.

¹¹³ Mt 12:31s and Lk 12:10.



the Spirit: "through to the action of Jesus and the work of the Spirit, these suffering, demoniac people become human beings, in whom and through whom God manifests his glory"¹¹⁴ (Welker, 1990:205).

This work of the Spirit on people brings them liberation from demonic forces and suffering. For Welker, by renouncing this action, man renounces the work of the Spirit and therefore blasphemes against Him. Indeed, the Welker expressly says: "the saying about the forgiveness of the blasphemy against the Spirit is directed against those who do not want to see the undeniable experience of multiple salvation from a situation of need that is desperate to the human eye. It is directed against those who do not want to see the manifestation of the power of God in the disinterested help that God himself brings to those who suffer in despair. It is directed against those who take the last hope from others, and also prevent themselves from nurturing this ultimate hope."¹¹⁵ (Welker, 1990:206)

Therefore, going against the experience of liberation and salvation makes the blasphemy against the Spirit unpardonable, "since the glory of God is manifested in the working of this Spirit within the conditions of human life"¹¹⁶ (Welker, 1990:207). Who does not want to perceive the Spirit and the action of God in his own life, he is blaspheming the Spirit and this "means not taking seriously, in *bad faith*, neither God nor oneself"¹¹⁷ (Welker, 1990:207). Instead

¹¹⁴ Translated from Italian "grazie all'azione di Gesù e all'opera dello Spirito, queste persone sofferenti, indemoniate, diventano esseri umani, nei quali e attraverso i quali Dio manifesta la sua gloria".

¹¹⁵ Translated from Italian "il detto sull'imperdonabilità della bestemmia contro lo Spirito è rivolto contro coloro che non vogliono vedere l'esperienza innegabile della salvezza molteplice da una situazione di bisogno che all'occhio umano risulta disperato. È rivolto contro coloro che non vogliono vedere la manifestazione della potenza di Dio nel soccorso disinteressato che Dio stesso porta a quanti soffrono nella disperazione. È rivolto contro coloro che sottraggono agli altri l'ultima speranza, e impediscono anche a se stessi di nutrire questa speranza ultima".

¹¹⁶ Translated from Italian "poiché nell'operare di questo Spirito dentro le condizioni della vita umana si manifesta la gloria di Dio".

¹¹⁷ Translated from Italian "vuol dire non prendere sul serio, in *malafede*, nè Dio, nè se stessi".



only through experience of the Spirit is it possible to have the liberation and knowledge of God.

3.2.2.5 Relationships between the Spirit of truth, love and the Messiah

"The power of the Spirit, who creates justice and establishes peace, is recognizable in the dedication of Jesus, in his tangible work that heals and frees men, in his suffering; in a word, in his preaching and constitution of the Kingdom of God, besides his death on the cross and in the perdition and salvation of the world, which are revealed in this event"¹¹⁸ (Welker, 1990:208).

His power is seen in the rescue that He gives to those who suffer or are in captivity, to those whom He saves from sin and those whom He transforms and renews. Furthermore, it is possible to note his action in community action, in exposing evil spirits and lies, in working for the proclamation of God's justice and mercy (Welker, 1990:209). Even in the image of the effusion, the Spirit works with the power that is granted to him by Christ, and for this reason, the *Paraclete* is the power sent by Christ; this is power "of communion with *Him*, it is the strength of *His* presence"¹¹⁹ (Welker, 1990:210). The "*Paraclete* takes over the "carnal", physical and circumscribed presence of Jesus in the world. With total disinterest, He refers to Jesus and to his words; He represents Him"¹²⁰ (Welker, 1990:210).¹²¹

Therefore, it is through the Spirit that one has the testimony of Christ because He speaks of Christ (Welker, 1990:212) and works amongst the

¹¹⁸ Translated from Italian "la potenza dello Spirito, che crea la giustizia e fonda la pace, è riconoscibile nella dedizione disinteressata di Gesù, nel suo operare concreto che sana e libera gli uomini, nella sua sofferenza; in una parola, nella sua predicazione e costituzione del Regno di Dio, oltretutto nella sua morte in croce e nella perdizione e salvezza del mondo, che in questo evento si disvelano".

¹¹⁹ Translated from Italian "di comunione con lui, è la forza della sua presenza".

¹²⁰ Translated from Italian "Paracrito subentra alla presenza 'carnale', fisica e circoscritta di Gesù nel mondo. Con totale disinteresse, egli rimanda a Gesù e alle sue parole; lo rappresenta".

¹²¹ Jn14:26; 15:26; 14:16.



believers whom He leads to the knowledge and the revelation of the truth. This acquired certainty is defined as consolation since He is the Consoler because "not only He assures stability in the present situation and in its opening to the future, but He also comes to meet me even in unfamiliar situations, and starting from them it works for my benefit"¹²² (Welker, 1990:213). In this action of his, He also manifests Himself as the Spirit of love, which leads to selflessness of oneself, of one's self, giving the possibility to others to be considered as friends. This setting and proposing for others is not something natural, but it is by the Spirit of God¹²³ and generates, as Welker states, a field of forces of love that leads people to do good for others (1990:214).

3.3 The Spirit of God and the meanings of the 'effusion of the Spirit from heaven'

Before analyzing the expression 'outpouring of the Spirit from heaven' it is important to understand how Welker considers the action of the Spirit in the context in which He is expressed. "The multi-contextual and polyphonic presence of the Spirit requires us to question simple one-on-one relations and mono-hierarchical forms of social interaction in their ability to express basic religious experiences and interactions. Theories of 'emergence' have to be used to explain the multi-contextual and polyphonic character of the Spirit and his working. The pouring out of the Spirit brings about a pluralistic striving for God's righteousness and truth." (Welker, 2006:2663) It is easy to understand how this unity is the work of the Spirit which has a pluralistic character and in order to act against sin in spite of man's frailties and weaknesses (Welker, 2006:2664). This way of the working of the Spirit, according to the Welker, "has the dual character of a personal, namely, context-sensitive and intentional

¹²² Mk 13:11.

¹²³ Rm 5:5.



instance - and of a structuring a force-field, which operates in poly-contextual and polyphonic forms. The notion of the 'pouring' of the Spirit seems to combine both characters and modes" (2006:2680).

The biblical traditions told of good and evil spirits, instead the New Testament highlights the divine character of the Spirit referring to the merciful God Jesus, who is the revealed God who shows love and salvation (Welker, 2006:2680). In addition, "the affirmation that the Spirit of God is poured out of heaven, or from above, is repeatedly found in biblical traditions"¹²⁴ (Welker, 1990:133). In this statement, the starting point from which the Spirit descends is heaven. This place is commonly known as the place where God or the angels are. On the other hand, from the natural point of view, it is the place where the stars, the sun and the whole firmament are (Welker, 1990:134).

Thus, the sky takes on a certain importance based on how it is seen. In fact, in other biblical texts, heaven is understood in a different way according to the context. In some, it means the material place where the birds fly or the clouds are found, or the stars are. In others, it takes on a religious significance. According to the Welker, therefore, it is necessary to define a doctrine of the sky deriving from that of creation to define the various indications that the Bible gives in detail (1990:135).

Furthermore, to indicate the strength of the Spirit, Welker makes the practical and visible example of the hurricane or the rain, comparing the strength of these atmospheric events to the charismatic movements that receive the Spirit of God that descends from above with the same force (Welker, 1990:136).

This place is the heaven that is not accessible to man and traditionally is the place that contains the forces of nature or history and even of the future (Welker, 1990:137).

¹²⁴ Translated from Italian "l'affermazione che lo Spirito di Dio è effuso *dal cielo*, o *dall'alto*, si ritrova più volte nelle tradizioni bibliche".



In addition to this vision, the most purely religious view sees heaven as the place of God's presence, where his strength and power are revealed by the work of the Spirit (Welker, 1990:139).

This is the reason why the effusion proceeds from above or from heaven, then it spreads amongst men operating "a new communion in different vital contexts"¹²⁵ (Welker, 1990:142) where the recipient is in a process "of mutual recognition on the basis of the common belonging to God"¹²⁶ (Welker, 1990:143) and makes sure that this power is recognizable, describable and tangible.

3.3.1 Joel and the effusion of the Spirit

The outpouring of the Spirit is not a purely New Testament concept because in the Old Testament reference was already made to it in Joel 3: 1-5.¹²⁷ "The promise of Joel is preceded and followed by announcements of the revealing and salvific presence of God (see Joel 2.27; 3.5) in the midst of immense catastrophes."¹²⁸ (Welker, 1990:145)

The text refers to the outpouring of the Spirit that descends "all flesh", that is men, women, old men, young people, slaves, sons and daughters. Defining each category of people has its importance because the text contains, in this way, all types of people possible, all with their own strength and with the same possibility of reception (Welker, 1990:145).

Joel emphasizes the mercy of the Spirit as justice in favour of the weak or of those who experience disadvantages of all kinds. Joel considers a full participation of all in the receiving of the Spirit. However, in the same way, the

¹²⁵ Translated from Italian "una nuova comunione in contesti vitali diversi".

¹²⁶ Translated from Italian "di mutuo riconoscimento sulla base della comune appartenenza a Dio".

¹²⁷ Jl 3:1-5.

¹²⁸ Translated from Italian "La promessa di Gioele è preceduta e seguita da annunci della presenza rivelatrice e salvifica di Dio (cfr. Gl 2,27;3,5) in mezzo a catastrofi immani".



sensitivity of the Spirit leads to differentiating his action amongst the various generations. In this way, everyone has the opportunity to receive salvation and knows the way that leads to God. This differentiation of the action of the Spirit acts on all human beings and all of them have the opportunity to receive these promises. In each of them there is the presence of the Spirit, the face of God who seeks man (Welker, 1990:147). The face of God represents the person, the real presence of God himself and it is God himself who turns to individuals to have communion with Him. Therefore, in this promise of Joel, there are some meanings that Welker considers:

1. Those who participate in this outpouring receive and impart prophetic knowledge to others. This shows how God acts on behalf of his people by talking to them while they are in trouble;
2. Those who feel the presence of God and bear witness to it enliven and build up the whole community;
3. Those who testify feel the presence of God and the reality of the witness enriches the listener (Welker, 1990:150-1).

In this way, the outpouring of the Spirit leads to involving individuals by building them, freeing them and enlivening them (Welker, 1990:151), by directing man to look at the face of God because he experiences a new life in order to see things in a different manner for himself and for others.

3.3.2 The Spirit who creates and gives peace

"One of the greatest challenges posed to theology is the question of how the 'Spirit of creation' and the 'Spirit of justice' should be understood as the 'one Spirit of God'."¹²⁹ (Welker, 1990:153)

¹²⁹ Translation from Italian "Una delle massime sfide poste alla teologia è la questione in quale modo lo 'Spirito della creazione' e lo 'Spirito della giustizia' debbano essere intesi come 'unico Spirito di Dio'".



The answer is articulated by the Welker in several steps. First of all, it happens through the bearer of the Spirit, who in his action produces what is right and merciful and the knowledge of God. This action takes place not by secular political instruments but through the outpouring of the Spirit that comes from heaven. He acts in time and space. Furthermore, his action tends to destroy the unjust differences that exist between people, maintaining the legitimate differences. All of this is done to eliminate the injustice existing in this world (Welker, 1990:153-154).

However, in God's creative action, who is really acting? It is the *rûah* and his action is seen as a blow or a breath. It is through this breath that man obtains "the breath of life" (Welker, 1990:154). This breath makes the difference between the dead and the living, as there is a difference between God and the idols. Only at death, breath is withdrawn from human beings losing their vitality. According to Welker, this means that "to be inserted, thanks to the *rûah* of God, into a vital whole, into a reality which, in the created world, gives life to individuals and to the whole"¹³⁰ (Welker, 1990:154). This is why the Spirit gives life! Because it is creative and vital. The Scriptures¹³¹ perfectly describe this relation between breath and death; in fact if the *rûah* goes away, then this leads to death and corruption (Welker, 1990:155).

Therefore, in his creation of life, the Spirit operates justice, and on the contrary, if there is injustice and lies, then the Spirit is absent. His work is not limited in space or time, not even among people. This all determines a relationship between the creature in his vulnerability, and the Spirit who is alert and always caring for his creature (Welker, 1990:157). It is an important relationship because the Spirit acts on living creatures leading also to a renewal and a reunification of God's people to their God (Welker, 1990:158).

¹³⁰ Translation from Italian "trovarsi inseriti, grazie alla *ruah* di Dio, in un insieme vitale, in una realtà che, nel mondo creato dà la vita ai singoli e al tutto".

¹³¹ Ps 104, 29; Job 34,14 as indicated by Welker.



A connection is also made with the life of the risen Jesus so that we can participate in it. In this way, the Spirit reveals Himself as the Spirit of Christ, (Welker, 2014a:141); the same Christ who does not keep the Spirit of God for Himself but makes Him available to all those baptized in his name (Welker, 2014a:284).

Moreover, renewal by the Spirit leads to a heart change, initially a heart of stone, hard, stubborn, and then becoming a heart of flesh. The psalmist prays to his God to create in him a pure heart renewing in him a firm spirit.¹³² The use of “flesh” is considered to represent every creature’s life under its carnal aspect, that is, its transiency, sensitivity and vulnerability (Welker, 1990:159-160). The Spirit cannot operate in these contexts. A bodily life is necessary to live with other creatures, but the need is also felt of a spiritual life to give strength to overcome the weaknesses of the flesh. Welker, indeed, emphasizes this aspect of the flesh with the body and the spirit. “In Galatians, Paul speaks of the flesh and the spirit as ‘enemies’, since each shows up an opposing ‘desire’. This hostile constellation leads to a loss of human freedom that can only be resolved if the spirit is allowed to lead: ‘Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh.’” (Welker, 2014b:47)

In the close relationship to the body, a positive aspect is also highlighted. A dignity that flesh receives and it is expressly indicated by the Apostle Paul speaking of the genealogy of David in reference to Jesus.¹³³ The problem, however, remains when we think about the fact that the flesh is subjected to many desires contrary to the will of God and therefore, succumbs to sin (2014b:48).

Still quoting Paul, in the descent of the flesh, Welker underlines how through the action of the Spirit, the body is considered under a spiritual dimension. Therefore, considering the body no longer fleshly but open to be

¹³² Ps 51 as indicated by Welker.

¹³³ Rm. 1:3;9:5sss.



used by the Spirit of the risen Jesus thus becoming similar to the body of the risen Christ, understood in his spiritual dimension rather than physical (2014a:132-133). In fact, according to Welker “Paul essentially portrays the body as a *bearer of revelation* through which Jesus Christ is glorified and can be recognized” (2014a:133).

Moreover, considering the link between flesh and Spirit, Welker indicates how flesh can negatively influence the speaking in tongues. For this reason, Paul corrects the Corinthians by underlining how it is better to say intelligible words than words that are not understandable. This is to indicate that “rather one requires a carefully considered perception and appreciation of the body in order to understand the spirit and the places where it functions both in individual and communal human life” (Welker, 2014b:49).

Despite these clarifications, Welker indicates how it is possible to be renewed. In fact, “through his Spirit, the invisible God communicates with the human spirit imparting creative impulses” (Welker, 2014b:53).

In this way, the divine action takes place according to a well-defined scheme: “The activity of God’s Spirit does not penetrate directly into the psyche. Rather its effects flow through the heart into the human body and then indirectly upon the soul.” (Welker, 2014b:55)

It is by this work of the Spirit, which Welker calls the edification and vitality of the body, that Christians approach baptism and the Holy Communion bringing, therefore, each person to be part of a new body, the spiritual body (2014a:134). In this way, everyone grasps “the person of the Resurrected and his power to give form to the spirit” (2014a:142).



3.3.3 *Holy Spirit, effusion and His action*

Welker argues: "The powerful work of the Spirit ... manifests Himself with His 'effusion'"¹³⁴ (1990:215). His idea of the work of the Spirit on people is seen as a work of renewal with the awareness, of those who received Him, of entering into a "differentiated, non-homogeneous unity"¹³⁵ (1990:215) through to the outpouring of Spirit. "The intrinsic richness of the Spirit is acknowledged, when it is defined by the terms of 'pouring' the Spirit and the mode of 'filling' them with the Spirit." (Welker, 2006:2645) Welker argues that these people enter into a so-called field of forces of the Spirit that operates where there are people, therefore in a community, which bear witness to God's action (1990:215). Moreover, this action is pneumatic, placing man through his spirit of knowledge of God, not only by the Word or revelation but also by the languages that are communicated in an incomprehensible way. In this way, it continues the Christological work which in Christ has revealed God. Now He is in the world by the pouring of the Spirit (Welker, 2014a:51).

This outpouring of the Spirit is none other than the power of God, which operates in many ways producing different effects on the community, on the people, on their unity, producing, therefore their salvation. In this way, all become witnesses to others who see in them a radiating power generated by the Spirit (1990:216). This action enables believers to be close to God, both together with those close to them and with Christ himself. This does not come from their ability but from the strength, they receive from the Spirit¹³⁶ (Welker, 2006:2646).

In this way, through the Spirit, a person becomes a charismatic person, "a person over whom the Spirit comes amid and on behalf of the people of God" (2014a:142).

¹³⁴ Translation from Italian "L'operare potente dello Spirito [...] si manifesta con la sua 'effusione'".

¹³⁵ Translation from Italian "unità differenziata, non omogenea".

¹³⁶ Welker, 2006: 2646 The Spirit enables people to gain an immediacy to God, even a unity not only with one another but above all with Christ himself and with the divine Creator.



The beginning of this outpouring was at Pentecost, and it began because, according to Welker, it is not a "punctual and unrepeatable event"¹³⁷ (1990:216), but it serves to give knowledge of other experiences.

This event, is contrasting with what happened in Babel where there was confusion of languages, dispersion of people and cultural difference. Welker believes that Pentecost cancelled all those traits and that, despite the similarity between Babel and Pentecost, there is a difference due to the variety of people regarding sex, nationality or religion. There is no longer any distinction because they are now witnesses of the same public event, which is a consequence of the outpouring of the Spirit (1990:217).

It is important what Welker says when he argues that Pentecost is not relevant for the noise from the sky or the tongues of fire, not even for the speaking in tongues. Therefore, he does not consider those phenomena which are incomprehensible important. Welker emphasizes another aspect: those people who had the Spirit's effusion "did not speak of the great deeds of God in an incomprehensible language, but in a language that in any case must be defined as 'supercomprehensible'"¹³⁸ (Welker, 1990:218).

In fact, all those present in the different parts of the world at that time, with different languages, somehow understood what was witnessed because they heard it in their own language. Welker evaluates the phenomena that happened: on the one hand what he calls 'miracle of audition', that is what the bystanders listened to, and on the other hand the languages, that is the phenomenon expressed by those who were in the Upper room who testified proclaiming "the great deeds of God in *universal* terms"¹³⁹ (1990:219). In this event, an individual phenomenon that is not easily comprehensible is connected to the community; the individual differences tend to enter into a possible communion with different individuals maintaining their diversities.

¹³⁷ Translation from Italian "evento puntuale e irripetibile".

¹³⁸ Translation from Italian "non parlano delle grandi gesta di Dio in una lingua incomprensibile, ma in un linguaggio che in ogni caso va definito 'supercomprendibile'".

¹³⁹ Translation from Italian "le grandi gesta di Dio in termini *universal*".



In what, then, does Welker see the power of the Spirit reflected? "In the experience that unfolds itself when there is a true proclamation, when preaching is good; it is the experience of a power enabling people of different backgrounds and cultures, with different interests and with different expectations and hopes, to understand each other, to make common experiences ... whose original power does not lie in them."¹⁴⁰ (1990:220)

This experience turns out to be the fulfillment of the promises of Joel. It is beyond any previous experience bringing with it the awareness that the community resulting from this union becomes the bearer and witness of God's deeds (1990:220).

Therefore, from individualism and differences between individuals, there is a moving on to the communion of individuals who have different peculiarities. The event enriches everyone helping to understand each other, giving rise to relationships of communion and mutual trust. It is an enriching event which, through individual differences and problems, tends to create union, while this public experience of the outpouring of the Spirit, which operates in the differentiation of speaking and languages, "is the truly spectacular element of the Pentecost event" (Welker, 1990:221).

This event leads to an understanding of God's deeds from the individual and community standpoint. "*Through the outpouring of the Spirit, God operates his own testimony, a planetary, multilingual, poly-individual testimony*"¹⁴¹ (1990:221) which unites people. Whoever receives the effusion receives the baptism in the Holy Spirit and enters, into what Welker calls 'the field of forces'. This is the only way to enter the universal community founded by the Spirit, (1990:221-222) and not through human capacities or efforts of

¹⁴⁰ Translation from Italian "In quell'esperienza che si vive immancabilmente quando c'è proclamazione vera, quando la predicazione è buona: è l'esperienza di una forza che consiste a uomini di diversa provenienza e cultura, con differenti interessi e con diverse attese e speranze, di capire insieme, di fare esperienze comuni [...] la cui forza originaria però non sta in essi".

¹⁴¹ Translation from Italian "*Tramite l'effusione dello Spirito, Dio opera la testimonianza di sé, una testimonianza planetaria, multilingue, poliindividuale*".



individuals, but through a new reality that has heavenly characteristics (1990:223). In this new reality, they can be filled by the Spirit himself (1990:223-224).

What is this filling? Since the event is linked to the great deeds of God, what causes all of it, according to Welker, is the crucified and risen Christ.

What does this involve? First of all an awareness, a perception and experience of the Spirit that gives salvation. This is only a participation, a first fruit (Welker, 1990:224). Welker says that this does not exhaust the fullness of the Spirit but "in the forces' field of the outpouring of the Spirit, the Spirit is experienced in a valid manner"¹⁴² (1990:224).

3.3.3.1 The various fields of forces generated by the Spirit

Can this forces field of the Spirit, even if complex, be known in its operation or in its effectiveness? The answer, says Welker, lies precisely in the Spirit that gives the right understanding to witness his presence and action. How? With "faith, hope and love"¹⁴³ (Welker, 1990:225). Through them the forces field of the Spirit is realized. Through the " 'gifts', 'gifts of grace', 'charisms', the Spirit of God grants man participation in Himself. The gifts of grace and charisma are elements of the forces' field of the Spirit".¹⁴⁴ (1990:225-226)

So doing, Welker underlines how "charisms are forms ... in which the Spirit makes himself known and makes acquaintance"¹⁴⁵ (1990:226). For what purpose? The apostle Paul answers this question in 1 Cor 12:7: "To

¹⁴² Translation from Italian "nel campo di forze dell'effusione dello Spirito, lo Spirito è sperimentato in maniera valida".

¹⁴³ Translation from Italian "la fede, la speranza e l'amore".

¹⁴⁴ Translation from Italian "'doni', con questi 'doni della grazia', con questi 'carismi', lo Spirito di Dio concede agli uomini la partecipazione a se stesso. I doni di grazia e carismi sono elementi del campo di forze dello Spirito'".

¹⁴⁵ Translation from Italian "carismi sono forme [...] nelle quali lo Spirito si fa conoscere e opera conoscenza".



each moreover is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common profiting."¹⁴⁶ Welker argues that through these charisms various force fields are created, formed by men and women who exercise them to manifest the Spirit (1990: 226).

Welker comes to a conclusion that has a community character. In fact, all the people who receive these gifts enter the various force fields of these charisms, and therefore "the one Spirit, the one Christ, the one God grants different gifts of grace, different ministries or different forces (see 1 Corinthians 12: 4-6), synergically revealing themselves, bearing witness to themselves"¹⁴⁷ (1990 226).

The purpose is therefore the common good. This is why the one who receives the gift aims to reveal God to others, highlighting the non-private character of the gift. Moreover, Welker disapproves the creation of hierarchies of charisms since they lead to divisions within the same and single body where, all members, even the weakest, are indispensable (Welker, 1990:227). "The power of the Spirit goes beyond the contexts of individual understanding and communication and of individual communities, though 'the gift of the Spirit' expresses itself in gifts of communicative grace or in gifts which are received, experienced and communicated."¹⁴⁸ (Welker, 1990:228) "The same Spirit manifests Himself as a 'gift' in the spiritual gifts he bestows"¹⁴⁹ (Welker, 1990:228) and through them the Spirit is known.

¹⁴⁶ NASB 1 Cor 12: 7.

¹⁴⁷ Translation from Italian "l'unico Spirito, l'unico Cristo, l'unico Dio si serve di diversi doni di grazia, dei diversi ministeri o delle diverse forze (cfr. 1 Cor. 12:4-6) , e della loro sinergia per rivelarsi e dare testimonianza di sè".

¹⁴⁸ Translation from Italian "La potenza dello Spirito va oltre i contesti di comprensione e di comunicazione dei singoli individui e delle singole comunità, benché 'il dono dello Spirito' si esprima in doni di grazia comunicativi, o in questi doni venga recepito, sperimentato e comunicato".

¹⁴⁹ Translation from Italian "Lo Spirito stesso si manifesta come 'dono' nei doni spirituali che conferisce".



These gifts are always “related to Christ, to the preaching and action of Christ. They introduce themselves into the community of Christ”¹⁵⁰ (Welker, 1990 228).

Nevertheless, how is it possible to receive them? The answer is by faith. Indeed, the Spirit is received in faith.¹⁵¹ Preaching and testimony are linked at this faith and they are manifested within this field of forces (Welker, 1990:229).

Looking at the gifts, it is evident how they are emphasized in 1 Cor 12 and, in chapter 13, relativized in relation to love and hope. So, according to Welker, love and hope, compared to the gifts, have a significant relevance. He highlights how they are force fields and elements of the Spirit’s force fields (1990:229-230).

However, according to Welker, what is hope? “Hope is the form of experience and understanding in which faith is related to the experiences of the seemingly still unredeemed world”¹⁵² (Welker, 1990:230). These experiences are gained at all times and define moments of patience, suffering or various other feelings. So, according to the German theologian, it is the result of what is experienced which determines a certain field of strength, and referring to the Apostle Paul “Expands through the experience of joy and peace in faith”¹⁵³ (1990:230). Joy and peace lead to reconciliation between individuals and the elimination of conflicts that have been created (Welker, 2006:2641). These fruits of the Spirit, like peace and joy, therefore, nourish hope.

This action of the Spirit is individual since none is identical before God. In fact, the Spirit works in the individual according to his characteristics and

¹⁵⁰ Translation from Italian “rapportati a Cristo, alla predicazione e azione di Cristo. Introducono nella comunità di Cristo”.

¹⁵¹ Rm 15:13; 2 Tm 1:7- 13.

¹⁵² Translation from Italian “La speranza è la forma di esperienza e di comprensione nella quale la fede è rapportata alle esperienze del mondo apparentemente ancora irredento”.

¹⁵³ Translation from Italian “si espande attraverso l’esperienza della gioia e della pace nella fede”.



qualities and in relation to his origins, culture and language. Therefore, diversity depends on what he has experienced and in the feelings he has experienced. In each unique individuality, the individual becomes one of the believers in whom the Spirit works. In this way, a connection is established between "concrete and unrepeatable individuality and ecumenical universality",¹⁵⁴ (Welker, 1990 232) that is as a gift of the Spirit given to me and "not only to others"¹⁵⁵ (Welker, 1990:232). In fact, "The Holy Spirit is not a power that acts and operates in every context in 'the same way'. First Corinthians 12:11 speaks of the 'one Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as it wills' and Hebrews 2:4 says that God acts 'by various gifts and miracles of the Holy Spirit distributed according to its own will.'" (Welker, 2006:2625)

This action, therefore, is not homogeneous and uniform but diversified, and will nevertheless lead to a single body, which is the Church starting from the individual communities.

However, the Spirit is not the only power and does not include man alone in the community. His action changes attitudes in people, which, from the spiritual point of view, are called "fruits of the Spirit". Welker affirms that these attitudes have almost self-limiting characteristics because they tend to put themselves towards each other. In fact meekness, goodness, benevolence and others, are ways of acting of the individual led by the Spirit and tend to have certain positive attitudes towards others. The basis of it all is that kind of love which makes one experience the relationship with others not as a burden but as a joy. It is an unmeasurable strength that "survives the death of the loved one, and even its escape from love"¹⁵⁶ (Welker, 1990:234).

¹⁵⁴ Translation from Italian "individualità concreta e irripetibile e universalità ecumenica".

¹⁵⁵ Translation from Italian "e non soltanto ad altri".

¹⁵⁶ Translation from Italian "sopravvive alla morte della persona amata, e persino al suo sottrarsi all'amore".



Moreover, in selfless love even those who love without being loved "grow and open to joy for the development of the beloved person"¹⁵⁷ (Welker, 1990: 234).

This feeling, that is love, enters in the Spirit field of forces radiating and attracting the different relationships with others. It is the basis of communication with others and can transform the world. It "is the most perfect of the forms of expression and communication desired by the Spirit"¹⁵⁸ (Welker, 1990:235) because it also overcomes enmities or indifference by building new forms of life and coexistence, promoting life itself. In this way, "the fruitful love of the Spirit corresponds to the same creative Spirit"¹⁵⁹ (Welker, 1990:235) because it goes beyond cultural differences by creating community harmonies and breaking down social hierarchies. Love as the fruit of the Spirit is effused and comes out of the life of the individual working also within it. Love, as a charism, is in fact a heavenly power (Welker, 1990: 235). Love in action, breaking down every kind of barrier, acts in order to have more justice, a true mercy in such a way that the law is fulfilled (Welker, 1990:235). In this context, it is possible to find the work of peace that is "that relationship of men and community with oneself and with one's own environments, which is determined by love"¹⁶⁰ (Welker, 1990:235).

Welker points out that the Spirit of God is precisely the Spirit of love and peace who realizes what the law held. He practically translates the intentions of the law into actions to determine precisely what the law supports, that is, to establish the law, the mercy and the knowledge of God. In what way do they do it? Universalizing the intentions, that is, making them

¹⁵⁷ Translation from Italian "cresce e si apre alla gioia per lo sviluppo della persona amata".

¹⁵⁸ Translation from Italian "è la più perfetta tra le forme di espressione e di comunicazione volute dallo Spirito".

¹⁵⁹ Translation from Italian "l'amore frutto dello Spirito corrisponde allo stesso Spirito creatore".

¹⁶⁰ Translation from Italian "quel rapporto di uomini e comunità con sè e con i propri ambienti, che è determinato dall'amore".



equal for everyone, and at the same time referring them to the individual (1990:240).

All this happens only by the power of the Spirit since, without Him, people do not act with love and cannot find peace (Welker, 1990:241) while the law's intentions remain only unrealized wishes. Hence, thanks to this power, God maintains the world despite attempts tending to counterfeit it (Welker, 1990:240). People's problems are used together with their weaknesses, to operate in a way they act for justice and mercy, thus involving love in action. This action becomes God's will (Welker, 1990:242).

Those who are guided by the Spirit, in fact, accomplish God's will by responding to the Law's intentions without any constraint. Doing God's will, in love and in the power of the Spirit, they are free in the inner man and in peace with the world since the power of love has been established in them (Welker, 1990:241).

Two aspects, taken into consideration by Welker, and which are among the most debated in recent decades, are speaking in tongues and inspiration. Considering the areas of debate, the first is a phenomenon debated between the Pentecostal churches and the Charismatic renewal movement and those denominations and churches of different traditions. The second question divides fundamentalists from non-fundamentalists (Welker, 1990:247).

The question Welker tries to answer is why speaking in tongues is the most problematic of the gifts of the Spirit. "Most people from Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions insist on the importance of the "Spirit baptism". The interpretation of this symbol in the framework of the polycontextual and polyphonic dwelling of the Spirit opens an intermediate way between the insistence on dramatic and sensational individual experiences, as "initiation events" of faith, and the assertion that the "Spirit of truth" is characterized by its connection to Jesus Christ and to a wisdom which operates in surprising ways, though not necessarily spectacular ones" (2006:2691-2694).



This kind of baptism is highlighted in some communities by speaking in tongues. The speaking of the Spirit is expressed in the New Testament, like in Mark 16:17, where we read that the people "speak new languages". The term speaking in tongues or languages is present in several passages like Acts 10:46; 19:6; 1 Cor 12:30 and 13:8, or 1 Cor 12:10,28. 1 Cor 14 is a chapter that talks about the phenomenon.¹⁶¹ According to Welker, "Paul describes here speaking in tongues as a talk that takes place in a state of ecstasy and is incomprehensible, and therefore needs explanation and interpretation; it is a prayer addressed to God and that, however, as an expression of ecstatic praise and thanksgiving, serves only for the edification of those who are directly involved in it"¹⁶² (1990:248).

Consequently, they speak to God. In the same context, the apostle shows the importance of "understanding and reason (*nous*)" (Welker, 2014a:136) which need to be applied in all forms of speaking in tongues. Moreover, Welker underlines how these two factors, indicated by Paul, do not refer to some philosophical abilities, but to the communication of certain clear messages with a specific purpose which stimulate the church's response. This might be diverted by carnal efforts depending on emotional capacities or persuasion (2014a:136).

The difference that Welker points out is that in Acts 2 the speaking was understandable while in the other passages, like Acts 10:44ss and Acts 18:6ss the speaking in tongues is not clearly associated with the descent of the Spirit and with the gift of speaking in languages or to "the gift of *glossolalia*, which is incomprehensible to hearers and needs an

¹⁶¹ As indicated by Welker.

¹⁶² Translation from Italian "Paolo descrive qui il parlare in lingue come un parlare che avviene in stato di estasi ed è incomprensibile, e che quindi ha bisogno di spiegazione e di interpretazione; è un pregare rivolto a Dio e che però, in quanto espressione di lode e ringraziamento estatico, serve esclusivamente all'edificazione di quanti ne sono direttamente coinvolti".



interpretation”¹⁶³ (1990:248).¹⁶⁴ Based on some specific steps, Welker points out that there isn’t a strict link between the descent of the Spirit and *glossolalia* or that kind of *glossolalia* which is privileged in comparison to other gifts (1990:248).

Moreover, when it comes to speaking in tongues, Welker does not only include *glossolalia*, but also *xenolalia* (speaking foreign languages) both falling into the gifts of the Spirit. Nevertheless, “they are not central, they are not the most important and elevated charisms, nor the only ones or the determining ones”¹⁶⁵ (1990:249). In fact, referring to the list of Paul¹⁶⁶, the first mentioned gifts are those of wisdom, knowledge and faith, and subsequently those that determine continuity with the work of Jesus, that is, healing, powerful works, prophecy and discernment. Only at the end of the verse it is possible to find speaking in different languages and their interpretation. Furthermore, Welker highlights the fact that regarding this gift, Paul writes to the Corinthians rebuking them for their incorrect use¹⁶⁷ (1990:249).

Welker surely believes that the gift of tongues is a gift of the Spirit, by which it is possible to speak to God and to utter mysterious things, edifying those who exercise it and through it, by prayer and praise, glorifying God (1990:249). However, he “drastically relativizes the value of this gift, *subordinating it to the gift of prophecy* that is to the comprehensible speaking

¹⁶³ Translation from Italian “il dono della glossolalia, che è incomprensibile agli astanti e bisognosa di interpretazione”.

¹⁶⁴ Welker analyses the cases of Peter, Cornelius and John, after the Spirit had descended. In these cases it is indicated that people began to prophesy and speak in tongues. This talk, however, is not defined if it was understandable or not to those present as it happened some time before Pentecost, and therefore it would have to be interpreted. In the other passages instead (Acts 4:31, 9:17, 11:15) Welker highlights the fact that it does not mention the fact that they spoke in tongues but it is known that they received baptism.

¹⁶⁵ Translation from Italian “non sono centrali, non sono i carismi più importanti ed elevati, nè tanto meno gli unici o quelli determinanti”.

¹⁶⁶ 1 Cor 12:8-9.

¹⁶⁷ 1 Cor 14.



that builds up the community”¹⁶⁸ (1990:249). The motivation is expressed by Paul when he says that the prophetic gift is more important and superior to the speaking in tongues because it is immediately comprehensible to the listener and consequently provides a clear and intelligible communication. Conversely, speaking in other languages has the negative factor that is not understandable to strangers and therefore does not communicate anything (1990:249-250).

Welker, indeed, claims that, when Paul states that speaking in tongues is a "sign for the unbelievers" (1990:250) in 1 Cor 14:22, he is referring to Is 28:11ss which is a condemnation to remain in unbelief. Citing Paul, he affirms that to say intelligible things is better than speaking in an incomprehensible way (1 Cor 14:19).

Now the question arises as to why in the Pentecostal and charismatic churches speaking in tongues is considered indispensable and extremely important instead of being considered of secondary importance.

According to Welker, the causes of such a mistake depend on their way of understanding the Spirit. Charismatics think of Him as a “numinous reality”¹⁶⁹ (1990:250) misinterpreting what actually happened at Pentecost and the way He acted (1990:250). Therefore, such a vision leads to interpret the Spirit as the One “which arouses numinous sensations and corresponding 'experiences'”¹⁷⁰ (Welker, 1990:250).

This kind of understanding determines a certain type of ecclesial life which, consequently, will be of a mystical kind. The motivation, according to Welker, is that charismatics take into undue consideration the astonishing and spectacular factor of the event beyond its real happening. This kind of

¹⁶⁸ Translation from Italian “relativizza drasticamente il valore di questo dono, subordinandolo al dono della profezia, cioè al discorso comprensibile che edifica la comunità”.

¹⁶⁹ Translation from Italian “realtà numinosa”.

¹⁷⁰ Translation from Italian “che suscita sensazioni numinose ed ‘esperienze’ corrispondenti”.



evaluation leads them to misunderstand the way in which the Spirit acts and, consequently, to erroneously evaluate his gifts (1990:250).

Furthermore, Welker argues that, focusing solely and exclusively on *glossolalia*, the tendency is to turn faith into something tangible, offering itself to others as a kind of a remonstrance (Welker, 1990:251).

But against whom? Not against the traditional churches that do not have it, but against the rigid liturgy, “the adaptation of spirituality to certain secular lifestyles and to certain forms of moralism”¹⁷¹ (Welker, 1990:251). Moreover, according to Welker, this type of language-centred attitude becomes a threat against the true experience of the Spirit since speaking in tongues would determine a certain individualism within the communities (1990:251).

The Pentecostal experience, focused on speaking in tongues, seems to fall into individualism especially in this modern world, with its “indeterminate and pluriform individualism” (Welker, 1990:252) which abstracts from what is the tangible activity of the community, which Welker defines as poly-concrete. Poly-concrete because it is formed by various individuals who, endowed with the Spirit, seek to use tangibly the various gifts, witnessing, even if in an unnoticed way, the presence of the Spirit (Welker, 1990:252).

Thus, speaking in tongues and interpreting them, in such an abstract context, tends to go beyond any form of standardization and typification. In fact, it involves different individuals producing a phenomenon publicly seen. Obviously there is a kind of communication among those present based on these particular experiences. The public speaking in tongues, however, requires the interpretation to the community participating in this experience not to leave the congregation in confusion or in the incomprehensibility of the message (Welker, 1990:252).

¹⁷¹ Translation from Italian “all’adeguamento della spiritualità a determinati stili di vita secolari e a certe forme di moralismo”.



Welker's explanation, therefore, is that Pentecostal churches place the gift of tongues at the centre of their experience, even though the apostle Paul does not grant such great importance to it.

This analysis' motivation depends on considering such an experience as something indeterminate, necessarily presupposing an interpretation (Welker, 1990:253). This understanding compares the experience "to the 'mystical' experience or the modern awareness of the ego. Speaking in tongues is considered a language form that can be used and employed individualistically or in ways useful to create bonds, disruptive or capable of solidarity" (Welker, 1990: 253).

Despite being indeterminate and in need of interpretation, it has its own pluralism that can be edifying or destructive. This leads to the need of individuals who are well practiced in interpretation not exalting the gift and its importance and centrality among "the signs and external expressions that signal the presence of these gifts"¹⁷² (Welker, 1990:253).

Welker's analysis begins from Pentecost accounting other effects indicated in the biblical passages. However, he emphasizes that, despite the importance of speaking in tongues, baptism in the Spirit should not be relativized (Welker, 1990:254).

Regarding inspiration, Welker defines it as the event in which "God infused the letters of the biblical text into the authors with absolute precision, indeed even dictating them" (1990:254) and then they put them in writing. He affirms that every single word is the word of God. An example is that of prophetic oracles, when the prophet says, "Thus saith the Lord".

Every word is no less than the Word of God, becoming a "direct 'message'"¹⁷³ (Welker, 1990:254). In this way, the authority of the written word is immediately applicable because it is no less than what God said

¹⁷² Translation from Italian "i segni e le manifestazioni esterne che segnalano la presenza di questi doni".

¹⁷³ Translation from Italian "directly 'message'".



through the Holy Spirit and by whom God has dictated words to the writers. This is biblical inspiration.

Within this doctrine, Welker sets in motion the outpouring of the Spirit who, when received, inspires people for a certain service. In such a context the fullness of the presence of God becomes alive by creating union where, by language or race or sex, there was division (1990:256). This unity leads to greater intimacy with God and these factors necessarily confirm that Scriptures are inspired (Welker, 1990:257).

In the diversity of experience and people, Welker revives Joel's vision and therefore the Pentecostal experience. It is by the Spirit and the texts, that various experiences are created. In fact, according to Welker, in the inspired text there is a kind of communication from God that produces experience. The text is not dead in itself, it is not stereotyped, but provokes and generates experiences in those who approach the text. What produces the text is a real experience because the Bible is nothing more than a set of testimonies, which can be complete or partial, but in which all "the action of the Spirit transforms these witnesses into true and living witnesses. The initiative of the Spirit through these testimonies gathers the people of God, renews it, reinvigorates it, allows it to recognize and confess the presence of God in his text"¹⁷⁴ (Welker, 1990:258). All these witnesses are not only equal to each other, even if experiences take place in completely different, social, cultural or intellectual areas. This differentiation may sometimes not be clear or fully understood, provoking fear (Welker, 1990:258).

So in the end, the Spirit works in inspiration and makes sure that testimonies that have arisen in different, even heterogeneous contexts can operate in different environments. "This action makes the word of God

¹⁷⁴ Translation from Italian "l'azione dello Spirito trasforma queste testimonianze in testimonianze vere e vive. L'iniziativa dello Spirito attraverso queste testimonianze raccoglie il popolo di Dio, lo rinnova, lo rinvigorisce, gli consente di riconoscere e confessare la presenza di Dio nel suo testo".



answerable, heard, welcomed and bearing fruit.”¹⁷⁵ (Welker, 1990:258) What is therefore achieved is by Welker defined as the "secret testimony"¹⁷⁶ (Welker, 1990:259). "The Spirit produces and obtains a unity which, on the human side, creates a correspondence with the unity of the presence of God.”¹⁷⁷ (Welker, 1990:259)

Generally speaking, it is possible to summarize how inspiration is God's initiative which through the various biblical testimonies makes the presence of God perceived, provoking precisely that kind of experience as it is told. The people's response is precisely a reaction to this experience. "The same texts of the Bible, as the same communities, without this inspiration of Scripture are nothing but 'dead letters' and 'dry bones'. It is by the Spirit that the Bible affirms its presence and its glory granting to the inspired listeners the possibility to experience, express and communicate the presence of God and his glory.”¹⁷⁸ (Welker, 1990:259)

¹⁷⁵ Translation from Italian "Questa azione fa sì che la parola di Dio trovi risposta, sia ascoltata, venga accolta e porti frutto".

¹⁷⁶ Translation from Italian "testimonianza segreta".

¹⁷⁷ Translation from Italian "Lo Spirito produce, ottiene l'unità della certezza personale e in tal modo, sul versante umano, crea un corrispondenza con l'unità della presenza di Dio".

¹⁷⁸ Translation from Italian "tanto i testi della Bibbia presi a sè, quanto le comunità in sè, senza questa ispirazione della Scrittura non sono altro che 'lettera morta' e 'ossa aride'. Accade tramite lo Spirito che la Bibbia attesti la sua presenza e la sua gloria e coloro che ascoltano ispirati siano messi in condizione di sperimentare, esprimere e comunicare la presenza di Dio e la sua gloria".



CHAPTER 4

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT ACCORDING TO JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN

Jürgen Moltmann is a reformed German theologian. His fame came after writing the 'Theology of Hope'. Like Welker, he reflected on the person of the Holy Spirit highlighting many aspects. The beginning of his book, on the Holy Spirit¹⁷⁹, clarifies his approach to the person of the Spirit. First of all, he identifies the Spirit as Holy, that is, opposite to profane (Moltmann, 1994a:19) saying that He is such “because he sanctifies life and renews the face of the earth”¹⁸⁰ (1994a:19).

Moltmann explains, at the beginning of this text, the connection between the Spirit and everyday life in order to be aware of God, perceiving and experiencing Him in every individual life.

This is why he concentrates on the Spirit and life relationship, highlighting how He revitalizes and sanctifies everyone's life (1994a:6).

¹⁷⁹ MOLTSMANN, J. 1994a. Lo Spirito della vita. Per una pneumatologia integrale. Brescia: Queriniana.

¹⁸⁰ Translation from Italian “perché santifica la vita e rinnova la faccia della terra”.



4.1 *Integral Pneumatology. Theology and concepts.*

Speaking of the Spirit, Moltmann shows how it is impossible to distinguish his work from Christ's. In fact, "Christ's liberating and redeeming work refers to a life that always flows from its source and which is moved by the 'spirit of life', since it is precisely this life which has to be redeemed and made free"¹⁸¹ (1994a:6). He, therefore, does not talk about substitution or opposition, tending to give it a character of universality (1994a: 6).

The author's purpose is to give not only a theological vision but above all, an experiential one. People, today, face many problems and this world shows the future pending destruction that awaits people. In addition, life's complications lead to suicide or to various kinds of individual and collective problems. This is why Moltmann proposes a vision of the Spirit as "an integral pneumatology", deepening the concept of life (1994a:8). Life is not only understood in an individualistic way, but in a pluralistic and universal one.

4.1.1 *The Spirit's action in the world*

The author, at first, deals with the vision of the Spirit which, in the last decades, has been imposed by ecclesiastical institutions. He emphasizes how the Spirit was considered holy only in connections to ecclesiastical institutions. The reason was that, in these institutions, there were people considered spiritual, that is, worshipping ministers who through their work brought the knowledge of the Word. To this traditional vision, he compared another one, in which individuals experienced the Spirit beginning from faith experiences that sometimes led to charismatic events. This approach has been labeled fanaticism, and in these areas the spirit was not considered holy. Why all of

¹⁸¹ Translation from Italian "l'opera liberante e redentrice di Cristo si riferisce ad una vita che fluisce sempre dalla sua sorgente e che è mossa dallo 'spirito della vita', poiché è appunto questa vita che dev'essere liberata e redenta".



this? Moltmann's answer is that this was due to the fact that, in the modern world, soaring liberties began to advance, such as that of faith or religion or free association, inaugurating new fields of the Spirit's action not contemplated in the past. This process introduced 'free thought' in ecclesiastical circles (Moltmann, 1994a:12-13).

However, this way of considering the Spirit's action, led to the abandonment and displacement of faithful people from churches where the Spirit had been personally experienced. These movements' motivation is found in the Scriptures, which depict certain experiences individually sought. The experiences search created a kind of relationship between Word and Spirit which does not end with the search for the language phenomenon but, substantially, in the rediscovery of the Spirit's presence in people's hearts (1994a:13-14).

In order to justify, not only the ecumenical communion, but also the interactions between the various churches with different experiences and theologies, to the interaction between Word and Spirit was added another one at the ecumenical level. Worthy of note, in this case, is the action of the Spirit which unites, not separates, the various churches leading to an ecumenical communion which is more relevant than that provided by other theologians, such as Cullmann, who regard this ecumenical movement as the beginning of what is considered the Johannine church (Moltmann, 1994a:15).

In this situation, however, a reflection on the differences existing among the various churches, from those which consider the subordination of the Spirit to the Son (the *filioque* problem still debated between the Catholic and the Orthodox churches), to those who focus on the charismatic experiences of the Spirit, that is, the charismatic and Pentecostal churches (1994a:15).



4.1.2 *The non-individualistic approach of the Spirit*

According to the Catholic concept, the Spirit acts in the church and in personal faith, redeeming individuals bringing them to a better world than this. In the church, such an individualistic action, called by Moltmann 'Platonization of Christianity', takes the name of spirituality (1994a:20). Spirituality opposes the body, and its various experiences, to the Spirit's action within man. However, if the bodily part of man is totally excluded, it seems that the evaluation of redemption is more Gnostic than Christian. However, the Word speaks of the resurrection of the flesh, which for Moltmann, is linked to the Spirit who works not only in redemption but also in re-creating all things. This is the reason why he defines the Spirit as the Spirit of the Creator Father (1994a:20) becoming, therefore, the divine life force in action, and a life-giving Spirit.

Such a vision leads to the experience of the Spirit in different ways, overcoming the old boundaries delimited by the theology of the church rediscovering the Spirit acting in nature and in the world, thus defining theology as 'ecological theology,' that is, a communion with creation (1994a:21-22). There is, therefore, a re-evaluation of body and nature under a new perspective which qualifies the Spirit in his action, a re-evaluation of the body and nature with new characteristics.

4.1.3 *Spirit, his person and his experience*

The Spirit's activity is not only restricted to nature or creation. Initially, due to his activity, the Spirit was considered as the One who produced a certain kind of experiences, defining Him more as an impersonal force than a person. Consequently, He was associated with light, wind or fire (called *kenotic* forms), that is, in those forms that the Spirit can produce.



Prayers were directly addressed to the Father and to Christ, while invocations were directed to the Spirit calling upon his presence, never to help or thank. For example, Moltmann says: “*Veni Creator Spiritus*” (Moltmann, 1994a:22). In antiquity, Tertullian determined that the Spirit was a Trinitarian person by asserting his personality though never demonstrating it. However, in his intra-Trinitarian relationship, it is evident his relationship with the other persons, and his personality, or his being of a person. The problem arises when one experiences the Spirit; in fact, the “human beings’ experience of God” is called ‘force of God’ or ‘Spirit of God’¹⁸² (1994a:23), indicating more than a divine quality, the presence of God himself (1994a:23). “It is not an ontological question, but of a *modus of his presence* in creation and in the history of mankind”¹⁸³ (1994a:23) since He is not only present and active but He is also defined as the “*indwelling of God*”, that is, indwelling and living in different contexts demonstrating the closeness of God. Nearness? Through the manifestations that are called *sh^ekinah* in which one identifies not only the presence of God but one “*interlocutor of God in God Himself*”¹⁸⁴ (1994a:24). However, despite all the possible considerations, his personality is not easily detected especially when compared to that of the Father or the Son. Many tried to define his personality in different ways.

What is Moltmann's idea concerning the experience of the Spirit? In his words, there is a glimpse of today’s experience, called ‘historical experience’, which remembers that of the past though opening to the future. This ‘today’ represents the actualization of Christ that is not found in what it is remembered in the past and not even in the expectation for the future, but it is the experience in itself, together with life and the Spirit’s communion (Moltmann, 1994a:31). Moltmann, therefore, regards pneumatology as a result of Christology paving

¹⁸² Translation from Italian “che gli esseri umani ‘sperimentano’ di Dio viene detto ‘forza di Dio’ o ‘Spirito di Dio’ “.

¹⁸³ Translation from Italian “Non si tratta di una sua qualità ontologica, bensí di un *modus della sua presenza* nella creazione e nella storia degli uomini”.

¹⁸⁴ Translation from Italian “*interlocutore di Dio in Dio stesso* “.



the way to eschatology. Thus, the fulcrum is at the centre of today's dimension of experience.

The problem is therefore to define what experience is, something which has been very complex. Moltmann starts from the definition of Discheri (1989:34) which says, "Experience embraces the totality of what the conscience acquires in the exercise of its activity" (1994a:34).¹⁸⁵ From such a definition it is possible to infer that experience is nothing more than a perception of what has been experienced which remains imprinted in the conscience and in the intellect. This process, therefore, is called "experience".

The problem, which Moltmann addresses, lies in what man perceives. In fact, experiences are gained even without one's willingness to experience them. They can be unintentional and regarding neither conscience nor intellect because man can even experience what he involuntarily acquires. In fact, there are persisting life experiences with which one must live, which are accounted for, while others are deciphered or removed (1994a:34-35). Some examples may be death, certain joys of love, or other special situations that can remain etched, becoming intimate and profound, conditioning life though not understanding them. These experiences happen whether we want them or not. They are both done and received. People cannot understand or change them; they happen and affect our lives, willingly or not (Moltmann, 1994a:37). In any case, a conditioning is received that changes and transform a person. In this process, something happens, producing an inner individual transformation that changes the way of communicating with other people. Thus, an individual experience becomes something of a collective one.

Is it possible to have examples that prove the experience of individuals and they are many. Yes! The Bible considers them to be so, the many stories

¹⁸⁵ Moltmann cites Discheri, E. 1989. *Der Heilige Geist und das menschliche Bewusstsein. Eine Theologiegeschichtlich-systematische Untersuchung*, Wurzburg 1989, 714. Translated in Italian "L'esperienza abbraccia la totalità di ciò che la coscienza acquisisce nell'esercizio della sua attività".



of families and people of Israel are of this order, stories that are told and sometimes taken as models for others (Moltmann, 1994a:39-40).

Another way of experiencing belongs to the religious sphere which is not a separate sphere of life but always present in every life. In this case, too, there may be moments of ups and downs, trust or not, that condition life itself (Moltmann, 1994a:42). The basis of this religious trust lies in the heart¹⁸⁶ (Moltmann, 1994a:42), accompanies man, and is not an undefined something. In the modern world, based on scientifically guaranteed experiments, experience has been reduced only to “a dominion over nature, to the full advantage of human life. Hence, experience, as a practice of knowledge, becomes part of the practice of human living”¹⁸⁷ (Moltmann, 1994a:44).

Therefore, experience becomes something objective and perceptible, verifiable. Whatever is causal and unrepeatable is no longer considered relevant and removed as irrational, thus leading to the devastation of life itself (Moltmann 1994a:45). In this way nature has been destroyed by a modern vision of experience which inspires answers that have little to do with faith. In fact, by asking a question about God and if you can experience Him or not, the answer today is, He is “neither knowable nor experimentable”¹⁸⁸ (Moltmann, 1994a:46). This kind of evaluation leads to define modern science as agnostic because God is not knowable and, consequently, it is not possible to experience Him in a tangible way. However, as Moltmann says, it is possible to experience God in a sense “transcendental of the human self-consciousness at the centre of his experiential world”¹⁸⁹ (Moltmann, 1994a:47). This experience is identified with the divine Spirit in man. In this

¹⁸⁶ Cited Lutero about first commandment : <<La fiducia e la fede del cuore producono Dio e l'idolo... Il tuo vero Dio è quello dal quale il tuo cuore dipende e nel quale riponi la tua fiducia>> .

¹⁸⁷ Translation from Italian “a dominio sulla natura, a tutto vantaggio della vita umana. Per cui l' ‘esperienza’, in quanto prassi di conoscenza, entra con ciò a far parte della prassi del vivere umano”.

¹⁸⁸ Translation from Italian “nè conoscibile nè sperimentabile”.

¹⁸⁹ Translation from Italian “trascendentale di quell'autocoscienza umana che sta al centro del suo mondo esperienziale”.



way “the revealing action of God takes place in the experience that the believer makes of himself”¹⁹⁰ (Moltmann, 1994a:47).

Therefore, in experiencing the Spirit that a person has, and having confidence in Christ as the manifestation of God, he has self-awareness of himself in an immediate manner. In this way the modern idea of experience based on the subject - object pattern which considers experience in relation to an object of experience as an individual's experience of the Spirit turns into an experience of communion with others producing relationships (Moltmann, 1994a:48). In fact, the modern world lives in a pluralistic and polycentric and not in an individualistic context. This is why experience, for Moltmann, is to be understood under a multi-dimensional aspect with the possibility “to discover transcendence in every experience, not only in what we do with ourselves”¹⁹¹ (1994a:49). Experiencing God is a transcendent experience in the immanent reality that people live in the world, since God is present in the world manifesting Himself at a communal level. “Therefore, every experience made by a creature of the Spirit is also an experience of the Spirit. Every true experience of oneself becomes also an experience of the vital Spirit of God in the human being.”¹⁹² (Moltmann, 1994a:51) And then, “*to experience God in all things* presupposes a transcendence that is immanent to things and must be seized by induction”¹⁹³ (Moltmann, 1994a:51). And this transcendence is shown in the same nature, so it is possible to admit that in God's creation there is an immanent transcendence. The first example is the image of God¹⁹⁴ out of which man is made and for whom he is sovereign over nature.¹⁹⁵ However,

¹⁹⁰ Translation from Italian “l'agire rivelante di Dio si attua nell'esperienza che il credente fa di sè”.

¹⁹¹ Translation from Italian “scoprire trascendenza in ogni esperienza, non solo in quella che facciamo di noi stessi”.

¹⁹² Translation from Italian “Ogni esperienza fatta da una creatura dello Spirito è dunque anche un'esperienza dello Spirito. Ogni vera esperienza di se stessi diventa anche un'esperienza dello Spirito vitale di Dio nell'essere umano”.

¹⁹³ Translation from Italian “*sperimentare Dio in tutte le cose* presuppone una trascendenza che è immanente alle cose e che va colta per via induttiva.

¹⁹⁴ Gn1:26.

¹⁹⁵ Ps 8.



man has risen, raising his soul on the body and on nature, becoming master of nature itself and also doing what was less pleasant. Moltmann underlines the need "to revisit an anthropocentric pneumatology, but then also an anthropology referring exclusively to consciousness, caught only in its immediacy"¹⁹⁶ (1994a:53), coming to express a doctrine that Moltmann calls "*integral doctrine of God, Holy Spirit*"¹⁹⁷ (1994a:53). Integral because it concerns the whole man, then because all concerns man, in his total being and soul, in his material part, that is the body, and also his deeper dimension as consciousness and the subconscious. Further in the relationship between person and community and community and society, and then in the "totality of the creatural communion that exists between human beings and the earth together with all its creatures"¹⁹⁸ (1994a:53).

4.1.4 The historical experience of the Spirit

What does Moltmann think of the historical experience of the Spirit? "By 'historical experience of God' is meant that experience of God that takes place within history, through historical events and in temporal perception, however, it includes also a perception of reality as history, that story that is born from such experiences of God"¹⁹⁹ (Moltmann,1994a:54).

The main reference in the Old Testament is Israel which has always connected the experiences gained with people who really existed and with

¹⁹⁶ Translation from Italian "il bisogno di rivedere una pneumatologia antropocentrica, ma allora anche un'antropologia riferita esclusivamente alla coscienza, e questa colta solo nella sua immediatezza".

¹⁹⁷ Translation from Italian "*dottrina integrale di Dio, Spirito Santo*".

¹⁹⁸ Translation from Italian "totalità della comunione creaturale che esiste fra gli esseri umani e la terra insieme a tutte le sue creature".

¹⁹⁹ Translation from Italian "Per 'esperienza storica di Dio' noi intendiamo quell'esperienza di Dio che avviene all'interno della storia, mediante eventi storici e in percezione temporale [...] però, anche una percezione della realtà come storia, quella storia che nasce proprio da tali esperienze di Dio".



particular historical events. This is why there is a phrase pointing precisely this relationship: the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moreover, if this expression concerns people, God has called them to carry forward his plan; it is not possible to forget events known and symbolized as the God of the Covenant, the Exodus or the Promised Land. So, the memory of these events is “the expectation of his coming makes his presence experienced a historical present”²⁰⁰ (1994a:54). This movement goes towards the future, towards a particular end. However the term 'present' is highlighted by Moltmann as a ‘*nunc stans*’ that is “*the eternal now*”²⁰¹ (1994a:54) which has no temporal meaning but identifies the presence of eternity “for that which is eternal has only one time: the present. Eternity lies in the depths of the lived moment, not in the extension of time”²⁰² (1994a:54).

However, how does Moltmann identify the Spirit between Old and New Testaments? The words used for Spirit are: *rûah* in the Old Testament and *pneûma* in the New Testament.

The Greek term refers to something devoid of the body, supernatural when referring to the Spirit of God. Instead the term in Hebrew has a completely different meaning; it can refer to a hurricane or a storm, to a force in the body or soul or even in nature or in humanity (Moltmann, 1994a:55).

Here lies the difference of interpretation between Jewish and Western thought. Numerically, in the Old Testament, the term *rûah* is present, more or less, 380 times and 27 times it is linked to the name of God that is YAHWEH. Defining the literal meaning, explains Moltmann, is very complicated and it does not have a unitary model. For sure, the term, as argued by Schungel-Strauman, was an “onomatopoeic word” (cited by Moltmann, 1994a:56) used to express the sound of the wind, not as it is normally understood as something

²⁰⁰ Translation from Italian “l’attesa della sua venuta rendono la sua presenza sperimentata presente storico”.

²⁰¹ Translation from Italian “l’eterno ora”.

²⁰² Translation from Italian “poiché ciò che è eterno ha soltanto un tempo: il presente. L’eternità sta nel profondo del momento vissuto, non nell’estensione del tempo”.



without life, but as something vital that has life in itself. Referring to God, it is nothing but the effect of what the power of God creates, the exterminating anger or the vivifying grace that acts against our resistance (Moltmann, 1994a:56). In time it assumed the meaning of breath or vital force for man and animals with a distinction in relation to blood circulation. There were two associations, the one between soul-blood identified as *nefesh*, and the other with soul-person, identified as *rûah*.

In Psalm 104:29 the words breath and Spirit derive from *rûah* which distinguishes the life-giving and creative force of God from the one created by every living thing (Moltmann, 1994a:56). "In the Old Testament it is said that the spirit comes in man with the life breath of God (*rûah* of YAHWEH), and then returns to him after death."²⁰³ (2004:85)

In the same way, the term can take on a different meaning when associated with the action of the spirits. In fact it is possible to have a good or bad *rûah*, as the one sent to Abimelech²⁰⁴ or even one of a lie²⁰⁵ (1994a:56).

In the event, associated to the Word (*dābār Yahweh*), it is considered as "God's voice breath"²⁰⁶ (Moltmann, 1994a:57), which, together with God's action, keeps alive through the Spirit and the Word.²⁰⁷ Worth of note, in this case, is the word *dābār*, masculine, which correlates with the feminine life principle, *rûah*. In any case, it is possible to understand it as a divine presence, a transcendent force in God and vitally immanent in man. The word similar to *rûah*, understood as *rewah* which means amplitude,²⁰⁸ indicates space "that is, that space of freedom in which the living can develop"²⁰⁹ (1994a:58). In fact,

²⁰³ Translation from Italian "E nell'Antico Testamento si dice che lo spirito viene nell'uomo con il soffio vitale di Dio (ruah di JHWH), per poi fare a lui ritorno dopo la morte".

²⁰⁴ Jude 9:23 as indicated by Moltmann.

²⁰⁵ 1 Ki 22:22 as indicated by Moltmann.

²⁰⁶ Translation from Italian "il respiro della voce di Dio".

²⁰⁷ Ps 33:6 as indicated by Moltmann.

²⁰⁸ H.Schungel-Straumann, 61 (cited by Moltmann, 1994a:58).

²⁰⁹ Translation from Italian "cioé quello spazio di libertà in cui ciò che vive può svilupparsi".



in experiencing God and living in the Spirit, some say to be "experiencing God in a spatial way"²¹⁰ (Moltmann, 1994a:58).

This same presence can be noted in many people chosen by God. These individuals, as for example in the book of Judges, guided by the Spirit, acting in the name of God to free people, possess the Spirit's gifts. These gifts are given by the *rûah Jahweh* that came down on Otniel or Gideon, or invested Samson giving him strength, or Saul. Two gifts' peculiarities are their limitation in time duration and their spontaneity until, in the royal dynasty of Israel, they became permanent. This is why the king is considered the anointed one of God (Moltmann, 1994a:59). With this statement the presence of God in the people is highlighted through the image of the king who represents Him. To the kings are added the prophets who, seized by the Spirit, begin to preach by the will of the Lord saying what the Lord inspires them to say. Among these there was King Saul too.

Included are also various charismatic manifestations, such as ecstatic rapture, wisdom and judgment, coming from the Spirit who inspires them. Until just before the exile the word is associated with them; in fact, they speak for the Lord announcing the *dābār Jahweh* saying: "Thus says the Lord..." (Moltmann, 1994a:60) to their interlocutors. Prophets like Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah are called literary prophets. Called by the Lord they do not have any extraordinary ecstatic experience, but stay in the words that God tells them. During the exile, in Ezekiel and in Deutero-Isaiah, when prophets' visions and predictions are indicated we find a reference to the *rûah Jahweh* without any extraordinary phenomena. At first, with Saul, and later with the reign of David, the Spirit begins to bestow gifts by giving a Messianic perspective to the kingdom of Israel. Moreover, the same Spirit's action can be seen in the psalms where He works in individuals so that they can make an inner experience of the Spirit (Moltmann, 1994a:61).

²¹⁰

Translation from Italian "sperimentare Dio in modo spaziale".



With these characteristics, the Spirit of God, that is, the *rûah Jahweh*, acts in the people of Israel's history among kings, prophets, judges and other individuals.

4.1.5 *The Spirit of God and His sh^ekînah*

The words *rûah Jahweh* express, therefore, a way to comprehend the action of the Spirit of God in various aspects. Over all, when the adjective "saint" is added to the noun Spirit, it is necessary to make a distinction between the Christian and the Jewish understanding of its meaning. In the early rabbinic literature, it means 'Spirit of the sanctuary' (Schafer, cited by Moltmann, 1994a:63).²¹¹ To Christians, the term refers to God himself. In order to define the *rûah Jahweh*, Christians do not refer to the Jewish concept but they use the *sh^ekînah* idea which means the descent of God in a place and at a certain moment. The term is used in "cultic language and originally refers to God who 'lives under the tent' and 'lives' in the midst of his people, first in the mobile ark, then in the temple on Zion"²¹² (Moltmann, 1994a:63-64). In this way the place where it is possible to find God is, precisely, the sanctuary. Over time, this will become the idea of God living with his people, to whom Israel will call upon in the hardest moments of its history (Moltmann, 1994a:64).

In any case, it represents the presence of God that descends from heaven and stays among the people; not God himself, because even the heavens cannot contain Him. It is the presence of God in the immanent sphere, lest it is saying God's presence as distinct from God Himself (Moltmann, 1994a:64). To better understand the Spirit of God through the *sh^ekînah*, it is

²¹¹ Schafer, P. 1972 *Die Vorstellung vom Heiling Geist in der rabbinischem Litaratur*, Munchen.

²¹² Translation from Italian "linguaggio culturale e originariamente si riferisce a Dio che 'vive sotto la tenda' e 'abita' in mezzo al suo popolo, prima nell'arca mobile, poi nel tempio sul Sion".



possible to note how it represents not only the active presence of God, but also the sensitiveness of God Himself when the Spirit suffers, inhabits, rejoices or is grieved (Moltmann, 1994a:68).

4.1.6 *Messianic expectations of the Spirit*

According to Moltmann, experiencing God in history, through the Spirit, is not only a past experience, but it opens to a future founded in the historical events which give value to the present in the hope of the future. The people of Israel are a good example of experiencing God during the Exodus, in the presence of that alliance which gives hope for the Promised Land. For the same reason, when the people were in exile in Babylon, it hoped for a return to the Promised Land. The people of Israel always maintained those expectations, hopes for a brighter future. From its beginning, "the religion of Israel has been a *religion of God's expectations*, and these expectations must certainly be considered as the foundation holding the different horizons in which the messianic and pneumatic hopes are delineated"²¹³ (Moltmann, 1994a:69-70).

As Moltmann argues, the people's renewal by the Spirit, purifying them from the committed sins, is included in the restoration of Zion. But this renewal, well expressed in the book of Isaiah, does not concern any king of Israel, referring to a particular king on whom the Spirit would rest, confirming the fidelity of God to His people. Isaiah announces the messianic king who will be anointed and to whom mercy and justice will be linked, near to the last ones proclaiming what Moltmann calls "the eschatological sabbath" (Moltmann, 1994a:70) that is, an eternal Sabbath, the Saturday, which will represent the

²¹³ Translation from Italian "la religione d'Israele è stata una religione *dell'attesa di Dio*, e questa attesa va considerata senz'altro come il fondamento che regge i diversi orizzonti in cui si delineano le speranze messianiche e pneumatiche".



true rest, when there will be no injustice and the right will be restored. This hope has its historical foundation in the Exodus and it will happen again (1994a:71).

Therefore, passing from the pre-exile to the exile moments, different occasions are determined in which the *rûah* manifests itself, until it will have a futuristic connotation projected into the future. This determines a continuity of the work of God's *rûah* with a subsequent intervention in the future (1994a:71).

Thus *rûah* represents the presence of God everywhere, beginning from Moses to Ezekiel and Jeremiah and after the exile. In all Israel's history the work of the Spirit gives hope. An example is Ezekiel 37 where dry bones come back to life and where the Spirit enters people to resurrect them. The temple, therefore, is no longer necessary because the people themselves become the temple of the Spirit and of God's *sh'kînah*. This is testified by Ezekiel when he speaks of a new heart and by Jeremiah, when he points to the heart as the seat of God's laws. This future hope is well expressed by Joel 3:1 which anticipates the outpouring of the Spirit over all, without distinction of sex, race, or age. Only then will God's people be considered a prophetic people (Moltmann, 1994a:73).

Poured on every flesh means 'human life' (Moltmann, 1998:20). God is the source of life like water in the case of the Samaritan woman. Therefore the Spirit is not only a divine person but a divine element that is sent with the aim of filling every living being (Moltmann, 1998:21). "In the 'outpouring of God's Spirit the divinity unfolds, to become a 'divinity that melts and flows', as in *Matilde of Magdeburg's* poetry The transition from the Spirit to the different vital energies, from *châris* to *charísmata*, is an *effluvium* that we could call 'emanation'."²¹⁴ (Moltmann, 1998:21)

²¹⁴ Translation from Italian "Nell' 'effusione dello Spirito di Dio' la Divinità di dischiude, per diventare <<divinità che fonde e fluisce>>, come poetava *Matilde di Magdeburgo* [...] il trapasso dallo Spirito alle diverse energie vitali, dalla *châris* ai *charísmata*, è un effluvio che potremmo chiamare 'emanazione'.



This “being sent” is none other than the “*Missio Dei*,” that is, the mission of the Holy Spirit sent by the Father through the Son. “The Holy Spirit, in fact, is the ‘source of life and brings life to the world: whole life, full life, not hindered, non-destructible, *eternal life*.”²¹⁵ (Moltmann, 1998:29) And this mission which brings new life “does not mean ‘compulsion to enter’ (*cogite to enter*), but an invitation to the future of God and to the hope in a new creation of all things”²¹⁶ (Moltmann, 1998:31). In the meantime, He renews the people of God, every living being, and the whole earth (Moltmann, 1998:33-35).

4.1.7 *Between Christ and the Spirit*

By carefully analyzing the Pauline and Johannine texts, Moltmann notes that they develop a christological pneumatology. So, a question arises: what relationship can there be between the “Christ of the Spirit and the Spirit of Christ?” In the Western church’s tradition this relationship has been ignored. Reform movements fought it because the Lord of the Church was only the risen Christ and all was focused on Him. In the East with the Cappadocians, reciprocity has always been present in the Trinitarian doctrine, without including the *filioque* (1994a:76-77). In the next paragraph, the relations between them will be explained.

4.1.7.1 The Christ of the Spirit: Jesus’ spirituality and the kingdom

From the historical point of view, Jesus’ story is based on the action of the Spirit. Moltmann thinks that it was possible that, at baptism, Jesus had an

²¹⁵ Translation from Italian “Lo Spirito Santo, infatti, è la ‘la fonte della vità e porta vita al mondo: vita intera, vita piena, non impedita, non distruttibile, *vita eterna*.”.

²¹⁶ Translation from Italian “non significa ‘costrizione ad entrarè (*cogite entrare*), ma invito al futuro di Dio ed alla speranza nella creazione nuova di tutte le cose”.



experience of the Spirit confirming that He was the Son of God on which the Spirit rested. Throughout his life the Spirit was visible, in calling his father *Abba* or in his obedience. Therefore, the Spirit descended on Jesus and his permanence, according to Moltmann is the *sh^ekînah* of God (1994a:78).

In so doing, the Spirit limits Himself, humbles Himself and identifies Himself in the person of Jesus and in what concerned his whole life until the passion (1994a:78). His presence in Jesus, 'without measure',²¹⁷ permits the access into the reign and the re-creation of all things, and this is why Jesus does great things in the power of the Spirit confirming his messianic royalty. The Messiah's royalty is not comparable to that of today's kings. In fact, it was in opposition to today's way of seeing the kings since He did not take advantage of the people nor did He commit any kind of violence, control or force, but He peacefully used the Spirit's gifts. In this way, the Spirit did represent the transcendent part of his journey on earth until He suffered on the cross (Moltmann, 1994a:79) binding with Him his *sh^ekînah*, the Spirit of Christ "to the point that from now on it can be qualified and invoked in the name of Christ"²¹⁸ (Moltmann, 1994a:80). However, the Spirit's action was evident in all Jesus' actions. According to the Gospels, the first thing people experienced in Jesus was the healing virtue of the divine Spirit. This is why people, coming close to Jesus, introduced themselves as sick and not as 'sinners', as it would be in Paul²¹⁹ (Moltmann, 1995:17). In this way the kingdom was present in those who were sick with the Spirit giving life to those who, at that moment, were considered dead. Everything was a response of faith through the experience produced by the Spirit (Moltmann, 1995:17). Today, this experience gives us life leading us to the future of the kingdom (Moltmann,

²¹⁷ John 3:34.

²¹⁸ Translation from Italian "al punto che d'ora in poi può essere qualificato e invocato con il nome di Cristo".

²¹⁹ Translation from Italian "'La prima cosa che, secondo i vangeli, gli uomini sperimentarono in Gesù fu la *virtù sanante dello Spirito divino*. Per questo secondo i vangeli gli uomini, vicino a Gesù, si manifestarono come malati e non come 'peccatori', come avviene in Paolo".



1995:19). This same experience was available from the beginning and the first church experienced what was “at least equally supported by the ‘*experience of the Spirit of God*’. Paul therefore calls this divine Spirit the ‘vivifying Spirit’ and the ‘power of resurrection’”²²⁰ (Moltmann, 1995:80).

The same power which enabled Christ’s resurrection will act in our bodies²²¹ in the future resurrection from the dead. Therefore, from a past event, that is, the resurrection of Christ, the Spirit actualizes today’s experience in the light of the future (Moltmann, 1995:86-87).

This process is called by Paul “Christ’s creation”, and, by John the Spirit rebirth. According to John, the Spirit rebirth gives new life, as a mother letting us enter into the kingdom (Moltmann, 1995:143).

4.1.7.2 Christ’s Spirit: the spirituality of the community

“Pauline identification of Christ and the Spirit is unusual in 1 Cor 15:45 where Christ, the new man,” became the life-giving Spirit”²²² (Moltmann, 1994a:85). Due to Jesus’ resurrection, the power of the Spirit is identified as the donor of life. In fact, the risen Jesus who lives by the Spirit, as Spirit of Jesus, is the life-giver. “Being the eternal Spirit, as Calvin rightly emphasizes” (Moltmann, 1994a:85),²²³ it is possible to expect eternal life as a gift, the recreation of all things, the resurrection of the dead and the new birth of the living. In this activity of the Spirit, at the death of Jesus, it is possible to detect God’s participation to reconcile the world, highlighting how the trinitarian action

²²⁰ Translation from Italian “era sorretta perlomeno in misura altrettanto grande dall’*esperienza dello Spirito di Dio*’. Paolo chiama perciò questo Spirito divino lo <<Spirito vivificante>> e la <<forza della risurrezione>>”.

²²¹ Rm 8:11 as indicated by Moltmann.

²²² Translation from Italian “Singolare e’ l’identificazione paolina tra Cristo e Spirito in *1 Cor 15:45*” Cristo, l’uomo nuovo, <<divenne Spirito datore di vita>>”.

²²³ Cited by Moltmann in referring to G. CALVINO, *Corp. Reg. 47,48*. Cf W. KRUSCHE, *Das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes nach Calvin*, Göttingen 1957, 137 ss. Translated from Italian ““Essendo lo Spirito eterno, come giustamente Calvino sottolinea””.



was present in every moment of Jesus' earthly life. This action is passed to Christ's body, the church. In this new dimension, the Spirit gives charisms signifying the beginning of the new creation because Christ's body now becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit (Moltmann, 1994a:86-87). This passage is visible in the Comforter promised by Jesus who stays with Jesus as saving power at his cross. According to Moltmann, on the cross there is a reversal, from Christology to pneumatology, thus creating what he defines "*pneumatologia crucis*" (1994a:88).

"Being founded in Christ and oriented towards the future of God's kingdom, the church is grounded in all that it truly is and can do, in the presence and strength of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit renews it in communion with Christ. It infuses the power of the new creation and of the freedom and peace that dwell in it."²²⁴ (Moltmann, 1976:8) In this way the messianic kingdom is fully realized (Moltmann, 1976:17) since, in the present, it is possible to live in what the deposit of the new future creation is (Moltmann, 1976:57), which is the Spirit. In this way, the present is linked to the future, awaiting the advent of God and experiencing something of what people will have at Christ's advent. This is why Moltmann underlines how to experience future things in the Spirit, making sure that the various gifts of the Spirit are not to be considered as supernatural, but only energies or forces of a world that will come (1998:47).

Therefore, the Spirit tends to establish a communion between Christ and the Church which is precisely the communion of the Holy Spirit having a historical link with what Christ did, becoming the "eschatological creature of the Spirit"²²⁵ (Moltmann, 1976:57).

In this way, as Moltmann argues, in the church, life is one in the Spirit and obedience, because the historical link with Christ makes it manifest the

²²⁴ Translation from Italian "Essendo fondata in Cristo e orientata verso il futuro del regno di Dio, la chiesa si trova, in tutto ciò che essa in verità è e può fare, nella *presenza* e nella *forza* dello *Spirito santo*. Lo Spirito la rinnova nella comunione con Cristo. Le infonde le forze della nuova creazione e della libertà e pace che in essa abitano".

²²⁵ Translation from Italian "creatura escatologica dello Spirito".



Spirit Himself and also the new power that the Spirit gives the church in this new creation. "In the eschatological perspective it is therefore possible to qualify the Spirit as 'the power of the future', since it is through the Spirit that the believer is determined by the future of God."²²⁶ (1976:58)

This newly created community is multiple and not uniform, since uniformity "represses the Holy Spirit's pluralism and his charisms"²²⁷ (Moltmann, 1995:154). Creation therefore, is not uniform, and is formed by a person born again by the Spirit. Men and women who become brothers and sisters in the new birth experience by the action of the Spirit who makes them free and all equals (Moltmann, 1998:38).

4.1.7.3 The final expectation of the Spirit

"Waiting for the Spirit" is an expression drawn from the text "Come, Lord Jesus"²²⁸ where, thanks to the Spirit, believers invoke the return of Christ to make God's kingdom fully initiated. This experience of the Spirit, individually or within the community, tends to highlight a hopeful expectation in an eschatological key. It is a deposit that people have now, but which will be increased in the future. In any case, people have already experienced the new creation by the Spirit, and have come to know that the apostle himself is the first fruit of what people will have (Moltmann, 1994a:92). Thus, the believer lives in this hope in which the Spirit has already performed a new creation in a person who lives in the joy of the Spirit in this world.

Moltmann highlights a negative side too: "*When freedom is near, the chains begin to hurt.*"²²⁹ (1994a:93) With this saying, Moltmann emphasizes

²²⁶ Translation from Italian "In prospettiva escatologica è possibile dunque qualificare lo Spirito come 'la potenza della futurità', poiché è attraverso lo Spirito che il credente viene determinato dal futuro di Dio".

²²⁷ Translation from Italian "reprime il pluralismo dello Spirito Santo e dei suoi carismi".

²²⁸ NASB Rev 22:20b.

²²⁹ Translation from Italian "*Quando la libertà è vicina, le catene incominciano a far male*".



the importance of freedom and the truth that, when it is lost, man becomes accustomed to the chains which entrap him. Imprisonment acts as a warning to the prisoner of the positive value of freedom and of a rich life which he, now, cannot fully live. This happens in the Christian life in which you expect a full and positive though living in a negative qualified world (1994a:94).

4.2 *Living life in the Spirit*

Therefore, the Spirit works in the world and works in the people if they allow Him to act. However, there are things to consider in a life anointed by the Spirit.

4.2.1 *Differences between spirituality and vitality*

Dealing with with this theme, of life in the Spirit, Moltmann begins by making a distinction between spirituality and religiosity. Moltmann argues that if religiosity is the search for something higher, spirituality tends, instead, to outline a life lived in communion with God and in the Spirit (1994a:102). In fact, the apostle Paul uses the term *en pneúmati* to be understood as a life lived under the Spirit (1994a:102). Initially the idea was to isolate ourselves from this world and live in celibacy and poverty living a spiritual life of asceticism, fasting or moments of contemplation. This way of experiencing spirituality does not align with others living in different realities. This is why spiritual life is opposed to a life dominated by carnal sensibility which is completely external and not internal (Moltmann, 1994a:103).

Regarding vitality, Moltmann, repropose an old concept used during the late bourgeois cultural revolution that occurred before the Great War. In this case, life had to be lived in harmony with nature seeing it under new



aspects, values. Moltmann defines this vitality (1994a:105) or true spirituality (1998:102) as love of life. Love that leads to unite man to other living creatures who, like him, want to live. And all this despite the difficulties that exist in life itself.

In the division between external and internal, Moltmann relates the imminent *aeon* of life and the transient one of sin and death. Following the apostle Paul's indication, who, by flesh (*sārx*) indicates a sphere of the created world seen in its transiency, or a life lived in the flesh (*en sarkī*), clarifying the concept of living life in the Spirit through a divine origin, which considers the human being in its entirety and not only that portion related to the body (1994a:107). In this way, he classifies the world as unsaved but in the hope of having redemption in order to understand what the flesh actually is, that is how the Spirit illuminates it (1994a:108). In this struggle, the Spirit does not tend to separate us from the world but, as Moltmann says, gives us hope because this world passes according to a concept which is "apocalyptic with universal dimensions"²³⁰ (1994a:109).

This vision leads us to consider the human soul as the *Imago Dei*, that is, the image of God, so that people can be whole before God and in communion with others, as it was at the creation of man and woman. In this, Moltmann sees "*the social experience of the self as well as the personal experience of communion*"²³¹ (1994a:115) in a relationship of man with God and man with others. This experience of the Spirit recreates the human being, since the Spirit is the divine and vital force of new creation (Moltmann, 1994a:115) being the One who reveals and recreates everything (1976:85).

This is what sets the Spirit of life in communion with God as if it were a loving partner, a travelling companion even in suffering (1998:112).

²³⁰ Translation from Italian "apocalittica dalle dimensioni universali".

²³¹ Translation from Italian "*l'esperienza sociale di sè e l'esperienza personale di comunione*".



In this way the mortal body is revived from its oppression in the hope of the transfiguration of the body, beginning from a life renewed by charisms. Hence, Moltmann relates spirituality to creation which leads to the liberation of the body for its transiency (1994a:116).

The Spirit, the source of life, makes life acceptable, highlighting love for life, thus giving life to life itself, the life of and in the Spirit who battles against death.

However, what does this experience lead to? It leads to what Moltmann sees as liberation from life. In fact, what is the first experience that man makes of God? That of being set free. Free from what? From guilt, from death, in the inner part of man, while externally, he does not bow to the law of economic, political and cultural impositions”²³² (1994a:120). This process, according to Moltmann, leads to a new level of inner life and to the opening of new vital spaces in relation to others. Israel, after being set free from the Egyptian slavery, in the exodus, experienced this kind of liberation.

Similarly, today's man can experience what is written: “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty.”²³³ Accepting Christ's lordship means to be no longer subjected, as a servant, to the master who exercises a certain power over him. With the new Lord, one is set free from being a servant. Paul speaks openly when he asks who will set him free from his body of death. He finds the answer in the Lord with whom he begins a new relationship, different from the past, in which God becomes our Father (1994a:121-122).

This God can be known “in the experiences that Jesus made of God and in the experiences of those who live in communion with Jesus by the Spirit”²³⁴ (Moltmann, 1994a:122). He is the God Jesus who died on the cross

²³² Translation from Italian “mentre all'esterno non si piegano alla legge delle imposizioni economiche, politiche e culturali”.

²³³ NASB 2 Cor 3:17.

²³⁴ Translation from Italian “Io si coglie soltanto nelle esperienze che Gesù fece di Dio e nelle esperienze che dello Spirito fanno coloro che vivono in comunione con Gesù”.



and rose again. But if the power that sets man free is in this God who acts in the Son, the same is true of the Spirit by whom everything happens because He is the Spirit of Christ and of God. Through the Word that works in people's heart, the Spirit opens once closed doors (Moltmann, 1994a:124).

Then, 'God's Spirit' opens up new possibilities in us, through historical conditions in which we move. We will indicate the specific activity of the Holy Spirit as the work that makes subjective the objective word of God, in the hearts of faithful people"²³⁵ (1994a:125). In so doing, both the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of God, word and *kairós* (appropriate timing) operate, thus becoming God's experience, that kind of an experience which gives freedom.

4.2.2 Liberation theology as an example of praxis

A modern aspect of this freedom, supported by faith in God, can be glimpsed in a movement born in South America to counteract the social situation faced by indigenous peoples. Thus it is not a theoretical situation of freedom, but it is a practical experience that leads people who live in misery, suffering violence and injustice, to defend themselves invoking freedom. In fact, reflecting on biblical history, especially which is exposed in the book of Exodus, one discovers a "liberation" theology referring to the *kairos* through a contextual hermeneutics (Moltmann, 1994a:132). This is because everything is based on the search for justice, through the ethical experience of a people towards the other, since this is the experience of the biblical God, the one who recognizes the right of all the people. In the context in which it is found, this leads to the search for liberation. The historical concept of liberation is then brought to a future expectation, relating to the coming kingdom of God

²³⁵ Translation from Italian "Lo 'Spirito di Dio' dischiude in noi, attraverso condizioni storiche in cui ci muoviamo, nuove possibilità. Dovremo precisare l'attività dello Spirito Santo, dunque, come l'opera che rende soggettivamente efficace, nel cuore dei fedeli, la parola oggettiva di Dio".



(Moltmann, 1994a:132-133). Therefore, just as the Exodus liberation led to the Covenant, so the politics of liberation tend to satisfy perspectives in favour of the people and freedom.

4.2.3 Steps after liberation

According to Moltmann, it is necessary to take successive important steps; the search for divine justice that brings peace, the new birth and the sanctification of life.

The invocation of the Spirit, in search of a justice from God not otherwise obtained, confirms that the Spirit of truth is the One who convinces the world of sin by bringing justice where there is no justice, and giving freedom to slaves, that kind of freedom which leads to eternal life. This happens because of the Spirit of Christ who, being also the Comforter brings comfort to those who are unjustly accused (1994a:146-147). This applies not only at a social or political level, but as liberation from sin which Moltmann clearly underlines, like "the liberations from economic injustice, political oppression, cultural alienation and personal discouragement"²³⁶ (1994a:152). In this way "divine justice gives cause to the victims"²³⁷ (1994a:153) and acts in favour of the oppressed, orphans and widows. It is the messianic proclamation of the liberating Messiah that will bring justice among the nations. Only after justice will there be peace.

As indicated by some Old Testament passages, God's action is in favour of the weak and of those who suffer and cannot be defended (Moltmann, 1994a:153).

Though injustice is suffered by people, God is also a victim of the violent, being the example of one who underwent suffering. The suffering

²³⁶ Translation from Italian "le liberazioni dall'ingiustizia economica, dall'oppressione politica, dall'alienazione culturale e dallo scoramento personale".

²³⁷ Translation from Italian "la giustizia divina crea diritto per le vittime".



servant accepted sufferings and sorrows and this is why He understands people and is in solidarity with men and women. In the passion He knows what suffering, injustice and violence mean (Moltmann, 1994a:154). Here then, the action of God leads to liberation by justifying the guilty ones who are in sin, setting free the oppressed from violent people and from injustice. Sin is forgiven, but the sinner must be regenerated.

This action is individual, but Moltmann believes that it is also a collective, social one. Indeed, "God's justice corrects the structures"²³⁸ (1994a:163). As an example he takes "*apartheid*". Christ refuses an unjust society, fostering that kind of justice which does not distinguish between races, classes or sex (1994a:165).

God's justice therefore acts, bringing law and peace (1994a:166) and everything which pertains to the work of the Spirit of justice that will clear the bad conscience exposing all the injustice of this world. In this way He will create justice (Moltmann, 1994a:168). "This is why we can qualify the Holy Spirit as the *justification of life*."²³⁹ (Moltmann, 1994a:168) "The Spirit that corrects and restores."²⁴⁰ (Moltmann, 1994a:168)

Once justice is done, the need is for a new step forward, which Moltmann defines in eastern terms. '*Palinghenesía*' is a word derived from oriental cosmology that refers to the new birth of the world. According to this concept, the ages of the world are cyclically based on periodic regeneration which occurs at the beginning of each year or week (1994a:170). This way of understanding opens the door to the doctrine of reincarnation.

In the Jewish context, the concept takes on an eschatological aspect as a new birth for the coming kingdom of God. According to Moltmann it should not be considered as a regeneration, but "*incipit vita nova*, which can be

²³⁸ Translation from Italian "la giustizia di Dio corregge le strutture".

²³⁹ Translation from Italian "Per questo potremo qualificare lo Spirito Santo come la *giustificazione della vita*".

²⁴⁰ Translation from Italian "Lo Spirito che corregge e ristabilisce".



individually inferred from the encounter with Nicodemus”²⁴¹ (Moltmann, 1994a:170), becoming universal according to Daniel.²⁴²

However, according to Moltmann, the reference to this new life has a different meaning from what is generally understood. According to him what is new is something unique and eternal and not repetitive, (1998:39) something which makes a noticeable difference with the Eastern conception. So the reference is not to the American version of “being born again”.

Referring to the new creation it is normal to exclude Mt 19.28 which indicates a new creation from the cosmic-apocalyptic point of view. It has always been seen only as an inner personal experience and no more, thus excluding the words in Matthew and considering only that of Titus²⁴³ in which renewal comes through baptism and the entry into the community is due to the outpouring of the Spirit.

This new life is, therefore, nothing else than Christ’s resurrection actualized in the people by the gift of eternal life despite their transiency (Moltmann, 1998:41). It is a new reality giving hope in the regeneration (Moltmann, 1998:42) brought by Christ. In this connection it is possible to obtain what He obtained as the first fruit of everything.

This is the way in which the Spirit becomes the source of life that regenerates, giving new life, energy and strength to all those who ask. A far superior life will be here and during eternity because it becomes what it was intended for (Moltmann, 2004:137).

It also means becoming just, heir of that eternal life that He expects (Moltmann, 1994a:170). Explaining this new being, determined by regeneration due to the work of Christ and the action of the Holy Spirit, Moltmann compares the Spirit to a mother who gives new life again and again as it happens to a mother giving birth to a child (Moltmann, 1994a:183-184).

²⁴¹ Translation from Italian “*incipit vita nova*, come si deduce anche dal colloquio con Nicodemo”.

²⁴² Dn 7 indicated by Moltmann.

²⁴³ Titus 3:5-7.



Moltmann also qualifies this action as '*Spirita*', that is, according to the Spirit of Consolation, like that of a mother acting with her children, emphasizing, therefore, the feminine character of the term, coming closer to the Hebrew *rûah Jahweh* (1994a:185).

After birth a child grows up, and this must be the tendency that a Christian should have. In fact, if the Spirit is active in the new birth then the implication is a growth in faith and in knowledge. This growth has to do with ourselves and with our relationship with others. It is a life lived that, according to Paul, is also oriented eschatologically towards the future.

Since the gifts are the forces of the future world, it is the love of God which, in the Spirit, is experienced today and one day will be fully experienced. Such a growth is in quality thanks to the work of the Spirit in us (Moltmann, 1994a:189-191). This process, called sanctification, follows the decision to accept Christ.

The new life in the Spirit develops certain qualities, even good works, as the response of a person to God that begins manifesting to his people. Here is what is re-established which at first, was defined as the image of God, which man carries with him (Moltmann, 1994a:205).

In this process, the Spirit nourishes and nurtures the person by producing fruit (Moltmann, 1994a:206) giving new life to life itself, while knowing that "the fruit of the Spirit is the anticipation of bliss in joy despite the experience of suffering and in love despite the experience of disappointment and hatred"²⁴⁴ (Moltmann, 1976:58).

²⁴⁴ Translation from Italian "Il frutto dello Spirito è l'anticipazione della beatitudine nella gioia malgrado l'esperienza della sofferenza, e nell'amore malgrado l'esperienza della delusione e dell'odio".



4.3 *Life under the influence of charismatic forces*

Life has in itself something that has to do with the Spirit, in fact, beyond all, the Spirit of life begins to act when one experiences the Spirit beginning from the call or vocation. In this context, Moltmann relates what is vocation or *klésis* to talent or *chárisma*; this is why man is considered charismatic. In this way, the two concepts cross each other in such a way that talent supports vocation. Therefore, basically, everyone has his *chárisma* that is helpful in the community where other charisms exist. But how does this interweaving of gifts of the Spirit and the one Spirit take place? Between the specific *cháris* and the many *chárismata*? Or better, how does unity fit in diversity and vice versa? (1994a:211).

Moltmann answers these questions by claiming that charismatics are not some electives as if they possess something more or different from others. All believers are addressed since the promise was that the Spirit would be poured out on every person²⁴⁵ to give eternal life (1998:75).

4.3.1 *New life moved by new vitalities*

What are these charisms for? How do they integrate into the community? Moltmann's answer begins, obviously, from the apostle Paul. The German theologian studies Paul's biblical vision, more focused on praxis, especially in reference to the first letter to the Corinthians. In chapter 7 he relates vocation to calling pointing out, primarily, that everyone must maintain the condition he had when he was called. This is because at his time, society was manifold and approached the gospel in different ways, such as the

²⁴⁵

Joel 2:28.



Hebrew's or the pagan's, or according to gender, male or female, or social status of freedom or slavery (1994a:212). Beyond the differences, individually, each of them had the Spirit calling them to perform a service according to the experience of the Spirit who influenced the believers' life. Thus, their action was a *charism* of the Spirit in actual service.

Moltmann, indeed, highlights the fact that “*charism*, a gift that becomes a task, is what should be put into service of the liberating lordship of the Lord”²⁴⁶ (1994a:212).

Action then becomes a charism because it works for Christ and encompasses the whole life of the believer, making his life a charismatic one, lived in faith and in gratitude to the work of the Spirit who vivifies it (1994a:213). In the same way, any individual life related to others becomes a life of action in the service of the kingdom of God.

In this sense Paul considers them worthy of edification within a community where they are revealed through the work of the Spirit. There are gifts of various kinds, from those ministerial or *kerygmatic* to those marked by certain phenomena such as speaking in tongues, or diaconal or healing gifts, or as Moltmann indicates, the cybernetic ones of faith, leadership or pastors or community builders that occur when a community already exists. All these gifts are at the service of a community and are made available to all, each with his own gift in a diversity of services, all referred to the same Spirit and for the common utility (1994a:214-215).

Therefore, spiritual charisms put people of the same community at each other service. These are historical experiences tied to Christ's story. It is an individual experience, done by faith and within the communion of the church (1976:82) communion that leads to encountering others, who entered the kingdom like me, and therefore similar to me (1976:166). Only within the community of believers, the Spirit and therefore the charisms live in

²⁴⁶ Translation from Italian “il carisma, dono che diventa compito, è tutto ciò che può essere messo a servizio della signoria liberante del Signore”.



remembrance of Christ and in the hope of the kingdom which will be coming in power. The presence of the Spirit who renders the church messianic celebrating the signs of hope and of the advent of Christ (1976:377).

All believers, therefore, are in unity, not just as physical persons gathered in one place, but also and above all, unity of the Spirit who is one and is not distinguishable in the sacrament or ministry (Moltmann, 1976:377). This is because all members have their ministry, all are priests, prophets and kings. The Spirit is not owned only by some, therefore nobody can claim to possess Him totally. This is why in a living community life happens like in the first Pentecostal community, with vocations and many called ones, seeking all the same thing in the call to which everyone answered (1998:74).

4.3.2 *The gift of speaking in tongues*

This gift is historically documented in Acts 2 and has accompanied the various reawakening movements in Christianity, and the last Pentecostal movement. Moltmann confesses that he does not have a direct experience therefore he cannot 'contradict or explain the phenomenon, but views it from the outside' (1994a:215). That's why he says: "My impression is that in *glossolalia* one feels so much possessed by the Spirit that he cannot express it in a verbal way so that all understand, but in an incomprehensible way of moans and cries, like when we cry uncontrollably to express a very intense pain, or when we laugh, jump and dance to communicate the joy that pervades us."²⁴⁷ (1998:79)

²⁴⁷ Translation from Italian "la mia impressione è che nella glossolalia ci si senta talmente afferrati dallo Spirito da esprimersi non più nel modo verbale che tutti comprendiamo, ma in quello incomprensibile dei gemiti e delle grida, come quando si piange senza ritegno per esprimere un dolore molto intenso, o si ride, si salta e si balla per comunicare la gioia che ci pervade".



Hence, he regards it as a strong emotion produced by the Spirit which results in external *glossolalia* (Moltmann, 1994a:215). All these gestures or words, prophecies, praises and anything else the Spirit manifests, are expressed in this spontaneous prayer becoming motions and modes of expression in a charismatic community. However, those modes vary according to the areas in which they are expressed.

After talking on the charismatic movement, Moltmann criticizes the churches of Germany where there is sound preaching, beautiful music and choirs, with no participation of the people present in the church, showing a lack of Christian personality in each member. The order and discipline are very different from those in the Afro-American and African communities where liturgy is charismatic and the personal charismatic experience is so strong that even those who are generally silent do participate to the charismatic event (Moltmann, 1994a:216).

By making this analysis, he underlines how even if the experience of the Spirit happens in an incomprehensible way, this language can always be interpreted. He refers to the apostle Paul who suggests to desire the gift of prophecy so that, what is said, is understandable to those who listen. This prophetic action happens in a private or public *kairós* that defines what is sin or grace (Moltmann, 1994a:216).

In any case, Moltmann tends to underline how this charismatic experience reawakens the individual faith so to express himself in freedom, (1998:79) in what he calls the "feast of freedom" of the resurrected one where the power of the Spirit is experienced and anyone, weak or helpless, begins to sing, talk and move. These people come out of themselves in a surprising way (1976:155) and in this feast they begin to have a joyous release of life expressed with the above-mentioned characteristics that is singing, playfulness, dance, joy, precisely because they release the power of the Spirit (1976:154-155).



Moltmann, indeed, emphasizes how: "In Pentecostal churches we speak of 'new birth' to signify the profound and continuous experience that is made of the gifts that the Spirit has poured on our existence."²⁴⁸ (Moltmann, 1998:37) This is the reason why he considers the Pentecostal or African churches' liturgies as a celebration of the liberation of the abundant fullness of the Spirit with no limiting rules on liturgy or strict religious regulations (Moltmann, 1976:155).

All this does not happen in the communities he attended because they seemed blocked and concentrated on a single crystallized experience. For this reason, he judges critically the action of these churches that tend to stifle the charismatic spirit without first enabling Him to act, revitalizing the church and awaking people (1998:80). The church is linked to the Spirit and placed at his service; therefore it would be necessary to be at the disposal of the Holy Spirit, who blows wherever He wants. Hence, the church should be listening to the Spirit, breathing and understanding in which direction to go (Moltmann, 1998:116).

However, if on the one hand he criticizes his own confession in favour of this new movement, on the other hand he criticizes the charismatics which today refuse to use their charisms in everyday life, that is, in politics, in the peace movement, and in the commitment to ecology. In fact, the power of the Spirit operates within the church and should be testified outside it, manifesting Christ's liberating power (Moltmann, 1998:80).

In addition to speaking in tongues, there are other charismatic forces like healing physical and psychic infirmities, which are signs of regeneration, determining a transition from a precarious stage of health to one in which the person recovers, foreshadowing recreation. In this way the power of Christ's resurrection is symbolized as well as the coming of that kingdom which opened

²⁴⁸ Translation from Italian "Nelle chiese pentecostali si parla di 'rinascita' a significare l'esperienza, profonda e continuativa, che si fa dei doni che lo Spirito ha riversato sulla nostra esistenza".



its doors two thousand years ago (Moltmann, 1998:83). This Spirit's way of acting becomes a flowing, a shining or a pouring like water or light which covers the individual who receives it (Moltmann, 1998:88).

4.3.3 *The Spirit as a source of energy and his future fulfillment*

How is the Spirit considered in this life and how is He experienced? The Spirit "is experienced as a *vitalizing energy*"²⁴⁹ (Moltmann, 1994a:226). According to Moltmann, "we experience ourselves in the oscillations of the divine force field"²⁵⁰ (1994a:226) and from this point of view the Spirit is considered as *dýnamis* or *enérgeia*, that is a power or energy. The Spirit is seen as the source of life or of the propagation of the energies or light, while He is poured out on every flesh, giving gifts that are part of Him. Everything is a passage of that vitality which moves from the source, that is the Spirit Himself (Moltmann, 1994a:226) who gives various gifts, thus giving a spiritual quality to every flesh.

This is the way to determine not only a communion with the Spirit but also between God and us, which is intimate and profound, and which Moltmann calls "mutual inhabitation" (1994a:227). In this way God participates in every person's life, in an experience of the Spirit obtained through the vitalizing energies which give life never possible before, that is, shining on life in love and in communion with others.

However, the excess use of these energies has been corrected by Paul himself who in his letter to the Corinthians highlights two points: one is what Moltmann calls 'eschatological reserve' which is opposed to the forms of ecstasy that he calls 'fulfillment'. The other is identified with the theology of the

²⁴⁹ Translation from Italian "è sperimentato come *energia vitalizzante*".

²⁵⁰ Translation from Italian "noi facciamo esperienza di noi stessi nelle oscillazioni del campo di forza divino".



cross that is in contrast with "the enthusiasm that flies off the earth on which that cross is planted"²⁵¹ which Moltmann calls '*eschatologia crucis*' (Moltmann, 1979:164).

This way of seeing the power of the Spirit, is also treated by Moltmann in his famous text: 'Theology of Hope'. In this book Moltmann says: "The believer does not receive the eternal Spirit of the heavens, but the eschatological 'deposit of the Spirit'; of the Spirit, *who raised* Christ from the dead and *who will resurrect* our mortal bodies (Romans 8:11)." (1979:166) This relationship between Christ and the Spirit, starting from the event of Christ's resurrection and bringing vitality today through the Spirit, focuses on the future, and for this reason the *pnéuma*, indicated by Moltmann and defined by Bultmann, "can be defined as the power of future reality"²⁵² (cited by Moltmann, 1979:217).

In any case, the German theologian says, future and past are not different from the present, but are distinguished only in the historical event of Jesus who has risen in the resurrection (1979:217) putting man "in the tendency of what is latent in the resurrection of Jesus, to what the future of the risen one tends"²⁵³ (1979:217).

This action, therefore, is present in man. This power acting on him, that is the Holy Spirit, is nothing but the deposit of the future glory which aims to glorify Christ in the faithful ones, uniting them to Him so that the future glory is already present in the historical present day of the believer (Moltmann, 1976:87). These powers or energies, those are Paul's *chárismata*, are the energies of the new life, the gifts "of God's creative grace"²⁵⁴ (Moltmann, 1976:384). Produced by the Spirit, they define specific roles and tasks in the

²⁵¹ Translation from Italian "l'entusiasmo che abbandona la terra su cui quella croce è piantata".

²⁵² MOLTSMANN, J. 1979. Theologie des Neuen Testaments, 1953, p.331. translated from "si può definire come la potenza della realtà futura".

²⁵³ Translation from Italian "nella tendenza di ciò che è latente nella risurrezione di Gesù, di ciò a cui tende il futuro del risorto".

²⁵⁴ Translation from Italian "della grazia creatrice di Dio".



kingdom. They are to be understood as "functions of the messianic lordship of Christ"²⁵⁵ (Moltmann, 1976:394).

"The Holy Spirit becomes the energetic, vibrant and vitalizing field of the new life, we are in God and God is in us"²⁵⁶ (Moltmann, 1998:72). New life is experienced in the power of the Spirit and in the call (or vocation). Moltmann emphasizes that we are charismatic even when we do not use the gifts we have, even when we ignore them (1998:73).

In fact, according to Paul, "vocation and abilities received as a gift are inextricably linked to each other"²⁵⁷ (1998:73).

Therefore, both call and vocation are accompanied by gifts that should be used immediately.

4.4 The Spirit's communion

The Spirit as the third person of the Trinity has an important function, that of bringing communion and relationships. For this reason it is a person. These points will be analyzed in this section.

4.4.1 Experiences of the Spirit - experience of communion

The term communion is closely linked to the Holy Spirit, differently from the Father who is linked to love and to the Son who is attached to grace. The doxology indicated by Paul's verse is very clear because it expresses the relationships of every side of the persons of the Trinity. This three-way

²⁵⁵ Translation from Italian "funzioni della signoria messianica di Cristo".

²⁵⁶ Translation from Italian "Lo Spirito Santo diventa il campo energetico, vibrante e vitalizzante, della nuova vita, noi siamo in Dio e Dio è in noi".

²⁵⁷ Translation from Italian "vocazione e capacità ricevuta in dono sono tra loro indissolubilmente legate".



relationship also emphasizes a kind of Trinitarian communion. This term means that there is peace and openness for each other (Moltmann, 1994a:249). Therefore, it is defined as the tendency to be all together, with the possibility to relate to each other without inequalities and in the reciprocity of relationships. So there is no one-sidedness, but exchange of views and therefore communication.

In this context it is evident how the Spirit is the proponent of communication and therefore of communion that includes self-giving. This is why He can be considered not only as a gift but also as the essence of the divine substance itself. This is because the Spirit already communicates in the Trinity, as He wants to do with creatures (Moltmann, 1994a:250-251). This kind of relationship, therefore, becomes a life experience tending to create exchanges between creatures and also exchange with the Spirit. In this way, the Spirit can be defined as the One who produces communion, that Spirit that in communion, gives life to the creatures with which He has this communion (Moltmann, 1994a:251).

The result is a kind of socialization, that is, a relationship between living beings vivified by the Spirit. Thus, starting from a Trinitarian communion that implies plurality in unity, an intra-human socialization is brought about that unifies, through love, what is different, uniting and bringing freedom in diversity.

In this situation Moltmann underlines how all the gifts, which are many and varied, by the power of love, tend to unity, the power that is the foundation of the believers who live for others, thus creating what Paul defined as the body of Christ. This action is the communication of the Holy Spirit (1994a:252) that brings unity among the many believers who have different gifts. The Spirit creates such a unity though gifts which are different and varied.

Hence a communion that, thanks to love integrates and creates what has been defined as the Trinity, that is, a plurality in unity. Therefore, a real encounter with others happens if people experience God, not only individually



but also socially, thus feeling respect for our neighbour while, at the same time, experiencing God (Moltmann, 1994a:252).

So it is possible to have a personal as well as a social experience and this action is felt inside the church where the Spirit gives the impulse to born-again believers to go on into holiness which creates unity with others. Moltmann says that this is the Spirit of community. This unity is that which is found within the Trinity and the energies that emanate from this communion are vital and creative: "we call Him the divine Spirit, because it transcends all the creatures together with the created energies"²⁵⁸ (Moltmann, 1994a:260).

The Christian community is thus created and defined by men and women in communion and by the communion they have with God. In this way trust in God is experienced and obtained by faith (Moltmann, 1994a:271) and therefore, the community is established on mutual trust. But this mutual trust does not exclude conflicts (Moltmann, 1994a:272). Moltmann argues that these conflicts can, once overcome, enhance mutual trust, since trust, according to Moltmann, is "the art of living together not only in what unites us but also in what differentiates us"²⁵⁹ (1994a:272).

This art of living comes with Christ's love, and the communion of the Spirit brings people together in their diversity even if one aims to different goals (for others, for initiative groups, for ecology and the environment, for peace and the third world, or for aid groups such as AIDS patients, disabled people or others).

The experience of the Spirit is strengthened by prayer and love towards those who have problems (Moltmann, 1986:38). It is the way we approach others that activates the Spirit in each one according to the person's call, and to the power that He gives. The new creation call is expressly indicated by Paul as *diakonia* and not a special office or profession. In this action is stamped the

²⁵⁸ Translation from Italian "chiamiamo Spirito divino, perché trascende tutte le sue creature insieme alle energie create".

²⁵⁹ Translation from Italian "l'arte di convivere non solo in ciò che ci accomuna ma anche in quel che ci differenzia".



image of Jesus (Moltmann, 1986:40). Furthermore, in *charísmata* there are not only gifts or powers, but also pain, failures, and sadness because in the world there will always be weak or despised people who are considered of no value. According to Moltmann, Paul believed that the gifts of the Spirit are conditioned by the situation in which a person finds himself, when God calls him (Moltmann, 1986:76). For this reason Moltmann lists a series of gifts that, at first sight, would not be taken into consideration, such as being Jewish and being kind, being married or not, to the point that even “being handicapped, in any form, can be a gift of the Holy Spirit, if the person in this condition is called to be an image of God and his glory on earth”²⁶⁰ (1986:76-77).

This situation that would seem disqualifying because it values disability is a gift because it could become a “reflection of Christ’s suffering”²⁶¹ (Moltmann, 1986:77). Therefore, experiencing the Spirit means having the power to carry on the tasks to which we have been called.

4.4.2 *Experiencing a Person*

According to Moltmann, perceiving the personality of the Spirit is the most complicated experience in pneumatology (1994a:304). The New Testament itself does not exactly define the Spirit as a person or a force. Considering the position the Spirit assumes within the Trinity, it seems that his personality is mostly affirmed (1994a:304) as we read in the first definition of the Trinitarian formula, which considers the substance of the Father and the Son the same as the Spirit’s.

So this image has always remained marginalized and seen in relationship and communion with the other persons of the Trinity. This is why

²⁶⁰ Translation from Italian “l’essere handicappato, in qualsiasi forma, può essere un dono dello Spirito Santo, se una persona in tale condizione, viene chiamata a essere immagine di Dio e suo splendore sulla terra”.

²⁶¹ Translation from Italian “*riflesso del Cristo sofferente*”.



Moltmann tends to explain this quality introducing the Spirit's action through metaphors which indicate who the Holy Spirit is, by the relationships with the other Trinitarian persons (1994:305).

He, firstly, proposes the experience of the Spirit with four metaphors. For example, to indicate the personal character of God, he uses the metaphors of the Lord, Mother or Judge; to identify his mystical character, he uses metaphors of light, water or fruitfulness; in reference to his action he gives the example of an impetuous wind, fire or love and finally in his formative character, he uses such terms as energy, space or figure.

Nonetheless, all of these metaphors lead to the comprehension of the action of the Spirit but not of his personality. This is why Moltmann, starting from what can be seen by the various suggested metaphors, fails to grasp his peculiar personality which is evidenced in the Trinity in which we see the Spirit acting differently from the Father (creative activity), and from the Son (reconciliation).

In all the above metaphors there is a distinction between actions and the subject who performs them who in some cases is transcendent and in other's, immanent. From the actions towards man and from the experience that one makes of God, His personality as well as His divine aspect can be inferred.

How does this happen? In his outpouring on every flesh the Spirit of God sets in motion his energies becoming present in every flesh in which He is effused. This perception of one's energies leads to knowing God by invoking Him in prayer (or *epiclesis*) (1994a:326-327). So, in Moltmann, the person of the Spirit is seen by people by the effect produced by his presence and communication, which creates an enriching relationship representing the eternal divine life that gives life to every creature (1994a:327). From this point of view, Moltmann defines Him in this way: "*God's personality of the Holy Spirit*



is the loving presence that is communicated, spread and effused, from the eternal divine life of the Trinitarian God."²⁶² (1994a:327)

In this presence of the Spirit, one experiences something sublime and marvelous that is not comparable to any good or bad spirit that is there, since it is God Himself (Moltmann, 1998:18).

Furthermore, to pray to the Spirit means to pray that He will come, (the *epiclesis* of the Spirit), searching and invoking his presence. This invocation does not tend to give a gift, but something much more than the gift itself, that is, God's presence without limits. These prayers are called "*Maranatha*-prayers", because they refer to the advent of the Spirit by showing the eschatological quality of the invocation: 'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus' (Moltmann, 1998:19).

This is the *Parousia* of the Spirit leading to that of Christ, of his advent; now we have the anticipation, the deposit that will one day be full (Moltmann, 1998:19).

That's because at the moment, our lives are hindered by living in a world in full decay, so that, what is possible to have today is something that we will fully have in the future. Today we have some of his Spirit in us, in our hearts, while living in a world full of problems, but with a sure hope for ourselves, for the community we belong to and for the land which still groans and is 'in labour' (Moltmann, 1998:20).

²⁶² Translation from Italian "'La personalità di Dio dello Spirito Santo è la presenza amorosa che si comunica, si diffonde e si effonde, dall'eterna vita divina del Dio trinitario".



CHAPTER 5

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT ACCORDING TO A PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVE

Having indicated the vision of the Holy Spirit according to Moltmann and Welker, the two theologians of reference, the theology of the Spirit according to the Pentecostal perspective will be apparent. In this sense an introduction will be possible to form that speaks of the Pentecostal movement according to Kärkkäinen, the Pentecostal phenomenology according to Harvey Cox who wrote his bestseller 'Fire from Heaven' and finally consideration will be given to the Pentecostal doctrine of the Spirit from the perspective by Rodman William.

5.1 The Pentecostal movement according to KÄRKKÄINEN

Kärkkäinen considers the growth of the Pentecostal and charismatic movement as the phenomenon originated at the beginning of the twentieth century (Kärkkäinen, 2012:1908). The movement from its birth it's been of different types, from the classical one, born in Azusa Street and considered the first, to subsequent Pentecostal and charismatic developments, in



churches such as the Catholic Church, up to its third phase, which determined the birth of neo-charismatic movements in the world (2012:1912).

The growth has been exponential but among these movements, Kärkkäinen points out that in their pneumatology it is difficult to find a common line (Kärkkäinen, 2012:1915). Certainly, their spirituality is centred on Jesus and on the strong will to meet with Him (2012:1919).

Cox (cited by Kärkkäinen, 2012:1922)²⁶³ inserts this vision into what he calls "primitive spirituality" (empowerment category for him) and causes the movement to raise many individuals out of desperation. So making a comparison between the simple presence of the Spirit that is present in many Christians, "for Pentecostals the presence of the Spirit in their midst implies *empowerment*. While this empowerment often manifests itself in spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, prophecy or healings, it is still felt and sought by Pentecostals even when those manifestations are absent" (Kärkkäinen, 2012:1925).

This way of perceiving the Spirit in modern churches tends to give the possibility of having a mystical experience of God. "Pentecostals call this initial empowerment experience Spirit baptism" (cited by Kärkkäinen, 2012:1932).²⁶⁴

The characteristic of this movement is that the doctrine has been defined only after the experience has been gained, even if not uniformly. However, in their different formulations, it is called by most people an "initial physical evidence" (Kärkkäinen, 2012:1934). With this expression, Pentecostals claim that baptism is received with this external evidence which in practice is the *glossolalia*, namely 'speaking in tongues' (Kärkkäinen, 2012:1935). In addition to this gift, other gifts are sought by Pentecostals which

²⁶³ Cox, H. 1995. Fire from Heaven. 81-82.

²⁶⁴ See Frank Macchia, 2009, "Baptized in the Spirit: towards a Global Theology of Spirit Baptism," in *The Spirit in the World: Emerging Pentecostal Theologies in Global Context*, ed. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.), pp 3-20.



give them the strength to heal, do miracles or conduct exorcisms (Kärkkäinen, 2012:1941). This way of seeing the power of the Spirit has its basis in the book of Acts on which today's Pentecostal experience is founded (Kärkkäinen, 2012:1936).

In this way, the work of the Spirit tends to accompany Christ who works in salvation, creating a pneumatology called by Yong: 'holistic' (cited by Kärkkäinen, 2012:1943).²⁶⁵ This perspective led to an application in the real world of spiritual salvation in South America, with political, economic and social actions (Kärkkäinen, 2012:1949) and in contrast with the classical soteriology, which tended to divide the work of Christ from that of the Spirit (Kärkkäinen, 2012:1942).

This work of the Spirit according to the Pentecostal perspective is supernatural, and the actions of the Spirit are those that occurred during the time of the early church. Moreover, two characteristics of this movement with this perspective of the Spirit, concern eschatology, as an imminent expectation of the return of Jesus, and the mission to which the Pentecostals refer are based on the promise of Acts 1:8 for the received power (Kärkkäinen, 2012:1952-1957). This last aspect has contributed to the growth in this movement.

In general, according to Yong (quoted by Kärkkäinen, 2012), the Pentecostals not only consider the divinity of the person of the Spirit, but also his action in the world and his interaction with human beings and communities without neglecting the response of the Spirit to their prayers. In this action, the Spirit moves intervening with manifestations and spiritual gifts. Nevertheless, it is necessary to distinguish appropriately between genuine and non-genuine manifestations (2012:1959-1966).

²⁶⁵ Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 82.



One characteristic that Yong points out is that the Pentecostals are excluded from academic discussion because of their way of interpreting experiences and that the author states that as 'embarassing' (Kärkkäinen, 2012:1967-1968).

5.2 The phenomenology according to Harvey Cox

The Pentecostal movement has had a large following across the globe and its spread has continued uninterrupted. What Harvey Cox (1994) proposes is an experience based on *charismata* and particularly on speaking in tongues. Following Cox's text, how this phenomenology spread in an area of southern Italy will be shown. This is a place where this author was born and raised. This land is Sicily.

Cox recounts how difficult it was to have information on Pentecostalism in Italy. Only through an anthropologist and not a Pentecostal, Salvatore Cucchiari, who started a study on Pentecostalism in Italy, was he able to take a cue for his book, before visiting Sicily (1994:193). Moreover, the choice of location has amazed Cox because, as it is generally known, Sicily is known for negative aspects like the Mafia, or for the very rooted Catholicism or because of its olive groves (1994:192).

Cucchiari seems to appreciate this way of managing church, and Cox learned different information that he otherwise would not have obtained. A relevant aspect, especially for the place where the study took place, was determined by the presence of a large number of women within these churches. It was relevant because the culture of the time in these places was patriarchal, and therefore, having a female presence within this Pentecostal movement could be seen as a way to counteract a culture so much focused on the male figure. To exploit this opportunity by studying its context could also



bring hope for other places where there are no similar difficulties (Cox, 1994:193).

Why was this aspect important? Answering this depends on the culture of the time in Sicily. Surely there was a change in progress (he spoke of the early 90s) in a land very attached to traditions, very unorganized and subject to the underworld. In the mentality of the place, men consider women according to a patriarchal vision and because of this vision they are obliged to appear and behave in certain ways in the public sphere, even if the woman always has a certain dominion at home. To relate better to the changes that occurred in Sicily, Cox takes as reference a well-known literary work of Gattopardo. A work, which is set in Sicily of course, and written 50 years before (1994:194).

In addition, consider the work of Lucia Chiavola Bimbaum that speaks of the Sicily where her grandparents came from, which agrees that Italy has become one of the foremost countries in the world in terms of women's movements (1994:194-195).

From the religious point of view, Cox, referring to the work of Bimbaum, underlines how religiousness and folklore are well rooted in this land where the figure of Mary Magdalene is paramount compared to that of Jesus. This entrenchment, Cox emphasizes, was present among popular beliefs but was frowned upon by the local priests (1994:195).

Italian Pentecostalism began to develop after Giacomo Lombardi arrived in Italy (1994:195). He converted in America and returned to his country of origin. He began to talk about his experience among people closest to him and through them, this new experience spread to many areas of Italy despite the strength of the Catholic Church and Fascism. Cox, describes that in one of his visits to Sicily in 1993, in those churches, he noted that the leadership in



the church communities was held by men who preached and highlighted male authority both in the house and in the churches (1994:195).

Because of this way of being in Sicily, Cox underlines how some men entered Pentecostalism only because the patriarchal environment was being lost due to the progress of women in society (Cox, 1994:195). Despite that, the opposite happened because, in this movement, women would be the master (1994:196).

In fact, women in these Pentecostal movements will always have a greater role, especially in adoration or in certain positions of leadership. The doctrinal basis of the movement refers to the Spirit and the Word, therefore not only the Bible which is under male control especially concerning preaching, but also the gifts of the Spirit to which there is no longer a gender difference between masculine and feminine. This type of Pentecostalism rejects the religious symbols and practices that have been there for centuries, both those which concern the authority of the Catholic Church and its creed, as well as the festivities practised by it. The weight of this movement is focused on convivial dinners, prayer meetings, music and testimonies. Their gathering time is joyous and pleasant (Cox, 1994:196).

The presence of women is evident (almost two thirds of the church) showing a response in contrast with the patriarchal culture of the place; at times often to challenge and disobey the masculine power of their fathers or husbands. In this hostility, they showed courage and for this reason an epithet began to spread, "dens of witches and whores" (Cox, 1994:197).

Where did this epithet come from? Cox tells how it was taken from old popular stories that circulated in those places. Magic, witchcraft and other negative stories abounded concerning the participation of the women centuries earlier. However, it is known that Pentecostals reject any form of magic or witchcraft and condemn sexual promiscuity. In fact, the Pentecostal women of



this area are seen as more puritanical than the others. This happens because female disobedience to the husband, brother or father, was seen as uncontrolled bad public behaviour. This was the popular motivation from which this epithet (1994:197-198).

There is a growing concern about the Pentecostal movement, its influence in the surrounding environment is more evident, and this is due to its theology and practice.

Even if women do not preach because they are forbidden, they prophesy or testify and within the communities they heal or pray in the Spirit. These are gifts that are exercised without there being a difference in those who exercise them. However, the ministries, which are official positions, are all males (Cox, 1994:198).

Citing Cucchiari (1994:199), Cox refers to a sermon in Cucchiari's text indicating how liberation is exhorted and evoked in these churches, and this sermon was delivered by a woman in the community of Palermo. She spoke for 15-20 minutes and the church answered to her exhortation. Although Cucchiari asked if the woman preached, everyone denied that indicating that it was not a sermon but only a testimony. Moreover, in some churches in Italy the prophecy is made only by women, and these prophecies, at times, have greater character and power than the sermons (1994:199).

Further, healing is considered a gift, and in these places is practised by women. This situation emphasizes the importance of these activities performed by women. Nevertheless, they are considered gifts but not ministries (Cox, 1994:199).

For Cox, this way of acting within the church, by women, is also being reflected outside the church and therefore in society. However, the key to all this is the Pentecostal experience they have and the way they worship. "Central to Pentecostal worship is the experience of being possessed by the



Spirit, receiving the Spirit's gifts, and breaking out of the constraints and limitations of everyday life." (1994:200)

They dance, clap their hands, cry, and this shows how the Pentecostals are sensitive to the work of the Spirit and despite their appearance, they are attentive to "prevent sexual hanky-panky" behaviour (Cox, 1994:200). Cox underlines that Pentecostal worship is "'aberrant': it challenges the normal rules about how women should act in public, which is one of the things Sicilian men are honour-bound to guarantee" (1994:200). Further, it appears that there is chaos in these types of services that is considered as a relief valve for various tensions (1994:200). Cox further considers the Pentecostal theology as a new way to do worship structured by sermons and testimonies, songs and prayers. Practically, a revolution (1994:201).

In this revolution, no goddess is worshiped, as amongst the Catholics with the Virgin Mary. There is a new way of portraying the deity in God in the Holy Spirit and in Jesus. The central point becomes Jesus who embraces sinners and wants to enter their hearts. This process is named by Cucchiari as a "soteriological romance" (Cox, 1994:201).

God is considered a figure that loves and not a judge or tyrant, as depicted in the past. He sympathizes with men and this vision, according to a feminist theological vision, no longer sees the image of a God-man who regulates society in a patriarchal mold, but gives it a softer vision of a God who loves a quality that is closer to the female figure (Cox, 1994:201). The same thing happens both in the songs and in the sermons with explicit reference to the feminine qualities that Jesus has and which contrast the sexual stereotype in force in Sicily (Cox, 1994:202).

No theologian caused this situation, but largely illiterate people with little culture "who convey these fresh images through rite and ecstasy" (Cox, 1994:203), which gives "an infinitely more powerful idiom" (Cox, 1994:203).



A further consideration that Cox makes on Cucchiari's text is the phrase 'full of grace'. This expression was associated with Jesus in the sermon at the church in Palermo and was borrowed from the Catholic vision of prayers addressed to Mary. Furthermore, many Pentecostals think that the Spirit is of a female gender, leading to a change in the divine pattern that differs from the traditional one. This new vision strengthens the family structure and associates feminine qualities in God and Jesus. In this way, it has created a paradigm that starts from the family sphere to act throughout the earth (Cox, 1994:203).

What Cox represents is a part of the history of my land, not only a spiritual change in people and inside churches, but also something projected towards society. A difficult land that has reshaped itself in these 30 years and will continue to modify.

5.3 The doctrine of the Spirit according to Rodman Williams

This paragraph will discuss the doctrine of the Holy Spirit by theologian Rodman Williams referring to his systematic theology of three volumes. These volumes indicate how he develops and what is his intent concerning the doctrine of the Spirit. Obviously, this approach will be totally different from previous theologians because it was used more like a reference text from which it was possible to integrate the ideas of the theologians. In Williams's case, as reference text will be used his systematic theology by which the references on the Spirit will be extracted.

Williams, like the other theologians, also gives a name to his work by calling it 'Renewal Theology' (Williams, 2001)²⁶⁶. Why renewal theology? Because it analyzes how the Spirit acts and how it is possible to perceive his

²⁶⁶ http://www.rodmanwilliams.com/A_Theological_Pilgrimage/TP01.htm Date of access 20/12/2018



presence. Consequently, this way of working of the Spirit leads to the renewal of the person and makes him rediscover the depth of praise. Thus, it allows a greater awareness of the work of God in the life of a man himself and of the community²⁶⁷ as well.

5.3.1 Terminological definition of 'The Holy Spirit'

Pneumatology as “the branch of theology is not fully understood, in fact many declare it to be aware of God the Father and Jesus Christ, but they express uncertainties about the Holy Spirit. They probably know the terminology related to the Holy Spirit, but they are not aware of his real existence, his role and the fact that he can be experienced”²⁶⁸ (Williams, 2009b:163).

Williams tries to explain the term starting from the name that is Holy Spirit. He evaluates the Holy Spirit terminologically. The term Spirit could deceive because someone can interpret that He is intangible and therefore has no body or being spirit would not be material. However, Williams notes how “the Spirit in a person, for example, is different from the body, and then does not have a substantial existence. Spirit is not substance, not even in his most rarefied or indistinct form”²⁶⁹ (Williams, 2009b:163). Despite that, He is “an essential reality of human existence, which operates through the soul and the

²⁶⁷ http://www.rodmanwilliams.com/A_Theological_Pilgrimage/TP01.htm Date of access 20/12/2018.

²⁶⁸ Translation from Italian “ramo della teologia non e' compreso pienamente, infatti in molti dichiarano di conoscere Dio Padre e Gesu' Cristo, ma esprimono delle incertezze riguardo allo Spirito Santo. Probabilmente conoscono la terminologia relative allo Spirito Santo, ma non sono consapevoli della sua reale esistenza, del suo ruolo e del fatto che possa essere sperimentato”.

²⁶⁹ Translation from Italian “lo spirito in una persona, per esempio, e' diverso dal corpo, quindi non ha un'esistenza sostanziale. Lo spirito non e' sostanza, neppure nella sua forma piu' rarefatta o indistinta”.



body”²⁷⁰ (Williams, 2009b:163). Then, the term seems to highlight his immateriality.

Williams analyzes how pointing to the Spirit in this way, He is opposed to flesh and bone and further He can move freely. For this reason, He is compared to the wind. Unlike the human spirit that is limited by the body, the Spirit has no limits of any kind. Furthermore, He represents “*life, initiative and dynamic movement*”²⁷¹ (2009b:164). These characteristics are present from the creation up to Christ. Moreover, after the birth of Jesus, Spirit gave Jesus Power, as well as to believers after Pentecost.

Furthermore, His holiness “underlines the *sacredness* of the Spirit”²⁷² (Williams, 2009b:164). William means that He is completely separated from what is not divine. In this way the adjective indicates his diversity. This concept is also highlighted because He is pure, He applies justice, He is awesome and glorious. With these characteristics He fills the earth (2009b:165).

Williams, with the article ‘the’, indicates his uniqueness and singularity, compared to other spirits like angels or demons or with the human one. (2009b:165)

Are there other ways to refer to the Holy Spirit? Williams lists others as the Spirit of God²⁷³ or of Christ²⁷⁴, or simply as Spirit or Spirit of the Father.²⁷⁵ From these epithets it is possible to consider the bond that exists between the three persons of the Trinity. Moreover, if the above-mentioned expressions can be present both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, certainly the

²⁷⁰ Translation from Italian “una realta’ essenziale dell’esistenza umana, che opera attraverso l’anima e il corpo”.

²⁷¹ Translation from Italian “la *vita*, l’*iniziativa* e il *movimento dinamico*”.

²⁷² Translation from Italian “sottolinea la *sacralita’* dello Spirito”.

²⁷³ Mt.12:28,32.

²⁷⁴ Rm. 8:9.

²⁷⁵ Mt. 10:20.



most present epithet is the "Spirit of the Eternal" (YAHWEH in Hebrew) (Williams, 2009b:167), linking the name of God in Hebrew with the Spirit.

In addition to these names, the Spirit also has several titles that tend to describe some of his characteristics such as the Spirit of Truth or Spirit of holiness or Spirit of life or adoption or grace or glory or eternal. In these titles it is possible to understand how the Spirit has fundamental and essential characteristics (Williams, 2009b:168-173).

Moreover, being without form, He is sometimes symbolized or represented by objects or animals. For example, the wind or the breath for his dynamics, his strength or his movement; fire or water that would represent the action to consume or purify; a dove that identifies the meekness or the innocence of the Spirit that with his moving hovers in the air; seal that identifies the believer as divine property; or finally as the oil that represents the anointing (Williams, 2009b:173-178).

Williams, obviously, agrees that his nature is divine and He is God.²⁷⁶ In fact in different verses it is indicated that He is omnipresent or omniscient or omnipotent. Then, in Him there are all the characteristics of God (2009b:178-181). Moreover He is not a force but a Person because He has a personality. In fact, there are some designations attributed to Him, such as *Paraclete*, which means comforter or lawyer or helper. In this way, when believers are baptized, the Spirit comes to them as a person and not as a force. Then the believer has an experience with a personal reality (Williams, 2009b:182).

Personal why? Because in Him there are all the characteristics of a person:

- He is intelligent;

²⁷⁶

Acts 5:3; 4:21:11.



- He speaks;²⁷⁷
- He has a will;²⁷⁸
- He has feelings;²⁷⁹

and because of this He has interpersonal relationships with others, starting from Jesus up to believers (Williams, 2009b:182-184).

5.3.2 The action of the Spirit in different contexts

Williams considers the Spirit in different contexts:

- He is the inspirer of the Scriptures;
- He is the one who is not apart from the Father and the Son, therefore He is present in the Trinity;
- He is the One who acts in this world and in men and women and this action occurred during history and up to the present days.

The various aspects will be discussed step by step.

5.3.2.1 The Spirit in inspiring action

In the introductory part of his systematic theology, Williams emphasizes how it is possible to develop “a true theological work”²⁸⁰ (2009a:11) only through the guidance of the Spirit. Obviously, he refers to the famous passage from John that speaks about the Spirit as the One who leads towards the

²⁷⁷ Acts 8:29; 10:19; 28:25.

²⁷⁸ Acts 16:6,7; Gn 6:3; 1 Cor 12:11.

²⁷⁹ Is 63:10; Eph 4:30; Rm 8:26.

²⁸⁰ Translation from Italian “una vera opera teologica”.



truth.²⁸¹ According to Williams, the Spirit becomes the centrepiece of everything. In fact, He becomes the centre of truth and teaching and above all a guide.²⁸² It is through the Spirit and his anointing that somebody has knowledge.²⁸³ This possibility is of all believers in whom the Spirit dwells. In this way, the community of the individuals who follow the action and the way of the Spirit is created. The Spirit who works in the believer guides him and the Church (2009a:11).

The reference point that determines the truth is the Scriptures. It is inspired by God²⁸⁴ and it becomes revelation of God as it is the breath of God that inspired the writers (Williams, 2009a:11-12). Through this spiritual action, Scripture has its own authority becoming, therefore, the point of reference for all Christians. The Scriptures are therefore the Word of God and not the words or thoughts of men (Williams, 2009a:12). This same action of the Spirit that led Bible writers to write the Bible, acts in those that read them because it was the same action, the same Spirit, that led the writers to write them (Williams, 2009a:15).

In the same way, the illumination of the Spirit is needed to comprehend comprehensibly the creation made by God. That creation that reason cannot fully understand (Williams, 2009a:104-105).

Moreover, highlighting the drama of the modern world, Williams considers the need for a rebirth or spiritual awakening which is carried out by means of “an unprecedented movement of the Holy Spirit from the times of the New Testament”²⁸⁵ (2009a:18). This movement of today is the Pentecostal one.

281 Jn 3:16.

282 Italics is mine.

283 1 Jn 2:20.

284 2 Th 3:16-17.

285 Translation from Italian “un movimento dello Spirito Santo senza precedentidai tempi del Nuovo Testamento”.



5.3.2.2 The action of the Spirit within the Trinity

Speaking of the Trinity acting in creation, Williams declares that the Spirit is “who gives *energy* to creation”²⁸⁶ (Williams, 2009a:113). In this way he underlines how the activity of the Spirit in creation concerns the living²⁸⁷ or the skies²⁸⁸ and it occurred through the breath of God and through the wind (Williams, 2009a:114).

It is the Spirit that gives energy to what is created on earth. This action occurred from the beginning. The Spirit hovered over creation, reviving the original chaos, giving life where it still did not exist: vegetable, animal and finally human life. Life given by the breath of God (Williams, 2009a:115).

5.3.2.3 The Spirit and the Messiah

A very important function of the Spirit indicated between the Old and New Testaments is that concerning the covering of the Messiah. Several verses of Isaiah refer to this Anointed that will come out of the dynasty of Isai and descendant of David, on which the Spirit will rest in abundance up to receive qualities and abilities out of the ordinary to be able to govern and judge (2009b:196). Furthermore, He will teach the rightness.

These words will be repeated by Jesus in the Gospels. In fact, He read Isaiah's verses in the synagogue and He was referring to Himself.²⁸⁹ In this

²⁸⁶ Translation from Italian “colui che conferisce *energia* alla creazione”.

²⁸⁷ Job 33:4; Ps 104:30.

²⁸⁸ Ps 33:6.

²⁸⁹ Lk 4:18-19, cfr. Is 61:1-2.



way, Williams emphasizes how Jesus will be the Messiah and He will do great works through the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, He will be indicated as who has justice, benevolence and patience (Williams, 2009b:196).

His mission and therefore his ministry are characterized by an anointing that He already had from his baptism by the hand of John the Baptist. In this event the dove came down from the high, and this dove represents the Spirit that descended on Him. Then God's voice explicitly stated that He was his Son. With the beginning of the ministry, the Anointed by the Spirit begins the ministry to bring it to completion through the Spirit. The Spirit was upon Him without measure.

In this way, Williams emphasizes that Jesus was divine and holy from birth, but became the Anointed at his baptism (2009b:203-204). The term "*filled with the Holy Spirit*"²⁹⁰ indicated by Luke²⁹¹ is understood by Williams as an inner abundance of the Spirit (2009b:206). Being filled with the Holy Spirit, the Messiah is guided by Him and through Him performs his ministry by preaching and accomplishing great works. These powerful works were effected through the Power (or *dynamis*) of the Spirit (Williams, 2009b:208).

However, in the years of his ministry, Jesus highlights an important point: the Spirit was yet to come. Events mentioned by Jesus refer to this future situation, including the name given by Jesus to the Spirit, namely that of *Paraclete* (Williams, 2009b:210). The *Paraclete* or Comforter is the One who will be sent by Christ and He is nothing but the Holy Spirit who will have the task of convincing the world to justice and judgment.²⁹²

²⁹⁰ Italics is mine.

²⁹¹ Lk 4:1.

²⁹² Jn 16:8.



When did the Spirit arrive? After the departing of Jesus. In fact, Acts 2 occurred because Jesus had gone to the Father. Only in this way, the Spirit descended after the heavens were opened. Then the Spirit descended on the bystanders who would have to evangelize the world through him (Williams, 2009b:211). Of course, the Holy Spirit descended on those who were already born of the Spirit. Jesus Himself was born of the Spirit from Mary, his mother, and then received the Spirit at baptism (2009b:211). In this case, it is underlined as the “birth from the Spirit preceded the descent of the Spirit”²⁹³ (Williams, 2009b:212). A Williams’ clarification: the believers received the descent of the Spirit only because they were already a community of believers. They had already believed when Jesus was there, but their faith only became stable just before Jesus returned to the Father through the breath of the Spirit blown by Jesus (2009b:214).

5.3.3 The action of the Spirit through people

The action of the Spirit has always involved people. In fact, people have been used by the Spirit to do or say great things. This privilege was not given to everybody. Scriptures tell of these individuals and their deeds.

5.3.3.1 The Spirit gives some abilities

The Spirit gives the ability to several people to perform different tasks and particular activities that without Him they would not have been able to do. Williams lists some examples where the Spirit used people to do great things.

²⁹³

Translation from Italian “nascita dallo Spirito precedette la discesa dello Spirito”.



The Spirit gave Besaleel those qualities that enabled him to build the tabernacle with all the tools it needed. About the temple, David received the divine plan inspired by the Spirit.

Furthermore, the Spirit refills some people that became guides for his people during the desert travels. This process began with the Spirit filling the 70 elders who helped Moses on their journey which lasted forty years. After Moses' death, the plan was completed by another man filled with spirit: Joshua. He became the general who conquered the Promised Land. The guide of the Spirit will be maintained later in the Promise Land choosing the judges: people who had to deliver the people of Israel from the enemies who had conquered them.

Moreover, the Spirit has chosen people to govern his people. Starting with Saul and continuing with the most known king in Israel, David; this began the age of the kings of Israel. After the division of the tribes of Israel into North and South, the Spirit continued to fill some men to speak to his people who have turned away from Him. God spoke to his people through the prophecies performed by the prophets chosen by God (Williams, 2009b:187-192).

The word that highlights this aspect is: "the Word of the Eternal was addressed to ..." ²⁹⁴ indicating the reference prophet (Williams, 2009b:192).

Finally, there is a case in which the anointing of the Spirit gave authority to someone. This person is Zerubbabel, who received from the angel the mission to rebuild the temple after the exile in the land of Babylon (Williams, 2009b:193).

In all the Old Testament many people received supernatural help so they could do amazing things. However, unlike what occurred in the New

²⁹⁴

Translation from Italian "The Word of the Eternal was addressed to ...".



Testament, this action was temporary and not continuous. In the same way the Spirit used them, He went away. Williams cites the example of Samson on whom the Spirit came several times during his lifetime to do great things or he mentions the prophets who by the Spirit pronounced what they received from God only at the moments indicated by God.

When the Spirit made or said something, this action served for his cause and to bring the Kingdom of God. In this way, “the Spirit came to give indications, strength and authority for their life and their mission”²⁹⁵ (Williams, 2009b:194). A special mission that also used people who doubted God in some situations.

5.3.3.2 The Spirit that gives power

The miracles of Jesus are due to the power of the Spirit and they are recognized by all. They were obvious but despite what Jesus did, people did not believe in Him. These great signs and deeds were powerful through the *dynameis* of God, the power of God (Williams, 2009a:178). These acts, these signs or deeds are not bound to the past. In fact, Jesus did them when He was on the Earth, but through the Consoler,²⁹⁶ they are still done today. These works can continue through the work of the Holy Spirit and with the same *dynameis* of that time (Williams, 2009a:182).

In fact, according to Williams, this action of the Spirit is still relevant, although during the period of the Reformation some reformers such as Luther and Calvin argued that the period of miracles had ended with Jesus. Even if

²⁹⁵ Translation from Italian “lo Spirito venne per dare indicazioni, forza e autorità per la loro vita e la loro missione”.

²⁹⁶ Jn 14:16-17.



Wesley was not fully convinced, the belief that the miracles ceased occurred through Warfield in the early twentieth century. Today, the believers could have a spiritual rebirth as well as healing or they can do powerful works or hear signs such as speaking in tongues (Williams, 2009a:183-185).

5.3.3.3 Spirit of God and spiritual union with man

Williams emphasizes how breathing determines life that obviously ends when everybody cannot breathe anymore. "The breath of life ... is God's gift for the reality of conscious life. Until the man received the breath of life, he remained a dead creature"²⁹⁷ and therefore dust (2009a:248). This breath was blown by God by making a living being (2009a:248). This breath, according to Williams, "it is not God himself because man does not possess a deposit of the divine Spirit"²⁹⁸ (2009a:249). However, this breath occurs through his Spirit "and it is intimately bound up with the Spirit of God, though not entirely identical with the divine Spirit"²⁹⁹ (Williams, 2009a:249). In spite of this, the Holy Spirit can be linked to the spirit of man, in fact the spirit of man is sensitive to Him and in the Bible there are many verses that link both (Williams, 2009a:249).

The Spirit acts and "does not limit Himself to applying the word so that faith is aroused, but He deepens and confirms faith with his inner testimony"³⁰⁰ (Williams, 2009a:373). This Spirit is not far from believers, because He dwells

²⁹⁷ Translation from Italian "L'alito di vita, [...] e' il dono di Dio per la realta' della vita conscia. Finche' l'uomo non ricevette l'alito di vita, rimase una creatura morta".

²⁹⁸ Translation from Italian "non e' Dio stesso perche' l'uomo non possiede un deposito dello Spirito divino".

²⁹⁹ Translation from Italian "ed e' intimamente legato allo Spirito di Dio, pur non essendo assolutamente identico allo Spirito divino".

³⁰⁰ Translation from Italian "non si limita ad applicare la parola cosicche' la fede sia destata, ma approfondisce e conferma la fede con la sua testimonianza interiore".



in them as happened in the meeting of the Risen Jesus, where the disciples received the Spirit who began to live in them (Williams, 2009a:373).

But how does the Spirit or / and Christ dwell in the believer according to Williams?

For him, “being in Christ involves a spiritual union. As Paul explains, ‘one who unites himself to the Lord is one spirit with him alone’ (1 Corinthians 6:17). The human spirit is united with the Spirit of Christ, so that the Spirit of Christ works in and through the spirit of the believer. Therefore, at the deepest level of human nature there is union with Jesus Christ”³⁰¹(Williams, 2009b:28).

Therefore, there is a dwelling of the Spirit in the believer, and at the same time Christ through the same Spirit. This is the reason why Paul speaks interchangeably of the Spirit of God or of the Spirit of Christ. This presence of Christ is nothing but a spiritual and obviously not physical presence (Williams, 2009b: 28).

All this occurred through the regeneration performed by the Holy Spirit (Williams, 2009b:34). It is a birth or regeneration that comes from God, so it is not possible to talk about physical rebirth but a spiritual rebirth that happens in a supernatural way. Jesus Himself was born of the Spirit, of that same Spirit who already brings life and brings life back to life. Giving a new life is his work as well (Williams, 2009b:34).

³⁰¹ Translation from Italian “essere in Cristo implica un’unione spirituale. Come spiega Paolo ‘chi si unisce al Signore e’ uno spirito solo con lui’ (1 Corinzi 6:17). Lo spirito umano viene unito allo Spirito di Cristo, cosicche’ lo Spirito di Cristo opera in/e attraverso lo spirito del credente. Dunque, al livello piu’ profondo della natura umana c’e’ l’unione con Gesu’ Cristo “.



What triggers this action of the Spirit is the Word that once entered the person, “it is activated by the Holy Spirit in order to produce new life”³⁰² (Williams, 2009b:36).

With regeneration it is necessary that there is a conviction of sin that does not depend only on the enlightenment that someone has through the Word, but also with an action of the Spirit that leads to understand someone's status as sinner and therefore provoke a sense of guilt (Williams, 2009b:40).

Therefore, through this action of the Spirit, someone arrives at repentance. Repentance that is not remorse, as the case of Judas, identified as sadness of the world that led him to commit suicide and not to repent. In him the Spirit did not act, because only through the action of the Spirit is it possible to understand what has been done and therefore the sin committed (Williams, 2009b:41-42). Thus the Spirit carries out the circumcision of the heart by eliminating sin and giving salvation (Williams, 2009b:42).

Once repentance has occurred, then the believer has been converted and a spiritual union takes place. This union occurs between the believer and the Spirit of Christ or the Holy Spirit, which causes the believer to be in the Spirit and the Spirit in the believer. In this way, the point of contact of the person is no longer his spirit but the Holy Spirit which is now in him (Williams, 2009b: 50).

In this way, with the abode of the Holy Spirit, a new creature is born (Williams, 2009b 50). This creature finds a new heart only and exclusively by faith, as Ezekiel had announced (Williams, 2009b:51). After the purification, which is an aspect of regeneration, the law of God is put in place.

³⁰² Translation from Italian “viene attivata dallo Spirito Santo per poter produrre nuova vita”.



This process of regeneration concerns the heart and mind of the person, changed through the Spirit of Christ (Williams, 2009b:54).

The next step is sanctification that is a process in which the Spirit gives 'vitality' to the believer. With this action, the believer will walk into sanctification and he is prepared to obey Christ always through the Spirit. Furthermore, through the Spirit the believer will be changed and will be more like Christ and his image (Williams, 2009b:117).

This action of the Spirit in the believer is opposed to the sinful ego of the man or, as Paul says, to the *flesh*.³⁰³ There is this struggle between the two sides, between flesh and Spirit, with desires opposed to one another. This opposition is sustained by the same Spirit that leads the believer to renounce the desires of the flesh. In any case, the believer does not have to go into a compromise with these desires (Williams, 2009b:120).

It is necessary for the Spirit to mortify the body to live (Williams, 2009b:120) through the force that the Spirit gives (Williams, 2009b:121) and likewise, seeing that He dwells in the believer, He gives awareness to the believer of his sins. In addition, if the believer does not reach perfection, he will grow in holiness. This path is nothing but a path of struggle that aims to eliminate all sins. Step by step, the obscure points of the believer will be brought to light to bring them to correct and continue the sanctification process (Williams, 2009b:125).

This walking of the believer is not under the law to which someone is no longer a slave, but it is a path "in the freedom of the Spirit"³⁰⁴ (Williams,

³⁰³ Italics is mine.

³⁰⁴ Translation from Italian "nella libert  dello Spirito".



2009b:134). In fact, “what the law could never produce is guaranteed by the Spirit”³⁰⁵ (Williams, 2009b:135).

In this way, the fruit of the Spirit will begin to notice itself but, like all fruits, it needs some time (Williams, 2009b:135). Under the judgment of the Spirit the qualities of the fruits of the Spirit can be exercised (Williams, 2009b:135). So, the believer fulfils the law, because he walks through the Spirit (Williams, 2009b:135).

5.3.3.4 The anointing of the Spirit

Jesus is also called the Anointed or Christ because He received the anointing that occurred at baptism when the Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove. This was the beginning of his ministry with powerful works and healings through the Spirit (Williams, 2009a:406). A doubt that Williams tries to clarify is related to the powerful works which Jesus did. Would Jesus ever have been able to do what He did without the anointing of the Spirit? According to Williams, the answer is negative. Only through the anointing of the Spirit, could Jesus do all He did (2009a:407). For this reason, Williams claims that, being “Jesus, the Anointed, can really be called *Pentecostal*”³⁰⁶ (2009a:407). Jesus' life was a life of walking in the Spirit that led Him to perform healings and powerful works through those which Paul would call gifts (*charismata*) of the Spirit (2009a:407). In this way, Williams connects the figure of Jesus with the gifts of the Spirit through the unction received. For this reason, Jesus “can be called ‘Pentecostal Christ’”³⁰⁷ (Williams, 2009a:407).

³⁰⁵ Translation from Italian “cio’ che la legge non avrebbe mai potuto produrre, e’ garantito dallo Spirito”.

³⁰⁶ Translation from Italian “Gesù, l’Unto, può essere realmente definito *pentecostale*”.

³⁰⁷ Translation from Italian “può essere definito ‘Cristo Pentecostale’”.



5.3.4 Pentecostal experience and connection with other biblical doctrines

The Pentecostal movement has its foundation in an experience, the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. What are the considerations to be made according to Williams' perspective? Williams lists some relations and considerations that will be evaluated in the next paragraph.

5.3.4.1 Faith and reception of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit given is a gift given to believers whose purpose is the testimony of Christ. According to Williams, all believers who believe in Christ must have Him. Therefore, to have Him, believers must have faith which is essential for the reception of the Spirit. This was the promise for everyone according to Joel. It is possible to have these steps: repentance, baptism and reception of the Spirit. Williams emphasizes from the book of Acts that in all the events in which the Spirit was received, faith was fundamental. This aspect is verifiable already with the Pentecost event (2009b:335).

The reception of the Spirit does not have a predefined time, but according to Williams, it has a dynamic of faith. This dynamic is found in a certain perseverance before receiving the gift of the Spirit. For example, Paul received the Holy Spirit three days after the Damascus event (2009b:340-341). With this example, it is possible to understand that for receiving the Spirit days or even years may pass. Faith is important.

Instead, at Caesarea the event of believing and receiving the Spirit is contemporary and occurred during the preaching of Peter (Williams, 2009b:343). For this reason Williams claims that it is not possible to define a



rule in order to understand when the Spirit will be received by believers (2009b:344). For him, "the Holy Spirit proceeds from the exalted Lord"³⁰⁸ (2009b: 350) and there are no bonds of baptism in water or other rituals that determine him, only faith. In order to receive Him, it is possible to use the imposition of hands, as in the case of the Samaritans or Ephesians (2009b:357) or do nothing as happened in Caesarea that the Spirit descended without any kind of external action (2009b:355). Thus, the reception of the Spirit does not depend on the imposition of hands even if it is a channel to receive Him (2009b:356).

This gift of the Holy Spirit was made by God's will at the time of Pentecost and recently in the Pentecostal movement (Williams, 2009b:362-364).

It turns out to be an answer to prayer. In fact, both the 120 more or less on the upper story and also Paul were waiting in prayer. The waiting for reception is always associated with prayer (Williams, 2009b:364-367).

According to Williams, prayer and waiting and obedience to the Word and submission to Christ are important points for the reception of the Spirit (2009b:373).

5.3.4.2 The mission of the Spirit

The Father through Jesus sends the Spirit. The motivation is explained by Williams in various aspects.

First of all, He will be leading the whole truth. For this reason He is called the Spirit of Truth, whose Truth is Jesus. At the beginning Jesus taught his disciples with the power of the Spirit. Before Jesus' ascension, the Spirit will

³⁰⁸ Translation from Italian "lo Spirito Santo procede del Signore esaltato".



be in the disciples through the breath of Jesus (Williams, 2009b:291-292). After Pentecost, the disciples began to have more security and certainties than before for the work of the Spirit was in them. This was a reason why they no longer asked questions about the kingdom of God or about the restoration of Israel. In fact, the Spirit began his work of illuminating their minds and their knowledge (2009b:292-293) at Pentecost. Only through the Spirit were they led to the truth (2009b:296).

Furthermore, the Spirit gives power to the ministry. Jesus received Him and had the strength to overcome the temptation in the desert. This Power was available to the disciples at Pentecost and its reception is the purpose for which the Spirit descended (Williams, 2009b:299).

This Power was necessary to bring effective testimony and to do powerful works. In the first case, the Gospel has been possible to bring it to all peoples (Williams, 2009b:300). At Pentecost, there were already 3000 people who repented (Williams, 2009b:301). It is also important for Pentecostals because through Him, they have reached even the most distant and difficult countries, thus bringing the evangelical mission to all peoples. In fact, they have spread all over the world becoming the most numerous Christian current (Williams, 2009b:304). They are witnesses of Christ and being filled with the Spirit, they work with power for the proclamation of the Gospel with greater incisiveness (Williams, 2009b:307).

These proclamations are accompanied by powerful works. Williams emphasizes how prodigies and signs identify miracles that happened through the apostles. They were filled with the Spirit (Williams, 2009b:308). Hence preaching and signs (Williams, 2009b:309) attest that it arrived what Jesus promises (Williams, 2009b:310).

These miracles are possible even today, but somebody denies this aspect asserting that they occurred only in the days of the early Church. It is



correct to underline that God has the freedom to implement them at any moment (Williams, 2009b:310). In fact, with the Pentecostal movement the powerful works were rediscovered and among these there were and there are healing and liberation (Williams, 2009b:311).

Finally, the Holy Spirit serves to determine “the acceptance and approval of God towards His people”³⁰⁹ (Williams, 2009b:324). Therefore, He serves to confirm this approval. In fact, when the Spirit descended in the form of a dove upon Jesus there was God's approval. Williams emphasizes that in Jesus, God has placed his seal represented by the descent of the Spirit (Williams, 2009b:324).

In Caesarea, the descent of the Spirit on those believers was the attestation “of their salvation and their acceptance for others”³¹⁰ (Williams, 2009b:325) so much so that Peter claimed that they had received the same experience as the disciples at Pentecost. So, the Spirit was “an external confirmation that demonstrated to others that they had really entered into salvation that a confirmation for those directly concerned (therefore interior), to whom the certainty of having been accepted by God was guaranteed”³¹¹ (Williams, 2009b:325).

For this confirmation from God (Williams, 2009b:326), people can say *Abba* to God demonstrating and witnessing that they are children. In this way, the believer is more secure (Williams, 2009b:329) and with the work of the Spirit in him becomes God's property externally. Instead, inwardly there is a profound work of the Spirit. This presence in the believer is only a deposit that will be completed in the future (Williams, 2009b:330).

³⁰⁹ Translation from Italian “l'accettazione e l'approvazione di Dio verso il suo popolo”.

³¹⁰ Translation from Italian “della loro salvezza e della loro accettazione per gli altri”.

³¹¹ Translation from Italian “sia una conferma esteriore che dimostrava agli altri che erano realmente entrati nella salvezza, che una conferma per i diretti interessati (dunque interiore), a cui fu garantita la certezza di essere stati accettati da Dio”.



This eschatological awareness is present today in the Pentecostal movement where believers are already aware and prepared for the future world (Williams, 2009b:330). Obviously, "the descent of the Holy Spirit also presupposes the profound and preparatory work of the Spirit that implements sanctification"³¹² through faith (Williams, 2009b:331).

This mission had already been promised. The Lucan promise of the Father³¹³ declared that it was necessary to wait before being clothed in Power. The verse shows how the community of believers was already formed and therefore they were all born-again. The waiting would lead them to receive Power. If the baptism of the Baptist was in sight of the repentance and remission of sins, which action of Jesus was in sight to bring the Holy Spirit? (Williams, 2009b:216) Acts 1:5 describes this comparison declaring the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the "*total immersion in the Spirit, such as immersion in water for the baptism of John*"³¹⁴ (Williams, 2009b:218). The purpose of the baptism of the Spirit was to bring testimony all over the world with Power.

5.3.4.3 The meaning of the term 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit'

Williams claims, "that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was a merciful gesture of God. It is a gift or, more specifically, the gift of the Holy Spirit"³¹⁵ (2009b:221) and you must receive it.

³¹² Translation from Italian "la discesa dello Spirito Santo presuppone anche l'opera fondamentale e preparatoria dello Spirito che attua la santificazione".

³¹³ Lk 24:49.

³¹⁴ Translation from Italian "*immersione totale nello Spirito, come l'immersione in acqua per il battesimo di Giovanni*".

³¹⁵ Translation from Italian "che il battesimo nello Spirito Santo fu un gesto misericordioso di Dio. E' un dono o, piu' specificatamente, il dono dello Spirito Santo".



The relationship that is created between giving and receiving is not well expressed at Pentecost but in other moments. For example when Peter³¹⁶ declared that even the Gentiles received the Spirit as the disciples at Pentecost. The same thing occurred in other places where this relationship is more pronounced, as in Samaria, in Damascus with Paul, in Caesarea and Ephesus (Williams, 2009b:222).

It is also present in the various letters³¹⁷ (Williams, 2009b:223). The promise of the Spirit could only come after Jesus was exalted because He was who would send the Spirit (Williams, 2009b:226). His reception is bound to those who have already been saved (Williams, 2009b:228) as baptism can occur after repentance, faith, and therefore salvation (Williams, 2009b:229). Williams declares that the “salvation is the subjective factor that prepares for the reception of the Holy Spirit. The other two essential factors, that is, the promise of the Father and the exaltation of Christ were totally objective”³¹⁸ (2009b:231).

This gift was the promise of the Father; it was given to the disciples and afterwards extended to all. This was attested by Peter immediately after he received Him (Williams, 2009b:223). He said that this gift was for all those whom the Lord will call, to all those who will respond positively to the effective call, that is to the call that led to salvation. The foundation was repentance and faith (Williams, 2009b:231).

³¹⁶ Acts 10:47.

³¹⁷ Compare Rm 5:5; 1 Cor 2:12; 2 Cor 1:21-22; 2 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 11:4; Gl 3:2; 3:14; Eph 1:13-14; 1 Th 4:8; 1 Jn 3:24; 1 Jn 4:13.

³¹⁸ Translation from Italian “salvezza e’ il fattore soggettivo che preparava per la ricezione dello Spirito Santo. Gli altri due fattori essenziali, cioe’ la promessa del Padre e l’esaltazione di Cristo erano totalmente oggettivi”.



But how did this Spirit come down? Williams refers to some words: effusion, fall, coming, baptism and fullness. In the first one, he quotes Peter's words saying that Jesus scattered what everyone saw and heard.

The idea of Peter's outpouring has value for the mention of the prophecy of Joel who says that the Spirit would be spread on every flesh, men, women, youth and servants. So a shedding much bigger than in the past (2009b:233-234).

This assumed that those who waited on the high floor represented the people who were indicated in the prophecy (Williams, 2009b:234). They were all Jews, but in Israel it had never been hoped in this way even though it was predicted by the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel³¹⁹ (Williams, 2009b:234-235).

Moreover, after being spread on the house of Israel at Pentecost, the Spirit spread over the Gentiles bringing amazement among the Jews. In addition, Peter will affirm that the Gentiles received the same experience and therefore the same gift of those who were present at Pentecost (Williams, 2009b:235).

Williams points out that these events were not related only to the times described in Acts, but as indicated by Titus, they still continued after the apostolic happenings. In addition, Williams lists texts such as the letter from Clement of Rome to Corinth and the epistle of Barnabas which narrate how this outpouring continued to spread and not cease (2009b:237).

For this outpouring, Williams points out that some thinkers indicate that "the contemporary Pentecostal awakening has been aroused by a real outpouring of the Holy Spirit"³²⁰ (Williams, 2009b:238) and which is present in

³¹⁹ Is 44:2-3; Ezk 39:29.

³²⁰ Translation from Italian "il risveglio Pentecostale contemporaneo sia stato suscitato da una reale effusione dello Spirito Santo".



the movements indicated with the name of Pentecostalism classic, Protestant Neo-Pentecostalism. The movements of today do not exclude that there have been others in history (Williams, 2009b:238).

The second term is 'fall' explained by the speech of Peter at the home of the gentile, Cornelius. In this event, Peter expressed that what happened has the same modality as the disciples had received the Spirit at Pentecost. With the term "fell", Williams emphasizes the impact, the impetuosity of the sound and wind that happened at both events. He also highlights how this fall was dependent on the will of God who made the Holy Spirit to descend also to Caesarea as well as to Jerusalem. The same term is used when the Spirit descended on the Samaritans who had not yet received the Spirit and after they received Him with the laying on of hands by Peter and John. Williams declares that these phenomena of the first century happened in the same way in the Pentecostal awakening of the last century (2009b:238-240).

Another term used is 'coming', meaning the expectation due to receive the Spirit, and this is evident before Pentecost as they were all waiting (Williams, 2009b:240). These terms denote one "profound experience with the transcendent God"³²¹ (Williams, 2009b:243) and it is not a form of mysticism but "a kind of spiritual invasion that comes from above and reaches the depths"³²² (Williams, 2009b:243).

Furthermore, another verb used in these verses is "baptize". This term is used in Acts 1:5 as a promise of what was to come and was also used by Peter at Cornelius's house. The term 'baptize' means to immerse and the expression to be baptized or immersed in the Spirit gives the idea of being submerged in the Spirit as happens at baptism in water (Williams, 2009b:245).

³²¹ Translation from Italian "profonda esperienza col Dio trascendente".

³²² Translation from Italian "una sorta di invasione spirituale che proviene dall'alto e raggiunge le profondità".



During the Pentecostal awakening, the term used is precisely baptism in the Holy Spirit. “Many people also declare that the experience of a Pentecostal baptism has finally opened a way for God to work more productively in their lives.”³²³ (Williams, 2009b:246)

Finally, ‘fullness’ is a term referring to the Holy Spirit who fills them once descended into people. Both at Pentecost and Paul refer to the filling of those who received the Holy Spirit (Williams, 2009b:246). Thus, this experience will be an inner experience of the Spirit (Williams, 2009b:247).

Instead, the presence of the tongues of fire before filling brings back to the words spoken by Jesus. Jesus said that the baptism would take place with the Spirit and with fire.³²⁴ These tongues spread to all those present and Williams calls this diffusion as “divine visitation in all its fullness”³²⁵ (Williams, 2009b:247).

This condition of fullness is not unique and has been experienced several times as happened to Stephen and Barnabas (Williams, 2009b:248) as well. This repetition of the experience is clearly expressed by Williams: “in addition to the initial reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit indicated by the word *filled* in the case of the early disciples and Paul of Tarsus, it is possible to be filled later also and it is possible to be constantly filled with the Spirit. This does not absolutely deny the initial reception of the Spirit, but shows that the concept of *fullness* is rather complex” (Williams, 2009b:248). This could be the meaning given to Paul's expression of being filled with the Spirit in a constant way. This

³²³ Translation from Italian “Molti dichiarano anche che l’esperienza di un battesimo pentecostale ha finalmente aperto una via affinché Dio operasse in modo più produttivo nelle loro vite”.

³²⁴ Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16.

³²⁵ Translation from Italian “visitazione divina in tutta la sua pienezza”.



condition permits believers to have a life that is always and constantly filled (2009b:248).

Furthermore, two terms, full and filled, according to Williams refer to the community or single believer who is filled with the Spirit and this can lead today to "an extremely profound perception of the Spirit of God, which moves like the wind or like fire until all barriers are broken down and can penetrate everything"³²⁶ (2009b:249). In this way, the community also has an awareness of what the presence of God and his action is (Williams, 2009b:249).

The observations made by Williams are based on terms that indicate an action of God by the Spirit that acts from the outside of man and touches the most profound and internal part of man. In this way the presence of the Spirit is felt by man and his presence is dynamic because it leads people to be filled with the Spirit and to experience God.

"The message of Pentecost and its continuation is a dynamic event that can be summarized by saying 'God has come'. The sound from the sky 'as of impetuous wind blowing' on the day of Pentecost and the 'tongues of fire' that rested on each person underline the action and presence of God."³²⁷ (Williams, 2009b:250) This descent is nothing but a manifestation of glory as happened in the Old Testament when the cloud descended filling the tabernacle or temple (Williams, 2009b:251).

³²⁶ Translation from Italian "una percezione estremamente profonda dello Spirito di Dio, che si muove come il vento o come il fuoco finché tutte le barriere non vengono abbattute e non riesce a penetrare in ogni cosa".

³²⁷ Translation from Italian "Il messaggio della Pentecoste e la sua continuazione è un evento dinamico che può essere riassunto dicendo <<Dio è venuto>>. Il suono dal cielo "come di vento impetuoso che soffia" nel giorno della Pentecoste e le "lingue di fuoco" che si posarono su ogni persona sottolineano l'azione e la presenza di Dio".



5.3.4.4 The phenomenon of tongues

Pentecost in Jerusalem, Caesarea and Ephesus are the three cities where the phenomenon of tongues occurred. In Samaria it is not explicitly indicated but it is to be understood from the context (Williams, 2009b:257). Paul claims that he speaks in tongues the first time was in Ananias' house. From these examples and other ones indicated in Acts, Williams expresses the view that speaking in tongues occurs with the reception of the Holy Spirit. This opportunity is restricted to a few, but it is possible for all (Williams, 2009b:258-259).

He defines speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of baptism in the Spirit. It is the main evidence because there were also other signs that accompanied it, but the most frequent is the one of the tongues. In the cities where it was manifested, as in Caesarea and Ephesus, the people present magnified God or prophesied as well. In these cities, first Peter and then Paul understood how the gift could be given to everyone. Only in Samaria the evidence of the tongues is implied (Williams, 2009b:259-60).

5.3.4.5 An explanation of the phenomenon

Williams defines speaking in tongues as "a spiritual expression, that is, of the words spoken by the Holy Spirit through the voices of the people"³²⁸ (2009b:261) indicating the Spirit as the source of speaking in other languages. This talk is called *glossolalia*.³²⁹ A first distinction to be made between foreign

³²⁸ Translation from Italian "un'espressione spirituale, cioè delle parole pronunciate dallo Spirito Santo attraverso le voci delle persone".

³²⁹ Italics is mine.



languages and different languages and between ecstatic or inspired languages. The first one occurred at Pentecost, but Williams emphasizes that Peter at Caesarea did not notice any difference with what happened in Jerusalem. The only difference is determined by waiting or by some emotional factor. Also the expression about the people present and drunk is not correct because before Luke's quote, those present spoke in foreign languages and their way of expressing was intelligible. So asserting that it was all due to emotional factors is not adequate.

In any case, the phenomenon is treated as a transcendental language and always as a spiritual expression (Williams, 2009b:262-263). Nevertheless, rationality is always present. This concept contrasts with the vision that affirms that these events are only the product of emotionality that led to thinking only about irrational ecstasies (Williams, 2009b:263).

The term used at Pentecost is '*other languages*',³³⁰ understood as different languages (Williams, 2009b:264) and indicating that they were expressions of the Spirit and not languages of other countries. Williams agrees that the languages spoken were foreign because the audience listened to them that they were speaking in their own languages, but "in these verses one does not speak of the languages of each person, but of the fact that people heard them speaking in their own language. For this reason, while believers spoke in 'other languages' through the Holy Spirit, their words were immediately translated by the same Spirit into the different languages of the multitude"³³¹ (Williams, 2009b:264).

These were pneumatic words that had the source in the Spirit and were understood through the interpretation, a gift of which the apostle Paul speaks

³³⁰ Italics is mine.

³³¹ Translation from Italian "in questi versetti non si parla *dei* linguaggi di ogni persona, ma del fatto che le persone li udirono parlare *nella* propria lingua. Per questa ragione, mentre i credenti parlavano in "altre lingue" mediante lo Spirito Santo, le loro parole venivano immediatamente tradotte dallo stesso Spirito nei diversi idiomi della moltitudine".



in his letters. These tongues, according to Williams, are tongues that had never been spoken before. This concept was expressed in the last chapter of Mark that refers to new tongues.

What is determined is a connection between tongues and baptism in the Holy Spirit emphasizing that this is not a temporary experience but a connection that leads to a certain continuity of the gift. The experience had to be always renewed and had not ceased at Pentecost. In fact, Paul continued to speak in other languages even years after Pentecost (Williams, 2009b:266). The same thing happened in Corinth where many people spoke in tongues and Paul, in his letter, tried to regulate this situation because they overdid the tongues and created disorder (Williams, 2009b:267).

Moreover, this *glossolalia* is associated by Paul to prayer in a spiritual and not mechanical sense. It is fully suggested by the Spirit as happened at Pentecost (Williams, 2009b:267). In this prayer, Paul does not put aside the intelligence that led to making the person as if he were unconscious, but he underlines how “praying with the spirit does not require a mental conceptualization, it is possible to pray with the spirit even while doing other things”³³² (Williams, 2009b:269).

There are many verses in the New Testament that refer to speaking in tongues, and Williams perceives that this was a widespread practice even after Pentecost (Williams, 2009b:270).

Regarding the tongues, Williams makes some clarifications: if the material part of the man, the mouth and the vocal chords are active because they act during the event, the Holy Spirit determines the words that are said. It is the Spirit who tells to say certain things but without obligation because He does not control the person. These tongues work beyond what is human

³³² Translation from Italian “pregare con lo spirito non richiede una concettualizzazione mentale, si può pregare con lo spirito anche mentre si fanno altre cose”.



through the contact between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit (2009b:271-272).

Moreover, this language is a language of the Spirit that goes beyond the spoken tongue. These languages have a sense even if they are not understood, and for this motivation they can be interpreted. This means that speaking in tongues is intelligible. It is a language that goes beyond the rationality and ability (Williams, 2009b:272). Moreover, *glossolalia* is considered as a new sign attested to by the event that occurred at Pentecost (Williams, 2009b:273) becoming also peculiar to the experience (Williams, 2009b:273).

It is surely a sign to be considered new because it happened at Pentecost in a particular way. Furthermore, it is not to be compared to prophesying in order to explain it (Williams, 2009b:273-274). This event-sign is determined by the descent of the Holy Spirit which was accompanied by a sound from the heaven like that of the wind.

Furthermore, "it was *the* sign of a new and powerful gesture of God, both on the day of Pentecost and later"³³³ (Williams, 2009b:274). It is peculiar because with speaking in tongues, those who received seemed to be like drunks. For this reason, Williams considers it peculiar or strange (2009b:274).

Moreover, making a comparison with the present day, Williams states that psychologists or psychiatrists have indicated certain churches in which they speak in tongues like sects or churches with insane people or with people with emotional disorders. The motivation is this peculiarity that languages have. Even in historic Protestant churches there were these events but they were considered as undesirable despite the extraordinary change that occurred in the lives of those who experienced them (Williams, 2009b:275).

³³³ Translation from Italian "fu il segno di un gesto nuovo e potente di Dio, sia nel giorno della Pentecoste che in seguito".



Then, why speak in tongues? Williams makes a list to express the meaning of speaking in tongues. He emphasizes how speaking in tongues in the book of Acts is a praise to God, both for redemption and for the promise of the descent of the Spirit (Williams, 2009b:276). Moreover, taking up the various events in which the languages were manifested in Acts, he found that the common point is the praise that everyone gave to God (Williams, 2009b:277). Williams even claims that it is possible to sing in the Spirit that is an adoration with fervour. This type of adoration is beyond normal expressions and can also use lyrical expressions. He identifies it as an aspect of tongues, that is, to sing in tongues where the Spirit also provides the melody (Williams, 2009b:280).

In addition, speaking in tongues utters mysteries or hidden things that man cannot understand with his mind but it transports him to a higher level (Williams, 2009b:282). This high level leads man to investigate everything, even the deep things of God.³³⁴

Finally, speaking in tongues serves to offer prayers or petitions to God. In fact, through the Spirit it is possible to pray with the Spirit offering these prayers to God. Therefore, the Spirit offers prayers and supplications to God Himself. This way of praying is the richest and most complete prayer that helps the believers who do not know how to pray.

Then the Spirit occurs to this lack interceding for them with sighs (Williams, 2009b:283). Furthermore, the Spirit knows to whom to pray because He knows the needs of believers and then uses languages to pray for them. However, prayer with the mind is not excluded and is important (Williams, 2009b:284).

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As indicated by Williams: 1 Cor. 2:10,13.



5.3.4.6 The importance of speaking in tongues

Speaking in tongues or *glossolalia* is a language of the Spirit and for this reason is important, not so much for language but because it permits one to speak to God. It is defined as a supreme communication that occurs beyond the languages of this world which are limited (Williams, 2009b:285). Furthermore, it is important for personal edification (Williams, 2009b:286).

However, for Williams, the importance is not only restricted at this time. In fact, another sign that speaking in tongues provides is the eschatological one. With this term, he identifies speaking in tongues as a sign of the last things, of the end of time. The episode of Pentecost is considered as a peculiar day and together with other signs it becomes as "the day of the Lord" that will come (Williams, 2009b:288).

Through this sign the Pentecostal movement also arose, and this is a sign according to Williams, because possibly the secular era is the era in which God will prepare the end of time (2009b:289). Furthermore, it is "the sign that precedes the establishment of the Kingdom"³³⁵ (2009b:289) and represents the way to be in a direct relationship with God (2009b:290).

5.3.4.7 The effects that baptism create in the Holy Spirit

What is created in this descent of the Spirit in the believers? Williams divides effects into immediate and after receiving the Spirit.

Among the immediate effects, the main thing is determined by the presence of God. This presence is really felt. Therefore, the believer is aware

³³⁵

Translation from Italian "il segno che precede l'instaurazione del Regno".



of his presence. In fact, at Pentecost, people began to glorify God and therefore to praise God for what they had experienced (Williams, 2009b:379).

In all the episodes listed in Acts, the disciples were filled with the Spirit and experienced the reality of his presence (Williams, 2009b:380). Through this awareness, everybody took action in a surprising way (Williams, 2009b:381).

In addition, his presence was felt inwardly. In fact, they were full of joy so much to confuse it with being drunk. Joy even if somebody were in prison or were persecuted (Williams, 2009b:382). The source of this joy was the Holy Spirit and everybody was filled with Him (Williams, 2009b:384).

Furthermore, the believers who receive the Spirit receive power for the words and actions they would have to do. This frankness of speech can be noted in Peter's sermon immediately after receiving the Spirit at Pentecost or in the healing of the lame before the Sanhedrin where John and Peter spoke frankly (Williams, 2009b:385). Both the frankness and the safety and courage of all the disciples were the work of being filled with the Spirit (Williams, 2009b:386). These attitudes of frankness, security or courage still occur today with the people who receive this gift (Williams, 2009b:387).

The effects that are noticed after the reception of baptism are found in the community where believers began to have a greater communion (*koinonia*) and love for each other (Williams, 2009b:388) leading them to be of equal consent (Williams, 2009b:391). "The unity that derives from the Spirit, that is the *koinonia*, must be kept with zeal and it is necessary to pray fervently to have it."³³⁶ (Williams, 2009b:391-392) This is happening to the present day with an awakening that happens both to people and in the community (Williams, 2009b:392).

³³⁶ Translation from Italian "L'unita' che deriva dallo Spirito, ossia la *koinonia*, deve essere mantenuta con zelo e occorre pregare con fervore per averla".



Moreover, another effect can be noticed in the believers who tend to praise their Lord because they are filled with the Spirit. At Pentecost, as in other episodes of the Acts, the praise became fluid and constant. Those who have been baptized in the Spirit tend to praise God, and as happened in the book of Acts, today it occurs not only in the churches but also in the houses. Praise and adoration in these contexts are always present (Williams, 2009b:395).

“Personal, intimate and grateful adoration of God is the heart of contemporary spiritual awakening.”³³⁷ (Williams, 2009b:396) This is also accomplished when someone praises with hymns and psalms or even with spiritual songs which, as Williams says, are inspired by the Spirit (2009b: 396).

5.3.4.8 The Spirit and the gifts

The term gifts, as indicated by the Greek is *charismata*. These gifts are depending on the Spirit, and for this reason they are indicated as “spiritual gifts or *charismata* spiritual” (Williams, 2009b:397). To these gifts, sometimes Paul associates the term *pneumatika* but always intending gifts of the Spirit (Williams, 2009b:399). Despite the diversity of gifts shown on the Pauline lists, “they are distributions of the Holy Spirit”³³⁸ (Williams, 2009b:397). Williams thus emphasizes how these gifts are gifts of the Spirit even when they are not explicitly indicated. In fact, the three catalogs indicated by Paul have a slight distinction on the term used in the letter to the Ephesians (unlike that to the Romans or Corinthians) where he used the Greek term '*domata*', indicating the gifts given by Christ. Paul makes this distinction but emphasizes that God is

³³⁷ Translation from Italian “doni Spirituali o *charismata* spirituali”.

³³⁸ Translation from Italian “sono distribuzioni dello Spirito Santo”.



one and therefore they come from the same and the only God (Williams, 2009b:398).

According to Williams, the gifts indicated in Corinthians refer to Pentecostals of today. He also affirms that every believer of today is Pentecostal because he has received eternal life, because of the Spirit. A clarification that Williams makes concerns the letter to the Corinthians to which Paul writes to resolve internal problems. In this letter the Corinthians have experienced the gifts Paul lists, and those same gifts, according to Williams, are part of the Pentecostal awakening. The criticism that arises because somebody does not accept the gifts is due to the fact that he has not made them this experience and therefore confines these gifts only to the New Testament period (Williams, 2009b:401-402).

For their reception, Williams analyzes in what situation they are received. First, he underlines how they are the work of the Spirit under the lordship of the Lord Jesus exalted because through Him the Spirit is scattered (2009b:403). Through “pneumatic gifts, Jesus reveals the depths of wisdom and knowledge, he makes powerful works of healing and liberation, and works miracles of different kinds”³³⁹ (Williams, 2009b:404).

Although all discussions are based on the Spirit and his work, the Trinity is the basis on which everything belongs (Williams, 2009b:405). The apostle Paul expresses this concept very well. When he writes to the Corinthians indicating that the action of giving of the Spirit “to be really pneumatic, it must be totally Christocentric and Trinitarian”³⁴⁰ as well (Williams, 2009b:405).

Gifts represent the manifestation of the Spirit. This means that the invisible Spirit becomes visible through the manifested gift. At Pentecost and

³³⁹ Translation from Italian “i doni pneumatici, Gesu’ rivela le profondita’ della Sapienza e della conoscenza, attua opere potenti di guarigione e liberazione, e fa miracoli di diversitipi “.

³⁴⁰ Translation from Italian “essere realmente pneumatica, occorre che sia totalmente cristocentrica e trinitaria”.



in the other episodes of Acts this process happens (Williams, 2009b:406). However, the gift is distinct from the fruit even if it is always the work of the Spirit. In fact, the fruit needs more time to grow in the Christian life of the believer (Williams, 2009b:406).

As for the fruit, the Pentecostals are criticized because they focus a lot on the gifts, even though sometimes they are not ripe or are carnal thus not showing a life of holiness. To this criticism Williams responds that even the Corinthians to whom Paul wrote had the same problems and not for this reason the gifts were put aside.

Probably, Williams also points out that these accusations come from those whom Paul calls auditors who have not yet experienced these things (2009b:407).

This donation made by God has its importance because it is “*God* himself who reveals himself through the Holy Spirit and *Christ* who ministers through the *Spirit*”³⁴¹ (Williams, 2009b:408).

“In the exercise of spiritual gifts, the Holy Spirit expresses Himself in and through human activity”³⁴² (Williams, 2009b:408) making them supernatural (Williams, 2009b:408) and using people without gender or race distinction (Williams, 2009b:409). These gifts once received are exercised by these people (Williams, 2009b:410). In addition, Williams tends to emphasize that “they are not offices or assignments”³⁴³ (2009b:411).

They are assigned to certain people. In this case the Spirit freely uses people and sometimes “a person could manifest a word of knowledge on one

³⁴¹ Translation from Italian “*Dio* stesso che si rivela mediante lo Spirito Santo, e di *Cristo* che ministra attraverso lo *Spirito*”.

³⁴² Translation from Italian “Nell’esercizio dei doni spirituali, lo Spirito Santo si esprime nella e attraverso l’attività umana”.

³⁴³ Translation from Italian “non sono uffici o incarichi”.



occasion, and a prophecy on another occasion (or any other combination)”³⁴⁴ (Williams, 2009b:411).

This affirmation confirms that there is no possession. However, their use is for the common good (Williams, 2009b:412), hence for the community who is exercised. Indeed, the purpose of the Spirit is to build believers (Williams, 2009b:413).

So it is not the gift itself that interests but the purpose for which the gift is used and therefore the building up of the body (Williams, 2009b:414) which is the Church.

5.4 The Spirit and the church

How does the Spirit act within the community? Williams explains this concept very well. “It is spiritual the common foundation of existence of the Church that is made up of people.”³⁴⁵ (2009c:10) Hence, a church is founded on the Spirit that has provided its members with a non-earthly but celestial citizenship (Williams, 2009c:10). For this reason, it is possible to speak about birth from above. The believers are born again, because reality is not earthly but spiritual and invisible (Williams, 2009c:10). This earthly reality is called *ekklēsia* and is not determined by men and women inside it because it is an invisible reality. It has a spiritual essence (Williams, 2009c:11). “Paul exhorts the Ephesians to strive to ‘keep the unity of the Spirit with the bond of peace’ (Ephesians 4:3). The church should always be anxious to preserve the unity of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, uniting us to Christ, has also linked us in

³⁴⁴ Translation from Italian “una persona potrebbe manifestare una parola di conoscenza in un’occasione, e una profezia in un’altra occasione (o qualsiasi altra combinazione)”.

³⁴⁵ Translation from Italian “La Chiesa è formata da persone il cui fondamento comune di esistenza è spirituale”.



mutual love, so we should strive to preserve this unity.”³⁴⁶ (Williams, 2009c:137)

This unity in the Spirit can be threatened, as in Corinth, bringing divisions inside. This is the cause because Paul speaks of unity in the Spirit and of one body. He explains how to have unity that the Spirit brings (Williams, 2009c:17) and makes the Church as a temple of God (Williams, 2009c:25). In this way, and with the work of the Spirit, it becomes holy (Williams, 2009c:25), not for some quality achieved by its members but because God makes the Church to become a dwelling place or a spiritual home (Williams, 2009c:26).

This characteristic of holiness considers the church apart from the world, for the world does not have Christ and therefore the Spirit is not in it (Williams, 2009c:26).

How does all this happen? Through the inner working of the Spirit that transforms the heart of flesh of people giving a new heart and giving vitality (Williams, 2009c:56-57). This entails new life in the believer with a law that is no longer written on stone boards, as happened for Israel, but directly in the hearts of the believers. The Spirit begins to dwell in them by giving this new life and by making the believer part of God's people (Williams, 2009c:57).

Therefore, community life will depend on the action of the Spirit who will give life and vivify it. Without this action, the Church would have died spiritually (Williams, 2009c:85). An example cited by Williams is the dry bones told by Ezekiel, which through a prophetic word, the wind blew and the Spirit gave new life to the bones (2009c:85). With this action, they were born to new life (Williams, 2009c:86).

³⁴⁶ Translation from Italian “Paolo esorta gli efesini a sforzarsi di ‘conservare l’unità dello Spirito con vincolo della pace’ (Efesini 4:3). La chiesa dovrebbe essere sempre ansiosa di conservare l’unità dello Spirito Santo. Lo Spirito Santo, unendoci a Cristo, ci ha anche legati nell’amore reciproco, quindi dovremmo sforzarci di conservare questa unità”.



This episode has to do with the people of Israel, but the resurrection of Christ will cause the Spirit to make people's hearts come to bring salvation and new life to those who will become part of the Church (Williams, 2009c:86). The Spirit will create a communion among them, a *koinonia* that “denotes a close connection, a communion and a deep participation or sharing”³⁴⁷ (Williams, 2009c:87). It is a work of the Spirit that brings communion with God (Williams, 2009c:87) and then makes this communion with others. This communion brought about one hundred and twenty person to receive the Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Williams, 2009c:90). They were in communion and they prayed and waited for the descent of the Spirit. Indeed, “the Church is the community of the Holy Spirit, it has been vivified by the Spirit, it experiences the communion in the Spirit and it is the communion of the saints”³⁴⁸ (Williams, 2009c:93).

Furthermore, the Spirit guides the Church in worship. In fact, Paul speaks of the offering of worship through the Spirit of God. “However, since the Holy Spirit is fully God, we can very well worship Him as we worship the Father and the Son, and we do so with many prayers and many hymns.”³⁴⁹ (Williams, 2009c:118) In being filled with the Spirit, it is possible to worship God in the freedom that He grants (Williams, 2009c:119-120).

Through the grace received from God by which everyone is saved, the believers need to serve others because this gift received directly from God must not be used only for themselves, but must be addressed to other people.

³⁴⁷ Translation from Italian “denota uno stretto legame, una comunione e una partecipazione o una condivisione profonda”.

³⁴⁸ Translation from Italian “la Chiesa è la comunità dello Spirito Santo, è stata vivificata dallo Spirito, sperimenta la comunione nello Spirito ed è la comunione dei santi”.

³⁴⁹ Translation from Italian “Tuttavia, poiché lo Spirito Santo è pienamente Dio, possiamo benissimo adorarlo come adoriamo il Padre e il Figlio, e lo facciamo con molte preghiere e molti inni”.



What the Spirit has given, his gifts, must be administered to others for mutual building (Williams, 2009c:148-149).

In addition, the mission of the Church is to evangelize. This action can be carried out through the Spirit that gives strength and follows the Great Commission indicated by Matthew (Williams, 2009c:169). This force was the power that disciples had to receive through the Spirit (Williams, 2009c:170) and it was useful for communicating the Christian message effectively. In this way, the Spirit helped them in this purpose. Moreover, the received Spirit would have led them in the spread of the gospel beginning from Jerusalem (Williams, 2009c:174) with supernatural manifestations (Williams, 2009c:180).

This action today has become valid in the social field. Many people or Associations do that. However, Williams indicates the need to have the guidance of the Spirit and respect the mandate of the Church which is to bring salvation and not only social or humanitarian help. *“The church must contain both aspects.* This does not mean that the Gospel is the message of salvation and must have priority. However, it not occurs omit other human and social needs.”³⁵⁰ (2009c:185-186)

How to relate the church to the government authorities of the moment? The Church lives in the world and the actions of the people of God are different at each moment. If in the Old Testament there was initially theocracy, with God who was responsible for his people, afterwards with the kings this responsibility was delegated to them who could decide to follow their God or not.

In the New Testament, the Gospel spread across the earth and at that time the known world was the domain of the Roman Empire. Religious and political fields were completely separated, but according to Williams, God established these areas (2009c:331-333). The Church must be subjected to

³⁵⁰ Translation from Italian *“La chiesa deve contenere entrambi gli aspetti.* Questo non significa che il Vangelo è il messaggio della salvezza e deve avere la priorità. Tuttavia, non bisogna trascurare le altre necessità umane e sociali “.



this political authority (Williams, 2009c:340) as it is with the magistrates (Williams, 2009c:341). The Church's task will be to intercede for them so that they can solve the problems of the world in the best possible way without falling into evil and without countering the believers (Williams, 2009c:343). Likewise, Williams indicates that the believer must be a good citizen in the indications given by the various governments (2009c:345-346). Despite this situation, the church has a certain distinguishing characteristic from the government: it has higher ethics than the justice of the government. The government seeks to enforce laws but the Church responds with the law of love that is indicated with Jesus as the new ethics of the Kingdom allowing to go beyond the law (Williams, 2009c:348).



CHAPTER 6

AMONG THE VISIONS

This chapter aims to compare the various perspectives with each other showing the discontinuities as well as the continuities among the various perspectives. Each paragraph intends to compare the three theologians on the basis of specific themes that can be identified within their perspectives.

6.1 Definitions

All three theologians name their theology according to the action of the Spirit. Depending on the approach which every theologian uses the action is different.

6.1.1 Welker's definition: The Realistic Theology

Welker's theological assumption is experience. His approach tends to grasp the reality of God through experiences gained by individuals in real life. In this way he tends to highlight the idea of man as a creature who changes by experiencing God. Therefore, experiencing God will be the point of connection between the created man and God the Creator (Welker, 1990:6).



Unlike the theoretical work done in Bible schools, experiencing God in the real world, led Welker to call his Theology as 'Realistic' (1990:7). It is the Spirit that leads to the experience. Today the secularized world neglects the Spirit, therefore it cannot experience God (Welker, 1990:11).

Nevertheless, his action is visible in movements tending to highlight God's reality in history, like the charismatics and similar ones aiming to exploit written sections in order to react to environmental or social situations that are unfavourable to them. To this group, Welker associates movements referring to the liberation or feminist theology (1990:11)

Welker, resuming a phrase from a previous chapter, "the multiplicity of movements corresponds to the abundance of the Spirit"³⁵¹ (1990:24), tends to indicate the Spirit as an advocate of these movements. His action in today's reality is intended to improve the situation in which individuals find themselves or sharpen their experience of God in their lives.

Social and inner life become reference points of the work of the Spirit bringing God closer to man by experiencing Him. This is possible because social themes "are placed under the power inherent in the promise of the Spirit of justice"³⁵² (Welker, 1990:25).

However, God's experience is not the same in all realities, but differs in cultures, societies and areas in which it is made.

6.1.2 Moltmann's definition: The Integral Theology

Moltmann, unlike Welker, has a vision that seeks to go beyond experiences. His concept is not only limited to the concept of the individual life, but it is extended to all individuals in their diversity and plurality. This is why

³⁵¹ Translation from Italian "la molteplicità dei movimenti corrisponde all'abbondanza dello Spirito".

³⁵² Translated from Italian, "si pongono sotto la potenza insita nella promessa dello Spirito della giustizia".



his vision of the Spirit, understood from an integral point of view, is known as 'Integral' Theology' (Moltmann, 1994a:8).

This way of seeing the Spirit attempts to change the idea of spirituality within today's churches. The Spirit does not remain trapped in ecclesiastical institutions but tends to come out in freedom upbringing movements of faith with different characteristics. This process introduces 'free thought' in ecclesiastical circles (Moltmann, 1994a:12-13).

Despite of the differences, they are under the guidance of the same Spirit. The main example is determined by the charismatic movements which have produced an awakening and a rediscovery of the action of the Spirit. This reawakening took place through the work of the Spirit and a re-reading of the Word. It is a vision with a universal characteristic not bound to individual charismatic movements, but including groups of historical churches in which some have felt the action of the Spirit in their lives, bringing a new vitality. This action of the Spirit could be considered a life-giving experience (1994a:13-14).

This same action happens in nature and in the secular world, since the same Spirit acts in movements seeking liberation from social problems or in favour of nature, from an ecological point of view. Liberation Theology seeks to act in certain areas of the world to bring justice where there is not. How can this happen? Through the action of the Spirit who brings new life.

New life also from the eschatological point of view, of the last things to which humanity is approaching. In this vision, alongside the work of the Spirit there is also the work of Christ who, in His Resurrection, grants the Spirit the possibility of bringing regeneration. Regeneration for individuals who are changed and who are made capable to relate to others in a new way.

This all happens by the experience of the Spirit, which is called: 'historical experience'. Moltmann defines very well the meaning of this expression saying that it is a today's experience recalling the past and looking forward to the future. An action that begins in Christ and ends in his return.



This experience leads to change. In this way there is a close relationship between Pneumatology and Christology.

In any case, individual experience leads to a communion with others. Experience leads to a transformed life easily objectively verified. Experiencing Christ is the basis of any other experience of openness to others because it is the multidimensional context of every individual that leads him to have this pluralistic feature. Hence, the transcendent experience of God becomes immanent in the heart of a person who experiences Him. And then, “*to experience God in all things* presupposes a transcendence that is immanent to things and must be caught by induction.”³⁵³ (Moltmann, 1994a:51)

In this way an anthropocentric pneumatology is created leading to an “*integral doctrine of God, the Holy Spirit*”³⁵⁴ (Moltmann, 1994a:53). Integral because it concerns the whole man, man in his totality, in his entire being composed of a material part, that is the body, and his immaterial part as the conscious and subconscious (1994a:53).

In this way, Moltmann's definition changes the comprehension of the integral action of the Spirit in man.

6.1.3 William's definition: The Renewal Theology

This definition arises from the truth that the Spirit is present in man and generates something new. In fact, according to Williams's idea, the Spirit acts in individuals renewing them. This renewal leads them to act and experience God personally.³⁵⁵ There is a total change of the person, a growth that leads him to praise his Creator and to get closer to the Word of God. This renewal

³⁵³ Translation from Italian “*sperimentare Dio in tutte le cose* presuppone una trascendenza che è immanente alle cose e che va colta per via induttiva.

³⁵⁴ Translation from Italian “*dottrina integrale di Dio, Spirito Santo*”.

³⁵⁵ http://www.rodmanwilliams.com/A_Theological_Pilgrimage/TP01.htm. Date of access: 20/12/2018.



leads him to act positively towards other people and to live a very profound community life. It is also a renewal that leads to the appropriate use of gifts and to mission and evangelization. The way the renewal occurs in the person stimulates him to work.

Thus, the Spirit works in the life of the person by renewing him. At the beginning, Williams explains in detail what the Holy Spirit is, indicating very well the single terms of the word: 'The Holy Spirit'. According to him, is the article 'The' which distinguishes the Spirit from all other spirits or forces (Williams, 2009b:165). The adjective 'Holy' identifies his sacredness, that is, his separation from what is mundane (Williams, 2009b:164). Finally, despite the term used, the word 'Spirit' identifies not a force or a substance, but a person with a personality of his own (Williams, 2009b:182).

From these starting points, Williams will extend his perspective to all the aspects in which the Spirit acts.

6.1.4 Three definitions: what is the difference?

The three theologians define their theological vision by expressing it with different characteristics. However, all of them highlight the action of the Spirit. The foundation of all is the Spirit. In Moltmann's vision, the work of the Spirit has universal as well as individual characteristics. In fact he argues that God's experience is identified with the divine Spirit in man. In this way "the revealing action of God takes place in the experience that the believer makes of himself"³⁵⁶ (Moltmann, 1994a:47).

Welker thinks that the work of the Spirit is the foundation of experiencing God and it is an action on the individual. In fact, the reality of God tries to understand "in what way our experiences, our images of the world, our moral

³⁵⁶ Translation from Italian "l'agire rivelante di Dio si attua nell'esperienza che il credente fa di sè".



criteria and values must be illuminated and changed if they want to be in accord with the creational reality"³⁵⁷ (Welker, 1990:6).

Williams, instead, considers it as a renewal though it is still a personal action of the Spirit that renews the individual.³⁵⁸

Therefore, starting from different perspectives, everyone defines a personal action of the Spirit who wants to change people in order to act in them. Each definition proposes a change in individuals leading to action towards others, and mostly to a renewed relationship with God. The main difference regards the action of the Spirit in the world. In their works, Welker (1990:11) and Moltmann (1994a:132) see the action of the Spirit in the world bringing to birth various movements among which is the Pentecostal one. This action has its scriptural reference which finds fulfillment in society where He tries to correct those deficiencies which, biblically speaking, are unjust or lead to slavery. According to them, the various theologies, such as liberation, ecologist, feminist and so on, are a way in which the Spirit acts facing problems of the time and re-evaluating them through an evident and correcting action. Moltmann, as in the case of liberation theology, considers them practical examples (1994a:132-133), while, according to Welker, they reveal a God that can be present in certain contexts where there are specific needs and necessities (2014a:31).

Williams, as already noted does not make much reference to these theologies, concentrating much on the work of the Spirit in individuals and on the way they can be used by the Spirit to accomplish great things. The only action, outside the church that is clearly considered is evangelization. The Great Commission is the point of reference by which the Pentecostals try to complete the mission, extending from Jerusalem throughout the world. What

³⁵⁷ Translated from Italian: "in quale modo le nostre esperienze, le nostre immagini del mondo, i nostri criteri e valori morali debbono essere illuminati e mutati, se vogliono sintotizzarsi con la realta' creaturale".

³⁵⁸ http://www.rodmanwilliams.com/A_Theological_Pilgrimage/TP01.htm Date of access 20/12/2018.



happened at Pentecost, with powerful works, prodigies and signs, can be reproduced inside the Pentecostal Movement since God has the freedom to implement them at any moment (Williams, 2009b:310).

Therefore, it is possible to say that on the individual action the three theologians agree, but regarding the action of the Spirit in the world, it seems that Williams says very little.

6.2 Spirit and Pentecostal Movement

This paragraph will compare the differences of opinion and the consideration of the above-mentioned theologians on what has been defined as the Pentecostal movement.

6.2.1 Welker and the Pentecostal Movement

In his works, Welker considers the Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements as groups that experience a real presence of the Spirit. He asserts with certainty that they have gained a real experience as evidenced in their community life during the various phases of worship and in their personal life as well. Thus, the Spirit acts in these movements generating vitality to individuals. For Welker it is "the most vital religious phenomenon of our time" (1990:18).

The Spirit is active today determining the birth and expansion of the movement throughout the world with a very high growth of followers. There is no doubt that this movement is inspired by the Spirit since it spreads everywhere by what is called the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Welker, 1990:20-21)

Welker notes that the Spirit is using Pentecostals to bring the gospel to the world. However, he points out that those within the movement often stress



the sensationality of events. Events such as *glossolalia* or healings or powerful works create a form of spectacle or evident sensationism. Indeed, according to Welker, "the theology of the Spirit should analyse with sobriety and realism the perceptible experiences of the Spirit, interpreting them and helping people to understand them, and only then, pondering the direction of the spectacular action of the same Spirit"³⁵⁹ (1990:23).

He does not deny the use of charisms but he values them in a sober and useful way for the community. Spectacularity is not a symptom of a greater spirituality. This is why, he cites a Pentecostal theologian, Frank Macchia, who in the assessment of Pentecostal theology highlights some theological differences within the Pentecostal groups tied to the baptism of the Spirit (Welker, 2014a:218). Furthermore, he asserts how these Pentecostal groups are eschatologically oriented towards the return of Christ that will bring the Kingdom of God to earth. This kind of dispensationalism, is a speculation about the fullness of time (2014a:219) and a combination between Spirit Christology and theological eschatology (2014a:220).

6.2.2 Moltmann and the Pentecostal Movement

Moltmann includes the Pentecostal and charismatic Movements among those movements that are born not from a rigorous and well-regulated ecclesiology, but from what he calls 'free thought' (1994a:12-13). He observes that there has been a movement of believers from the historical churches to this new ecclesiological reality in search of the experience of the Spirit that these new churches are practising. There is a certain relationship between Word and Spirit that leads them to approach these new groups based on what

³⁵⁹ Translated from Italian "la teologia dello Spirito dovrebbe analizzare con sobrietà e realismo le esperienze percepibili dello Spirito, per interpretarle e aiutare a comprenderle, e solo a partire da qui interrogarsi poi anche nella direzione dell'azione spettacolare dello stesso Spirito".



is called the baptism of the Spirit. However, the diffusion of this kind of experience has spread even in the historical churches leading to what he calls the 'Johannine church', that is a period of time when the Spirit acts among the churches, leading them to moments of ecumenical communion (Moltmann, 1994a:15).

Obviously the basic experience of these new movements is the phenomenon of speaking in tongues that is biblically based on the day of Pentecost of Acts 2. He humbly says that, not having experienced it, he cannot explain such a phenomenon (1994a:215), but from the outside he can testify of the incomprehensible way in which *glossolalia* leads to a joy that pervades the receiver. He says: “my impression is that in *glossolalia* one feels so much possessed by the Spirit that he cannot express it in a verbal way so that all understand, but in an incomprehensible way of moans and cries, like when we cry uncontrollably to express a very intense pain, or when we laugh, jump and dance to communicate the joy that pervades us”³⁶⁰ (1998:79). This strong emotion leads them to externalize *glossolalia*.

These movements, still growing throughout the world, are based on the experience of awakening that grants them a certain individual freedom called ‘freedom feast’ (1998:79). Moltmann underlies these two points becoming critical of the churches in Germany who criticize those movements and their experience without trying to gain the same experience. He refers to their cultural and ecclesiastical tradition and with their crystallized experience. He notes how in the Pentecostal churches there is a certain experience of regeneration that leads to changes within the churches, something that does not happen in the historic churches (1998:80). However, if on one hand he criticizes the world from which he comes in favour of the Pentecostal Churches, on the other hand,

³⁶⁰ Translation from Italian “la mia impressione è che nella glossolalia ci si senta talmente afferrati dallo Spirito da esprimersi non più nel modo verbale che tutti comprendiamo, ma in quello incomprensibile dei gemiti e delle grida, come quando si piange senza ritegno per esprimere un dolore molto intenso, o si ride, si salta e si balla per comunicare la gioia che ci pervade”.



he criticizes the Pentecostal churches that are concentrating too much on expressing charisms inside the church without using them for the world in every field, from politics, ecology to the peace movement. In these contexts, according to him, there could be a stronger action of the Spirit to start from those who have experienced it the most (1998:80).

6.2.3 *Williams and the Pentecostal Movement*

Williams relates the descent of the Spirit that came at Pentecost with what happened in the last century giving rise to the Pentecostal Movement. At the beginning it was necessary to be able to spread the gospel among all the people starting from Jerusalem, and through the same power, Pentecostals have reached all the countries in their missions becoming, currently, the most numerous Christian group (Williams, 2009b:304). It is power that guides them in the proclamation of the gospel (Williams, 2009b:307). Furthermore, Williams also associates the things that happen, miracles and wonders as resulting from the work of the Spirit. This is why he tends to stress the continuity of miracles to the modern times and criticizes the movements that deny this possibility (Williams, 2009b:310). In fact, he argues, the Spirit is always in action, and this is evident because his activities are still manifested in the Pentecostal Movement with healing and liberation as well (Williams, 2009b:311). These gifts also become preparatory for the future world indicating an eschatological action of the Spirit.

All his Systematic Theology maintains this emphasis, identifying the action of the Spirit with the central point of the Pentecostal movement. In all his discussions on the doctrines he imprints the Pentecostals' vision. For



instance, being Jesus the Anointed of God. He really considers Him a Pentecostal or a Pentecostal Christ³⁶¹ (Williams, 2009a:407).

6.2.4 The Pentecostal Movement according to the three theologians

The Pentecostal Movement is considered by all three theologians as the Movement of the Spirit that brought the diffusion of the Gospel to all parts of the world. The first reference is to what it happened at Pentecost. On these points all three of them do agree. They confirm, therefore, that today's experience is similar to that gained by the first church in the first century. Besides this agreement, there are critical differences that refer to the nature of today's movement. Welker points out that today's Pentecostal churches have little theology and are based primarily on the experience that distinguishes them. This lack of theological reflection leads them to accept any form of experience being valued by the spectacularity, the phenomenology of the experience, that is, the external character of the experience. For this reason, he underlines that there should be much more closeness to the text than to the experience itself (Welker, 1990:23).

Moltmann approves what is done in the Pentecostal churches by encouraging his own church to welcome a greater spiritual openness (1994a:216). However, he argues how the Movement is closed within its shell not opening to those activities that can cause problems present in the world (1998:80). If the Spirit moves the way and where He wants, it is necessary for those churches to open the charisms also to that world where the Spirit has been in action from the beginning.

Williams, on the other hand, as a good Pentecostal argumentant, considers all doctrines linked with the action of the Spirit. In all three there is a

³⁶¹ Translation from Italian "Gesù, l'Unto, può essere realmente definito *pentecostale*".



perspective that leads to the future, towards the Kingdom of God, and Williams analyzes those aspects from the Pentecostal point of view. He indicates Christ as Pentecostal (Williams, 2009a:407) by connecting Christology to Pneumatology very closely. The connection between Christology and Pneumatology is done by Welker and Moltmann as well, but Williams increases the connection with the Pentecostal Movement.

6.3 *The work of the Spirit in the Bible among people of the past*

The personal experience of the Spirit has always been important and all theologies have considered it as the foundation of the communion with God. However, experiencing the Spirit is not something new. Even in the Old Testament, the Bible speaks of individuals who have experienced the Spirit.

6.3.1 *Welker: the Spirit and the individuals of the Old Testament*

According to Welker, a semantic evaluation confirms that the substantial characteristic of the Spirit, between the Old and the New Testaments, has not changed. The multiplicity of meanings is maintained, that is wind or spirit or breath. In all cases, Welker emphasizes the freedom of the Spirit who has been working from the beginning as specifically indicated in Genesis (1990:56). However, the action of the Spirit is to be considered in reference to the wind or God's breath but also in reference to the actions of people who perform certain functions by the anointing. Welker cites many of them, everyone with a different function, from Besaleel to Elijah, from Moses to Saul and later, the various prophets.

The Old Testament is a document rich in actions by people who are working to carry on God's purpose warning his people for the direction they



are taking. In other situations, his action is similar to a warrior, though not being a warrior (for instance in the book of Judges). He does not identify the Spirit of God as a warrior spirit because his action tends to bring salvation where there is imprisonment (Welker, 1990:58).

Moreover, the choice of these people is made not on the basis of their capacity but because of the Spirit's descending on them, filling them and calling them to do great things. Therefore, the aim is to bring unity to those people who have been disunited by Christian dominations. In fact, Israel is in a "*situations of uncertainty, fear, paralysis, ending up with only complaint*"³⁶² (Welker, 1990 60). Therefore, the choice of these people is not due to their capacity. They are insecure and imperfect people, full of doubts and perplexities. God chooses them to do great things. In fact, they are weak and unable to do what God has commanded, but only through the Spirit and his anointing they fight, win over the lions, while ropes break.

At this stage, Welker analyzes how the two opposites are together, the human weakness, and the power for the Spirit. As already indicated, there is no perfection in them. The Spirit chooses them along with their weaknesses and fragility, with their doubts, and in spite of everything, they choose to meet their enemies (Welker, 1990:63). This double function, power and weakness, is considered as a change of identity (Welker, 1990:75).

A private identity is that of the chosen people, and a public one is what they have when the Spirit guides them to do great things. In this contrast, on one side, there is a lack of power and powerlessness when the Spirit goes away because the strength that God gives them is not continuous (1990:77). On the other side there is a man capable of doing great things in front of everyone. Finally, he argues how this power is not continuous but it comes and goes according to what the Spirit decides to do (1990:83).

³⁶² Translated from Italian "*situazioni d'incertezza, di paura, di paralisi, e finisce di lamentarsi soltanto*".



6.3.2 Moltmann: the Spirit and the individuals of the Old Testament

As Welker, also Moltmann gives due consideration to the Old Testament people chosen by God. He ties God's experience with the historical event. In this way he confirms how this experience happens in a certain historical moment, at a certain time and in a certain place. Through this concept he shows how the perception that people have of God's reality, should be seen within the limits of history. This is why he underlines the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the connection between God and some people in specific moments in history. Their experience has become a historic event to be remembered (Moltmann, 1994a:54). The same happens in the various pacts that God has made, or in events such as the exodus from Egypt or the conquest of the Promised Land. Thus, the presence of God is perceived within the history of the people of Israel. Moreover, this presence is transposed into the future so much as to identify it as a present that has a future in eternity. An eternity that is not only expected but being realized in the present: "*the eternal now*"³⁶³ (1994a:54).

This presence occurs through the works done by chosen people that, guided by the Spirit, do whatever God wants them to do. An action that is not continuous but sporadic, not permanent but limited in time. On these these few occasions, these people represent God since they are chosen by Him. This all happens also with kings, even if, in the case of Saul, the Spirit left him after he abandoned God (1994a:59).

Therefore, according to Moltmann, people who are anointed rule in God's name like the kings, do great things as the judges or speak in the name of God as the prophets. All this is done through the Spirit, the *rûah Jahweh* acting through them. Moltmann also considers the presence and descent of God in the sanctuary. This is the *shêkînah* that comes down at certain times

³⁶³

MOLTMANN JÜRGEN. 1994a, translated from Italian "l'eterno ora".



representing the moment of God's dwelling with his people. It is the presence of God in the immanent present, as God's presence distinct from God Himself (Moltmann, 1994a:64).

6.3.3 *Williams: the Spirit and the individuals of the Old Testament*

In his systematic work, also Williams argues how the Spirit acted in the Old Testament choosing people to do what they were called to do. These people were chosen among many people to act on God's behalf. The Spirit's action gave them qualities that they would never have had without Him. Among these people worthy of consideration is Besaleel that made tools for building the tabernacle or Moses that led his people. Furthermore, people chosen to act as generals like Joshua or the liberators of Israel, the judges when the people had abandoned their God (Williams, 2009b:187-192). The coming of chosen people continues with kings, David first, and then with all the prophets who were people to whom "the Word of the Eternal was addressed ..." ³⁶⁴ (Williams, 2009b:192). In this way, the divine help can be found in many people of the Old Testament who acted in God's name. The descent of the Spirit upon them, made them capable of great things, which otherwise they would never have done: "the Spirit came to give directions" ³⁶⁵ (Williams, 2009b:194).

6.3.4 *A common vision on the action of the Spirit in the Old Testament*

All three of the theologians have highlighted the action of the Spirit in the individuals of the Old Testament. They agree that God chose some people

³⁶⁴ Translation from Italian "The Word of the Eternal was addressed to..."

³⁶⁵ Translation from Italian "lo Spirito venne per dare indicazioni, forza e autorità per la loro vita e la loro missione".



who acted by the Spirit and his anointing. They would never have been able to act if the Spirit had not given them the capacity to act. This is a common vision on how the Spirit works among people. An action that is part of a bigger picture is that of the will of God revealing Himself to all people of Israel. Throughout this people's history there has been a divine intervention which has indicated the path to follow. Furthermore, when the direction was wrong, God tried to correct certain attitudes. The Spirit descended on them and used them to act in a specific context or place to do great things, to grant freedom from dominations, to conquer or warn them of the way they had undertaken.

The Spirit's action has been persistent from the beginning, using the same people as well. According to Moltmann, these people made an experience of the divine, a historical experience to remember, a meaningful event with a foretaste of eternity at a specific time. God's historical experience is a present fact (Moltmann, 1994a:54). Welker, on the other hand, underlines how this experience involves all people anointed by God contrasting between being a person and God's anointed one. A man, whose private life is weak, is insecure and not qualified to do anything. On the opposite side there is a man that in public life is strong and safe, with skills and abilities to foresee or interpret dreams by the Spirit. For this reason he considers this attitude as a change of identity (Welker, 1990:75).

So, the vision is common, but with small conceptual differences that Welker and Moltmann have well illustrated.

6.4 *Relationship between the Spirit and Messiah*

In this section, the focus will be on possible connections between the Old and New Testaments. As the Spirit has acted on individuals to do specific things, the Old Testament emphasizes his anointing on specific persons. This anointing will be manifested in a formidable manner centuries later in Jesus of



Nazareth. The promised Messiah will be the One on whom the Spirit will rest. Every theologian has defined this aspect to be important for the Christian faith.

6.4.1 *Welker: The Spirit and the Messiah*

As highlighted in the Old Testament paragraph, the Spirit brought unity to those persons disrupted and dominated by foreign peoples guiding Israel to the Promised Land. Furthermore, God tried to speak to the various kings who ruled Israel. Besides these valuable actions, practised by people anointed by the Spirit, the Spirit attempted to bring justice and peace. In fact, the Spirit is not "a numinous reality but a force capable of transforming the real life conditions"³⁶⁶ (Welker, 1990:109).

This action of the Spirit, bearer of peace and justice, is strongly emphasized in the book of Isaiah that anticipates a man chosen by God to whom authority will be given, bringing mercy, justice and peace. The bearer of these virtues will be an Anointed one. "Anointed by the Spirit" is equivalent to being a bearer of the Spirit: "The bearer of the Spirit achieves justice. He judges, decides what is right"³⁶⁷ (Welker, 1990:113). He will be the One who will restore everything in due time for all people and not just for Israel. This man will be the servant of God (Welker, 1990:115) and the One on whom the Spirit will rest. Basically He will be the Messiah.

The Spirit's choice will fall on a particular man who will act for all humanity. He will be invested with the Spirit to establish justice, peace and law, universally. This action will not be carried out by Him in a public manner but in silence and in service to other people. He will not impose Himself but rather He will suffer to reach his goal. To strengthen Him, the Spirit will descend on

³⁶⁶ Translated from Italian "una realtà numinosa ma una forza in grado di trasformare le condizioni della vita reale".

³⁶⁷ Translation from Italian "Il portatore dello Spirito realizza la giustizia. Egli giudica, decide quello che e' giusto".



Him without measure. As Welker argues, "the Spirit of God, the Spirit of justice and peace, will be manifested by a Messiah who does not know and who does not want to impose Himself politically and who does not know and does not want to respond to the typical canons of a public person"³⁶⁸ (Welker, 1990:133).

This person is Jesus of Nazareth who will be the promised Messiah and the One who will bring back what man had lost, justice, law and mercy. These are the characteristics of the Kingdom preached by Jesus. With His death his ministry is not finished, He is present as the *Paraclete* who will act in all those who will testify of Christ. Therefore by the anointed ones, filled with the Spirit, the testimony will be spread all over the world. The Spirit will bring about union, communion among believers, and his presence will be felt. Thus, the connection between the Bearer of the Spirit and the Messiah is very strong, since they are the same person.

In the Old Testament it was already foreseen that this Anointed man of God would restore all things that had been destroyed with the fall of man. This power of the Spirit, the power that makes even the dead to resurrect,³⁶⁹ "establishes Christ publicly"³⁷⁰ (Welker, 1990:178). Through the temptations in the wilderness, Jesus demonstrated his power over Satan, and later on the cross and finally in his resurrection (Welker, 1990:179).

Then, "by virtue of the Spirit, Christ is universally constituted"³⁷¹ (Welker, 1990:180). In the Jordan, it is confirmed that "the Messiah as a single person is the person of Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah, but this concept does

³⁶⁸ Translated from Italian "lo Spirito di Dio, lo Spirito della giustizia e della pace, opera tramite un Messia che non sa e non vuole 'imporsi politicamente, che non sa e non vuole rispondere ai canoni tipici del personaggio pubblico'".

³⁶⁹ Heb 9:14; Rom 1:4.

³⁷⁰ Translation from Italian "insedia il Cristo *pubblicamente*".

³⁷¹ Translation from Italian "in virtù dello Spirito, il Cristo è costituito universalmente".



not yet explicitly show the impact it should have. He will be one among other persons"³⁷² (Welker, 1990:182).

In his action there is the proclamation of the kingdom of God and the possibility of driving out demons or healing from diseases.

6.4.2 Moltmann: the Spirit and the Messiah

According to Moltmann, the people of Israel have always lived in expectation, hoping something better would come in the future. In fact, he says that "the religion of Israel has been *a religion of God's expectation*"³⁷³ (1994a:69-70). Expectation of a renewal and restoration are well expressed in the book of Isaiah. A specific characteristic of this renewal concerns a king. Not the usual king who is in command of a people, but a king with an important characteristic, he will be invested by the Spirit and on him the Spirit will rest. This king announced by Isaiah is a Messianic King who, being anointed will bring justice, mercy and peace.

Moltmann moves forward this proclamation to what he calls the 'eschatological *sabbath*' (1994a:70). He connects the eternal *Sabbath* with the Saturday established at the creation which was meant to be a day of rest. Furthermore, there is the need to restore what has been lost over time in injustice and in the loss of rights.

Moltmann emphasizes hope for a people and then for all peoples through the action of God's *rûah* representing the presence of God everywhere. Hope in what? Hope for his people who live in adverse conditions

³⁷² Translation from Italian "conoscere il Messia come persona singola e la persona di Gesù di Nazaret come Messia, ma non manifesta ancora in modo esplicito l'impatto che dovrà avere questa persona sui popoli".

³⁷³ Translation from Italian "la religione d'Israele è stata una religione *dell'attesa di Dio*, e questa attesa va considerata senz'altro come il fondamento che regge i diversi orizzonti in cui si delineano le speranze messianiche e pneumatiche".



such as slavery in Egypt or in exile. This hope will be manifested in the liberation and return to the land of the fathers.

The same hope highlights the work of the Spirit who rejoices in life even where there is death, as happened to the dry bones cited by Ezekiel. Above all, Moltmann identifies God's perception in his *shekînah*. This perception will be realized a few centuries later through the outpouring of the Spirit to all people as prophesied by the prophet Joel. Effusion for all people without distinction of race, gender or age (Moltmann, 1994a:73).

This action of the Spirit will bring new life and will be the mission of the Spirit. The Spirit rests on the Son of God and He will accompany Jesus during his earthly life until the cross. Jesus will have the Spirit 'without measure'³⁷⁴ and He will be King and Messiah (Moltmann, 1994a:79). He will not be like today's kings who exploit their subjects. He will not use violence or rule over people, but He will give men and women the opportunity to receive his gifts. Then, on the cross, Jesus will be considered the Christ, and the Spirit will be identified as the Spirit of Christ. From this point of view, Moltmann will consider his action under a pneumatological point of view.

Christ's healing action is performed in the kingdom of God and it is considered as a healing action of diseases which led to death. Such healing action, if the Spirit has been experienced, happens by faith. Moltmann argues that this experience is always projected into the future in the coming kingdom. It begins in the death of Jesus, by which comes the possibility of having gifts and being a new creation. In this way human bodies become the temple of the Spirit (Moltmann, 1994a:86-87). It is the Counselor, the promised Spirit who will operate everything. This connection to the cross leads Moltmann to better define the "*pneumatology crucis*" (Moltmann, 1994a:88).

The orientation towards the future makes the Messianic realm to be realized (Moltmann, 1976:17), not because, as promised, it will happen in the

³⁷⁴

John 3:34.



future, but because it begins in the here and now by the work of the Spirit. Moltmann makes a connection between present and future.

Furthermore, the Spirit will connect Christ to the Church and this historical link, based on Christ, is defined by Moltmann as “eschatological creature of the Spirit”³⁷⁵ (1976:57).

In this present reality the Spirit acts through the Church as He did in Jesus’ times. This process defines the Spirit as ‘the power of the future (1976:58), acting in a community that is not uniform but pluralistic since uniformity “represses the Holy Spirit’s pluralism and his charisms”³⁷⁶ (Moltmann, 1995:154).

6.4.3 Williams: *The Spirit and the Messiah*

According to Williams, the Spirit has many functions and one of them is anointing the Messiah. Referring to Isaiah he argues that the choice of the Anointed will be from the lineage of David. The Spirit will give Him the ability to rule, judge and bring justice (Williams, 2009b:196). These characteristics are those indicated in the Gospels that speak of Jesus. His mission began at baptism when the dove descended from heaven and the divine voice was heard. In this way Jesus could carry out his ministry (2009b:203-204).

This anointing is an inner abundance of the Spirit (Williams 2009b:206). Jesus therefore received the Spirit without measure enabling Him to do all those works by the *dynamis* of the Spirit. Jesus could do all He did (Williams, 2009a:407). This is why, as Williams claims, “Jesus, the Anointed, can really be called *Pentecostal*”³⁷⁷ (2009a:407). His life was a life of walking in the Spirit

³⁷⁵ Translation from Italian “creatura escatologica dello Spirito”.

³⁷⁶ Translation from Italian “reprime il pluralismo dello Spirito Santo e dei suoi carismi”.

³⁷⁷ Translation from Italian “Gesù, l’Unto, può essere realmente definito *pentecostale*”.



that granted Him the possibility to heal and perform powerful works through what Paul called gifts (*charismata*) of the Spirit. In this way, Williams connects the image of Jesus with the gifts of the Spirit through Jesus Christ who "can be called the 'Pentecostal Christ'"³⁷⁸ (Williams, 2009a:407).

Nevertheless, Williams points out that from Jesus' words it is possible to understand how the believers can do greater things by the Spirit. In fact, the *Paraclete* or Comforter will come, will be sent by Christ with the purpose of convincing the world of justice and judgment.³⁷⁹

This happened at the departure of Jesus, that is, his ascension. Only later, at Pentecost, was the promise fulfilled when the believers were already a 'community', who believed in Jesus; a community called together when the Spirit blew on them since the "birth from the Spirit preceded the descent of the Spirit"³⁸⁰ (Williams, 2009b:212).

6.4.4 *The Spirit and the Messiah and the three theologians*

It can be affirmed that all three theologians agree in defining Messiah Jesus Christ, who died on the cross. All refer to the verses in Isaiah where the Anointed, the Messiah, will be the bearer of the Spirit. He will bring peace, mercy and justice, which Jesus will complete by his work. He will follow the promised Spirit received by those believers in order to bear witness to the world. The *Paraclete* sent by Christ will give gifts to work inside and outside the church.

Thus, all three theologians cite Bible verses evidencing the connection between Messiah, Jesus and Spirit. They make some distinctions highlighting

³⁷⁸ Translation from Italian "puo' essere definito "Cristo Pentecostale" ".

³⁷⁹ Jn 16:8.

³⁸⁰ Translation from Italian "nascita dallo Spirito precedette la discesa dello Spirito".



different aspects. If Welker talks more about justice, peace and mercy, Moltmann emphasizes the eschatological aspect, adding that the gift of the Spirit will not stop at the time of the Messiah but will go further determining the long-awaited kingdom.

Williams, on the other hand, shorter than the others, tends to underline how the reception of the Spirit is only for believers.

6.5 *The outpouring of the Spirit.*

The outpouring of the Spirit seems to be a concept belonging only to the Pentecostal Movement world, but actually is a concept present in other literatures and other Churches. Welker and Moltmann refer to this concept by describing their ideas of the effusion of the Spirit in a way that is complementary to Williams.

6.5.1 Welker and the outpouring of the Spirit

Welker analyzes the outpouring of the Spirit very well, starting from a premise, society is not formed of equal individuals and consequently, the Spirit's approach is not uniform. Indeed, He does not act for everyone in the same way. According to Welker, this vision determines a "multicontextual and polyphonic presence of the Spirit" (2006:2663). This action is not the same for every believer but has a pluralistic character. Anyway, in this pluralistic action of the Spirit there is a certain unity among those on whom the Spirit works. A specific personal action of the Spirit operates in a poly-contextual and pluralistic contest (2006:2680).

On this basis, the outpouring of the Spirit takes place from heaven down, descending on people in spite of the diversity that exists among them.



Clearly, the prophet Joel anticipates this diversity of gender and age among the individuals saying that everybody could receive this promise. Thus, the possibility is given to different groups. In this way, it is possible to recognize the action of the Spirit as diversified between people and generations always granting to all of them the same possibility of reception (Welker, 1990:145). In each of them there is the presence of the Spirit, God's countenance seeking man (Welker, 1990:147).

Furthermore, this action is the Spirit's creative action, of God's *rûah* which Christ's action brings peace, justice and mercy (Welker, 1990:153). He acts on men and women creating new life, new vitality in those who receive the Spirit. Then, there is a reunification with God and a connection with the risen Christ of the believers who participate in his life. This participation is determined by a new heart, no more a heart of stone, allowing him to live among other people with the extra power that makes him overcome weaknesses and vulnerabilities due to the carnal life (Welker, 1990:159-160).

Therefore Welker considers man involved in an open battle between flesh and spirit. In this battle the action of the Spirit gives vitality and new life to those who receive Him. Then, the work of the Spirit leads to a renewal and direct communication with God. This action does not take place in the human mind, but within the heart and therefore in the soul of man (Welker, 2014b:55).

According to Welker, when the Spirit works powerfully, He "manifests Himself with his 'effusion' "³⁸¹ (1990:215). This is the renewal for those who receive Him. Through the effusion and the filling of the Spirit, man knows the Spirit. This is man's wealth. In this way, man enters the field of the Spirit's forces. This field is nothing but the Spirit that acts in people leading them to act and bear testimony (Welker, 1990:215).

This is a pneumatic action leading believers to communicate with God even in an incomprehensible way (2014a:51). It is not an act of discontinuity

³⁸¹ Translation from Italian "L'operare potente dello Spirito [...] si manifesta con la sua 'effusione'".



with the past but the continuation of the work of Christ. Through this powerful action, the Spirit leads to unity and produces salvation by means of their witness. Thus a believer becomes a charismatic person, “a person on whom the Spirit comes amid and on behalf of the people of God” (2014a:142).

6.5.1.1 Welker's perplexity

The Pentecost event is considered by many to be an incomprehensible phenomenon. Welker argues that is not like that. For him, the language expressed at Pentecost is ' "supercomprehensible"'³⁸² (1990:218).

This language was understood by several witnesses in their language. If on one hand there is a 'miracle of audition', on the other hand there is the proclamation of great works done by God (Welker, 1990:219). Furthermore, it is possible to diversify a common experience in those individuals who were part of it. The different people gathered there came from different cultures, and they had different interests and backgrounds, ideas and hopes. They experienced a power which united them, brought them closer, as described by the prophet Joel (Welker, 1990:220).

They were united in one experience and this unity created a communion in diversity building relationships of mutual trust. Therefore, an enrichment was produced and a union determined by a public experience of the outpouring of the Spirit, which operated in the differentiation of speaking in tongues (Welker, 1990:221). *"Through the outpouring of the Spirit, God operates His own testimony, a planetary, multilingual, poly-individual testimony."*³⁸³ (1990:221) Thus, an event that individually could be incomprehensible was connected to a community comprehensibly united by the Spirit. The same Spirit brought the

³⁸² Translation from Italian “non parlano delle grandi gesta di Dio in una lingua incomprensibile, ma in un linguaggio che in ogni caso va definito ‘supercomprensibile’”.

³⁸³ Translation from Italian “*Tramite l'effusione dello Spirito, Dio opera la testimonianza di sè, una testimonianza planetaria, multilingue, poliindividuale*”.



same experience in believers despite their diversity. Then the incomprehensible events, as generally understood, became a comprehensible event that unified men and women leading them in the community founded by the same Spirit (1990:221-222).

6.5.2 Moltmann and the outpouring of the Spirit

The concept of the outpouring of the Spirit is expressed by Moltmann beginning from the Bible verse in the book of Joel. It refers to the hope for the people of God of a new heart. This possibility will be given to everyone without distinction of sex, race or age. So all humanity will have the opportunity to experience it. Moltmann, citing the text of Matilde of Magdeburg, says that this efflux, this emanation, starts from divinity and opens up giving vital energies determined by *charis* or *charismata* (Moltmann, 1998:21). In fact, the Spirit is the giver of life, and this is his Mission, the so-called *Missio Dei* (Moltmann, 1998:29). So a renewal is offered, a rebirth but neither in the Eastern sense of the term, i.e. a cyclical rebirth, nor in the American sense of being born-again. The meaning is one of an "*incipit vita nova*",³⁸⁴ which can be deduced from the interview with Nicodemus (Moltmann, 1994a:170), a regeneration. Something that happens at once in a decisive way, touching people in their depth, involving the new creation and not just people.

This action of the Spirit brings renewal through baptism and introduces it into the community. It gives new life determined by the resurrection of Christ which is realized in the people. In this way, a believer enters in a new dimension; he changes status and becomes heir of a life that will last for eternity (Moltmann, 1994a:170). Regarding the Spirit's regeneration, Moltmann draws a comparison between spirit and a mother. In fact, the action

³⁸⁴ Translation from Italian "*incipit vita nova*", come si deduce anche dal colloquio con Nicodemo".



of rebirth produced by the Spirit is similar to that of a mother's childbirth. This comparison leads Moltmann to refer to the Spirit in a feminine way: 'Spirita' (1994a:185).

This entails a spiritual growth in faith and in knowledge, which is realized in the believers and in their relationship with others. Thus it begins life with a new power and vitality and with energies that are given to believers by the gifts. These gifts are an expression of the future world's power (Moltmann, 1994a:189-191). In this growth, the image of God as thought to have been at the creation is determined more and more in the here and now (Moltmann, 1994a:205).

While living in this world, this new life entails struggles, which do not separate from it. The Spirit recreates people by placing them in a position to communicate with God, and live in communion with others.

This happens because in the outpouring of the Spirit on all, God's Spirit is present in the believers bringing them to know God and invoking Him, his presence, with prayers. Therefore, the Spirit who gives life begins to generate love for life and for others.

6.5.3 *Williams and the outpouring of the Spirit*

Williams defines the miracles of Jesus as signs of a power, the *dynamis* of God, not linked only to the events of Jesus' ministry (2009a:178). Based on the promise of the Counselor that had been sent, these signs are still present today. In this statement, he argues that healings or powerful works can happen today (Williams, 2009a:182). At the time of the Reformation the possibility of great works was denied because these events were linked only to the apostolic period. This comprehension is still present in some groups that



do not believe that the Spirit can operate today in the same way as it did in the Apostolic period (Williams, 2009a:183-185).

According to Williams, man can receive the breath of God that gives him life, by making him a living being. There is the possibility of connecting the Spirit of God with the spirit of man. It is the Spirit that acts in "applying the word so that faith is aroused, deepening and confirming faith with his inner testimony"³⁸⁵ (Williams, 2009a:373). There is a home in the believers built by encountering the risen Jesus. In this way believers obtain a spiritual union, becoming one spirit with Him. Through this union it is possible for the Spirit to act through the believer, maintaining a spiritual presence inside him (Williams, 2009a:373).

The starting point for this process is regeneration by the Spirit. This makes a person regenerated by God, for a spiritual rebirth by the Word of God and produced by the Spirit. Faith is the essential point in receiving the Spirit because through Him there is repentance. Then the process can continue with baptism and the reception of the Spirit (Williams, 2009b:335).

This regeneration leads to a conviction of sin and an illumination of the Word. As a consequence the believer is brought to act and understand better what is sin and what is not. So, the believer repents of his sins because he is convinced of the mistakes made receiving what is commonly called the circumcision of the heart (Williams, 2009b:42).

³⁸⁵ Translation from Italian "ad applicare la parola cosicche' la fede sia destata, ma approfondisce e conferma la fede con la sua testimonianza interiore".



This leads to a spiritual conversion of the person and therefore to a spiritual union with Christ. “Therefore, at the deepest level of human nature there is union with Jesus Christ.”³⁸⁶ (Williams, 2009b:28)

Thus, a believer is a new creature and from this moment on, his life will have a new vitality leading him to be guided by the Spirit following a path of sanctification (Williams, 2009b:54). This path will be difficult because man is carnal and fights with the flesh. This struggle can only be sustained through the work of the Spirit that will reduce carnal desires by making the believer no longer a slave but free in the Spirit (Williams, 2009b:120). Through this action the fruit of the Spirit begins to develop constantly feeding the life of the believer.

Faith is basic to reception and to baptism as it was fundamental to Pentecost. Williams regards this faith as a dynamic faith which leads to receiving the Gift of the Spirit in perseverance (2009b:340-341). There is no predefined time to receive it but everything is based on waiting. It is something that will happen because it is founded on the promise of God. The essential points are prayer, expectation, obedience and submission to Christ for reception (2009b:373). This becomes the mission of the Spirit, leading to the truth, giving power for ministry and in temptation. The work of the Spirit was visible in the testimony of those who brought the gospel. In fact, their proclamations were accompanied by powerful works because they were effected by people filled with the Spirit (Williams, 2009b:307-308).

Moreover, this effusion serves as a proof and approval from God's side. In fact, the Holy Spirit determines “the acceptance and approval of God towards His people”³⁸⁷ (Williams, 2009b:324). This event happened to Jesus as well, when he was baptized.

³⁸⁶ Translation from Italian “Dunque, al livello piu’ profondo della natura umana c’e’ l’unione con Gesu’ Cristo “.

³⁸⁷ Translation from Italian “l’accettazione e l’approvazione di Dio verso il suo popolo“.



6.5.4 *The outpouring of the Spirit and three theologians*

The concept of the outpouring of the Spirit is approached by the theologians in a very similar way. Everyone agrees that at the beginning there is the prophecy of Joel, who gave the opportunity to experience God to all people. Welker considers the work of the Spirit in the believers as an individual action in each of them, determined by their diversity (Welker, 2006:2680). However, this leads to an inner change which unifies them in the reality of the Spirit. This change, this new birth, leads not only to regeneration but to a new communication with God (2014a:51). This operation creates a new person called, by Welker, a charismatic person that is “a person over whom the Spirit comes amid and on behalf of the people of God” (2014a:142).

The concepts expressed by Moltmann are similar. There is this new *incipit* that changes the person leading him to communicate with God and to live fighting in this world seeking ever more the presence of God. This “*incipit vita nova*”³⁸⁸ can be deduced from the interview with Nicodemus (Moltmann, 1994a:170), a regeneration of the Spirit. Furthermore, the believer will experience a new vitality, new energies by the Spirit and his gifts that are an anticipation of the future world (Moltmann, 1994a:191). This concept is the basis of Moltmann’s thoughts.

Williams also supports the same concept by affirming that, by the action of the Spirit the believer has become a new creature, capable of doing the same powerful works and healings that happened in the Apostolic time (Williams, 2009a:182). The foundation is the meeting of the risen Jesus and the consequent presence of the Spirit inside (Williams, 2009a:373). What Williams underline is the place of faith which is basic in receiving the Spirit (2009b:335) and beginning a full process till sanctification (2009b:54). A particular function is very important to him: the approval. The Holy Spirit serves

³⁸⁸ Translation from Italian “*incipit vita nova*, come si deduce anche dal colloquio con Nicodemo”.



to determine “the acceptance and approval of God towards his people”³⁸⁹ (Williams, 2009b:324) as happened with Jesus.

Therefore, all theologians considered, even if in a slightly different way, affirm that the Spirit has been poured out to make all the people participate in this union with the Creator. In this way, not only it is possible to re-establish a vertical relationship with God as foreseen at the time of the creation, but a horizontal one as well. This horizontal action is established with others. In this way it underlines the action of God in every believer. Everything becomes visible and easily evaluable by those who live in the world.

6.6 *Gift and field of forces of the Spirit*

This paragraph's purpose is to consider the most 'spectacular' or 'phenomenal' part of the action of the Spirit in believers: the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit. William, being a Pentecostal, in his Systematic Theology, obviously treats this aspect in a wider way since the Pentecostal theology considers the Spirit a fundamental doctrine. What will be done in this case is to highlight only the essential points, since all the aspects have been widely expressed in the previous chapters.

6.6.1 *Welker: Gift and field of forces of the Spirit*

According to Welker, the outpouring of the Spirit is the reception of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This outpouring introduces believers into a field of forces where the community lives. This field of forces is nothing but the possibility of believers in the community to use the Spirit to do amazing works.

³⁸⁹

Translation from Italian “l'accettazione e l'approvazione di Dio verso il suo popolo”.



Everything is connected to Jesus and to what He did on the cross. In fact, the gifts are “related to Christ, to the preaching and action of Christ. They introduce themselves into the community of Christ”³⁹⁰ (Welker, 1990 228). A gift is not limited to one believer but is for all. Furthermore, it is given to me and “not only to others”³⁹¹ (Welker, 1990:232).

This baptism is a first fruit of what will be obtained in the future. Although the Spirit will reach his fullness in the future, this experience today is already a fullness of the Spirit.

Where do these fields come from? The gifts and fields of forces of the Spirit derive from grace. In fact Welker argues that through the “‘gifts’, ‘gifts of grace’, ‘charisms’, the Spirit of God grants man participation in Himself. The gifts of grace and charisma are elements of the forces’ field of the Spirit”³⁹² (1990:225-226).

If through the *charismata* or gifts, the Spirit works for the good of the church, as argued by the apostle Paul,³⁹³ the fruits are for those who are related to others. Gifts are for the church and do not define hierarchies in their use (Welker, 1990:227). In fact, the purpose of the gift is to be used for the good of all, therefore for the good of the community. To these gifts, which are fields of forces of the Spirit, Welker associates other fields of strength such as faith, love or hope or peace (1990:229-230). Aspects of the fruit of the Spirit that lead the believer to have relations with others obeying the law of God translate the intentions of the law into actions to determine precisely what the law requires (1990:240).

The gift that provokes more disagreements is the speaking in tongues. Welker knows that this gift is important for the Pentecostal and charismatic

³⁹⁰ Translation from Italian “rapportati a Cristo, alla predicazione e azione di Cristo. Introducono nella comunità di Cristo”.

³⁹¹ Translation from Italian “e non soltanto ad altri”.

³⁹² Translation from Italian “‘doni’, con questi ‘doni della grazia’, con questi ‘carismi’, lo Spirito di Dio concede agli uomini la partecipazione a se stesso. I doni di grazia e carismi sono elementi del campo di forze dello Spirito”.

³⁹³ NASB: 1 Cor 12: 7.



communities. However, he relativizes it indicating in the intelligibility of the words the usefulness of the gift. He affirms that only with the interpretation its use is helpful in the church. In fact, he argues that “the gift of *glossolalia*, which is incomprehensible to hearers needs an interpretation”³⁹⁴ (1990:248). What is needed is clear and intellegible speaking.

In any case, he does not stigmatize the gift itself, because he considers it useful for the person who expresses it and because through it believers speak directly to God (2014a:136).

He also does not firmly state the link between the descent of the Spirit and the *glossolalia*. On the latter, he tends to distinguish between *glossolalia*, that is, speaking in tongues and *xenolalia* that is speaking foreign languages because both are falling into the gifts of the Spirit category (1990:249).

Moreover, he tries to explain the motivations that Pentecostal and Charismatic movements bring to the search of this gift which is, according to the list of the apostle Paul, of secondary importance. This is the reason why he says that the searching of mystical factors, for Pentecostals, is the result of a protest that does not concern other communities in the world. In any case, he underlines how speaking in tongues could individualize the gift more than using it for community reasons (1990:251).

6.6.2 Moltmann: Gift and field of forces of the Spirit

According to Moltmann, the Spirit has a vitalizing energy. *Dýnamis* or *enérghēia* are terms used to express power and energy (Moltmann, 1994a:226). Generating new life is the work of the Spirit who tends to free man putting him in communion with God and consequently with others. This power comes from the Spirit. The vitality comes from that same Spirit who has

³⁹⁴ Translation from Italian “il dono della glossolalia, che è incomprendibile agli astanti e bisognosa di interpretazione”.



regenerated the individual. For him, these aspects assume an eschatological characteristic and do not fall into a kind of ecstasy. They are useful as fulfillment which is part of what it is possible to have in the future. For him this is the '*eschatologia crucis*' (1979:164).

Hence a connection between the Cross and the Spirit is never broken. It is always in continuation and is not focused on the past but on a future perspective. The Spirit acts through those forces, the energies that are indicated by Paul as *chárismata*. They are the energies of life produced by the Spirit. He calls them tasks of the kingdom or "functions of the messianic lordship of Christ"³⁹⁵ (Moltmann, 1976:394).

"The Holy Spirit becomes the energetic, vibrant and vitalizing field of the new life: we are in God and God is in us"³⁹⁶ (Moltmann, 1998:72). Therefore the central point is to experience such a life through the power of the Spirit in everybody's context. This makes every believer a charismatic though, according to Moltmann, he is charismatic also when he does not use the gift he has received in the Spirit. In fact, vocation and gift are connected (1998:73).

In addition to having a new communion with God that begins to live in believers, the vocation that has been received will have a charismatic character leading to having gifts that must be used for others. These vitalities or forces of the Spirit have an eschatological aspect. They are the deposit of what is to be received and they are received through what Christ has done. In any way, they become the deposit of a future glory (Moltmann, 1994a:92).

Among these forces, the phenomenon of tongues has accompanied different periods of awakening. Moltmann did not have this experience but he says that *glossolalia* is an "incomprehensible way of moans and cries" (1998:79) leading to particular moments of joy.

³⁹⁵ Translation from Italian "funzioni della signoria messianica di Cristo".

³⁹⁶ Translation from Italian "Lo Spirito Santo diventa il campo energetico, vibrante e vitalizzante, della nuova vita, noi siamo in Dio e Dio è in noi".



In this event, however, he underlines the action of the Spirit. Everything concerning these phenomena, prayers, praises or languages are expressions of the Spirit and become part of the charismatic community. His criticism of German churches arises because they close themselves up like a hedgehog in the normal activities that have been done for so many centuries instead of trying this experience (1994a:216).

In charismatic churches, it is known that there is more participation of believers in worship. What should be done in the historic churches that would open them to this experience that brings gifts as well as vitality and freedom in the believers. In this way they will not remain cristallized in a formal participation. In fact, in a charismatic service there are hand clapping, joy and songs, and active participation of the community (1976:154-155). Moltmann, nevertheless, emphasizes how, "In Pentecostal Churches we speak of 'rebirth' to signify the profound and continuous experience of the gifts that the Spirit has poured on our existence"³⁹⁷ (1998:37) and the liturgy is not blocked or cristallized.

On the other hand, he makes some criticism saying that they do not act for the world, that is, charisms are present inside the church and not exploited for the action of the conquest of the world in particular fields such as political or ecological or movements of peace. The Spirit working inside the churches should be manifested (Moltmann, 1998:80).

6.6.3 Williams: Gift and field of forces of the Spirit

According to Williams, in order to receive gifts, the baptism in the Holy Spirit becomes fundamental. It was a promise as indicated by Luke, and

³⁹⁷ Translation from Italian "Nelle chiese pentecostali si parla di 'rinascita' a significare l'esperienza, profonda e continuativa, che si fa dei doni che lo Spirito ha riversato sulla nostra esistenza".



became a sign of repentance (Williams, 2009b:229) and remission of sins. The purpose was to bear witness to the world with power. It is a gesture of mercy of God; it is a gift of the Spirit. Salvation is necessary and preparatory to receiving the Spirit (Williams, 2009b:229).

In fact, at Pentecost, worthy of note is that bystanders were praying and they were all already saved.

In Williams' systematic theology translated into Italian, the descent of the Spirit is characterized by five different words: effusion, fall, coming, baptism and fullness. These terms are found throughout the book of Acts on various occasions in which the Spirit descends to demonstrate what the prophet Joel had said (2009b:233-251).

The continuity of the effusion, for Williams, is guaranteed after the Apostolic period, and so he refers to Titus or to the texts of the fathers of the Church as Clement of Rome (2009b:237).

Regarding the speaking in tongues, he considers this "divine visitation in all its fullness" (Williams, 2009b:247) which is not 'isolated in itself'. It is not a unique experience, but it gives the possibility to be filled again and steadily always having a profound and powerful experience of God (2009b:248). This allows the community to be aware of his presence. He calls it "an extremely profound perception of the Spirit of God, which moves like the wind or like fire until all barriers are broken down"³⁹⁸ (2009b:249).

Speaking in tongues is nothing but the initial evidence of baptism in the Spirit. It is God who talks through the believers. He distinguishes on the typology of languages that is between foreign languages and different languages, based on the various incidents reported on different occasions in Acts.

³⁹⁸ Translation from Italian "una percezione estremamente profonda dello Spirito di Dio, che si muove come il vento o come il fuoco finche' tutte le barriere non vengono abbattute e non riesce a penetrare in ogni cosa".



On Pentecost he argues that it is not correct to indicate that it was an emotional factor that moved *glossolalia* because it foresees in any case rationality on those who use them. Rather, they are spiritual expressions which do not exclude the believers' mental rationality; they are not the product of emotionality that led them to experience a sort of irrational ecstasy (Williams, 2009b:263).

As usually noted, at Pentecost the languages indicated refer to other countries and foreign languages (Williams, 2009b:264).

The understanding of what is said can be obtained by interpretation, but even if there is no interpretation, languages make sense. According to Williams, this kind of speaking is always intelligible. Besides that, as stated by the languages, the believers do not pray only to God, but it is possible to sing in the Spirit (an adoration with fervour), or utter mysteries as well as prayers and supplications for things that believers cannot know (Williams, 2009b:280).

For the above-mentioned reasons, speaking in tongues is of significant importance not only because people talk to God, but because it is helpful for personal edification (Williams, 2009b:286). Furthermore, at the present, it determines fullness of future things being a sign that warns about the arrival of the Kingdom. In fact it is “the sign that precedes the establishment of the Kingdom”³⁹⁹ (Williams, 2009b:288,289).

To this characteristic, Williams adds the joy that is obtained (Williams, 2009b:382), the frankness that people experience in speaking to others (Williams, 2009b:386) the *koinonia* and love for others and a greater fervour (Williams, 2009b:388).

The gifts, the *charismata*, are gifts of the Spirit and in the Pauline catalogues identify the participation of all persons of the Trinity. They are involved indicating how much a sense of action should not only be the Spirit,

³⁹⁹

Translation from Italian “il segno che precede l'instaurazione del Regno”.



in fact“ to be really pneumatic, it must be totally Christocentric and Trinitarian”⁴⁰⁰ as well (Williams, 2009b:405).

Instead, the manifestation of the gift is the visible demonstration of the invisible Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit, on the other hand, is distinct from the gift but always a work of the Spirit. The fruit has a longer process than the gift because it needs more time to grow. Moreover, it is not true that the focus of the Pentecostals is only on the gifts, neglecting personal and spiritual growth because if this is the problem, it is the same problem highlighted by Paul to the Corinthians (2009b:407).

In any case, exercising the gifts is not binding on the person who exercises it and is not his possession (Williams, 2009b:412). Use is exclusive to the common good and to the building up of the believers (Williams, 2009b:413). In fact, Williams tends to emphasize that “they are not offices or assignments”⁴⁰¹ (2009b:411).

6.6.4 Gift and field of forces of the Spirit and three theologians

The gifts and fields of force generated by the Spirit are for all three of our theologians important within the church’s community life. They signify the presence of God through their manifestations within the church. Furthermore, according to Welker, having more gifts, more than another does not determine hierarchies within the church (Welker, 1990:227). Williams argues that the gift is not possessed by the believer, it is not a property of the believer who he can exploit it as he wishes. To enlighten this point Williams exposes an example explaining how God can use more gifts in the same person or the same gift on more people (Williams, 2009b:412).

⁴⁰⁰ Translation from Italian “essere realmente pneumatica, occorre che sia totalmente cristocentrica e trinitaria”.

⁴⁰¹ Translation from Italian “non sono uffici o incarichi”.



All three theologians agree in affirming that Christology is fundamental and closely connected to the action of the Spirit through gifts and fields forces. Furthermore, they are a manifestation of what is possible to see in the future. For this topic, Moltmann is more precise calling '*Eschatologia Crucis*' the action of the cross with the perspective towards the future, declaring how the gifts are founded by the lordship of Christ (Moltmann, 1979:164).

Furthermore, according to Welker baptism is decisive for the gifts (1990:221-222) and Williams (2009b:229) claims that those who are rescued can have it (2009b:229). Instead, Moltmann considers the gift already present at the time of the vocation (or call). The believer will then exploit this gift or not (1998:73).

As for the fields of force generated by the Spirit, Welker is more precise and goes into more details expressing clearly how the Spirit acts between these fields of force. Furthermore, he connects these fields of force with the gifts (Welker, 1990:225-226).

With regard to the most discussed gift, speaking in tongues, the three theologians agree that it happens by the Spirit and that it is possible to have a gift after having experienced God, as it happened at Pentecost. Then there are differences of views. Welker criticizes Pentecostals because speaking in tongues is considered the most important gift compared to others; he does not even see a close connection between the spirit descended from heaven and *glossolalia* (Welker, 1990:249) since it needed an interpretation. For this reason he argues that "the gift of *glossolalia*, which is incomprehensible to the listeners, needs an interpretation"⁴⁰² (1990:248).

Moltmann, on the other hand, would hope that this experience will be found in historical communities to bring some awakening and vitality to a church crystallized in the past (Moltmann, 1976:154-155). However, he

⁴⁰² Translation from Italian "il dono della glossolalia, che è incomprendibile agli astanti e bisognosa di interpretazione".



criticizes the Pentecostals who do not bring these gifts outside to use them in the problems the world has (1998:80).

Williams is much more detailed, but could not have been otherwise since he is a Pentecostal theologian. Obviously he considers speaking in tongues as very important, indicating all the reasons for supporting this thesis, and including the fact that the rationality is always present and never cancelled (2009b:263).

He elevates this so much attacked and discussed experience. He is very critical of those who claim that these gifts cannot be manifested today having happened only at the time of the Apostolic church. However, God is free to manifest them whenever He wants to (Williams, 2009b:310).

In this way, it is possible to note how the three theologians do mostly agree on the fundamentals. The gift is used inside the church and is a work of the Spirit founded on the work of Christ on the cross. Obviously, in the application of the gift and in its importance, the views are slightly different, but this does not exclude the validity and usefulness of the gift within the churches.

6.7 *Experience of communion through the Spirit*

In this last paragraph, the researcher will briefly talk on how the action of the Spirit moves within the believers and consequently in their relationship with others within the church. All three theologians have expressed this concept clearly and precisely.

6.7.1 *Welker: Experience of communion through the Spirit*

According to Welker, the action of the Spirit tends to enrich and give freedom to the believer without leading to individualism. Through the various



fields of force of the Spirit it will distinguish the believer from others, protecting his unique and different way. With these characteristics he will grow remaining in communion and harmony with others. In fact, "It is said that the 'unity of the Spirit' not only tolerates differences and differentiation, but welcomes and cultivates all those differences that do not conflict with God's right, mercy and knowledge."⁴⁰³ (Welker, 1990:29)

There will be forces in motion of the Spirit such as peace, love and others, against whom the differences among believers will bring no conflicts being complementary (Welker, 2006:2641). In this way, a connection is established between "concrete and unrepeatable individuality and ecumenical universality"⁴⁰⁴ (Welker, 1990 232). Thus, the believer becomes a participant in a single body for the work of the Spirit. A body that has union with Christ in the Spirit and elevates human existence. In this way, unity leads to greater closeness to God (Welker, 2006:2648-2650). It is to be considered that the various individuals are different from each other, have different characteristics, gender, age, culture, but nevertheless they are united by nullifying those that are their own differences.

So, diversity and multiplicity are together and are closely related. In fact, each individual is unique in his characteristic and different from others. A diversity and multiplicity is determined in the church and by the Spirit (Spirit of Justice) so that differences are eliminated. Then, everybody will be on the same level living in brotherly communion. In this way the believer is a participant in the life of the church, a community representing that one body whose head is Christ. This is the motivation that pushes Welker to argue: "the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit attests a precise sensitivity to

⁴⁰³ Translated from Italian "Si dice che la 'unità dello Spirito' non solo tollera le differenze e la differenziazione, ma accoglie e coltiva tutte quelle differenze che non contrastano col diritto, la misericordia e la conoscenza di Dio".

⁴⁰⁴ Translation from Italian "individualità concreta e irripetibile e universalità ecumenica".



differences. They take into account the typical traits of individuals who found or prevent a 'natural' commonality"⁴⁰⁵ (Welker, 1990:32).

6.7.4 Moltmann: *Experience of communion through the Spirit*

Experiencing the Spirit is something crucial to build good relationships with others. Moltmann links the believer's experience with that of Jesus. Jesus experienced God in the same way; therefore those who live in communion with Him share the same experience through the Spirit. Therefore, through Christ the Spirit acts in people's hearts making a present time experience.

Talking about vocation, Moltmann associates the talents or *chárisma* to the believer who becomes a 'charismatic believer' (1994a:213). Then he will use this *chárisma* available for the church. Therefore, every believer has his own charisma that he must make available for the community. Through the Spirit, then the *chárisma* is manifested differently within the church according to God's purpose for each believer. Therefore, a *chárisma* is intended to serve others becoming, therefore, an activity within the community (Moltmann, 1994a:214-215).

The whole variety of gifts, from speaking in tongues to the diaconate, to the pastorate or to healing gifts, serves to support the community. They are at the service of the community in the diversity of the gifts and of the people that make up the community itself. In this way, the bearers of charisms are inserted into an active life within the community which is always based on the communion of faith of the believers (Moltmann, 1976:82). Thus, by the Spirit the union of the community is determined and everybody will try to achieve a single purpose that is the growth of the church.

⁴⁰⁵ Translated from Italian "Le promesse di effusione dello Spirito attestano una precisa sensibilità alle differenze. Esse tengono conto dei tratti tipici degli individui che fondano o impediscono una comunanza 'naturale'".



To explain communion, Moltmann refers to the Pauline doxology to express the relationship that exists among the persons of the Trinity. This trinitarian, reciprocal relationship can be included among the believers who have the Spirit in them. It means that the believers feel the presence of God and not have only a gift of the Spirit. This relationship carried in daily life creates life experience among people producing communion among them. According to Moltmann, socialization is created and therefore good relationship among people enlivened by the Spirit should be practised (1994a:251).

A difference is determined among people that leads to unity, as it is the case of the Trinitarian sphere. The foundation is the love that unites all of them. Love helps what is considered a communion of the Spirit and that will form a single body. This Spirit creates unity and not disunity even if there are differences in the gifts (Moltmann, 1994a:252). Such a communion integrates people through love.

Consequently, a personal experience of God is transformed into a social and community experience. Everything is based on people's faith and mutual trust (Moltmann, 1994a:272). Although love is the foundation and there is a work of the Spirit in every individual, Moltmann maintains that there is always the possibility of being in conflict with each other because different people with different points of view compound Christian communities. In fact, according to him, communion is "the art of living together not only in what unites us but also in what differentiates us"⁴⁰⁶ (Moltmann, 1994a:272).

In any case, in unity and communion, it is possible to work for disabled people, for the world, for ecology and other activities that can be useful to improve life and creation. These are activities due to the new creation, to the activities of *diakonia*, which are not professions but spontaneous activities resulting from the action of the Spirit (Moltmann, 1986:40). The power received

⁴⁰⁶ Translation from Italian "l'arte di convivere non solo in ciò che ci accomuna ma anche in quel che ci differenzia",



by the Spirit, also used in the gifts, can be present in conditions of suffering or discomfort. The reference is to a disabled person or to other similar situations in which Christians are called to act in God's image. The reason, according to him, is that a disability could become a "reflection of the suffering Christ" (Moltmann, 1986:77).

In this way, the experience of the Spirit, therefore the energies that the Spirit gives through his outpouring, grant a particular strength to carry out these activities. In this way, the invisible love of God is communicated to others, since the Spirit is love that communicates and spreads among people.

A non-uniform community is created because, as Moltmann says, uniformity "represses the pluralism of the Holy Spirit and his charisms" (1995:154). So, the people of a community born of the Spirit are men and women who become brothers and sisters.

Together, as it happens individually, believers await the blessed hope, the expectation of the fullness of the Spirit living in the joy of the Spirit. In this way, community life has an eschatological character.

6.7.4 *Williams: Experience of communion through the Spirit*

According to Williams, the Spirit acts within the community. "The common foundation of existence of the Church that is made up of people, is spiritual."⁴⁰⁷ (2009c:10) People who become citizens of the heavenly kingdom are, consequently, born again. This Church is therefore formed by people born again from the Spirit who should always preserve unity because unity is determined by mutual love (Williams, 2009c:137).

In fact, Williams emphasizes this unitary aspect based on love and the truth that, in unity, the church becomes a temple of God (2009c:25). In this way

⁴⁰⁷ Translation from Italian "La Chiesa è formata da persone il cui fondamento comune di esistenza è spirituale".



the church can be open to the outside, to the world. This way of acting inside and outside the church, can happen through regeneration and revitalization produced by the work of the Spirit.

Only in this way, believers will create a communion among them, a *koinonia*, and a communion with God. “The Church is the community of the Holy Spirit, is vivified by the Spirit experiencing the communion in the Spirit which is the communion of the saints.”⁴⁰⁸ (Williams, 2009c:93)

An implied activity inside the church is adoration through the Spirit, which can be directed to the Spirit himself because He is God. This type of adoration is expressed with prayers and hymns (Williams, 2009c:118).

Williams, referring to the use of gifts, argues that they must be used for others, for the church. They serve not for believers in a personal way but for mutual edification. He also underlines the missionary character of the church linked to the great mandate of Matthew, which must be done to communicate the Gospel to others by the Spirit’s help (2009c:169).

This can also happen in the social field without ever neglecting the communication of the Christian message. In fact, “*The church must contain both aspects*. This does not mean that the Gospel is the message of salvation and must have priority.

However, it should never neglect other human and social needs.”⁴⁰⁹ (Williams, 2009c:185-186)

⁴⁰⁸ Translation from Italian “la Chiesa è la comunità dello Spirito Santo, è stata vivificata dallo Spirito, sperimenta la comunione nello Spirito ed è la comunione dei santi “.

⁴⁰⁹ Translation from Italian “*La chiesa deve contenere entrambi gli aspetti*. Questo non significa che il Vangelo è il messaggio della salvezza e deve avere la priorità. Tuttavia, non bisogna trascurare le altre necessità umane e sociali “.



6.7.4 Experience of communion by the Spirit according to the three theologians

This section emphasizes the importance of the unity of the Spirit within the church. All three theologians agree in their emphasis on the importance of unity because unity is determined by the Spirit. Although with different explanations, there is a basic agreement among all. They give a definition of the action of the Spirit in the believer and this action is fundamental for determining the Church. The Spirit acts in every person granting new spiritual life. Through this new birth they enter into a spiritual world, that of the Church, which welcomes all even though there are differences in culture, mind, idea, genre and so on. The Spirit will tend to eliminate those differences using the gifts for the common utility.

Together, the believers, in the power of the Spirit, have the task of staying united, carrying out activities that can include social help or the message of the gospel. In fact, as it is emphasized by all, the love of the Spirit is experienced among believers who have the Spirit in them.

Although, as Moltmann says, there will always be the possibility of conflict because the church is made up of different believers, seeking unity is the basis of church life. Generally speaking, they want to emphasize how, in the diversity of believers, the Spirit acts bringing union among them. Gifts and forces of the Spirit serve precisely help believers grow in mutual trust to become a single body whose head is Christ.



CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY

The Holy Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit acts in the present as He has acted in the past. Moreover, from the beginning his action was clear. The divine action has never failed and will continue to be present. It acts in the world and in people. He works through believers, transforming them in depth and making them able to communicate with their Creator. It also acts through them in order to make the Lord known to those who are open to receiving Him. The Spirit also works through gifts that are meant to build up the church and keep it united in his strength. The action of the Spirit has never been lacking in any respects.

Already from the time of creation, God wanted to be present and wanted to act for his creation. God has tried in every way to bring us to reunite with his creature to remedy the sin of man and the breaking of communion that has been created. God's purpose was to have fellowship with his creatures, and in order to do this even after the split that occurred in Eden, God's wonderful plan foresaw the Son of God's arrival for anyone to be reconciled with the Father.

These concepts, as well as others that have not been listed, are present in the ideas and writings of the theologians considered in this treatise. These are the fundamental points that all three theologians have faced in a more or less extensive way. There is no discrepancy between them on the basic



concepts, therefore, it is possible to welcome a theology of the Spirit that ultimately sees everyone in agreement.

However, the differences are there if you go a little bit more into detail. These differences can already be seen from the name they give to their theology, where it is possible to pass from integral theology to the one of the renewal or that is understood as realistic.

From a careful analysis, it would seem that all three theologians are at odds with each other because their theologies have different names. In fact, three theologies on the same subject that would seem to stand out could make it clear that there is no unity, there is no convergence or possibility of communication between them. However, as mentioned earlier, if you do a very superficial analysis you would arrive at this wrong conclusion.

The reality is determined by the fact that all three face the same topics, having different perspectives. They have a different vision because they capture aspects that the other does not. They try to go deep into the various topics by following what they believe is consistent with their perspective.

However, the gift of languages has been the exceptional topic that has mostly put them in disagreement regarding the practice of the church. Considering their works globally, it is possible to check how their theology of the Spirit is expressed, in the researcher's opinion, in a perspective of what the Spirit has done throughout history, from creation to the present day.

Each of them took the highlights of the work of the Spirit and expressed them according to their vision and following their idea of the Spirit. Each of them has faced every subject in which the Spirit acted, with a unique perspective.

But unique does not mean 'only'. Reformed theologians have approached their theology of the Spirit in a very precise and careful manner with similar views in some cases, and with different readings in others. In the



case of the work of the Holy Spirit today, there is not a denial of his action through the gifts, rather there is a deepening of the argument that tries to explain what happened at Pentecost occurred in relation to the Pentecostal Movement of the last century. A view not from the first actors, nor from participants of the experience, but from theologians who have treated the phenomenon theologically, pointing out their ideas according to their perspectives. Furthermore, Welker deepens the Pentecost event by pointing out some misinterpreted scriptures and giving more attention to the church practice of these gifts than to their phenomenology. Moltmann underlines the eschatological aspect of the work of the Spirit in the believer's beginning the experience that is made through the Spirit today. Both are very careful in evaluating the action of the Spirit in the world and drawing useful analyses.

Williams obviously tends to express the work of the Spirit in a more clear and enlarged way regarding the gifts because these characteristics are the basis of the experience of the Pentecostal Movement through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He is trying to explain the phenomenon of Pentecost by constructing a theology that is a perspective of the theology of the new movement that has spread in a short time all over the world.

These are not the only perspectives to be followed. The researcher believes that everyone has expressed his ideas following his own line, their own vision. Is one of these perspectives more correct than the others? Is the truth in some of these perspectives? It is possible to correctly say that all three speak of the Truth which is Christ, of the action of the Spirit in the believers and in the world in a correct manner and would tend to complete what the others say.

In fact, the Word of God is like a crystal, which once you look at it from a certain angle it assumes a colour that would change if you look from another. Changing the angle, the view changes and results in a different colour. One thing remains unchanged: the crystal. This phenomenon is known as



pleocrosimos, and I believe the Word of God has a similar effect. The Word is unchanged, it's the same over time, but based on how you look at it you can show off aspects that you could not see from other angles. Obviously we refer to an evaluation that does not deny the Word as the only truth and that does not contradict it.

What these theologians have done is to express three different points of observation to express what the action of the Spirit is in the world and in people. From this point of view I believe there is a lot of continuity among their theologies. They are in line with the biblical teachings and no one denies the fundamentals of Scripture or how the Spirit acted.

If there are points of discontinuity, I think they are due to the fact that everyone can have a different view from the other on certain topics. Everyone has had the intent to deepen one aspect and neglect another, or even more, to consider one topic more than another one.

I believe this discontinuity depends on the diversity of the thinking theologian, who reflects on the Word and how the Spirit acted. The theologian who supports his belief, evaluates the action of the Spirit by considering certain points that others may also overlook.

The same thing happens in the community life that people have within the churches. One believer is different from the other, unique as a person, and likewise united with others in the action of the Spirit. There is a diversity that enriches the church which in turn does not make them. All three theologians have faced the diversity of each believer in relation to the others united in the communion of the Spirit. The Spirit acts in diversity leading into unity. This unity is the body of Christ that is one but still composed of different parts each one different from the other.

I believe that this situation is possible also with these theologies. Comparing them is an enrichment, it is a growth that benefits everyone. These



are aspects that make the action of the Spirit's vision more complete because as noticed before, different people have different ideas. If we had done the same research with other theologians, we would have found other points of reflection that would have completed the perspective of the action of the Spirit even more.

What does all this bring to us? It leads us to a single solution: the Spirit acts like the wind, you hear the noise but you do not know where He comes from and where He goes. In the same way, everyone can feel the wind acting and trying to perceive what he can, but still not totally understanding Him because the Spirit has his own way of moving. He testifies of Christ and premising that, He works for Him so that one day, He'll come back again.



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