

Spirit in the New Testament  
Edward W. Winstanley  
*The Princeton Theological Review* 8:317-320. [1910]

This little book consists of an Introductory Survey in which typical examples of the use of πνεῦμα in the Greek Old Testament, and indirectly of קדשׁ in the Hebrew Scriptures, are classified; further, of a list of all the New Testament passages in which πνεῦμα occurs, with brief annotation of each, to which is added a statistical table affording a conspectus of distribution; finally, a discussion of the New Testament evidence with a view to defining the doctrine. The inductive part of the work appears to have been carefully done. If the conclusions drawn in the closing section are not altogether satisfactory, this is in part due to the critical premises of the author, which, in our view, render him over-suspicious of the objectivity of the record in the Gospels and the Acts. It is due to this that in the teaching and conversations of our Lord, as reported by the Synoptists, he is unable to find any "direct assertion that is *well established* claiming the Holy Spirit as the Inspirer of His message and work". But the testimony of the words spoken by Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth is ruled out on the sole ground that "there is evidence of a purposeful artistic transposition of the episode" and "that such a claim at that time is not in accord with the silence otherwise observed by our Lord in the early months of his ministry". A less suspicious criticism might have contented itself with regarding the episode anticipated by Luke, without on that account questioning its authenticity. Similarly, the statement of Matt.12:28 is doubted because the parallel passage in Luke has "by the finger of God" instead of "by the Spirit of God". In Luke 11:13 the reference to the Spirit is explained as "due to the interpretation from Christian life" on the basis of a comparison with Matt. 7:4 ("good things" instead of "the Holy Spirit"), and in the same way Matt. 10:20 = Mk. 13:11, which promise the help of the Spirit in the defense of the disciples as witnesses to Christ, are held to reflect the story of early persecution. Why the passage in which Jesus speaks about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in connection with his casting out of demons (Matt. 12:31 = Mk. 3:29 = Lk. 12:10) should not be taken at its face value, simply because "the claim to the Spirit upon Him is indirectly made", we are unable to see. But not merely in regard to the sayings attributed to Jesus, also as regards the narrative of the Evangelists where it speaks of the Spirit in connection with Jesus, the author seems to be skeptical. He breaks the force of the account of Jesus' baptism by calling attention to the variations in the several narratives and to what he calls "the throwing back of the anointing of Jesus in the written records as time went on". By this is meant that the "anointing" was first placed at the transfiguration, then at the baptism, and finally as the last step in the apprehension of the Person of Jesus at the conception. For the negative conclusion reached the writer seeks to account, somewhat hesitatingly, in the following manner: "May it not be that the immediacy of His communion with the Father was such that He did not need to speak of His endowment with the Messianic Spirit, and that in his training of the Twelve He led them to treasure a direct access to the Father in prayer during the days of His flesh?" That Jesus should have regarded the influence of the Spirit as introducing into his own or the disciples' communion with God any degree of indirectness, we find it hard to believe. The whole tenor of the conception of the Spirit and his functions seems to be against this. The Spirit is the very factor which not only renders communion with God possible, but also renders it most direct and intimate.

In the discussion of the references in Acts the same distinction between the viewpoint of the author and that of the acting and speaking persons of the history obtrudes itself with the same effect of

preventing the arrival at a clear-cut definition of the early apostolic doctrine. The distinction is, of course, quite legitimate in itself, the point of view from which Luke regards the Spirit and his operation need not be in all respects the same as that from which Peter in his speeches approaches the subject. But when the suspicion is given place that Luke's point of view has been worked into the Petrine addresses, the data on which the student relies for tracing the development become worthless. Mr. Winstanley thinks that Luke writes of the Spirit as he does because of the living experience and the vivid realization he had of his work in the Christian life around him, and that in congregations which were to a large extent Pauline. Hence the dominance of the conception of the Spirit in his thought-world both in the first and the second treatise. And yet the author is compelled to admit a fact, which alone we believe is sufficient to discredit this hypothesis: "The truly Pauline level of teaching is unattained, the doctrine of the Spirit as the molder and fashioner of the Christian's inner life is unassimilated." How Luke, supposing that he actually carried back the idea of the Spirit current at his time of writing into the earliest history of the Church, could have possibly refrained from attributing to the Spirit's influence the phenomena of high moral and religious life of these early days, it is difficult to understand. The fact is Peter's references to the Spirit in their sub-Pauline character admirably fit into the time to which the historian assigns them and constitute one of the most striking marks of the authenticity of these speeches and of the trustworthiness of Luke as a reporter.

The great problem in connection with the New Testament doctrine of the Spirit lies in the Pauline teaching, in the remarkable widening out of the sphere of operation, its extension to the fundamental processes of the Christian life and its transition in consequence from the abrupt to the organic, equable and constant. The author makes no serious attempt to solve this problem, nor could this have been satisfactorily attempted within the limits of so brief and elementary a discussion. But the peculiarities of the Pauline teaching might at least have been brought out with greater distinctness, especially the all-important point that to Paul the Spirit is not merely a Spirit whom Christ bestows, but a spirit first of all subjectively Christ's own, indwelling in the glorified humanity of the Savior, since the resurrection, so that it is not quite the same when Peter says: Christ has sent forth the Spirit, as when Paul affirms the same fact in various ways. Hence for Paul different results follow not as yet connected with the fact in the Petrine teaching, chief and most central of all the life-union between Christ and the believer, while also the soteriological identification between Christ and the Spirit in the light of this acquires a new significance.

In the treatment of the Johannine writings the same dubiousness crops out. Is it really necessary to assume two strands of teaching, one Pauline, the other characteristically Johannine, simply because the new birth is sometimes defined as a birth from God, at other times as a birth of the Spirit? Does not the Spirit stand precisely for that which originates from God supernaturally? Nor do we think that the differences of representation in the closing discourses of the Gospel are sufficiently real even to invite the suspicion that here "another hand of the same school" is traceable, "to whom, in view of Church traditions, the Spirit's work was insufficiently prominent". The variation that the Spirit is represented on the one hand as sent "by the Father", on the other hand as "by Jesus from the Father" is certainly an insufficient basis for such an inference, to which, we are glad to say, the author does not in the end commit himself positively.

A brief paragraph is devoted to the Apostolic Fathers, and the concluding remarks on the "Present

Significance” of the doctrine speak reverently and soberly of the mystery of the triune Being of God, to which the doctrine of the Spirit is one of the Scripture avenues of approach, the author’s particular concern being to warn against a use of the word “person” with tritheistic implications.