



The Spirit and the Creation, under the sign of hope

O Espírito e a Criação, sob o signo da esperança

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Abstract

This article discusses the Spirit of God in creation, based on the contents of the Judeo-Christian Revelation, considering the hope of “new heaven and new earth” (Rev 21:1). On the one hand, the attributes of Pneuma and His role in the divine work of creation are presented; on the other hand, the attributes and works of the Spirit are placed in light of the expectation for the God’s Kingdom fulfillment in the cosmos and in history. Thus, Pneumatology is read through the lens of theological hope, in times of challenges to faith and the future of life on Earth. In this approach, the verbs blow, vivify, console, strengthen, perfect and regenerate articulate Revelation and History, present and future of creation. In conclusion, three perspectives on the scope of the topic are suggested: deepen Pneumatology in connection with Christology, Grace and Eschatology; experience ecological conversion as a work of the Spirit; promote dialogue between Pneumatology and Natural Sciences, strengthening the ecological commitment to human and planetary life, in tune with the Creative Spirit.

Keywords: Creator God. Pneuma. Shekhinah. Christian hope. Cosmology.

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Resumo

Este artigo discorre sobre o Espírito de Deus na criação, a partir dos conteúdos da Revelação judaico-cristã, à luz da esperança de “novo céu e nova terra” (Ap 21:1). De um lado, apresentam-se os atributos do Pneuma e seu papel na obra divina da criação; de outro, faz-se uma aproximação desses atributos à expectativa de realização do Reino de Deus, no cosmo e na história. Assim, a Pneumatologia é lida com a lente da esperança teologal, em tempos de desafios à fé e ao futuro da vida na Terra. Nesta abordagem, os verbos soprar, vivificar, consolar, fortalecer, aperfeiçoar e regenerar articulam Revelação e História, presente e futuro da criação. À conclusão, abrem-se três perspectivas de alcance do tema: aprofundar a Pneumatologia em conexão com a Cristologia, Graça e Escatologia; vivenciar a conversão ecológica como obra do Espírito; pôr em diálogo a Pneumatologia e as Ciências da Natureza, fortalecendo assim o compromisso ecológico pela vida humana e planetária, em sintonia com o Espírito Criador.

Palavras-chave: Deus Criador. Pneuma. Shekiná. Esperança cristã. Cosmologia.

Introduction

A wind that “blows where it wishes” (Jn 3:8), the Spirit of God is present throughout the cosmos, from the human microcosm to the distant borders of the expanding universe. The wisdom tradition – embraced by Paul – attests to this: “For your incorruptible Spirit [O God] is in all things” (Wis 12:1) and “searches all things, even the depths of God” (1Cor 2:10). Dealing, therefore, with his work in the created world is a task open to different approaches and perceptions. Biblical Revelation itself, with its specific theological canons, recognizes the dynamic nature of the *Pneuma*, as a universally present divine power, to be discerned in the many manifestations of Nature, History, Religions and Culture that make up the variegated mosaic of humanity and the Earth. This is the horizon of investigation of Pneumatology as a whole, which includes both the extensive presence of the *Pneuma* in the world and its sanctifying work in the space of explicit faith in Jesus the Savior, experienced in Christian communities.

Renouncing excessive pretensions, this article focuses on the role of the Spirit of God in creation, presenting the fundamental themes and perspectives proposed by Judeo-Christian tradition: on the one hand, taking in aspects of a fundamental pneumatology, about the revealed Person of the Holy Spirit; on the other hand, rehearsing an approximation of these aspects to the expectation of the Kingdom of God fulfillment, in the cosmos and in history.

This approach brings pneumatology into the workshop of hope, in times of challenges to faith and uncertainty about the future of humanity and the planet. For this reason, the verbs *blow*, *vivify*, *console*, *strengthen*, *perfect* and *regenerate* give movement to the topics presented, starting from their biblical basis and proposing their meaning for the firming up of life, in the hope of the definitive Kingdom. To conclude, there are three perspectives on the subject: deepen Pneumatology, rereading the contents of Revelation, Systematic theology and Patristics; to promote ecological conversion in a profound sense, as the work of the Spirit in the human creature; to increase the meeting between Pneumatology and Natural Sciences, thus strengthening the commitment to human and planetary life, in tune with the Creator Spirit.

Breath of God

The Spirit of God is mentioned as early as the beginning of creation in the Book of Genesis: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was a formless and desolate emptiness [*tohu wa bohu*], and darkness was over the surface of the deep [*tehom*], and the Spirit [*Ruah*] of God was hovering over the surface of the waters” (Gen 1:1-2 NASB)¹.

Against a backdrop of darkness and informality, the divine Breath (*Ruah*) stirs the waters and empowers the abyss with its generative virtue. While light is created by the divine Word as the inauguration of the “first day” and therefore of time (Gen 1:3-5), *ruah* has a different nature: it is not a creature, but a power of the Creator God, the divine Breath that “makes life possible” and can “be understood as a strong wind” (TEB, 1994, p. 24: footnote “e”)².

This action of the divine Breath or Spirit on the abyssal waters is reminiscent of the *Enuma elish*, the Babylonian creation myth – as Stéphanie Anthonioz (2019) demonstrates – due to the correspondence between Tihamat (the creator deity of the *Enuma elish*) and the *tehom* (the watery abyss of the biblical *Bereshit*). On the other hand, marked by Jewish monotheism, the biblical account does not cite any foreign divinity, in order to affirm the work of the one *El* or *Elohê* – the ancestral God worshipped by Abraham and the Hebrew tribes – whose *ruah* is potent and vital breath.

¹ NASB, New American Standard Bible.

² TEB, in most of Latin languages Ecumenical Bible Translation; in French TOB, Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible.

Translated as wind or breath, *ruah* has feminine gender and divine attributes, clearly named *Ruah Elohim* – Breath of God (Gen 1:2). The Hebrew *me-rahefet* in Gen 1:2 means to glide over, with the effect of moving or stirring the surface of the abyssal waters, without touching them. In this way, the narrative indicates a divine power extrinsic to the waters – distinct from a mere creature or natural force – which conveys the creative power of God himself. As Moltmann observes, it is the Breath of God that “vibrated over chaos” (2010, p. 50).

The watery abyss represents primordial chaos, prior to any form of life, deep and dark. God breathes his hot and powerful breath into it, stirring up the waters to empower life. This action by *Ruah Elohim* expresses the intention and power of the Creator God, who brings forth life and beauty from the inert and shapeless chaos. It is a primordial action, at the origin of time and space, even before the Word (*dabar*) that summons, defines and names creatures.

In Genesis, the breath-word pair marks God's action in creating the cosmos, the earth and other beings: by his word, He names and defines creatures; by his breath, He makes them exist and live. In this way, “all creatures are called to life by the same *ruah* – which constitutes the communion of all of them in Creation” (Moltmann, 2010, p. 50). Thus, “the masculine word (*dabar*) and the feminine life force (*ruah*) necessarily complement each other” (Moltmann, 2010, p. 50). In fact, *ruah* means the breath or vital breath [*ruah hayim*] in many passages of the Old Testament (cf. Gen 6:17 and 7:15, Nm 16:22 and 27,16, Ez 37:5).

A force similar to that of *ruah* in Creation is mentioned in Exodus, when the waters of the Sea of Reeds receded, allowing the children of Israel to flee from Pharaoh's troops: “With a strong east wind [*ruah ha-qadim*] blowing all night, the Lord repelled the sea and set it dry” (Ex 14:21) – a phenomenon of water retraction, still seen today when the east wind blows, in some bends of the River Nile (Egypt), where the waters move from East to West, between the sandbanks and reeds close to the shore (cf. Miserey, 2010). Power and effectiveness stand out, indicating the providential action of God who creates, liberates and intervenes in favor of his people, with his powerful Breath of Life.

In the Old Testament, the same feminine term *ruah* also refers to the atmospheric manifestations of different winds, with their direction, speed, strength and heat. From the study by Baumgärtel (1971) comes this exemplary list of citations:

- daily wind that comes from the West or Occident: *ruah hayom* (Gen 3:8)
- violent wind: *ruah razaq* (Ex 10:19, 1 Kings 19:11), typical of the storm
- impetuous wind, from the East: *ruah qadim azzah* (Ex 14:21, Ps 48:7-8)
- powerful breath: *ruah qashah* (Is 27:8)
- stormy wind or hurricane: *ruah kabbir* (Job 8:2)
- strong wind: *ruah so'ah* (Ps 55:9)
- scorching and caustic wind: *ruah tsah* (Jer 4:12)
- gusty wind: *ruah se'aroth* (Ez 13:11-13)
- burning wind: *ruah zile'afoth* (Ps 11:6)
- wind from the East or Orient: *ruah ha-qadim* (Ex 14:21)
- desert wind: *ruah midbar* (Jer 13:24)
- wind from the sea or the West: *ruah yam* (Ex 10:19)
- North or Northern wind: *ruah tsafôn* (Prov 25:23, Sirach 43:20)

These expressions point to the original experience of the Semitic peoples in their territory and their journey, for whom the wind, lightning and storms were both a sign of the seasons and a theophany: from the breeze to the gale, the manifestations of the atmospheric air serve as a metaphor for the divine attributes of the Spirit (cf. 1 Kings 19:7-14). Other Books, such as Exodus and the Prophets, name it the Spirit of Yahweh (*Ruah Yhwh*: Ex 15:8-10, Is 27:8 and 40:7, Hos 13:15). It is the breath that God possesses and dispenses over all creatures, literally “over all flesh” (*Elohê ha-ruot le-kol bāsar* in Num 16:22 and 27:16).

Life-giving Spirit

The life-giving action of the Spirit takes on dramatic expression in the vision of Ezekiel 37: led by “the Spirit of the Lord [Yhwh]”, the prophet comes to a “valley full of bones [...] completely dry” (Ezek 37:1,2). God commands him to prophesy over these bones, saying:

Behold, I will cause you to be penetrated by the Spirit and you shall live. I will cover you with sinews, I will cause you to be covered with flesh and I will clothe you with skin. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live. Then you will know that I am the Lord [Yhwh]. (Ezek 37:5-6 NASB)

And so it came to pass, first with bones rejoined with sinews and covered with flesh and skin, but still lifeless bodies. God then proclaimed the second prophecy, through the mouth of Ezekiel: “Spirit, come from the four winds and blow on these dead that they may live!” (Ezek 37:9). At that moment, “the Spirit penetrated them, and they lived, standing on their feet like an immense army” (Ezek 37:10). This standing army portrays the people of Israel, lifted up by the hope of returning to the promised land and living there in freedom and justice (cf. Ezek 37:11-13). God declares: “And I will put my Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the Lord [Yhwh], have spoken and done it – declares the Lord [Yhwh]” (Ezek 37:14 NASB).

The account, with its anatomical details, depicts living, articulate bodies, with breathing and movement, because they have been “penetrated by the Spirit” (Ezek 37:5.10). However, the vitality of Creation – physical and organically articulated – does not end with the raising up of the vivified bodies, but continues in the march of God's people, moved by “hope” on their way to the “land of Israel” (Ezek 37:11-12). Thus, the Spirit of Creation is also the Spirit of History, who animates and leads the pilgrim people of God through time, especially in situations of exile and servitude, so that they may return free to the land that God gives them.

Centuries later, the apostle Paul uses expressions like those of Ezekiel 37 when describing the Church as a Body “joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love” (Eph 4:16 NRSVCE)³.

An articulated Body, of which believers are “members” and whose “head is Christ” (Eph 4:15; Col 1:18). All united to each other – and jointly united to the Head – the members share the same Breath, in which they were “bathed [baptized]” and from which “they all drank” (1Cor 12:13), indicating the outward and inward dynamism of the Pneuma in the *ekklesia*: the Spirit vitalizes everyone integrally, from the outside (bathing) to the inside (drinking). In this community, “Jews and Greeks, slaves and free” form “one body” through the same Spirit (1Cor 12:13). This is a new *oikoumene* – unity in the Spirit, of universal extension – which overcomes the exclusions between citizens and foreigners in the *polis* (city), as well as between Hebrews and Gentiles in the *qahal* (assembly) of Israel. Bathed, nourished, inspired and gathered in/by the Spirit, all and sundry form a living and plural Body. It is an organic image of the new People of God: “There is one Body and one Spirit, just as the hope of the vocation to which you were called is one” (Eph 4:4).

Consoling and regenerating Spirit

Prophetic literature not only foreshadows the coming Anointed One, the Messiah King who will come to usher the time of redemption, but it also foreshadows the Anointing itself: the outpouring of the *Ruah* as the principle or agent of renewal and regeneration. The promised Spirit blesses Jacob and makes

³ NRSVCE, New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition of the Bible.

him fruitful (Is 44:3-4); he inhabits the human heart and infuses it with fidelity to the Covenant (Ezek 11:19-20; 36:26-27); he is poured out on the whole house of Israel, rescued from captivity (Ezek 39:29); and in messianic times, he will grant the inhabitants of Jerusalem “a spirit of grace and supplication” (Zech 12:10).

Alongside the prophecies about God's Anointed (cf. Is 12:1-4 and 61:1-2) and the coming of the Spirit upon “all flesh” in Joel (3:1-2), there are prophecies referring to the “desert and the dry land”, the “steppe and the forest”, with their “flowers”, their mountains (Carmel) and plains (Sharon) – as Isaiah 35:1-3 says. With poetry and vigor, the prophet concludes: “the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes (Is 35:7 NRSVCE). Although Isaiah does not explicitly mention the *Ruah Elohim* in these lines, the manifestation of God's “glory [*kavod*]” and “splendor [*kavod-Yhwh*]” (Is 35:2) in the mountains and valleys makes the Earth the place of His *shekinah*: the divine Presence that comes to shelter, comfort, strengthen and lead the people, especially when they live in exile or persecution. The “*shekinah* herself is in exile” to sustain dispersed and exiled Israel – as the *Petichat Eliahu*, a long prayer recited daily by Sephardic Jews, says (*Complete Sephardic Sidur*, FRIDLIN edition, 2015, p. 9). The mystical book *Tikunei ha-Zohar* also says the same in section Tikun n. 24 (apud Scholem, 2002, p. 73).

For Jewish mysticism, it is interesting to note the verbal proximity between the root of *shekhinah* – the verb *shakhan*: to come to; to remain with; to dwell with (cf. Ex 29:45; 40:35) – and the conjugation *yoshaakhem* present in Isaiah 35:4: “Behold, your God comes.... He is coming to save you [*yoshaakhem*]” (Is 35:4). In his book *Alfa-beta I*, n. 8, Rabbi Akiva (1999, p. 119) examines the verbs present in the text of Isaiah 35 and concludes that God's coming to save, in this case, is the work of the *shekinah*: “Strengthen the exhausted, and make the feeble strong. Say to those with anxious heart: Take courage, fear not!” (Is 35:3-4 NASB). Interpretations of this kind follow one another in the long mystical tradition of Judaism, discussing the different “levels of meaning” of the *shekinah* and the Torah as a whole (Scholem, 2002, p. 73).

What is worth highlighting here is the proximity between *shekinah* and *ruah*: in the spiritual and liturgical tradition of Judaism, *shekinah* carries the effects of consolation, strength, deliverance, justice, joy and grace, which are typical of *ruah* – as we read in Isaiah 61:1-3. These effects are experienced by the Messiah, the Anointed One par excellence, but also by all “the people” in whose “bosom” God has “put His holy Spirit” (Is 63:11). Even today, decades after the establishment of the State of Israel, Jewish communities all over the world appeal to God's mercy and ask: “may your *shekhinah* to return to Zion [*ha-machazir Shekhinatô le-Tsion*]” (*Sucat David Sidur*, Congregation Mekor Haim edition, 2006, p. 482). Thus, *Ruah*'s horizon of action expands, from the Messiah to the people; from the people to the city of Zion; from the city of Zion to the desert and its inhabitants, as we read in Isaiah:

The palace is forsaken; the populous city is abandoned. The Ophel [southern hill of the ancient city of Zion] with its watchtower will serve as a permanent [animal] cave, for the joy of wild asses, a pasture for flocks; until – from on high – the Spirit is poured out on us. Then the wilderness will become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field will be worth a forest. (Is 32:14-15 NRSVCE)

Here the prophet extends the action of the Spirit to the ruins and the wilderness, as a life-giving force poured down from on high: “the Spirit [*ruah*] causes life to spring up and progress everywhere” (TEB, 1994, p. 656: footnote “c”). Note that, in addition to generating a new heart faithful to the Covenant, as Ezekiel 36:26-28 says, the Divine Spirit restores the ruins and regenerates the land. The attribute “from on high” present in Isaiah is a probable source for the promise of the Spirit to the disciples, according to Luke, when Christ tells them: “And behold, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city [of Jerusalem] until you are clothed with power from on high” (Lk 24:49 NASB). In this way, we can see in Luke the fulfillment of the pneumatological promises of Isaiah and Joel, as noted in Luke 24:49

and Acts 2:16-21, respectively referring to Isaiah 61:1-4 and Joel 3:1-2. Also in Luke, we hear remote echoes of Genesis in the description of the phenomena of Pentecost day:

And suddenly a noise [*hōsper*] like a violent rushing wind [*pnôes biáias*], came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And tongues that looked like fire appeared to them, distributing themselves, and a tongue rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit [*plêreis pnêumatos*] and began to speak with different tongues, as the Spirit was giving them the ability to speak out. (Act 2:1-4 NASB)

In the first Creation, the Spirit breathes on the waters of the abyss (Gen 1:1-2); in the new Creation – recapitulated by the Risen One – the Spirit promised by the Messiah descends on the gathered community (Acts 2:2-4). In both cases there are manifestations of strength and efficacy: a powerful breath that stirs the waters in Genesis; an impetuous wind that distributes fire over those present, in Acts.

The signs and attributes configure a theophany with the characteristics of a storm, reminiscent of the manifestations of *Ruah* at Creation: Luke highlights the *échos hôster* (rumbling echo) like a *pnôes biáias* (gale blowing). Then *glôssai hosêi pyros* (tongues of fire) rained down from on high, spreading over the disciples (Acts 2:2). In this case, gale and fire are the stormy elements interpreted eschatologically as “power from on high” (Lk 24:49) and “the Spirit poured out on all flesh” (Acts 2:17). And the fire is a metaphor for the divine Spirit himself, who touches those present, fills them, enables them to speak in foreign languages and, finally, sends them out to bear witness to the New Covenant sealed by Jesus (cf. Mt 3:11, Lk 3:16, Acts 2:5).

These elements make up a theophany of the Creator Spirit, with evidence of movement, efficacy and transformation, not only in relation to the individuals of the experience (Jesus' disciples), but also in relation to natural powers (windstorm and fire). Therefore, the manifestation of the Spirit (*ruah/pneuma*) is not only interior – in the heart of the believers – for their reinvigorated witness of the Gospel, but also exterior, in the realm of Nature which is renewed by the outpouring of that primordial Breath, finally inaugurating the new Creation.

Cosmic and vital power

Through His divine *Ruah*, God not only creates, but sustains all things and makes Himself present to the whole of Creation, from the human microcosm to the sidereal macrocosm. In Hebrew, this is indicated by the term *rewah* (breadth, extension), from the same root as *ruah*, as Moltmann observes: “*Ruah* creates space, sets it in motion, takes it from narrowness to breadth and thus makes [every being] alive” (2010, p. 51). As Paul said, “the Holy Spirit searches all things [*pánta eráuna*]” (1 Cor 2:10), echoing the Book of Wisdom: “For your incorruptible Spirit [O God] is in all things [*en pasin*]” (Wis 12:1). Although the biblical worldview is, in certain respects, a monotheistic reinterpretation of Babylonian myths – originally far removed from current knowledge of physics and cosmology – it is remarkable that it includes categories of universal extension such as *dabar* (word-voice) and *ruah* (breath-wind), of cosmic scope, as the principle of movement, vitality and becoming of all Creation.

The Wisdom Books develop the perspective of Genesis and attest to the life-giving and renewing power of *Ruah*: “You [God] send forth your breath, and they are created; and you renew the surface of the ground” (Ps 104:30). In addition, no sound from the cosmos escapes Him: “The Spirit of the Lord fills the earth; he contains the universe and knows every sound” (Wis 1:7). It should be noted that the text is not referring to photographs of outer space taken through telescopes, but to cosmic, distant and subtle sounds – in fact, electromagnetic waves with radio frequencies – whose capture was only possible after the installation of radio-telescopes at various points on Earth, starting in 1974.

In re-reading the biblical narratives through the lens of recent science, Edwards notes that there is a “story of the Spirit” intrinsic to the “fourteen-billion-year history of the universe” (Edwards, 2007, p. 63). Biblical language and worldview are obviously daughters of their time and culture. But they develop thought-provoking notions and categories, such as God's presence in Creation through his Spirit “breathing life into a universe of creatures” (Edwards, 2007, p. 63). Far from the static interpretation of certain creationist readings, the Bible presents the Spirit (*ruah/pneuma*) as a force “creatively empowering a world in process” (Edwards, 2007, p. 64). Versatile as the wind and powerful as fire, the Spirit creates the world “in open-ended and dynamic ways” (Edwards, 2007 p. 65). As McKenzie says, the Spirit is the “life-giving and energizing power of God” (1990, p. 1291).

The Divine Artist of Creation

As God's creative *dynamis*, the *Ruah* sets in motion the opening of the universe to life, as the impulse, force and direction of being against non-being, of cohesion against dissolution, of fecundity against caducity, of renewal against stagnation. In fact, the universe – beyond the concentration of high organic, sentient and conscious complexity found on planet Earth – is continually expanding, without dissipating. And how can it expand without losing itself in the void? – This is due to the subtle interplay between the forces of contraction – governed gravitationally by *dark matter* – and the forces of expansion, governed by *dark energy*, which opposes gravity under the effect of the *big bang*. This explosion caused everything to expand, from a tiny point, in all directions of what became space-time. This interplay of forces can be gauged by science, but maintaining its balance in the infinite variation of cosmic bodies and phenomena is difficult to explain, just as the constitution of reality prior to the *big bang* remains scientifically unexplained. In some theoretical speculations, the reality before the Big Bang should be a *quantum almost nothing* (Wilson, 2022; also cf. Penrose, 2023).

What existed (or didn't exist...) before time, before any trace of cosmogenesis detectable by Science, Theology considers “the Unknowable, the Unamenable, and the Mystery” (Boff, 2013, p. 177). Others prefer to call it the “quantum vacuum, the original source of all being, [...] the generative abyss [...] or the background energy, which pre-exists all forms of energy and all beings” (Boff, 2013, p. 178). Theologically, this adjustment of cosmic forces that makes the universe exist, complexify and expand towards perpetuity is due to the Spirit of God – as Moltmann ponders (1993, p. 33):

The creator God of heaven and earth is present in each of his creatures and in the communion of Creation through his cosmic Spirit. God's presence penetrates the entire universe. God is not only the creator of the world, but also the Spirit of the universe. Through the forces and possibilities of the Spirit, the Creator makes his dwelling place in his creatures; by enlivening them, he keeps them in their existence and leads them towards the future of his Kingdom. In this sense, the history of the universe, of creation, is the history of the effects of the divine Spirit.

Pope Francis expresses a similar thought in his encyclical *Laudato si'* (LS, 2015, n. 80) based on *Exposition of Aristotle's Physics* written by Thomas Aquinas:

The Spirit of God has filled the universe with possibilities and therefore, from the very heart of things, something new can always emerge: “Nature is nothing other than a certain kind of art, namely God's art, impressed upon things, whereby those things are moved to a determinate end. It is as if a shipbuilder were able to give timbers the wherewithal to move themselves to take the form of a ship [Thomas Aquinas: *In octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis expositio*, liber II, lectio 14]”. (LS 80)

What Edwards described as the *creative empowerment* of the Holy Spirit in a world in process (2017, p. 64) – so that “something new always springs from the very heart of things”, as Pope Francis says

(LS n. 80) – the genius of Thomas Aquinas qualified as “divine art, inscribed in things” (apud LS n. 80). In fact, if the Logos reveals the divine *designium* for the Universe and constitutes it as the generating Word (cf. Jn 1:3, Heb 1:3), it is up to the Pneuma to perpetuate and perfect it as the Artist of creation. Respecting the nature and potential of beings – endowed with intrinsic beauty and goodness, according to Genesis (*tov*, in Hebrew: Gen 1:9.12.18.21.25.31) – the Spirit is the creative artisan who fills the universe and helps creatures to organize themselves and advance towards becoming, in a dynamic of countless variables and combinations, facing nothingness and darkness through the expansion of energy and light, towards life. As the Psalmist sums up, speaking of all beings before God the Creator:

Lord, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions. There is the sea, great and broad, in which there are swarms without number; animals both small and great. The ships move along there, and Leviathan, which You have formed to have fun in it. They all wait for You to give them their food in due season. You give to them, they gather it up; You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good. You hide Your face, they are terrified; You take away their breath, they perish and return to their dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the ground. May the glory of the Lord endure forever. May the Lord rejoice in His works! (Ps 104:24-31 NASB)

Therefore, the qualities that the Christian faith attributes to the Spirit of God – invoked as Lord and Life-giver (*Dominus et Vivificans*) – apply both to his action in humanity and in the cosmos, being Him effectively *Creator Spiritus* – the Creator Spirit. This is the Christian perspective of a Trinitarian cosmology: in communion with the Father (*archê*) and the Son (*logos*), the Spirit (*pneuma*) did not create the world in a distant beginning, in a past moment lost in the centuries, but is continually *Creator Spiritus* from the beginning, in the present time and for centuries to come. As the synagogal prayer says, recognizing God's creative act: “He, through his goodness, constantly renews the work of Creation every day” (*Sephardic complete Sidur*, Fridlin edition, 2015, p. 47).

Due to His creative and renewing action, *Ruah* represents the “perfective cause” in the Trinity – as Basil the Great suggests in his treatise *On the Holy Spirit* XVI, n. 38 (Migne edition, 1857, column 136). To which Cantalamessa comments (2014, p. 68-69):

The creative action of the Spirit is at the origin of the perfection of what was created; we would say that He is not so much the One who makes the world go from nothing to being [the work of the Father as the main cause and the Word as the efficient cause], but the One who makes it go from being formless to being formed and perfect. In other words, the Holy Spirit is the One who, from chaos, makes what is created pass into the cosmos, making it something beautiful, organized, purified.

For the Spirit inaugurates being where there was nothing before; penetrates every tiny particle; expands the *minimum* to infinity; connects the fragments; gives depth to space-time; enhances every possibility of life; beautifies shapes; makes consciousness and love emerge where there was previously inert matter. Pneuma not only preserves the creatures, but perfects them according to the *Imago* of all bodies (Col 1:15), the *Logos* of all science (John 1:14), the Light of everything that radiates (John 1:9), the sustaining Word of the universe (Heb 1:3) – which is the Christ, in whom “all things were created” (Col 1:16).

Hope for fullness

As Edwards says, in the biblical-Christian worldview the Spirit is the *dynamis* by which “God maintains things in being, above the abyss of nothingness”, pointing “to the future not only of human beings, but of all creation” (2007, p. 83). This holistic and connective perspective of all creatures is expressed by Paul in these terms:

For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only that, but also, we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons and daughters, the redemption of our body. (Rom 8:22-23 NASB)

The apostle discusses theologically about the future glory of Creation, still in process of birth and developing, to be freed and recapitulated in Christ – Lord of history and the cosmos. The theme is amplified in the Letter to the Colossians, when presenting Christ as the divine *Imago* (icon) and principle of the cosmic *Pleroma* (fullness):

He is the Image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation: for by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or rulers, or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also the head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. (Col 1:15-20 NASB)

It is an eschatological projection of the effects of the Resurrection on a cosmic scale, as liberation and recapitulation of all things in God, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit. This new condition, however, is still on the way to its fullness, possessed “in the firstfruits” and “in hope” (Rm 8:20.23) by the disciples who make their pilgrimage in today's space-time.

While future fullness is announced in Christ, who is the point of arrival of all things, the “firstfruits” can now be shared and celebrated by humanity – together with all creation – in the Spirit (cf. Rom 8:22-27). The Spirit anticipates, in time, the fullness of the definitive *eschaton*. Thus, Paul says that the cosmic becoming that drags the Universe is welcomed and participated by humankind with “eagerly waiting” (Rom 8:19).

After all, life in the future was manifested in Christ and given by the Spirit, renewing the existential perspectives of human living, summarized in the Our Father prayer: recognizing and sanctifying the divine Name, correcting all idolatry; assume ourselves as people capable of welcoming and consolidating the Reign of God; know and adhere to God's purpose for the world – so that “all may have life” (John 10:10). And what would this life be that the Father gives us, in his Kingdom? – It's overcoming hunger by sharing bread; it's reconciliation and justice, through the forgiveness of debts and sins; it's the assistance of grace in the face of temptations; it's liberation from all evil – grace consummated in the Easter of the Messiah Jesus – to be proven in everyday life (cf. Mt 6:9-13).

Thus, the Kingdom of God is already present as a gift, but not yet definitively realized, in the hopeful tension between “the *already* and the *not yet*” – as Cullmann says (1970, p. 172). What is expected is the fullness of this gift – “new heaven and new earth” (Rev 21:1) – as the definitive condition of humanity and the cosmos, finally freed and regenerated by God, through his creative Word and his consoling Spirit.

“Thy Spirit come”

It is interesting to note that a Lucan variant of the *Our Father* does not pray “Your Kingdom come” as in Matthew but surprisingly prays “Your Spirit come” (Luke 11:2 in TEB 1994, p. 1999, footnote “b”). As some manuscripts testify, this Lucan variant highlights the pneumatological consistency of the work of Creation, Redemption and Sanctification, which the Trinity operates in communion of Three Persons. Some Fathers of the Church valued this version of the *Our Father*, such as Evagrius Ponticus, Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, because it is “the Spirit of Truth” (John 16:16) that favors a person's conscious adherence to God's will. In this sense, “your Kingdom come is worth saying: your Spirit come” – summarizes Maximus the Confessor, in his *Brief interpretation of the Our-Father prayer* (2010, p. 158).

Hope does not disappoint

The coming of the Kingdom calls for *theological hope* in the lordship of God, invoked as Father, as Jesus experienced and taught. And who confirms to us that God is Father, and we are children? How is it possible to wait for the coming of the Kingdom, amid daily pain, weakness and tribulations? – The answer: by the Holy Spirit. He “testifies that we are children of God” (Rom 8:16); “helps us in our weakness” and “intercedes for us”, so that we can “pray as we ought” (Rom 8:26). That is why He is invoked as the *Paraclete*: “Spirit of Truth [...], Advocate and Comforter” (John 15:26 and 16:7-13), that is, He who comforts, who consolidates, who gives firmness: “he will guide [the disciples] in the full truth” (John 16:13), “he will announce the things to come” (John 16:13) and “strengthen” the followers of Jesus (2Tim 1:7). He is divine Love itself “poured into our hearts”, for Whom “hope does not disappoint” (Rom 5:5).

With these attributes, the Spirit guarantees and in a certain way anticipates “in the first fruits” the human and cosmic fullness that will come, awaited “in hope” – as Paul says in Rom 8:23-24. A hope that goes beyond optimism or mere waiting, because it is theological hope, which allows human beings to actively participate in the Creator's purposes, adhering to His will. By adhering to the divine will of the Creator, hope achieves effectiveness, hastening the Kingdom of God in the present time and, in this way, putting into effect “new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness dwells” (2Pt 3:13). For “the Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17).

Hope actively anticipates the future, through discernment, choices and gestures of truth and mercy that allow the Kingdom of God to manifest itself in the present time, like someone who takes an orange seed in his hand and contemplates, there, the entire orange grove that is yet to come. The orange grove is at the same time a gift – for the life mysteriously stored in the seed and in the fertile soil that receives it – and the responsibility of those who plant, care for, water and harvest, participating in God's creative act. In this case, where would the Spirit be? – Everywhere where life asserts itself and sprouts, with possibilities of full realization: in God himself, being his Breath; in the seed and in the soil, as the Creative Spirit; in the depths of the human being, whom the Spirit consoles, encourages and moves. Without ever being confused with creatures, “the Spirit searches all things” because he is God (1Cor 2:10).

Hence the joy, fruitfulness and intrepidity of continuing life, amid lights and shadows in the course of time – by the power of the Creator Spirit – until the glorification of everything and everyone in the Cosmic Christ (cf. Rom 8:26-30). In this way, the Spirit of God embraces and connects, in its life-giving power, all creatures, in a cosmic birth that takes place between the contraction and expansion of space-time, until He “brings time to its fullness” and “to gather up all things in Christ, as the Head” (Eph 1:10).

Conclusions

a) Dealing with the Spirit of God in creation requires, and at the same time favors, a rethinking of Pneumatology, from its biblical bases to its internal connections with other theological treatises, especially the Theology of Creation, Grace, Christology and Eschatology. The Pneuma can no longer be relegated to a *dimension* of completion for the intelligence of faith, since it is God and, therefore, *constitutes* in Trinitarian terms all the divine work in the world, passing through the Incarnation of the Word to the final *eschaton*. Just as a Christology and a theology of Grace have developed over the centuries in response to new questions and controversies, resulting in consistent treatises, with pastoral and ecumenical relevance, recent scenarios of socio-environmental risk, crisis of meaning and post-truth call for re-readings of Pneumatology, to re-propose the kerygma and inspire the experience of the Gospel, in the Church and beyond the Church. Many authors point in this direction, including those mentioned above, without forgetting the patristic treasure from which old and new things can be taken.

b) Due to its nature and attributes, the Holy Spirit spreads the seeds of the Word in all creatures, donating Himself to the intelligence and will willing to welcome Him, in addition to even traversing raw matter – from where consciousness emerged after a persistent process of “complexification”, as Teilhard de Chardin says (1988, p. 46). Qualifying Him as a *guest of the soul* and *interior teacher* means that the Spirit opens space in the depth of beings and inhabits our interiority – the *heart* (Rom 5:5) – communicating there the Logos “which illuminates every human being” (John 1:9). This matters to Creation, because humanity is the conscious face of the universe, capable of understanding, deciding and acting, moved by knowledge and will, as a hermeneutic of the world and partner of the Creator God. Therefore, dealing with the Holy Spirit in Creation includes seriously considering His indwelling in the human person. It consequently includes the human capacity to adhere to God's purpose for the Earth and its creatures, with an awakened conscience and converted to the good of Creation. In other words, the Holy Spirit makes our “ecological conversion” operate as a “profound interior conversion” (LS n. 217). He educates us to contemplate Nature, to recognize the value of each creature, to be grateful for manifest life and to defend threatened life, confronting challenges and overcoming obstacles, committed to the present time and projecting the future with renewed hope. For “hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Rom 5:5 NASB)

c) Our condition as hermeneutics (or interpreters) of the world and partners of the Creator should accelerate the encounter between faith and science, particularly in the field of Cosmology, Physics, Evolutionary Biology and other Natural Sciences, which verify the exuberant mystery of Creation in phenomena, as suggested by Edwards (2007) and Küng (2011). Authors such as Basil the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Teilhard de Chardin, Moltmann – and many others, each in their own time – testify to the search for truth inspired by the Paraclete, capable of uniting research and adoration. As He is the “Spirit of Truth” (John 16:13), He embraces every search for meaning, every investigation of causes and every interpretation of phenomena, undertaken with right intention and commitment to good. These are the interior dispositions that the human person carries with him/her, in different artistic, theological or scientific competences, when open to the Spirit who “fills the universe” (Wis 1:7) and “searches all things” (1Cor 2:10). These provisions allow dialogue between Pneumatology, Cosmology and Ecology, for the benefit of human and planetary life, cooperating to seek solutions to the ecological, climate, energy and food crisis. The Spirit is responsible for life, communion and fertility, in the face of death, fragmentation and scarcity. In this sense, uniting knowledge and resources for the good of Creation is cooperating with the Spirit, expressing true worship of the Creator God “friend of life” (Wis 11:26).

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