

Palamite Influence in Contemporary Pneumatology

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Abstract: This century has seen a renaissance of Palamite theology, and though this has been recognised by a small number of Western theologians, responses have rarely gone further than sympathetic descriptions on the one hand, and the reiteration of traditional criticisms on the other. This paper seeks to explore the use made of Eastern Orthodox, and specifically Palamite theology, as a constructive theological resource in the area of pneumatology by one contemporary theologian who has gone beyond this impasse, Anna Marie Aagaard. The question of the possible broader but indirect influence of Palamism will also be raised with reference to the pneumatology of Michael Welker.

THE renaissance of interest in the thought of the fourteenth-century Byzantine theologian Gregory Palamas can be dated to the publication of the *Philokalia*¹ in 1782. In little more than a decade, these writings had become available in Church Slavonic, and Russian translations followed in the course of the nineteenth century. The present century has seen a coherent presentation and defence of Palamite thought by Orthodox theologians, some of whom have written in western European languages. Despite its significance as an intellectual movement, Palamism has not generally been well-received in the West. Martin Jugie, who in 1931 had written a much-cited critical article on Palamism² was able as late as 1941 to dismiss it as little more than a theological fossil.³ Although this response to Palamas and his twentieth-century followers may no longer be typical, direct influence on Western writers has been limited, and has rarely gone beyond sympathetic description. There is a smaller number of Western scholars who do, however, seek to draw on

1. G. E. H. Palmer, P. Sherrard and K. Ware (translators), *The Philokalia* vol. 4 (London: Faber and Faber, 1998).

2. M. Jugie, "Palamas, Gregoire", in *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique* (Paris: Libraire Letouzey et Ane, 1931).

3. B. Schultze, "Hauptthemen der neueren russischen Theologie", in W. Nyssen et. al. (eds.), *Handbuch der Ostkirchenkunde* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1984), vol.1, 347-8.

Palamite theology as a valid resource and integrate it into their own theological work.

There is one area in which there may be a discernible use of Palamite thought, and it should not surprise us too much that this is the area of pneumatology. I have argued elsewhere that the energies of God, although properly spoken of as the energies of the whole Trinity, stand in a special relationship to the person of the Holy Spirit through whom they are mediated.⁴ The last two decades have seen a “rediscovery of the Holy Spirit”, partly because of the charismatic movement, and partly as a function of the revival of trinitarian theology which, it should be said, has at least in part been stimulated by Orthodox writers.⁵ I want to look briefly at the pneumatologies of two contemporary contributors to this rediscovery of the Holy Spirit. One of these, Anna Marie Aagaard, has consciously drawn on Palamite theological insights and the other, Michael Welker, has been less directly, but nevertheless, I believe, indirectly influenced by Orthodox thought.

ANNA MARIE AAGAARD

The contemporary Danish scholar Anna Marie Aagaard was the one of the first Westerners to make creative use of Palamite theological insights as a resource upon which to build her own theological position. I will summarise briefly four of her works in which a Palamite approach to the doctrine of God is both affirmed and also creatively drawn into the author’s own theological enterprise. These works are a 1967 article on Athanasius,⁶ Aagaard’s 1973 doctoral dissertation on missiology and pneumatology,⁷ and two further articles on pneumatology published in 1974⁸ and 1980.⁹

The 1967 article is a detailed exegesis of a passage in Athanasius. Its focus is christological rather than pneumatological. There is for Athanasius, according to the author, a fundamental distinction between being

4. See my book *Energies of the Spirit: Trinitarian Models in Eastern Orthodox and Western Theology* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997) esp. 96-7.

5. In *The Forgotten Trinity: Report of the BCC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine Today* (London: British Council of Churches, 1989) 5, Lossky is mentioned alongside Barth and Rahner as one of the major initiators of the current renaissance in the theology of the Trinity. Evidence of the rediscovery of a doctrine of the Spirit can be seen in the shift of focus in WCC discussion themes from christology to pneumatology (see A. Outler, “Pneumatology as an Ecumenical Frontier”, in *The Ecumenical Review* 41 [1989] 363), and also by the plethora of publications in recent years on pneumatological themes.

6. A. M. Aagaard, “Christus wurde Mensch, um alles Menschliche zu überwinden”, in *Studia Theologica* 21 (1967) 164-81.

7. A. M. Aagaard, *Helligånden sendt til Verden* (Aarhus: Forlaget Aros, 1973). I rely almost entirely here on the abstract in English, 281-5.

8. A. M. Aagaard, “Der Heilige Geist in der Welt”, in H. Meyer et al., *Wiederentdeckung des Heiligen Geistes* (Frankfurt aM: Verlag Otto Lembeck/Verlag Josef Knecht, 1974).

9. A. M. Aagaard, “Die Erfahrung des Geistes”, in O. A. Dilschneider (ed.), *Theologie des Geistes* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1980) 11-24.

and becoming, in which becoming is equated with non-being. These are the only two modes of existence for Athanasius: existence as God, that is as the one who is life, and existence as not-God, that is as that which is not of itself life, but which can receive life. The created is characterised by becoming, that is by the process of coming to be out of non-being. The divine Logos, after incarnation, exists in both these modes – for our sake. This sets up a distinction between nature and grace, but not in the later scholastic sense of nature and supernature, but between Being and Non-Being, or between God in Godself and the human being who is *kata physin* mortal.¹⁰ Does this mean that the Logos ends up on the side of creation? The negative answer of Athanasius is well known. But the important thing for Aagaard is the way in which Athanasius comes to this conclusion. Athanasius draws a distinction in God between *ousia* and *dynamis*.¹¹ For Origen this same distinction had represented a subordinationist distinction between the Father and the Son, with the Son as the *dynamis* of God's *ousia*. The radical creativity of Athanasius lies in his transformation of Origen's subordinationism to become a distinction within God's trinitarian life, "between God's being for Godself and God's being for the creation". This means that God's activities *ad extra* are distinguished from God's being *ad intra*, and God's inner being is not determined by God's actions *ad extra*. God is not merely "God for us",¹² and the Logos is not merely an instrument. Athanasius' central concern in all this is soteriology, and Aagaard outlines this in some detail in the second half of the paper.

In her dissertation *Helligånden sendt til Verden* Aagaard is concerned primarily with missiology. She begins by noting the shift in focus in the 1960s from ecclesiology to more foundational issues, specifically the questions "who is the triune God?" and "what is the relationship between salvation history and human history?" The author first discusses this renewed interest in trinitarian theology and pneumatology within Protestant thought. Prompted by the influence of Karl Barth, it reveals itself in the Protestant ecumenical missiology that found expression at the New Delhi (1961) and Uppsala (1968) Assemblies of the World Council of Churches. It is contrasted to an older "church-centred theology of mission".¹³ Fundamental to this renewed interest in trinitarian and pneumatological themes as the basis for missiology is the notion that God is a sending God. This is a far sounder basis for mission, as it "implies an actualisation of trinitarian theology". But

10. Aagaard, "Christus wurde Mensch", 169.

11. Aagaard, "Christus wurde Mensch", 171: "Athanasius formulates his thoughts most clearly in *De Incarnatione* 17, where he says that the Logos is outside everything created as being, but in all things as *dynamis*. In all things he comes to be (*ejgivneto*), but is (*hjn*) outside of all things."

12. Aagaard, "Christus wurde Mensch", 172.

13. Aagaard, *Helligånden sendt til Verden*, 281.

there is a problem: the trinitarian theological basis still refers to a decidedly Western understanding of the Trinity, with its *a priori* of God's simplicity.¹⁴ Similar changes are noted in Roman Catholic missiology, where in place of the older motives for mission as *plantatio ecclesiae* and *conversio gentium*, ecclesiology has now come to be determined by missiology, and missiology by trinitarian theology. This goes so far, but again there is a problem, viz. that two distinct histories of salvation are posited: an ecclesial and a non-ecclesial way of salvation.¹⁵ This confusing distinction, in the opinion of the author, is again the result of an inadequate theology of the Holy Spirit.

The limitations of both Protestant and Roman Catholic theologies of mission lie in the fact that there is no allowance for, in Aagaard's words, "an assertion of God's own history in man's history. It only allows for a "history of signs" witnessing to God's forever identical essence."¹⁶ The problem, in other words, again lies in an understanding of Trinity regulated by a notion of God's simplicity and a consequent failure to distinguish God's being from God's actions – that is, a failure to acknowledge precisely the distinction developed systematically by Gregory Palamas. The value of these developments, however, should not be overlooked, namely that "modern Protestant and RC missiology have made trinitarian theology topical in a new way."¹⁷

After her discussion of contemporary missiologies, Aagaard starts to develop a theology of the Holy Spirit as creator of the history of salvation. This she does by way of a critique of the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* and of the classical western trinitarian thinking of Thomas Aquinas. Central to both is the notion of the Holy Spirit as a gift to be given. Aagaard points out the real value, but also the inherent limitations, of the Thomistic model which she sees still in operation in *Gaudium et Spes*. Human history is the recipient of God's going out of and return to Godself, with the Holy Spirit as the primary gift to us and for our salvation. Rational humanity returns to God in response to this mission – no human being is outside this outgoing and homecoming of God. The strength of this model is its generous open-endedness and inclusivity. Its weakness is its continuing emphasis on the cerebral as

14. Aagaard, *Helligånden sendt til Verden*, 281: "It is demonstrated that modern ecumenical missiology is firmly rooted in a Western tradition which since Augustine has made the "simplicitas" of the divine nature a presupposition for any trinitarian theology. In continuation of this tradition, the missio-Dei theology understands God's "actio ad extra", including the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit, as conditioned by his essence. God's sending acts manifest His nature as a sending God."

15. Aagaard points out that there are various ways of naming this distinction: Rahner speaks of "special" and "general", Küng of "ordinary" and "extraordinary" ways of salvation.

16. Aagaard, *Helligånden sendt til Verden*, 282.

17. Aagaard, *Helligånden sendt til Verden*, 282.

the means of access to God: our return to God is by virtue of our "cognition and will".¹⁸

After this evaluation and critique, Aagaard turns to Orthodox theology for its focus on the relation between the saving acts of the Spirit and human history.¹⁹ Here the history of salvation is less a matter of God's outgoing to humanity, but rather a "common history" of humanity and the Spirit.²⁰ Chapters six and seven are of central importance for our purposes here. Chapter six discusses the Orthodox interpretation of the transfiguration of the world as the work of the Holy Spirit and humanity together, when humanity is "endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit". Note that the speech is now of "gifts (plural) of the Spirit" rather than of the Spirit *as* a gift. Aagaard continues: "a concept of history as the economy of the Spirit is thus the key to an understanding of the humanisation of the world" and the divinisation of humanity.²¹ The concept of cooperation (synergism) is important here, in that it makes possible the idea of a history of God with humanity, as the proper work of the Holy Spirit. It is here that Western ecclesiology and, more fundamentally, Western pneumatology are shown to be inadequate.²²

Chapter seven explores the Orthodox concept of theosis "as the meaning and goal of history with the doctrine of the Trinity",²³ with reference to a tradition running from Athanasius to Gregory Palamas. Note that both the continuity of Palamas with the patristic tradition and his trinitarian soteriological emphasis are assumed: any problem in this regard has already been worked out in the 1967 article. The emphasis here is on the unity as "one united agent" of the Spirit and the humanity endowed with the gifts of the Spirit within the one history of salvation. There is no need to separate salvation history from "secular" history,²⁴ nor to posit two distinct varieties (ecclesial and extra-ecclesial) of salvation history. The major themes that distinguish Eastern Orthodox from Western trinitarian thinking, namely the *monarchia* of the Father

18. Aagaard, *Helligånden sendt til Verden*, 283: "Man returns to the divine love with the 'processio' and 'datio Spiritus Sancti' as 'causa et ratio', and this makes rational man's 'reditus ad Deum cognoscendo et amando' a matter of salvation through cognition and will.... No human being whose 'exitus a Deo' and 'reditus ad Deum' is engulfed in the 'processio amoris' is, however, outside the 'reditus amoris in Spiritu Sancto per Filium ad Deum'."

19. Aagaard, *Helligånden sendt til Verden*, 283.

20. Aagaard, *Helligånden sendt til Verden*, 284.

21. Aagaard, *Helligånden sendt til Verden*, 284.

22. Aagaard, *Helligånden sendt til Verden*, 284: "the present Western way of presenting the questions concerning the relation between a history of salvation outside and inside the Church falls short of Orthodox ecclesiology. The Church is 'the world as Eucharist', and there is no world which is not in the process of becoming Eucharist in the 'synergiea' between the Spirit and man."

23. Aagaard, *Helligånden sendt til Verden*, 284. Specific reference is made in these chapters to a large number of Orthodox authors.

24. Aagaard is in agreement with the Pannenberg school here. See W. Pannenberg et al., *Revelation as History* (Macmillan: London, 1968).

and the essence – energies distinction, are discussed in relation to this major emphasis. The advantage of the Eastern model, according to Aagaard, is that it allows for the affirmation *finitum capax infiniti* while at the same time it safeguards the inaccessibility of the triune God. Above all, it avoids any tendency to reduce the Spirit to a mere *dynamis* or energy that can be given.²⁵ In the final chapter the author returns to her discussion of missiology, using the language of the “missions” (plural) of the Spirit, to safeguard “the historicity of the economy of the Spirit”, or in other words, the particularity of the presence and activities of the Spirit in the world. “Concrete human beings in specific historical situations are the “locus” of the saving presence of the Spirit.”²⁶

In 1974 Aagaard published an article entitled “Der Heilige Geist in der Welt”. The question posed at the start is eschatological: at what price does God become “all in all”?²⁷ The author once again sets herself against the tendency to reduce the Spirit to a *dynamis* or energy, a tendency to be found both in objective sayings about God on the basis of Aristotelian metaphysics, and subjective sayings about God that we find in anthropological and existentialist theology. Rather, and in a way that anticipates George Lindbeck’s attempt to go beyond both objectivist and subjectivist models of doctrine,²⁸ Aagaard calls for a “theological” theology of the Holy Spirit, one which discerns a unity of divine and human activities in the history of the Spirit (or the history of God’s presence) in the world. The place of God’s presence is not all places, and not any arbitrary place, but specifically in the history of God’s reign of love.

The precondition for an adequate pneumatology is a biblical eschatology, in which the reign of God is understood apocalyptically as “here but not yet”. So long as we harbour the strain of thought that understands the reign of God as an unchangeable beyond we will continue to see this world and human history as godless and without value, separated radically from the (by implication, ahistorical) reign of God. The positive alternative to this is to affirm that “the same reign of love, justice, peace and joy that is revealed in God’s Christ becomes present history on earth in human acts of love and justice...”²⁹

Under the heading criteria (for an adequate pneumatology), the author discusses the resurrection of Jesus, not simply as any resurrection, but specifically as the resurrection of the messiah who had been

25. Aagaard, *Helligånden sendt til Verden*, 284: “As a divine person the Spirit is hidden in the history which aims at the consummation of all creation, and yet is this very history the ‘locus’ of His presence in the world.”

26. Aagaard, *Helligånden sendt til Verden*, 285.

27. Aagaard, “Der Heilige Geist in der Welt”, 97, see also 117.

28. G. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in Postliberal Age* (London: SPCK, 1984).

29. Aagaard, “Der Heilige Geist in der Welt”, 103

crucified because of his advocacy of the reign of justice and peace and love. This means that God is not yet fully glorified, not yet free from pain,³⁰ and that the reign of God has a specific history in the world.³¹ It is in this specific history that the Spirit is present. Aagaard cites Nissiotis in support here: "(the Holy Spirit is) the God of history in action".³² Only thus are we freed from the temptation to understand Jesus' resurrection in an ahistorical way as the revelation of a metaphysical beyond. Only thus are we brought to speak soteriologically in terms of God's action in the Spirit "for us and for our salvation". The person of the Spirit is not to be thought of in isolation from the works of the Spirit, and these works have a specific historical dimension. They are not to be seen in every place, time and person,³³ but in particular places, times and persons.

The Apocalypse ascribes salvation doxologically "to our God" (Rev 7: 10). What are we to understand by this? God is not yet the God that this God will be. The future has an ontological preeminence in God's divinity, and this dimension of God's futurity interprets the world as history, and history as meaning.³⁴ This is not the recognition of some future, unknown God, but the presence in history of the love already made known in the life of Jesus Christ. It means that the trinitarian process of God's coming to be "all in all" is not carried out in the depths of God's own being, but in the common history of God with humanity. It is only through this understanding of God as having a history *with* the world that we avoid a dualism of two kingdoms, one historical and the other outside of history. The avoidance of such dualism (or positively, the affirmation of the activity of the Spirit in the world) goes hand in hand with the rejection of the notion of the Spirit as a mere *dynamis*. Rather, it is a corollary to the full affirmation of the Spirit as a trinitarian person.

The 1980 article, "Die Erfahrung des Geistes", continues this critique of the metaphysical dualism that isolates the concept of spirit as "an inner, invisible thing", a "substance isolated totally from the bodily".³⁵ It is this dualism that makes it hard to speak of God as Spirit in contemporary Western culture. Against this the author posits the New Testament link between Holy Spirit and power, which in turns enables us to speak of the experience of the Spirit, and of a practical relationship of the human being to the Spirit. The author goes on to speak of a necessary link between experience and interpretation: "there is no experience that is not interpreted experience". We could ask, here, why

30. Aagaard, "Der Heilige Geist in der Welt", 106.

31. Aagaard, "Der Heilige Geist in der Welt", 108.

32. Aagaard, "Der Heilige Geist in der Welt", 118, n. 12.

33. Aagaard, "Der Heilige Geist in der Welt", 110.

34. Aagaard, "Der Heilige Geist in der Welt", 111.

35. Aagaard, "Die Erfahrung des Geistes," 11.

then make the Palamite distinction between Spirit and the dynamism or energy of the Spirit at all? The answer, it seems to me, is that to make no such distinction would lead to a reduction of the Spirit, to a subordination of the Spirit, that is to the very consequence Aagaard has worked so hard to avoid in all the writings discussed here.

To summarise: The significance of the 1987 article on Athanasius is that Aagaard locates the later Palamite distinction between God-in-Godself and God-for-us in Athanasius, and sees it as integral to Athanasius' working out of his own major concern, namely soteriology. Indirectly she answers two standard Western concerns about this distinction: about its supposed lack of patristic origins, and about its possible detrimental effects on soteriology. The dissertation moves from the area of patristics and applies the Palamite doctrine of God to the at the time very current discussion of missiology (and by extension, ecclesiology). Here Aagaard successfully explains both the achievements and the limitations of Western developments in missiology, both within Protestant and Roman Catholic thought, during the decade of the 1960s. The significance for us is that the limitations of Western missiology are traced back to an inadequate pneumatology, the suggested remedy for which is to take seriously the insights of the Orthodox, and specifically the Palamite, doctrine of God. Even to speak "economically" of the "proper work" (rather than an appropriated work), or in the plural of the "proper missions" indicates a departure from the traditional Western way of thinking. Where the 1967 article was concerned with christology, and the focus of the dissertation is missiology, we also see an emerging concern for pneumatology here. The two later essays focus on explicating the new pneumatology projected in the dissertation, the 1974 article in relation to eschatology and the reign of God, the 1980 article in relation to the Palamite theme of our experience of the Spirit. Both these articles seek to critique the unbiblical dualism that so easily asserts itself within Western theological discourse.

MICHAEL WELKER

Does Aagaard's use of Palamism as a theological resource end with her, or can it be seen to have influenced other scholars working in similar areas? If direct influence from Palamism has been rare, has there perhaps been some discernible indirect influence? One of the major recent contributors to the renewed discussion of pneumatology, and one who does not draw explicitly on Orthodox thought, has been Michael Welker.³⁶ I think Welker exemplifies an indirect influence of Palamism,

36. M. Welker, *God the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994). Welker's pneumatology bears a close relationship to that of Jürgen Moltmann, a scholar who, like Aagaard has

in this case through the work of Aagaard. Welker mentions Aagaard only twice,³⁷ but before we jump to the conclusion that these are minor and insubstantial references, and without wanting naively to attribute Welker's whole pneumatology to Aagaard, let us look closely at how Welker makes use of Aagaard's insights, bearing in mind always Aagaard's indebtedness to Orthodox theology. I shall focus on the two places where Aagaard is cited.

The final chapter of Welker's book *God the Spirit* opens up a major part of his argument for a more biblical (and therefore more worldly) understanding of the Spirit, as opposed to the metaphysical notion of Spirit that has dominated much of Western intellectual history, including theology. The passage is worth quoting in full:

The Western world has been shaped and defined by a spirit that exhibits another constitution, other interests, other goals, and other power structures than the Spirit of God. This spirit has also spread over the rest of the world. It has, for example, defined and regulated what counts as the essence of the human person, what counts as the ground of certainty, or what counts as meaningful interests in development and as meaningful forms of development for human beings and for cultures. The accepted conceptions of order, rule, reason, harmony, and peace are still dictated by this spirit, or at least are decisively influenced by it. They are, as that which is unquestioned and self-evident, unobtrusively inscribed in psyches, forms of thought, and constructions of "reality", inasmuch as this spirit asserts *itself* in all domains of life and experience.

In a manner that seems highly self-evident, this spirit acquires plausibility and trust and possesses an almost boundless power of expansion. Because this is the case, this spirit – whether it became explicitly recognisable or remained as an all-infusing medium underneath the threshold of consciousness – has been frequently confused with the Spirit of God.³⁸

This critique of the metaphysical concept of spirit was, as we have seen, also a major theme of Aagaard's, and her 1980 essay is cited by Welker as an authority on the need to separate the Aristotelian, metaphysical notion of spirit from the biblical understanding of Holy Spirit. Welker is incisive in his rejection of theological "hybrids", like the con-

drawn directly though not uncritically on Palamite sources. But Moltmann's influence on Welker is not primarily in the area of an openness to Orthodox thought. Moltmann's *The Spirit of Life: a Universal Affirmation* (London: SCM, 1992) appeared (in German) in 1991, the year before Welker's book, and the relationship between the two pneumatologies has been outlined helpfully and wittily by K. Blaser in the form of an imaginary conversation, "Immanente Transzendenz oder plurale Emergenz des Geistes?", in *Evangelische Theologie* 53 (1993) 566-76.

37. Welker, *God the Spirit*, 280, n. 1; 328, n. 80

38. Welker, *God the Spirit*, 279.

cept of spirit he finds in Rahner, that have “identified the spirit that dominates the Western world and the Spirit of God”.³⁹ Welker is taking up and developing a theme already mapped out by Aagaard. Like Aagaard, Welker is enabled to be highly critical, from within the Western theological tradition, of this tradition.

The second reference also takes up one of Aagaard’s central themes, her “well-placed critique”, as Welker calls it, of the tendency “constantly to degrade the Holy Spirit to an irrelevant, unknown entity of the metaphysical beyond”,⁴⁰ this time in connection with the idea of bodily resurrection.

It is difficult to grasp and render plausible how life can both be placed beyond the reach of death and nevertheless be resurrected *flesh*. It is difficult to grasp and render plausible how life can both be placed beyond the reach of historical relativising and nevertheless, through the Spirit, not only be contemporary to all times and all worlds, but also have repercussions for all times and all worlds. As a result, thought and imagination have often given up when confronted with this life and have banished it into an entirely removed “beyond” or into naked unbelievability.⁴¹

Aagaard has also, as we have seen, argued forcefully against the tendency to banish the Spirit to an “entirely removed beyond”, and her work has served to expose the sources of such tendencies within Western theology. Once again we find this critique developed Welker. Like Aagaard, Welker is at pains here and throughout his book to emphasise “the specific historical dimensions” of the Spirit’s actions in the world. Even more interesting, from our point of view, is Welker’s caution “against the false consequence of also permitting historical relativising of eternal life”.⁴² Without naming the Palamite distinction between God in Godself and God for us, Welker, like Aagaard, insists that the concrete historicity of God’s actions in the world do not imply the dissolution of the Spirit in the world. Indeed, the only way to protect the concreteness of these historical actions is precisely the acknowledgment that the Spirit is also, as a divine person, beyond our experience of the Spirit’s actions.

Aagaard is a theologian who works very much within the Western theological tradition. There is the proper concern for the liberation themes of much recent ecumenical theology emanating from WCC

39. Welker, *God the Spirit*, 280, n. 2. Referring to Rahner’s *Theological Investigations*, vols. 16 and 17, Welker comments “With regard to a substantive pneumatology, these volumes are astonishingly devoid of insight.”

40. M. Welker, *God the Spirit*, 328, n. 80, citing Aagaard, “Der Heilige Geist in der Welt”, 103.

41. Welker, *God the Spirit*, 328.

42. Welker, *God the Spirit*, 328, n. 80.

circles, and in this Aagaard's work may hold possibilities towards reconciliation of the tensions between Orthodox and Third World theologians that became especially apparent at the Canberra Assembly of the WCC in 1991. There is the rigorous biblical exegesis traditionally associated with Protestant thought, and the quest for a non-metaphysical, historical (or economic) understanding of the Trinity that we see in much of the newer work on trinitarian themes. There is the Lutheran affirmation *finitum capax infiniti*. But throughout these writings there is a constant awareness of the contemporary Orthodox corrective to traditional Western ways of doing theology. Aagaard goes beyond the "safe" strategem of referring back simply to a common patristic heritage. In particular, Aagaard does not shy away from drawing on the work of Gregory Palamas and his more recent followers and integrating them into her own theological endeavour. Contrary to a great deal of even current Western theological opinion which continues to see Orthodox theology as rather metaphysical, rather unbiblical, Aagaard has understood and used the Orthodox and specifically the Palamite doctrine of God as a way forward to this more adequate basis for a doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

The dialogue between Orthodox and Western theologians can serve at times to highlight issues within Orthodox theology. That Orthodox, and specifically Palamite theology can be used as a resource by Western theologians has been admirably demonstrated by Aagaard's work in pneumatology. In addition, I have argued that the influence of Orthodox theology is not always direct or obvious. Aagaard's work is not the sole or even the major source of Welker's pneumatology. Welker's intention is to recover, in the place of an abstract, metaphysical concept of spirit, a properly "theological" pneumatology, a means of access to the biblical Spirit of God. And indeed, this is also Aagaard's intention. The drawing on Orthodox theological resources is not, for her, an end in itself, but rather a means to a more adequate understanding of the activities of the Holy Spirit in the world. Because of its obvious success in doing just this, Welker can in turn draw on her work in the development of his own pneumatology.⁴³

43. I wish to express my gratitude to Prof. Aagaard for reading and commenting on the draft version of this paper. The paper was read at the AAR/SBL conference in New Orleans, November 1996, and I acknowledge with gratitude the financial support of the Australian Research Theology Foundation and St Barnabas College, Adelaide, in enabling me to attend.