

The Significance of Luther's Pneumatology for our Time (*Abstract*)

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Luther's pneumatology has been a missing link in Luther studies for hundreds of years. Luther scholars recognise in general that the publication of Rudolf Otto's dissertation *Die Anschauung vom Heiligen Geiste bei Luther* in 1989 was an important start. The author has investigated the significant literature of the development of interpretation on Luther's teaching of the Holy Spirit from Otto, E. Seeberg, R. Prenter, H. Gerdes, K.D. Schmidt, W.v. Loewenich, O. Rodenbergs, G. Ebeling and M. Plathow etc, to the papers in the conference of "Der Heilige Geist im Verständnis Luthers und der lutherischen Theologie" (1989) and "Der Heilige Geist" (1994).

This literature review shows the different emphases of the research findings and the debate among the scholars, i.e. according to Otto, Luther did not explain the work of the Holy Spirit from the perspective of godly causality (göttliche Kausalität), but of the empirical causality (empirische Kausalität) in panentheistic sense that the Holy Spirit as divine energy is immanent within all Creation. In this way Otto integrates the theoretical desire for knowledge (theoretisches Erkennenwollen) and religious need (religiöses Bedürfnis) for beating the deism of the 19th century. However Prenter criticized Otto's interpretation of Luther that the functions of the Holy Spirit were assumed to be those of the Word and of faith; and all concepts about the Holy Spirit as a transcendent cause of the new life seem completely superfluous. The concept of the Holy Spirit as such had no organic place in Luther's evangelical understanding of Christianity. In contrast to this Prenter proposed a "pneumatological realism" that the Holy Spirit is the Triune God personally present in our distress as spiritus creator who manifests Himself in the humanity of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the real, divine sphere in which Christ comes out of the remoteness of history and the realm of pure ideas and becomes living, present reality. Besides, although the discussions were not in unanimity about Luther's teaching on the Holy Spirit, it is clear that the pneumatology of Martin Luther is of great significance for understanding his "theology of the cross", for his teaching on "law and gospel", as well as on "justification and sanctification".

The author continues investigating Luther's writing, in particular the *Wider die himmlischen Propheten* (1525), *Ein Brief an die Christen zu Straßburg wider den Schwärmergeist* (1525), *Vom Abendmahl Christi* (1528), *Der große Katechismus* (1529), *Smalcald Articles* (1537), *Die drei Symbola oder Bekenntnis des Glaubens Christi* (1538), *Von den Konzilen und der Kirche* (1539), *Von den letzten Worten Davids*, (1543) and his sermons etc., and points out that Luther's pneumatology is inseparable from his theology of trinity, and was developed on the very foundation of his Christ-centred Christology. Luther is convinced that the Holy Spirit works "only" in the Word. As a result we know the Holy Spirit only through His work in the Word. This is the position of Luther in his context for condemning the Pope on the one hand, as he found the Christian holiness in the prescription of chasubles, tonsures, cowls, garb, food, festivals... countless other items of an external, bodily, transitory nature, not in the grace of Christ; and criticizing the enthusiasts on the other that they judge, interpret, and twist the Scripture or oral Word according to their pleasure as they have the Spirit apart from the prior contact with the Word. This so-called "Wortmonopolismus" of Luther is in fact a big problem to many theologians. Nevertheless Luther has never put the Holy Spirit subordinate to Christ, nor denied that the Holy Spirit Himself is immanent within all Creation. What he wants to say is, the Holy Spirit works in the Word of His free will. This is the self-limitation of the Holy Spirit, like God the Son limited Himself in the incarnation.