

**Zeitschrift:** Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie = Revue philosophique et théologique de Fribourg = Rivista filosofica e teologica di Friburgo = Review of philosophy and theology of Fribourg

**Band:** 43 (1996)

**Heft:** 3

**Artikel:** The spirit of John's Gospel : a Hegelian perspective

**Autor:** Viviano, Benedict T.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-761257>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 15.07.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

BENEDICT T. VIVIANO

## The Spirit in John's Gospel: A Hegelian Perspective

The gospel according to John offers a remarkable presentation and interpretation of the Christian faith, bold, deep, and in many ways original, not to say radically selective, despite its surface simplicity and occasional monotony. In particular, it makes its own specific contribution to the New Testament understanding of Jesus as Christ, viz., his preexistence and incarnate divinity,<sup>1</sup> as well as to the New Testament doctrine of the (Holy) Spirit.<sup>2</sup> Surveys of the biblical data on the Spirit commonly give pride of place to John's contribution as the culmination of biblical revelation on the subject.<sup>3</sup> For example, a recent study's relevant chapter is entitled «The Rich Pneumatology of John», contrasted with «The Discreet Pneumatology of Matthew» and «The Puzzling Pneumatology of the Book of Revelation.»<sup>4</sup> Yet in this century there have been remarkably few full exegetical studies of the Spirit in John, with the exception of the Paraclete texts.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, M.-E. BOISMARD, *Moses or Jesus?: An Essay in Johannine Christology* (Minneapolis 1993).

<sup>2</sup> The fullest recent study is by Felix PORSCHE, *Pneuma und Wort. Ein exegetischer Beitrag zur Pneumatologie des Johannesevangeliums*. (Frankfurter Theologische Studien 16; Frankfurt/M. 1974).

<sup>3</sup> E.g., H.B. SWETE, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament*, London 1909, pp. 129–168; TDNT 6.332–455 (KLEINKNECHT, BAUMGÄRTEL, BIEDER, SJÖBERG, SCHWEIZER); G.T. MONTAGUE, *The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition* (New York 1976), pp. 333–365; M.A. CHEVALLIER, *Souffle de Dieu: Le Saint-Esprit dans le Nouveau Testament*. Vol. 1: Ancien Testament, Hellenisme et Judaïsme – La Tradition Synoptique – L'oeuvre de Luc Vol. 2: Paul – Les écrits johanniques 1990. (Le Point Théologique 26; Paris 1978); Yves CONGAR, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3 vols. (New York/London 1983); IDEM, *The Word and the Spirit* (San Francisco/London 1986); Jürgen MOLTMANN, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (London 1992); Louis BOUYER, *Le Consolateur: Esprit-Saint et Vie de Grâce* (Paris 1980); R.E. BROWN, *Biblical Exegesis and Church Doctrine* (London 1985), pp. 101–113.

<sup>4</sup> MONTAGUE, *The Holy Spirit*, chaps. 24, 26, 27.

<sup>5</sup> «... die übrigen Pneuma-Aussagen des Evangeliums [werden] recht stiefmütterlich behandelt», PORSCHE, *Pneuma und Wort*, p. 4.

This paucity of investigations is not due to virtual unanimity on the understanding of Johannine pneumatology. After a lucid survey of the studies which have been made since 1900, Felix Porsch comes to the following conclusion and summary:

The survey shows that in the course of the history of interpretation regarding the nature, origin, unity and meaning of the Johannine view(s) of the *Pneuma* quite contradictory explanations have been given, which we can now once more present through key words:

The Johannine *Pneuma* is a further development of the Pauline pneumatology (Goguel, Simpson); it has hardly anything in common with the Pauline view (Büchsel); it is much rather a further development of the Spirit (Windisch); its origin lies in an «eschatological impasse», so that it should be seen as the result of the unfulfilled expectation of the Parousia (Scott, Simpson, Windisch, Barrett, Bultmann); the Spirit is no one other than the risen Christ himself, whose return he replaces (Scott, Bultmann, Schweizer); the view of the Spirit in the Farewell Discourses and in the rest of the gospel is not unified; it is a matter of two irreconcilable views. As a result the identification with the Paraclete is secondary (Scott, Windisch, Bultmann); the views are different but not opposite, so that the identification with the Paraclete can be original (Büchsel, Barrett, and the majority); the Spirit in John is not viewed as a person but as a power (Goguel, Bultmann); it is a person and not only a power (Büchsel, Schlier and the majority); in John the Spirit is no Spirit of the Sacrament (Büchsel, Bultmann, Schweizer), but the «power of the self-opening-up of God in the self-opening-up of Jesus, who has entered into his glory» and makes use of particular men and earthly means (sacraments) (Schlier).<sup>6</sup>

The following essay has no intention of being exhaustive, either in the sense of studying all of the Johannine texts which mention the Spirit,<sup>7</sup> or of addressing the problems raised in the survey just quoted. Its goal is rather to present the thesis that an important key to the right understanding of the Johannine Spirit texts is the Johannine doctrine of the Incarnation, that is, that in Jesus Christ the Word of God became flesh (John 1:14). The Word thereby entered into human history in a new and different way from previous forms of divine revelation. Yet this unique event

<sup>6</sup> PORSCH, *Pneuma und Wort*, pp. 13–14.

<sup>7</sup> MONTAGUE's inclusive list runs: John 1:24–34; 3:5–8.34; 4:10–14; 7:37–39; 19:33–34; Paraclete 14:15–18.25–26; 15:26–27; 16:4–11.12–15; 20:20–23; plus 1John 2:20.27; 4:1–6 (12).13; 5:6–10. Statistically *pneuma* occurs 24 times in the gospel, and 12 times in the Johannine letters, a total of 36 occurrences. *Parakletos* occurs 4 times in the gospel, once in the letters. For the purposes of this article, we will take John 1–20 as a literary whole, as a unity at least in its final form.

of incarnation, so far from being an isolated one, paradoxically also becomes a key to the interpretation of the manifold phenomena of human history.

In order to develop this thesis, we will make use of some insights derived from the philosopher G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831). The central concept of Hegel's philosophy is *Geist*, spirit.<sup>8</sup> It is likely that Hegel developed his understanding of Spirit through a study of John's gospel and particularly of its Spirit-texts.<sup>9</sup> One must keep in mind that Hegel was a seminarian at Tübingen for several years in the late eighteenth century and that he studied this gospel intensely.<sup>10</sup> But, one may reasonably wonder, did Hegel read his concept of the Spirit into John anachronistically (*eisegesis*), or did he actually discover the depth, richness and radicality of the Johannine doctrine which was always there in the text but repressed or ignored by more harmonizing traditional exegesis? In the latter case Hegel would have acted as a true exegete, one who helps others see some of the fullness of meaning present within the biblical text itself. It is a subsidiary thesis of this article that the latter is the case, that Hegel helps us to understand the fuller implications of the Johannine Spirit texts. But at the same time it will be seen how much Hegel has learned from John, how important that gospel has been in the formulation of some of his most characteristic and genial insights.<sup>11</sup>

Helpful as Hegel's philosophy may be in this respect, one cannot deny that it is also dated in some respects. Particularly suspect today are his pretensions to access to the divine mind, claims which can perhaps most charitably be understood as promotional exaggeration. Yet for John too the gift of the Spirit enables believers to share in the divine life, so that even here Hegel's boldness has a biblical foundation.

<sup>8</sup> «*Geist* is the ultimate Hegelian category, descriptive of that process of consciousness which encompasses finitude and sublates it, yet is itself intrinsically infinite. God is Spirit but so also is human being in the modality of finitude and differentiation. It is a term, moreover, that has both religious (representative) and philosophical (conceptual) connotations. Hegel can pass back and forth between these several referents of *Geist*», Peter C. HODGSON, in the Editor's Introduction to his translation of Hegel's «Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion» (AAR Texts and Translations Series 2); Missoula 1979, xxiv; IDEM, «Hegel's Approach to Religion», *Journal of Religion* 64 (1984) 158–172; see further A.M. OLSON, *Hegel and the Spirit: Philosophy as Pneumatology* (Princeton 1992).

<sup>9</sup> Hegel's three favorite biblical texts were 2Cor 3:6; John 4:24; 16:13, all of which speak of the Spirit. Hans KÜNG, *The Incarnation of God: An Introduction to Hegel's Theological Thought as Prolegomena to a Future Christology*, trans. J.R. Stephenson (New York 1987; orig. 1970), p. 423.

<sup>10</sup> H. KÜNG, *Incarnation*, pp. 30–58. Among his fellow seminarians were the poet Hölderlin and the philosopher Schelling.

<sup>11</sup> W.A. SCHULZE, «Das Johannevangelium im deutschen Idealismus», *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 18 (1964) 85–118; C.G. SCHWEITZER, «Geist bei Hegel und Heiliger Geist», *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 6 (1964) 318–328; Emilio BRITO, *La christologie de Hegel*, Paris 1983.



The young Hegel posed the problem of biblical historical positivity (that is, how can biblical accounts of certain past events have universal saving significance for people today), and in these early theological writings he made many explicit citations from John and the rest of the Bible.<sup>12</sup> But the mature Hegel forged the conceptual tools to help solve the problem of positivity. In our study of John therefore we will use primarily the great works of Hegel's maturity, even though these works contain fewer explicit biblical citations (with the exception of the third part of his *Philosophy of Religion*) than the early works.

The author of an article on the Spirit in Hegel has written that «Hegel knew more about the Holy Spirit than most of his interpreters grant, or probably more than most theologians of his or our time dare to know ... His whole system is stamped with faith in the Trinity.»<sup>13</sup>

Our article will treat the Prologue (I.), the principal Spirit texts in John 3–7 (II.) and then the Paraclete texts (III.).

### I.

Given our thesis that an important key to the understanding of the Spirit texts is the Johannine doctrine of the Incarnation, we will begin our study with the Prologue of the Gospel (1:1–18), even though this is not the obvious place to begin, since the Spirit is not mentioned in the Prologue. But important Johannine concepts are mentioned in the Prologue which later in the Gospel will be related to the evangelist's understanding of the Spirit. The governing concept of the Prologue is the Logos or Word (vv. 1 ter, 14). The words (*rêmata*) of Jesus are identified with the Spirit in John 6:63, but also in 3:34: «The one whom God sent [in context, this is Jesus] speaks the words (*rêmata*) of God, for he [almost certainly God] does not give the Spirit by measure.» The slide or shift from the plural *rêmata* to the singular Logos is part of a regular Johannine pattern.<sup>14</sup> The themes of life (1:4 bis) and flesh (1:14) are also linked with the Spirit in 6:63. The truth (1:14, 17) is joined to the Spirit as the Spirit of truth in 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1John 4:6; the identity is complete in 1John 5:6: «the Spirit is truth.» The other relevant theme in the Prologue is light (vv. 4, 5, 6, 8, 9). Curiously this theme is never brought directly into contact with the theme of Spirit in the Johannine literature. But since of their very nature these two themes, Spirit and light, have to do with the inner

<sup>12</sup> G.W.F. HEGEL, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T.M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1988; orig. Chicago 1948; based on Herman NOHL's *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften* (Tübingen 1907).

<sup>13</sup> C.G. SCHWEITZER, «Geist bei Hegel», p. 318.

<sup>14</sup> F.M. BRAUN, «La réduction du pluriel au singulier dans l'évangile et la première lettre de Jean», *NTS* 24 (1977) 40–67, esp. 41–44.

illumination of the person, and because each is associated with the other themes mentioned, we do not hesitate to relate them.

The great message of the Johannine doctrine of the Incarnation is that, just as the flesh, by itself, in isolation, is not of any value, but when joined to the Spirit, as inspirited flesh, it becomes the hinge of salvation (John 6:63 expressed with an allusion to Tertullian's pun, *cardo salutis est caro*), so too the Spirit by itself, in isolation, is of little interest, but when it takes on flesh and becomes incarnate Spirit, then it becomes the source of grace and truth, i.e., salvation, for believers. «From his fullness we have all received» (1:16). Through the gift of the Spirit (20:22; 19:34), believers share in the divine life mediated, given, won by Jesus the Word.

There is the danger of a Gnostic slide from the Spirit of Jesus, a divine Spirit, to the Spirit dwelling in human spirits (cf. 14:23), in such a way that humans become divine and have no further need of Jesus or his Spirit, their «divine spark» having been ignited.<sup>15</sup> But this danger, while real,<sup>16</sup> is held in check in the gospel as we have it, not only by the apostolic authority conferred in 21:15–19, but especially by the *menein* theme (e.g., 15:4–16),<sup>17</sup> as well as by tying the Paraclete so tightly to Jesus (14:26; 15:26; 16:13–15). The danger of a Gnostic or overly spiritual reading remains also in modern interpretation when the incarnation is not taken as the starting point for the understanding of John's peculiar doctrine of the Spirit.<sup>18</sup>

As the Word *became* flesh, so the Spirit *works* on the flesh, enlightening it and giving it life. This principle of the incarnation or inspirited flesh as the bearer of ultimate meaning and value in John can then become a universal hermeneutical key, the universal Spirit of God manifest-

<sup>15</sup> George MACRAE, «Gnosis in Messina», *CBQ* 28 (1966) 322–333, esp. p. 332; Ugo BIANCHI, ed., *The Origins of Gnosticism: Colloquium of Messina 1966* (Supplements to Numen 12; Leiden 1967). For another view, see Bentley LAYTON, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York 1987).

<sup>16</sup> It engendered the schism to which 1John is a reaction, according to R.E. BROWN, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York 1967); IDEM, ««Other Sheep Not of This Fold»: The Johannine Perspective on Christian Diversity in the Late First Century», *JBL* 97 (1978) 5–22; IDEM, *The Epistles of John* (AB 30; Garden City, NY 1982), esp. pp. 69–115.

<sup>17</sup> J. HEISE, *Bleiben: menein in den johanneischen Schriften* (Tübingen 1967); Edward MALATESTA, *Interiority and Covenant* (AnBib 69; Rome 1978); Ernst KÄSEMANN, *The Testament of Jesus* (Philadelphia 1968).

<sup>18</sup> One may think of R. BULTMANN's view of the Spirit as present primarily in the preached word as such an overly spiritual or insubstantial interpretation, though it be hedged with many nuances. See his *Theology of the New Testament* (New York 1955), 2. 88–92. See the impressive response to Bultmann by Heinrich SCHLIER, «Zum Begriff des Geistes nach dem Johannesevangelium», in his: *Besinnung auf das Neue Testament: Exegetische Aufsätze und Vorträge II* (Freiburg 1967), pp. 264–271; orig. in: FS Josef Schmid (Regensburg 1963), pp. 233–239.

ing itself in and acting through particular persons and events. This is what Hegel saw and developed in his philosophy of history. What mattered was not the abstract nor the individual particular by itself, but the concrete or immanent universal.

Die Vereinigung des Allgemeinen, an und für sich Seienden überhaupt und der Einzelheit, des Subjectiven, – daß sie allein die Wahrheit sei, dies ist spekulativer Natur und wird in dieser allgemeinen Form in der Logik abgehandelt.<sup>19</sup>

The union of universal abstract existence generally with the individual – the subjective – that this alone is truth, belongs to the department of speculation, and is treated in this general form in logic.<sup>20</sup>

On the same page Hegel makes clear that this «universal abstract existence» united to the individual is that reason which governs the world and gives history its intelligibility and its universal philosophical meaning. A few pages earlier Hegel had argued «that this idea or reason is the true, the eternal, the absolutely powerful essence; that it reveals itself in the world, and that in that world nothing else is revealed but this and its honor and glory.»<sup>21</sup> Hegel is here clearly speaking about God in the form of Spirit, «the energizing power realizing» God's aim in history, which became incarnate in Jesus and is then carried on by the gift of his Spirit, as in the period before Christ the Spirit was active as the Spirit of prophecy.

That the union of abstract and individual is «alone the truth», Hegel develops in an earlier work, in the terse slogan «Das Wahre ist das Ganze» – «The truth is the whole».<sup>22</sup> We can unpack this lapidary formula as follows: The only thing which enjoys complete reality is the totality of interlocking social relationships. What else can this be than the totality of human history as brought to its completion and to its goal as comprehended in and by the divine mind? Hegel immediately goes on:

The whole, however, is merely the essential nature reaching its completeness through the process of its own development. Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a result, that only at the end is it what it is in very truth.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> G.W.F. HEGEL, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, erste Hälfte, Band I: *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg 1955), p. 87.

<sup>20</sup> G.W.F. HEGEL, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York 1956), p. 25. The phrase «the immanent universal» occurs also in Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. v. Miller (Atlantic Heights, NJ 1990), p. 36.

<sup>21</sup> HEGEL, *Weltgeschichte*, p. 29; Eng. trans., p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> G.W.F. HEGEL, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg 1952), p. 21; IDEM, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie (New York 1967), p. 81.

<sup>23</sup> *Phänomenologie*, p. 21; Eng. trans., p. 81–82.

All this is Hegel's justification to Greek metaphysics of the peculiar narrative mode of discourse of much of biblical revelation, whether this narrative mode be historical or legendary or even mythical.<sup>24</sup> Classical Greek metaphysics only found the meaningful in what was timeless (i.e., eternal), universal and necessary, i.e., precisely what was not historical (i.e., timebound) or particular or accidental-contingent. For it, *scientia non est de individuis*, that is, true science did not concern itself with individual examples of a species, e.g., the individual horse Bucephalus, but only of statements about horses which would hold true for all horses everywhere at all times. To such a view the biblical emphasis on events like the Exodus or the Crucifixion could make no ultimate sense. But once one is enabled, by this insight into John 1:14; 6:63, to see in such events the work of the Spirit of God (itself universal, eternal, necessarily free and reason supreme), the link between such events and the desiderata of Greek metaphysics was established. The way was now opened to the construction of a Christian philosophy which was faithful to the dominant accents of the Bible itself. History, rather than nature, became the chief dialogue partner of theology.<sup>25</sup> This is Hegel's achievement (prepared for by Vico and Herder),<sup>26</sup> as far as Christian theology is concerned, and Jewish as well (Franz Rosenzweig for example).

This problem, the positivity of the Christian religion, haunted Hegel from his earliest days as a theological student and provided the title for one of his first theological essays (1795/6).<sup>27</sup> Though the problem was posed by the whole Enlightenment, from English deism onward, it undoubtedly came to Hegel in the acute formulation by G.E. Lessing: «How these two religions, the religion of Christ and the Christian religion, can exist in Christ in one and the same person, is inconceivable.»<sup>28</sup> (Lessing wrote this in 1780, the year before he died.) The point of Lessing's antithesis could be expressed in terms of «the Jesus of History» versus «the Christ of faith», that is, between historical factuality or positivity and the creed of a universal faith. Hegel turns this antithesis on its head by find-

<sup>24</sup> On myth and the Bible, see my remarks in «The Genres of Matthew 1–2», *RB* 97 (1990) 31–53, esp. pp. 44–50. (There are major exceptions to this predominant narrative genre in the biblical canon, for example, laws, prophecy, hymns of praise and lamentation, epistles, and especially the wisdom literature. Yet most of these alternative genres are related to historical [in the broad sense] events and concrete original circumstances. Even the wisdom literature contains narrative elements: e.g., the narrative framework of Job; the survey of Israelite history in Sirach 44–50; the retelling of the Exodus story in a Hellenistic style devoid of proper names in Wisdom 9:18–19:22.).

<sup>25</sup> Louis RUMPF e.a., *Hegel et la théologie contemporaine: L'absolu dans l'histoire* (Neuchâtel 1977), pp. 7–9.

<sup>26</sup> Isaiah BERLIN, *Vico and Herder* (New York 1978).

<sup>27</sup> HEGEL, *Early Theological Writings*, (see note 12), pp. 67–181.

<sup>28</sup> G.E. LESSING, *Theological Writings*, trans. Henry Chadwick (London 1956).



ing in the Prologue (John 1:14) the universal in the particular. Not for nothing is this verse of the gospel, which is by definition a narrative of the particular details of the life of the founder of a religion (for Hegel *the* absolute religion) also the central clause of the Nicene creed: *Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine, et homo factus est*. (This clause is weakly translated in the current official American version in a way which leaves out any explicit mention of the incarnation or enfleshment: «by the power of the Holy Spirit he was *born* of the Virgin Mary, and became man.» The incarnation thus becomes the key to the philosophical intelligibility of history. It is easy to understand why one commentator has remarked: «As a matter of fact a distinct and central aspect of Hegel's philosophy is nothing other than an exegesis of the Johannine text, «And the Word was made flesh.»»<sup>29</sup> For example, in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Hegel says:

In the Nicene Council (A.D. 325), was ultimately established a fixed confession of faith, to which we still adhere: this confession had not, indeed, a speculative *form*, but the profoundly speculative is most intimately inwoven with the manifestation of Christ himself. Even in John (1:14) we see the commencement of a profounder comprehension. The profoundest thought is connected with the personality of Christ – with the historical and external; and it is the very grandeur of the Christian religion that, with all this profundity, it is easy of comprehension by our consciousness in its outward aspect, while at the same time, it summons us to penetrate deeper. It is thus adapted to every grade of culture, and yet satisfies the highest requirements.<sup>30</sup>

But what is the link between the Logos of John 1:1–14 and the *pneuma*, which John will call the Spirit of truth (John 14:17; 15:26), thereby identifying or at least linking the Spirit with Christ (who identifies himself as the truth in John 14:6)? What is the transition from Logos to *pneuma*? Hegel explains it this way:

But reason [Logos] in its truth is spirit which is higher than merely positive reason, or merely intuitive understanding. It is the negative, that which constitutes the quality alike of dialectical reason and of understanding; it negates what is simple [the thesis], thus positing the specific difference of the understanding [the antithesis]; it equally resolves it and is thus dialectical [the synthesis]. But it does not stay in the nothing of this result but in the result is no less positive, and in this way has restored what was at first simple, but as a universal which is within itself

<sup>29</sup> L. von RENTHE-FINK, *Geschichtlichkeit* (Göttingen 1964), p. 25, cited in H. KÜNG, *The Incarnation of God*, p. 387.

<sup>30</sup> *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, ed. Georg Lasson (Hamburg 1923, repr. 1968), p. 743; Eng. trans. Sibree, p. 331. Hegel wrote a commentary on the Prologue in his youth but it does not contain his major insight; it was more a learning experience. See H. NOHL, pp. 306–8; HEGEL, *Early Theological Writings*, pp. 256–9.



concrete; a given particular is not subsumed under this universal but in this determining, this positing of a difference, and the resolving of it, the particular has already determined itself. This spiritual movement ... the immanent development of the Notion [Begriff] ... is the absolute method of knowing and at the same time is the immanent soul of the content itself.<sup>31</sup>

Here Hegel, like John, explicitly links (or even identifies) the Logos with Spirit. But he then makes a bold move. He understands the Spirit as the inner motive force of history which includes a negative element. This negative element or moment need not be understood morally, as evil or sin. In context (a discussion of the dynamics of the syllogism in logic), it suffices to understand it as a contradiction (real or apparent) to the first moment or premise, a contradiction eventually to be resolved in a higher synthesis. This synthesis involves the simultaneous cancellation (on one level) and preservation (on another level) of the two preceding moments, the celebrated Hegelian *Aufhebung*, whose standardized translation is now «sublation». But Hegel then makes the movement of the syllogistic dialectic the basis for the understanding of history, where this «immanent development of the *Begriff*» is said to be both a (logical) method and the content of historical reality.

Implicit in this passage is also a certain return to the starting point in a new and better way («has restored what was at first simple»), a theme which had already appeared in the *Phenomenology*.<sup>32</sup> Its Johannine basis is the descent-ascent or katabasis-anabasis pattern which occurs frequently in the gospel (1:32–33.51; 3:13; 6:33.38.41.42.50.51.58.62; 21:17). This pattern was turned into an exitus-redditus (going forth-turning back) pattern by later theology of an originally neo-Platonic color, but the basic idea remains the same, viz., that salvation consists of a revealer going forth or emanating or descending from God in heaven; once having delivered the saving revelation and thereby ignited the divine spark in receptive souls, the revealer returns to heaven. In John the revealer is obviously Jesus, but Jesus himself in John says that he must depart in order for the Spirit to be sent. The Spirit continues the mission of Jesus and «leads» believers «into all truth» (John 16:7.13; cf. 7:39). In other words, the movement in John may be compared to a «great circle route» in which first Jesus and then his Spirit are sent forth to lead be-

<sup>31</sup> HEGEL, *Science of Logic*, p. 28.

<sup>32</sup> HEGEL, *Phänomenologie*, Preface, paragraph 29; Baillie trans., p. 90. There Hegel speaks of the «long and laborious journey» (p. 88) as a «rounded and concrete whole» and insists that «every moment is necessary». He adds that only «because the universal mind at work in the world (*Weltgeist*) has had the patience to go through these forms in the long stretch of time's extent, and to take upon itself the prodigious labour of the world's history ... could [it] ever manage to become conscious of itself.» Cf. Xavier TILLIETTE, *Le Christ de la philosophie* (Cogitatio fidei 155; Paris 1990), pp. 143–4.

lievers back to eternal life. Whether this circle is conceived vertically or horizontally makes little difference. The main point, for Hegel as for John, is that the Spirit, present within us (John 14:17), guides or leads us to all truth, moves us toward the goal of life and all history, and thereby gives meaning or saving significance to the whole process.

## II.

The gospel of John is customarily divided into the Prologue, and then two halves: chaps. 1:19–12:50, and chaps. 13:1–20:31, plus the appendix which is chap. 21. The Spirit texts in the first great half are concentrated in chaps. 3–7. (We pass over the Spirit given to Jesus at his baptism in 1:32–33, except to note that Jesus is there given the task to baptize believers with the holy Spirit [see further 3:22; 4:1–2; 20:22].)

We begin with the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus in chap. 3, and there concentrate on v. 8:

*to pneuma hopou thelei pnei kai tên phonên autou akoueis, all'ouk oidas pothen erchetai kai pou hypagei; houtôs estin pas ho gegennêmenos ek tou pneumatos.* – The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit (NAB).

The verse begins with a Johannine pun: *pneuma* means both wind and spirit (and breath). The verse is a figure of the nature of Spirit and its paradoxical character. The Spirit, it says, is invisible yet perceptible, apparently weak yet often forceful to the point of violence, unpredictable in its movements, mysterious in its origin and destiny; in its contextual link with birth here it is also a symbol of the breath of life. But, above all, the figure suggests that the Spirit is free, supremely free, as are those «born» of it.

Now the question may be put: what does a link of the Spirit with the Incarnation (1:14) and Hegel's historical philosophy add to our understanding of this verse? First, in the immediate context we may note a link with embodiment. Verse 12 reads: «If I tell you about earthly things (*epigeia*) and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?» Jesus and Nicodemus have been talking about rebirth in water and Spirit. The implication of v. 12, according to most commentators,<sup>33</sup> is that the Spirit (as involved in the rebirth) belongs to the *epigeia*, earthly things. (The «heavenly things» then refer to the Son of man who descends and ascends from heaven, mentioned in the following

<sup>33</sup> E.g., H. B. SWETE, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 133: «The spiritual birth is from above, but it takes place on earth (*epigeia*) and belongs to the facts of daily life»; Rudolf SCHNAKKENBURG, *The Gospel according to St. John* (New York 1968), vol. 1, p. 377; R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel according to John* (AB 29; Garden City, NY 1966), vol. 1, p. 132.

verses [vv. 13–14].) Now this surprising way of regarding the Spirit (not as material – that is not said [cf. 1Cor 15:44] – but as belonging within the earthly world) is not conceded by everyone. John 3:31 could be used against it, and Rudolf Bultmann, *Gospel of John* (Philadelphia: Westminster 1971, p. 149), takes epigeia as indicating the «meaningless situation of man», not «the new life mediated by the spirit». But if we took 1:14 as our starting point, along with Hegel's view of its significance, then we would incline to the majority view on the epigeia of v. 12. Once this position is secured, it then becomes more probable than ever to understand v. 8 as referring to a Spirit working within human beings who have been «born again», that is, as an enfleshed or incarnate Spirit (1:14; 6:63) at work in the world. To be sure, there is a mixture of metaphors in v. 8: first the Spirit is compared to a wind blowing through leaves (but external to them), then it is (less clearly) likened to the breath of life in a newborn child (that is, a spirit *within* the person). Since he is speaking figuratively, the evangelist probably intends to say that the divine Spirit works in the world both externally and internally, that is, in individuals as well as in whole societies. All of the above tends to justify a reading of v. 8 in terms of the incarnation in 1:14.

As for Hegel, we have already seen that he emphasizes the Spirit as a force working in history, that is, in individuals and societies. Now we can take note of two other dimensions of his thought which are related to John 3:8. The first is this. The central thesis of Hegel's philosophy of history is that human history is essentially the story of humanity's quest for freedom. It is the story of liberty.<sup>34</sup> This is the crimson thread which Hegel traces through the succeeding epochs of world history, the Oriental world, the Greek, the Roman, and the German. For him the Greek world is the region of Spirit par excellence, while history culminates in the German world as the principle of spiritual freedom. For Hegel this quest for freedom (however he defines it) is the process of the Absolute Spirit working itself out in and through the historical peoples and cultures of the world and in and through their outstanding personalities. To be sure, Hegel does not base this overall view exclusively on John 3:8 (though he does discuss the verse in his early theological writings).<sup>35</sup> But, once his Johannine pneumatic inspiration is clear, John 3:8, which most vividly teaches the extraordinary freedom of the Spirit, is the natural place to locate the source of his emphasis on this aspect of the spirit's operation.

This Johannine verse also helps to explain another of Hegel's themes in his philosophy of history, a theme which amounts to a corollary of the preceding one, viz., the Spirit as the quest for freedom and as itself supremely free. The theme is this: when we study history, we notice that

<sup>34</sup> HEGEL, *Philosophy of History*, pp. 41, 456.

<sup>35</sup> NOHL, *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften*, pp. 79–80.

there are shifts of leadership from one historical people to another, that each in turn has its golden age, its moment in the sun: China, India, Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Judaea, Greece, Rome, and so on. This is the pageant of history. But it has a negative side, viz., that when the golden age is past a culture can sink into mediocrity for a long time. Worse still, the changes involve wars and other catastrophes which leave civilizations in ruins. This is the terror of time, of history.<sup>36</sup> The world is so constituted, with humans endowed with freedom of moral choice, that this cannot be entirely avoided. But it can be made intelligible, saved from mere random fatality and caprice, and that is already some consolation. This is what Hegel attempts to do in his *Philosophy of History* which concludes:

That the history of the world, with all the changing scenes which its annals present, is this process of development and the realization of Spirit – this is the true theodicy, the justification of God in history. Only this insight can reconcile Spirit with the history of the world – viz., that what has happened, and is happening every day, is not only not «without God», but is essentially his work.<sup>37</sup>

In other words, the intelligibility of history is to be found in the free movement of the Spirit, which «blows where it wills».

Our discussion of the freedom of the Spirit imaged in John 3:8 is also the moment to mention another central characteristic emphasis of Hegel's philosophy as opposed to earlier philosophies. His *Phenomenology of Spirit* is obsessed, from one end to the other, but especially in the Preface, with the dynamic as opposed to the static, with being in movement, with *fieri* (becoming) rather than *esse* (being), with process and development. For Hegel, being was dead, becoming was alive. From the point of view of traditional metaphysics, it would have been better (because it would have avoided a confusing shift in terminology) to say: essence is static, existence (*esse*) and therefore being (*ens*) are dynamic.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps Hegel can be excused on the grounds that his project was so new that he needed to exaggerate to make his point. His project was to take time seriously, to insert motion into the very heart of being, to recognize that species evolve.<sup>39</sup> However that all may be, for our purpose it suffices to point out that in his titanic project, he was inspired not only by John 1:14 but also by the free movement of the Spirit as figured in John 3:8.

Our exegesis of John 3:8 may be summarized as follows. The Spirit there described figuratively belongs with the world and within individuals as an incarnate agent of God and Christ operating within the historical

<sup>36</sup> See the classic presentation of time in Mircea ELIADE, *Cosmos and History: the Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York 1955).

<sup>37</sup> LASSON ed., p. 938; Sibree trans., p. 457.

<sup>38</sup> KÜNG, *Incarnation*, pp. 382–390.

<sup>39</sup> HEGEL, *Phenomenology*, pp. 157–8, 202.



process. As supremely free, the Spirit enables redeemed humanity to move toward greater freedom (cf. John 8:32–36). The Spirit's activity in the life of the church (as the community of the Spirit) and especially in the life of the saints (those who most perfectly and heroically correspond to the guidance and promptings of the Spirit) provides the intelligibility of the historical process with all its vicissitudes and agonies, and, when that process has been completed, will be seen to have provided its moral justification. The help of Hegel in reaching these conclusions is obvious, but these conclusions are, we suggest, inherent in the text of the gospel itself. That the Spirit in 3:8 is a dynamic force at work in the world is beyond question.

We now turn to another Johannine Spirit text dear to Hegel.

God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth (John 4:24).

This statement on the nature of true worship in general comes between one related to baptism (3:8) and one related to the eucharist (6:63). Modern commentators are agreed on two things. 1. «God is Spirit» is not an essential definition, but a description of God's dealing with humans; cf. the parallels «God is light» (1John 1:5) and «God is love» (1John 4:8). Spirit in John connotes the realm of ultimate reality, more abundant life. 2. The statement on worship is not meant to rule out rites or sacraments which make use of material things such as water, wine, bread, oil, but rather refers to the transcendent personal media by which we approach the worship of God. (Note that humanity's need to worship someone higher than itself is simply presupposed.) Beyond this consensus, we may add that right worship for John is virtually Trinitarian or triadic. There is a God, the text says, and he has two saving agents in the world: the Son, identified in 14:6 with the truth, and the Spirit which the Son will breathe on the disciples in 20:22. The Spirit is later said to be the Spirit of truth, that is, the Son (14:17; 15:26; 16:13). Some commentators are tempted to see in the formula «in Spirit and truth» a hendiadys, that is, something like «in a truthful Spirit» but this seems to ignore the independent, person-like activity of the Paraclete in 16:8. It seems better therefore to take our passage in the sense: «must worship in the Spirit and Jesus» or «in the Spirit of Jesus as Son.»<sup>40</sup>

What further light does Hegel shed on this verse? First of all, as we said at the outset, Hegel is the only major philosopher to make Spirit the central category of his whole philosophical system. This Johannine verse is one of the sources of his philosophical option for Spirit. Now, thanks to his option, his entire system is an exploration and illustration of the

<sup>40</sup> SCHNACKENBURG, John, vol. 1, pp. 438–9; Ignace de LA POTTERIE, *La Vérité dans Saint Jean* (AnBib 74; Rome 1977), pp. 673–706.



many-sided fruitfulness and creative possibilities of this category of Spirit.

Second, we may note a polemical use of this category against forms of religion which are predominantly sentimental, religions of the «heart», since for Hegel Spirit is closely associated with truth, reason, intellect, Word, the Absolute, God. In the scintillating preface to his *Philosophy of Right* he says:

By the simple family remedy of ascribing to feeling the labor ... of reason and its intellect, all the trouble of rational insight and knowledge directed by speculative thinking is of course saved. On this point, Goethe's Mephistopheles ... says something like this ...: «Do but despise intellect and knowledge, the highest of all man's gifts, and thou hast surrendered thyself to the devil and to perdition art doomed.» ... Such sentiments assume even the guise of piety... But if it is piety of the right sort, it sheds the form of this emotional religion so soon as it leaves the inner life, enters upon the daylight of the Idea's development and revealed riches, and brings with it, out of its inner worship of God, reverence for law and for an absolute truth exalted above the subjective form of feeling.<sup>41</sup>

Hegel's translator here, T.M. Knox, comments:

The piety which Hegel attacks (Schleiermacher is sometimes in his mind) is that which regarded the world as God-forsaken and which exalts the sanctities of inner conviction above the wickedness of the world. It forgets, Hegel holds, that God reveals himself *in* the world, in nature and history. Piety of the right sort worships God not as an abstract «supreme being», but as a loving and self-revealing spirit. Such piety is at home in the world and is reconciled to it, because it has faith that, since the world is the revelation of God, reason must be immanent in it as its law and essential principle.<sup>42</sup>

Of course Hegel does not mean to exclude feelings, emotions, the «heart» altogether. They are for him part of human nature and of religious expression. But he registers his protest against the predominantly sentimental theories of religion which abounded in the Romantic era in which he lived and which tended to deny the doctrinal truth within Christianity, just as he protested against the reduction of religious reality to morality in the eighteenth century.

In another place Hegel incorporates an explicit reference to John 4:24:

Truth must surely come to humans at first in an external way, as a sensuously imagined, present object; as Moses glimpsed God in the burning bush (Exodus 3:2), and as the Greeks brought to their consciousness

<sup>41</sup> HEGEL, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford 1952), p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> HEGEL, *Philosophy of Right*, p. 300.

through marble statues and other representations. People however do not and should not remain at this external stage – either in religion or in philosophy. Such an imaginative form or historical content (like Christ) should become a spiritual [form-content] for the [human] Spirit; thus it ceases to be an external one, for the external stage is spiritless. We should recognize God in Spirit and in truth (John 4:34). God is the universal, the absolute, the essential Spirit. The Spirit is the true miracle, against the Spirit of nature. The Spirit is only the understanding of itself. It is only one spirit, the universal, divine Spirit – not that it is only everywhere.<sup>43</sup>

The point of all this is simply that Hegel opposes a merely external, «fleshly», childish approach to higher truths, especially religious ones. He struggles for the personal, inner conviction of and participation in these truths by intellectually free and mature people. This interpretation is not far from the normal exegetical understanding of this verse in its context, and differs primarily by the use of the external versus internal polarity.

We may briefly refer to a few other Johannine Spirit texts. We have already noted the crucial verse John 6:63 in our consideration of the Prologue, as the key to understanding 1:14. Here we may reconsider it in its context.

*to pneuma estin to zôopoïoun, hê sarx ouk ôphelei ouden: ta rêmata ha egô lelalêka hymin pneuma estin kai zôê estin.* – It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh [taken by itself] is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

These words come towards the end of the bread of life discourse, the longest chapter in the fourth gospel and doubtless of great importance to the evangelist, given his thorough development of it. It is common to interpret this discourse on two levels or to divide it into two parts, one taking the bread from heaven in the sense of the revelation which Jesus brings (vv. 26–50, this is the sapiential register), the other taking the bread as eucharistic (vv. 51–59, this is the sacramental register). The chapter can be read as a cascade of divine life into the world – from rock to rock so to speak: the Father sends the Son, the Son sends the Spirit, the Spirit prolongs the saving incarnation of the Son through enlightening believers as to the meaning of Jesus' words and works (miraculous signs) and sacraments in a community of faith and love till he leads them back to the Father. The sacrament of the eucharist, bread and wine as somehow the flesh and blood of Jesus which believers must consume in order to share in eternal life, provides Hegel with a further opportunity to display

<sup>43</sup> HEGEL, Werke, ed. H. Glockner, Jubiläumsausgabe, vol. 17, p. 106. Cf. Emilio BRITO, «Jn 4,24 dans l'oeuvre de Hegel», in: *The Four Gospels 1992* (F. Neirynck FS) (BETL 100; Leuven 1992), 3.2463–2476.

the explanatory power of his idea of the concrete universal. Hegel rejected the Catholic way of describing-locating the eucharistic mystery as transubstantiation and did so with coarse polemic at times.<sup>44</sup> But he held firmly to eucharistic realism through the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation and that suffices for minimal Christian orthodoxy at least in the view of E.H. Schillebeeckx.<sup>45</sup>

On the feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, the Johannine Jesus stood up and exclaimed, «Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as scripture says: «Rivers of living water will flow from within him.»» He said this in reference to the Spirit that those who came to believe in him were to receive (John 7:37–39). This passage confirms the interpretation of the waters «welling up to eternal life» in John 4:14 as the Spirit in the heart of the believer. The textual «*ek tês koilias autou*, from within him», if taken as referring to believers, reenforces Hegel's insistence throughout his works on the necessity of an internal principle within the person if religion is to go beyond a dead extrinsicism. (The reference to scripture in the text does not refer to an exact quotation from a particular biblical passage but refers in a general way to passages like Exod 17:6; Num 20:11; Ezek 47:1; Zech 14:8; Pss 78:16; 105:41.)

### III.

The four texts in the gospel of John (the reference in 1John 2:1 is not relevant) which speak of the Paraclete the Spirit of truth have been much studied.<sup>46</sup> Not all exegetical problems have been solved. For our pur-

<sup>44</sup> Franz WIEDMANN, *Hegel* (New York 1968), pp. 92–3; L.S. STEPELEVICH, «Hegel and the Lutheran Eucharist», *Heythrop Journal* 27 (1986) 262–274.

<sup>45</sup> HEGEL, *Philosophy of History*, p. 390; *The Christian Religion*, pp. 270–276; E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Christ the Sacrament of Encounter with God* (New York 1963), 5.3, pp. 229–243.

<sup>46</sup> Since the literature on the Paraclete is quite extensive, we will not attempt to list it all but, besides the works cited in notes 2 and 3, we will only list one recent article, a recent survey and several book length studies that harvest the earlier bibliography: Christian DIETZFELBINGER, «Paraklet und theologischer Anspruch im Johannesevangelium», *ZThK* 82 (1985) pp. 389–408. Frédéric MANNS, «Le Paraclet dans l'évangile de Jean», chap. 17 in his: *L'Evangile de Jean à la lumière du Judaïsme* (SBF Analecta 33; Jerusalem 1991), pp. 339–381; Otto BETZ, *Der Paraklet* (AGSU 2; Leiden 1963); George JOHNSTON, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John* (SNTS MS; 2; Cambridge 1970); Eskil FRANCK, *Revelation Taught: The Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel* (Lund 1985); G.M. BURGE, *The Anointed Community* (Grand Rapids MI 1987). Authors like O. Betz and F. Manns provide a rich and suggestive background of the Johannine Paraclete theme in the idea of intercessor (angelic and human) in early Judaism and Qumran. This material is important for a full understanding of the Johannine concept, yet it was not available to Hegel, who makes his own contribution. Given our focus, we will not go into this background, interesting though it be. Other recent studies (e.g., Dietzfelbinger) stress that the

poses it will suffice to give an orderly presentation of the texts and then to note the Hegelian penetration of their wider meaning. First, the title Paraclete is not completely perspicacious. But there exists a large consensus today that it should be translated Advocate, with connotations both lawyerly and religious. The religious meaning is to be sought in the early Christian *paraclesis*, i.e., intercession (through prayer and pleading both legal and extralegal) and encouragement (comfort).

Second, we may note a certain development in the four passages. The first three are short: 14:16–17; 14:6; 15:26–27. The last (16:7–15) is longer and may be deemed most important (certainly Hegel thought so). The first can be read as an introduction and brief description of the Paraclete. The other three can be understood as listing the various functions or activities of the Paraclete.

Let us now take them up one by one. «I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you (*meth'hymôn*) always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you (*par'hymîn*) and will be in you (*meth'hymôn*)» (14:16–17). We note first that this introductory presentation of the Paraclete established its relationship to God the Father and to Christ. The twice repeated *meth'hymôn* («with you», lost in the English translations) is arranged to create an *inclusio*. The *meth'hymôn* derives from the covenant formulary common in the Hebrew Scriptures as well as in, e.g., Matthew.<sup>47</sup> Its full form runs: «I will be your God and you will be my people.» Abbreviated forms are «I will be *with you*», and the like. So here the Advocate is said to function as the *Deus praesens* of the Old Testament, God present with his people to save them. By immediately describing the Paraclete as the Spirit of truth and by calling him «another Paraclete» the text also establishes a link with Christ, who is presupposed to be the first Paraclete (this is said explicitly in 1John 2:1) and who is identified with the truth in 14:6. Next, we note that the Paraclete is invisible to the world (and not only to the world, 3:8), and hence remains rather mysterious and illusive. Nevertheless, his permanent presence (*menei; eis ton aiôna*) is promised to the believers. Finally, he will abide not only alongside them but also in them (this translation of *meth'hymôn* is not wholly unjustified). That means that believers enjoy an interior, experiential, creative, and, we may hazard,

Paraclete functioned as the legitimation and guarantee of the peculiar post-Pascal tradition of the Johannine school. This emphasis comes closer to Hegel's own insights but he characteristically places it in a larger framework.

<sup>47</sup> Rudolf SMEND, *Die Bundesformel* (Theologische Studien 68; Zürich 1963); Klaus BALTZER, *The Covenant Formulary* (Philadelphia 1971); D.J. MCCARTHY, *Old Testament Covenant* (Richmond VA 1972); Hubertus FRANKEMÖLLE, *Jahwe-Bund und Kirche Christi* (NTAb 10b; Münster 1984).



mystical principle of divine life and help within them (cf. 14:23). So much then for the initial description.

«The Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name – he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you» (14:26). With this verse begins the list of the Paraclete's functions. The Paraclete will be first (and last, 16:13) a teacher, a teacher of totality (*panta*, everything). As such, he will provide believers with a kind of on-going, progressive magisterium or teaching authority. This is a provision for the future, when Jesus is no longer with them in his earthly ministry. Yet the evangelist, mindful of the danger of a drifting off into a Gnosticism which is no longer bound to the message and work of the historical Jesus, next insists that the Paraclete will operate as a reminder of that message. His teaching office will be rooted in a historical past, and not act out of pure speculative creativity. It will consist in deeper reflection on and new insights into what has already happened. (This is how the evangelist himself works and writes his gospel. It is also exactly how Hegel understands the task of philosophy, to interpret the past, to *understand* history.)<sup>48</sup>

«When philosophy paints its grey in grey, then has a shape of life grown old. By philosophy's grey in grey it cannot be rejuvenated but only understood. The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk.» The evangelist would not agree that the Spirit cannot rejuvenate, but he does state that the Spirit cannot come until Jesus has gone to the Father.

«When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. And you also testify» (15:26–27a). The third function of the Paraclete is as a witness, and believers share in this office. The theme of testimony or witnessing is a primordial one in the fourth gospel and is bound up with other basic themes like belief and mission.<sup>49</sup> For Johannine theology, bearing witness means not speaking on one's own authority but saying what one has seen and heard; saying the words of the sender. The continuity of the various testimonies in the gospel must be guaranteed. John is ultimately concerned by means of all testimonies to demonstrate their foundation in God's own truth and truthfulness. The disciples' testimony is legitimate insofar as it is informed by the Spirit of truth.

The last Paraclete text is too long to quote in full (John 16:7–15). It speaks of the Paraclete's function as judge and convicter or prosecutor, one might almost say, as prosecuting attorney. This is the fourth function

<sup>48</sup> HEGEL, *Philosophy of Right*, Preface, p. 13.

<sup>49</sup> Johannes BEUTLER, *Martyria: Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Zeugnisthema bei Johannes* (Frankfurt 1972); E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Christ* (New York 1980), pp. 309–312.



in our analysis and it is only conceivable if the Spirit is an acting person. This function also has the advantage of including in the work of the Spirit a moral dimension, a concern for justice and sin. If this dimension were not made explicit, the impression with which one would be left would be one-sidedly intellectualist. The text also asserts the dialectical necessity for Jesus to leave. «If I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you» (16:7b).

But most important in this section is the fifth and final function of the Paraclete, his function as guide or pathfinder, though this is clearly related to the first function of teacher (14:26), to which must be added the glorification of the Son, though this is explained as declaring (announcing) what he has heard from the Son. «I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now» (16:12). This expresses what would now be called the historicity of truth. Truth cannot be known all at once, but, given the nature of humans as beings in time, must be unfolded gradually, in proportion to the capacity of the recipients, the degree of the expansion of their consciousness.

«But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you (*hodêgêsei*) to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears and will declare to you the things that are coming (*ta erchomena*)» (16:13). This is the crowning work of the Paraclete. It is crucial to note the Greek verb used for guiding, *hodêgêsei*, because it prohibits understanding the task of the Spirit as a once-for-all action. It is rather a gradual unveiling of reality in the course of a journey, a march through historical times, an unfolding of revelation. Note too that his work is oriented to the future (*ta erchomena*). It is easy to see why this is one of Hegel's favorite verses. The connotations of evolution, progressive revelation, development of doctrine, the historicity of truth, all these are present in the Johannine text itself. Hegel merely takes them seriously for epistemology in a way that previous philosophy and theology did not. To this extent Hegel adds nothing to the text itself. But Hegel does add something. The Johannine text, although addressed to the disciples in the plural, gives the impression of dealing with a small group, whence its almost sectarian, «petty» character. Hegel corrects this false impression. He expands the reference of the text to world-historical, indeed imperial, dimensions. This bold expansion is not alien to the massive claims made by the text itself to speak God's word to the world, but it does make explicit what is there only potential or inchoate. One of Hegel's comments on this verse reads:

This one, the Spirit, desires to guide you into all truth – not the company of Christ and his words. Only (*erst*) after him [Christ] and his instruction through the text will the Spirit come upon the apostles, will they become full of the Spirit for the first time. We could almost say that if you led Christianity back to its first appearance [in the historical

Jesus] then you would be bringing it back on the basis of Spiritlessness; for Christ himself says that the Spirit will only (erst) come after me when I have gone away. The text of the first appearance thus contains only the presentiment of what the Spirit is and of what will be known as true.<sup>50</sup>

In conclusion we need only recall that our principal thesis is that the key to the right understanding of the Johannine concept of the Spirit as a force working in the believers who live in the world of history is the incarnation, the word of God made flesh in space and time. We have shown that this explains why John so closely relates the Spirit to Jesus as prolonging his revelatory, saving mission in the world, especially but not exclusively in the Paraclete texts. We must further recall our subsidiary thesis that of all John's many interpreters it is the Christian philosopher Hegel who has done the most to take this Johannine doctrine of the Spirit seriously in its singularity and in its richness. And it is Hegel who has worked out its implications for an understanding of the universal significance of the biblical historical mode of discourse, as well as for an understanding of the meaning of the human historical process as a whole. To be sure, Hegel's philosophy is not adequate in every respect, either philosophically or theologically, much less politically. It has not been our intention to claim any such thing. His greatest flaw is this, that pretending to be a monist all along, he finds its constrictions intolerable and secretly transforms his philosophy of history into a hidden dualism. (It is this hidden shift which makes his views usable by orthodox Christian theology.) Hegel could never decide completely to include chaos in God, to erect a pantheist system where everything is divinized, and we can be grateful for his indecision, his resistance to his own drive toward system, his vacillation between a masked dualism and the denial of the empirical concrete. Hegel is not only ambiguous about God from start to finish (how distinct is he from the world?), he is also ambivalent about history itself.<sup>51</sup> But even a flawed thinker may shed some light, and for this we can be grateful; from it we can learn.

<sup>50</sup> HEGEL, *Werke*, Glockner ed. 19, 11.

<sup>51</sup> H. KÜNG, *Incarnation*, pp. 326, 345, 389–90, 432; much of his critique he claims to derive from Ivan ILIJN, *Die Philosophie Hegels als kontemplative Gotteslehre* (Bern 1946; Russian orig. 1916); Daniel P. JAMROS, «Hegel on the Incarnation: Unique or Universal?», *Theological Studies* 56 (1995) 276–300; IDEM, *The Human Shape of God: Religion in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York 1994). The January 1996 number of the *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* is entirely devoted to «L'Absolu et l'Esprit chez Hegel».