

Introduction

The Realization of the Triune God *The Life-giving, Sevenfold-Intensified Spirit*

Upon first glance, there may not be much connection between the first three issues of *Affirmation & Critique*, which focused on knowing, experiencing, and being in union with the Triune God, and this issue, which focuses on two aspects of the Spirit—the life-giving Spirit and the sevenfold-intensified Spirit. On the surface this may appear to be only a finer, more discriminating analysis of the Triune God. There is, however, a more vital connection.

In the economy of God, the Father is embodied in the Son, and the Son is realized as the Spirit. In his classic defense of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, Basil the Great similarly stated, “Just as the Father is made visible *in* the Son, so also the Son is recognized *in* the Spirit” (97). The Father is communicated in the Son, just as the Son is communicated in the Spirit. It is this triune communication of God to man that makes possible our knowledge, experience, and union with the Triune God. This sentiment is aptly expressed by Karl Rahner: “God relates to us in a threefold manner, and this threefold, free, and gratuitous relation to us *is* not merely a copy or an analogy of the inner Trinity, but this Trinity itself, albeit as freely and gratuitously communicated. That which is communicated is precisely the triune personal God” (35-36). According to the biblical revelation, the Triune God is principally revealed economically rather than essentially, even though most systematic studies of the Triune God focus on the essential aspect. In these studies the mutual coexistence and coinherence of the three of the Trinity are readily accepted. If we are willing to consider the proposition that the mutual

coexistence and coinherence within the essential Trinity also extend to the economic Trinity, then the statement that the Son is realized as the Spirit should not be viewed as problematic. Any understanding of the Trinity that refuses to consider such a statement may, as Rahner suggests, be characterized by a “popular, un verbalized, but at bottom quite massive tritheism” (42).

The Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is the unique inheritance of Christians, and in the economy of God, the Spirit is the pledge, the foretaste, of our inheritance (Eph. 1:14). Through the Spirit, the Triune God is applied

to and realized in our experience. Consequently, if we wish to know the Triune God, experience the Triune God, and enjoy our union with the Triune God, we must have a living and vital relationship with the Spirit in our spirit. In the New Testament, several striking statements about the Spirit are offered by the apostles. Paul boldly declares that Christ, as the last Adam, became the life-giving Spirit, and John reveals that the Spirit has been intensified sevenfold. Each of these aspects speaks to our realization of the Triune God, and in fact, makes

possible our knowing, experiencing, and being in full union with the Triune God. ☐

***Through the Spirit,
the Triune God is
applied to and realized
in our experience.
If we wish to know,
experience, and enjoy our
union with the Triune God,
we must have a living
and vital relationship
with the Spirit in our spirit.***

Works Cited

- Rahner, Karl. *The Trinity*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.
- St. Basil the Great. *On the Holy Spirit*. Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980.