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Theology of the Holy Spirit  
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REDEFINING SPIRITUALITY: A PNEUMATOLOGICAL APPROACH BASED ON THE  
WORKS OF ELIZABETH JOHNSON AND JURGEN MOLTMANN

*“We are a spiritually impoverished generation, we search in all places the Spirit ever flowed in hope of finding water. For if the Spirit is living and never dies, the Spirit must still be present wherever the Spirit once was active forming human life and the work of human hands. Not in a trail of monuments, however – in a secret, mysterious life. The Spirit is like a small but carefully tended spark, ready to flare, flow and burst into flame the moment the Spirit feels the first enkindling breath”*  
*-Edith Stein<sup>1</sup>*

How are we to live our lives as Christians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? How are we to interact with people of other faiths and with those who claim no faith? How should we live out our faith in an age of war and violence, increasing technology and decreasing face-to-face communion? The questions facing our generations loom large and the answers are varied and plentiful. At the risk of adding simply one more solution, I would like to propose spirituality as a way of faithfully moving forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Spirituality today is a particularly perplexing term due to its use in various contexts and innumerable definitions. In many ways, spirituality today is a catchall term used as a stand-in for the ineffable characteristic or quality lacking, or desired, in the subject being studied. It is often used as a stand-in for religion, for the interior life, even to distinguish anti-institutional “new-age” phenomena from traditional religious structures and powers. Different movements and different theologies espouse different spiritualities, often without ever defining what they mean by spirituality, how it is different from their theology, or even how they came up with their particular understanding of spirituality. In society, spirituality is generally understood as an

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<sup>1</sup> David Tracy, “Recent Catholic Spirituality: Unity and Diversity.” *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern*, Eds. Louis Dupre and Don E. Saliers (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989).

ethereal, inner life exemplified by prayer and meditation, and is often used in contrast to religious infrastructure or dogmatic doctrines of belief (for example in the common identification, ‘I am spiritual, not religious’). More recent theologies, such as feminist theology and liberation theology, have characterized spirituality differently – understanding it to be related to community and action rather than individual reflection. Meanwhile the root of spirituality, spirit, is hardly ever mentioned in any definition or understanding. When it is, it is variously used to refer to the human spirit or the Holy Spirit without explanation as to the choice or what one means by ‘Holy Spirit.’ One thing is clear, spirituality, as a religious phenomenon, has been lost in its multiplicity of forms and definitions. The temptation, particularly for theologians, is to discard the term altogether as lost to the myriad of common parlance and popular religiosity. Yet, to lose the term is to lose an important piece of Christian history and an important dimension of Christian life for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As we shall see, Christian spirituality, grounded in an understanding of the Spirit, roots itself in the Christian tradition, yet opens itself to the demands and challenges of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century - providing Christians with a way of living out their faith here and now.

This paper explores an understanding of spirituality grounded in its root word, spirit,<sup>2</sup> through the pneumatologies of Jurgen Moltmann and Elizabeth Johnson. In doing so, this paper will offer a definition of spirituality that is entrenched in an understanding of the Spirit and the work of the Spirit in our midst. As Presbyterians, engaging in ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a solid of understanding of spirituality could benefit our church and ministry in three ways. First, the

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<sup>2</sup> The distinction between when ‘spirit’ is spelled with a lowercase ‘s’ and when it is spelled with an uppercase ‘S’ can say a lot about what an author means by ‘spirit’ or ‘Spirit.’ In this instance, I have chosen to spell ‘spirit’ with a lowercase when referring to anything besides the Holy Spirit, for which I will use ‘Spirit.’ The root of the word spirituality is not necessarily the Holy Spirit, or Spirit, but is rather simply spirit, which adds to the confusion of using the term spirituality and what one means by it. I will argue that as Christians, we ought to interpret the spirit in spirituality as the Holy Spirit, but that is a choice and could be argued against.

understanding of spirituality developed in this paper allows Reformed Christians to be faithful to reformed theology and a reformed understanding of God and humanity while at the same time allowing new movements of the Spirit in this time and place. As members of a church struggling for life, this understanding of life in the Spirit helps us hold onto what we believe, but also expand beyond ourselves to reach a world we are, as a whole, failing to engage. Second, the understanding of spirituality presented here provides a means for interfaith work and a theological grounding for the necessity of such cooperation. Finally, the understanding of spirituality proposed in this paper creates a framework for living a Christian life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As faithful Christians in the Reformed tradition we must always manage the balance between our understandings and beliefs and the way we live our lives. Too often we allow ourselves to become mired down in what we believe and how we believe what we believe and forget to live out our beliefs. An understanding of spirituality rooted in the Spirit allows us to be faithful to our theological beliefs and heritage, yet also pushes us to put those beliefs into action in the living out of a Christian life.

Moltmann and Johnson have been chosen because they offer modern pneumatologies engaged not only with the theological tradition, but also with the needs of the Christian community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Moltmann offers a more extensive pneumatology rooted in the Reformed tradition, while Johnson offers a pneumatology in the midst of her systematic theology, which is rooted in feminist and Catholic traditions. Both understand the Spirit to be God engaged in the midst of creation and history, though the ways in which they approach their theologies differs. In exploring both, this paper benefits from two perspectives and is enriched by two traditions. This paper will move through brief summaries of Moltmann and Johnson's

pneumatologies and conclude with a reflection on the implications of their pneumatologies for spirituality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

While Jurgen Moltmann's pneumatology pervades the whole of his scholarship, this paper looks explicitly at his primary pneumatological works, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* and *The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life*. Moltmann's main goal in his pneumatology is to create a "holistic" theology of the Spirit. By this he means a pneumatology that encompasses the whole of who humans are (body and soul, intellect and emotions, et cetera) as well as the whole of creation (not just humanity but all that God has created).<sup>3</sup> Two of Moltmann's main concerns are evident in this goal. First, his desire to liberate the Spirit from the bounds of the church, which has often imprisoned it by tethering it to the realm of ecclesiastical power and denying its connection to what is bodily and material.<sup>4</sup> This is evident today in the understandings of spirituality as otherworldly disciplines: practices that help people escape this messy world. Moltmann argues instead that the Spirit of God is connected to the spirit of humans, who God created body and soul. Moreover, the Spirit as a member of the Triune God is connected to creation, the whole of creation, which God declared good. Therefore, one cannot exclude the Spirit from what is earthly and created. The second concern evident in Moltmann's goal is a desire to remind humanity of the importance of creation. Aware of the ecological crisis the world has created, Moltmann argues strongly that this is a theological and moral issue with which Christians must be involved.

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<sup>3</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 37.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

As is evident already, Moltmann is creating not only a holistic pneumatology but a Trinitarian one as well. Too often, Moltmann notes, the Spirit is understood solely as the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of redemption. While Word and Spirit are intricately connected, Moltmann asserts the Spirit as not only the Spirit of Christ, but also the Spirit of the Creator, the Spirit of creation. Indeed, the Spirit is not secondary to Christ, as has often been practically assumed since the *filioque*, but the Spirit is co-equal and co-eternal with both God the Creator and God the Redeemer.

As the Spirit not only of redemption, but also of creation, it becomes possible to recognize the Spirit in all that affirms life and resists its destruction.<sup>5</sup> The Spirit is “the divine energy of life, animating the creation of all things.”<sup>6</sup> It is bodily and earthly, engaged in renewing and recreating all of creation. Redemption will not be, in this understanding, redemption *from* the world, but the redemption *of* the world. Likewise, redemption will not be *from* our bodies, but *of* our bodies.

In talking about the Spirit of creation, Moltmann draws heavily on the biblical images of *ruach*. More than calming images of breath, Moltmann understands the *ruach* as a tempest of God, a force that brings life.<sup>7</sup> *Ruach* is the “life force of created beings.”<sup>8</sup> Yet this is not only a force that creates and steps away, but also the force that continues to enliven us as well as the force that recreates and regenerates life. *Ruach* means life rather than death, what is moving and active rather than what is stagnant and paralyzed. The biblical images of *ruach* in creation and working through creation are abundant. Yet Moltmann sees this same force at work in non-

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>8</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 71.

creation texts as well. Drawing on the stories of the judges and the prophets, Moltmann lifts up the work of the Spirit in these individuals to redeem and renew the life of the whole community.<sup>9</sup> While this is all positive, Moltmann points also to the negative side of this force, for the Spirit also works against all that threatens to destroy or diminish life. This is a force fiercely protective of life, not only human life but creation's life as well. Indeed, working from Moltmann's understanding, it is reasonable to assume that the Spirit works against humanity when humanity is destroying creation.

Recognizing the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of creation as well as the Spirit of redemption opens up human understanding of the work and life of the Spirit in our midst. It works to liberate the Spirit not only from the church,<sup>10</sup> but also from humanity's exclusive claim to reception of the intercession of the Spirit. The Spirit is the space in which all of life is allowed to blossom and grow.<sup>11</sup>

In understanding the Spirit as the Spirit of creation, Moltmann is not disassociating the Spirit from Christ. Indeed, for Moltmann Spirit and Word are inextricably connected.<sup>12</sup> The image of the Spirit as the breath enables the Word while Word is the content of the breath. In this way Word and Spirit rely on one another and yet are unique and equal – for there can be no words without breath and there can be no content to breath without words.<sup>13</sup>

This close connection has important implications for understanding the work of the Spirit. The Spirit cannot only be the Spirit of creation, but must also be recognized as the Spirit

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<sup>9</sup> Moltmann, *Spirit*, 44.

<sup>10</sup> This is not to say the Spirit is not in the church, but rather that the Spirit cannot be confined to the church, or trapped in the church as ecclesial powers have sometimes tried to do.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>12</sup> Moltmann understands the relationship of the Spirit and the Word not to be one of subservience or hierarchy, as is often implied in the *filioque* clause, but rather a relationship of reciprocity, as the image of word and breath goes on to show. In this way, Spirit cannot be reduced to Word nor Word reduced to Spirit.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

of redemption. According to Moltmann, pneumatology is always rooted in Christology, in the remembrance of who Christ was and what Christ did, and it always points toward eschatology, the fulfillment or completion of what Christ began and what the Spirit is making effective.<sup>14</sup> This means we must understand the work of the Spirit as concerned not only with creation and re-creation, but also with justice and liberation. These are not fundamentally different tasks since a lack of justice is easily understood as a state of affairs resisting life, or at least the fullness of life. Yet, to focus solely on the Spirit as the Spirit of creation could lead one solely to an attitude of praise or doxology, while a focus on the Spirit as the Spirit of redemption necessarily leads one into a more active response of participation and work for liberation and justice.

Moltmann draws on a number of biblical texts and images from both the Old and New Testament to illustrate this aspect of the Spirit. To begin with, he connects the term “Lord” as a name for God referring explicitly to the Exodus incident and God’s liberating power in leading the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt.<sup>15</sup> Moltmann also draws heavily on the Isaiah texts, particularly the Servant songs, which connect Spirit and justice in explicit ways.<sup>16</sup> Finally, he talks about the life and ministry of Christ as an example of the connection between God and justice.

Extrapolating from these texts, Moltmann understands the Spirit as both liberator and judge. He writes, “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is the divine love which holds in life even self-destructive human communities in order to heal them.”<sup>17</sup> The Spirit is the judge who

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 18, 81.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 143.

convicts in order to liberate individuals and communities from the structures and condition of sin that imprison both them and the world, keeping creation from living to its fullest potential.<sup>18</sup>

Through the whole of his work, Moltmann describes a Spirit who is a life-giving presence and force in the history of creation. The Spirit comforts and renews, judges and liberates in order to coax life into every nook and cranny of creation. The Spirit is “the loving, self-communicating, out-fanning and out-pouring presence of the eternal life of the triune God.”<sup>19</sup> The Spirit is God in action, rejuvenating and liberating the world, as well as God in passion, suffering and existing with the world with sighs too deep for words and pangs for justice and renewal.<sup>20</sup>

Moltmann provides a number of important contributions to the work of pneumatology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. His understanding of the Spirit illuminates both the immanent and transcendent nature of the Spirit. Understanding the Spirit to be God at work in the world, Moltmann’s grounding in trinitarian theology allows him to connect the Spirit both to God the Creator and God the Christ so that we understand the Spirit to be not only about our souls and ultimate salvation, but primarily about our bodies and our lives here and now. Yet, Moltmann struggles to adequately develop the relationship between the Spirit and the Creator. Working against the *filioque* clause, Moltmann is clear in laying out the relationship between the Spirit and Christ, but the relationship between the Spirit and Creator is more assumed than developed. Further, Moltmann struggles with the tension between the Spirit as a communal force and individual experiences of the Spirit. Again, Moltmann is working against prevailing assumptions (as with the *filioque* clause) by arguing for a Spirit who is at work for the good of the whole creation,

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 136, 138.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 289.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 11.

rather than individual benefit; in so doing, he fails to give due recognition to individual experiences, and relationships, with the Spirit. Yet, Moltmann's work adds much to a Christian understanding of Spirit that is holistic and Trinitarian.

For Elizabeth Johnson, the Spirit is "God as She-Who-Dwells-Within, divine presence in compassionate engagement with the conflictual world."<sup>21</sup> The Spirit is "God drawing near and passing by in vivifying, sustaining, renewing, and liberating power in the midst of historical struggle."<sup>22</sup> In *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Discourse*, Johnson provides multiple images and definitions for the Spirit. Common to all is the understanding of Spirit as God passionately engaged in this world.<sup>23</sup> The Spirit is God's presence in this world. It is the way we encounter God in our lives, in our time, in our space. Rather than an ethereal being or spirit we can only image but never encounter, the Spirit takes concrete form in our lives. The Spirit encounters us in our daily activities through nature, relationships, and even in the histories of our own individual lives.

In *She Who Is* Johnson writes with particular focus on the experience of women and the relationship between women and the divine. Defining experiences of God as experiences of "the emancipation of women toward human flourishing,"<sup>24</sup> Johnson explores, recreates, and redefines Christian theology in a way that opens up God to the experience of women in the world and opens up women to the experience of God. In *Women, Earth and Creator Spirit*, Johnson

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<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 86.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 50, 82-83, 86, 125, 127, 133, 137-138.

<sup>24</sup> Johnson defines human flourishing as the ability to live out our full humanity, the whole of who God created us to be; this requires freedom and justice so that each individual has the ability to live into their imago die, *Ibid.*, 30.

connects women's need for liberation with creation's need for liberation and the exploitation of both women and creation with the neglect of the Spirit in theology.<sup>25</sup> In both books, Johnson describes a Spirit passionately engaged in liberation in the midst of history and life of creation. The Spirit is found not only in prayer and holy visions, but also in the grit of every day life. The whole of the world is ripe for experiences of the Spirit.<sup>26</sup>

In these foundational definitions three important emphases in Johnson's theology emerge: the personal, involved experience of the Spirit, the liberative action of the Spirit, and finally the push of the Spirit toward communion with the whole of creation. While Johnson would certainly not argue that the Spirit is for individual consumption alone, she does emphasize the ways in which the Spirit is present and involved in individual human lives. Working primarily from a desire to negate the image of the Spirit as unearthly or ethereal, Johnson roots the Spirit in the grist and grime of every day life. Johnson highlights three historical mediations through which humanity is able to experience the Spirit: the natural world, personal and interpersonal experiences, and structural systems that foster community.<sup>27</sup> In nature, Johnson is referencing moments "of wonder when we are overtaken by the grandeur of the natural world as it exists beyond us and without us, simply there in its own givenness and beauty, fragility and threatened state."<sup>28</sup> In these moments, Johnson argues, creation reveals God. In these moments we encounter the creative power of the Spirit of creation.

In our relationships with one another, we experience the Spirit in our love for and from one another: "we seek and are found by the Spirit in the person-creating give and take of loving

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<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, *Women, Earth and Creator Spirit* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 2.

<sup>26</sup> Johnson, *She Who Is*, 125.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 125-126.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

relationships.”<sup>29</sup> In the pain of broken relationships we experience both divine absence as well as divine compassion. In the whole process of coming to know others, and in turn ourselves, we encounter the Spirit who created us as unique individuals and called us to be in relationship with one another.<sup>30</sup>

Not only is the Spirit in creation and in our relationships, the Spirit is also to be found in the systems and structures that liberate creation and create community, which brings us to Johnson’s second and third emphases: the Spirit as liberator and the push of the Spirit toward communion with the whole of creation. For Johnson liberation is linked with human flourishing and responsibility. The Spirit liberates us from that which binds us, be it poverty, hunger, depression or addiction, in order that we may flourish as beings created in God’s image and structured for a relationship with God, and so we might liberate other people for this enjoyment. Liberation, for Johnson, is the criterion by which we can discern the Holy Spirit from other spirits, “for if something consistently results in the denigration of human beings, in what sense can it be religiously true?”<sup>31</sup>

While the Spirit may be a force in our individual lives, it is ultimately a force that pushes us into community both with other individuals and with creation. Liberation is the goal for Johnson, and no one can be fully liberated until the whole of creation is liberated.<sup>32</sup> Experiencing the Spirit may be liberating, but it is not merely liberating *from*, it is also liberating *for*: the Spirit liberates us from oppression and for human flourishing, or the living into our full humanity, as God created us. Moreover, the Spirit liberates us in order that we might liberate others. The Spirit frees us to be in communion with the rest of creation. Much of Johnson’s emphasis on

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 14.

community stems from her understanding of the Trinity. For Johnson, the Spirit is not merely a third dimension of God. All three persons of God are God in Her totality. Johnson argues that the historical logic for this theological point is experiential: “three experiences come to human beings from one God. Therefore three sorts of relationships are possible with one God.”<sup>33</sup> Moreover, it is the community of the three that Johnson stresses. The Trinity is neither a hierarchy nor an argument about who preceded whom; rather, the Trinity is a holy community. The persons of the Trinity are persons only in their relationships with one another.<sup>34</sup> Humanity is no different. We are full and complete, open for full human flourishing, only when we find ourselves in communion with one another and with God’s creation.

Like Moltmann, Johnson’s pneumatology broadens and deepens a Christian understanding of the Spirit. By exploring the Spirit through the lens of feminist theology, Johnson highlights the liberating and communal elements of the Spirit’s work in our midst. Moreover, Johnson’s definitions of the Spirit highlight the presence of the Spirit in our very midst. Where Moltmann struggles to acknowledge individual experiences of, and relationships with, the Spirit, Johnson is able to affirm individual experiences while still acknowledging the Spirit communal and universal pull for the liberation of all creation. However, Moltmann’s understanding of the interconnected nature of Spirit and Word reveals a weakness in Johnson’s theology where the Spirit and Christ are discussed in two separate chapters and their relationship explored only in the context of a communal trinity. Johnson’s lack of emphasis on the connection between the Spirit and Christ seems to divorce the Spirit from some of the scriptural testaments to its presence and relationship with Christ. Moreover, the lack of an intricate relationship

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 198-199.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 216.

between the Spirit and Christ lessens both figures, who can only add to one another in their connections.

Having explored the pneumatologies of Johnson and Moltmann, as well as some of their differences, it now becomes possible to extract some common denominators in their understanding of the Spirit. First, the Spirit is a Spirit who liberates. Both Johnson and Moltmann understand the Spirit as a force of life. Extrapolating from this basic understanding, the Spirit must also then be a liberating force, which frees humanity and creation from the bonds that ensnare them and inhibit or prevent life: be they structural, personal or ecclesial, and for full human flourishing as creatures created and loved by God. Moltmann enriches this understanding and grounds it in the reality of the world by linking liberation and justice. There can be no liberation without justice. To live in an unjust society is to live in a society in which all are not free to live the lives God has given them. Therefore, the Spirit cannot only be a Spirit of liberation, but must also be a judging Spirit: a judge who judges in order to free creation for full life. Johnson further adds to the understanding of liberation by reminding that no one can be fully free until all are free. In this way, the Spirit cannot be solely an individualistic force, but must also be a communal force.

Second, for both Johnson and Moltmann, the Spirit is holistic. Johnson alludes to this in her understanding of liberation as incomplete until all are liberated. Moltmann picks up on this understanding in his insistence that the Spirit incorporates the whole of who we are: body and soul, et cetera. Moreover, the Spirit includes not only the church, but the whole of humanity; and not only humanity, but the whole of creation. Johnson, working from this understanding as well,

sees the Spirit not only as holistic in a passive way, but in the active movement of the Spirit to bring humanity into communion, with one another and with creation.

Finally, both Johnson and Moltmann understand the Spirit as an engaged presence in the world and in history. Perhaps this is obvious based on the first two characteristics, but it is an important emphasis for both theologians. Johnson intentionally defines the Spirit in this way (“She-Who-Dwells-Within”) in order to work against the understanding of the Spirit as an ethereal being, above and beyond us. For Johnson, the Spirit is personal and involved. For Moltmann, it is important to understand the Spirit as the Spirit of both redemption (the Spirit of Christ) and the Spirit of creation (the Spirit of the Creator). In this way, it is possible to recognize the Spirit in all that affirms life and fights against that which threatens life.

Three questions now emerge. First, given these two pneumatologies, is it possible to understand spirituality as connected to the Spirit? Second, if it is, does this help us ground our understanding of spirituality? Third, how might we define and recognize a spirituality rooted in the Spirit?

First, is it possible to understand spirituality as connected to the Spirit? Linguistics would suggest it is possible, and appropriate, given the root of spirituality: spirit. Moreover, if we define spirituality very loosely as practices or actions that connect us to what is divine (a definition that seems to cover the span of spirituality in today’s culture) then there is reason to connect spirituality and Spirit, given Johnson and Moltmann’s understanding of the Spirit as God present and active in the world. Understanding the Spirit engaged in this way allows us to see the Spirit as what connects humanity with divinity. While Christ embodied both dimensions within his own body, the Spirit can be understood as the divine in the midst of human history and activity. In this way we can understand *spirituality as those practices or actions which*

*participate in the divine activity of the Spirit, including those practices or actions that help us recognize the activity and presence of the Spirit in our midst* (for we need to recognize the work of the Spirit before we are able to fully and consciously participate in it).

Second, does an understanding of spirituality as connected to the Spirit help us ground our understanding of spirituality? In other words, given the problematic ways in which spirituality is defined haphazardly in today's culture, does an understanding of spirituality as connected to the Spirit root our definition in such a way that distinguishes between what is authentic spirituality<sup>35</sup> and what is not? By connecting spirituality to the Spirit, we necessarily limit spirituality to our understanding of the Spirit. In this way, it becomes possible to distinguish between spiritualities that work with the Spirit and those that work against the Spirit. In this case, according to the pneumatologies of Johnson and Moltmann, spiritualities that affirm the whole of creation and the whole of life would be spiritualities rooted in the Spirit, whereas spiritualities that deny life, work against justice, destroy creation, or work against the fostering of community, would not be spiritualities rooted in the Spirit. At this point it becomes obvious that grounding an understanding of spirituality in the Spirit does not necessarily heavily restrict the possible forms of spirituality. A spirituality that affirms life and justice and community can still take many different forms.<sup>36</sup> Yet, understanding spirituality as connected to the Spirit does allow us a tool for discerning 'true' spirituality from 'false' spirituality.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Authentic spirituality is admittedly a vague term in this context. What I am referring to is an ability to say not everything is spirituality, but rather that spirituality has these particular characteristics. Perhaps it would be helpful to speak more specifically of Christian spirituality or Reformed spirituality, but the first term seems problematic insofar as the Spirit (as defined by Johnson and Moltmann) often transcends Christianity. The second term is problematic for the same reasons, especially given that this paper draws on the work of a Catholic theologian as well as a Reformed theologian.

<sup>36</sup> Such as spiritualities focused on justice or ecology, though a spirituality focused only outward is dangerous as is pointed out in the next note.

<sup>37</sup> Again, true and false spirituality are rather abstract terms; in this case, however, I am making specific allusions to the true and false spirits one sees at work in the biblical narratives (e.g. 1 Kings 22:19-28). An example

Finally, how might we define a spirituality rooted in the Spirit? What would such a spirituality look like if we worked from Johnson and Moltmann's common understanding of the Spirit? Above I defined a spirituality rooted in the Spirit as those practices or actions that participate in the divine activity of the Spirit, including those practices or actions that help us recognize the activity and presence of the Spirit in our midst. A more succinct way of stating this understanding would be to define spirituality as our reception of and response to the Spirit. If we understand the Spirit with Johnson and Moltmann as God engaged in this world, then spirituality are those practices or actions that allow us to recognize/discern the Spirit in our midst and respond to that presence by cooperating in the work of the Spirit.<sup>38</sup>

Given Johnson and Moltmann's understanding of the work of the Spirit, what might such a spirituality look like? First, the common understanding of spirituality as anti-institutional or anti-religious is both right and wrong. It is true that the Spirit transcends the bounds of the church and works beyond the confines of ecclesial powers and structures. In this way, it is possible to define spirituality as more than a religious or institutional power. On the other hand, the Spirit can and does work within the church as well as beyond it. And, if we understand spirituality as connected to the Spirit, we necessarily make connections with Christianity insofar as we define the Spirit, with Johnson and Moltmann, in terms of the Triune God. Therefore, it is not entirely appropriate to define spirituality over and against religion and the institutional structures of the Church, though it transcends both.

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of a false spirituality would be one that focused exclusively on the individual or exclusively on the outward work of the Spirit without any effort to recognize the work of the Spirit in one's midst. The latter is dangerous because it is possible to get caught up in our own understandings of what is good and right that we forget to look for what the Spirit is defining as good and right.

<sup>38</sup> While there are many possibilities for practices or actions that would fit these qualifications, some examples would be meditation, which helps us focus on the presence of the divine in our lives, or ecological habits, which help us participate in the life-giving force of the Spirit for all creation.

Second, if we are to understand the Spirit as holistic, it is inappropriate to understand spirituality as a purely individualistic endeavor. While we can understand the Spirit as personal and engaged (as Johnson does), we must also recognize the Spirit as a force for life and community. Therefore, insofar as the Spirit is present and engaged in our individual lives, it is for the purpose of liberation, life and community. Working in this vein, traditional spiritual disciplines such as *lectio divina*, prayer, or the *examen*, which seem intensely personal can be understood as appropriate practices not in their ability to remove the practitioner from the material world, but in their ability to help liberate us from the bonds of materialism and consumerism that ensnare and enslave us.<sup>39</sup> Insofar as they either liberate us from the preconceived expectations of our society or help us clear our vision in order to more clearly see the work of the Spirit, not only in our own lives, but also in the world around us, such practices may still be appropriate in our new understanding of spirituality. Yet, we must continually remind ourselves that such practices are not only for individual gain or fulfillment, but for our own liberation and vision in order that we might more clearly see the presence of the Spirit in our midst and participate in the work of the Spirit in the world.

Finally, spirituality cannot stop with our individual practices or recognitions of the Spirit, spirituality must be involved in the world for the work of liberation and justice, not only for our own communities, but for the whole of humanity; and not only for humanity, but for the whole of creation. Spirituality involves not only prayer but protest, not only sacred readings but social action. Working for justice in the midst of the political and public realm is an appropriate, indeed necessary, part of spirituality. Ecological spirituality is not an anomaly, but an obvious consequence of an understanding of the Spirit as holistic. Too often our tendency has been to

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<sup>39</sup> Moltmann, *Spirit*, 95.

locate spirituality in the church and the church in the realm of the “spiritual,” thus creating a circle in which neither encounters the world, but remain in the realm of the aerie and undefined. A spirituality rooted in the Spirit, however, understands redemption and the work of God in the world to be redemption of this world, not away from it. It understands salvation to be salvation of the world, not a move to another realm. To participate in the work of the Spirit is to participate in the redemption of this world, in the regeneration of creation and communities. Moltmann writes that we love God by loving our neighbors.<sup>40</sup> We can broaden this even more by understanding that we love God when we love not only our neighbor but also our enemy, not only our enemy but the stranger, and not only the stranger but the whole of the earth (humanity and creation both).

Given all of the above, a spirituality rooted in the Spirit is perhaps the best hope of the church not only for regeneration in an age of consumerism and secular disdain, but also for communication and cooperation in an age of pluralism and interfaith dialogue. Spirituality allows individuals to be engaged, not only in the life of the church but in the work of the world, not only in their own personal growth, but in the increase of justice and equality in the world at large. Spirituality allows the church to remain true to its roots and convictions without denying its members their right to remain true to the life-giving causes and convictions that motivate them. Moreover, the Spirit enables Christians to work with, and dialogue with, people of other faith who are also working to establish the kingdom in the world. The Spirit does not work solely in the life of the church, but is recognizable in all that affirms life and resists the powers that deny life, including other faith traditions and those without any faith allegiances. The Spirit liberates the church and its members to live into the fullness of life, which God has promised the

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 250.

Sarah Walker Cleaveland  
Theology of the Holy Spirit  
April 2007

whole of creation. Spirituality is the practical ways in which we recognize the Spirit and participate in Her life-giving, justice-filled, holistic work.

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