Kevin Douglas Hill: *Athanasius and the Holy Spirit: The Development of His Early Pneumatology*, Minneapolis (Fortress Press) 2016, XXII + 289 pp., ISBN 978-1-5064-1668-7, \$ 49,–.

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<https://doi.org/10.1515/zac-2020-0040>

With the exception of some brilliant Johannine and Pauline passages, the rest of the New Testament provides only incipient pneumatological reflection. The Apostolic Fathers did not further this discussion much, and only by the end of the 2nd century will two authors seriously discuss the role of the Spirit in salvation. In his anti-Gnostic polemic, bishop Irenaeus reflects on the Spirit in the *oikonomia*. Not much later in North Africa, Tertullian will produce some significant insights as

well. Nevertheless, as in many other areas of the theological discipline, it will be Origen alone who will begin a systematic reflection on the Holy Spirit, based on scriptural data and with several open-ended questions. However, this pneumatological discussion will be clearly secondary in relation to the Christological issue. In the highly conflicted following century, neither Arius nor the synod of Nicaea (325) places great emphasis on the person of the Holy Spirit, being exclusively focused on the status of Christ. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the Spirit was totally ignored. He indeed plays a role in the system of Marcellus of Ancyra, which will provoke sharp opposition by Eusebius of Caesarea, who claims that the Spirit is a creature of the Son. By the middle of the 4th century, we have Cyril of Jerusalem's treatment of the question in his 16th and 17th *Baptismal Catecheses* and especially in his (or his successor John's?) fifth *Mystagogical Catechesis*. Later on, we have Didymus' treatise *On the Holy Spirit*, whose chronology and relation to Athanasius is still not clear; key to our discussion, the latter eventually takes up the question. Twenty-five years later, Basil (375), Gregory of Nazianzus (380–381), and Gregory of Nyssa (381–382) will give pneumatology its solid form, with only Cyril of Alexandria's reflection to follow in the first half of the following century.

While the study of patristic pneumatology still falls behind Christology, increasingly, however slowly, some studies dedicated to individual Fathers are being published. In this regard, the case of Athanasius is symptomatic. The bibliography on him is vast, attracting the attention of scholars in almost all aspects of his theology. Concerning the Holy Spirit, however, there are few publications. As far as I know, Adolf Laminski's¹ fifty-year-old monography is the only one, whereas a handful of articles deal with the topic. Almost without exception, they restrict themselves to the *Epistles to Serapion* (359/360). In the established account, the full treatment of the Holy Spirit appears in these epistles *ex nihilo*, fading away afterwards again. Athanasius' dealing with the Spirit is therefore occasional, explained only by the challenge posed by the *Tropikoi*.

Against this background, we must set Kevin Douglas Hill's book, based upon a doctoral dissertation at the University of Durham, supervised first by Andrew Louth and later by Lewis Ayres. It directly challenges the above-offered view. Its aim, clearly stated in the introduction, "is to help fill the gap in our knowledge about the content and development of Athanasius' early theology of the Holy Spirit. Because of this aim, the majority of the book discusses material written

¹ Adolf Laminski, *Der Heilige Geist als Geist Christi und Geist der Gläubigen: Der Beitrag des Athanasios von Alexandrien zur Formulierung des trinitarischen Dogmas im vierten Jahrhundert* (Erfurter theologische Studien 23; Leipzig: St. Benno, 1969).

between about 329 and 345, which includes Athanasius' early *Festal Letters*, *Pagans—Incarnation*, and *Orations 1–3*" (pp. xvi–xvii).

From the very outset, the author postulates a pre-*Serapion* pneumatology, explicitly understood as a theology of the Holy Spirit that goes beyond the limits of dogmatic affirmations of the Spirit's nature. In addition to this, Hill makes a case for an evolution in the pneumatological thought of the Alexandrian bishop, at odds with the traditional presentation of Athanasius' dealing with the Holy Spirit only in *Serapion*. That evolution took almost twenty years, from his ordination (or a year afterwards, which coincides with the writing of *Pagans—Incarnation*) up to the composition of the third *Oration against the Arians* (ca. 345), fifteen years before *Serapion* was penned. Again, opposing the traditional exposition, Hill claims that there is in the pastoral works an emerging and increasing attention to the Holy Spirit, viewed as an essential agent of human salvation. This evolution becomes explicit reflection in the *Orations* (chiefly in the first), on the occasion of Athanasius' disputes regarding his own construction of the "Arian" Trinitarian heresies. Although it is manifest that the main focus there is Christological, in arguing for Christ's union in nature and similarity to the Father, pneumatological implications cannot be overlooked. In other words, Athanasius' pneumatological evolution up to 345 comes very close to his sound statements in *Serapion*. Consequently, it is clear that these did not appear *ex nihilo* simply in response to the challenge of the *Tropikoi* (with the pneumatological question then disappearing again).

Hill divides his book into two parts of similar length. While the first part deals with "Athanasius' Pastoral Works," the second has as its subject "The *Orations against the Arians*." Three chapters constitute the former: "The Problem of Pneumatological Reticence in *Against the Pagans—On the Incarnation*" (1), "Pneumatology in the Early Pastoral Works" (2), and "Pneumatology in the Later Pastoral Works" (3). The second part (on the *Orations*) contains four chapters: "A Foundational Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Athanasius' Trinitarian Arguments" (4), "Essential for Salvation: Psalm 45:7 and Christ's Reception of the Holy Spirit" (5), "Participation in the Holy Spirit: Principles and Pneumatological Implications" (6), and "The Spirit of the Son: The Holy Spirit's Union with the Son" (7).

Within a short introduction, the author makes his scope and methods clear. While I have already referred to the scope, Hill, following upon the recommendations of Charles Kannengiesser and later Johan Leemans, remarks upon the necessity of understanding Athanasius' texts within their context, meaning primarily the polemical and, foremost, the literary contexts. This methodological approach proves helpful in the pneumatological realm. Very often, the scarce occurrence of the term "Holy Spirit" in Athanasius' early work, chiefly but not only in *Pagans—Incarnation*, has been construed as a clear sign of Athanasius'

lack of attention to the Spirit, being himself focused on the question of the Son. On the contrary, considering the literary context of those works, Hill makes clear that while the main purpose of *Pagans—Incarnation* is to show the reasonableness of the cross, the near absence of not only the Spirit (he comes up on only three occasions in that work), but also of other significant themes, does not mean that Athanasius ignored pneumatological reflection. Rather, he was constrained by the context and the scope of this work.

In the following two chapters (2 and 3), Hill turns his attention to the pastoral works. Here the divide between early and later pastoral works is established around 340, i. e., the time of the composition of the *Orations*. From the outset of his episcopal career, Athanasius appears focused on soteriology, as manifested in *Pagans—Incarnation*. This focus progressively shows a developing theology of the Holy Spirit in the 330s, with the Spirit being deemed essential for salvation by 340. The emphasis is pastoral or, even better, spiritual. Athanasius is particularly concerned with the role of the Spirit in the life of the Christian. This focus does not change in the later pastoral works, which show in this regard a clear consistency with the earlier works. Athanasius does not feel the necessity to discuss questions surrounding the Spirit's nature.

The second part of the book revolves around a more mature pneumatology, the one present in the *Orations*. Here the Trinitarian issue comes to the fore when Athanasius, portraying his own construction of the "Arian" heresies, responds with Trinitarian arguments. Hill argues that at this stage Athanasius formulates four pneumatological tenets, i. e., that the Spirit is eternal, uncreated, united to the Son, and worthy of worship. This is tantamount to maintaining that the mature theology of the Spirit in *Serapion* is almost present in the *Orations*, fifteen years before, just steps away. This claim of Hill's fourth chapter is further supported with additional insights. The fifth chapter, revolving around the Spirit–salvation relationship, discusses in detail Athanasius' analysis of Psalm 45:7 in regard to Christ's baptism. Unlike Origen, Arius, Achilles, and Eusebius of Caesarea, the bishop of Alexandria interprets Christ's anointing with the Spirit as taking place in time and space. Christ did not need it but permitted it to be performed for the benefit of his "partakers" (p. 191), his fellow human beings. In other words, it was Christ's humanity that was anointed, and Christ received this anointing in order to make it possible for other human beings to be saved. He was anointed "for our sakes" (p. 191). While holiness is essential for salvation, this is attained through the Holy Spirit. The way in which we receive that holiness is addressed in chapter six, chiefly under the notion of participation and deification. If creatures participate in the Spirit, this requires the Spirit to be superior to creatures. The Spirit can give creatures a share in holiness because the Spirit essentially possesses holiness.

Although Athanasius says little that directly relates to the Spirit–Father relationship, Hill refers to four contexts in the *Orations* that point to the Spirit’s union with the Son. This is the theme of the last chapter (7).

The conclusions of the entire monography could be subsumed under three aspects: One, Athanasius’ pastoral works in the 330s are a better witness to his early pneumatology than *Pagans—Incarnation*. Two, by the end of that period, Athanasius, while understanding the Spirit as essential to soteriology, came to focus on the role of sanctification by the Spirit, empowering Christians to attain holiness. Three, while writing the *Orations*, Athanasius established the core of the mature pneumatology that he would articulate in *Serapion*. The pneumatological reflection of the *Orations* remained a step away from the full proclamation of *Serapion*, a step, however, that due to Athanasius’ focus on the Son and his construction of the “Arian” conspiracy, he did not take until the end of the 350s.

Well-written, even pedagogically by offering conclusions after each chapter, Hill’s argumentation is generally convincing and well-articulated. Nevertheless, a more intensive discussion of the key texts would have been fruitful. Another criticism regards the scarce discussion (with the exceptions of chapters five and six concerning particular questions) of the sources of Athanasius’ thought. Finally, a shortcoming—quite extensive among North American scholarship—is the poor if not nonexistent attention to non-English bibliography. In Hill’s case, although some articles in German are mentioned in the bibliography, they are not engaged in the discussion of the different themes. French, Italian (with the exception of three publications of Alberto Camplani), or Spanish studies and translations are simply ignored. In this and other regards, the bibliography ought to be completed.²

² Here only as a token: Pablo Argárate, “The Holy Spirit in Athanasius’ *Epistles to Serapion*,” *Journal of the Canadian Society for Coptic Studies* 2 (2011): 23–43; George C. Berthold, “The Procession of the Spirit in Athanasius,” *Studia Patristica* 41 (2006): 125–131; Enrico Cattaneo, ed. and trans., *Atanasio: Lettere a Serapione (lo Spirito Santo)* (Rome: Città Nuova, 1986); Dominique Gonnet, “L’Esprit saint dans la vie de l’Église selon Athanase,” in *Der Heilige Geist im Leben der Kirche. Forscher aus dem Osten und Westen Europas an den Quellen des gemeinsamen Glaubens* (ed. Ysabel de Andia and Peter L. Hofrichter; Pro Oriente-Studientagung “Der Heilige Geist bei den griechischen und lateinischen Kirchenvätern im ersten Jahrtausend,” Wien, Juni 2003; Wiener patristische Tagungen 2 = Pro Oriente 29; Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 2005), 141–149; Dominique Gonnet, “The Salutary Action of the Holy Spirit as Proof of His Divinity in Athanasius’ *Letters to Serapion*,” *Studia Patristica* 36 (2001): 509–513; Carmelo Granado, ed. and trans., *Atanasio de Alejandría: Epístolas a Serapión sobre el Espíritu Santo* (Madrid: Ciudad Nueva, 2007); Alasdair Heron, “Zur Theologie der ‘Tropici’ in den Serapionbriefen des Athanasius. Amos 4:13 als Pneumatologische Belegstelle,” *Kyrios* 14 (1974): 3–24; Luigi Iammarrone, ed. and trans., *Atanasio: Lettere a Serapione: sulla divinità dello Spirito Santo* (Padua: Messaggero, 1983); Helmut Saake, “Beobachtungen zur athanasianischen Pneumatologie,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 15 (1973): 348–364; idem, “Das Präskript zum ersten

The relevance of Hill's research is, clearly, in its challenging of the traditionally poor explanation of Athanasius' reflection on the Spirit. This book shows how the pneumatological question—not limited to dogmatic statements on the nature of the Spirit—emerges fairly early in Athanasius' career and is caused, in fact, by a soteriological rationale: The Spirit is essential to human salvation simply because he provides the required holiness. This is not tantamount to claiming that Athanasius did not experience an evolution. In his confrontation with the "Arians," mainly focused on the Son, Athanasius begins to implicitly recognize the relevance of the Spirit. This will become fully explicit only when, challenged by the *Tropikoi*, he will be forced to reflect on the nature of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, the present piece of research presents new horizons for better understanding a key player such as Athanasius.

Serapionbrief des Athanasios von Alexandria als pneumatologisches Programm," *VigChr* 26 (1972): 188–199; idem, "La notion de la Trinité à visée pansotériologique chez Origène et son déplacement intra-ecclésial chez Athanase d'Alexandrie," in *Politique et théologie chez Athanase d'Alexandrie: actes du colloque de Chantilly, 23–25 septembre 1973* (ed. Charles Kannengiesser; Paris: Beauchesne, 1974), 295–304; idem, *Pneumatologica. Untersuchungen zum Geistverständnis im Johannesevangelium, bei Origenes und Athanasios von Alexandria* (Frankfurt am Main: Diagonal, 1973); Hermann J. Sieben, "Herméneutique de l'exégèse dogmatique d'Athanase," in *Politique et théologie chez Athanase d'Alexandrie: actes du colloque de Chantilly, 23–25 septembre 1973* (ed. Charles Kannengiesser; Paris: Beauchesne, 1974), 195–214; Martin Tetz, *Athanasiana. Zu Leben und Lehre des Athanasius* (ed. Wilhelm Geerlings and Dietmar Wyrwa; BZNW 78; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995); Thomas F. Torrance, "Spiritus Creator: A Consideration of the Teaching of St. Athanasius and St. Basil," in *Theology in Reconstruction* (ed. Thomas F. Torrance; London: SCM, 1965), 209–228; Joseph Wolinski, "La pneumatologie des Pères Grecs avant le Concile de Constantinople I," in *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum: atti del Congresso teologico internazionale di pneumatologia: in occasione del 1600. anniversario del I Concilio di Costantinopoli e del 1550. anniversario del Concilio di Efeso: Roma, 22–26 marzo 1982* 1 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983), 127–162; Changseon Yeum, *Die Synode von Alexandrien (362). Die dogmengeschichtliche und kirchenpolitische Bedeutung für die Kirche im 4. Jahrhundert* (Münster: Lit, 2005).