

Pablo Argárate

# Feuer auf die Erde

*Der Heilige Geist bei Symeon dem Neuen Theologen (Hereditas Studien zur Alten Kirchengeschichte, Bd. 25, hg. v. E. Dassmann, H.-J. Vogt, Bonn: Borengässer Verlag, 2007), 279 Seiten*

*Reviewed by Daniel Munteanu*

This PhD Thesis submitted in 2003/2004 at the Catholic-Theological Faculty of Eberhard's Karl University of Tübingen, Germany, is actually not a systematic Pneumatology, but rather an introduction into the history of Hesychasmus, the life and the work of Saint Symeon the New Theologian (see 21f). The author focuses on the orthodox spirituality of Seeing of God as *spirituality of unio mystica*.

Pablo Argárate underlines the apophatic character of the Person of the Holy Spirit. In order to express this Saint Symeon used a fullness of pictures and names (28f.40f). Besides, the author doesn't take into account, in my opinion, that the pictures like light, peace, joy, gentleness etc. should be also understood as appropriations which don't circumscribe exclusively the Person of the Holy Spirit, but first of all the being of God as such (see Daniel Munteanu, *The Comforting Spirit of Love. Contribution to an Ecumenical Doctrine about the Holy Spirit based on the Trinitarian Theologies of J. Moltmann and D. Staniloae*, with a preface of Jürgen Moltmann Neukirchen-Vluyn in 2003, p. 77-91. Not only the Person of the Holy Spirit is to be perceived as light, peace etc. or as mercyfull, but the

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whole Trinity, i.e. the Person of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The author is absolutely aware that the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit is an inhabitation of the whole Trinity because the Holy Spirit leads us towards Christ who unites us with the Father (32.232). Anyways Argarate doesn't pick out as a central theme the differentiation between the inhabitation of the Spirit, of the Son and of the Father which could lead to a better understanding of the Person of the Holy Spirit. He writes, that the Holy Spirit is the „only tree of life“ that transforms „the soul of the person in a paradise“ (33), although the work of the Spirit can be never separated from the work of the Son and of the Father – *opera trinitatis indivisa sunt*. The Holy Trinity is not only „one in nature, being and will“ (41), but also in its work indivisible.

The author doesn't succeed in my opinion in pointing to the distinguishing mark of the Holy Spirit. How does the Spirit differ from the Father and from the Son? Instead, he follows quite faithfully the metaphors of Saint Symeon the New Theologian and misses, besides, a trinitarian and theological analysis without which none trinitarian Pneumatology is possible. Though he defines the Holy Spirit as a „donator of holiness“ (246), however, he doesn't point the connexion between the christological Pneumatology and pneumatological Christologie.

Argarate striates the topic of innertrinitarian relations and speaks of "processions", although the procession of the Holy Spirit (*ekporeusis*) is different from the birth of the Son from the Father (*genesis*) and may not be blurred by an all-inclusive concept - see in addition J. Moltmann, *Trinität und Reich Gottes. Zur Gotteslehre* (Munich: Kaiser 1980), p. 204f.

However, this work is absolutely welcome as an introduction to the theology of Saint Symeon the New Theologian, because it offers a direct contact with many texts of Symeon as for example regarding the connection between the work of the Holy Spirit and the Sacraments, the Church, the receipt of the Spirit, the renewal, the conversion of the person and the creation. It is an investigation of the texts of Saint Symeon the New Theologian which have a special pneumatological weighting. One can appreciate this book indeed as a preliminary work for a systematic analysis of the Pneumatology of Saint Symeon the New Theologian.