

EDITORIAL

Most of the articles in this edition of *Scriptura* derive from a conference of the Theological Society of South Africa that was held at the University of the Western Cape from 20-22 June 2001. The topic of the conference was "Whither does the Wind blow? South African reflections on the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Christ". This topic calls for some clarification.

The relationship between the work of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit remains one of the most important theological debates. The famous *filioque* clause continues to divide the East and the West. It is the subject of ongoing ecumenical debates, for example within the context of the Faith and Order initiatives. Remarkably, theological debates between the North and the South are also often influenced by diverse Christological and / or pneumatological orientations. In the South African context, a tension is evident between mainline and evangelical churches (derived from the North) with their strong Christological and ecclesiological emphasis (the Spirit completes the work of Christ through the church of Jesus Christ) and a variety of other movements that tend to emphasise the freedom of the Spirit to "blow wherever it wants to". These movements include, to a lesser or a greater extent, a variety of indigenous theologies ("God's Spirit was here in South Africa before Christ came"), Pentecostal theologies, including African Pentecostalism (the free gifts of the Spirit), liberation theologies (the political work of the Spirit outside the church), feminist theologies (the feminine face of the Spirit as a counter to a male Christ), religious pluralism (the universality of the Spirit is preferred to the exclusiveness of Christ) and perhaps also ecological theologies (the cosmic scope of the Spirit's presence). The spread of Orthodox Christianity in South Africa (especially in its Coptic and Ethiopian forms) may offer a distinct, and perhaps illuminating position within this tension.

Of course, most Christians would agree that Christ and the Spirit are intimately related to one another, but the way in which this is understood nevertheless often leads to tensions. It is important to address this tension precisely because the underlying theological assumptions usually remain implicit. It has to be addressed at its theological roots, namely the relationship between the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit. In this way the classic *filioque* debate can be revisited amidst the very real challenges that the South African context presents.

The articles included in this volume of *Scriptura* may be regarded as diverse attempts to respond to this challenge. Klaus Nürnberger's stimulating if controversial article gathers pneumatological insights from various Biblical trajectories. Brian Gaybba develops a trinitarian theology in which the Spirit is understood in terms of

the category of love. Bernd Oberdorfer's contribution provides a concise and thorough account of ecumenical debates on the *filioque* controversy. Other articles included in this volume draw from the insights of some of the conversations partners of the contributors, e.g. Hauerwas (Koopman), Miskotte (Meyer), Leonardo Boff (Conradie). The contribution of Ronell Bezuidenhout reflects on a public theology in the South African context while Piet Naude critically discusses the significance of the project of the World Council of Churches to confess the one Christian faith on the basis of the Nicene creed.

These contributions, valuable as they are, clearly remain inconclusive do address the penetrating theological questions mentioned above. It remains necessary to reflect on the relationship between Christology and pneumatology with reference to the many theological traditions in the South African context, including African indigenous theology, Pentecostal theology, feminist theology, black theology, liberation theology, ecological theology, ecumenical theology and Orthodox theology. This debate may also have significant implications for the ongoing dialogue between Christians and people from other religious traditions. This is indeed a challenge that the scholarly community in South Africa can ill afford not to address.

Ernst M Conradie
Associate Editor: *Scriptura*