

THE PNEUMATIC PERSON OF CHRIST

by Kerry S. Robichaux

It has been the task of the Christian church for the last fifteen hundred years to hold in mind, singly and cohesively, the dual affirmations of Christian faith concerning the person of Christ, that He is at once both complete God and perfect man. The task has never been easy. Even for the framers of these affirmations—the champions of Chalcedon—the difficulties were anything but small. The Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) forged the decisive language that has now long dictated our understanding concerning the person of Christ: “one hypostasis in two natures.” Yet the departure of the bishops from the council marked the beginning of the church’s uneasy journey in search of a proper understanding of who Christ actually is. The proceedings of the council were still in vivid, living memory when much of the eastern wing of Christianity began to return to previous suspicions concerning the two natures in Christ. The simpler and more easily grasped concept of one divine person whose divine nature had absorbed His humanity and who thus now possessed only one nature certainly held great attraction. This monophysitism (from Greek for “one nature”) soon again

prevailed in certain fringes of the eastern church. Elsewhere, though officially and nominally the greater majority of the church, both East and West, held faithfully to the declarations of Chalcedon, a pronounced uneasiness concerning the relationship of the human and divine in Christ began to exist. It has remained a constant undercurrent in theology to this day.

Today it is the vogue to read or hear of “the crisis of Chalcedon” or of “Chalcedon abandoned,” as modern theologians cast away allegiance to their fifth-century forebears in search of new Christologies. It appears that at the root of the discontent is the feeling that the Chalcedonian settlement is merely a Hellenic construct that far surpasses both the explicit statements and the implicit concepts of the New Testament.¹ Considering the banner declaration of Chalcedon, that is, “one hypostasis in two natures,” we can easily sympathize with the complaint. Chalcedonian *hypostasis* is perhaps far from the New Testament conceptually, and *nature* can only justifiably be said to appear once in the New Testament with the kind of denotation that the Chalcedonian bishops understood (2 Pet. 1:4), and in that one instance Peter does not use it in reference to the person of Christ. However, while I do not feel that Chalcedon goes beyond the New Testament conceptually, even though it necessarily goes beyond it linguistically, it is not my intention here to come to its defense. For all its propriety regarding the person of Christ, Chalcedon suffers from some inherent weaknesses. These, probably more than complaints about Hellenic theology, motivate the new Christologies.

Chalcedon and the Spirit

A particular weakness in the Chalcedonian settlement is its lack of attention to the Spirit in relation to the person of Christ. It is here that Chalcedon is especially out of touch with the message of the New Testament, and because of that, we should reconsider the Christological inheritance that Chalcedon has passed on to us. In this article I wish to revisit those texts of the New Testament that detail for us the relationship between Christ and the Spirit, and present some impacts these should have on our understanding of who Christ is, both in incarnation and in resurrection.

However, it would be unkind to fault the bishops at Chalcedon for not attending more carefully to the relationship

between Christ and the Spirit since their primary goal was to combat Nestorian and Eutychian influences in the church. Nestorianism viewed Christ as two persons, the divine Son of God and the man Jesus, under one outward guise. Thus, to those of Nestorian persuasion the one figure in the Gospels was actually two beings under the cover of the Lord's physical body. Eutyches and his adherents, on the other hand, perceived only one person, the Logos of God, with only one nature, the divine nature that had absorbed the Lord's human nature. To them the one figure in the Gospels was the person of God whose nature was also single, that is, a divinity that had absorbed humanity into it.² Both extremes were soundly rejected by Chalcedon because in the person of Christ, they maintained, we should perceive only one existent being (one hypostasis, or more simply, one person), the Logos of God, who existed in two perfect and complete natures, the divine and the human. They condemned anyone who divided the person or confounded the natures, and thus for posterity left behind the classic formula "one hypostasis in two natures." Their emphasis was on the relationship between the divine and human in Christ, and hence they were little concerned about the exact disposition of Christ's divine being. The view that prevailed because of Chalcedon is termed a Logos Christology, because the one hypostasis or person of the God-man is the Logos of God, the second of the Divine Trinity.

While the concern of the bishops at Chalcedon was the relationship of the human and divine in the person of Christ and not the relationship of the Son to the Spirit, the Chalcedonian declarations have shaped later Christian thought to the extent that we may find it unusual to even consider the Spirit in relation to the Son as we evoke our Christologies. To a great extent, because of Chalcedon some more naturally think of Christ as the independent Son of God become man and possessive of both divine and human natures. Many of the new Christologies are reactions to this view of "the independent Son" and attempt to better incorporate the definite tendency of the New Testament to relate the Spirit to the Son both in His incarnation and resurrection. It would be inappropriate to the scope of this article to review the speculations of even the major new Christologies,³ but in order to clarify my thesis I think it is worthwhile to first visit what is called Spirit Christology and to bring it in contrast with the position I wish to present.

Spirit Christology

Spirit Christology has to do with the identity of the divine in Christ. Chalcedon identified the Logos as that which was divine in Christ and is thus characterized as espousing a Logos Christology. Spirit Christology identifies the Spirit as the divine in Christ. It is certainly not a novel concept but dates back to the second century when it appears to

have been a prevailing view concerning Christ's divinity. My primary reason for singling out Spirit Christology is that it depends on many of the New Testament texts that my position also seeks to attend to. These texts have troubled theologians for some time because they seem to confuse the persons of the Trinity, against the norms of classical theology. I list the key texts here but will defer discussion of them until I have addressed the major tenets of Spirit Christology and my complaints about them.

But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you. (Rom. 8:9-11)

And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit. (2 Cor. 3:17-18)

The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit. (1 Cor. 15:45b)

Actually, it is because of texts such as these that the second-century church was attracted to Spirit Christology in the first place. Later theology, particularly that of the Nicene era, abandoned Spirit Christology in favor of Logos Christology for reasons that I will discuss below. Hence, Logos Christology prevails to this day. However, a number of modern theologians have revisited Spirit Christology both because of such New Testament texts and because of logical concerns about Logos Christology. I would like to review these concerns first, before turning to a discussion regarding these texts.

The greatest concern has been over the seat of personality in the person of Christ, and the question has been raised: If the hypostasis, or subjective center, of Christ is the Logos-Son, how can we reasonably say that Christ is a perfect man? Can there be a perfect man without a human seat of personality?⁴ The affirmation of Chalcedon is that Christ was, as to personal identity, God yet nevertheless fully man. In their formulation, personhood (technically, hypostasis) was not a necessary attribute of a human being; hence, the person of God could be a man, fully and completely. Numerous theologians, ancient and modern, have questioned this conception of a human being because by this concept, they argue, Christ is a human being unlike any of us and thus not consubstantial with us. The obvious implication is that our redemption is endangered if Christ is not truly one of us. Our redemption depends

on Christ being both God and man, and to many theologians Logos Christology offers a view of Christ that lacks a genuine human being.

Spirit Christology hopes to avoid this problem by asserting that Christ was hypostatically a human being, that is, that His personal identity was that of the man Jesus, and was thus most genuinely human and consubstantial with us. G. W. H. Lampe points out that "Spirit Christology must be content to acknowledge that the personal subject of the experience of Jesus Christ is a man. The hypostasis is not the Logos incarnate but a human being" (124). Logos Christology can boldly declare that "God died for our sins," because God the Son was the personal subject of the redemptive sufferings, even though the locus of those sufferings was indeed His humanity. Spirit Christology, however, must be "content to acknowledge" that it was merely a man who died, albeit One who was indeed divine. Further, in Spirit Christology the divinity of Christ obtains by virtue of the Spirit's indwelling, a phenomenon well-attested in the Old Testament and thus not outside the normal mode of God's previous operation. There is no need to speak of an incarnation in this Christology, because the person resides in the humanity of Christ, not in His divinity, and thus the divine person is not to be understood as having been incarnated. Rather, it is more appropriate to appeal to possession by the Spirit of God or to indwelling and inspiration by the Spirit because the human person is the subject of Christ and all His experiences are relative to a human personhood.

There are particular problems with Spirit Christology that should persuade us, as they did the early church, to reject it. First, although Spirit Christology avoids the two personal centers of Nestorianism, its human hypostasis is troubling. John's Gospel makes it clear that the personal subject of the God-man is the Logos of God, who existed from eternity with God and as God (1:1, 10-11, 14). The great revelation that Peter was blessed by the Father to see was that Jesus is "the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16-17). Whereas outwardly men saw Jesus as any one of a number of persons (Matt. 16:13-14), the Father had revealed to Peter that the person he followed was in fact the Son of God. These are nothing less than

hypostatic statements concerning Christ, even though *hypostasis* was a term only later applied to describe the nature of these statements, and they identify the Logos-Son as the hypostasis of Christ. Short of blotting out texts such as these from the New Testament, we can only with difficulty deny that the New Testament declares, if only occasionally, that the personal subject of Christ is the Logos and Son of God. Perhaps Lampe is suggesting that we blot out these texts in his defense of Spirit Christology:

The Chalcedonians brought to their discussions, and ultimately to their declarations, the conviction that the New Testament was the true source of all our understanding of Christ. They did not take upon themselves the ominous responsibility of explaining how Christ could be "one hypostasis in two natures"; rather, they limited themselves to making what they believed were declarations founded on the biblical data.

A christology of this kind has the advantage of enabling us to dispense with certain mythical concepts, such as a pre-existent Son (for it is the possessing and inspiring Spirit that is the eternally pre-existing deity which operates humanly in Christ), a descent from heaven of a personal being who chooses to be born and become an infant, a divine being who may either exercise or voluntarily suspend his omniscience. (124)

Certainly it is easy to assign difficulties of faith to the category of myth and to come forth from the exercise with the feeling that somehow rationality has helped us through. But like the Chalcedonians of the fifth century, many of us today are not ready to dismantle the New Testament simply because texts within it do not conform to our rational experiences of what human beings are. The Chalcedonians brought to their discussions, and ultimately to their declarations, the conviction that the New Testament was the true source of all our understanding of Christ. They did not take upon themselves the ominous responsibility of explaining how Christ could be "one hypostasis in two natures"; rather, they limited themselves to making what they believed were declarations founded on the biblical data, even if those declarations were couched in admittedly Hellenic terms. Chalcedon is criticized for presuming to know what only God can know, that is, the mode of the Logos's existence prior to His becoming a man (Pannenberg 34-35). Yet, as Olaf Hansen points out, a Christology that locates Christ's personal center in His humanity "suffers from the presumption that it knows what 'humanity' is" (174). Does indeed identifying the person of the God-man as the Logos-Son dehumanize Christ? It is certainly beyond rational thought that God could be a man, but it is not beyond the mystery of faith, as Chalcedon was content to accept.

Further, Spirit Christology suffers from a crippling disability to distinguish Christ from all other persons who had been possessed, indwelt, or inspired by the Spirit of God, particularly those in the Old Testament. The ancient church was equally suspicious of such a characterization of the divine in Christ and therefore opted for and fiercely defended Logos Christology. Claims of consistency with God's previous operation in the Old Testament serve only to undermine the uniqueness of Christ in respect to our salvation. While the necessary base for Christ's redemptive sacrifice abides in His being fully human, the perpetual efficacy of that sacrifice, and thus its intrinsic value, derives from His being fully God. Adherents of Spirit Christology argue that for our redemption Christ needed to be only consubstantial with God, not hypostatically God, and that Spirit-possession provides as much while preserving the integrity of His humanness by locating personal subjecthood in His humanity. In other words, Christ did not need to be God to the extent of being personally God, but He did need to be man to the extent of being personally man. Adherents of Logos Christology assert the reverse, that for our redemption Christ did indeed need to be God to the extent of being personally God, but He did not need to be man to the extent of being personally man. The issue boils down simply to this: *Who* was the subject of the sacrifice for our sins? Chalcedon unequivocally declared that God died for our sins but that He did so in His humanity, not in His divinity. Those who accept Spirit Christology affirm that it was the man Jesus who died for our sins and that the Spirit breathes efficacy into His sacrifice. But if Spirit Christology is correct, how does the man Jesus differ from even the most "spiritual" of the Old Testament prophets, or even any of the New Testament apostles, so that His sacrifice indeed would be unique enough to warrant its superiority over the death of a mere martyr? The ancient church could find no distinction in a Christ who was hypostatically merely a man, for the message of the gospel was that more than a mere man had accomplished our redemption. Rather, their faith answered to the good news not only that God had accepted the sacrifice but more importantly that He Himself had been the agentive subject of it. Again, their faith was not explicative but declaratory and based upon a perspective that they asserted was found in the Scriptures.

Christ—A Pneumatic Person

Spirit Christology does not, I think, offer a viable alternative to Logos Christology in that it tends to disregard those texts in the New Testament that locate Christ's hypostatic center in the Divine Person. Yet, to its credit, it capitalizes on those texts that describe the relationship of the Spirit to the Son in the person of Christ. Logos Christology does not necessarily exclude these texts, but its strong emphasis on the hypostasis of the Logos as Christ's personal center has conceptually eclipsed this relationship.

Adherents of Spirit Christology have begged for a more careful understanding of pneumatology in forging Christology, but this has been in the hope that ultimately Christology would settle on the Spirit as the full presence of the divine in Christ. What I wish to recommend is that we come to Christology with a more careful understanding of theology in its most classical sense, that is, in its reference to the relationships within the Trinity, particularly between the Son and the Spirit.

Elsewhere I have reviewed the basic assertions of Trinitarian theology relative to Christ's incarnation and resurrection ("The Processed and Consummated Triune God" 9). Here I wish to recall only one of those assertions so as to remind my readers that in any tenable Christology, the theology of the Trinity should be taken as a base and thoroughly respected. The paramount assertion concerning the Trinity is that the three, while eternally distinct, are never separate. (See *Distinct but Not Separate*, next page.) This point escapes a number of writers who attempt to deal with the New Testament data that relate the Spirit to Christ. While the subject (or hypostasis) of the incarnated God is the second of the Trinity, the Logos-Son, He did not by any means dwell among humankind as an independent being. Again, in another place I have reviewed the clear testimony of the Scriptures concerning the relationship of Christ and the Spirit in the incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection of Christ ("Christ, the Spirit, and Glory" 9). Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35); thus, even though He was hypostatically the Logos of God (John 1:1, 14), intrinsically He existed in relation to the Spirit. As the Evangelist says, He was "of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 1:20). When He began His public ministry, the Spirit descended upon Him to anoint Him for His work (3:16; Luke 4:18). This was not, as some have speculated, God adopting the man Jesus as His Son, for from conception He was God both hypostatically and intrinsically; rather, this was an anointing with the Spirit to equip Him economically for His ministry. Thus, while He was in subject and identity the Logos-Son, He worked not as an independent being but by the Spirit of God. Conceptually, we may be inclined to separate the Son from the Spirit and from the Father, and consider that the Son was on earth acting purely in and by His own hypostasis. Theologically, however, we cannot hold this notion. The Son did not do His own work, nor could He (John 5:19, 30; 8:28), for all His work was sourced in the Father. Further, all the work that He did, He did by the Spirit (Matt. 12:28; Luke 10:21). Even in dying on the cross, He acted by the Spirit (Heb. 9:14), and in resurrecting, He was fully empowered by the Spirit (1 Pet. 3:18; Rom. 8:11). Certainly, He was the subject of every action of the incarnated God, but He was not independent of God the Father and God the Spirit.

After Christ's resurrection His pneumatic existence is even more clearly perceived, and to this the apostles clearly

testified. It should not surprise us that in resurrection Christ is even more obviously pneumatic. In incarnation, while on the earth among humankind, He was certainly a pneumatic person, as has been shown; in resurrection He would not cease to be pneumatic. If anything, the pneumatic nature of His incarnation would be heightened in resurrection, and this appears to be consistent with the message of the apostles when they speak of Christ in resurrection. F. F. Bruce (125-130) has carefully shown from the New Testament the relationship between the activities

of Christ in resurrection and the activities of the Spirit. This relationship evidences the apostles' strong tendency to equate Christ's work in resurrection with that of the Spirit. Here I wish to relay what Professor Bruce has so elegantly presented, with a few additional scriptural supports here and there. Paul tells us that once we enter the Christian life, we are washed, we are sanctified, and we are justified both "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). It is the *Christian* life that we enter, and hence it is a life of full

DISTINCT BUT NOT SEPARATE

Across the centuries the Christian church has held that the three of the Divine Trinity are distinct but not separate.¹ Since today many have seemingly lost track of this notion, as evidenced in their writings, we provide here some highlights of this affirmation. Among the early Fathers we find:

Bear always in mind that this is the rule of faith which I profess; by it I testify that the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit are inseparable from each other.

Tertullian in *Against Praxeas*, 9, cited in *The Teachings of the Church Fathers*. Ed. by John R. Willis, S.J. New York: Herder and Herder, 1966, p. 177.

The Godhead is, to speak concisely, undivided in separate Persons.

Gregory Nazianzen in *The Fifth Theological Oration, On the Holy Spirit*, sec. 14, in NPNF VII:318.

For it is in no wise possible to entertain the idea of severance or division, in such a way as that the Son should be thought of apart from the Father, or the Spirit be disjoined from the Son. But the communion and the distinction apprehended in Them are, in a certain sense, ineffable and inconceivable, the continuity of nature being never rent asunder by the distinction of the hypostases, nor the notes of proper distinction confounded in the community of essence.

Basil of Caesarea in *Letters*, 38, cited in Willis, p. 185.

We hold the distinction, not the confusion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; a distinction without separation; a distinction without plurality; and thus we believe in Father, Son and Holy Spirit as each existing from and to eternity in this divine and wonderful Mystery.

Ambrose in *To Gratian, On the Christian Faith*, 4:8, cited in Willis, p. 185.

In the creeds we find even greater clarity and precision of expression on this matter:

Thus the three are one by nature, not as person. Nevertheless these three persons are not to be considered separable since, according to our belief, none of them ever existed or acted before another, after another, without another. For they are inseparable both in what they are and in what they do....For this reason we profess and believe that this Trinity is inseparable and distinct (*inconfusa*). We say, therefore, of these three persons, as our forefathers defined it, that they should be acknowledged, not separated....Therefore, neither do we confuse these three persons whose nature is one and inseparable, nor do we preach that they are in any way separable.

Symbol of the Eleventh Council of Toledo [675] in *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*. J. Neuner & J. Dupuis, 5th ed. London: Harper Collins Religious, 1991, pp. 113-114.

Among the Protestant confessions we read:

The three persons not confused, but distinct, and yet not separate, but of the same essence, equal in eternity and power.

Calvin et al., *The French Confession of Faith*, Art. 6 [1559], in *The Creeds of Christendom*. Ed. by Philip Schaff. Rev. by David S. Schaff. Harper and Row, 1931. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983, p. 363.

Notwithstanding we believe and teach that the same immense, one and indivisible God is in person inseparably and without confusion distinguished as Father, Son and Holy Spirit...

The Second Helvetic Confession, Ch. 3 [1566], in *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century*. Ed. by Arthur C. Cochrane. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966, p. 228.

¹We are grateful to Frank Hale for providing us with an in-depth historical survey of the church's long affirmation that the three of the Trinity are distinct but not separate. These excerpts are drawn from his survey.

relationship to Christ. Yet that relationship is rendered effective for us by the Spirit. Elsewhere, Paul refers to the saints, that is, the sanctified ones, as “those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. 1:2), while in another place he speaks of the believers as those “having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:16). The Holy Spirit is so termed not merely to indicate His own particular sanctity but more so to refer to His function to sanctify common sinners (2 Thes. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2), thus making them holy as He is. And yet, Paul refers to Christ as the sanctification of the saints (1 Cor. 1:30).

As believers, we enjoy a number of spiritual blessings, which the New Testament speaks of as deriving from the function of both Christ and the Spirit. Foremost among these is the great love that Christ has for us (Rom. 8:35; 2 Cor. 5:14; Eph. 3:19), but this “love of Christ” is imparted into us and made real to us by the Spirit; hence, Paul refers to it as “the love of the Spirit” (Rom. 15:30; cf. 5:5). The apostles speak of the believers joining in common fellowship with God. Paul says that we have been “called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9), and John declares that “our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). But this fellowship is also presented to us as “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor. 13:14) because it is distinctly the function of the Spirit to communicate the reality of Christ to us and thereby to bring us into actual union and communion with Him. On the one hand, Christ is the one reality in the universe (John 14:6, where we should understand *truth* in the sense of reality); on the other hand, the Spirit comes to us as “the Spirit of reality,” who guides us into all the reality, for He does not speak from Himself, but what He hears He speaks (16:13). He is the Spirit of reality because He glorifies the Son, who is the reality, receiving the things of the Son and declaring them to us (John 16:14).

By being brought into Christ through the Spirit, we enter into a marvelous freedom that Paul characterizes as being “in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 2:4). Later in the same Epistle he tells us that Christ has set us free to enjoy this freedom (5:1). In his second letter to the Corinthians, however, he tells us that this freedom is enjoyed “where the Spirit of the Lord is” (3:17). In writing to the Romans, he combines the function of the Spirit with this freedom in Christ: “The law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death” (8:2). These are not two freedoms that we enjoy but one reality, which Paul attributes here to Christ in one place and there to the Spirit in another.

Bruce also points us to both Christ and the Spirit as the source of illumination in our Christian life. In 1 Corinthians 2 Paul speaks of the way of the apostles’ ministry, that it was “not in persuasive words of wisdom” (v. 4); rather, he spoke “God’s wisdom in a mystery, ...which

none of the rulers of this age have known” (vv. 7, 8). These “depths of God” have been revealed to us, he says, “through the Spirit” (v. 10). We can know these things because the Spirit of God knows the things of God (v. 11). From this it appears that the Spirit gives us to know what He knows of God. But at the end of this section in his Epistle, Paul concludes by saying that “we have the mind of Christ” (v. 16), not the mind of the Spirit, and this gives us the way to know the mind of the Lord. The mind of Christ knows the mind of the Lord, and because we have the Spirit, who searches the depths of God, we have the mind of Christ.

Certainly a major purpose of God in sending His Son was that Christ would bring us back to the Father. Yet our initial reconciliation (Rom. 5:10-11) is not the end of our being brought to Him; we are constantly in need of Christ’s ministry to afford access to the Father. Paul and John refer to this ongoing ministry and relate it to both Christ and the Spirit. These apostles speak of advocacy for those times when we have sinned and of intercession for those times when we are weak. Before He died, the Lord Jesus told us that He would ask the Father and the Father would give another Comforter [Gk. *Parakletos*], even the Spirit of reality (John 14:16-17). There can be another Comforter because there was a first Comforter, who was the Lord Jesus Himself (cf. v. 1). While the Spirit was the second Comforter who was to come, the Lord promised that He Himself would not leave us as orphans but would come to us (v. 18). By this we understand that the Spirit’s coming as another Comforter is in reality the Son’s coming as the first Comforter. Today indeed Christ this Comforter is with us, not only serving to comfort us inwardly but also serving in that other capacity that *parakletos* suggests, as our Advocate before the Father. “If anyone sins,” John writes, “we have an Advocate [Gk. *Parakletos*] with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous” (1 John 2:1). As Advocate He intercedes for us, both on our behalf because of our failures and for our benefit because of our weaknesses. Paul declares that “it is Christ Jesus who died and, rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us” (Rom. 8:34); but only a few sentences before he also tells us that “the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (v. 26), and His intercession is effectual “because He intercedes for the saints according to God” (v. 27). Christ’s intercession is not separate from nor merely parallel to the Spirit’s intercession; rather, the Spirit’s intercession is Christ’s own intercession, for Christ and the Spirit function inseparably in the believers to bring them to the Father. In Ephesians 2:18 Paul speaks of this mutuality in function between Christ and the Spirit: “through Him [the Son] we both have access in one Spirit unto the Father.”

But reconciliation with and access to God are not the full

extent of the relationship that we have with the Father through Christ and the Spirit. More profoundly we have been made the very sons of God. In Galatians Paul tells us that we “are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (3:26), and this should not surprise us, since Christ is uniquely the Son of God. By our being brought into union with Him through faith, we enjoy the sonship. But in Romans Paul says that our being sons depends on the Spirit: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (8:14). Where Paul most clearly enunciates the sonship of the believers, he does so by relating the activity of both Christ and the Spirit in the believers:

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under law, that He might redeem those under law that we might receive the sonship. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father! (Gal. 4:4-6)

The Father sent forth the Son that we might be made sons, and because we now are sons, the Father sends forth not merely the Son nor merely the Spirit but more precisely the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, who now proclaims in our hearts, “Abba, Father!” Once it was the pneumatic Son during His earthly travail who cried out, “Abba Father” (Mark 14:36); now He again cries the same words in us through and as the Spirit of the Son, authenticating every believer as a son of God. We are sons of God not merely because we have been brought into union with the Son but also because the Spirit as the Spirit of the Son actuates that union and communicates to us Christ’s sonship for our participation therein.

Finally, our ultimate hope, the hope of glory, is none other than the very Christ who dwells in us (Col. 1:27). But again, Christ is not independently the hope of our glory, for the New Testament also testifies that the Spirit is a pledge within us for our ultimate glorification. We look to that day when our mortal bodies will be swallowed up by life and can trust that this will indeed happen because God “has given to us the Spirit as a pledge” (2 Cor. 5:4-5). This pledge, a seal of promise (Eph. 1:13) and a firstfruits (Rom. 8:23) of our full glory to come, is the Spirit, in whom Christ dwells within us as the hope of that glory.

These many passages from the New Testament should convince us that our Christian life derives from both Christ and the Spirit. But we should not be tempted to think that Christ has His freedom to offer and the Spirit His, that there is a love of Christ abiding in us and a love of the Spirit, that Christ does His work of sanctifying us and the Spirit His, and so on with “every spiritual blessing...in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). The blessings are in Christ but they are nonetheless Spiritual. These blessings are the one activity of the Triune God and come to us as one activity because the three are inseparable in their working. Just as in the Gospels the Son worked only through the Spirit, so also in the Epistles the Son works only through the Spirit. He was a pneumatic person in incarnation, and He is a pneumatic person in resurrection. By *pneumatic* I mean fully related to and involved with the Holy Spirit, not merely exhibiting a high spirituality but existing and working by the Spirit.

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The Key Texts

In light of what we have seen in the Gospels and the Epistles concerning the person of Christ, I wish to take up the key texts that Spirit Christologists consistently appeal to. Even though I do not think that these texts support the notions of Spirit Christology, especially when considered against the backdrop of the rest of the New Testament, they do speak of an intrinsic relationship between Christ and the Spirit, a relationship that Logos Christology too easily bypasses. The review of this relationship in the New Testament also helps us to better understand what Paul may have been getting at in writing these passages as he did. Many have come to these passages without regard for this relationship and have been governed more by what developed later in theology than by the full testimony of the Scriptures. Perhaps we can get back to an understanding of these texts that depend on this well-documented relationship. Romans 8:9-11 is the first of these key texts. I repeat the passage here for convenience:

But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who

raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

If we allow that from clause to clause Paul is referring to the Spirit's indwelling of the believers through a number of equivalent expressions—"dwells in you," "have," "is in you," "indwells you"—we find that the subject, that is, the hypostasis, of that indwelling is also expressed in a number of ways: "the Spirit of God," "the Spirit of Christ," "Christ," "the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead," and "His Spirit" [i.e., God's Spirit]. I think that we can safely assume that Paul is referring to the Spirit's indwelling in all these clauses. The question is: Who, according to these statements, is doing the indwelling? Clearly, both the Spirit, again, variously expressed, and Christ are the subject of the indwelling. This could be variously interpreted. We could understand (1) that the Spirit and Christ indwell the believers side by side; or (2) that the Spirit actually indwells the believers and by doing so represents Christ, who does not, in all actuality, indwell them; or (3) that Christ is now as He was in the Gospels, a pneumatic person, and because of that, when He indwells the believers, the Spirit must also be said to indwell them. The problem with the first and second interpretations is that they express a view of the Trinity that does not comply with the paramount Trinitarian assertion that I have stressed in this article, that the Son and the Spirit are distinct but not separate and that their action is inseparable and one. We cannot understand in this text that Christ is in the believers doing something while the Spirit is also in the believers doing something, and that the two actions are merely parallel. Worse, we cannot accept the notion that only the Spirit indwells the believers and that Christ does not, that the Spirit represents Christ, who is not actually present. This blatantly separates the hypostases and equals tritheism. Rather, if the Spirit indwells the believers, the Son is not separate from Him, and we must confess that Christ too indwells them, as Paul does in this passage. How then are we to understand this single indwelling of plural hypostases? Quite simply, the same way we understand God's single activity of plural hypostases in His Trinitarian existence (which in all honesty we can hardly say that we understand). As the Son and the Spirit relate to each other eternally in the Trinity, and as They relate to each other in the Gospels in the incarnation of God, so we must expect that They relate to each other in the present age in the believers. The only significant difference we can perceive is that in eternity we suspect that none of the three hypostases is emphasized over the others, that in the Gospels the second of the three hypostases is the subjective center of the incarnation, and that after Christ's resurrection the Spirit more commonly comes to the fore as the subject of God's activity in and with the believers. I appreciate Witness Lee's expression of this mystery when he categorizes the Trinity in the Gospels as "the Son with the Father by the Spirit" and in the Epistles as "the Spirit as the Son with the Father" (12-13).

Again, I wish to refer to F. F. Bruce in regard to this passage. Commenting on Romans 8:9-11, he writes:

In such statements, the indwelling Christ and the indwelling Spirit are practically interchangeable. The adverb *practically* is used here with its full force. Theoretically and in principle the indwelling Christ and the indwelling Spirit are distinguishable, but practically and in experience they cannot be separated. To obtain a rounded picture of Paul's doctrine of the Spirit, especially in relation to the ascended Christ, we must not concentrate on one set of texts and ignore the others but attain as comprehensive a conspectus as possible—primarily from his capital epistles. Paul was not a systematic theologian, and his thought and teaching cannot be organized into a neat and coherent system: attempts to do this regularly omit or do less than justice to features of value. Moreover, unlike Christian theologians of the post-Nicene era, he was free of all obligation to conform his language about Christ and the Spirit to established credal formulations. (125-126)

I find Bruce's comments on Paul's "doctrine of the Spirit" particularly cogent. But I must take issue with how he relates Paul's thought to later theological expression. We need not excuse Paul for failing to distinguish theoretically between Christ and the Spirit while he rendered them "practically" inseparable in our experience. The fact of the matter is that they *are* inseparable both theologically and experientially, and this is the right confession of later theology. I heartily agree with Bruce when he says that "we must not concentrate on one set of texts and ignore the others" and that "Paul was not a systematic theologian" (most fortunately!). But in Paul there is, I think, a "coherent system" of thought regarding Christ and the Spirit. It may be that his view is not "neat," if by *neat* Bruce means "not able to be assigned to separable categories." The real fault is, as Bruce implies, later theology's tendency to "omit or do less than justice to features of value," features that comprise Paul's coherent view of Christ and the Spirit. The systems we have derived from Nicaea and Chalcedon (and I do wish to emphasize the word *derived*) routinely exclude the full compass of what the New Testament says regarding Christ. Logos Christology is a classic example in that its endeavors to identify the Son as the hypostasis of the God-man fail to admit the fuller expression of the New Testament regarding the Son, that even though He is hypostatically the Son, He is always intrinsically related to the Spirit.

Another key text showing the relationship between Christ and the Spirit is 2 Corinthians 3:17-18:

And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. But we all with unveiled face,

beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

Akin to what he did in Romans 8:9-11, Paul here also seems to use the titles *Lord* and *Spirit* interchangeably, and some particular difficulty exists in the first clause, where Paul seems to blur the distinction between the Son and the Spirit. Able attempts have been made to allay the difficulty here by shifting the referent of *Lord* from the Son either to Yahweh of the Old Testament or to the Spirit in the New Testament. Gordon Fee is easily the ablest on the latter. Arguing against the notion that Paul here is saying that Christ is the Spirit, Fee asserts that Paul should be understood as saying something like this: “What I mean by *the Lord* [of v. 16] is the Spirit.” He perceives some proof of this in the next clause, for in using the phrase *the Spirit of the Lord*, Paul is, according to Fee, removing “any potential misunderstandings of the previous clause” (312). Fee writes:

[Paul] therefore circumvents an absolute identification of the Spirit with Yahweh (probably) or with Christ. Thus: “in interpreting ‘the Lord’ in the Exodus passage as referring to the Spirit, I [Paul] do not mean that the Spirit is Lord; rather, the Spirit is, as always, the Spirit *of the Lord*.” (312)

But this plays havoc with verse 16: “Whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” Are we to understand that the referent of *the Lord* here is the Spirit and hence that we turn to the Spirit to have the veil taken away rather than to Christ? Paul has just declared that “the veil is being done away with in Christ” (v. 14). Does Paul now wish us to understand that when we turn our hearts to the Lord, our turning is to the Spirit and not to the Christ in whom the veil is being done away with? Apart from the fact that such an interpretation strongly concurs with Professor Fee’s own theological background, it does not concur with other passages in the New Testament. In Acts 9:34-35 many in Lydda and Sharon “turned to the Lord” after the paralytic was healed when Peter declared, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you.” Likewise, in Acts 11:20-21 a number of people heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and turned to the Lord. In these places turning to the Lord would best be construed as

referring to turning to Christ, and rightly so, for the object of our faith is Christ. It would seem strange for Paul in 2 Corinthians 3 to advise us to turn to the Spirit, instead of to Christ, but it would not seem strange, as we have seen, for him to bring the Spirit into very close reference with Christ.

What then is Paul saying when he tells us that “the Lord is the Spirit”? It is not, I think in agreement with Fee, that Paul is advancing Spirit Christology. But it would be very much unlike Paul to present Christ as separate in being and function from the Spirit or to present the Spirit as separate in being and function from Christ. It certainly appears that his habit was to relate Christ and the Spirit as one functioning God in the believers. We turn to Christ, and the veil is taken away, because in Christ the veil is being done away with; yet the Christ we turn to is not separate from the Spirit, who as His Spirit, renders to us, actualizes for us, the freedom that is Christ. And more importantly, our gazing upon Christ’s glorious image transforms us into the same glorious image, yet that transformation is authored not simply by Christ the Lord nor simply by the Spirit of the Lord but by the Lord Spirit (literally, “the Lord the Spirit”), a unique term that captures best the distinction between Christ and the Spirit while maintaining their absolute inseparability.

As the Son and the Spirit relate to each other eternally in the Trinity, and as they relate to each other in the Gospels in the incarnation of God, so we must expect that they relate to each other in the present age in the believers. The only significant difference is that in the Gospels the second of the three hypostases is the subjective center of the incarnation, and that after Christ’s resurrection the Spirit more commonly comes to the fore as the subject of God’s activity in and with the believers.

This brings us to the final key text that shows the relationship of Christ and the Spirit, 1 Corinthians 15:45b: “The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.” Typically, commentators have understood this to mean anything but that the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit, no doubt motivated by concerns for classical Trinitarian theology. Fee, for example, writes, “Paul’s *reason* for saying that Christ became ‘a life-giving πνεῦμα’ is that the LXX had said of Adam that he became ‘a living ψυχή.’ That is, the *language of the citation* called for the *parallel language about Christ*” (265, Fee’s own emphasis). Thus, Fee argues that the statement is rhetorical in nature and not to be taken with the full theological implications that are suggested. Fee is able to skirt the meaning of the words in the text only through very complex arguments that appeal more to Greek exegetes than normal readers, even, I would contend, readers of Ancient Greek.

Fee's argument (264-267) runs like this: Paul's striking statement is not at all Christological but purely soteriological and provides proof derived from Scripture that "just as there is a ψυχικόν body, there is also a πνευματικόν body," contra the Gnostic influences in Corinth. The scriptural basis, Genesis 2:7 from the LXX, however, speaks of Adam becoming "a living ψυχή," which Paul understands as implying that Adam's body was ψυχικόν. In presenting Christ's resurrected body as an argument against Gnostic influences, Paul was constrained by the language of his citation to render his statement concerning the last Adam in parallel fashion, providing the noun form (πνεῦμα) instead of the adjective form (πνευματικόν), which would have better made his point. Hence, in saying that "the last Adam became a life-giving πνεῦμα," Paul is implying that Christ's resurrected body is πνευματικόν. What Fee wishes us to accept is that the implications alone are valid in this context, not the statements themselves as they are presented. Hence, we are not to make anything of the words *life-giving Spirit* as they are themselves, but are instead to attend to the implied meaning as the only meaning. One problem with this, however, is that Genesis 2:7 does not simply imply that Adam had a ψυχικόν body but more directly means that he was a living ψυχή. In fact, this precedent of calling a human being a soul is elsewhere followed in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen. 46:27; Exo. 1:5; Josh. 10:39). If Paul intends to imply that Christ's resurrected body was a πνευματικόν one, he would not have been so oblivious to the use of language to expect that his readers would not understand something about the Spirit from the way he uttered his statement. Further, if Fee is correct in finding the "real" meaning of 1 Corinthians 15:45, few will latch on to it, since arriving at it has been only through complex Greek exegesis. I honestly doubt that even the Corinthians themselves would have recognized Fee's purported meaning here. On the whole, Fee's argument, though purely a linguistic one, is grossly antilanguage, anticommunication, because it depends on the notion that the meaning and the surface form are grossly at odds with each other here, and because it assumes that "real" meaning comes only to those who distill it intensely.⁵

Not all scholars skirt the apparent meaning in Paul's words. Bruce, as able a Greek exegete as Fee, finds that there is, *prima facie*, something to the phrase as chosen by Paul and that it was not chosen for stylistic reasons alone. "Paul," he says, "knows of only one life-giving Spirit, and that is 'the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 8:2)" (124). Bruce's point is that Paul was motivated not merely by trying to balance the phrase *living soul* but also by his understanding of the relationship between the resurrected Christ and the Holy Spirit. Jürgen Moltmann is also more respectful of the value of Paul's statement as uttered:

What Paul means is evidently that the risen Christ lives

from, and in, the eternal Spirit, and that the divine Spirit of life acts in and through Him. Through this reciprocal perichoresis of mutual indwelling Christ becomes the "life-giving Spirit" and the Spirit becomes "the Spirit of Jesus Christ." (67)

As I am suggesting in this article, Moltmann brings to the issue a Trinitarian perspective, appealing to the perichoresis that exists among the hypostases. In other words, it can easily be said of Christ that He has become the life-giving Spirit because Christ and the Spirit coinhere. In resurrection, Christ is not merely made spiritual; rather, His entire mode of existence and the complete compass of His activity in the believers are fully expressed and fully communicated now by the Spirit.

After reviewing Paul's understanding of the relationship between Christ and the Spirit, and after attending to the mutuality of action between Christ and the Spirit in the Gospels, I do not find it particularly surprising that Paul would declare that the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit. It seems so very consonant with the New Testament's presentation of Christ as a pneumatic person. It does grate at our classical notions of theology, however, particularly in that, taken at face value, it might imply that the second has ceased to be distinct from the third or, even worse, has ceased to exist at all. But these are our Nicene anxieties and not Paul's. Paul knew the life-giving Spirit, not merely as a truth to be proclaimed but as an experience to be enjoyed, and Paul knew the resurrected Christ, not merely as a historical fact but as a continual and vivid presence. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul states what he had come to realize, that the historical, resurrected Christ had become the experiential, life-giving Spirit. We should not expect Paul to have clarified himself and specify that Christ indeed still exists and is distinct from the Spirit, especially after he has said as much in the preceding pages of his same Epistle (cf. 12:4-11 among others).

A Christology of the Pneumatic Son

We can never hope to fully understand the person of Christ. In a sense, we can be more secure in our understanding of the mystery of the Trinity than we can in our understanding of the mystery of Christ. What we know about humanity actually only complicates things for us and makes us wonder even more deeply than our speculations about the eternal Trinity allow us to do. Christology continues to grapple with even the most basic issues concerning this wonderful God-man, trying somehow to fit together the simple declarations of the Scriptures. The New Testament tells us that Christ is both God and man, and indications are that hypostatically He was the Logos-Son, not merely the man Jesus. The New Testament also tells us that the incarnate God was among us with the Father and by the Spirit, and putting the various facts together

we understand that He was a pneumatic person, that is, to be identified as the Logos but not to be separated from the Spirit. Of course, the writers of the New Testament did not attempt to explain how Christ could be the Logos hypostatically and at the same time live and work by the Spirit intrinsically; as always they simply heralded the truth that they had gained through revelation and experience.

Logos Christology rightly preserves the divine hypostasis in the person of Christ but too easily ignores the implications of the all-important Trinitarian assertion that the three are distinct but not separate. We must never lose sight of the kind of existence that the Logos, as One of the Divine Triad, has, and in incarnation He was as much the pneumatic Logos in that He lived and worked among humankind by and with the Spirit. In the Gospels every action of the God-man takes the Logos as its hypostasis; He is the subject of the incarnation, of the redemptive sacrifice, and of the resurrection. Nowhere is the Spirit assigned to any of the incarnate God's actions as the personal subject. Thus, as Chalcedon confesses, He was "one hypostasis in two natures," and we must concur that the hypostasis was that of the Logos; yet equally we must confess His relationship to the Spirit. In resurrection, however, the activities of God, at least as they occur in the believers, are not as clearly distinguished hypostatically. This is simply the way the New Testament goes after Christ's resurrection. Actions of God are in one place clearly assigned to Christ's agency, whereas in other places they are assigned to the Spirit's. The hypostases of God, particularly of Christ and of the Spirit, are not to be confused by any means, regardless of the processes that the Logos underwent; but the activities of Christ, which before His resurrection were solely His hypostatically, often clearly belong hypostatically to the Spirit as well after Christ's resurrection. These are the "raw" data of the New Testament, and any comprehensive Christology must respect them. Spirit Christology offers little in the way of a solution, but it does turn our attention to the genuine participation of the Spirit in the person of Christ, and we must be thankful to its proponents for that. In the end what is needed is less of the extremes of both Spirit Christology and Logos Christology. Here I propose a Christology of the pneumatic Son that respects who He is both from eternity and in time as best we know Him according to the New Testament. AFC

Notes

¹See, for example, Morna D. Hooker, in her article "Chalcedon and the New Testament."

²J. N. D. Kelly most accurately describes the position of Eutyches in these terms (331-333). The notion of a *tertium quid*, by

which a third nature is supposed, a nature neither wholly divine nor wholly human, and which is frequently attributed to Eutyches, is actually a derived one and not precisely his confession.

³A brief but insightful presentation of new trends in Christology is Klaas Runia's *The Present-day Christological Debate*.

⁴See, for example, a full treatment of the question in G. W. H. Lampe's article "The Holy Spirit and the Person of Christ" (118-120).

⁵Another critique of Fee's arguments, from other perspectives, has been put forth by my colleague Roger Good in an earlier issue of *A & C* (Good 48-50).

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