

When Does the Spirit Give Resurrection Life?

The Holy Spirit's Agency in the Resurrection of the Dead: An Exegetico-Theological Study of 1 Corinthians 15:44b-49 and Romans 8:9-13, by Scott Brodeur. Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2004.

Scott Brodeur's book *The Holy Spirit's Agency in the Resurrection of the Dead* (hereafter *Agency*), the publication of his 1994 doctoral dissertation at the Pontificia Università Gregoriana, investigates the role of the Holy Spirit in resurrection in two brief passages, 1 Corinthians 15:44b-49 and Romans 8:9-13, focusing on the resurrection of the dead but neglecting the role of the Holy Spirit in giving resurrection life today. *Agency* attempts to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit, rather than the Son or the Father, has the primary role as the agent of the resurrection, which it considers has been neglected in Catholic scholarship. *Agency* is divided into two sections that deal with these two blocks of verses respectively. Brodeur approaches these texts in what he calls an exegetico-theological study. Each section consists of three chapters. The first chapter of the sections looks at the verses as a literary and semantic subunit, the second chapter consists of a close reading (investigating each word especially in the Pauline corpus), and the third chapter consists of three theological reflections on the passage. In addition, in the first chapter of the first section there is a 36-page excursus on ancient Greek science on the growth, development, and reproduction of living things, as a background to Paul's presentation in 1 Corinthians 15:35-44a.

While Brodeur is to be commended for his labor on the text, his study has two main shortcomings. First, in order to strengthen the argument for the agency of the Spirit in the resurrection, *Agency* equates life giving—or the giving of eternal life (in which the Spirit is explicitly mentioned)—with resurrection, or the raising from the dead, as an end-time event (in which the Spirit is not explicitly mentioned). While there is biblical basis for this view, it is a mistake to regard the giving of eternal life merely as an end-time event involving the resurrection of the physical body.¹ For the most part, *Agency* either reinterprets or ignores the biblical passages which indicate that the believers have obtained and can experience eternal life in this age.

Second, Brodeur's concern about the neglect of the

agency of the Holy Spirit in scholarship seems to be driven by a view that stresses the distinctions between the three of the Trinity to the extreme of viewing them in separation from one another rather than coinhering and cooperating together in the operations of the Trinity, including the raising of the dead.

The Giving of the Eternal Resurrection Life—Now

Brodeur states plainly that he considers life giving to refer to the "eschatological life...connected with the resurrection of the dead" (122). While there is a biblical basis to link the giving of life with the resurrection (cf. John 5:21), the impartation of life should be seen as the experience of resurrection life in this age as well as the means to bring about a richer experience of resurrection at the end times (Phil. 3:8-15), and not occurring only at the final resurrection of the believers. *Agency's* eschatological view of life giving also impacts its concept of the Christian life in this age—it is a life of human imitation rather than receiving God's life into the believers.

In contrast to *Agency's* view of resurrection and life giving primarily as a future event, the Bible presents resurrection and life giving as not simply a future event but also, more significantly, as a person and a process. *Agency's* view is similar to that of Martha's, who postponed the resurrection of her brother Lazarus to the end of days, not realizing that the Lord Jesus Himself is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). Resurrection is not separate from Christ's person, and our resurrection is a process linked to His resurrection, occurring in our past, present, and future.

First Peter 1:3 indicates that our resurrection, or being raised from the dead, occurred in the past at the time of His resurrection and our regeneration. According to Ephesians 2:5-6, even when we were dead in offenses, we were made alive together with Christ and raised up together with Him and seated together with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. Colossians 2:13 similarly speaks of being made alive together with Him, having been forgiven our offenses.

Other verses also clearly indicate that we can experience eternal, resurrection life in this age because of Christ's presence in us as the life-giving Spirit:

Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our

body. For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death operates in us, but life in you. (2 Cor. 4:10-12)

In addition, the apostles are ministers of the new covenant, which is of the Spirit who gives life (3:6), and John mentions the possibility of one believer giving life to another (1 John 5:16). Both of these actions take place in this age.

While a number of verses use a future tense in relation to having eternal life, the future tense should be construed as being subsequent to the preceding verb only, rather than being indicative of an eschatological future, especially in general statements, such as, "everyone who believes into Him may have eternal life" (John 3:15-16), "everyone who beholds the Son and believes into Him should have eternal life" (6:40), and "just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). In John 6 other verses can be construed as following the Lord's death and resurrection, where the Lord spoke concerning eating His flesh and drinking His blood and having life within ourselves (v. 53), having eternal life and being raised up in the last day (v. 54), abiding in Him and He in us (v. 56), living because of Him (v. 57), and living forever (v. 58). This life comes from the Spirit who gives life, embodied in *rhema* words (v. 63).

Agency construes the future tense of the verb *give life* in Romans 8:11, "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," as "eschatological life" (214). However, according to the context of Romans 8 this better refers to the believers' experience in this age. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus operates in us to make our spirit life, our mind life, and even imparts life to our mortal bodies not only at the resurrection but even in this age (vv. 2, 10, 6).

There also are verses which speak of having eternal life in this age (1 John 5:12-13; cf. 3:15) and living as a result of this life (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; 1 John 4:9; cf. Heb. 10:38). Other verses mention our living to God (Gal. 2:19), Christ's living in us, and our living in faith (v. 20), living by the Spirit and walking by the Spirit (5:25), and living Christ (Phil. 1:21).²

While *Agency* contains a high view of the ultimate experience of life giving, presenting it to be the divinization or deification of the believers—God shares "his divine nature with us so that we may become what he is... through the agency of the Holy Spirit" (151-152)—*Agency* seems to have a much lower view of the Christian life in this age because it defers the action of life giving to the future. *Agency* considers the Christian life as a call to

moral behavior or to the imitation of Christ. Brodeur restates this, in terms of 1 Corinthians 15:49, as bearing the image of Christ. Instead of translating the verb *to bear* as a future indicative φορέσομεν "we will bear," as most English versions do, he follows quite strong textual evidence to read a hortatory aorist subjunctive φορέσωμεν "let us bear" (140-141).

The Agency of the Holy Spirit

The agent of resurrection, or life giving, is none other than God Himself, who has been processed through incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit to impart His resurrection life into us. Scholars can be forgiven for not emphasizing the agency of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection of the dead since the Bible itself does not explicitly state that the Spirit raises the dead. According to the New Testament the subject of the verb for *raising the dead* in most cases is God (Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 34, 37; 26:8; Rom. 4:24; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:15 (twice); 2 Cor. 1:9; 4:14; Eph. 2:6; Col. 2:12; 1 Thes. 1:10; Heb. 11:19; 1 Pet. 1:21) and in other cases is the Father (John 5:21; Gal. 1:1) or the Son (John 6:39; cf. 2:19-20). Also a number of times the verb for *raising the dead* is passive, and the agent is not specified (Matt. 16:21; 1 Cor. 15:52; 2 Cor. 5:15). Yet this does not mean that the Spirit is not involved. The Triune God is involved in the resurrection of the believers. Whenever one of the three of the Trinity is mentioned, the other two are involved, since the three are distinct but not separate (cf. the statement in the Athanasian Creed 4: *neque confundentes personas; neque substantium separantes*—"neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance"). In all the operations of the Trinity usually one of the three is more prominent and hence mentioned, e.g., in incarnation the Son is prominent; in the indwelling of the believers the Spirit is prominent, although the indwelling of Christ is also mentioned in a number of places (Rom. 8:10; Col. 1:27; 2 Cor. 13:5). In addition, the Spirit is also identified with the indwelling Christ (1 Cor. 15:45; Rom. 8:9-11; 2 Cor. 3:17). While the Bible omits explicit mention of the Spirit as the agent of resurrection, it is implied and perhaps so obvious that it is not considered necessary to mention because of His indwelling of the believers.³

Although the Spirit is not explicitly expressed as the agent of the verbs used in conjunction with resurrection or raising the dead, Brodeur tries to demonstrate the Spirit's agency by equating resurrection with life giving and then by demonstrating that life giving is associated with the Spirit, especially in 1 Corinthians 15:45 and Romans 8:2 and 11 (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:6 and John 6:63). Brodeur attempts to show the Spirit's agency in the resurrection of Christ from 1 Corinthians 15:45. He follows Paul's contrasting of the natural (or soulish) and spiritual bodies and the earthly and heavenly materials of these

bodies in the context to argue from the parallel structure of the verse that “just as the last Adam received his spiritual body thanks to the Spirit’s agency, so too those who follow him will receive their spiritual bodies from the Spirit as well” (124). While it is true that the transformation of the natural body to a spiritual body takes place through the action of the life-giving Spirit in the believers, it is a little strained to argue that this particular verse shows the Spirit’s agency in the transformation of Christ’s body. This is seen much more clearly in 1 Peter 3:18, which states, “Christ...being put to death in the flesh, but on the other, made alive in the Spirit.” The emphasis in 1 Corinthians 15:45b is more pointedly on what Christ becomes to the believers as the life-giving Spirit to carry out their transformation.

In its exposition on Romans 8 a number of statements in *Agency* indicate both the operation of the Spirit and His life-giving function. The key verse is Romans 8:11, in which the giving of life to our mortal bodies takes place through ($\delta\iota\alpha$ + genitive) the agency of the indwelling Holy Spirit. However, *Agency*’s explanation of this verse, along with other statements, put this life giving off to the end of the age, acknowledging the role of the Spirit primarily as an influence to live a moral life of imitating Christ:

God empowers Christians to live according to the Spirit both now and in the age to come...We are now justified by Christ’s blood and one day we shall be saved by his life (Rom 5,9-10)...

Since the Spirit dwells in Christians and thereby sanctifies them through his divine presence, he is the pledge of new life today and risen life in the future...God will manifest his saving righteousness by raising the dead to life at the general resurrection. This definitive saving act of God will occur by the agency of his life-giving Spirit poured out in Jesus Christ. (165)

Christians now have a duty to live according to the Spirit...If you chose to live in the Spirit, then you will live with God forever. (175)

Its exposition is clearly governed by an emphasis on the future event of the life-giving resurrection, all to the detriment of the believers’ experience in this age.

Agency also grapples with whether *pneuma* refers to the Holy Spirit or the human spirit. The author concludes that of the twenty-one occurrences of *pneuma* in Romans 8, verse 16 is the only one that “clearly refers to the human spirit” (181). The remainder he regards as references to the Holy Spirit. However, this analysis neglects the truth that the Holy Spirit indwells the human spirit, with the two spirits becoming one mingled spirit. In places where human faculties such as body or mind are referred, to such as in

verses 5, 6, 9 and 10, it is best to understand the term *spirit* in the phrases *according to the spirit*, *the mind set on the spirit*, *you are...in the spirit*, and *the spirit is life* as referring to the human spirit mingled with the Spirit of God.

Finally, one of the more controversial points *Agency* raises and revisits in its conclusion is the role of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection of all human beings. *Agency* argues that Romans 8:18 and the following verses, which speak of the freeing of creation from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God, imply “the universal resurrection of all the dead” (267). The book states that the Lord’s one righteous act “leads to justification and life for all (Rom 5,18)” (268). In contrast to this view, the Scriptures reveal that the process of sonship, leading to the glorification of the sons of God in Romans 8, requires receiving through believing and cooperation with the indwelling Spirit, and it is not imputed to all regardless of how they respond to the good news. *Agency* states, “The whole of creation...through the agency of the Holy Spirit, one day...will come to share in the eschatological glory of God’s sons and daughters” (166). Even though the freedom of the glory of the children of God will have indirect benefits to all of creation, these benefits do not include the impartation of the divine life. While all human beings who die will be resurrected, those who do not believe the gospel will be resurrected not to life but to judgment (John 5:29; cf. Rev. 20:5-6). As to the agent of this resurrection, the Bible states that the dead come forth in response to the voice of the Son of Man (John 5:28-29). The Bible is silent as to the role of the Spirit in this resurrection.

In his thorough and detailed exposition, Brodeur does demonstrate the agency of the Holy Spirit in the action of life giving from his two selected portions of text, and from this the agency of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection of the believers can be implied. However, in the author’s zeal to prove the agency of the Holy Spirit by linking life giving with resurrection, *Agency* interprets verses that indicate the believers’ experience of life in this age as pertaining only to their final resurrection at the end of the age. This overemphasizes the judicial aspect of God’s salvation and encourages human imitation through the neglect of the experience of the divine life in this age. In addition, *Agency* lacks a properly balanced view of the Trinity, which respects the distinctions but does not separate the persons, and does not recognize the proper role of the Spirit in all of the operations of the Triune God, especially in those involving the subjective experiences of the believers. Sometimes the Bible does not explicitly mention the Spirit’s role (perhaps it is obvious) but rather focuses us more on the source (the Father) or the means (the Son and His process) in its presentation of the experiences of the Christian life, such as the resurrection from the dead.

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Notes

¹Certain events or experiences of the believers are related to what has been called “inaugurated” or “partly realized” eschatology, such as the reign of Christ, the kingdom, paradise, deliverance, salvation, and even the appearance of antichrist (cf. 1 John 2:18; 4:3). The phrases *now, but not yet* or *already, but not yet* have been used by scholars to refer to phenomena which have a present-day application and an end-time fulfillment. This notion can also be applied to the resurrection of the believers.

²Brodeur occasionally hints at some “now” experiences of the eschatological giving of life, mentioning “behavior...influenced by the Spirit” (191), “Christ shares in our life and we in turn share in his” (195), and “divine life manifests itself in the lives of Christians” (196). However, for the most part, the giving of life is eschatological in his view.

³In its section on Romans 8 (163-255), *Agency* comes closest to a theological statement regarding the Trinity. It acknowledges that the Spirit is related to God (the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of the One who raised Christ from the dead) and to Christ (the Spirit of Christ, and His Spirit). It states that Paul never confuses them: “Each divine person is distinct and different yet related to the other two in a profoundly mysterious way” (173). *Agency* calls them “members of the Trinity,” “individuals,” and “Persons,” and it acknowledges that “Paul describes trinitarian relations in terms connected to human salvation,” and “his primary concern lies with the economic Trinity” (173-174). This stress on the distinctions might be a motivation for the author’s concern to recover the role of the Spirit in the resurrection.

Supporting a High Christology

Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study,
by Gordon D. Fee. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers,
2007.

When noted New Testament scholar Gordon D. Fee was asked to author a dictionary article on the Spirit and Paul and found that there was no existing book on the subject, he wrote *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, which arguably has become the most highly regarded and influential study of the Spirit in Paul’s Epistles. In similar fashion, after being invited to present papers on the Trinity and the incarnation at the Society of Biblical Literature’s seminar on Pauline theology in the 1990s, Fee made the equally surprising discovery that “neither did a full-fledged study of Pauline Christology as such exist” (*Pauline Christology*, xxvii). His latest work, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (hereafter *Pauline*), is intended to fill that void.

From the outset, Fee sets the parameters for this 600-plus page study by rightly committing to an understanding of “Pauline” as referring to “all the letters in the canonical Pauline corpus” (5). He proceeds by examining all of the verses that mention Christ in Paul’s Epistles to draw out the decidedly high Christology that lies therein, a Christology that is not argued for but is rather presupposed by Paul and his first-century readers. Through Fee’s tightly focused exegesis and subsequent synthesis of the data, it becomes evident that the Christ to whom the apostle and his audience directed their devotion was mutually understood to be the pre-existent, divine-human Son of God and Lord who bears “the Name” that is above every name and who shares the divine identity in the Godhead. Not surprisingly, Fee largely succeeds in discovering the Christ whom Paul and the first-century church adored, and he proves effective at bringing the reader into a renewed and enlarged wonder of His majesty. For all that there is to commend it, however, *Pauline* is not a flawless effort. This otherwise admirable study regrettably suffers from an oft-repeated misconception of Christ’s relationship to the Spirit, denying as it does Paul’s plain language in identifying the two. In mishandling this critical point, *Pauline* at times comes uncomfortably close to misrepresenting the legitimate distinctions between the Son and the Spirit (and, inevitably, the Father) and seems to suggest that there is a separation of persons in the Godhead. The author genuinely maintains that there is only one God and consistently affirms Paul’s strict monotheism, and thus cannot and should not be charged with advocating a tritheistic theology, but the exaggeration that characterizes his treatment of the relationships in the Trinity remains nonetheless as a blemish on what is an otherwise superb outing. This review will focus on this significant shortcoming while also acknowledging the book’s considerable merits in vision, scholarship, and fidelity to the Scriptures.

Pauline Christology: An Overview

The substantial introduction to this massive volume is indispensable for understanding Fee’s approach to the subject and the major points that characterize the high Christology that is to be developed in the succeeding pages. First, he sets forth his use of the word *Christology* to refer exclusively to a study of “the *person* of Christ—Paul’s understanding of *who* Christ *was/is*, in distinction to the *work* of Christ—*what* Christ *did* for us as Savior (soteriology)” (1). He continues by setting forth his main purpose in writing:

My ultimate concern in this study is with coherence in Paul’s thought concerning the person of Christ; but the approach one must take to get at this coherence is altogether by way of the contingencies of the several letters,

which are decidedly not intentionally christological (in the sense of systematically laying out what Paul believed about the person of Christ)...

Our christological task is to try to tease out what Paul himself understood *presuppositionally* about Christ, and to do so on the basis of his explicit and incidental references to Christ. (2-4)

Concerning methodology he writes,

I have attempted a Pauline Christology that is primarily exegetical, looking for the Christology that emerges in each of the letters in turn and thus trying to analyze each letter on its own terms. What is avoided here is a Christology that is basically an analysis of titles, although one can scarcely avoid some of this because Paul himself designated Christ in a variety of ways, some of which are titular. (4-5)

The intention in this “primarily exegetical” approach is to allow for a discovery of what Paul himself believed and asserted about Christ—“*Paul’s* theology” (5), as it were—and thus to arrive at a Christology that is truly Pauline.

In noting the theological difficulties inherent in Pauline Christology, Fee acknowledges the apparent tension that exists between Paul’s staunch monotheism and the indications in his writings that “‘the Son of God’ is also included in the divine identity” (7). The greater difficulty for Fee, however, is “the attempt to extract Christology from Paul’s letters apart from soteriology” (8), which he notes earlier is not a distinction that Paul himself makes (1). Not shying away from these challenges, Fee states,

At issue in this book is the singular concern to investigate the Pauline data regarding the person of Christ in terms of whom Paul understood him to be and how he viewed the relationship between Christ, as the Son of God and Lord, and the one God, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is therefore now revealed as our Father as well. (9)

Conclusions to these issues are stated in terms of either a “high” or a “low” Christology, and here Fee, conceding a possible oversimplification, asserts that

the ultimate issue has to do with the Son’s preexistence; that is, does an author consider Christ to have had existence as (or with) God before coming into our history for the purposes of redemption, which included at the end his resurrection and subsequent exaltation to “the right hand of God” in “fulfillment” of Ps 110:1? (9)

Authors who affirm preexistence (e.g., the apostle John and the writer of Hebrews) are considered to have a high

Christology, whereas those who cannot be said to affirm preexistence or are “ambiguous at best” (e.g., James) are said to have a low Christology (9). Fee is adamant that the subsequent analysis conclusively puts Paul at the high end of the spectrum, and he makes his case so convincingly throughout the book that one can only wonder at how any student of Paul’s Epistles could possibly harbor doubts to the contrary.

Following a short history of Pauline Christology in the twentieth century (10-15), Fee introduces three crucial texts (1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:13-17; Phil. 2:6-11) that embody most of the primary Christological elements that are evident throughout the Pauline corpus (16). One of those key elements is Paul’s appropriation of κύριος = *Adonai* = Yahweh Septuagint texts and his application of those texts to the now risen κύριος. Underlying this issue are two questions which require early resolution at the end of the Introduction: First, did Paul know the Septuagint and use it, and, second, would his readers have been aware of his purported appropriation of it to advance the revelation of Christ? On both counts, Fee responds in the affirmative, again with thoroughly convincing evidence to bolster his claims.

The remainder of the book is divided into two major sections. The first section, “Analysis,” examines all the verses that speak of Christ in Paul’s Epistles, beginning with the earliest of those writings (the Thessalonian correspondence) and proceeding chronologically to the pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy). This section accounts for over three-fourths of the book’s total length and is replete with revealing insights that are the result of Fee’s impassioned, decades-long handling of the texts. Here it is affirmed through careful, focused exegesis that Paul’s Christology is indeed very high, unfolding as it does Christ’s preexistence and His sharing of divine prerogatives that in the Old Testament are accounted only to God Himself. Further, particular attention is paid to “Paul’s intertextual appropriation of the language of the Septuagint, whereby κύριος = Yahweh is now κύριος = Christ” in affirmation of Christ’s deity (45). Fee also masterfully opens the window on Paul’s presuppositional understanding of Jesus as the Messianic/eternal Son of God, the true image and glory of God, the preexistent Lord and agent of creation, and the incarnate Redeemer and heavenly Savior. These themes are of necessity repeated frequently throughout the book, but the vision that they convey is no less impressive for the repetition.

In the second section—“Synthesis”—Fee pulls together the many disparate conclusions in the exegesis section to offer “a *thematic* analysis of these data with the ultimate goal of determining how we might best speak *theologically* about Paul’s Christology in its first-century setting” (10). Here the conclusions are drawn together under five chapter

headings: “Christ, the Divine Savior,” “Christ: Preexistent and Incarnate Savior,” “Jesus as Second Adam,” “Jesus: Jewish Messiah and Son of God,” and “Jesus: Jewish Messiah and Exalted Lord.” The last chapter, “Christ and the Spirit: Paul as a Proto-Trinitarian,” examines Paul’s alleged understanding of the relationship of Christ and the Spirit and how that purported relationship advances Paul’s overall understanding of the distinctions among the three of the Godhead and their coordinated actions to carry out the economy of salvation. Two appendices round out the volume. “Appendix A: Christ and Personified Wisdom,” convincingly debunks (as is done throughout the book) the modern trend in the New Testament academy to try to locate in Paul a Christology that “is to be understood at least in part in terms of personified Wisdom, as ‘she’ appears in three places in the Septuagint (Prov 8:22-31; Sir 14:3-22; Wis 7:21-10:21)” (595). Fee pointedly refers to this phenomenon as “the creation of modern scholarship, not the result of exegesis of the Pauline texts” (482). “Appendix B: Paul’s Use of Κύριος for Christ in Citations and Echoes of the Septuagint” offers a comprehensive listing of the verses cited in the exegesis section where Paul uses the language of the Septuagint to refer to Christ, either in “actual citations and apparent allusions to the Septuagint” or in “Yahweh phrases from the Septuagint that have been applied to Christ” (631).

Enlarging the Boundaries of the Identity of the One God: an Affirmation

“The ultimate theological question,” Fee writes, is “how does Paul perceive the relationship of the Son to the Father, since he never abandons—indeed, he stoutly retains—his historic monotheism?” (482). To arrive at an answer to that question, one must start at the beginning by realizing that Paul’s dynamic, personal encounter with the risen Christ forced him to make a radical adjustment to his understanding of the one God. That God now included for Paul the risen Lord Jesus, the Son of the Father, a heretofore incomprehensible thought for this monotheistic Jew. Fee sheds considerable light on Paul’s modified understanding of the one God by turning to 1 Corinthians 8:6 for the apostle’s “deliberate Christian restatement of the Shema, the basic theological confession of the Judaism in which Christian faith has its deep roots” (89). The verses are reproduced here for ease of reference:

Hear, O Israel, Jehovah is our God; Jehovah is one.
(Deut. 6:4, “The Shema”)

Yet to us there is one God, the Father, out from whom are all things, and we are unto Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we are through Him. (1 Cor. 8:6)

In Paul’s reworking of the Shema, several christologically

significant points are evident. The apostle maintains his monotheistic stance while indicating that the “one God” includes not only the Father, the source and goal of all things (“out from whom are all things, and we are unto Him”), but also the Son, through whom He created all things (“through whom are all things”). Further, it is through Christ as the divine agent that the one God has accomplished redemption (“we are through Him”), and thus “the whole passage therefore, typically for Paul, encloses the work of the Son within that of the Father” (91). Significantly, this is the first passage in the Pauline corpus that presupposes Christ’s preexistence (all things are through Him, indicating that creation was in view) as the Son of God (implied in Paul’s identification of the one God as “the Father”) (17, 90), with preexistence being the key for Fee to Paul’s high Christology. Thus, what Paul has done in this passage is to enlarge the boundaries of the divine identity to include the Lord Jesus Christ, the pre-existent Son of God and divine agent of creation, while retaining his firm monotheism in his affirmation that God indeed is still one God. Because Christ is “fully identified with God the Father” (245), Paul can routinely apply to Him language that in the Septuagint was reserved only for God Himself, and he does so without compromising his strict monotheism. These themes are developed throughout Fee’s study, and his handling of them generally evinces a consummate scholarship, an admirable regard for the language of the Bible, and a presentation of the biblical revelation that reaches beyond mere knowledge to enter the realm of vision. Here is where *Pauline* makes its most valuable contribution to the study of the Christology of Paul. It is when Fee broaches the subject of Christ’s relationship to the Spirit, and how that purported relationship fits into the enlarged identity of the one God, that the integrity of the volume begins to break down.

Pauline’s Mishandling of the Relationship of Christ and the Spirit

In “The Pneumatic Person of Christ” in an earlier issue of *Affirmation & Critique*, Kerry S. Robichaux states 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” (6). In *Pauline’s* treatment of the Christ-Spirit relationship, the distinctions of function that characterize the relationships in the Trinity are pressed to a point that comes dangerously close to positing a separation of persons and, consequently, the tenability of the Christology under consideration is called into question.

First Corinthians 15:45: “the Last Adam Became a Life-giving Spirit”

In his discussion of 1 Corinthians 15:45, and particularly

the last clause (“the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.”), Fee repeats arguments that he made in *God’s Empowering Presence*.¹ He reasons that Paul was forced to include this last clause in order to achieve a parallel structure to match his citation of Genesis 2:7 in the first half of the verse (“The first man, Adam, became a living soul”). Adam’s becoming a living soul was effected by God’s breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, and Fee sees here evidence that Christ’s function as a life-giving Spirit “will take place at the resurrection of believers, when he ‘makes alive’ their mortal bodies so that they too assume a σῶμα πνευματικόν like his” (118). Fee continues:

The concern of line 2 [“the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit”], therefore, is not christological in the sense that Christ and the Spirit were somehow now interchangeable terms for Paul. Indeed, despite the combination of “life-giving” and πνεῦμα, he almost certainly does not intend to say the Christ became *the* life-giving Spirit, but rather *a* life-giving spirit. Christ is *not* the Spirit; rather, in a play on the Genesis text, Paul says that Christ, through his resurrection, assumed his new existence in the spiritual realm, the realm, of course, that for believers is the ultimate sphere of the Spirit, in which they will have “spiritual” bodies, adapted to the final life of the Spirit. (118)

With these statements Fee has set himself in the precarious position of advocating two life-giving Spirits—the Holy Spirit, who functions to give life in this age (John 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6), and the resurrected Christ as a life-giving Spirit who functions to give life to His believers’ mortal bodies at the resurrection. Such a concept is utterly foreign to the Bible and is in direct contradiction of the stated truth that there is only “one Spirit” (Eph. 4:4).

Second Corinthians 3:17: “the Lord Is the Spirit”

In another irresponsible handling of Paul’s plain language, Fee gives the following explanation for what Paul means when he says, “The Lord is the Spirit”:

First, let us note the interpretive strategy. The clue lies with the identical pattern that occurs in Gal 4:25, where Paul’s ἐστίν (*is*) must not be taken literally, “this *is* that,” but representationally, “this *represents* that.” Thus, just as Hagar in Gal 4:25 is not in fact Mount Sinai but represents Mount Sinai, so here the κύριος in the Exodus passage now is *representative* of the Spirit. What this means, then, is that Paul interprets the *conversion* dimension of the Exodus text (“turning to the Lord”) as having to do with the Spirit: “‘the Lord’ is [= refers to the work of] the Spirit.” (178)

This argument is tenuous at best and seems to disregard

the context of 2 Corinthians 3 and 4. In chapter 3 we are told that the veil that was on the heart of the children of Israel at the reading of the law was being done away with *in Christ* (v. 14), and that the veil is taken away whenever their heart turns to *the Lord* (v. 16). The Lord to whom Israel turns in verse 16 is the Christ in whom the veil is being done away with in verse 14. Further, in verse 18 Paul writes, “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.” Here it is the glory of *the Lord* that the believers behold, yet in 4:4 it is the glory of *Christ* that does not shine on those who are veiled. Here the Lord whose glory the believers behold (3:18) must be the Christ whose glory is veiled in those whose hearts are turned away (4:4). Moreover, the image into which the believers are being transformed in 3:18 must be the image of the Son, who Himself is the image of God according to whom man was created (4:4; Col. 1:15; Gen. 1:26). That the Lord in 2 Corinthians 3:17 and 18 is Christ is evidenced further by Paul’s declaration in 4:5: “We do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord.” Paul’s language seems plain enough. The Lord, who is Christ Jesus, is the Spirit, and it is by the work of the “Lord Spirit” (3:18) that the believers are transformed into the image of the Son, whom the Spirit bears to them in resurrection. However, in saying that the Lord is the Spirit and, therefore, identifying the risen Christ with the Spirit, Paul also in verse 17 mentions “the Spirit of the Lord,” thus maintaining the rightful distinction between the two while yet speaking of them in the same breath as “the Lord Spirit.” To push for representation based on Galatians 4:25 to the exclusion of the immediate context that so richly reveals the pneumatic Christ is, as Fee is fond of saying, to miss Paul by too much.

A safer way to handle the issues brought up in 1 Corinthians 15:45 and 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 is in the way carried out by James D. G. Dunn, whom Fee repeatedly takes to task throughout the book, sometimes legitimately (e.g., in rebuffing Dunn’s attempts at a Wisdom Christology). Here, however, Dunn proves to be the abler student of the Word, and we concur with his statements below:

Paul identifies the exalted Jesus with the Spirit—not with a spiritual being (πνεῦμα ζῶν) or a spiritual dimension or sphere (πνευματικόν), but with the Spirit, the Holy Spirit (πνεῦμα ζωοποιού). Immanent christology is for Paul pneumatology; in the believer’s experience there is *no* distinction between Christ and Spirit. This does not mean of course that Paul makes *no* distinction between Christ and Spirit. (165)

To sum up, the nature of Paul’s spiritual experience, with its distinctive Jesus-content and Jesus-character, enables,

even requires, Paul to understand it not only in terms of the risen Christ, but also in terms of a Christ whose risen state is archetypal for believers' future state. Hence if Adam is the type of psychic existence, then Christ, the risen Christ, is the type of pneumatic existence. This experience of πνεῦμα ζωοποιού now implies σῶμα πνευματικόν because that is the inevitable end result of a process already under way, the process of being transformed into the image of Christ by his Spirit. In short, verse 45b constitutes proof because Paul's experience of the πνεῦμα ζωοποιού convinces him that the exalted Jesus has a spiritual, somatic existence and that in that mode of existence he is the pattern and forerunner of a new humanity. (164)

Pauline's Tenuous Monotheism

Pauline consistently maintains an avid monotheism throughout, and in so doing, respects Paul's unbending conviction that there is indeed one God. *Pauline's* monotheism, however, suffers under compromising statements such as these:

In the "geography" of the NT writers, and especially of Paul, God the Father and Christ the Son are "in heaven," while the Spirit continues the work of Christ on earth. For Paul, the earthly work of Christ and the Spirit can sometimes be expressed interchangeably, but not so with God the Father, who is always viewed as in heaven. (462-463)

It is precisely Paul's triadic way of speaking about our human salvation that will not allow us to confuse or conflate either the person or the work of the Son and the Spirit. In Paul's present worldview—"between the times," as it were—the Son is now seated "at God's right hand in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 1:20), where he currently makes intercession for us (Rom. 8:32). Significantly, just a couple of sentences earlier in Romans, Paul refers to *the Spirit* as indwelling us and as helping us in our times of weakness by interceding from within, speaking for us what is inexpressible, which God knows because he "knows the mind of the Spirit" (8:26-27). Thus, to put it in different terms: in the present "geography" of heaven and earth, both Father and Son are seen as dwelling in heaven, while the Spirit is seen as (in)dwelling on earth. (588)

With these statements, *Pauline* pushes the distinctions among the three of the Trinity to the point where each is now acting individually and separately, though in coordination with one another. Interestingly, the author disregards Romans 8:10, where Paul says that Christ is in the believers, and this in the same chapter where he also speaks so forthrightly of Christ's intercession in the heavens and the Spirit's indwelling the

believers on earth. Rather than suggesting a separation of persons performing their individual tasks, albeit in concert, this should point us to an appreciation of the inseparableness of the persons of the Godhead and the coinherence by which all three mutually indwell one another in the divine incorporation that they have enjoyed for eternity (John 14:16-20) and in which they carry out the economy of salvation in inseparability.

Conclusion

The foregoing criticisms notwithstanding, *Pauline* has much to offer any serious student of Paul, and the book can be heartily recommended based on the strength of its scholarship and the vision of the majestic Christ that it conveys. And ultimately, it is to this Christ that Gordon D. Fee, as the apostle Paul before him, gives his unstinting devotion. We do well to heed his advice:

One of the tragedies of this kind of exegetical exercise occurs if we focus on the "meaning" of the passage and thus lose the Pauline focus altogether, which is on the utter greatness and glory of Christ. In trying to "get it right" with regard to *what* Paul says, we are in constant great danger of "getting it wrong" as to *why* he says it at all—the ever-present danger of doing with this grand passage [Col. 2:2-3] what Jesus castigated the Pharisees for doing with the law: to turn from worship and adoration to fine-tuning our exegesis and thus never returning to worship and adoration. To do that, I would argue, would in the end defeat the Christology altogether. We simply have not entered into an understanding of Paul's understanding of his Lord if we are not drawn into his absolute adoration and devotion. (317)

To this end, *Pauline* makes a worthy contribution.

by Tony Espinosa

Notes

¹For more thorough responses to Fee's treatment of 1 Corinthians 15:45 in *God's Empowering Presence*, please see Good, pp. 48-50, and Robichaux, pp. 11-12.

Works Cited

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