

Imitation or Participation?

“Imitating Jesus,” by Michael Allen. *Modern Reformation* (March/April 2009): 27-30.

In *Modern Reformation*'s March/April 2009 issue on “The Imitation of Christ,” Michael Allen, adjunct professor of theology at Knox Theological Seminary and Wheaton College, contributes an article entitled “Imitating Jesus” (hereafter “Imitating”). The idea that the virtuous behavior of Jesus should be imitated is not new, and its wide and enduring appeal has been reaffirmed by the surprising popularity of the “What Would Jesus Do?” movement of our own era. “Imitating,” however, finds “What would Jesus do?” to be “a necessary but not sufficient question for Christian ethics” and attempts to bring a fresh perspective to the notion (28). Observing that the human experience of Jesus is both “continuous” with ours (28), in that He lived a genuine human life as a complete man, and “discontinuous” with ours (29), in that He was the unique Messiah who fulfilled “a unique calling in redemptive history, to which no one else is called” (28), “Imitating” states that Jesus “can and should be imitated” but not “directly and without qualification” (28-29).

Straining to resolve the tension between our purported need to imitate Jesus and the problem that not all His actions are repeatable due to His discontinuity with us, “Imitating” suggests a practice

of “ethical triangulation,” where we imitate Jesus well by imitating those who have followed him (especially the disciples and apostles of the New Testament). Our whole task is trying to locate godly behavior on the moral map. Just as a cellular signal can be located by viewing it relative to a number of towers, so the path of obedience can be discerned by viewing the life of Jesus as one of several examples. (29)

“Imitating” assures us that if we imitate the divinely appointed examples in the Bible, we will be imitating Jesus Himself, albeit indirectly. Acknowledging that these biblical patterns “are not sinless” (30), “Imitating” attempts to reassure us that it is God’s will that we imitate them:

Still, the Bible points us to the righteous behavior of these imperfect images of Christ. As we reflect on their search

for faithful ways to honor God, we will have our eyes opened to the way this would look in our own callings and contexts. They serve as final authorities for Christian practice, not because of their own merit but because God has employed them in this biblical capacity. (30)

Being imperfect ourselves, then, we are akin to these divinely prepared forerunners, and their example, “Imitating” suggests, is within closer reach of our attainment than is the model of the sinless Messiah Himself. While this may sound logical, even alluring, to some, all that “Imitating” can really offer practitioners of the life of imitation, if its recommendation is to be followed to its logical conclusion, is a further removal from Christ, who has already been presented as being “discontinuous” with us in our experience. But the more pertinent issue is this: Does the imitation of Christ, in either its purportedly direct or indirect modes, accomplish the believers’ conformation to the image of the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29), which “Imitating” acknowledges is involved in “the process of salvation” (28)?

Before looking more closely at the serious flaws in the article’s thesis, it should first be noted that “Imitating” offers sound, scripturally supported affirmations concerning the full humanity of Jesus and His uniqueness among men as the God-appointed Messiah. Its proper position on these fundamental matters merits mention (even though it is these points, taken together, that ultimately motivate the article’s untenable conclusions). “Imitating” rightly holds that “every aspect of human life was assumed by the Word” and that “to redeem the whole human person, Jesus must have assumed a complete human nature” (28), thus dispatching the ancient Apollinarian heresy that denied the full and complete humanity of the man Jesus.

In His role as the Messiah, Jesus “needed no atonement because he was sinless” (28), and His sinless humanity is rightly portrayed as having been perfected by the Spirit during His earthly sojourn (29). “Imitating” further observes that Christ made purification of sins, sat down “on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3), and now functions as our great and heavenly High Priest (29)—all roles unique to His commission. Looking primarily to the Epistle to the Hebrews for scriptural corroboration of these fundamental points concerning the work of the God-man Jesus, “Imitating” is on solid footing.

We certainly agree that Jesus is the unique Messiah, but we disagree that His uniqueness as such delimits Him as wholly inaccessible to man, as “Imitating” leads its readers to believe. Rather, Christ has become eternally accessible to man through the incarnation, by which He forever joined Himself to humanity, and the resurrection, through which His perfected humanity was glorified and made communicable to fallen man through the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). Through regeneration the life of the first God-man—divinity mingled with glorified humanity—is reproduced in the believers.

Consequently, the living of that life—the living again of Jesus in redeemed and regenerated human beings—is the goal of the Christian life, not mere objective imitation. Such a living, by extension, surely will be an imitation of Christ by virtue of its reproduction of Christ. To be sure, Christ alone is the Savior, whose status is incommunicable to man and whose accomplishments bear no need of repeating, and “Imitating” is right to defend the uniqueness of His person and work. But by positing that an insuperable gap exists between Jesus and His redeemed because He is the Messiah, so that believers are relegated to a life of objective and distant imitation of the Forerunner, “Imitating” falters and stumbles down a path where the Scriptures themselves do not go.

“Imitating” states that “the issue is distinguishing what is repeatable from what is not [repeatable]” in the living of Jesus (29), but a finer and more consequential distinction to be made is that between behavior itself and the life that produces behavior. In making the valid point that Jesus’ relationship to the Father is distinct from that of the redeemed to the Father because Jesus was without sin and, therefore, does not relate to the Father as a sinner grateful for the forgiveness of personal sins, “Imitating” says, “Our trust in the Father must be cross-centered in a way that the incarnate Son’s was not and could not be, for we are only adopted children and not children by nature (like Jesus)” (29).

For “Imitating,” then, those who are redeemed are merely adopted children who have no share in the nature of God and, we must conclude, no share in the eternal life of God, which bears that nature. Given the author’s Reformed heritage, which denies that believers receive the life of God through regeneration, it is not surprising that “Imitating” would make this assumption. But absent the life of God—the source of divine living within redeemed humanity—the believers’ only hope to be conformed to the image of Christ lies in their living a life of imitation by the strength and capacity of merely their human life, which, corrupted by sin, is woefully incapable of living the life that Jesus lived on the earth, even though it has been redeemed. The apostle Paul had no confidence in the flesh and realized the incapability of the

flesh to please God and to keep His law (Phil. 3:3; Rom. 8:8; 7:14-24), and the life that he lived was not one of imitation but one in which Christ had been revealed in him (Gal. 1:16), lived in him (2:20), and was formed in him (4:19). His “earnest expectation and hope” were not that he would mimic Christ but that Christ would be magnified in his body through the operation of the divine life (Phil. 1:20). Surely Christ’s uniqueness as the Messiah is not compromised by the imparting of the divine life into the believers, and there is no need to fear blaspheming Him by the notion. On the contrary, as the anointed One, He is uniquely commissioned to carry out the divine economy, and His deeds as the Messiah to accomplish the redemption of all the creation are unique to Him alone. His believers, however, are begotten of God with the divine life and nature (John 1:12-13; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18; 2 Pet. 1:4), are joined to the Lord in spirit (1 Cor. 6:17), are made the many members of His Body (Rom. 12:5), and, with the apostles, are joined unto Christ to share the anointing that He as the Messiah has received from God (2 Cor. 1:21). In this sense, Christ with His regenerated believers—the many sons of God (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 3:26; 4:6; Heb. 2:10)—are termed “the Christ” by the apostle (1 Cor. 12:12), a title that reveals their organic union with the resurrected and ascended Lord, who alone is the Head of the Body. The living of such a Body—the “behavior” of the members—should be the living of the Head, that is, the living of Christ in humanity, a living that issues from the divine life received through regeneration and not from the natural strength of their fallen human life. If the life of imitation advocated by “Imitating” is to be followed, then the grand design in the eternal economy of God to produce a living Body with Christ as the Head and source of its living is tragically compromised.

So as not to be misunderstood as denying “the gracious nature of the gospel” (27), the author of “Imitating” is quick to distance himself from promoting a works-motivated salvation, and his efforts are sincere. His concern is not with initial salvation but with the life lived as a saved one, and the concern is commendable, even if the resolution is misdirected. He writes,

While our following Jesus is not the ground for our standing before or adoption by God, it is nonetheless an important aspect of the Christian life...While sanctification and Christian service do not merit anything, they are a crucial aspect of redeemed life. (27-28)

But here again it is assumed that the believers’ relationship to God is based on adoption, that is, on a legal pronouncement of sonship versus the organic reality of sonship based on the divine life. “Following Jesus,” “sanctification,” and “Christian service” referred to above, then, are all grounded in a life of human imitation by human

effort that “Imitating” encourages. But “Imitating” misses the stark irony here. In its explicit promotion of initial salvation by grace followed by human efforts to imitate Christ following that salvation, “Imitating” opens the door to the implication that one does not need to be a believer in Christ in order to live a life of imitating Him. Doubtless, many who do not acknowledge Christ as Savior and Lord have admired His virtuous living from afar and have endeavored to imitate His righteous behavior. So what, then, is really to be gained from a life of imitation? Perhaps, after all, it is only the self-righteousness that “Imitating” fears advocating.

A major concern for “Imitating” is to distinguish the Messianic work of Christ (that which is not repeatable) from “the nature of his humanity” and the question of “what he does and how we might follow” him (that which is repeatable) on the path of imitation (28). For example, “Imitating” states,

Jesus obeyed the law that he might be perfectly suitable as a sin-offering. None of us needs to serve as a sin offering. We might imitate his obedience, however, without the goal of being sin offerings. Whereas he loved persons by dying on their behalf, his followers are to love their neighbors by pointing them to Jesus’ death, not by dying themselves. There are differences in vocational calling to be teased out. (29)

We agree that we cannot be sin offerings, for Christ is unique as such (2 Cor. 5:21), and that we cannot die on behalf of sinners, for Christ’s sacrifice was unique, complete, and once for all (Rom. 6:10; Heb. 9:26; 10:12; 1 Pet. 3:18). However, because Christ has become the life-giving Spirit in resurrection and is now available to us as the Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17), we can participate in the effectiveness of His death because this element of His work has been added to the Spirit, which is now “the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:19), the Spirit compounded with the elements of Christ’s living and accomplishments. In fact, the compound Spirit is Christ Himself as the Spirit—“the Lord Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18)—coming to us to live again in the members of His Body (John 14:17-18; Rom. 8:9-11). Paul certainly did not repeat the death of Christ for redemption, but he clearly experienced the effectiveness of that death as a killing to the self (Gal. 2:20), the flesh (5:24), the world (6:14), and the practices of the body (Rom. 8:13) in order that he might live by the divine life in resurrection (6:5; Phil. 3:10).

Further, although Paul himself was not a sin offering, he experienced Christ as his offering for sin because Christ was the pneumatic sin offering in his regenerated spirit (Rom. 8:3-4; 2 Tim. 4:22; Rom. 6:6). A regenerated person does not need to try to imitate a historic Christ,

because he is organically joined to the living Christ and, thus, participates in the life and accomplishments of Christ by virtue of that union. Consequently, he will imitate the living Christ when he participates in the life and accomplishments of Christ by virtue of that same union. Whereas a practice of imitation keeps us experientially apart from Christ, a life of participation results from our organic union with Him, just as the branches that are organically one with the vine participate in the life of the vine (John 15:1, 4-5).

The apostle Paul, as “Imitating” observes, “called on his readers to imitate him” (30), but the imitation that Paul advocated is not the imitation proffered by “Imitating.” Whereas the mode of imitation presented in “Imitating” consists of an independently fueled mimicry of the behavior of Jesus that is recorded in the Gospels and deemed repeatable, the life of Paul was a life of experiencing the indwelling Christ by drinking Him as the Spirit (Col. 1:27; Rom. 8:9-11; 2 Cor. 13:5; 1 Cor. 12:13), having His mind (2:16), enjoying His inward parts (Phil. 1:8), being conformed to His death and living in the power of His resurrection (3:10), magnifying Him to others (1:20), experiencing His inward transforming and conforming work (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2; 8:29), being saved in His life and reigning in it (5:10, 17), and living Him (Phil. 1:21). It was by such an experience of Christ through the constituting Spirit that all the divine attributes expressed in the human virtues of the God-man Jesus were lived out in Paul. To imitate those virtues apart from Christ is to insult Him by endeavoring to become what He is by our fallen, independent life. If we are to imitate Paul, then we are to imitate him in his self-denying, Christ-enjoying, Spirit-imbibing, and God-expressing living.

Finally, in enumerating the points of Jesus’ life under the heading “Messianic Work,” “Imitating” attempts to make a case for imitating Jesus according to the cultural contexts in which we live today:

Fourth, Jesus’ obedience was settled within the cultural contexts and constraints of the first century, whereas we live in different times... Various actions that he performed would have different social meaning if repeated identically today. Imitating him is necessarily a hermeneutical enterprise because we live in a world without the Roman Empire, Pharisees, and so forth.

Fifth, Jesus’ piety is documented for us in the New Testament, yet the “life of Jesus” that we can glean from these texts does not directly exemplify any number of social issues that we might imitate. For example, we have no idea how Jesus would act within marriage, for we have no evidence that he was married. While he taught certain things related to marriage, he does not act as a moral guide by means of his own behavior in this regard. We

could multiply this limit by showing the number of areas that are simply not recorded by the evangelists or that Jesus presumably did not interact with personally. Whatever he did, we know he did perfectly; but we are not told what this looks like or what it involves. (29)

The rationale here seems to disregard altogether that Christ is living now in the members of His Body and that He is capable of living the life that expresses God in humanity, regardless of cultural contexts. Further, to purport that one needs to look at the patterns of ethical living in the Bible to round out the picture of what godly living looks like strikes this reviewer as suggesting that the life of Christ is not complete or sufficient for Christian living. Do we in fact need the examples of godly living in the Bible to provide “canonical context” to the life of Jesus in order to offer us a complete pattern that we may imitate (29-30)? We believe that the biblical record testifies otherwise. What we need is what Paul himself claimed as his portion, that is, “the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:19), the Spirit of the crucified, resurrected, and ascended God-man whose life is sufficient for reproducing the living of Christ in humanity. Only by the operation of this Spirit can the believers in Christ be conformed to His image and, thus, become the corporate Christ (1 Cor. 12:12), the full expression of God in humanity.

In its review of the Apollinarian heresy, which denied the full and complete humanity of the man Jesus, “Imitating” states that since Apollinarians “favored the pursuit of faith apart from reason” because Jesus “only knew things divinely,” the Christian life was reduced to being “a bit less human” (28). Ironically, however, those who elect to practice the way of imitation suggested by “Imitating” risk incurring a damage of equal magnitude. For them, the Christian life is reduced to being something less properly divine.

by Tony Espinosa

An Inadequate Understanding of Life in the Gospel of John

“The Christological and Eschatological Significance of Jesus’ Miracle in John 5,” by Stephen S. Kim, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165 (October-December 2008): 413-24.

“The Christological and Eschatological Significance of Jesus’ Miracle in John 5” (hereafter *Significance*) attempts

to analyze “the first of five sign miracles in the Festival Cycle—Jesus’ miracle of healing the lame man at the pool of Bethesda (5:1-15)—and its attendant narrative and discourse” (415) and to draw out the implications of this miracle Christologically and eschatologically. Although *Significance* states that the Gospel of John is one of the most carefully crafted pieces of literature in the Bible, its analysis of the Gospel misses John’s emphasis on God’s bringing life to humanity and on the relationship between the Son and the Father in the giving of the divine life and in executing judgment.

Significance’s View of the Gospel of John and of the Lord’s Miracle in John 5

Significance is divided into two major sections and a conclusion. In the first section, “The Literary Structure of John,” this essay attempts to provide the context for John 5. It does this by stating that the aim of the Gospel of John is “to present Jesus as the promised Messiah of the Old Testament and the unique Son of God” and that the apostle’s way to accomplish this aim was through “the seven sign miracles...and their attendant contexts of teaching” recorded in the first twelve chapters of John” (413). It goes on to explain that these twelve chapters can be divided into two main sections: the Cana Cycle (chs. 2—4), in which the central focus is the revelation of Jesus as the divine Messiah and the importance of believing into Him (413-414), and the Festival Cycle (chs. 5—12), in which the focus shifts to developing a theme of opposition to Jesus (414). In the second section, “Healing of the Lame Man at the Pool,” *Significance* analyzes the miracle of healing the lame man at the pool of Bethesda in John 5 in three aspects: the setting of the miracle, the sign of the miracle itself, and the significance of the miracle.

Concerning the first two subsections, the miracle and its setting, *Significance* rightly points out that the miracle took place on the Sabbath to prove that the Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath. There is a discussion of the physical impossibilities of healing the crippled man in order to show that Jesus’ healing of him was and could only be a miracle. It suggests that the Lord’s charge to the crippled man, who was healed, to “not sin any more” does not refer to a “cause-and-effect” correlation between personal sin and sickness (419). Rather, the article presents an alternative view: “It is more likely that in His warning Jesus was addressing the eschatological correlation between sin and judgment by mentioning ‘something worse’” (419). The article concludes this subsection by acknowledging that this sign demonstrates that Jesus had the divine authority to forgive sins.

The third aspect in the subsection entitled “Healing of the Lame Man at the Pool” addresses in full the main

focus of the article. In this section the article focuses on the Lord's word from verses 18 through 30, where the Lord explains in an intrinsic way what He did in healing the lame man. Concerning Christology, *Significance* stresses that Jesus revealed His divine sonship by demonstrating His divine prerogative to forgive sin and to grant eternal life to those who believe into Him and by revealing His authority to judge those who reject the offer of life available through Him.

This article also points out that both the eternal life given by the Lord and the judgment carried out by Him have not only future consequences but also present implications. Although *Significance* defines eternal life as a "present experience of the reality that will be fully realized in the age to come" (421), it never draws the clear connection between the eternal life that the Son gives and the life that the Father has in Himself. It is crucial to realize that eternal life in John's Gospel is the life of the eternal Father that is in the Son and given by the Son when one believes in the Son.

Concerning eschatology, *Significance* explains that not only is *Son of Man* an apocalyptic title that points to the eschatological judgment of the resurrection of the dead but also that the act of healing the lame man foreshadows the characteristics of the coming Messianic kingdom (421). Finally, it adds that the Lord's choice to heal on the Sabbath was to demonstrate to the nation of Israel that He was the promised One who would inaugurate the kingdom as the true Sabbath rest (422-423).

The Central Focus of the Gospel of John Being Life

Significance's discourse on the literary structure of the Gospel of John fails to include the perspective of the entire Gospel. Without an inclusive view of this Gospel, it is difficult to analyze any single portion, and the result of such an analysis will also fall short of the apostle's intent and revelation in the analyzed portion. In other words, an analysis of the Lord's miracle in John 5 without an adequate view of the entire Gospel of John will fall short of presenting John's revelation in that chapter. In its statement that the aim of the Gospel of John is to present Jesus as the promised Messiah of the Old Testament and the unique Son of God, *Significance* references John 20:30-31 but then omits John's crucial assertion in verse 31 that our believing is for us to "have life in His name" (413). The apostle John's interest was not to reveal Jesus as the Son of God apart from His being life to humanity. Rather, his unique interest was to reveal Christ as the Son of God who brings God as life to humanity (1:4, 12). Thus, the entire Gospel of John is a gospel of life, and this life is God Himself in Christ as the Spirit entering into man (1 John 5:20; Eph. 4:18; John 11:25; 14:6; Rom. 8:2).¹

When we have a fuller view of the Gospel of John, it becomes apparent that the emphasis of John chapters 1 through 12 does not change. Instead of a focal change as suggested by *Significance*, there is only a contextual change, a change in the description of humanity's needs, which can be addressed only by the Son of God coming as life (John 5:21, 24, 39-40; 6:27, 35, 40, 47, 51, 57, 63, 68; 7:37-39; 8:12, 24, 28; 10:10-11, 17, 27-30; 11:25; 12:24, 49-50).

The Son Giving Life and Executing Judgment

While *Significance* mentions that the Lord's divine sonship is revealed in His authority to grant life, to forgive sins, and to judge, it focuses more on the Lord's eschatological judgment. As a consequence, it fails to consider adequately the divine titles *Son of God* and *Son of Man*. Consequently, it is basically silent on the Son's relationship with the Father as it relates to the giving of the divine life and executing judgment.

The title *Son of God* refers to Christ's divine nature. In John 5:25, "the Son of God" is mentioned in relation to His giving life, for "the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." However, the title *the Son of Man* in verse 27 of this same chapter refers mainly to Jesus' humanity. He is the man designated and resurrected by God through whom God will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31). In the context of John 5, Jesus has the authority to give the divine life and, subsequently, the authority to judge those who do not have the divine life. The revelation in these titles as seen in John 5 may be summarized by the statement: "The Lord is the Son of God (v. 25); hence, He can give life (v. 21). He is also the Son of Man; hence, He can execute judgment" (Recovery Version, 5:27, note 1).

The Son's relationship to the Father is revealed in the exercise of His authority to give life and to execute judgment. As the Son of God, He has life and can give life to whom He wills, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life (v. 21). However, the Son can do nothing from Himself except what He sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does in like manner (v. 19). To Him as the Son of Man the Father has given the authority to execute judgment based on the principle of life (v. 27). The Son does not judge from Himself, but as He hears, He judges, because He does not seek His own will but the will of Him who sent Him (v. 30). In this sense, the Son has limited His living and activity to the sphere of the Father (14:10; 6:57; 5:43; cf. Phil. 2:6-7). The Son is in the Father, lives because of the Father, and is one with the Father based on a mutual participation in the divine life. Thus, He "can do nothing from Himself" (John 5:19). Rather, the God-man Jesus and the Father are one, and the Son declares

and expresses the Father in both His divine and human statuses for the carrying out of God's economy to save and impart Himself as life to man (10:30; 1:18; 14:9-10) and to judge based on the absence or presence of the divine life.

Significance's eschatological investigation of the Lord's miracle in John 5, though full and well reasoned, overlooks the large context of the Gospel of John. In considering the Lord's healing on the Sabbath as a presentation of His being the Messiah to provide the Sabbath rest for the nation of Israel, *Significance* concludes that the lame man symbolizes the Jewish nation with its deformity and thereby overlooks the detail of John's Gospel being a message addressed to all humankind rather than to the Jewish nation only. In so doing, it misses the broader context of the miracle, which is that the lame man may symbolize humanity in general and the impotence and inability to keep the law as revealed in Romans 7. Because of such an innate human impotence, only the life of God, as contained in the law of the Spirit of life in Romans 8, can meet this need in humanity.

In conclusion, *Significance's* Christological examination of the Lord's miracle in John 5 is lacking and falls short of the Gospel's intrinsic revelation of the Lord's being life to the believers and to His relationship with the Father. However, its analysis of the eschatological significance of this miracle is thorough and insightful although limited in the scope of its application.

by Joel Oladele

Notes

¹The Gospel of John is a gospel of life, and the two crucial components of this Gospel, as of the entire Bible, are life and building. This is revealed primarily in the first two signs recorded in the Gospel of John, one of which is not a miracle (2:1-22). Life is God Himself in Christ as the Spirit entering into man, and the purpose of life is to build God's house, which will consummate as the city of life, the New Jerusalem, as the ultimate expression of God in man and man in God (John 1:1, 4, 14; 2:19; Rev. 21:22; 22:1-2). In this light John's Gospel can be divided into two major sections: "The eternal Word incarnated coming to bring God into man—1:1—13:38" and "Jesus crucified and Christ resurrected going to prepare the way to bring man into God, and as the Spirit coming to abide and live in the believers for the building of God's habitation—14:1—21:25" (Recovery Version, Gospel of John, outline).

Works Cited

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Now Christ Is the Spirit

The Spirit's Relation to the Risen Lord in Paul: An Examination of Its Christological Implications, by Mehrdad Fatehi. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000.

Mehrdad Fatehi's *The Spirit's Relation to the Risen Lord in Paul* (hereafter *Relation*), the publication of his 1998 doctoral dissertation at Brunel University (the London Bible College) under the direction of Max Turner, investigates the relationship between the Spirit and the risen Christ. It is a welcome and important contribution dealing with this misunderstood and somewhat controversial topic. His work stands between two extremes: one extreme that identifies the Lord (who is the Spirit) in verses such as 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 as Christ but undermines trinitarian presuppositions in Paul, and another extreme that insists that the Lord in 3:17-18 is not Christological at all.

Fatehi reviews most of the pertinent secondary literature that addresses these issues and then analyzes the Old Testament, Second-Temple Jewish, and rabbinic literature before looking at key passages in Paul's writings that relate the Spirit to Christ. Fatehi indicates that in Jewish experience and thought the Spirit is considered "an experience of God himself" rather than just a "divine agent or mediatorial figure" (163). He suggests that Paul continues this understanding of the Spirit, for example, in 1 Corinthians 3:16 where the Spirit's indwelling causes the believers to be the temple of God.

To demonstrate the relationship of the risen Christ to the Spirit, Fatehi initially avoids the more controversial or disputed passages: 1 Corinthians 15:45 and 2 Corinthians 3:17. Rather, he uses a number of texts, such as Romans 15:18-19, which show Paul's consciousness of Christ working in him through the power of the Spirit. The Spirit reveals the mind of Christ and brings the believers to an understanding of Christ crucified (1 Cor. 1:17—2:16). Christ is seen as the new covenant Lord who writes on the fleshly hearts of the new covenant people through the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:3). *Relation* concludes that the Spirit "clearly functions as the medium of the risen Lord's presence and activity in the same way that it functions in relation to God in the Old Testament and Judaism as a whole" (202).

In chapter 10 *Relation* looks at the expressions *the Spirit of Christ* (Rom. 8:9), *the Spirit of His Son* (Gal. 4:6), and *the Spirit of Jesus Christ* (Phil. 1:19). It considers the relationship of the genitive modifier to *the Spirit*, looking especially at exegetical clues in the immediate context, and concludes that these expressions are analogous to the term *the*

Spirit of God in the Old Testament, which refer to the risen Lord's presence and activity within the believers.

In chapter 11 *Relation* demonstrates from a number of verses (1 Cor. 12:3; Rom. 8:9; 7:4-6; 12:11; 14:17-18; 1:3-4) that the risen Christ as the living Lord exercises His lordship among the believers through the Spirit. Chapter 12 continues by showing that "Christians are 'in Christ' also in the sense that they are in union with him through the Spirit" (274). This union with Christ issues in an "incorporation" into His body through the Spirit (269).

Chapter 13 of *Relation* brings the reader to the crux of its argument that 1 Corinthians 15:45 and 2 Corinthians 3:17 identify the Spirit with the risen Lord. In dealing with 1 Corinthians 15:45, "the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit," *Relation* particularly mentions Dunn, who identifies Christ with the Spirit especially in the believer's experience in which "there is no distinction between Christ and the Spirit" (276), and Turner, who equates the life-giving Spirit with Christ's resurrected spiritual body (276). *Relation* refutes Fee's consideration that Christ as a life-giving Spirit is eschatological, referring only to our future resurrection, rather than to the believer's present experience. Perhaps in deference to his doctoral advisor, Fatehi denies that there is "direct or explicit identification of the risen Christ with God's Spirit," although in later statements, he goes on to say, it is "highly likely that...God's Spirit is also in view in Paul's statement" (285-286). *Relation* also states that "Paul's characterization of the risen Lord even as 'a life-giving Spirit,' points inevitably to some kind of identification between Christ and 'the life-giving Spirit,'" especially since the "breath of life" implied in the first part of the verse "was closely associated in Judaism with God's Spirit" (286). Although Christ becomes an "archetype" of the spiritual body, "vitalised by the Spirit of life"; "his becoming [life-giving Spirit]...can mean nothing less than his relating to his people through the same Spirit in a life-giving way" (288). The Spirit "mediates Christ's resurrection life to his people, both in their present pre-resurrection state (cf. Rom. 8:10) as well as in their future post-resurrection life" (288). There is not just identification between Christ and the Spirit "in function" but also "in 'being'" (289). *Relation* argues convincingly that in 2 Corinthians 3:17, "the Lord is the Spirit," the Lord does indeed refer to the risen Christ from the context and from the interpretation of Exodus 34:34, which is one of many places where "Paul frequently uses OT Yahweh texts for Christ" (301).

Relation concludes that 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 demonstrate that Paul does identify the Spirit with the risen Christ and that these verses actually reinforce what Paul is saying about the relationship between Christ and the Spirit in other places. This identification continues in the same line as the dynamic identification between the Spirit and

God in Judaism. The Spirit communicates the power, life, will, and presence of the risen Lord but also has an ontological aspect in which "the risen Lord himself is actually present and active through the Spirit," yet "the risen Lord is not reduced to the Spirit" (305). Fatehi does not feel comfortable with Dunn's statement, "the impersonal Spirit...is now identified with Jesus and bears his personality" (306), that is, with a "personal or complete identification" (307). There is a danger in pressing this objection too far and, thus, ending up with both distinction and separation. However, Fatehi does rightly consider that there needs to be a distinction between the two.

The fourth and concluding part of *Relation* considers the Christological implications of the identification of Christ with the Spirit. It suggests that the believer's experiences of Christ as the Spirit and the notion of a divine Christ fit into a "diverse and flexible" Jewish monotheism that was present in the first century a.d., as opposed to a narrower view of monotheism today (329). However, this is not to say that there was not something new—an "appearing...of Christ as a 'divine' person within the Godhead who was actively present through the Spirit" (332). This in turn impacts trinitarian theology; "Christians" have "a dual relationship to God as Father and to Jesus as Lord in and through the Spirit" (333). It is interesting to note, as James Dunn does in his review of Fatehi's book, that the "experience of the Spirit in explaining the early emergence of a high Christology" does not seem controversial in the formative years of the church according to "our earliest Christian sources" (285).

Fatehi is to be commended for his efforts to present a strong case for the identification of Christ as the Spirit, not only in the two controversial verses, but also throughout Paul's writings. He also makes a strong case that there is a basis for this in the Old Testament and other Jewish writings. Yet Paul was not restricted by his Jewish background; his unveiling of the revelation of God as the Spirit is presented as a revelation of a divine Christ who is realized and experienced as the Spirit by the believers. Not only is Christ realized and experienced as the Spirit, but all that He has passed through, including His death and resurrection, has also been compounded into the Spirit for the believer's experience. Further consideration by Fatehi of the Spirit's relation to the risen Lord hopefully will address these matters, since indeed in God's economy "the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor. 3:17), which is only possible by the compounding of the Spirit with Christ's person and work.

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Works Cited

Dunn, James D. G. "The Spirit's Relation to the Risen Lord in Paul." *Journal of Theological Studies* 55 (2004): 283-286.