

Copyright © 2017 Kyle David Claunch

All rights reserved. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including, without limitation, preservation or instruction.

THE SON AND THE SPIRIT:
THE PROMISE OF SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY IN TRADITIONAL
TRINITARIAN AND CHRISTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Kyle David Claunch
May 2017

APPROVAL SHEET

THE SON AND THE SPIRIT:
THE PROMISE OF SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY IN TRADITIONAL
TRINITARIAN AND CHRISTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Kyle David Claunch

Read and Approved by:

Bruce A. Ware (Chair)

Stephen J. Wellum

Shawn D. Wright

Date _____

To Ashley.

You have endured much to make the pursuit of this goal a reality. Through all the years of rigorous study, the joys and demands of parenting, the delights and duties of ministry, and the challenges and triumphs of daily life, you have embraced the completion of this calling as your own. You, Ashley, have been the picture of what God intended when he ordained that the wife be a helper suitable to her husband. I rise up and call you blessed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	ix
PREFACE	x
Chapter	
1. SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY AND THE SPECTRUM OF ORTHODOXY	1
Introduction	1
Definition of Spirit Christology	2
Spirit Christology in Contemporary Theology	4
Thesis	9
Background	11
Method	13
Summary of Contents	15
Conclusion	19
2. SURVEY OF SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY PROPOSALS, PART 1: REVISIONIST MODELS	20
Introduction	20
Adoptionist Christologies in the Early Church	21
The Ebionites	22
Theodotus and Paul of Samosata	23
Theological Themes of Adoptionism	24
Rejection of Adoptionism: Harmful or Helpful?	27
Modern Adoptionism	28
James D. G. Dunn: <i>Jesus and the Spirit</i>	28

Chapter	Page
Geoffrey Lampe: <i>God as Spirit</i>	33
Paul Newman: <i>A Spirit Christology</i>	37
Roger Haight: "The Case for Spirit Christology"	41
Conclusion	48
3. SURVEY OF SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY PROPOSALS, PART 2: CONTEMPORARY TRINITARIAN MODELS	49
Introduction	49
Spirit Christology for Emphasis on the Humanity of Christ	51
Gerald Hawthorne	52
Klaus Issler	62
Bruce Ware	69
Conclusion	80
Spirit Christology for Emphasis on the Spirit in the Immanent Trinity and Ecumenism	81
Ralph Del Colle	81
Myk Habets	85
Critique of Habets and Del Colle	89
Spirit Christology for Global Theology	96
Clark Pinnock	97
Amos Yong	100
Conclusion from Pinnock and Yong	105
Promise and Peril: Advantages and Dangers of Spirit Christology	106
Advantages	107
Emphasis on the Humanity of Christ	107
The Imitation of Christ	109
Emphasis on the Holy Spirit	110
The Exegetical Advantage	111

Chapter	Page
Dangers	112
Diminished Emphasis on the Deity of Christ.....	112
Incoherence of Divine Unity.....	115
Incoherence of Hypostatic Union.....	117
Decentralizing Jesus.....	118
Overemphasized Ecumenical Potential.....	120
Conclusion	121
4. THE SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY OF JOHN OWEN	122
Introduction	122
Owen's Catholic Spirit Christology	125
Owen's Spirit Christology and Trinitarian Agency	126
Exceptions to Inseparable Operations?.....	139
Owen's Spirit Christology and Chalcedonian Categories.....	143
A Cleavage Between the Natures?	145
Owen's Spirit Christology and Covenant Theology.....	152
Christ as the Antitype of Prelapsarian Adam	153
Christ as Antitype of OT People of God	156
Christ as Archetype of NT Church	159
John Owen and the Promise of Spirit Christology.....	160
Emphasis on the Humanity of Christ.....	161
The Imitation of Christ	162
Emphasis on the Holy Spirit.....	163
The Exegetical Advantage.....	163
John Owen and the Peril of Spirit Christology	164
Diminished Emphasis on the Deity of Christ	164
Incoherence of Divine Unity	166

Chapter	Page
Incoherence of the Hypostatic Union	167
Decentralizing Jesus	167
Overemphasis on Ecumenical Potential	168
Conclusion	169
5. RETRIEVING AND ADVANCING AN OWENITE SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY.....	170
Introduction	170
Trinitarian Agency and Operations of the Holy Spirit	173
Owenite Spirit Christology and Biblical Support	178
Biblical Support for Agency of the Holy Spirit.....	179
Biblical Support for Spirit Christology.....	188
The Spirit in the Conception and Childhood of Jesus.....	189
The Spirit in the Baptism and Temptations of Jesus.....	191
The Spirit in the Earliest Teaching of Jesus.....	194
The Spirit in the Miracles of Jesus	195
The Spirit and Jesus in the Gospel of John	199
Conclusions from the Biblical Material.....	204
Contemporary Critiques from Theologians of the Classical Tradition.....	204
Starting with the Holy Spirit: A Critique from Christopher R. J. Holmes	205
The <i>Extra-Calvinisticum</i> : A Critique from Stephen J. Wellum	208
The Works of Christ that Attest his Deity.....	214
Conclusion	217
6. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	218
Recap of the Argument	218
The Promise of Spirit Christology	219
The Peril of Spirit Christology.....	221

	Page
The Use of the Term "Spirit Christology"	225
The Future of Spirit Christology	226
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	228

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
<i>EDT</i>	<i>Evangelical Dictionary of Theology</i> , ed. Walter A. Elwell, 2 nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001)
<i>HeyJ</i>	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
<i>IJST</i>	<i>International Journal of Systematic Theology</i>
<i>JAT</i>	<i>Journal of Analytic Theology</i>
<i>JECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JES</i>	<i>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JPT</i>	<i>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</i>
<i>JRT</i>	<i>Journal of Reformed Theology</i>
<i>LF</i>	<i>Lutheran Forum</i>
<i>Pneuma</i>	<i>Pneuma: Journal for the Society of Pentecostal Studies</i>
<i>PRSt</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
<i>Them</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
<i>TrinJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>

PREFACE

I have loved the study of theology since my childhood. The embers of this love, lit, I hope, by the Holy Spirit, were fanned into flame throughout my life by the faithful testimony, preaching, teaching, and conviction of my father, Dr. Michael Claunch. The longer I have lived, the more aware I have become that I am blessed beyond measure to have had theological vigor and conviction modeled for me in my church and my home by the same man. To him I owe a great debt of gratitude.

My mom, Karen Claunch, is not the theologian that my father is in word. However, her unremittingly gentle spirit, diligent prayer habits, and radically evident love of neighbor helped confirm in my heart, as much as any words spoken, the reality of the love of the one true God known to us through Jesus Christ. To her I owe a great debt of gratitude.

As is the case with many, the more I have studied the being and attributes of the one true and living God and his actions in the world, according to his revelation in Holy Scripture, the more I realize how vast an ocean theology truly is. Few people have assisted me in appreciating the expanse of that ocean and swimming its waters more than my *doktorvater*, Dr. Bruce Ware. Since my first semester as a seminary student, I determined that I wanted to be the kind of theologian that Bruce Ware is. I may never achieve that goal, but I am honored to know him as a mentor and friend, even while I grow as a dwarf theologian standing on his shoulders. To him I owe a great debt of gratitude.

The pursuit of the Ph.D. degree is something over which I prayed diligently with my wife before entering the program. We both felt compelled that entering and completing the program was a matter of divine calling for my life, for our lives. The

journey has been long. At times, we both wondered if the finish line would ever be crossed. The regular pressures of full-time pastoral ministry, the challenges and crises of parenting, and the general vicissitudes of life have all presented obstacles along the way. Nevertheless, through it all, my wife, Ashley, never wavered in her assurance that running this race was a matter of obedience to God. Her regular sacrifices for me to study, research, and write as well as her incessant encouragement and accountability have helped ensure that my determination to finish would never waver. To her I owe a great debt of gratitude.

I am currently the Lead Pastor of Highland Park First Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. To shepherd this flock completes in me the sweetest joy of my calling as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. To live in community with this body of believers continues the work of sanctification in my life by the grace of God. To know these people is to have a pleasant taste of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. To Highland Park I owe a great debt of gratitude.

Finally, my heart overflows with thanks to the many financial benefactors who have made my education possible. For seven years, throughout my M.Div. and through the first half of my Ph.D. studies, an anonymous benefactor regularly gave significant sums of money for the continuation of my education while I served as the Pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Springfield, Kentucky. I may never know this person's name, but I am overwhelmingly grateful for the generosity shown, without which I would likely have needed to cease my studies. During the last three years, my church, Highland Park FBC, has provided financial support for my education as a portion of my salary package. Again, this provision has made the pursuit of this degree possible. To these benefactors I owe a great debt of gratitude.

Of course, all of these human sources of encouragement, motivation, and financial support are just so many tangible expressions of the kindness of him whom to know is eternal life. "From him and through him and to him are all things, to whom be

the glory forever, amen” (Rom 11:36). It is my prayer that the arguments and analyses set forth in this dissertation serve to enrich the theological pursuits of gospel-believing, God-loving people, by the power of the Holy Spirit. May the very Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who rests upon the Son, rest upon you as you consider the rich and rewarding subject of Spirit Christology.

Kyle D. Claunch

Louisville, Kentucky

May 2017

CHAPTER 1
SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY AND THE SPECTRUM OF
ORTHODOXY

Introduction

The Holy Spirit has, at times, been referred to as the forgotten or neglected member of the Trinity by both popular¹ and scholarly authors.² This criticism is seen as especially trenchant with respect to Western theological traditions. Recent years, however, have seen a renaissance of pneumatological studies in the West, leading some to believe that the days of the anonymity of the Spirit are waning.³ New studies in pneumatology abound, and at the hands of many contemporary theologians, every traditional doctrinal locus of systematic theology is being developed from an explicitly pneumatological standpoint.⁴ Perhaps no traditional doctrine has received more attention in this pneumatological reappraisal than that of Christology. The result is a surge in contemporary literature on the subject of Spirit Christology. This surge in literature

¹See Francis Chan, *Forgotten God: Reversing our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009).

²Clark Pinnock hopes to assist Western Christianity in recovering from its “forgetfulness of Spirit.” See Clark Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1996), 9-11. Jürgen Moltmann observes that the Holy Spirit is often thought of as “the Cinderella of Western theology.” Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 1. Gary Badcock refers to a “pronounced pneumatological deficit in Christian theology.” Gary Badcock, *Light of Truth and Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 1.

³Moltmann observes, “‘Forgetfulness of the Spirit’ gave way to a positive obsession with the Spirit” (*Spirit of Life*, 1).

⁴Ironically, while Karl Barth is often presented as perpetrating the neglect of pneumatology by his excessive Christocentrism, Moltmann suggests that Barth, near the end of his life, dreamed of “a new theology which would begin with the third article of the creed and would realize in a new way the real concern of his old opponent, Schleiermacher” (Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 1).

means that the term Spirit Christology, which is of relatively recent vintage, is now somewhat of a household name among contemporary students of pneumatology.

Some would dispute the claims of this narrative of neglect, pointing to a plethora of studies from many eras of Christian theological history to demonstrate the doctrine of the person and work of the Holy Spirit has not been so drastically neglected as this narrative suggests. Nevertheless, the reality that the prevalence of this narrative has led to an explosion of pneumatological studies unprecedented in earlier periods in the history of Christian theology cannot be denied. It is in the context of this narrative of neglect and the recent pneumatological surge that the term Spirit Christology was framed. For better or worse, Spirit Christology is now, and will remain, a force to be reckoned with in the larger pneumatological and Christological contexts of Christian theology.

Definition of Spirit Christology

Spirit Christology is notoriously difficult to define. Myk Habets, before offering his own broad definition of the term, warns, “Spirit Christology is not a precisely definable Christological construction.”⁵ Herschel Odell Bryant, also before offering a definition of his own, laments the difficulty of the task: “The dilemma confronting anyone seeking to understand Spirit Christology is the lack of unanimity among contemporary scholars regarding either a definition or a model of Spirit Christology.”⁶ This difficulty is due, in part, to the fact that contemporary proposals of Spirit Christology are approached from many different theological perspectives and with many desiderata in view. Due to this extensive theological variety, it is important for an introductory definition to be broad enough to include all the models that will be engaged

⁵Myk Habets, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, ed. K. C. Hanson, Charles M. Collier, and D. Christopher Spinks (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 4.

⁶Herschel Odell Bryant, *Spirit Christology in the Christian Tradition: From the Patristic Period to the Rise of Pentecostalism in the Twentieth Century* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2014).

in this study. A broad definition will allow the reader to categorize the varieties of Spirit Christology according to the specific theological content and desiderata of the various proposals. This approach will also best equip the reader to understand and evaluate the constructive Spirit-Christology proposal offered at the end of this dissertation. For the purposes of this study, I offer the following definition: *Spirit Christology is an approach to Christology that affords paradigmatic prominence to the Holy Spirit for understanding traditional Christological categories.* In the words of Ralph Del Colle, Spirit Christology “seeks to understand both ‘who Christ is’ and ‘what Christ has done’ from the perspective of the third article of the creed: ‘I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life.’”⁷ In this definition, the term *paradigmatic prominence* is key. No theologian who takes Scripture, in particular the four canonical gospels, seriously would deny the fact that the Holy Spirit is an integral part of the narrative of the life of Christ in the state of humiliation. Many theologians, however, do not see the prominence of pneumatological emphases in the gospel narratives as paradigm forming for Christology. Thus, many systematic studies in Christology deal with all of the key issues of historic Christology in such a way that the prominence of pneumatologically emphatic passages in the gospels does little or nothing to shape the overall paradigm of Christological dogma. That is, pneumatology does not occupy a place of paradigmatic prominence. Put differently, a Christological proposal can be identified as Spirit Christology if one or more of the major issues in traditional Christological discourse would be deemed as impoverished or incomplete apart from sustained appeal to the Holy Spirit.⁸

⁷Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3.

⁸Virtually all theologians will acknowledge the Holy Spirit as present with respect to the incarnate person and work of Christ. Considerably few Christological proposals, however, are explicitly dependent on pneumatological categories for the expression of Christological paradigms. Thus, what is meant by paradigmatic prominence is that the paradigm would be incomplete apart from the pneumatological element.

It will be seen that the paradigmatic prominence given to the Holy Spirit can vary dramatically. For some theologians, the Holy Spirit is understood as the working power of God in a unitarian sense, and, as such, Jesus' experience of God as Spirit accounts for any ascription of divinity to Him, ascriptions which are only understood in a functional sense. Even among Trinitarian proponents of Spirit Christology, there is considerable variety to the paradigmatic prominence given to the Spirit. For some, the fullness of Jesus' humanity is the more prominent feature, such that the eternally divine Son's humanity can only be understood by ascribing the supernatural features of his earthly existence to the immediate operations of the Holy Spirit in and through Him.⁹ For others, the eternal hypostatic identity of the Spirit is constitutive of the eternal hypostatic identity of the Son so that a reconceived model of eternal Trinitarian modes of subsistence is presented.¹⁰ For still other proponents of Trinitarian Spirit Christology, the pneumatological emphasis in Christology is a critical cog in the machinery of an inclusivist soteriology.¹¹

Spirit Christology in Contemporary Theology

Before a thesis is articulated, a brief survey of Spirit Christology proposals on the landscape of contemporary theology is in order. One can think of the contemporary proposals as occurring along a spectrum of consistency with classical Trinitarian theology and Christology, as articulated in the early ecumenical creeds. At one end of the

⁹This is by far the most common approach and is embodied, most influentially, by Gerald Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus* (1991; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003).

¹⁰The traditional order of the eternal modes of subsistence is thus reconceived. This, of course, affects one's understanding of the much-disputed *filioque* clause of the Western Trinitarian tradition. Both Ralph Del Colle (*Christ and the Spirit*) and Myk Habets (*The Anointed Son*) conceive of Spirit Christology in this eternal sense. Their proposals will be considered in some detail in chapter 3.

¹¹See Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, and Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005). Both Pinnock and Yong propose Spirit-Christology paradigms for this reason.

spectrum of contemporary Spirit Christology are the revisionist models. For thinkers such as Geoffrey Lampe,¹² James D. G. Dunn,¹³ Paul Newman,¹⁴ and Roger Haight,¹⁵ Spirit Christology is an alternative to the Logos Christology of the ecumenical creeds.¹⁶ Such thinkers lament the ascendancy of classical Trinitarian orthodoxy and its Christological extension to the Chalcedonian formula of one person with two natures. In these revisionist Spirit Christologies, the category of God as Spirit is the conceptual key for understanding the uniqueness of the person of Jesus Christ without the philosophically and theologically dense exercises required by those who affirm the classical formulae. These thinkers fit the overall paradigm of theological liberalism when it comes to the person of Christ and the rejection of Trinitarian dogma. However, all of the thinkers surveyed in this dissertation construct their Christological proposals explicitly in terms of Spirit Christology. It will be shown that these revisionist models are, in many ways, just contemporary iterations of an old Christological heresy – adoptionism.

While revisionist proposals have considerably influenced contemporary discussions of Spirit Christology, it would be a mistake to paint all models of Spirit Christology with the same heterodox brush. There is a large and growing number of contemporary theologians who articulate proposals of Spirit Christology as complementary to traditional Logos Christology and the basic contours of Trinitarian

¹²Geoffrey Lampe, *God As Spirit: The Bampton Lectures, 1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

¹³James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975).

¹⁴Paul Newman, *A Spirit Christology: Recovering the Biblical Paradigm of Christian Faith* (1987; repr., n.p., Paul Newman, 2014).

¹⁵Roger Haight, S. J., “The Case for Spirit Christology,” *TS* 53 (1992): 257-87. See also Haight, *Jesus: Symbol of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000).

¹⁶Logos Christology derives its name from the first chapter of John’s gospel, in which the eternally divine Word (Gk. *logos*) became flesh. Thus, Logos Christology holds to the ontological deity and preexistence of the Son.

orthodoxy. Thus, on the spectrum of consistency with Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy, there is a radical distinction between two broad kinds of contemporary Spirit Christology – revisionist and Trinitarian.¹⁷ The complexity does not end with this distinction, however. Even among proponents of Trinitarian Spirit Christology, the subject is approached from many different theological perspectives and with vastly different objectives.

For some proponents of Trinitarian models, the *raison d’être* of Spirit Christology is the long history of the perceived neglect of pneumatology in Western Christian traditions. These theologians believe that the forgetfulness of Spirit in Western Christianity is owing to an excessive Christocentrism that has conceived of the role of the Spirit as an aspect of the person and work of the Son. Therefore, a carefully conceived Spirit Christology is considered the starting point for inviting the Cinderella Spirit of Western theology to the theological ball.¹⁸

The consequences of this supposed pneumatological neglect are not merely conceptual, however, according to these thinkers. One negative consequence is the lack of ecumenical unity and a kind of dialogical stalemate engendered by the *filioque* clause of the Latin version of the Nicene Creed.¹⁹ Spirit Christology is thus presented as a means for dramatically improving the church’s prospects for ecumenical dialogue, moving Eastern and Western traditions beyond the “stalemate” of the *filioque* clause. Myk Habets, a leading Protestant authority on the subject of Spirit Christology, writes,

¹⁷The terms “revisionist” and “Trinitarian” are common in the literature to describe these two vastly different broad approaches.

¹⁸See Myk Habets, “*Veni Cinderella Spiritus!*” *JPT* 10 (2001): 65-80.

¹⁹The contentious *filioque* clause, asserting that the eternal hypostatic identity of the Holy Spirit is understood as proceeding from both the Father “and the Son,” was inserted into the Latin version of the Nicene Creed at the regional council of Toledo in AD 589. This created great tension between the Greek-speaking Eastern churches and the Latin Western churches, which continued to fester for centuries, resulting in an official division of the church between East and West in AD 1054. The *filioque* clause continues to be a point of contention between Eastern and Western Christian traditions.

The ecumenical endeavor is basic to a Spirit Christology. Spirit Christology unites Word and Spirit, East and West. It is this insight that can provide a basis for renewed discussion of the contentious *filioque* addition and move the church beyond the current ecclesiological stalemate.²⁰

The *filioque* clause is thus summarily modified, rejected, or even reversed by various proposals of Trinitarian Spirit Christology.

In some instances, the desire for unifying disparate groups terminates with the hope of ecumenism among Christian traditions,²¹ but other proposals are offered with a more ambitious – some would aver, more problematic – goal. For these theologians, the path of pneumatological emphasis involves Christological de-emphasis, such that the person of the Son no longer occupies the central place in Trinitarian and Soteriological paradigms. That is, some proponents of Spirit Christology articulate their proposals with the explicit goal of establishing a global theology in which the Holy Spirit is savingly active in non-Christian faith traditions.²²

For others, a Trinitarian model of Spirit Christology is primarily an exegetical concern, and the *raison d’etre* seems to be a recovery, not from a neglect of pneumatology, *per se*, but from a neglect of the humanity of Christ. Thinkers such as Gerald Hawthorne, Klaus Issler, and Bruce Ware²³ see the scriptural role of the Spirit in

²⁰Habets, *Anointed Son*, 278. See also Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit*. The late Del Colle was a Roman Catholic theologian and was thus confessionally bound to the *filioque* insertion. However, he developed a model of immanent Trinitarian relations of origin that technically allowed for the *filioque* to be maintained while removing the theological centrality the clause seems to give to Christ over the Spirit. As with Habets, Del Colle’s concern with the traditional understanding of the *filioque* is that it stands in the way of ecumenism.

²¹This is the case for both Habets and Del Colle.

²²Clark Pinnock not only rejects the *filioque* clause but reverses it, making the mission of the Son an aspect of the mission of the Spirit, rather than the other way around. In this way, the saving work of the Spirit transcends the particular manifestation of the mission of the Son and can include other world religions (Pinnock, *Flame of Love*). Amos Yong is another Evangelical theologian, who constructs a model of Spirit Christology as an attempt to ground the saving work of the Spirit in non-Christian faith traditions (Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out On All Flesh*).

²³See Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*; Klaus Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012). See also Issler, “Jesus’ Example: Prototype of the Dependent, Spirit-filled Life,” in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Intermediate Christology*, ed. Klaus Issler and Fred Sanders (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Academic, 2007), 189-225; ²³Bruce Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011). See also Ware, *Father, Son, Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, Relevance*

the earthly life and ministry of Christ as the key to recovering from this neglect.²⁴ It is believed that traditional Christological formulae have so over-emphasized the deity of Christ that the reality of his humanity has been relegated to mere confessional status. The result, it is argued, is a confessionally orthodox Christology that lacks a robust articulation of the humanity of Christ, which is so dutifully confessed. Proponents of this kind of Spirit Christology lament the fact that most interpreters see the miracles of Jesus as obvious demonstrations of his deity. Concerning this tendency, the late New Testament scholar Gerald Hawthorne, avers, “In their zeal to affirm the deity of Jesus, these writers and others like them effectually eliminate the realness of his humanity. But this the New Testament writers do not do. They stand unalterably opposed to such Docetism.”²⁵ While many would aver, rightly, that Hawthorne’s use of the terminology of Docetism takes the point entirely too far, his use of the label highlights the degree to which he believes the classical tradition to have neglected the humanity of Christ.²⁶ Hawthorne, and to varying degrees, Issler and Ware, maintain that a sustained appeal to the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit as the primary explanation for the extraordinary features of Jesus’ earthly life and ministry, then Jesus’ solidarity with mankind can be more richly understood and embraced. This renewed emphasis on the humanity of Jesus Christ through the use of the conceptual tools of Spirit Christology is believed to be helpful, even critical, for enhancing Christian devotion, both through

(Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005).

²⁴It is important to note that the proposals of Hawthorne, Issler, and Ware do not use the terminology of “Spirit Christology.” However, given the use of that term in contemporary literature and the definition offered here, their proposals certainly do fit into that category.

²⁵Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 24. Later in the book, Hawthorne takes up this accusation again: “In a legitimate concern to preserve at all costs the deity of Jesus Christ, many contemporary teachers of the church have followed the lead of the ancient fathers and have become *de facto* Docetists, failing to estimate fully the humanity in which divinity made itself visible” (205).

²⁶Ironically, it will be seen later in this dissertation (Chapter 3) that Hawthorne’s proposal, intended as it is to recover an emphasis on the fully humanity of Christ, ultimately jeopardizes that very confession precisely because of his departure from the classical tradition.

worshipful reflection on Jesus' humanity²⁷ and by making greater sense of the scriptural commands to follow the example of Jesus Christ.²⁸

Thesis

Revisionist proponents of Spirit Christology have forsaken classical Trinitarian theology and Christology altogether. Trinitarian proponents of Spirit Christology, on the other hand, confess agreement with the broad contours of the doctrine of the Trinity (one God in three persons) and the Chalcedonian Definition (Christ is one person with two natures). In spite of this allegiance to the Trinitarian heritage of the church, however, contemporary proposals of even Trinitarian Spirit Christology raise significant questions concerning genuine conceptual consistency with the classical understanding in various ways. Furthermore, in some cases, Spirit Christology forms the basis for rejecting the Protestant conviction that salvation comes only through explicit faith in Jesus Christ on the basis of his completed mission as redeemer. The paucity of contemporary Spirit-Christology proposals that are framed in light of self-conscious and explicit adherence to the classical Trinitarian and Christological heritage of the church might lead some to conclude that Spirit Christology, in and of itself, involves different degrees of deviation from the church's heritage and thus represents a potentially dangerous step in the direction of repeating the old heresies that heritage is designed to prevent.

It is the burden of this dissertation, however, to prove that neither the rejection nor the modification of classical Trinitarian theology or Christology is necessary for the construction of a robust Spirit Christology. My thesis, therefore, is that a carefully conceived Trinitarian Spirit Christology can offer a pneumatological enrichment of traditional Christology. Such a model of Spirit Christology, furthermore, will not move

²⁷This is one of the primary interests of Bruce Ware in *The Man Christ Jesus*.

²⁸This is the primary interest of Klaus Issler in *Living into the Life of Jesus*.

Christians away from the traditional Christocentric soteriological impulse of the Christian tradition but will rather affirm the strength and necessity of that impulse. Such a Spirit Christology should be developed by utilizing (rather than rejecting, modifying, or ignoring) the tools of classical, Nicene Trinitarian theology and Chalcedonian Christology. The final objective of this dissertation, therefore, is to articulate a constructive theological model of Spirit Christology that thoroughly exemplifies the claims of this thesis.

The pursuit of this thesis will require thorough interaction with the most influential proponents of contemporary Spirit Christology. This interaction will result in a critical assessment in which a number of theological advantages and theological dangers of Spirit Christology are identified. Following this critical assessment, the pneumatological proposal of John Owen will be reviewed as a classical and Reformed iteration of Spirit Christology. Owen's overall model will be defended as truly and consistently classical against the claims of some scholars to the contrary. Owen's model will then be assessed favorably in light of the advantages and dangers identified in the survey of contemporary proposals. Thus, the final model of Spirit Christology offered at the end of this dissertation will be a positive restatement of Owen's model in light of the issues raised by contemporary proponents Spirit Christology and their critics.

All proponents of Spirit Christology believe that the emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the person and work of the Son offers distinct theological advantages, which are diminished or lost entirely without this pneumatological approach. I find many of these potential advantages compelling, but not all of them. Of course, whether or not an emphasis is actually an advantage rather than a detriment to theological discourse is largely a subjective matter and will depend a great deal upon the presupposed theological convictions of the critic. The assessment of theological advantages and dangers in this dissertation will be conducted with reference to classical Trinitarian theology and Chalcedonian orthodoxy. By classical Trinitarian orthodoxy, I mean the pro-Nicene

consensus that emerged in the late fourth century, as demonstrated by the careful research of such scholars as Lewis Ayres²⁹ and Michel Barnes.³⁰ By Chalcedonian Christology, I mean not only the mid fifth-century Definition of Chalcedon (AD 451) with its one-person/two-nature formula but also the clarification of the implications of the Definition for a coherent understanding of the meaning of both person and nature, as expressed in the Second and Third Councils of Constantinople (AD 553 and 680). Also in view is the rich traditional stream (medieval, reformational, Evangelical) that has sought consciously to remain faithful to the boundaries laid out by those formulae of Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy. Furthermore, this dissertation is being written from the vantage point of a traditional Reformed, Evangelical soteriological paradigm. This soteriological paradigm includes a commitment to the exclusivity of Jesus Christ as the only Savior and the necessity of explicit personal faith in Christ as the only means of receiving the saving benefits of his passion and resurrection. The appeal to the advantages and dangers of Spirit Christology will constitute the primary rhetorical device for the articulation of a Spirit Christology that is consistent with classical Trinitarian theology and Christology as well as traditional Reformed, Evangelical soteriology.

Background

My interest in the subject of Spirit Christology began in an Advanced Theology course while pursuing my M.Div. at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS). Bruce Ware was lecturing that day on the impeccability of the Spirit-anointed Messiah. As he taught through the biblical texts that emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in the earthly life and ministry of Jesus, I found this new emphasis to make

²⁹See especially Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

³⁰See Michele René Barnes, "One Nature, One Power: Consensus Doctrine in Pro-Nicene Polemic," in *Historica, Theologica et Philosophica, Critica et Philologica*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Louvain, France: Peeters, 1997), 5-23.

sense of many features of the biblical text I had not been able to understand adequately beforehand. Ware's application of this pneumatological emphasis to the question of the impeccability of Christ and the genuineness of his temptations was tremendously helpful to me as one greatly interested in defending the biblical fidelity and coherence of traditional Christological affirmations. While Ware never used the label of Spirit Christology for his position, it certainly was an example of Spirit Christology and my first exposure to it. From that time, Ware's pneumatological emphases in Christology have shaped the way I teach and preach about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Several years later, having completed by M.Div. degree, I entered the Ph.D. program in Systematic Theology at SBTS. During my first semester, I took the Christology and Incarnation seminar with Stephen Wellum. The reading and research required for that seminar opened my eyes to the ocean of complex biblical, theological, and philosophical matters associated with the basic Christian commitment that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. Aside from cementing my love for Christology as an academic theological discipline, my research for that seminar introduced me, for the first time, to the body of literature devoted to the subject of Spirit Christology. I learned that some proponents of Spirit Christology reject all traditional Christian convictions regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ (the revisionist models). I also learned that many proponents of Spirit Christology intentionally modify traditional categories without totally abandoning them (Trinitarian models). However, for all of the potential danger I detected in Spirit Christology, I recognized in the emphases of that literature many of the same truths I had learned from Bruce Ware several years earlier, emphases I believed to be indispensable to Christian understanding and devotion. Among those talking about Spirit Christology, there seemed to be an impasse: either emphasize the Spirit in Christological formulation, or remain entirely faithful to classical Trinitarian and Christological categories – either/or. But I began to contemplate the possibility of both/and. I wondered whether there might be a way beyond the impasse, whether

rapprochement might be possible. Was there a way to embrace the theological advantages of Trinitarian Spirit Christology while avoiding the dangers associated with that paradigm? Surely the possibilities and examples of grave error in Spirit Christology were not necessarily an indication that the whole paradigm is fundamentally flawed. Thus, I set out to find a way forward that painstakingly avoided the dangers lurking ominously nearby while embracing the advantages of a robust Trinitarian Spirit Christology.

It was not until my second semester in the Ph.D. program of SBTS that I found help in articulating a model of Spirit Christology that was consciously formed within the boundaries of classical Trinitarian theology and Christology. In a seminar on post-reformation Reformed scholasticism with Shawn Wright, I discovered that John Owen's extensive discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in the earthly life of Christ is, in fact, a model of Spirit Christology. For Owen, Spirit Christology³¹ is not only consistent with classical categories but demanded by them. Therefore, the model of Spirit Christology articulated by John Owen will be a prominent feature in the proposal offered in this dissertation. In fact, my proposal will be an attempt to appropriate Owen's Spirit Christology in a way that answers contemporary critics of Owen and contemporary classical theologians who criticize Spirit Christology in light of the classical Trinitarian and Christological heritage of the church.

Method

Many aspects of the method to be employed in pursuit of this thesis have already been stated, namely the assessment of contemporary Spirit-Christology proposals in light of classical Trinitarian theology and Christology, followed by an attempt to retrieve the Spirit-Christology proposal of John Owen in the contemporary theological

³¹Owen does not use the term "Spirit Christology," as the term is of relatively recent vintage. However, his model is consistent with the use of that term in contemporary literature and with the definition of the term given in this dissertation.

context. This section, therefore, will focus primarily on the different theological disciplines that will be employed as tools to that end. This thesis is being pursued primarily with an interest in the discipline of Systematic Theology. Indeed, the goal of this dissertation is to offer a constructive systematic-theological proposal of Trinitarian and Spirit Christology. Systematic theology, for the sake of this dissertation, may be defined as the contemporary articulation of biblical truth in a logically ordered (systematic) and coherent fashion, giving careful attention to historical theology. Systematic theology can take the form of summary, critique, or constructive proposal. This dissertation will include elements of all three. As for summary and critique, chapters 2, 3, and 4 will engage in extensive summary and critique of proponents of revisionist Spirit Christology, contemporary adherents to Trinitarian Spirit Christology, and the proposal of John Owen, respectively. Chapter 5 will engage in constructive systematic theology by offering an Owenite proposal of Trinitarian Spirit Christology, advancing Owen's presentation of the working of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus Christ through biblical exegesis and by responding to contemporary critics of Spirit Christology, showing that Owen's model does not succumb to their critiques.

As an articulation of biblical truth, systematic theology must engage in the careful work of exegesis, utilizing tools from the various disciplines of biblical studies. This dissertation will include considerable exegesis of a number of key biblical texts relating to Spirit Christology. While exegetical arguments will be considered where relevant throughout, the most sustained exegetical offerings of this dissertation will come as part of the constructive Owenite proposal in the fifth chapter. Exegetical treatments will include passages often cited in defense of a robust presentation of the role of the Spirit in the earthly life and ministry of Jesus, especially key passages from the synoptic gospels and Acts. Another important exegetical component will be a survey of the Spirit-Christology motif in the Gospel of John. Beyond the specific biblical data presenting the ministry of the Spirit in the life of Jesus, however, this dissertation will also consider

many other passages of pneumatological significance in order to demonstrate that the Spirit Christology proposed here is consistent with the biblical presentation of the person and work of the Spirit of God throughout the canon.

Sensitivity to historical theology is paramount in the construction of systematic theology in order that the strengths of past theological conclusions may be appropriated or retrieved to provide a tested doctrinal foundation for contemporary articulation. As indicated in the thesis, this dissertation will seek to offer a proposal for Spirit Christology that is consistent with the well-tried traditions of classical Trinitarian theology and Christology. Furthermore, sensitivity to historical theology gives the theologian the distinct advantage of seeing how proposals constructed in the past have proven to be in error or have led to error when subjected to the test of time. This dissertation will demonstrate a basic agreement with the “sensitivity” of retrieval articulated by Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain in *Reformed Catholicity*: “Theology stands in particularly acute need of resources from the Christian past if it is to find renewal.”³² Like Allen and Swain, I am convinced that “we can and should pursue catholicity on Protestant principles” and that “pursuing this path holds promise for theological and spiritual renewal.”³³

Summary of Contents

Chapter 2 will begin with a brief but important survey of the adoptionist Christological proposals of the early church. This survey will be conducted primarily with the use of secondary sources. The result of this survey will be the identification of the key theological themes of adoptionist Christologies. Following the discussion of ancient adoptionism, contemporary revisionist Spirit Christology proposals will be

³²Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 12-13.

³³Allen and Swain, *Reformed Catholicity*, 13.

surveyed. Key works of Geoffrey Lampe,³⁴ James D. G. Dunn,³⁵ Paul Newman,³⁶ and Roger Haight³⁷ will be summarized and critiqued. It will be shown that the same theological themes that earned adoptionism its label as heretical also characterize these contemporary revisionist Spirit-Christology proposals. This chapter is important to the thesis of this dissertation for a number of reasons. First, by addressing the iterations of Spirit Christology that are the furthest removed from classical Trinitarian theology and Christology, this chapter will assist the reader in the theological location of the proposal offered at the end of the dissertation, which, if this dissertation is successful, will exemplify the opposite end of the Spirit-Christology spectrum. Second, some of the critical analysis of contemporary Trinitarian models of Spirit Christology will hinge on the inherent tendency of Spirit Christology to lean in the direction of adoptionism, even if only implicitly. The reader will be better equipped to understand this particular point of criticism because of the discussion in this chapter.

Chapter 3 will introduce the reader to the most important iterations of contemporary Trinitarian Spirit Christology. As such, proposals from a variety of theological perspectives with different theological objectives will be considered. As already noted, the *raison d'être* for some Trinitarian authors is the neglect of the Holy Spirit in Western theological studies. Thus, Spirit Christology is a way to give the Spirit his due in theological discourse as fully equal with the other two persons in the Godhead. Thinkers who take up Spirit Christology in this way are Ralph Del Colle,³⁸ Myk Habets,³⁹

³⁴Lampe, *God as Spirit*.

³⁵Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*.

³⁶Newman, *A Spirit Christology*.

³⁷Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology" and Haight, *Jesus: Symbol of God*.

³⁸See especially Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit*.

³⁹See especially Habets, *The Anointed Son*.

Clark Pinnock,⁴⁰ and Amos Yong.⁴¹ For others, the *raison d'être* is not so much a neglect of the Spirit of God in theological discourse but a neglect of the genuine humanity of Christ in both theological and popular Christian understanding and deity. Thus, a robust Spirit Christology is a way of emphasizing the solidarity of Jesus with the rest of mankind. Key thinkers who take up Spirit Christology in this way are Gerald Hawthorne,⁴² Bruce Ware,⁴³ and Klaus Issler.⁴⁴ Following the analysis of each of these proponents of Spirit Christology, this chapter will identify the advantages and dangers of Spirit Christology from the perspective of one who is committed to the creedal heritage of classical Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy and a Reformed soteriological paradigm. This chapter is critical to the thesis of the dissertation for at least two reasons. First, in order to demonstrate that this thesis is even worth pursuing, it must be shown that contemporary models of Trinitarian Spirit Christology raise serious questions concerning the consistency of Spirit Christology with traditional Trinitarian theology and Chalcedonian Christology. Second, the advantages and dangers of Spirit Christology will be used as a rhetorical framework for analyzing the proposal of John Owen in chapter four and for the presentation of the constructive proposal offered in chapter five.

Chapter 4 will give a thorough summary and analysis of the Spirit Christology of the seventeenth-century Reformed theologian, John Owen. Owen's proposal is found in *ΙΙΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ*, or *A Discourse Concerning the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*.⁴⁵ It will be seen that Owen did not construct his proposal in the interests of

⁴⁰See especially Pinnock, *Flame of Love*.

⁴¹See especially Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*.

⁴²Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*.

⁴³See especially Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*; also, Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*.

⁴⁴See especially Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus*.

⁴⁵John Owen, *ΙΙΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ*, vol. 3, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Gould (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009).

novelty. Rather, Owen consciously adhered to the strictures of classical confessional Trinitarian theology and Christology as well as the Christocentric soteriological paradigm of the Reformed tradition, of which he was proudly a part. Two modern interpreters of Owen, Alan Spence and Oliver Crisp, while recognizing Owen's conscious commitment to classical categories, have nevertheless claimed that Owen's understanding of the role of the Spirit in the life and ministry of Christ is conceptually incompatible with some of the basic commitments of classical Trinitarian theology and Chalcedonian Christology, respectively.⁴⁶ In this chapter, I will argue that these two scholars have misread Owen in important ways and that the charge of incompatibility with classical categories is misplaced. Having surveyed Owen's model and defended him against critics, this chapter will demonstrate how Owen's model achieves the advantages and avoids the dangers identified in chapter 3. It will also be shown that, because Owen was facing primarily Socinian opponents, he does not venture to answer the questions that might be raised by modern critics who share his concern for fidelity to classical Trinitarian theology and Christology. The stage will thus be set for chapter 5, in which Owen's model is appropriated and advanced for the sake of contemporary theological reflection.

Chapter 5 will consciously appropriate the Spirit Christology of John Owen while advancing his model by answering some questions he never answered. Part of this will involve an in-depth analysis of how the Christological concept of the *extra-Calvinisticum* is critical to defending an "Owenite Spirit Christology"⁴⁷ in light of the strictures of a thoroughly Chalcedonian Christology. This chapter will also engage in exegesis of key biblical texts. Many of these texts will be considered in support of the

⁴⁶See Alan Spence, *Incarnation and Inspiration: John Owen and the Coherence of Christology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), and Oliver Crisp, "John Owen on Spirit Christology," *JRT* 5 (2011): 5-25. Crisp's article is reproduced as a chapter in Crisp, *Revisioning Christology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 91-110.

⁴⁷Oliver Crisp toys with this term in "John Owen on Spirit Christology," only to conclude that embracing the model is not a legitimate move for those wishing to uphold the Chalcedonian vision of the person of Christ. I dissent and will embrace the term as well as the model proposed by Owen.

need for the paradigm of Spirit Christology. However, others will be considered because of the challenge they pose to Spirit Christology models, especially those accounts in the canonical gospels in which Jesus' miracles seem to be carried out with the express purpose of demonstrating his deity. This chapter will also include substantial interaction with two influential contemporary classical theologians – Christopher R. J. Holmes⁴⁸ and Stephen J. Wellum⁴⁹ - who have criticized Spirit-Christology paradigms because of their inconsistency with classical theological convictions. It will be seen that, while the criticisms are legitimate when applied to most contemporary proposals of Spirit Christology, the Owenite model presented in this dissertation is not subject to the same criticisms.

Conclusion

Ultimately, it is my hope in this dissertation to demonstrate that the pneumatological emphases of Spirit Christology need not be rejected by those committed to the classical understanding of the doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ. Rather, when done rightly, Spirit Christology offers a pneumatological enrichment to a glorious tradition, the tradition of classical Trinitarian theology and Christology. That is, if the perils can be avoided, the promise of Spirit Christology makes the pursuit worth the effort.

⁴⁸Christopher R. J. Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, New Studies in Dogmatics, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

⁴⁹Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

CHAPTER 2
SURVEY OF SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY PROPOSALS
PART 1: REVISIONIST MODELS

Introduction

This chapter will examine the revisionist Spirit-Christology proposals that are furthest removed from classical Trinitarian theology and Christology on the spectrum of orthodoxy. Contemporary revisionist proposals are sometimes referred to by the label “post-Trinitarian.”¹ However, in terms of the theological content of their proposals, the modern authors considered here all return to the pre-Trinitarian² Christological heresy of adoptionism. In order to demonstrate the validity of this claim, a brief presentation of the early iterations of adoptionism will be considered in order to identify the key theological themes of that paradigm, which ultimately led to the church’s wholesale rejection of adoptionist models as heretica. Following the discussion of early adoptionism, the contemporary proposals of James D. G. Dunn,³ Geoffrey Lampe,⁴ Paul Newman,⁵ and

¹Myk Habets, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, ed. K. C. Hanson, Charles M. Collier, and D. Christopher Spinks (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 5.

²The “pre” in this term is used in reference to the pro-Nicene Trinitarian consensus of the late fourth century that has been the standard of Trinitarian orthodoxy since. The earliest clear expressions of adoptionism came before these developments.

³James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (1975; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

⁴Geoffrey Lampe, *God as Spirit: The Bampton Lectures 1976* (London: SCM, 1983). For an earlier, more succinct but less nuanced presentation of Lampe’s views, see Lampe “The Holy Spirit and the Person of Christ” in *Christ, Faith and History, Cambridge Studies in Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 111-30. In that essay, of particular value for Lampe’s rejection of classical Trinitarian and Christological paradigms is his discussion of the motif of “possession” by the Spirit as the better paradigm for articulating Christological models (123-25).

⁵Paul Newman, *A Spirit Christology: Recovering the Biblical Paradigm of Christian Faith* (1987; repr., n.p., Paul Newman, 2014).

Roger Haight⁶ will be examined and evidence adduced to show that the same theological themes that led to the church's rejection of the adoptionist paradigm in earlier centuries also characterize these authors' models of Spirit Christology.

For decades, it was common to assume that all forms of Spirit Christology were revisionist proposals.⁷ It was suggested in the first chapter, however, that Spirit Christology occurs along a spectrum of faithfulness to classical Trinitarian and Christological formulae. After reading this chapter, the reader will have a clearer understanding of the models of Spirit Christology furthest removed from classical Trinitarian theology and Christology. This will assist the reader in the theological location of the proposal that will be offered in the final chapters of this dissertation, which will exemplify the opposite end of the spectrum. Also, this chapter will better equip the reader to appreciate and understand the analysis of the Trinitarian models of Spirit Christology (chapter 3), as some of the critiques of those models will hinge on the tendency of many Spirit-Christology proposals to lean in the direction of the revisionist models considered here, even if only implicitly.

Adoptionist Christologies in the Early Church

Gary Badcock observes that "some of the earliest christologies of the church... were broadly pneumatic in character."⁸ Of these early pneumatic Christologies, the most prominent was the adoptionist model. The details of the development of ancient

⁶Roger Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," *TS* 53 (1992): 257-87. See also Haight, *Jesus: Symbol of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000).

⁷For a prime example of the assumption that all Spirit Christology is revisionist in nature, proposing a paradigm that is designed to replace the traditional incarnational Logos models, see Olaf Hansen, "Spirit Christology: A Way Out of Our Dilemma?" in *The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church: From Biblical Times to the Present*, ed. Paul D. Opsahl (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978), 172-203. Hansen critiques Spirit Christology for failing adequately to preserve the uniqueness of Jesus as presented in the NT and confessed by the early church as well as for its failure to account for the climactic eschatological character of the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. For Hansen, the term Spirit Christology, however, only represents what this work refers to as revisionist proposals.

⁸Gary Badcock, *Light of Truth and Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 145.

adoptionism are somewhat sketchy. This is likely due to the church's eventual unambiguous rejection of the model. Because adoptionism was deemed heretical, the earliest primary source materials were not carefully preserved. Adolf von Harnack suggests that the *Shepherd of Hermas* is a primary source for adoptionist Christology, but Jaroslav Pelikan has pointed out that this is an unlikely interpretation of the *Shepherd*.⁹ It seems, rather, that the earliest source to discuss ancient adoptionism is the second-century treatise by Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*. Adoptionist groups are also discussed by Origen in *Contra Celsus* and by Eusebius in *Ecclesiastical History*. In every case, the sources are secondary and written to refute adoptionism rather than to defend or propose it. It is these sources from which modern historical theologians have had to draw in their attempts to reconstruct the doctrinal content of adoptionist Christology. In spite of these limitations, there is general agreement on the basic contours of the paradigm.

The Ebionites

The term adoptionism, also commonly referred to as *dynamic monarchianism*, is typically reserved for the second and third-century movements that took shape under the leadership of Theodotus the Cobbler and Paul of Samosata, respectively. These teachers, however, had clear theological predecessors, the most notable of which were the Ebionites. The Ebionites were an ascetic Jewish-Christian sect that probably rose to prominence after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70.¹⁰ Origen observes that there were two groups of Ebionites, one holding to the preexistence and virgin birth of Christ, the other rejecting both and arguing instead that Jesus was a mere man, born as all men from a human mother and father.¹¹ Concerning the former group, J. N. D. Kelly suggests

⁹Adolf von Harnack, *Outlines in The History of Dogma*. trans. Edwin Knox Mitchell (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1893). See the discussion in Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 175-76.

¹⁰See Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 24, and *EDT*, s. v. "Ebionites."

¹¹Origen refers to "two sects of Ebionites, the one confessing as we do that Jesus was born of a virgin, the other holding that he was not born in this way but like other men" (*Contra Celsus* V. 61, cited in

that they “were perfectly orthodox in their belief that Jesus was the Son of God.”¹² It is the latter group, however, that is of interest for this chapter. This group of Ebionites “rejected the virgin birth, regarding the Lord as a man normally born from Joseph and Mary.”¹³ Myk Habets describes Ebionite Christology as entailing “a denial of the early history of Jesus such as his virgin birth and preexistence.” Furthermore, “At the baptism they saw the Holy Spirit enter Jesus and in a Gnostic-like fashion considered this to be the union of a heavenly being with the man Jesus, resulting in the Christ, the Son of God.”¹⁴ Because the descent of the Spirit was immediately followed by the declaration of divine Sonship – “This is my Beloved Son” – the Ebionites believed that this event marked the adoption of the man Jesus as the Son of God, thus accounting for the moniker, adoptionism.

Theodotus and Paul of Samosata

The adoptionist heresy was not merely a Jewish-Christian phenomenon, however. In fact, those most commonly associated with the ancient heresy were Gentiles. Theodotus the Cobbler (or leather merchant) was a learned man of Byzantium who was summoned to Rome about AD 190 to present and defend his views concerning Christ to Victor, then Bishop of Rome. Kelly summarizes his Christological position:

Theodotus held that until His baptism Jesus lived the life of an ordinary man, with the difference that He was supremely virtuous. The Spirit, or Christ, then descended upon Him, and from that moment He worked miracles, without, however, becoming divine – others of the same school admitted His deification after His resurrection.¹⁵

Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 24).

¹²J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. (1977; repr., New York: Continuum, 2006), 139.

¹³Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 139.

¹⁴Habets, *Anointed Son*, 58.

¹⁵Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 116.

The most alarming words in Kelly's summary are "ordinary man" and "Without... becoming divine." Indeed this conscious rejection of the ontological deity of Jesus was the reason Victor had summoned him to Rome. For Theodotus, as with the Ebionites before him, Jesus was a mere man. His sonship to God was to be understood in terms of the descent of the Spirit/Christ upon him. Furthermore, the Spirit was understood to refer to the manifestation of divine power, the same manifestation which had inspired the prophets of old. Theodotus was eventually excommunicated by Victor for his denial of the true ontological deity of Jesus Christ.

Paul of Samosata is probably the most famous of the early adoptionists. As Bishop of Antioch, his teachings were popular during the latter half of the third century until he was condemned at the Synod of Antioch in AD 268.¹⁶ As with the other early models of adoptionism, Paul of Samosata's teachings are difficult to reconstruct with precision. However, the evidence supports the conclusion that he held to the same adoptionist Christological paradigm as the Ebionites and Theodotus before him. Eusebius of Caesarea, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, reports that Paul of Samosata "espoused low and mean views as to Christ, contrary to the church's teaching, namely, that he was in his nature an ordinary man."¹⁷ Like his predecessors, Paul of Samosata held that Jesus' baptism, marked by the descent of the Spirit onto Jesus, was the moment of his adoption as the Son of God.

Theological Themes of Adoptionism

A few important theological themes of these early adoptionist Christologies should be made explicit. It is these themes that resulted in the church's rejection of these Christological views as heresy. When the revisionist models of Spirit Christology are

¹⁶Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 117.

¹⁷Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History* 7.27.2, cited in Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 176.

examined in the next section, it will be shown that the same themes characterize those models. First, behind their specifically Christological views, the adoptionists held in common a unitarian view of God. When the adoptionists speak about the Spirit descending upon Jesus at his baptism, they do not mean a distinct hypostasis. Rather, they mean the active manifestation of divine power or divine inspiration. Habets is right when he says of adoptionist Christologies, “The Spirit is thus seen as a divine power and not a person, so that Jesus the man is indwelt by the divine power of God.”¹⁸ The second theme is specifically Christological and follows quite naturally from the first: All of the early adoptionists rejected the personal preexistence of Jesus Christ. That is, the adoptionists believed that the personal subject of the life of Jesus of Nazareth is none other than a human person whose personal existence is coterminous with his human life.¹⁹ Third, the adoptionists rejected the ontological deity of Jesus Christ. While the adoptionists could speak of divine power at work upon, in, or through Jesus, they could not speak of Jesus as a divine person. He was a *merely human person* in/on/through whom the divine power of the Spirit was at work.²⁰ Thus, the adoptionists could speak of Jesus as unique only according to degree (the Spirit of God was present in him to a higher degree than in any other human person) but not according to kind. Oliver Crisp is certainly right in his assessment of any kind of Christology that can only ascribe deity to Christ in this functional way while denying ontological deity:

¹⁸Habets, *Anointed Son*, 58.

¹⁹In his tome on the doctrine of the preexistence of Christ, Douglas McCready notes that some reject the term preexistence even without rejecting the theological content of the doctrine. He discusses “eternal existence” as a possible alternative but concludes that this term is insufficient to describe the uniqueness of the person of the Son as existing from all eternity and *prior to* the incarnation. He writes, “All [three persons of the Godhead] are eternally existent, but only the Son has changed his situation in such a way that the term *preexistence* is helpful.” Douglas McCready, *He Came Down from Heaven: The Preexistence of Christ and the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2005), 13. Particularly *apropos* for this chapter is the fact that McCready goes on to identify those who reject preexistence and the ontological deity of Jesus Christ as holding to “some form of adoptionism” (McCready, *He Came Down from Heaven*, 14).

²⁰The later Chalcedonian concept of the *anhypostasia* of the human nature of Jesus, until *enhyposstatized* by the divine Logos, would be utterly incompatible with the Christology of the adoptionists.

Such a person would not be both fully God and fully man. He would be fully man, but also only merely man, with only a human nature on which God acts in a special way. This is the heresy of Adoptionism. (Adoptionism states that Jesus of Nazareth was a human being who was “adopted” or “possessed” by the second person of the Trinity at some point in his life, becoming Christ through this experience.)²¹

Although these early adoptionists all agreed that the baptism of Jesus was the historical event that marked his adoption as Son of God, this fact is not listed as one of the key theological themes of the early adoptionists. This point of common ground is, in truth, little more than an interesting footnote. Even if the early adoptionists had identified the moment of Jesus’ conception or birth or some point in his early childhood as the historical moment of his adoption, the paradigm would have been just as soundly rejected by the early church. The reason for the early church’s rejection of the model is not the detail of *when* Jesus was adopted as Son of God but the fact that he was a mere man whose adoptive anointing by the Spirit of God accounts for the divine title, Son of God, a title with only functional, rather than ontological, overtones. In other words, the three themes identified here – unitarian theology, rejection of the preexistence of Christ, and rejection of the ontological deity of Christ – form the *raison d’être* of the early church’s rejection of the paradigm. Thus, contemporary proponents of revisionist Spirit Christology do not absolve themselves from the charge of advocating an adoptionist Christology even though they don’t identify his baptism as the key moment of his adoption. While adoptionism might be spoken of as a *kind* of Spirit Christology, it is clear that adoptionism does not represent a *Trinitarian* Spirit Christology, even in seed form. Rather, adoptionism developed along a trajectory that was diametrically opposed to the tradition that would ultimately yield orthodox Trinitarian theology and an incarnational Logos Christology.

²¹Oliver Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 26. It should be noted, however, that adoptionist models do not argue that the person of Jesus of Nazareth was possessed by the “second person of the Trinity” because adoptionists are fundamentally unitarian in their understanding of the Godhead. It would be more accurate to say that adoptionist models hold that Jesus was possessed by the Spirit of God. Nevertheless, Crisp is right to see in a rejection of the ontological deity of the person of Jesus of Nazareth in an adoptionist paradigm.

Rejection of Adoptionism: Harmful or Helpful?

Before examining the contemporary revisionist Spirit Christologies, a few comments are in order concerning the church's rejection of these early forms of Spirit Christology. Gary Badcock has lamented the ascendancy of a thoroughgoing Logos Christology, a model which marginalized pneumatic approaches, preventing the development of Spirit Christology for many centuries to come. For Badcock, "The loss of Spirit as a Christological category in the early tradition meant that this Christological perspective went undeveloped, resulting in negative implications that are still with us."²² The result, according to Badcock, is that it is now very difficult to develop a robust Spirit Christology: "In our efforts to reconstruct a more inclusive concept of Christ and of the Spirit, we lack a developed conceptuality, and thus a clear starting point and basis for discussion."²³ While it may be true that the development of Logos Christology, which reached maturity in the Definition of Chalcedon, stymied reflection on the role of the Holy Spirit in the person and work of Christ, it is difficult to lament the early church's firm rejection of the *kind* of Spirit Christology that was being developed by the adoptionists. The trajectory of adoptionism was not in the direction of an eventual affirmation of the ontological deity of Jesus Christ and a mature Trinitarian theology. It is only along the path paved by the Logos Christology of the ecumenical creeds that a responsible Spirit Christology can be developed, one that is faithful to the biblical testimony concerning the prominence of the role of the Spirit in the person and work of the ontologically divine Son. On the contrary, the church's utter rejection of the heretical Spirit Christology of adoptionism is one of the key factors that has opened the door for

²²Badcock, *Light of Truth*, 146.

²³Badcock, *Light of Truth*, 146. To be clear, Badcock is not advocating an adoptionist Christology, only lamenting the utter suppression of it as a pneumatic paradigm.

the fruitful development of an altogether *different kind* of Spirit Christology in the contemporary context.

Modern Adoptionism

In spite of the church's rejection of adoptionism as heretical and antithetical to the biblical presentation of Jesus Christ as true God and true man, some modern scholars have revived the ancient heresy. The remainder of this chapter will consist of a review and analysis of the key contributions of James D. G. Dunn, Geoffrey Lampe, Paul Newman, and Roger Haight as proponents of revisionist models of Spirit Christology that utterly reject traditional Trinitarian theology and Christology. They opt instead for a contemporary iteration of a modified form of adoptionism, even if their proposals do not locate the baptism of Jesus as the historical moment of the adoption of the man Jesus as Son of God by the Spirit. A thorough analysis of all the nuances of each proposal is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Nevertheless, sufficient evidence will be shown to demonstrate that the same theological themes that resulted in the rejection of early adoptionism – (1) a Unitarian view of God (2) a denial of the preexistence of Jesus Christ, and (3) a denial of the ontological deity of Jesus Christ – also characterize the proposals offered by these four scholars.

James D. G. Dunn: *Jesus and the Spirit*

In his influential and important monograph,²⁴ *Jesus and the Spirit*, James Dunn's objective is primarily historical, and his method is primarily exegetical. Through a rigorous examination of the relevant New Testament texts, Dunn seeks to present an objective, historical presentation of the way that Jesus and the earliest Christian communities understood their experience of God as Spirit. Because his purpose is

²⁴Lampe, Newman, and Haight, the other leading scholars offering a revisionist account of Spirit Christology, all cite Dunn's work often, referring to his ideas favorably and leaning heavily on his exegetical and historical analysis.

primarily historical, Dunn offers little by way of reflection on the theological implications of his proposal for Trinitarian theology and Christology respectively. Nevertheless, the conclusions he does draw entail a theological commitment to the themes of adoptionist Christology.²⁵ Furthermore, in the works of the other scholars reviewed in this chapter, it is clear that Dunn's historical and exegetical conclusions play a major role in shaping their Christological commitments.

Evidence for a unitarian view of God is seen most clearly in two aspects of Dunn's proposal: (1) his tendency to speak of the Spirit as a non-personal power of God in creation and (2) his identification of Spirit with the post-resurrection Jesus. Throughout the opening two chapters of *Jesus and the Spirit*, Dunn advances the conclusion that Jesus' own personal consciousness of sonship was the result of his experience of the power of God at work in and through him, which Jesus identified as Spirit. Throughout the discussion, Dunn speaks of the Spirit, not as a hypostatically distinct divine person but as the term given for the active power of the one God in the world. For example, in his analysis of the parallel statement in Matthew 12:28 and Luke 11:20 concerning Jesus' power to cast out demons by the "Spirit of God" (Matt 12:28) or by the "finger of God" (Luke 11:20), Dunn considers whether Matthew altered the original Q source from finger to Spirit or whether Luke altered Q from Spirit to finger. Dunn favors Matthew's "Spirit" as original but ultimately concludes that it matters little because whichever author changed the wording was simply operating in continuity with

²⁵Dunn is only slightly more forthcoming in the later monograph, *Christology in the Making*. There, he seeks to explore the development of Christology into the full-blown expression of the incarnation of the preexistent, divine, hypostatically distinct Son of God. Dunn admits that the incarnational Christology of classical Christian theology has its roots in the text of Scripture, especially John 1:14. However, he tries to establish that the incarnational model of John 1:14 appears very late, penned after the first generation of Christianity, and represents something other than an "organic" development of the earliest Christian understanding. For Dunn, incarnational Christology represents the introduction of new ideas, foreign to the earliest Christian understanding and to the understanding of Jesus himself. In other words, Dunn develops a book-length argument that the Christology of classical Christian theology is an unnatural departure from Jesus and the apostles, a departure that occurs *within* the NT itself. See James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Christian Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), xiii-xv.

the Hebrew tradition found in the Old Testament that the phrase “Spirit of God” (or “Spirit of the LORD”) was synonymous with phrases like “hand of God” and “power of God.” Dunn writes, “This is natural, since both are ways of describing the powerful action of God. The equation, finger of God = power of God = Spirit of God, is one which arises directly out of the Hebrew understanding of God’s action.”²⁶ On many occasions, Dunn uses the phrase “power of God” as synonymous with “Spirit of God” or “God as Spirit” and never gives any indication that he understands the Spirit as a personally distinct agent.

Another aspect of Dunn’s Spirit-Christology proposal that suggests a unitarian view of God is his contention that Paul identifies the Spirit with the post-resurrection Jesus. According to Dunn, Paul so closely associated the power of the Spirit with the life and ministry of Jesus that in the post-resurrection state, the Spirit of God, and its synonymous terms – Word and Wisdom – have become identified as one and the same with the person of Christ.²⁷ Dunn’s reasoning is worth quoting at length here:

Because for Paul, and the early Christians in general, Jesus was *the* revelation of God, these words took on the shape of Christ, were identified with Christ – Christ the Wisdom of God, Christ the Word of God, Christ the Spirit of God. By identification with Christ these hitherto impersonal (though sometimes personified) concepts gained character and personality – the character and personality of Christ. In Paul then *the distinctive mark of the Spirit becomes his Christness. The Charismatic Spirit is brought to the test of the Christ event. The touch of the Spirit becomes finally and definitively the touch of Christ. In brief, the dynamic of the relationship between Spirit and Jesus can be expressed epigrammatically thus: as the Spirit was the divinity of Jesus, so Jesus became the personality of the Spirit.*²⁸

While Dunn’s personal convictions are difficult to pin down, it must at least be said that the only coherent theological model to be drawn from the synthesis of the synoptists and Paul, as understood by Dunn, is a unitarian model. If the Spirit is not a

²⁶Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 47.

²⁷Habets is right to pinpoint the tendency of post-Trinitarian Spirit Christologies to equate “the risen Lord with the Spirit in an overly functional way and eventually into an ontological unity” (*Anointed Son*, 196).

²⁸Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 325. Emphasis in quotation.

hypostatically distinct personal agent but the impersonal power of God at work in the world, and if the Spirit's activity constitutes the only proper way to speak of divinity in Christ, and if the Spirit of God can be identified as Christ after the resurrection, then a kind a unitarian understanding of God is the only possible coherent result. It is, therefore, not surprising to read of Dunn's disdain for the church's tendency to draw metaphysical conclusions about the Trinitarian being of God in himself from the pages of Scripture. In Dunn's view, the "net result" of the church's dogmatic convictions concerning the eternal triune being of God "has been more to retard the gospel than to advance it."²⁹

Concerning the personal preexistence of the person of Christ, the second theological theme of adoptionist Christology, Dunn says very little. In one important passage, however, he addresses the question of whether Jesus' sense of sonship to God as Father can rightly be expressed in metaphysical terms. That is, is there warrant from the evidence of the historically reliable texts in the gospels to conclude that Jesus' sense of sonship included a sense of metaphysical/eternal relationship? Or was it only an experiential/existential sense of personal adoption by God? Dunn avers,

The point to be underlined is that 'son' here expresses an experienced relationship, an existential relationship, not a metaphysical relationship as such. Although it is of course possible to postulate a metaphysical relationship lying behind Jesus' consciousness of sonship, the evidence permits us to speak only of Jesus' consciousness of an intimate relationship with God, not of awareness of metaphysical sonship, nor of a 'divine consciousness,' (far less consciousness of being 'second Person of the Trinity'!). Even to speak of a consciousness of 'divine sonship' is misleading. And certainly to speak of an awareness of preexistence goes far beyond the evidence. After all, the whole concept of Israel's sonship was one of adoption rather than of creation.³⁰

²⁹Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 326.

³⁰Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 38. One may wonder how Dunn can make such a claim as this in light of so many direct claims to metaphysical relationship and preexistence as an eternal person found on the lips of Jesus and the evangelist in John's gospel. Dunn admits that the preexistence is taught by John's gospel. However, as already noted, Dunn is dismissive of John's gospel as representing a much later version of Christian understanding than what was the case during the lifetime of Jesus and the apostles. Thus, John's gospel is, for Dunn, of little value for understanding Jesus' own consciousness of sonship. See Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 38n25.

This quotation not only demonstrates that Dunn rejects the notion of the eternal preexistence of Christ but also shows that he prefers the paradigm of adoption as the best and only historically warranted way of understanding Jesus as Son of God.

Given the evidence adduced above, one could rightly conclude that, to be consistent, Dunn must reject the ontological deity of Jesus Christ – the third theme of adoptionist Christologies. Indeed, Dunn takes an approach to the question of the divinity of Jesus that will be followed by each of the other authors considered in the rest of this chapter. He is convinced that Christology must be done “from below” rather than “from above.” That is, for Dunn, any Christological conclusions made by the post-Easter Christian community must be rooted in the discernible self-consciousness of the historical Jesus. Otherwise, the gap between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith would be a “yawning, unbridgeable abyss.”³¹ So, for Dunn, the question of Christ’s divinity must be limited by those gospel passages deemed historically authentic as representing the true words and actions of the Jesus of history.³² Taking this approach to the question, Dunn concludes, “Certainly it is quite clear that if we can indeed properly speak of the ‘divinity’ of the *historical Jesus*, we can only do so in terms of his experience of God: *his ‘divinity’ means his relationship with the Father as son and the*

³¹Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 91. Dunn’s distinction between Christology “from above” and “from below” as well as the dichotomy he draws between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith have their root in the early nineteenth century progenitors of liberal Protestantism, such as Schleiermacher, Strauss, and others. However, the entire framework of these dichotomies can be by-passed with the assumption that all of Scripture is true and inerrant because “inspired by God.” In this way the need to determine first which Scripture passages are authentic as historical sources and then which passages draw warranted conclusions from the historically authentic passages is entirely done away, and Christology becomes a matter of reading, interpreting, and reflecting upon the scriptural presentation of the person of Christ with the assumption that the various data are not conflicting but complementary. It is this approach of accepting the witness of all Scripture as reliable divine revelation that gave rise to the great Trinitarian and Christological confessions of the early church, which are so roundly criticized by the modern authors considered in this chapter. Thus, there is considerable irony. Dunn wishes to approach Christ only from Scripture and not from the vantage point of the historical creeds of the church. However, it is the historical creeds whose content is derived from trust in all of Scripture while Dunn’s proposal is rooted in methodological doubt and the utter rejection of significant portions of the biblical canon as reliable.

³²Of course, in this approach, which passages are deemed authentic is largely determined by already formed Christological assumptions, the most prominent of which is the belief that any ascription of ontological deity or personal preexistence has its genesis in the post-Easter tradition, not in the historical Jesus.

Spirit of God in him.”³³ Thus, Dunn rejects ontological deity, opting instead for the functional sense of deity understood in terms of Jesus’ sense of sonship based on his experience of Spirit. Therefore, by presenting a view of God that can only be coherently described as unitarian, by rejecting the idea of the personal preexistence of the person of Christ, and by spurning the ontological deity of Jesus, Dunn has demonstrated his theological solidarity with the ancient adoptionist Christological paradigm.

Geoffrey Lampe: *God as Spirit*

In *God as Spirit*, Geoffrey Lampe intends to answer a puzzling question of Christology: “What is the relation of Jesus to God?”³⁴ For Lampe, the answer to the question is not to be sought along the traditional paths of Trinitarian theology and Logos Christology. Rather, the question is “best approached by way of the concept of the Spirit of God.”³⁵ In this statement, one can see that Lampe is developing a *kind* of Spirit Christology. The mysteries of divinity and humanity with respect to Christ are understood in light of the Spirit. Through an analysis of Lampe’s ideas in light of the themes of adoptionist Christology, it will be seen that Lampe’s proposal is yet another modern iteration of the ancient heresy of adoptionism.

First, it is evident from a careful reading of *God as Spirit* that Lampe holds to a unitarian view of God. This is seen most clearly in his use of the term “Spirit of God” or “God as Spirit.” By the term “Spirit of God,” Lampe does not mean the third person of the Trinity. Rather, he insists that “the Spirit of God is to be understood, not as referring to a divine hypostasis distinct from God the Father and God the Son or Word, but as indicating God himself as active towards and in his human creation.”³⁶ Lampe’s rejection

³³Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 92. Emphasis in citation.

³⁴Lampe, *God as Spirit*, 11.

³⁵Lampe, *God as Spirit*, 11.

³⁶Lampe, *God as Spirit*, 11. This is the same way Dunn understands the identity of “Spirit,”

of Trinitarian theology is evident by his rejection of the eternal hypostatic individuality of the Spirit. But is Lampe a unitarian? At this point, one might demur that a rejection of the hypostatic individuality of the Spirit leaves the door open for a kind of binitarianism. However, for Lampe, the concepts of “Word,” “Wisdom,” and “Spirit” are interchangeable metaphors. He explains, “Any one of these terms could be used to speak of the outreach of God himself as revealed and experienced.”³⁷ Thus, for Lampe, a denial of the hypostatic identity of Spirit is identical to a denial of the hypostatic identity of the Logos as well.³⁸ Furthermore, Lampe refers favorably to the modalism of Praxeas, saying, “This was a view which should not have been so lightly rejected in the interests of the theology of the preexistent Logos-Son-Christ.”³⁹ Put succinctly, beneath the nuanced analysis of metaphors, Lampe is fundamentally unitarian in his theology, thus espousing the first of the Christological themes of adoptionism.

Given Lampe’s unitarian understanding of the Godhead, it is not surprising to learn that he rejects the traditional understanding of the preexistence of Jesus Christ, thus expressing the second major theological theme of the ancient adoptionists. An entire chapter of *God as Spirit* is devoted to the question of preexistence.⁴⁰ “In a sense,” Lampe says, “all creation is pre-existent, in that it subsists from eternity as an idea in the mind of

although Lampe is far more direct and explicit in his articulation of it.

³⁷Lampe, *God as Spirit*, 140. Similar statements showing these concepts to be interchangeable are made throughout the volume.

³⁸Ralph Del Colle recognizes this feature of Lampe’s theology: “[Lampe] completely dispenses with hypostatic distinctions within the triunity of God. There are not hypostases (or persons) distinct from the Father who function as divine mediators. God as Spirit present in Jesus and now to believers as the Christ-Spirit is an exercise in monopersonal theism” (Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1994], 163).

³⁹Lampe, *God as Spirit*, 139. Interestingly, Friedrich Schleiermacher makes a similar appeal to the early modalist understanding of the Trinity, suggesting that a return to modalism is the best way forward for Trinitarian theology. See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart, 2nd ed. (Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile, 2011), 787.

⁴⁰Chapter 5 of Lampe, *God as Spirit*, is entitled, “To Earth from Heaven: The Preexistent Christ.”

the Creator.”⁴¹ However, the tendency of some of the authors of the New Testament to identify the preexistence of God as Word/Wisdom/Spirit with the human person of Jesus is seen as highly problematic. For Lampe, the very idea belongs more to the realm of science fiction literature, in which “superman from a distant planet. . . visited the earth in flying saucers or some other kind of space-ships.”⁴² In Lampe’s view, the development of this idea into the creedal confessions of Nicaea, Constantinople, and Chalcedon, proved to be disastrous. The resulting theology is hopelessly incoherent, causing “inconsistency and confusion.”⁴³ Thus, like the ancient adoptionists, Lampe rejects the personal preexistence of the person of Christ. In fact, he goes so far as to claim that “when Jesus is identified with the preexistent Son, belief in a true incarnation of God in Jesus is weakened.”⁴⁴

Lampe’s apparent desire to preserve belief in “a true incarnation of God in Jesus” raises the issue of the third major theme of the ancient heresy of adoptionism. Is it possible, given his Unitarianism and denial of the personal preexistence of Jesus Christ, that Lampe can still somehow coherently affirm the ontological deity of Jesus? His desire to preserve belief in the “true incarnation” might suggest that this is the case. But what does Lampe mean by “true incarnation”? For traditional Logos Christology, the doctrine of the incarnation is the ground for ascribing ontological deity to the Son because the preexistent divine Son takes to himself a human nature without ever forfeiting the fullness of his deity. For Lampe, however, the terminology of incarnation is being used

⁴¹Lampe, *God as Spirit*, 120. This expresses the view that Douglas McCready calls “ideal preexistence.” McCready points out that this is really just a finessed way of preserving the traditional parlance of preexistence without actually saying anything about the uniqueness of Jesus. On this paradigm, Jesus’ preexistence is no different than my preexistence or the preexistence of my dog. Everything preexists in the mind of God from eternity, a category that traditional Christian theology wisely expresses in terms of foreknowledge rather than preexistence. See Douglas McCready, “He Came Down From Heaven: The Preexistence of Christ revisited,” *JETS* 40 (1997): 419-32.

⁴²Lampe, *God as Spirit*, 136.

⁴³Lampe, *God as Spirit*, 140.

⁴⁴Lampe, *God as Spirit*, 142.

quite differently. In his view, the incarnation of God in Jesus is just one instance of incarnation among many, albeit the supreme instance. He writes,

God has always been incarnate in his human creatures, forming their spirits from within and revealing himself in and through them; for although revelation comes from beyond the narrow confines of the human spirit and is not originated by man himself, there is not, and never has been, any revelation of God that has not been incarnated in, and mediated through, the thoughts and emotions of men and women.⁴⁵

This is an important statement for understanding Lampe's Christology. He has conflated the concepts of incarnation and revelation. Traditional Logos Christology has always affirmed that the incarnation is the supreme instance of revelation (see Heb 1:1-2). The eternal Son's assumption of a human nature by which he dwelt among us is a revelatory event (John 1:14) so that Jesus can say to Philip, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). For traditional Christology, the incarnation is a unique event, not only because it is the highest degree of revelation but also because the one through whom the revelation comes is the eternally and ontologically divine Son in human flesh. For Lampe, however, the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus is simply the divine revelation given to Jesus, and even flowing through Jesus, as the archetypal model for all other instances of incarnation/revelation. Thus, the incarnation does not establish the utter ontological uniqueness of Jesus. Rather, Jesus' uniqueness is conceived only in terms of the degree to which he experienced the incarnation/revelation of the Spirit of God. Lampe explains: "This was not a different divine presence, but the same God the Spirit who moved and inspired other men, such as the prophets. It was not a different kind of human response, but it was total instead of partial."⁴⁶ Even in his attempt to preserve the terminology of incarnation, Lampe's proposal has far more in

⁴⁵Lampe, *God as Spirit*, 23.

⁴⁶Lampe, *God as Spirit*, 23-24. Ralph Del Colle recognizes Lampe's proposal as being of the same kind as that of James Dunn, both of whom can only ascribe divinity to Christ functionally but not ontologically: "Geoffrey Lampe's Spirit-Christology can follow Dunn's statement that the divinity of the incarnate Christ is a function of the Holy Spirit" (Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit*, 147).

common with the “non-incarnational Christology” of John Hick⁴⁷ than the robust incarnational Christology of the Christian tradition. Like the rest of the liberal tradition sired by Schleiermacher, Lampe can affirm the *presence of divinity in Christ* but not the *predication of divinity to Christ*.⁴⁸

Lampe emphasizes that the notion of God as Spirit is the key to understanding Christology. Thus, his proposal is a *kind* of Spirit Christology. However, when viewed against the backdrop of the adoptionist Christologies of the Ebionites, Theodotus, and Paul of Samosata, Lampe’s proposal is seen to embrace all the distinctive theological themes that resulted in the church’s rejection of adoptionist Christology: a unitarian understanding of God, a denial of the personal preexistence of Jesus Christ, and a denial of the ontological deity of Jesus Christ.

Paul Newman: *A Spirit Christology*

Paul Newman’s Spirit Christology is perhaps the easiest to analyze in terms of its fidelity to classical Trinitarian and Christological categories. In his monograph *A Spirit Christology: Recovering the Biblical Paradigm of Christian Faith*, he frames his entire presentation of Spirit Christology in terms of departing from the old traditions of Trinitarian theology and the model of Christology that flows from it. For Newman, the entire Trinitarian paradigm of three individual hypostases in the Godhead, the second of whom assumed a human nature in the incarnation, is “an idea whose time has come.”⁴⁹ There is, according to Newman, a growing need “for a paradigm shift in Christian

⁴⁷See Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, 154-84. In the chapter entitled, “Non-Incarnational Christology,” Crisp analyzes the mature Christology of Hick presented in John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993).

⁴⁸Schleiermacher contends that Christ is distinguished from all other humans “by the constant potency of His God-consciousness, *which was a veritable existence of God in Him*” (*The Christian Faith*, 385).

⁴⁹“An Idea Whose Time Has Come” is the title of the first chapter of Newman, *A Spirit Christology*, 7-46. By the phrase, “an idea whose time has come,” Newman means that the time has come to give up traditional Logos Christology as a theological paradigm.

theology.”⁵⁰ He goes on to describe that paradigm shift as an abandonment of traditional Trinitarian concepts. More specifically, Newman envisions “Spirit Christology replacing the model of hypostatic union of the divine and human in Jesus.”⁵¹

Even a cursory reading of Newman reveals that his attempt to assist in the development of a “new paradigm”⁵² in Christology is really just the reiteration of the old heresy of adoptionism, as all of the theological themes of adoptionist Christology are evident in Newman’s proposal. First, Newman proposes a unitarian understanding of the Godhead. The denial of any kind of hypostatic distinctions within the being of God is evident throughout the volume, but it is most explicit in his discussion of exclusive monotheism. Newman appeals to Paul Tillich’s four kinds of monotheism: monarchic, mystical, exclusive, and Trinitarian.⁵³ The two most important kinds for the purpose of this discussion are exclusive monotheism and Trinitarian monotheism. Exclusive monotheism, as the moniker implies, exalts the one God to a place of exclusive dominion over all things without forfeiting the concrete reality of God’s presence in the world and his intimate dialogue with people throughout history. According to Newman, this kind of monotheism best fits the biblical portrayal of God and best suits the model of Spirit Christology he espouses.⁵⁴ The Spirit, in this model, is understood as the active presence of God in the world, and Jesus is understood as part of the created world with whom God is in intimate dialogue as Spirit. This exclusive monotheism, for Newman, is contrasted with Trinitarian monotheism, which is the monotheism of the early ecumenical creeds of the church. According to Newman, to approach Christology within the paradigm of

⁵⁰Newman, *A Spirit Christology*, 7.

⁵¹Newman, *A Spirit Christology*, 9.

⁵²Newman, *A Spirit Christology*, 4.

⁵³Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 1:228-35. Cited in Newman, *A Spirit Christology*, 118.

⁵⁴Newman, *A Spirit Christology*, 118.

Trinitarian monotheism means that the discipline is being approached with a pre-understanding of God that is in no way “similar to that of most biblical authors or that of Jesus himself.”⁵⁵ For Newman, exclusive monotheism entails a rejection of the historic doctrine of the Trinity in favor of a unitarian understanding of God, who is active in the world as Spirit.

Given his exclusive (read, unitarian) monotheism, it follows that Newman’s Spirit Christology has no place for the idea of the personal, eternal preexistence of the Son of God. Unlike Lampe, who wants to keep the terminology of preexistence but so re-define it as to render it a radically different doctrine than the church has historically affirmed, Newman is content to dispense with the very idea of the preexistence of a cosmic Christ as fundamentally misguided:

For example, the traditional interpretations of the protological passages in the New Testament, those suggesting preexistence of the Christ before the time of Jesus, are now seen to be mistaken. According to a growing number of New Testament scholars it is not accurate to interpret the so-called cosmic Christ passages in John 1, Colossians 1, and Hebrews 1 as intending to mean the pre-existence of the person of Christ prior to the time of Jesus. If this re-interpretation of the New Testament is correct the biblical basis for the idea of a cosmic Christ is drastically reduced.⁵⁶

Thus, as the subtitle of his book suggests, Newman not only wishes to reject the traditional Christological understanding of the preexistence of Christ, but he believes that he is more faithful to the text of Scripture in doing so.⁵⁷

As far as the deity of Jesus Christ is concerned, Newman’s account is more forthcoming than the other revisionist accounts considered in this chapter. Whereas Lampe, Dunn, and Haight (to be examined next) all wish to retain language of the divinity of Christ, albeit only in a functional sense, Newman prefers that the language of

⁵⁵Newman, *A Spirit Christology*, 120.

⁵⁶Newman, *A Spirit Christology*, 1.

⁵⁷The subtitle is *Recovering the Biblical Paradigm of Christian Faith*.

Jesus' divinity be avoided altogether. Rather than trying to appease the tradition that has long been the most prominent among Christians, that Jesus is the divine Son of God, Newman hopes to renounce the misguided tradition and lead the church down a path of confessing that Jesus is, in fact, not God:

Many theologians have offered reformulations of the faith, but most are determined, at the same time, to hold onto the traditional patterns of thought. Specifically, the deity of Jesus and the trinitarian nature of God that follows from Jesus' deity have continued to be affirmed despite the almost universal consensus that Jesus was a human being in every sense of the word.⁵⁸

It is clear from this quote that Newman views the simultaneous affirmations of the real humanity and real deity of Jesus to be absurd. The continued affirmation of Jesus' deity is a hindrance to the coherent development of the church's understanding of his full humanity, and a full understanding of the humanity of Jesus is critical, per Newman, to understanding his experience of the Spirit. In the chapter devoted to exploring Jesus' experience of the Spirit during his life, ministry, death, and resurrection,⁵⁹ Newman devotes considerable space to discussing Jesus' attitudes and virtues, making the point that Jesus could not have genuinely experienced humility or faith – both of which, Newman affirms, he did indeed experience – if he were ontologically divine, as the Trinitarian tradition maintains.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Newman, *A Spirit Christology*, 1.

⁵⁹Newman denies the historical bodily resurrection of Christ, preferring instead to understand the earliest followers' accounts of the risen Christ as experiences of the Spirit in which the ethos of Jesus' life in the Spirit is transferred to the people of God after Jesus (Newman, *A Spirit Christology*, 156-57).

⁶⁰Newman reasons that if Jesus did not experience faith, then he is not truly human. Yet, it is impossible for a fully divine person to experience faith. Jesus is human and thus experienced faith. Therefore, Jesus cannot coherently be thought of as a divine person (*A Spirit Christology*, 144). Concerning humility, Newman portrays Jesus as humble throughout the gospels. It is, however, illogical to consider Jesus as humble if also divine. He writes, "There is a modern song that goes 'O Lord, it's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way.' Jesus might have sung this song if he were the kind of person that the tradition of the church has, for the most part, made him out to be" (Newman, *A Spirit Christology*, 146).

As with Lampe and Dunn, Newman's Spirit Christology is a re-iteration of the same themes of adoptionist Christology that led the church to reject the paradigm as unsuitable to Christian understanding and worship.

Roger Haight: "The Case for Spirit Christology"

As a Roman Catholic Jesuit theologian, Roger Haight is more concerned than the other writers considered in this chapter to preserve the language of traditional understandings of the Godhead, going so far as to suggest that his proposal is in line with the most important aspects of the theological claims of both Nicaea and Chalcedon.⁶¹ However, Haight's proposal is not orthodox with respect to the Trinitarian theology of Nicaea nor the Christology of Chalcedon, a fact that will be made clear as his position is surveyed with respect to the theological themes of adoptionism. In fact, Haight radically misrepresents the theological conclusions of those councils in order to force them into the service of his Spirit-Christology proposal. In spite of his attempts to defend his position as orthodox, Haight articulates a Christological model that is a reiteration of the adoptionist heresy.

In fairness, it should be observed that Haight explicitly attempts to distance his proposal from that of the early adoptionists based on the timing of Jesus' experience of the Spirit. Haight emphasizes the fact that Jesus' experience of the Spirit began in the womb of Mary rather than at his baptism (cf. Luke 1:35). This distinction, he believes, separates him from the heresy of adoptionism because that model focused on the baptismal event as the moment of Jesus' adoption.⁶² However, as already noted, the

⁶¹Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," 274-75.

⁶²Haight writes, "Nor need this Incarnation of God as Spirit be understood in an adoptionist sense, even though one might suspect that there is a legitimate sense in which this could be done since it is a conception with New Testament roots. But in contrast to adoptionism, one may think of the presence of God as Spirit to Jesus from the first moment of his existence" (Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," 277).

timing of Jesus' experience of the Spirit is not what makes adoptionism problematic. Rather, it is the fact that Jesus' identity as divine Son is seen to be an entirely functional reality grounded only in the degree to which he was anointed by the Spirit. Whether one recognizes the conception or the baptism as the genesis of this anointing is tertiary to the points being discussed here.⁶³

As with ancient adoptionism, Haight's proposal presupposes a unitarian view of God. As already noted, Haight claims that his proposal is "faithful to the great Christological councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon."⁶⁴ If his proposal really is consistent with Nicaea, then one should expect to find a Trinitarian, not a unitarian view of God. However, Haight does not mean that he affirms the Trinitarian view of God as articulated by Nicaea. Rather, he affirms only his own paraphrase of Nicene theology. Haight writes, "The doctrine of Nicaea can be paraphrased in this way: not less than God was present to and operative in Jesus."⁶⁵ But this extremely minimalist paraphrase of the Council of Nicaea completely ignores the heart of Nicene doctrine, as articulated by the Nicene Creed of AD 325. The Council of Nicaea affirmed that Jesus is the preexistent Son of the one God. As such, he is to be personally distinguished from God the Father (as the doctrine of eternal generation – "before all worlds, begotten not made" – states), and he is to be worshipped as one in being with God the Father (as the much-celebrated *homoousion* of the Nicene Creed affirms). These central tenants of Nicene theology, Roger Haight does not affirm. Thus, when Roger Haight claims to be faithful to the

⁶³While hoping to distance himself from adoptionism by locating the genesis of Jesus' experience of the Spirit at his conception, Haight still cannot get around the inescapable adoptionism of his proposal in which Jesus' very status as Son of God is predicated on his earthly experience of the Spirit: He writes, "The Synoptics also lead one to understand the presence and action of God as Spirit in his life as *the ground* of Jesus' sonship" (Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," 269, emphasis added).

⁶⁴Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," 260.

⁶⁵Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," 274.

Council of Nicaea, such a claim should not be mistaken for the Trinitarian understanding of God that Nicaea demands.

Haight's subtle unitarian depiction of God is best seen by examining three features of his Spirit Christology: (1) his understanding of God as Spirit, (2) his understanding of the interchangeability of Spirit and Logos as symbols, and (3) his rejection of the doctrine of the immanent Trinity. Haight opines, "God as Spirit, or the Spirit of God, is simply God, is not other than God, but is materially and numerically identical with God."⁶⁶ For Haight, "God as Spirit is God," but the symbol of Spirit "indicates God at work, as active, and as power, energy, or force that accomplishes something. Thus, God as Spirit refers to God, as it were, outside of the immanent selfhood of God."⁶⁷ By describing "God as Spirit" as God's active power outside of God's immanent self, Haight has made it clear that he does not conceive of the Holy Spirit as a hypostatically distinct subsistence who shares eternally in the being of the one true God while eternally maintaining distinct personal properties (a Trinitarian understanding of the Spirit). Rather, Haight conceives of the symbol of God as Spirit as a way of speaking about the one God at work in the world. Thus, there is no distinct, eternal, divine person of the Holy Spirit.

At this point, one may wonder if Haight could still hold to a kind of binitarianism. This brings us to the second feature of Haight's proposal that identifies it as unitarian. Haight makes it clear that his understanding of the divine Logos is conceptually the same as his understanding of God as Spirit. In fact, both symbols, Logos and Spirit, refer to the same active power of God in the world. The terms are interchangeable, according to Haight.⁶⁸ Even though the symbols of Spirit and Logos can

⁶⁶Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," 266.

⁶⁷Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," 266-67.

⁶⁸Haight writes, "All of these symbols are basically the same insofar as they point to the same generalized experience of God outside of God's self and immanent to the world in presence and active

be used in personal ways, for Haight, this is an example of literary personification, not a theological statement of the distinct personal identities of Logos and Spirit. In fact, Haight demurs, “When the metaphorical character of personification is not respected, when it becomes hypostatized, i.e. conceived as objective and individual, in the same measure the power of the symbol tends to be undermined.”⁶⁹

The third feature of Haight’s proposal evidencing his unitarian theology can be seen in the way he discusses the doctrine of the Trinity near the end of his essay. Haight recognizes that his depersonalizing of the symbols of Logos and Spirit and his equating of the two cast serious doubt on the doctrine of the Trinity. He wonders if such an affirmation does not “cut the ground away from the development of the doctrine of the immanent Trinity?”⁷⁰ He goes on to say that it is the economic Trinity – the manifestation of God’s saving works in the world – that is important. It is from the economic Trinity that Christians ultimately began to reflect on the Trinitarian being of God in himself (the immanent Trinity). Haight considers all statements about God in himself to be unnecessary extrapolations from the economic Trinity. Further, the extrapolations are not merely unnecessary but also unbiblical: “The doctrine of the immanent Trinity does not appear in the New Testament, not even implicitly.”⁷¹ Thus, Haight admits that the depersonalization of Logos and Spirit and the conflation of the two terms is a detriment to the church’s historic affirmation that the one God is a Trinity *eternally*. This is no problem to Haight, though, because it is only the economic Trinity, not the immanent, that is important to the church’s faith. From these observations, it is plain that Haight’s understanding of God is thoroughly unitarian.

power” (Haight, “The Case for Spirit Christology,” 267).

⁶⁹Haight, “The Case for Spirit Christology,” 268.

⁷⁰Haight, “The Case for Spirit Christology,” 284.

⁷¹Haight, “The Case for Spirit Christology,” 285.

The second theme of adoptionist Christology is the rejection of the eternal preexistence of the person of Christ. In light of his unitarian theology, it follows that Haight would reject preexistence as well. In a manner similar to Lampe, Haight allows that God's idea/plan/purpose for Jesus was preexistent in the divine mind, just as God's idea of all things and all persons was preexistent. However, the idea of the concrete preexistence of the person of the Son is ruled out of bounds. Haight states this directly: "One cannot really think of a preexistence of Jesus. It was natural and inevitable that an understanding of Jesus as God's salvation bringer drift backwards toward preexistence. But one cannot think of the preexistence of Jesus."⁷² Thus, Haight's theological solidarity with adoptionism is evident from his rejection of the eternal preexistence of the person of Christ.

How then does Haight fair with respect to the ontological deity of Jesus? Is it possible for him to affirm the deity of Jesus Christ with a unitarian understanding of the Godhead and a rejection of the personal preexistence of Christ? It would seem not, but again, Haight's words can be misleading. In numerous places throughout his essay, Haight affirms the deity of Jesus Christ. From the outset, he states that his intention is to offer a proposal explaining "how God is present and active in Jesus, and thus Jesus' divinity, by using the biblical symbol of God as Spirit, and not the symbol Logos."⁷³ Haight goes on to say, "We know that Jesus was a human being, but what is not clear and what requires careful 'explanation' is the idea that he was divine. The question of what this divinity, which must be affirmed, can possibly mean is a major Christological problem today."⁷⁴ So, it would appear that Haight affirms the divinity of Jesus Christ, but

⁷²Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," 276.

⁷³Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," 257.

⁷⁴Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," 258.

what does he mean by that affirmation? Clarity on what he means comes in his discussion of the Council of Chalcedon.

It was noted earlier that Haight claims to affirm the theology of both Nicaea and Chalcedon. But, as was demonstrated, Haight's affirmation of Nicaea is little more than an affirmation of his own convenient paraphrase of Nicene theology, which is actually a misrepresentation of the council and the creed. He approaches Chalcedon similarly. He asks with respect to his model of Spirit Christology, "Can the divinity of Jesus be asserted in the same manner as in the doctrine of Chalcedon with its formula of one person and two natures?"⁷⁵ He answers that indeed it can, but only when the "theology of the past attendant upon that formula is 'modified.'"⁷⁶ Haight goes on to explain how his Spirit Christology is consistent with Chalcedon's one person with two natures:

We spontaneously accept Jesus as a human person. Therefore, as long as these natures are not conceived in a static and abstract way, one can say that Jesus was one human person with an integral human nature in whom not less than God, and thus a divine nature is at work.⁷⁷

Consider carefully Haight's words. First, the one person of Haight's version of the "Chalcedonian" formula is a "human person." By contrast, Chalcedon's "one person" is the divine person of the eternal Son who took to himself a non-personalized human nature (*anhypostasia*), which was personalized by the one divine person of the Son (*enhypostasia*). Nestorius, whose views were rejected by Chalcedon (as by Ephesus before that) contended that Christ was a human person, but Haight's proposal results in something even more radical than Nestorianism. For Haight, Christ is not two persons, one human and one divine (Nestorianism), he is one human person (with a human nature)

⁷⁵Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," 275.

⁷⁶Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," 275.

⁷⁷Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," 275.

within whom the one divine nature is at work. By this model, it is difficult to see how Haight's version of the one-person/two-nature formula could not be applied to everyone in whom the Spirit of God is active (Moses, the Judges, the Prophets, David, New Testament Christians, etc.). The fact is, Haight cannot consistently affirm the deity of Jesus Christ in a way that sets Jesus apart from any other person through whom God worked.⁷⁸ Rather, Haight's affirmation of Jesus' divinity – like that of Lampe, Dunn, and the adoptionists of the early church – is merely an affirmation that the Spirit of God is at work in Jesus. The ontological deity of Jesus is rejected.

In spite of great effort to present his Spirit Christology as thoroughly orthodox, Haight's proposal is just another modern iteration of the ancient heresy of adoptionism in which a unitarian view of God, a rejection of the preexistence of the person of Christ, and a rejection of the ontological deity of Christ are major themes. Such Christological positions were deemed unworthy of the belief of the church in the earliest days of Christianity because of their incompatibility with Scripture's presentation of the worship-worthy Savior of the world, the eternally divine and hypostatically distinct Word of the Father who became flesh and dwelt among us, the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷⁸Haight has a section in which he tries to answer the question of whether or not Jesus is qualitatively unique or merely quantitatively so. Put differently, he entertains the question of whether Jesus' uniqueness is only a uniqueness of *degree* or whether it may also be a uniqueness of *kind*. As with other topics, Haight cleverly redefines the terms of discussion in order to make his radically heterodox proposals sound more faithful to the tried tradition of the church. He says that the distinction between qualitative and quantitative is a false one, or at least one in which the line is blurry. Haight writes, "In short one may understand that God as Spirit was present to Jesus in a superlative degree and this is sufficient to convey all that was intended by a qualitative difference" (Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," 279-80). This simply avoids the question by redefining all the terms. Once qualitative is collapsed into quantitative, then the question can be answered affirmatively. Furthermore, even if Haight were to acknowledge the distinction, even the quantitative uniqueness of Jesus is unsustainable in Haight's model. He argues explicitly that Jesus is one Savior figure among many, suggesting that what Jesus is to Christians, other Savior figures can be to people of other faiths. He states, "The explanation of the status of Jesus must be such that it not be exclusive. It must allow for the possibility of other savior figures of equal status and who may reveal something of God that is normative" (281). Thus, without realizing it, Haight's Jesus is not even unique according to degree. As it turns out, the extraordinary Jesus of Roger Haight's theology is actually quite ordinary.

Conclusion

It has been observed that Spirit Christology can take many different theological forms so that it is best to consider the various proposals as occurring along a spectrum, with those conforming most to the creedal tradition of the church's classical Trinitarian and Christological convictions on one end and those most blatantly rejecting the classical tradition on the other end. In chapter 1, I observed that those most blatantly rejecting the classical paradigm are often referred to as revisionist or post-Trinitarian theologians. In this chapter, however, I have tried to demonstrate that the revisionist elements of these proposals really represent a return to an early form of Christology, which was rejected for its inability to account for the clear ascriptions of deity given to Christ in Scripture and the worship he therefore receives, both in Scripture and in the early church. Thus, these proposals do not represent an advance beyond an antiquated Trinitarian theology, as the moniker "post-Trinitarian" might suggest, but a regression to a pre-Trinitarian mode of thinking, one that should still be regarded as heresy by the church.

Unfortunately, the prominence of Spirit-Christology proposals like these, coupled with the fact that the term Spirit Christology seems to have been developed with these proposals in mind, have led many to be suspicious of any attempt to reconceive the significance of the Spirit of God for understanding Christology. However, as already noted, not all Spirit-Christology proposals follow this heterodox adoptionist paradigm. As the term Spirit Christology has become more common, it is now being used by theologians wishing to highlight the person and work of the Spirit in ways that are paradigmatic for Christology, all while remaining self-consciously faithful to the classical Trinitarian theology and Christology of the church's confessional heritage. It is these Trinitarian models of Spirit Christology that will be the focus of investigation in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3
SURVEY OF SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY PROPOSALS
PART 2: CONTEMPORARY TRINITARIAN
MODELS

Introduction

The revisionist proponents of Spirit Christology attempt to recover the reality of Christ’s humanity by rejecting the church’s historic affirmation of the ontological deity of Jesus Christ, and with it, the doctrine of the Trinity. Myk Habets observes that this has led some to question whether “a pneumatic Christology can contribute meaningfully to Trinitarian theology or whether it finally results in a unipersonal theology with a Christological component.”¹ There is, however, a growing number of theologians who have constructed proposals of Spirit Christology that aim to make just such a meaningful contribution. These authors have embraced the critique that the humanity of Christ has been underemphasized and that the Holy Spirit has been neglected in traditional Trinitarian and Christological discourse. Thus, many authors from diverse Christian theological traditions have undertaken to develop a Spirit Christology that remains faithful to the broad contours of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and the Chalcedonian two-nature formula for the person of Christ. Rejecting the heterodox path of the revisionist models, these thinkers propose various versions of *Trinitarian Spirit Christology*.

In this chapter, seven proponents of Trinitarian Spirit Christology will be considered. Authors were selected as representatives of three broad species of

¹Myk Habets, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, ed. K. C. Hanson, Charles M. Collier, and D. Christopher Spinks (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 198.

contemporary Trinitarian Spirit Christology characterized by different motivating concerns. The first species of contemporary Trinitarian Spirit Christology is driven by a concern to properly emphasize the full humanity of Jesus Christ by giving proper attention to the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the earthly life and ministry of Jesus. This species, then, is exclusively a Spirit Christology of anointing – the human nature of the Son is anointed by the Spirit. Representatives of this kind of Spirit Christology are Gerald Hawthorne, Klaus Issler, and Bruce Ware.² The second species of Trinitarian Spirit Christology is driven by a concern to give the Holy Spirit his proper emphasis as a fully divine person, a feature of Christian theology alleged to have been neglected for centuries, especially in much of the Western theological tradition. Reconceiving the traditional model of eternal processions in the immanent Trinity in a way that emphasizes the Spirit is critical to this approach. This species of Spirit Christology is also motivated by the potential that a Spirit-Christology model has for advancing ecumenical dialogue, especially when eternal relations of origin are reconsidered. Authors representing this kind of Spirit Christology are Ralph Del Colle and Myk Habets. The third species of Trinitarian Spirit Christology considered in this chapter is driven by a concern to articulate a global theology in which God is savingly active in and by the Holy Spirit in non-Christian faith traditions. Clark Pinnock and Amos Yong are representative proponents of this kind of Spirit Christology. The key contributions of each author within each kind of Trinitarian Spirit Christology will be noted. Each proposal will then be critiqued with respect to the tried Trinitarian, Christological, and soteriological heritage of the church, which each author purports to uphold.³

²Neither Hawthorne, Ware, nor Issler use the label of “Spirit Christology,” but the nature of their proposals is such that the label, as defined in this dissertation, fits their proposals. Other authors considered in this chapter explicitly use the label to describe their own positions.

³While some biblical/exegetical critique will appear in this chapter, sustained critique of this kind is not in view here. My most sustained interaction with the biblical material most pertinent to Spirit

Following the discussion of these seven authors, this chapter will conclude by identifying the advantages of Trinitarian Spirit Christology – those theological aspects of the paradigm that make it worth pursuing – and the dangers of Trinitarian Spirit Christology – those theological tendencies of the paradigm that must (and can) be rejected for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Trinitarian and Christological heritage bequeathed to the present-day church on the basis of the teachings of Holy Scripture. None of the models considered in this chapter have achieved *all* of the advantages while explicitly avoiding *all* of the dangers of Spirit Christology.⁴ This chapter thereby sets the stage for the next chapter in which extended attention will be given to the Reformed orthodox theologian John Owen as presenting a model of Spirit Christology that tenaciously and meticulously adheres to the Trinitarian and Chalcedonian heritage of the church without compromise or exception, thus avoiding the theological dangers while still achieving all of the advantages of a robust articulation of Spirit Christology.

Spirit Christology for Emphasis on the Humanity of Christ

Gerald Hawthorne, Klaus Issler, and Bruce Ware all develop a kind of Spirit Christology for the purpose of focusing on the fully human experience of Jesus Christ. Unlike the other proponents of Spirit Christology considered in this chapter, these authors are not concerned about a neglect of the Holy Spirit in Christian theology as much as they are concerned about a neglect of the humanity of Christ. In other words, while many proponents of Spirit Christology intend to recover from a pneumatological deficit by

Christology will come in chap. 5.

⁴This is not to say that all of the models have necessarily succumb to the dangers (though some clearly have, as will be seen). It is simply to say that the dangers have either not been directly addressed or that when addressed, questions remain. For example, it will be shown that Bruce Ware has addressed some of the potential dangers of Spirit Christology but only in the context of another debate, not related directly to his Spirit-Christology proposal.

means of a Christological emphasis, these authors intend to recover from a perceived Christological deficit by means of a pneumatological emphasis.

Gerald Hawthorne

In 1991, Gerald Hawthorne, the late New Testament scholar out of Wheaton, Illinois published what remains to this day the only book-length treatise devoted exclusively to an exegetical analysis of the role of the Holy Spirit in the earthly life and ministry of Jesus Christ – *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus*.⁵ In his seminal book,⁶ Hawthorne intends to answer the question, “To what extent was this extraordinary life [of Christ] the direct result of the Spirit’s activity upon it?”⁷ For Hawthorne, the answer is clear: “[T]he Holy Spirit was the divine power by which Jesus overcame his human limitations, rose above his human weakness, and won out over his human mortality. It will be the purpose of the major part of this volume to show how this is so.”⁸ For “the major part of this volume,” Hawthorne conducts a systematic exegetical examination of the work of the Spirit in every phase of the life of Christ,⁹ seeking to demonstrate that “the Holy Spirit was indeed operative in every experience of Jesus so that the great moments of his life were indeed the result of the Spirit’s powerful presence within or upon him.”¹⁰ Hawthorne presents his case for the prominence of the role of the Holy Spirit in the earthly life of Christ as an

⁵Gerald Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus* (1991; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010).

⁶Every author considered in detail in this chapter cites this book.

⁷Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 3.

⁸Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 35.

⁹Hawthorne divides the phases of Christ’s life (each a chapter in the book) as follows: “The Spirit in the Conception and Birth of Jesus” (ch. 2), “The Spirit in the Boyhood and Youth of Jesus” (ch. 3), “The Spirit in the Baptism and Temptation of Jesus” (ch. 4), “The Spirit in the Ministry of Jesus” (ch. 5), “The Spirit in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus” (ch. 6).

¹⁰Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 114.

alternative to the more common appeal to Christ's personal union with the divine nature as the explanation for the extraordinary features of his life:

According to these Gospel writers, Jesus himself understood that his ability to heal, to make people whole, to restore sight to the blind and speech to the dumb, and to overthrow the destructive forces of evil lay not in himself, lay not in the strength of his own person, but in God and in the power of God mediated to him through the Spirit.¹¹

It is important to note that Hawthorne is not denying the full ontological deity of the person of Christ. He writes, "I am an incarnationalist. This is to say, it is my studied opinion that the New Testament clearly teaches that the preexistent eternal Son of God entered into history in the person of Jesus Christ."¹² Later Hawthorne affirms that it is "the persistent demand of the biblical data. . . that Jesus was both God and Man."¹³ Thus, Hawthorne's Spirit Christology is being considered here as an instance of *Trinitarian* Spirit Christology.

While affirming the full deity of Jesus according to the paradigm of Logos Christology, Hawthorne fears that the post-apostolic theological tradition of the church has failed to emphasize sufficiently the full humanity of Christ. The reason for this failure is due, in large part, to a failure to recognize the paradigmatic prominence given to the presence and power of the Spirit during the earthly life and ministry of Jesus. Hawthorne points out that the extraordinary words and works of Jesus have been interpreted as so many proofs of his deity throughout the long history of the church.¹⁴ The result, then, is a kind of implicit, if unintentional, Docetism in which the full humanity of Christ is

¹¹Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 169-70.

¹²Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 5.

¹³Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 46.

¹⁴For example, Hawthorne cites Athanasius, the champion of Nicaea, as saying, "[Jesus] spat in human fashion, yet his spittle was charged with deity, for therewith he caused the eyes of the man born blind to recover their sight" (*The Presence and the Power*, 204). Hawthorne cites Leo the Great to the same effect: "To feel hunger, thirst and weariness and to sleep is evidently human; but to satisfy thousands with five loaves and to bestow living water on the Samaritan woman. . . is without doubt divine" (205).

masked in favor of a sort of super-human existence for Jesus on earth, charged by his full possession of the divine nature. Hawthorne laments, “In their zeal to affirm the deity of Jesus, these writers and others like them effectually eliminate the realness of his humanity. But this the New Testament writers do not do. They stand unalterably opposed to such Docetism.”¹⁵

The concern to recover a robust portrait of the full humanity of Jesus Christ (and thus his solidarity with those he came to save) against what he perceives to be a woeful neglect of this affirmation in the tradition of Christian theological reflection is the chief motivating factor for Hawthorne’s Spirit Christology. The emphasis on the humanity of Christ then lays the groundwork for a related motivating factor in Hawthorne’s Spirit Christology, namely, that the followers of Christ really can live life as he lived it – resisting temptation, obeying God, performing deeds and speaking words that manifest the power of God, and even one day being resurrected from the dead – all because the very same Holy Spirit that empowered Jesus’ earthly life and ministry has been bestowed by Jesus (and the Father) upon the followers of Christ.¹⁶

Hawthorne’s proposal has much to commend it. With clarity and passion, he makes a compelling case that the very tradition that has always dutifully confessed the full humanity of Christ has overlooked and left undeveloped one of the key biblical paradigms that help us appreciate that humanity, namely the anointing presence and power of the Holy Spirit operative in/on/through his human nature. Hawthorne’s work, however, also raises serious questions about its coherence with the very historic Trinitarian theology and Chalcedonian Christology that he intends to uphold. The great

¹⁵Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 24. Later in the book, Hawthorne takes up this accusation again: “In a legitimate concern to preserve at all costs the deity of Jesus Christ, many contemporary teachers of the church have followed the lead of the ancient fathers and have become *de facto* Docetists, failing to estimate fully the humanity in which divinity made itself visible” (205).

¹⁶The final chapter is entitled “The Spirit in the life of the Follower of Jesus” (Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 227).

majority of Hawthorne's book is devoted to exegesis and to drawing theological conclusions directly from the exegesis. In the penultimate chapter, however, Hawthorne intentionally tackles the mystery of the unity of the divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ.¹⁷ He frames his discussion in light of the Definition of Chalcedon and the failed attempts at understanding the unity of deity and humanity in Christ that preceded the council. Hawthorne cites Chalcedon's conclusions favorably, openly affirming the Definition's rejection of the errors of Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, and Eutychianism.¹⁸ Hawthorne then shares that, in his understanding, the best way to make sense of the hypostatic union is by a form of kenotic Christology:

The doctrine of the person of Christ to which my study has driven me, and which in my judgment best complies with the teaching of the New Testament as I have attempted to describe it in the preceding chapters is that which often goes by the name of "Kenotic Christology." Its biblical basis is the "Christ Hymn" found in Philippians 2:6-11 and 2 Corinthians 8:9.¹⁹

He distances himself from the classical versions of kenotic Christology in which Christ is said to have relinquished certain divine attributes ontologically for the duration of his earthly life and ministry. He prefers instead the version of kenotic Christology in which those divine attributes that are incompatible with human existence become latent or potential during the state of humiliation, even while the Son still possesses those attributes ontologically. Concerning the challenge of holding together the fullness of ontological deity along with the full range of human existence and experience, Hawthorne states,

The particular view of the person of Christ which seems to me most able to do this and which seems most in harmony with the whole teaching of the New

¹⁷Chapter 7 is entitled "The Spirit as the Key to the Kenosis" (Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 199-226).

¹⁸Hawthorne says of Chalcedon: "It asserted the full divinity of Christ against Arianism, the full humanity of Christ against Apollinarius, the unity of Christ's person against Nestorius, and the permanence of Christ's two natures without confusion against Eutyches" (Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 203).

¹⁹Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 206.

Testament is the view that, in becoming a human being, *the Son of God willed to renounce the exercise of his divine powers, attributes, prerogatives*, so that he might live fully within those limitations which inhere in being truly human.

Divine attributes, including those of omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, are not to be thought of as being laid aside when the eternal Son became human but rather *thought of as becoming potential or latent within this incarnate one – present in Jesus in all their fullness but no longer in exercise.*²⁰

Thus, Hawthorne acknowledges a distinction between ontological kenotic Christology (OKC) and functional kenotic Christology (FKC),²¹ though he does not use those labels.

While Hawthorne states that his understanding is consistent with Chalcedonian Christology, his commitment to a functionally kenotic understanding of the incarnation is superfluous in light of Chalcedon's two-nature formula and presents considerable problems for a Nicene understanding of Trinitarian theology.²²

In Trinitarian theology, the difficult tension always revolves around the simultaneous affirmation of oneness (there is only one God) and Threeness (there are three distinct “persons,” each of whom is fully God). In Christology, the difficult tension always revolves around the unity of the divine nature (Jesus is fully God) and the human nature (Jesus is fully man) in the one person of Christ. Adding to the challenge of speaking truthfully about God and Christ is the fact that the way one conceives of unity and distinction in the Trinity has entailments for Christology, and vice-versa. Major problems with Hawthorne's proposal will be considered in terms of Nicene Trinitarian

²⁰Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 208. Emphasis mine.

²¹See Oliver Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered*, Current Issues in Theology, ed. Iain Torrance (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 118-53. Crisp recognizes the very distinction that Hawthorne is making between different kinds of kenotic Christologies. He refers to the view that Christ completely divests himself of certain (or all) divine attributes for the incarnation as “ontological kenotic Christology” and the view that certain divine attributes simply become latent or potential as “functional kenotic Christology” (119). Though Hawthorne does not use the labels of ontological and functional kenoticism, the distinctions are the same. Hawthorne discusses the different kinds of kenotic Christologies in *The Presence and the Power*, 206-7. For a far more thorough analysis of kenotic Christology that acknowledges the ontological/functional distinction spoken of by Crisp but that includes detailed interaction with many scholars who adhere to both kinds of kenoticism, see Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 355-419.

²²Any kind of kenotic Christology has significant problems with respect to a whole range of the tenets of classical theism, including such notions as divine simplicity, the identity of God's essence (being) with his existence (act), etc. This discussion, however, is only critiquing the specific problems associated with classical Trinitarian theology and Christology.

theology and then in terms of Chalcedonian Christology, with the recognition that the two areas overlap considerably.

When Hawthorne speaks of certain divine attributes becoming “latent” for the purpose of the incarnation, he is making a statement about the divine nature of Christ. In other words, because the locus of divine attributes is the divine nature/essence, to speak of such attributes as “potential or latent” or “no longer in exercise” is to make a statement about the divine nature/essence.²³ This Christological model, however, has significant Trinitarian consequences. How does the latency of these certain attributes in the divine nature of Christ affect the other members of the Trinity? According to classical Trinitarian theology, the oneness of the Godhead consists in the fact there is one and only one divine nature or essence, shared fully and identically by the three persons. Thus, the divine nature of Christ is the very same divine nature as that of the Father and the Spirit. If the omniscience²⁴ of the divine nature becomes “potential or latent,” are the Father and the Spirit temporarily deprived of the prerogative of omniscience also? Certainly this is not a conclusion Hawthorne or any other advocate of Trinitarian theology would want.

There are at least two ways around this conclusion while still holding to FKC, both of which have significant problems of their own. One solution might be for

²³One insightful critical reader of an earlier draft of this chapter questioned the conclusion that, for Hawthorne, the potentiality or latency of the divine attributes is necessarily a statement about the divine nature. He suggested that perhaps all Hawthorne means is that the attributes of the divine nature were not in use by the Son *according to his human nature*. In other words, maybe Hawthorne means only that the latency is with respect to the human nature of the Son, not that the attributes of the divine nature are inherently latent. If this is the case, then the criticism of this paragraph loses its edge because the claims of Hawthorne’s version of FKC does not have entailments for the divine nature *per se*. In response, I simply point out that if this is what Hawthorne intends, he has chosen very poor terms to communicate it. If Hawthorne had only meant this much, he would have been much better served to use the language of the tradition, including the medieval and Reformed Orthodox conception of the divine *occultatio* or veiling (see Richard Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1995], 207), rather than the language of functional kenotic Christology, namely that Christ’s divine attributes were latent. Given the fact that the locus of divine attributes is the divine/nature essence, the statement that such attributes are latent or not in exercise is problematic for divine unity in Trinitarian understanding. Thus, the criticism of Hawthorne’s Trinitarian theology in this paragraph is valid.

²⁴Omniscience is being used as a representative example of any divine attribute that is incompatible with human existence and experience. Hawthorne predicates latency to omnipresence and omnipotence as well. See block quote on pp. 55-56.

Hawthorne (and other proponents of FKC) to insist that the attributes are not latent in the divine nature, *per se*. Rather, they are only latent insofar as they are not exercised by the *person* of the Son. So, the Father and the Spirit can continue exercising the omniscience of the one divine nature, even while the Son does not. In this way, the latency of the attributes does not affect the other persons of the Trinity. This solution, however, entails that the persons of the Trinity are distinct centers of will and consciousness (thus a social model of the Trinity that ascribes will and mind to the persons rather than the divine essence), in which case the divine nature, with its various attributes, would have to be conceived of as a kind of storehouse that the divine persons voluntarily *access* when in action. So the Son, during his earthly life, does not access the property of omniscience, but the other persons continue to access it.

This “solution” has at least two major Trinitarian problems. First, it seems to redefine what is meant by the divine nature/essence. On this account, it sounds like the divine nature/essence is a fourth thing in addition to the three persons rather than the traditional understanding in which the divine nature/essence just is the very being and existence of the Triune God. This conception of the divine nature thus raises the further question of what constitutes the being of the three persons, since their existence (being) is presupposed by their access to the divine attributes. Second, this solution makes nonsense of the historic Trinitarian doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity *ad extra*. This feature of Trinitarian theology, which will be discussed at greater length in later portions of this dissertation, is simply the conviction that one undivided divine nature/essence entails an inseparability of divine operations. Because the power of a divine action has the one undivided divine essence as its principle of operation, any act performed by one person of the Trinity is an act shared by all three persons because the three persons share fully in the one nature/essence. This staple of Trinitarian theology cannot be maintained if the divine nature/essence is a storehouse of attributes that can be accessed (or not accessed) by different divine persons for different actions. These two

reasons are sufficient to conclude that the “solution” of applying latency to the *person* of the Son rather than to the divine nature is not a viable option.

Another possible solution that avoids the problem of the Father and the Spirit temporarily ceasing to be omniscient (among other things) along with the Son during the earthly life of Christ, is to deny that there is one identical and undivided divine nature/essence. On this account, each Trinitarian person possesses his own divine nature/essence, each one being fully equal to (but not identical to) the others. In this way, the *omni* attributes of the Son’s divine nature could become latent, but the same attributes in the divine natures of the other two persons would remain active. The great problem with this “solution” is that it is impossible to conceive of only one God on this paradigm. If three distinct centers of will and consciousness all possess their own distinct iteration of a divine nature, how are there not three gods?²⁵ Hawthorne’s kenotic proposal, therefore, has a major problem with respect to traditional Trinitarian theology.

Hawthorne’s FKC proposal raises two major problems with respect to Christology proper as well. First, given Chalcedon’s assertion that the two natures of Christ are not confused, the distinctive character of each nature being preserved, Hawthorne’s kenotic approach to Christology is, at best, superfluous. The entire kenotic project seeks to modify aspects of the divine nature in order to preserve the genuine humanity of Christ. To do so, however, fails to uphold Chalcedon’s insistence that each of the natures retains its distinctive character even though united in the one person of the

²⁵In his essay, “On Not Three Gods,” the pro-Nicene Capadocian theologian Gregory of Nyssa attempts to respond to a hypothetical interlocutor who wonders how the doctrine of the Trinity, with its commitment to three eternal distinct hypostases, is not in fact a belief in three gods. Nyssa’s response appeals to the doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity, observing that the three persons share identically the same will as the principle of all of their undivided operations. Thus, the divine persons do not merely cooperate as three distinct beings but as three hypostases sharing the same being. For Nyssa, rightly, three distinct but equal essences would entail the existence of three gods. See Gregory of Nyssa, “On ‘Not Three Gods,’” in *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises*, ed. and trans. Alexander Roberts, vol. 5 of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Phillip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 616-25. For a discussion of Nyssa’s treatise along these lines, see Mark Husbands, “The Trinity is Not Our Social Program: Volf, Gregory of Nyssa, and Barth,” in *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, and Worship*, ed. Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 120-41.

Logos. Thus, if the Chalcedonian paradigm is embraced, kenoticism is rendered altogether unnecessary. Rather than attempting to propose a model in which the divine attributes of Christ become latent for the sake of Christ's humanity, Hawthorne would have been much better served to appeal to the distinction between the natures and to the traditional understanding of Christ's ability to live simultaneously through each nature. This feature of Christology is entailed by Chalcedon's affirmations and has often been referred to as the *extra-calvinisticum* (or simply, the *extra*).

Hawthorne, though, expresses disdain for the notion of the *extra*, even though he does not use the term. He criticizes the vast majority of orthodox theologians in the history of the church who teach that "the historical Jesus, whom they proclaimed as both God and man took on a sort of dual existence."²⁶ Hawthorne is dismissive of the idea that "the Logos, while incarnate on earth was still seated at the right hand of the Father upholding the universe."²⁷ Hawthorne insists that this understanding of the person of Christ renders its proponents as "*de facto* Docetists" who teach that "Jesus as a man may have been limited, but that the very same person at the same instant was unlimited as God – that he was weak as a man, but that he knew all things as God."²⁸ But this "dual existence" of the person of the Son, this view that the one incarnate on earth is simultaneously upholding the universe by the word of his power, this teaching that Jesus was limited as a man while simultaneously unlimited as God, just is what traditional Christology has always affirmed, as articulated in the Chalcedonian Definition's insistence that the properties of the two natures are conjoined in one person but *not confused*. This concept that Hawthorne rejects just is the *extra* of classical Christology that makes FKC superfluous.²⁹

²⁶Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 204.

²⁷Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 204.

²⁸Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 205.

²⁹In his disdain for a strong affirmation of the separation of the natures, Hawthorne speaks in a

The second problem with Hawthorne’s proposal with respect to Chalcedonian Christology, and a point which clarifies his distaste for the robust distinction of natures that yields the *extra*, is his explicit affirmation of a monothelite³⁰ (one-will) model of the hypostatic union. Monothelitism, Hawthorne recognizes, is not the classical position of the church, as articulated by the Third Council of Constantinople in A.D. 680. He demurs, though, that the monothelite controversy revolved around “unreal distinctions”³¹ and was merely the ploy of political maneuvering rather than sincere theological concern.³² Therefore, even though dyothelite (two-will) Christology is technically the orthodox position – monothelitism being deemed heretical – Hawthorne feels no compulsion to articulate a dyothelite Christology. Rather, he affirms that Jesus’ one will is to be predicated of the personal subject of the incarnation such that “the human will is the divine will restrained by conditions which are accepted fully and completely. His will is the subject of His divine life, and by self-limitation is also the subject of His human

way that comes uncomfortably close to the Eutychian blending of the natures. He writes, “There is no iron curtain between the earthly life of Jesus and his heavenly mode of existence. There is a curtain, but through it shines a celestial glow, and there are breaks in the fabric through which the light shines” (Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 212).

³⁰Monothelite means “one-willed” and refers to the conviction that Jesus possessed only one will/mind as the incarnate Son. This entails the philosophical conviction that will/mind is a property of person rather than nature since there is one person and two natures in the incarnate Son. Monothelitism was debated in the centuries following Chalcedon, and the pro-Chalcedonians won the day, declaring monothelite Christology as a heresy at the third Council of Constantinople in AD 680. What was at stake in this controversy was the genuineness of Christ’s humanity. If Christ possesses only one will, it must be a divine will because the divine person of the Son assumed a human nature. Thus, a monothelite Christology means that Christ did not have a distinctly human mind/will. Rather, the divine mind/will was somehow limited in order to manifest itself through the human nature. Interestingly, monothelitism also has entailments for one’s understanding of God. For, if Christ possesses only one divine mind, then the divine mind is tempted “in every respect even as we are,” (Heb 4:15) but Scripture is explicit that “God cannot be tempted with evil” (Jam 1:13).

³¹Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 212.

³²Hawthorne cites the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* favorably as saying that the monothelite heresy “was of political rather than religious origin, being designed to rally the monophysites to their orthodox (Chalcedonian) fellow-Christians when division endangered the empire” (*Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 932, cited in Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 223n46). For an alternate understanding, see Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, *Contours of Christian Theology*, ed. Gerald Bray (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998) 179-80. Macleod recognizes the politically fierce motivations at work in the controversy but argues that the theological convictions safeguarded by the Council represent far more than “arid scholastic debate, rendered even more distasteful by the fact that its progress and outcome were determined to a large extent by sordid political motivations” (179). Rather, dyothelite Christology is critical to a right reading of Scripture and a right understanding of the person of Christ.

existence.”³³ Hawthorne’s commitment to a monothelite understanding of the person of Christ is not surprising, even expected, given his commitment to functional kenoticism. But this is not the metaphysical model of the hypostatic union that was championed at Chalcedon.³⁴ In a monothelite model, contra Hawthorne, Christ does not possess a distinctly human mind/will, and it is therefore impossible to conceive coherently of the fullness of his humanity. Further, as Hawthorne’s model demonstrates, a monothelite model requires one to posit limitations (even if only functional) of the divine nature. In this way, a monothelite Christology represents a failure to distinguish adequately between the two natures of the Son of God and inevitably winds up diminishing both.

While Hawthorne’s conviction that the Holy Spirit was operative in every phase of the incarnate life of Jesus is tremendously valuable and insightful, it is clear that the metaphysical underpinning of his Christology differs from the trajectory along which the orthodox doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ were articulated by the Nicene Creed and the Chalcedonian definition, respectively. Hawthorne’s Spirit Christology is a Trinitarian model, but it presents problems from the vantage point of classical Trinitarian theology and Christology.

Klaus Issler

As a professor and author, Klaus Issler focuses much attention on Christian character formation. In his book, *Living into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character*, Issler challenges readers to grow in godliness by learning from and following the example of Jesus. Issler devotes a chapter in his book to explore the extent

³³The quote is from Vincent Taylor, *The Person of Christ* (London: Macmillan, 1966), 294, and is cited favorably in Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 212. The predication of will to person, as represented in this quotation, is the quintessential metaphysical commitment that was rejected by the church in the monothelite controversy to preserve the genuineness of Christ’s humanity.

³⁴For a recent discussion of the monothelite controversy and the importance of the issue of Christ’s two wills from the perspective of classical Christology, see Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 338-48.

to which Jesus was dependent upon the Father and the Holy Spirit (although primary attention is given to his dependence on the Spirit) to resist temptation, perform miracles, and accomplish his mission as redeemer. In this chapter, Issler develops a kind of Spirit Christology, though he does not use that term to describe his own position.

For Issler, as with all other proponents of Trinitarian Spirit Christology, a robust recognition and appreciation of the full humanity of Jesus Christ is his central concern. Issler certainly affirms the full deity of Jesus, but he fears that proper emphasis on the humanity of Christ has been eclipsed by emphasis on his deity. For Issler, the recovery of appropriate emphasis on the full scope of Jesus' human existence and experience is critical to the formation of Christian character. He writes, "There is sufficient scriptural evidence to show that Jesus was both fully God and fully human. We often ignore the latter, to the detriment of the formation of our character. . . . The truth about Jesus' authentic human experience has great potential for impacting our personal formation journey."³⁵ Thus, in the interests of a robust account of Jesus' humanity and the value of such an account for character formation, Issler inquires, when it comes to the extraordinary and supernatural aspects of Jesus' life and ministry, "Whose divine ability was mainly involved? (1) Was it Jesus' own divine ability? (2) Was Jesus dependent on the Father's and the Spirit's divine ability? or (3) Was it some combination of these?"³⁶ This question is critical to Issler's purpose because if Jesus lived his life primarily by drawing on the resources of his own divine ability, then Christians can admire him, but they cannot emulate him.³⁷ If, on the other hand, Jesus lived primarily according to the normal resources of a human life, drawing on the divine resources of the Father and Spirit

³⁵Klaus Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 112.

³⁶Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus*, 113.

³⁷See Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus*, 113. He favorably cites William Barry: "If Jesus is superhuman, then I can admire him, but I do not have to take seriously his call to emulate him. I can never be a superhuman being" (William Barry, *Letting God Come Close* [Chicago: Jesuit Way, 2001], 111.).

for strength and supernatural power, then Christians can follow Jesus' example because God the Father is the Father of all believers, and God the Holy Spirit dwells in and upon all believers, as was the case with Jesus.

In raising the question of whose divine ability empowered Jesus, Issler notes that there are five logically possible ways to answer the questions:

Option A: Jesus *exclusively* used his own divine ability, *never* depending on the divine resources of the Father and Holy Spirit and *never* using his human ability.

Option B: Jesus *predominantly* used his own divine ability, *infrequently* depending on the divine resources of the Father and the Holy Spirit and infrequently using his human ability.

Option C: Jesus used his own divine ability *about half the time* (not using his human ability), and for *the other half* he depended on the divine resources of the Father and the Holy Spirit (on these occasions he used his human ability), thus balancing/alternating an equal use of both abilities.

Option D: Jesus *infrequently* used his own divine ability, and *predominantly* depended on the divine resources of the Father and Holy Spirit and also predominantly used his human ability.

Option E: Jesus *never* used his own divine ability and *exclusively* depended on the divine resources of the Father and Holy Spirit while he exclusively used his human ability.³⁸

Issler surveys the options, ruling out A and B quickly because of much clear scriptural testimony to Jesus' dependence on the Father and empowerment by the Spirit. Option C is rejected because it represents only half a life of genuine human experience and is difficult to reconcile with Hebrews 2:17, which states that Jesus "had to be made like his brothers in every respect." Option E is attractive in that it certainly allows for the full range of human experience in the life of Jesus, but Issler rejects this also because there does seem to be some instances in which Jesus "used his own divine ability" (e. g. the transfiguration). For Issler, Option D is the best choice in that it allows for a full range of human experience but leaves open the door for the occasional manifestation of the power of Jesus' own divine nature in his words and actions.

To prove his thesis, Issler notes three factors of Jesus' life and ministry as reported in Scripture: (1) Jesus' dependence on the Father, (2) Jesus' faith in God, (3)

³⁸Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus*, 114.

Jesus' dependence on the Holy Spirit. Of these three factors, Issler gives considerably more attention to Jesus' dependence on the Spirit than the other two. Following Hawthorne, he observes that the Holy Spirit was active in every phase of Jesus' life, from conception to resurrection. He contends that Jesus' miracles were performed by the power of the Spirit, and he credits the Spirit with supplying the supernatural strength necessary to resist temptation.

Issler's main point is well-taken. A robust affirmation of Jesus' humanity is indispensable to his role as *exemplar* of the Christian life. Furthermore, the role of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus helps believers understand how Jesus could live as he did – a life of perfection and power – and still live a genuinely human life worthy of emulation. However, Issler's proposal presents significant problems with respect to traditional Trinitarian theology and Chalcedonian Christology. First, the way Issler frames his Spirit Christology is, *prima facie*, incompatible with the historic doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity. This is evident from the way that he consistently speaks about the manifestation of divine power in the earthly life of Christ. When asking the critical question, he says, "*Whose* divine ability was mainly involved? (1) Was it *his own* divine ability? (2) Was Jesus dependent on *the Father's* and *the Spirit's* divine ability?"³⁹ He continues throughout the chapter to contrast the divine ability of the Son with that of the Father and Spirit. At worst, this way of speaking implies that each of the Trinitarian persons possesses his own divine power, which would entail three separate, even if equal, divine natures. At best, this way of speaking entails a social model of the Trinity in which mind/will is a property of person, and each person wills to enact that properties of the divine nature separately. As already noted, traditional Trinitarian theology affirms one single undivided divine nature/essence that is the principle of the divine activity of all three persons. When one person of the Godhead acts,

³⁹Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus*, 113.

he does so from the one divine nature shared by all three persons. So, the action of one divine person is, consequently, the action of all three. Further, in traditional Trinitarian theology, mind/will is predicated of the one nature/essence. So, to think of one person exercising divine power in contrast to the other two is incoherent to traditionally conceived Trinitarian metaphysics. If this staple concept of the inseparable operations of the Trinity is correct, then the way that Issler distinguishes between the power/ability of the Father, Son, and Spirit is misguided. As will be seen in the discussion of John Owen in the next chapter and in my proposal in the final chapter of this dissertation, there is a coherent and biblically faithful way to affirm inseparable operations and speak of the working of the Holy Spirit in particular in and upon Jesus Christ. Issler, however, speaks of the ability of the Spirit as something distinct from the ability of the Son, thus making the coherence of divine unity difficult to conceive.⁴⁰

Another weakness of Issler's presentation pertains to the Chalcedonian formula for the two natures of Christ in one person. Issler discusses the limits of Jesus' knowledge and understanding during his earthly life and ministry. Like Hawthorne, Issler avers that Jesus could not have lived a fully human life while regularly experiencing omniscience as God the Son. While Issler does not explicitly refer to his position as a kind of kenotic Christology, his discussion of the concept of veiling suggests that his position is indeed a species of FKC.⁴¹ For Issler, Jesus' infinite knowledge, including certainty of his own

⁴⁰Issler might respond to this critique by saying that he does not intend to imply separate divine powers but only to emphasize that the power is exercised in such a way that it is appropriate to ascribe the exercise of power to one person rather than another. If that is Issler's intent, there is no problem, but his wording here does not indicate that he is trying to preserve the traditional understanding of divine unity as articulated by the doctrine of inseparable operations. Given the other metaphysical entailments of Issler's proposal, namely his monothelism (see below), it seems more likely that Issler is operating with a social understanding of the Trinity, such that the divine persons each will to act according to the one divine nature separately. Thus, it would be metaphysically conceivable that one person's actions does not necessarily include the other two.

⁴¹Issler even cites Ben Witherington, whose understanding of Phil 2:6-8 is clearly an affirmation of functional kenoticism. Witherington states, "It is not adequate to say Christ did not subtract anything since in fact he added a human nature. . . . The text says that he did empty himself or strip himself Christ set aside his rightful divine prerogatives or status. This does not mean he set aside the divine nature, but it does indicate some sort of self-limitation, some sort of setting aside of divine rights or privileges" (Ben Witherington, *Friendship and Finances in Philippi* [Valley Forge, PA: Trinity

impeccability,⁴² had to be significantly hidden from his understanding. Issler proposes the idea that the Holy Spirit operated, throughout the stages of Jesus' life, as a "divine, dynamic firewall" to "block out" his access to divine consciousness and thus omniscience.⁴³ In this way, the Holy Spirit prevented the superhuman knowledge and confidence of the divine nature from penetrating the understanding of Jesus as he lived life as a man. On first glance, this proposal is odd, if for no other reason than that it seems to emphasize a role for the Holy Spirit that is precisely the opposite of the role ascribed to him in Scripture. The prophet Isaiah foretells the anointing of the Spirit of God on the Messiah as the Spirit of wisdom and understanding (Isa 11:1-2). Issler himself observes that Luke's statement in Luke 2:52 – "Jesus grew in wisdom" – is likely an appeal to Isaiah 11:1-2, so that the Spirit is viewed as the source of the increase of wisdom as Jesus grew into a man.⁴⁴ Thus, Isaiah and Luke are saying that Jesus increased in wisdom by the working of the Spirit. Scripturally, therefore, it is far more fitting to speak of the Spirit of God as the revelatory agent by whom Jesus was made aware of his own divine identity in his human mind and consciousness rather than to speak of the Spirit as the firewall that prevented excessive knowledge of the same. Certainly, Issler does not see

International, 1994], 66, cited in Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus*, 123.). Furthermore, Wellum (*God the Son Incarnate*, 383-88) recognizes the kenoticism of Issler's proposal and even interacts with Issler as one of his two chief interlocutors for the FKC position. Wellum maintains that Issler's Spirit Christology provides the biblical material to supplement the metaphysical model of monothelism as expounded by Garrett J. DeWeese in his essay, "One Person, Two Natures: Two Metaphysical Models of the Incarnation," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Intermediate Christology*, ed. Klaus Issler and Fred Sanders (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), 114-52.

⁴²Issler has an interesting discussion of divine impeccability and temptation. He proposes that it was *metaphysically impossible* for Christ to sin, per the traditional doctrine of the impeccability of Christ. However, it was *epistemically possible*. That is, while Jesus certainly knew he was God and knew that God cannot sin, he did not possess a degree of epistemic certainty that he could not sin sufficient to eliminate the reality of any temptation. Issler uses the analogy of computer software. Though he is relatively confident that his software and computer will not fail, he is not so certain as to never back up his work. Similarly, Jesus may have been relatively certain of his impeccability, but not so certain as to make temptation disingenuous (Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus*, 120-2).

⁴³Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus*, 125.

⁴⁴Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus*, 123. Interestingly, Issler contends that the Holy Spirit revealed Jesus' own divine identity to him in his childhood while also blocking his apprehension of divine realities throughout his life.

the concepts of the revelation and the veiling of divine knowledge as mutually exclusive, but even the fact that he posits the necessity of veiling of divine knowledge is suggestive of more significant problems.

Issler's idea of the need for a divine firewall entails a monothelite understanding of the person of Jesus Christ. This is the only way to make sense of the suggestion that the Spirit needed to block Jesus' conscious experience of the omniscience of the divine nature. For Issler, during his earthly life and ministry, Jesus' one mind had full access to the knowledge obtained by his human experience according to his human nature, but the Spirit of God prevented full access to the omniscience of his divine nature. Issler, therefore, is identifying mind as a property of person, rather than as a property of nature.⁴⁵ As already noted, the monothelite Christological paradigm is not consistent with the Chalcedonian insistence on the distinction of natures and the consequent affirmation of the *extra*. Rather, in monothelitism the full humanity of Jesus is implicated in ways that are strikingly akin to the heresy of Apollinarianism.⁴⁶

The Chalcedonian formula of two natures resolves the question of Christ's omniscience, however, in a very different way. When the Son of God assumed a human nature, per Chalcedon, that assumption included a "rational soul." In other words, Christ

⁴⁵If Jesus has two wills/minds, as the classical Chalcedonian tradition insists, then his human mind and his divine mind are distinct so that the human mind is not automatically conscious of all the infinite realities of which the divine mind is conscious. The assumption that Jesus' mind needs to be limited in knowledge implies the identity of the divine and human mind. This is further confirmed by Issler's own suggestion that, in a pre-incarnate arrangement, the Son delegated his cosmic functions (Col 1:16, Heb 1:3) to the Spirit so that the Spirit could limit his exercise of the divine attributes for the incarnation (Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus*, 125n31). If the limiting of divine attributes, such as omniscience, that the Holy Spirit performs for the Son prevents the Son from upholding the universe while incarnate, then it follows that the Son has only one mind/will predicated of his person, rather than two predicated of his nature.

⁴⁶Chalcedon's affirmation that Christ assumed a rational soul was a direct rejection of Apollinarianism's belief that Christ assumed human flesh, but not a human rational soul. If mind is a property of person, as Issler's position seems to entail, then the person of Christ, once incarnate, does not possess a fully human mind. Rather, he possesses only the divine mind that somehow lives through a human nature. The position, therefore, is more akin to the *logos-sarx* Christology of Apollinarus than the *logos-anthropos* Christology of orthodoxy. For extended treatment of the debate between *logos-sarx* and *logos-anthropos* Christological paradigms, see Alloys Grillmeier, S. J. *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, 2nd ed., trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975).

assumed a human mind. According to Chalcedonian logic, because the two natures of Christ preserve the distinctive characteristics proper to each “without confusion,” the human mind of Christ experiences limitations with respect to knowledge while the divine mind of Christ continues to exercise omniscience. The full range of the knowledge possessed by the human mind is, of course, also possessed by the divine mind (per omniscience), but the distinctive knowledge of the divine mind is only accessible to the human mind by way of revelation, just as all knowledge of God is hidden from all men unless revealed (Deut 29:29).

As with Hawthorne before him, Issler’s proposal has much to commend it, especially as he emphasizes the need to see the life of Christ as experiencing the full range of humanity under the power and guidance of the Spirit, as Scripture teaches and as the example of Christ demands. Issler’s proposal for how the mind of Christ was limited during his earthly life and ministry, however, like Hawthorne’s before him, has problems with respect to traditional Trinitarian theology and Christology. His proposal not only reverses the traditional understanding of the Spirit as agent of revelatory understanding but also runs counter to the pro-Chalcedonian conviction that mind and will are properties of nature, not person, meaning that Christ has two minds/wills. Ironically, for all his zeal to emphasize the humanity of Christ, Issler’s Christological proposal actually jeopardizes it because of the unavoidable conclusion that the mind/will of the man Christ Jesus, however much blinded by the Holy Spirit, was not a fully human mind/will. Rather, the man Christ Jesus possessed only a divine mind/will somehow shrouded in human flesh.

Bruce Ware

Bruce Ware is an Evangelical theologian who, like Hawthorne and Issler, has emphasized the paradigmatic prominence given to the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of

Christ during his earthly mission.⁴⁷ In his recent book *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ*, Ware thoughtfully examines the biblical texts that bear witness to Jesus' distinctly human experiences. Though he does not use the term, a model of Trinitarian Spirit Christology is a prominent feature of Ware's understanding of the humanity of Christ: "One of the clearest and strongest evidences that Jesus lived his life and carried out his mission fundamentally through his humanity is that Jesus came as the Spirit-anointed Messiah. That is, Jesus was empowered by the Spirit to accomplish the work he came to do."⁴⁸ For Ware, the role of the Spirit in the earthly life and ministry of Christ, so prominent in the portrayal of Jesus' life in the Gospels, only makes sense if Jesus, though fully God, lived his life through the human nature he assumed in a fully human way.⁴⁹ The Spirit could add nothing to Jesus' deity, but the presence and power of the Spirit could empower and improve his human experience in every way.⁵⁰ Throughout the book, in every major discussion, the paradigmatic prominence of the role of the Holy Spirit in understanding and appreciating the full humanity of Jesus is on display.

⁴⁷Ware develops a form of Spirit Christology in a number of publications. See Bruce A. Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013); Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 87-94; Ware, "Christ's Atonement: A Work of the Trinity" in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Intermediate Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), 156-88.

⁴⁸Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, 34. Ware develops the implications of his Spirit Christology throughout *The Man Christ Jesus*. However, the model of Spirit empowerment in the earthly life of Christ is explicitly developed in the chapter entitled, "Empowered by the Spirit" (31-46).

⁴⁹Ware states, "The only way to make sense, then, of the fact that Jesus came in the power of the Spirit is to understand that he lived his life fundamentally as a man, and as such, he relied on the Spirit to provide the power, grace, knowledge, wisdom, direction, and enablement he needed, moment by moment and day by day, to fulfill the mission the Father sent him to accomplish" (Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, 34).

⁵⁰Ware writes, "Now, one must ask this question: why did Jesus need the Spirit of God to indwell and empower his life? After all, he was fully God, and being fully God, certainly nothing could be added to him, for as God, he possessed already, infinitely and eternally, every quality or perfection that there is. . . . So, we ask: what could the Spirit of God contribute to the deity of Christ? And the answer we must give is: Nothing! . . . So then we ask instead this question: what could the Spirit of God contribute to the humanity of Christ? The answer is: everything of supernatural power and enablement that he, in his human nature, would lack" (Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, 34).

Perhaps the most promising contribution that is unique to Ware's work is his application of Spirit Christology to the question of Christ's impeccability and the genuineness of his temptations. Ware affirms the traditional doctrine of the impeccability of Christ – both sinless and not able to sin⁵¹ – because he recognizes that to forfeit this concept is to jeopardize the deity of Christ according to the hypostatic union of two natures in one person.⁵² Nevertheless, he recognizes that it is conceptually difficult to affirm the genuineness of Christ's temptations given his impeccability. The Scriptures clearly state that Jesus was tempted "as we are" (Heb 4:15), but how can this be given his impeccability? Ware summarizes the important contributions to this discussion by such stalwart Reformed thinkers as Louis Berkhof, Herman Bavinck, and William G. T. Shedd as well as the offerings of contemporary theologians Thomas Morris, Gerald O'Collins, and Millard Erickson. Ware finds some of the suggestions to be helpful, others less so. However, none of the suggestions is completely satisfying, leading him to formulate his own proposal for how Christ was both impeccable and genuinely tempted:

For some time now, I have considered another possible way of dealing with this issue, one that flows from a strong sense that Christ should be understood to have lived his life of sinless obedience as a man, anointed and empowered by the Spirit to live his life and carry out his calling, obedient to the end.⁵³

Not surprisingly, Ware's proposal has a Spirit-Christology orientation. Ultimately, for Ware, the solution to this Christological conundrum comes when one recognizes that in

⁵¹The word "impeccable," in common jargon, usually means only perfect or without fault. However, in Christian theological discourse, impeccable carries its Latin etymological force. That is, impeccability refers to the conviction that it was not possible for Christ to sin. All orthodox Christian traditions have held that Jesus was without sin, but there has been some debate as to whether it was metaphysically possible for him to be so. Of course, if he is truly impeccable, then it is difficult to make sense of Scripture's affirmation that he was genuinely tempted. If he is not impeccable, it is difficult to conceive how one can affirm that he is truly God, given Scripture's clear affirmation that God cannot sin.

⁵²According to Chalcedonian categories, the one person of Jesus Christ is a divine person who assumed a human nature. Though he is tempted according to the human nature, his actions are the actions of his person. If it is possible for Jesus to sin, then it is implicitly possible for God to sin, since Jesus is divine. This involves a radical redefinition of deity. Otherwise, one might affirm that it is not possible for God to sin but possible for Jesus to sin. In this case, however, the deity of Jesus is implicitly denied.

⁵³Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, 79.

the actual experience of Jesus, impeccability is not related to sinlessness as cause to effect. Ware avers, “The impeccability of Christ by virtue of his impeccable divine nature united to his human nature has nothing directly to do with how he resisted temptation and how it was that he did not sin.”⁵⁴ Evangelicals tend to reason as follows: (1) Why is Jesus truly an impeccable person? Answer: He is God. (2) Why did Jesus actually not sin? Answer: As God, he is impeccable. For Ware, though, the answers to these two questions must be different from one another. (1) Why is Jesus truly an impeccable person? Answer: He is God. (2) Why did Jesus actually not sin? Answer: As a man, he depended on the empowering grace of the Holy Spirit to resist temptation and obey the Father’s will. To illustrate this proposal Ware imagines a swimmer seeking to break a world record for long-distance swimming. For the event, multiple boats are in the water with rescue crews on hand to ensure that fatigue does not so overtake the swimmer that he drowns. The presence of these boats and crews guarantees that it is impossible for this swimmer to drown. The swimmer then swims his desired distance and breaks the world record, all without actually using the assistance of the boats and crews even one time. Thus, in the case of the swimmer, there are two questions that need to be asked: (1) Why was it impossible for the swimmer to drown? Answer: Medical and rescue crews were close at hand in boats. (2) Why did the swimmer actually not drown? Answer: He swam well, enduring the pain of the long swim without succumbing to fatigue. Just as the presence of rescue crews and boats did not cause the swimmer’s accomplishment, so the deity (and thus impeccability) of Jesus did not cause his sinlessness. In this way, one can conceive of Jesus actually experiencing the power of temptation according to his human nature and resisting according to his human nature, by the power of the Spirit.

⁵⁴Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, 81.

Ware is influenced by Hawthorne and makes many of the same points, albeit presented in new and fresh ways.⁵⁵ One might wonder, therefore, if Ware holds to a functionally kenotic model of the incarnation in an attempt to explain the unity of the two natures in the one person of Christ. If so, is Ware's Spirit Christology subject to the same critiques and pitfalls as Hawthorne's model? Ware, however, does not appear to follow Hawthorne on this point. In the very brief section discussing the meaning of the kenosis in Philippians 2:7, Ware proposes a model that is akin to a veiling or covering of the splendor of the divine nature because of the addition of a human nature.⁵⁶ Recall that Issler also speaks of a veiling of the divine attributes for the sake of preserving the genuineness of Jesus' human experiences. For Issler, though, the divine nature is veiled from the one mind and consciousness of the person of the Son during the state of his earthly humiliation. Ware, however, does not commit himself to a one-mind or one-will version of Christology (monothelitism) explicitly, and he says nothing in *The Man Christ Jesus* that entails such a commitment. In fact, when discussing the question of impeccability, Ware speaks favorably of the dyothelite Christology of William G. T.

⁵⁵Unlike Hawthorne, however, Ware argues that, at times, Jesus demonstrated his own deity by his actions.

⁵⁶Ware explains that the self-emptying (*ekenosen*) of Philippians 2:7 took place by way of addition. Since a limited human nature was added to the infinite divine nature in the incarnation, the addition was actually a subtraction. Ware illustrates this by describing a beautiful shiny new car that is taken for a test drive. The car is driven through mud and muck before being returned to the showroom floor. Nothing has been taken away from the car. Instead, there has been an addition. The addition of mud, though, results in a kind of subtraction from the beauty and splendor of the car. So with the incarnation of the Son of God, the addition of a human nature results in a veiling of the splendor and majesty of the divine Son (*The Man Christ Jesus*, 20-21). It should be noted, however, that this analogy, as with all analogies, breaks down. The addition of mud and much actually does take away real value from the car, as would the addition of miles to the engine or dents to the body. The Chalcedonian separation and distinction of the two natures in the one person of Christ prevents the conclusion that the actual splendor and glory of the person is diminished by the addition of a human nature. The splendor and majesty of the Son's deity is veiled by the addition of a human nature but not diminished by it. Thus, while the orthodox understanding of the *Communicatio Idiomatum* – attributes of either nature or both can be predicated of the person, but the attributes of one nature cannot be predicated of the other nature – allows us to speak of the person of the Son in terms of the limitations of humanity, it preserves the perfections of deity at the same time. Put differently, the distinction of natures and the unity of the one person allows one to affirm that the Son was weak and limited but only according to his human nature. The Son was mortal and died but only according to his human nature, and so on.

Shedd.⁵⁷ Furthermore, his own proposal concerning the impeccability of Christ only makes sense in light of a robust Chalcedonian distinction between the natures, including a dyothelite understanding of the minds/wills of Christ. Ware does not attempt a metaphysical analysis of the hypostatic union that explains his personal convictions concerning the relationship of the two natures in the person of the Son. It is also the case, however, that in *The Man Christ Jesus*, he never speaks in a way that sets him at odds with the Chalcedonian Christological heritage of the church.

Even though Ware does not say anything in his proposal that conflicts with Chalcedonian Christology, *per se*, he has been accused by some of holding to an understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity that is outside the bounds of Nicene Trinitarianism. Amid the many forms of accusation, there are essentially two main charges: (1) Ware's framing of Trinitarian agency represents an a priori rejection of the historic doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity *ad extra* and thereby jeopardizes divine unity. (2) Ware's insistence that the Son submits eternally to the Father so that the Father and Son exist eternally in a relationship of authority and submission entails a commitment to three wills in the Godhead because submission is nonsense apart from distinct wills. Both of these charges, if accurate, have considerable implications, not only for Trinitarian theology, but also for Christology. Let us consider these charges one at a time.

The first of these accusations has been made, not only with respect to Ware's understanding of eternal submission in the Godhead but also with respect to his articulation of Spirit Christology. In a yet unpublished essay, Keith E. Johnson has charged Hawthorne, Issler, and Ware together of articulating an understanding of the role of the Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus that is inconsistent with inseparable

⁵⁷Ware writes, "I agree here with Shedd, who argued that if Christ could sin, 'the guilt would not be confined to the human nature' but the divine nature also would be stained" (*The Man Christ Jesus*, 80).

operations. After giving a summary of the doctrine of inseparable operations and defending the doctrine from the Gospel of John, Johnson states his objection:

[W]e are now in position to see more clearly the trinitarian problems besetting the proposals of Hawthorne, Ware and Issler. All three wrongly assume that only one person of the Trinity can function as divine agent when Jesus performs miraculous actions like healing. In the case of Hawthorne, that divine agent is exclusively the Holy Spirit. In the case of Issler and Ware, that agent is predominantly the Spirit. According to Issler and Ware, on rare occasions Jesus performed some miracles by his own divine power. The point is that in any situation, only one trinitarian person can be the source of divine power in the ministry of Jesus Christ. In this model of divine action, no consideration is given to the possibility that all three divine persons might be involved. This is rejected a priori.⁵⁸

It has already been shown that both Hawthorne and Issler present their Spirit Christology in terms that jeopardize Nicene Trinitarian theology, in particular the doctrine of inseparable operations. Does Ware's Spirit Christology entail this, however, as Johnson suggests? In Johnson's essay, he cites specific examples from both Hawthorne and Issler to demonstrate their incompatibility with the doctrine of inseparable operations, but Ware is considered with them only by way of inference. In the case of Ware specifically, Johnson's only argument is that Ware speaks of Jesus as relying on the Spirit and never discusses the question of how the work of the Spirit can be spoken of specifically in light of inseparable operations. Johnson, a serious Augustine scholar and able theologian,⁵⁹ is well aware of the rich theological tradition of appropriation and divine missions that allows one to speak of the external works of God with respect to one particular person while still affirming the metaphysical reality of inseparable operations.⁶⁰ It is true that

⁵⁸Keith E. Johnson, "The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Ministry of Jesus Christ: A Trinitarian Perspective" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, San Diego, CA, November 20, 2014.), 11.

⁵⁹See Keith E. Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity and Religious Pluralism: An Augustinian Assessment* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011). In this monograph, Johnson brings the Trinitarian theology of Augustine to bear on a number of contemporary proposals that appeal to the Trinity to ground their pluralistic theology of religions. Johnson focuses largely on Augustine's account of Trinitarian agency, which is built upon the doctrine of inseparable operations and the way that one speaks of the peculiar works of each person in light of inseparable operations by means of an appeal to the divine missions.

⁶⁰The means of speaking specifically of one person or another as the peculiar subject of a work of God *ad extra* is by no means monolithic. A number of nuanced explanations have been put forth by theologians of various Christian traditions. Virtually all models of explanation build on Augustine in some way. For a discussion of how the Trinitarian agency of Augustine is picked up by the Reformed theologian

Hawthorne and Issler speak in ways that are not compatible with that tradition, but Ware, at least in *The Man Christ Jesus* (which is the source text for Johnson’s criticisms of Ware), says nothing that is inherently incompatible with that tradition. Rather, it seems that Ware, in this case, has been labeled as guilty by association.

Before leaving the discussion of whether Ware’s Spirit Christology is compatible with the doctrine of inseparable operations, however, it should be noted that, in an earlier publication on the doctrine of the Trinity, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, Relevance*, Ware makes some statements that, *prima facie*, seem to reject the historic doctrine of inseparable operations, statements that have not gone unnoticed by his fiercest critics. For example, Ware writes, “For, though the Father is supreme, though he has in the trinitarian order the place of highest authority, the place of highest honor, yet he *chooses* to do his work in *many* cases through the Son and through the Spirit rather than unilaterally.”⁶¹ The statement that the Father “chooses” to work through the Son and Spirit in “many” cases might *seem* to imply that it is metaphysically possible for the Father to work apart from the Son and the Spirit and that he may have even done so in some instances. It is at this point that the recent Trinitarian controversy between a number of Evangelical Reformed complementarian⁶² theologians becomes *apropos*. Before this particular controversy, one was left to wonder whether, in fact,

John Owen, see Kyle Claunch, “What God Hath Done Together: Defending the Historic Doctrine of the Inseparable Operations of the Trinity,” *JETS* 56 (2013): 781-800. For a review of the doctrine as it is articulated by medieval scholastics, such as Scotus and Aquinas, see Adonis Vidu, “Trinitarian Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation,” *JAT* 4 (2016): 106-27.

⁶¹Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, 55, emphasis added. Later in the same volume, Ware contends, “It is not as though the Father is unable to work unilaterally, but rather he chooses to involve the Son and the Spirit” (57).

⁶²“Complementarian” refers to the conviction that men are identified by Scripture as having a role of authority/headship over women in both the marriage relationship and the church (Eph 5:22ff. and 1 Tim 2:11-15). The woman’s role is one of honorable submission to her husband in the home and to male leaders in the church. Any leadership role taken on by women in either the home or the church should be undertaken in such a way as not to subvert the headship of men in their appropriate roles. In spite of these role distinctions, complementarian theologians vehemently affirm the equality of dignity and worth of men and women before God as created equally in his image. Thus, the role differentiation is a matter of complementarity, not inequity.

Bruce Ware affirms the historic confession of divine unity in terms of inseparable operations or whether statements like this one were to be taken as evidence of his rejection of the historic doctrine. The controversy, however, has led to some helpful clarifications by Ware. The controversy revolved around the affirmation by Ware (and a number of other theologians, most notably Wayne Grudem) that the Son's obedience to the Father is not unique to the state of earthly humiliation nor to the incarnation. Rather, the Son's submission to the Father is an eternal relationship of authority and submission that pertains to the very hypostatic identity of the Son with respect to the Father. A full analysis of Ware's position on the Son's submission to the Father is well beyond the scope of this dissertation.⁶³ However, in the midst of the controversy, quotes like the one given above were adduced as evidence of the unorthodox Trinitarian theology of Ware. However, in response to the criticism, Ware has written several blog articles, two of which directly address the issue of the inseparable operations of the Trinity. In the first, Ware writes,

I gladly affirm my commitment to the doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Because each person of the Trinity possesses the identically same divine nature, each uses the same power and relies on the same knowledge and wisdom in conducting the various works that each does. So, there cannot be a separation or division in the work of the One God since each person participates fully in the One nature of God.⁶⁴

Additionally, a few days after writing those words, Todd Pruitt posted an article in which he quotes several passages from Ware, all of which, according to Pruitt, seem to suggest

⁶³I have contributed to the discussion elsewhere. See Kyle Claunch, "God Is the Head of Christ: Does 1 Corinthians 11:3 Ground Gender Complementarity in the Immanent Trinity?" in *One God in Three Persons: Unity of Essence, Distinction of Persons, Implications for Life*, ed. John Starke and Bruce A. Ware (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 65-94. In that essay, I argue that the language of eternal submission is too strong but that the incarnate submission of the Son is grounded in an irreversible taxis of the divine being. Because the Son is eternally generated from the Father, it was fitting for the Son to be the one sent into the world to become incarnate. Thus, the irreversible eternal taxis of the divine being finds analogical expression in created relationships of authority and submission.

⁶⁴Bruce A. Ware, "Knowing the Self-revealed God Who Is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – Guest Post by Bruce Ware," *Biblical Reasoning*, a blog by Luke Stamps, Matthew Emerson, and Luke Wisely, posted July 4, 2016, accessed September 2, 2016, <https://secundumscripturas.com/2016/07/04/knowning-the-self-revealed-god-who-is-father-son-and-holy-spirit/>.

an unorthodox view of the Trinity. For example, Ware writes, “It is not as though the Father is unable to work unilaterally, but rather, he chooses to involve the Son and the Spirit.”⁶⁵ Ware’s words seemed to Pruitt to suggest the metaphysical possibility that the Father might have acted unilaterally had he chosen to do so, which amounts to a denial of inseparable operations. In response to Pruitt’s post, Ware then wrote another blog article, an open letter to his accusers, in which he responded specifically to Pruitt’s quotations of his work. Ware pointed out that the larger context of many of the quotes demonstrates explicitly his commitment to the unity and indivisibility of the divine essence.

Concerning the specific statement about the Father’s ability to act unilaterally, Ware writes,

Allow me also to comment briefly on quotations made by Todd that speak of the Father not working unilaterally but rather choosing to work through the Son and the Spirit. My point here is very simple: since the Father is omnipotent, there simply is nothing that could hinder him *by nature* from doing anything he would choose to do. Of course, this is purely hypothetical, and I acknowledge that my wording here could be made more precise. I did not intend to suggest that the Father ever *would* act in such an independent manner, or *could* act independently, strictly speaking, in light of the Trinitarian union of persons. Indeed, he acts always and only inseparably with the Son and the Spirit. Still, the point is that while he acts inseparably, he also wills with the Son and Spirit to act in full accord with them, and he intends in this to put the Son, in particular, in the place of ascendant exaltation. So, indeed, the work of God is inseparable, as the church has long held, but the work of the one God is also hypostatically distinguishable.⁶⁶

Thus, while debate will continue as to the coherence and viability of Ware’s statement of his positions, it is clear that he does not reject the church’s affirmation of the inseparable operations of the Trinity but rather confesses it.

⁶⁵Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, 57, cited by Todd Pruitt, “Let’s All be Nicene,” *Mortification of Spin*, a blog by Carl Trueman, Todd Pruitt, and Amy Byrd, posted on July 7, 2016, accessed September 2, 2016, http://www.mortificationofspin.org/mos/1517/lets-all-be-nicene?utm_content=buffer51008&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer#.V8mcYpgrLIX.

⁶⁶Bruce Ware, “An Open Letter to Liam Goligher, Carl Trueman, and Todd Pruitt on Trinitarian Equality and Distinctions – Guest Post by Bruce Ware,” *Biblical Reasoning*, a blog by Luke Stamps, Matthew Emerson, and Luke Wisely, posted July 7, 2016, accessed September 2, 2016, <https://secundumscripturas.com/2016/07/08/an-open-letter-to-liam-goligher-carl-trueman-and-todd-pruitt-on-trinitarian-equality-and-distinctions-guest-post-by-bruce-ware/>.

The other accusation that has been made recently about Ware’s Trinitarian theology pertains to the matter of the will of God. In traditional Trinitarian theology, the divine will is predicated of the divine nature/essence so that there is only one will in God, even as there is only one God. However, because Ware and others have argued adamantly that the Father and the Son have an eternal relationship of authority and submission, some have accused Ware of holding to three wills in the Trinity, making it difficult to see how he can coherently maintain divine essential unity.⁶⁷ Just as Ware responded directly to criticism concerning the doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity, so he responded to accusations concerning the divine will. He asks the question, “Can there be a will of authority (from the Father) and a will of submission (from the Son) without conceiving of separate and separable wills?”⁶⁸ In other words, is the language of eternal authority and submission compatible with the church’s historic affirmation of one will in God? Ware answers, “In short, my answer is yes.” He goes on to describe the eternal authority and submission as “inflections”⁶⁹ of the one divine will, ordered “according to their distinct hypostatic identities and modes of subsistence.”⁷⁰ So, although questions remain, it is clear that Ware is not intentionally modifying the traditional Trinitarian or Christological formulae. Rather, he shows great concern for demonstrating that his

⁶⁷In another context, in which I openly questioned whether the use of submission language is consistent with the affirmation of one divine will in the Godhead, I suggested that the position of Bruce Ware “seems to entail” a commitment to three distinct wills (Kyle Claunch, “God Is the Head of Christ,” 88). However, I used the word “seems” because Ware did not make that explicit. In fact, I hoped that my comments there would generate further dialogue concerning this very issue. See Kyle Claunch, “An Attempt at Clarity and Charity without Compromising Orthodoxy,” posted July 1, 2016, accessed September 2, 2016, <https://secundumscripturas.com/2016/07/01/some-clarifications-from-kdclaunch-on-bruce-ware-and-the-trinity-debate/>.

⁶⁸Bruce Ware, “Knowing the Self-revealed God,” <https://secundumscripturas.com/2016/07/04/knowning-the-self-revealed-god-who-is-father-son-and-holy-spirit/>.

⁶⁹This term is borrowed from Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 231.

⁷⁰Bruce Ware, “Knowing the Self-revealed God,” <https://secundumscripturas.com/2016/07/04/knowning-the-self-revealed-god-who-is-father-son-and-holy-spirit/>.

proposals are consistent with Nicene Trinitarianism and Chalcedonian Christology. Students and theologians alike can look forward to further clarification on these important matters in the future writings of Bruce Ware.

Conclusion

Hawthorne, Issler, and Ware share a concern for a lack of emphasis on the orthodox confession that Jesus is fully human. One major key that Scripture gives for recovering the appropriate emphasis on Christ's humanity is his experience of the anointing presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Trinitarian Spirit Christology of these thinkers pertains specifically to the anointing of the human nature of the Son. Each makes distinctive contributions to the discussion of the work of the Holy Spirit in the earthly life of Christ, and the paradigm they collectively emphasize is one that should be a major component of any Christological discussion of the humanity of Christ. In this way, these thinkers' ideas have enriched traditional Christological reflection. However, as has been shown, these thinkers present their case in ways that raise serious questions concerning consistency with the Nicene Trinitarian and Chalcedonian Christological heritage of the church. In the case of Hawthorne, he has explicitly affirmed a kenotic Christology that is incompatible with Nicene and Chalcedonian sensibilities. In the case of Issler, he has used language that strongly implies a rejection of the doctrine of inseparable operations and thus a diminishing of the concept of divine unity. Furthermore, Issler's language suggests a monothelite Christology, which is incompatible with Chalcedonian categories. In the case of Ware, accusations of inconsistency with the received orthodoxy of the church have begun to be answered, and clarifications from him are still forthcoming, but it is clear that he is explicit in his confession of historic orthodoxy. In the case of all three of these thinkers, however, it is clear that more work needs to be done to capitalize on the potential enrichment to traditional theology that their

proposals offer while avoiding dangerous theological pitfalls concerning divine unity and the unity and distinction of the two natures in the one person of Christ.

Spirit Christology for Emphasis on the Spirit in the Immanent Trinity and Ecumenism

Ralph Del Colle and Myk Habets share with Hawthorne, Ware, and Issler the concern that the humanity of Christ is neither properly developed nor emphasized in much of the theological tradition of Western Christianity, but that concern is not the primary motivating factor driving their Spirit Christology. Rather, Del Colle and Habets perceive a tragic neglect of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in Christian theology in general and in Christology in particular.⁷¹ This lack of emphasis on the Spirit, embodied in the contentious *filioque* clause of the Latin version of the Nicene creed, has resulted, not only in a pneumatological deficit in theology but in a divided Christianity. For these thinkers, the solution is found by reconceiving the way Christians think about the eternal relations of origin that constitute the hypostatic individuality of the three persons of the Godhead. This reconceived approach to eternal Trinitarian relations involves a kind of reciprocity that purportedly elevates the Holy Spirit to a place of proper emphasis and attention in Christian theology and paves the way for remedying the ecumenical divide in Christianity. This section will briefly review the proposals of Del Colle and Habets and then critique them together.

Ralph Del Colle

Ralph Del Colle is a Roman Catholic charismatic theologian of the Holy Spirit. The late theologian's greatest work, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit Christology in Trinitarian Perspective*, presents a thorough investigation of the possibility of articulating a model of Spirit Christology that is consistent with the broader contours of Roman

⁷¹See Myk Habets, "Veni Cinderella Spiritus," *JPT* 10 (2001): 65-80.

Catholic Trinitarian theology and Christology. He succeeds at synthesizing the work of some of his Roman Catholic predecessors (e.g. Philip Rosato⁷² and Yves Congar⁷³), drawing especially on the work of David Coffey.⁷⁴ From the beginning, Del Colle recognizes that Spirit Christology is particularly difficult for theologians in the Western tradition because of the West's affirmation of the *filioque* clause, which was inserted into the Nicene Creed at Toledo in AD 589 and led to the official division of the church between East and West in AD 1054. Del Colle believes that the *filioque* clause has resulted in an "excessive Christocentrism" in the West.⁷⁵ He is sympathetic to the pneumatological question raised by Eastern Orthodox theologians: "How can the Holy Spirit be fully recognized in the economy of God if within the trinity its relationship of origination from the Father is also made dependent on the Son?"⁷⁶ Del Colle is intent on keeping his proposal within the parameters of official Roman Catholic dogma, which includes the *filioque*, but he is aware of the problems this presents for a robust Spirit Christology.

In order to get through this impasse, he engages in extensive dialogue with the neo-scholastic tradition, spending considerable time explicating the Thomistic account of the doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity *ad extra* and the concurrent appropriation of divine works to one particular person of the Godhead. For the scholastics, the doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Godhead *ad extra* entails that one cannot ground the distinction between the persons of the Godhead in the

⁷²See Philip J. Rosato, S. J., "Spirit Christology: Ambiguity and Promise," *TS* 38 (1977): 423-49.

⁷³See Yves Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, trans. David Smith (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).

⁷⁴See David Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," *TS* 45 (1984): 466-80; Coffey, "A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit," *TS* 47 (1986): 227-50; Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," *TS* 51 (1990): 193-229.

⁷⁵Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit*, 12.

⁷⁶Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit*, 12.

economic Trinity because the economic works are indivisible. Del Colle admits that the commitment to the doctrine of inseparable operations, though necessary for the conceptual preservation of divine unity, is “the most significant hindrance in neo-scholastic theology to the development of Spirit-christology.”⁷⁷ In traditional scholastic and neo-scholastic thought, the distinction between the persons must be developed speculatively by considering the relations of opposition and the personal notions of the three persons. Only then can one move to ascribing divine action *ad extra* to one particular person of the Godhead, and this only by way of appropriation, i. e., speaking of the action as manifesting the *ad intra* properties of one person but recognizing that the action was equally an action of all three persons acting indivisibly.⁷⁸ Thus, for thinkers in the scholastic and neo-scholastic tradition, Spirit Christology can only be developed speculatively⁷⁹ from the standpoint of the immanent Trinitarian hypostatic distinctions.⁸⁰ While Del Colle is critical of the scholastic tendency to isolate dogmatic speculation from the revelation of God in Scripture, he nevertheless begins his investigation of Spirit Christology by proposing a speculative model of immanent Trinitarian relations, which

⁷⁷Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit*, 57.

⁷⁸Del Colle’s discussion of the neo-scholastic method of distinguishing the persons and appropriating economic works to each person without dividing the divine essence is found in *Christ and the Spirit*, 34-58.

⁷⁹Del Colle writes, “Neo-scholastic thought when compared to much contemporary theology does not proceed along the lines of historical interest in the positive data of revelation, either in terms of critical investigation into the New Testament with its correlative understanding of the development of doctrine, or in terms of a more theological notion of salvation history – e.g., a biblical schema of promise and fulfillment (which gained ascendancy in the documents of Vatican II)... What the method did accomplish was to bequeath a fairly formalized, abstract, and rigorous framework for the dogmatic consideration of the trinitarian and christological mysteries” (Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit*, 35).

⁸⁰This is in marked contrast to the approaches of Hawthorne, Ware, and Issler, all of whom begin their Spirit-Christology proposals with the New Testament record of the life and ministry of Jesus as incarnate divine Son. This neo-scholastic approach is also in marked contrast to John Owen, who will be considered in the next chapter. For Owen, the doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity is paramount, but he proceeds on the basis that the economic missions of the Son and Spirit reveal their eternal hypostatic identity in relation to the Father. Thus, our knowledge of the *ad intra* divine life is by revelation, not primarily by speculation.

he believes comports better with divine revelation in the economy than does the traditional Thomistic model of the immanent Trinity.

Concerning the eternal distinctions between the persons, Del Colle proposes that the traditional Latin account based on the model of generation and procession, including the disputed *filioque*, is correct as far as it goes.⁸¹ The account, however, does not go far enough. While the procession/generation model can account for the revelatory *descent* of God to man in the economy of salvation, the model cannot account for the soteriological *ascent* of man to God. This is so because the traditional model does not allow for any kind of reciprocity. Generation and procession are unidirectional concepts always moving from the Father but never back to him within the Godhead. Thus, Del Colle proposes a bestowal model for understanding the hypostatic individuality of the Spirit, a model which he insists is complementary to the traditional model of procession/generation. In the bestowal model, the Father bestows the Spirit on the Son, and the Son reciprocates by bestowing the Spirit on the Father. Put in the language of procession, this model suggests that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *to the Son* and from the Son *to the Father* in the *ad intra* life of God. Thus, concerning the hypostatic individuality of the Spirit, there is procession from the Father *and the Son* (*filioque*), but it is a reciprocal procession.⁸²

For Del Colle, the best conceptual tool for understanding the bestowal model of immanent Trinitarian hypostatic distinctions is the concept of the Holy Spirit as the love between the Father and Son. As Augustine first developed the idea of the Holy Spirit

⁸¹Within the one being of God, the three distinct hypostases are distinguished by relations of origin. The Father generates the Son, and the Son is generated. The Father spirates the Spirit, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father. The Son spirates the Spirit also, and the Spirit also proceeds from the Son.

⁸²In *Christ and the Spirit*, Del Colle is primarily concerned with summarizing the landscape of neo-scholastic thought that paved the way for the development of Spirit Christology using the tools of that tradition. He discusses the bestowal model, as articulated by David Coffey, in chapter 4, "Beyond Neo-scholasticism," 91-134. For a clear discussion of Del Colle's own appropriation of this model, apart from the dense interactions with the neo-scholastics and David Coffey, see Ralph Del Colle, "Reflections on the *Filioque*" *JES* 34 (1997): 202-17.

as the love between the Father and the Son, he did so in a way that fit the traditional, unidirectional model of generation and procession.⁸³ For Augustine, the Father’s generation of the Son is logically prior to the mutual love between Father and Son. Del Colle suggests that the image of the Holy Spirit as love, however, is helpful for understanding the bestowal model as an alternative to the traditional, unidirectional model. The Holy Spirit is the love that the Father bestows on the Son. As such, it can be said that the Son’s eternal generation from the Father is by the Spirit because the Father generates the Son in love. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is the love that the Son bestows on the Father. The generation of the Son is therefore logically posterior to the Father’s spiration of the Spirit *and* logically prior to the Son’s spiration of the Spirit. Thus, this model accounts not only for the *descent* of God to man – from the Father through the Son by the Spirit – but also for the *ascent* of man to God – by the Spirit through the Son to the Father. In this proposal, Del Colle believes that he has presented “a model of Spirit Christology that stresses the pneumatological dimension of the divine economy that underscores filioquist sensibilities without compromising the monarchy of the Father or implicating a subordination of the Third Person.”⁸⁴

Myk Habets

In his book, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology*, New Zealand scholar Myk Habets has done for Evangelical theology what Ralph Del Colle did for Roman Catholic theology. The book is a scholarly *tour de force* that offers discussions and critique of many of the leading proponents of Spirit Christology from a variety of

⁸³This idea of the Spirit as the love between the Father and the Son has been picked up and utilized by many theologians since the early Middle Ages. It was first introduced by Augustine in *De Trinitate*. See Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, O. P. vol. 1 of *The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, O. S. A. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2010).

⁸⁴ Del Colle, “Reflections on the *Filioque*,” 202.

different theological backgrounds. Building on their work, Habets makes his own proposal of Trinitarian Spirit Christology.

Much like Del Colle, Habets is concerned that the traditional model of generation/procession as the means of distinguishing the three persons in the immanent Trinity has a tendency to diminish the reality of the Spirit's true personhood in relation to the Father and the Son. While his concerns are similar, Habets frames the problem a bit differently than Del Colle. The uni-directional, or linear, generation of the Son from the Father alone followed (logically, not chronologically) by the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son presents a model in which the only distinguishing personal property of the Spirit in the immanent Godhead is passive.⁸⁵ That is, the Spirit is individuated as a person only by the fact that he *is spirated by* the Father and the Son. The Father and the Son, on the other hand, both have active aspects of personal hypostatic individuation. The Father actively generates the Son and spirates the Spirit. The Son, while passively generated by the Father, actively spirates the Spirit. The suggestion of Augustine, developed by Richard St. Victor and continually repeated throughout the history of the church, that the Holy Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son is promising in that it implies some reciprocity, but for Habets, that paradigm still leaves the eternal hypostatic identity of the person of the Holy Spirit as completely passive.⁸⁶ It is only (logically) after the Son's generation by the Father that love (Holy Spirit) is shared between them. Following Roman Catholic theologian, Thomas

⁸⁵Interestingly enough, many proponents of Spirit Christology prefer a more "Eastern" approach to the doctrine of the Trinity because the absence of the *filioque* from the Eastern version of the Nicene Creed does not imply the subordination of the Spirit's work to that of the Son (as the Western tradition is alleged to have done). However, Habets' concern here with respect to the passivity of the Spirit in the eternal modes of subsistence would apply to the Son also in the Eastern tradition. If the Spirit does not proceed also from the Son (*filioque*), then the Son is only generated, even as the Spirit is only spirated, neither person being active in the "personing" of another person. Special thanks to Bruce Ware for pointing this out.

⁸⁶Habets laments, "In the West, the Father and Son play active roles while the Spirit assumes a passive function as merely the Love or Gift shared by the Father and the Son" (*Anointed Son*, 223).

Weinandy,⁸⁷ Habets laments that “the weakness of the Trinitarian constructions of both East and West lies in an inadequate, even flawed, conception of the role and function of the Holy Spirit within the Trinitarian life.”⁸⁸ In light of this weakness, Habets agrees with the sentiment of Cristoph Schwöbel that the traditional doctrine of the immanent Trinity needs “serious change.”⁸⁹ For Habets, the only way a proper emphasis on the Spirit can be achieved is “if all three persons, logically and ontologically, spring forth in one simultaneous, nonsequential, eternal act in which each person of the Trinity subsistently defines, and equally, is subsistently defined by, the other persons.”⁹⁰ In other words, the active and passive aspects of the eternal relations of origin must be equal between all three persons. For Habets, there can be no irreversible *taxis* of the divine being that logically and eternally begins with the Father and terminates with the Spirit.

To achieve his objective, Habets espouses a reciprocal model of double movement in which the Son is eternally generated from the Father in and by the Spirit and the Son loves the Father in and by the Spirit. This model, Habets is certain, underscores the ontological equality and mutually interdependent subsistence of all three persons while ascribing a place to the Holy Spirit that is more prominent than mere personal passivity or third in an irreversible order (*taxis*) of eternal being. He explains:

The Spirit proceeds from the Father and is identified as the one through whom the Father begets the Son; in this double movement the Father is defined (personed) as the Father of the Son and the Son is also defined (personed) as the Son of the Father.

⁸⁷See Thomas Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity* (London: T & T Clark, 1995). Habets admits being profoundly influenced by Weinandy's reconceived doctrine of the Trinity and laments the fact that this little volume has not received the widespread attention it deserves. Habets calls Weinandy's proposal “the most profound and fruitful I have yet encountered” (Habets, *Anointed Son*, 222n150).

⁸⁸Habets, *Anointed Son*, 223.

⁸⁹Christoph Schwöbel, “Christology and Trinitarian Thought,” in *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 145, cited in Habets, *Anointed Son*, 220.

⁹⁰Habets, *Anointed Son*, 223.

In short, all three persons of the Trinity, within their relationships, help constitute each other.⁹¹

The Spirit is thus afforded a more prominent role in the immanent Trinity than traditional models allegedly allow, but the classical Christian creeds, namely Nicaea and Chalcedon are not compromised.⁹²

It is important to note that, for Habets, this rethinking of the immanent Trinity, motivated as it is by a desire to give the Spirit his proper due as a full person in the Godhead, is not arbitrarily concocted. Rather, he is convinced that the Scriptures demand such a rethinking of the doctrine of the Trinity and renewed emphasis on the person of the Holy Spirit. Habets proceeds on the assumption that the first clause of the famous “Rahner’s Rule” is correct: “The economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity.”⁹³ Therefore, the working of the Trinitarian persons in the economy must be revelatory of the subsistence of the Trinitarian persons in eternity. Drawing on this conviction, Habets reasons from Scripture that the personal hypostatic identity of the Son must be, in some way, dependent on the personal hypostatic identity of the Spirit. One scriptural event that leads to this conclusion is the virginal conception of Jesus. Since the Holy Spirit is the person directly mentioned as bringing about the conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary and since the working of the Spirit in that instance is causally linked to Jesus’ identity as Son of God,⁹⁴ Habets concludes that the eternal hypostatic identity of the Son is to be understood in terms of the working of the Spirit, by whom the Father generates the Son.

⁹¹Habets, *Anointed Son*, 224.

⁹²Habets explicitly expresses a desire to be consistent with the great tradition of the Christian faith, especially the creedal formulae of Nicaea and Chalcedon. He states that one of the criteria for Christology is that it be “consistent with the accepted creeds of Christendom (Nicaea and Chalcedon).” He goes on to say, “The councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon set the parameters within which Christology can unfold” (*Anointed Son*, 192). How consistent Habets’ own proposal is with the parameters of the creeds and whether such a proposal is internally coherent remains to be seen.

⁹³See *Anointed Son*, 221. He avers that affirming the axiom in the other direction – “The immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity” – would be problematic because it would diminish the proper and necessary “apophatic reticence” that must be maintained when discussing the immanent Trinity.

⁹⁴In Luke 1:35, the angel tells Mary that the conception will happen when the Holy Spirit comes upon her. He then says, “Therefore, the child to be born will be called Holy – the Son of God.” For Habets’ discussion of Luke 1:35 and the parallel statement in Matthew that ascribes the conception of Jesus

For Habets, as for Del Colle, the potential that Spirit Christology with a reconceived model of immanent Trinitarian relations holds out for ecumenical dialogue is a key desideratum. Habets writes,

The ecumenical endeavor is basic to a Spirit Christology. Spirit Christology unites Word and Spirit, East and West. It is this insight that can provide a basis for renewed discussion of the contentious *filioque* addition and move the church beyond the current ecclesiological stalemate.⁹⁵

While Del Colle takes pains to demonstrate the consistency of his model with the *filioque* clause of the Western edition of the Nicene Creed, Habets is openly critical of the *filioque*, suggesting that it should be dropped from the Nicene Creed in the interests of ecumenical unity. Like Del Colle, Habets admits that the *filioque* clause can be compatible with a reconceived notion of reciprocal Trinitarian relations. The Spirit is “personed” by the Father *and the Son*, but the emphasis added by the *filioque* insertion is superfluous once it is granted that the Father and the Son are equally “personed” by the Spirit. Habets, therefore, contends that the clause is unnecessary theologically and harmful in terms of ecumenical dialogue.⁹⁶

Critique of Habets and Del Colle

The proposals of Del Colle and Habets represent Trinitarian Spirit Christology at the highest conceptual level. According to their reciprocal models of eternal generation and procession, the very eternal hypostatic identity of God the Son in the immanent Trinity can only be properly conceived in terms of the Holy Spirit. The proposals are not

to the Holy Spirit, see (Habets, *Anointed Son*, 123-31).

⁹⁵Habets, *Anointed Son*, 278. See also Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit*.

⁹⁶See Habets, *Anointed Son*, 278-79. For more sustained treatments of Habets’ position concerning the *filioque*, see Myk Habets, “*Filioque?* Nein: A Proposal for Coherent Coinherence,” in *Trinitarian Theology After Barth*, ed. Myk Habets and Philip Tolliday, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, ed. K. C. Hanson, Charles M. Collier, and D. Christopher Spinks (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 161-202. See also Habets, “Getting beyond the *Filioque* with Third Article Theology,” in *Ecumenical Perspectives on the Filioque for the 21st Century*, ed. Myk Habets (Huntingdon, UK: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 211-30.

without difficulty, however. First, one wonders about the coherence of any model that seeks to emphasize the hypostatic individuality of the Spirit by locating the origin of the person of the Spirit in two distinct eternal moments of spiration. How is it that the Spirit's hypostatic identity proceeds first from the Father alone and then (again, logically) from the Son to the Father? Habets insists that generation and procession, being eternal, are to be understood as non-sequential, even in a logical sense. However, while the church has always acknowledged that the sequence of the eternal processions in the Godhead are not chronological (on pain of Arianism), the church has also recognized a logical sequence (order, *taxis*) of the divine persons *ad intra*. This eternal sequential logic is difficult to escape. If the Son has his eternal hypostatic identity as the one eternally generated from the Father by the Spirit, then the Spirit is logically prior to the Son in the order of being in the Godhead. To suggest that the Spirit's hypostatic identity is also constituted as proceeding from the Son to the Father seems incoherent.

A second potential problem with the reciprocal models of Del Colle and Habets pertains to the revelatory correspondence between the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity. Del Colle criticizes the scholastic and neo-scholastic traditions for their failure to give credence to the revelation of God in Scripture, tending instead to base their accounts of the *ad intra* divine life on pure speculation.⁹⁷ One of Del Colle's reasons for developing a Spirit Christology and thus a bestowal model of eternal Trinitarian relations is his desire to draw a real connection between the revelation of God in Scripture and the being of Godself as a corrective to the neo-

⁹⁷Concerning the speculative approach to the immanent Trinity and the speculatively derived commitment to inseparable operations and the Thomistic account of appropriations, Del Colle laments, "This has made the task of differentiation difficult when it comes to the *ad extra* missions, especially since any Christology begins there rather than in the *ad intra* relations. For example, if we take the gospel narratives, a primitive triadology is evident when Jesus prays to the Father and is anointed with the Spirit. Without these basic 'evangelical data' no trinitarian theology would have ever emerged" (Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit*, 93).

scholastic tradition. For Habets, as already noted, the revelatory correspondence between the economic and immanent Trinity is of paramount importance. Ironically, however, the reciprocal model of eternal Trinitarian relations may actually jeopardize the very connection between the eternal being of God and his revelation in the economy of salvation that the traditional, unidirectional generation/procession model was actually intended to express. The traditional model was developed as a way to speak of the eternal being of Godself according to the pattern of divine revelation, revelation which has as its source the missions of the Son and Spirit as narratively and propositionally transmitted to the church through the written words that make up the New Testament.⁹⁸ The Father sent the Son as redeemer, and the Son accomplished his mission through his passion and resurrection. The Son then sent the Spirit, from the Father, so that those he came to save could, through the indwelling of the Spirit, be sons of God with him. The order (*taxis*) observed in the revelation of the divine missions was then said to be true (analogically) of the eternal being of God in himself – Father → Son → Holy Spirit.

For many, Augustine of Hippo represents the high-water mark of the pro-Nicene Trinitarian grammar that emerged toward the end of the fourth century. For Augustine, the immanent Trinitarian relations are *revealed* by the economic missions of the Son and the Spirit:

Just as Father, then, begot and the Son was begotten, so the Father sent and the son was sent. But just as the begetter and the begotten are one, so are the sender and the sent, because the Father and the Son are one; so too the Holy Spirit is one with them, because these three are one (1 John 5:7). And just as being born means for the Son his being from the Father, so *his being sent means his being known to be*

⁹⁸See Fred Sanders, *The Triune God*, New Studies in Dogmatics Series, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016). Sanders writes, “God made it known that his unity was triunity precisely when the Father sent the Son and the Holy Spirit, in fulfillment of the promise of redemption. . . . If the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit had not made themselves personally known, we would not have attained knowledge that the one God is the triune God” (37). Later in the same volume, Sanders states the case again with respect to the relationship between eternal being and economic action: “What the missions reveal about the life of God is that his life takes place in eternal relations of origin” (93).

from him. And just as for the Holy Spirit his being the gift of God means his proceeding from the Father, so *his being sent means his being known to proceed from him.*⁹⁹

Notice how, for Augustine, the Son's birth from the Father "means his being from the Father" and that his "being sent means his being known to be from [the Father]." A similar pattern is given for the giving/sending of the Spirit. For Augustine (and the vast majority of thinkers throughout the long history of Trinitarian theological reflection), therefore, the eternal and irreversible (linear, unidirectional) *taxis* of the persons of the Trinity *ad intra* is the conceptual basis for the revealed *taxis* of the divine missions *ad extra*. The non-sequential, reciprocal models of Del Colle and Habets, however, eliminate all traces of *taxis* in the immanent Trinity leaving one to wonder why the economic *taxis* of the divine missions is so linear/unidirectional in its orientation. Does the order of the economic missions, which are the focus of NT revelation, tell us anything at all about the *ad intra* divine life? If the order of economic missions does not reveal an eternal linear *taxis* of generation/procession in the Godhead, what does it reveal?

Del Colle and Habets, however, are convinced that the revelatory correspondence between economic and immanent Trinity demands the reciprocity their models try to achieve. They would demur that, in the NT, if the Spirit of God brings about the conception of the Son of God in the womb of Mary (Luke 1:35 and Matt 1:18, 20), shouldn't the order of this economic Trinitarian reality be seen as revelatory of the eternal being of God in himself? That is, if in the virginal conception, "divinity is communicated to humanity [of Christ] via the indwelling Spirit,"¹⁰⁰ does it not follow, by way of revelatory correspondence, that the eternal hypostatic identity of the Son is somehow by the Spirit as well? Further, if the Spirit not only goes forth *from* Jesus to the people of God but also descends *upon* Jesus for the completion of his mission, then

⁹⁹Augustine, *The Trinity* (De Trinitate), 4.5.29, 181-82. Augustine cites 1 John 5:7 often in *De Trinitate*. Scholars almost unanimously agree that the text is an interpolation into the epistle.

¹⁰⁰Habets, *Anointed Son*, 128.

shouldn't this revelation of the Triune Godhead be reflected in theological speculation about the eternal relations of origin? In other words, does Jesus' conception by the Spirit and subsequent experience of the Spirit (a touchstone of any Spirit Christology) not reveal that his eternal generation from the Father is by the Spirit? Furthermore, Del Colle in particular would aver that the sending of the Spirit to the people of God results in the soteriological ascent of man back to God. There is, then, he would say, an inherent reciprocity to the economic missions when soteriological realities are considered: the Spirit goes forth from the Son in order for the redeemed to redound back to God through the Spirit and the Son. Does not the reality of the saving mission of the Spirit indicate a reciprocal model of eternal relations of origin?

These seem like strong points in response to the critique that a reciprocal model obscures the revelatory correspondence between the immanent Trinity and the saving missions of the Son and the Spirit. Let us consider each point in turn. First, does the Son's experience of the Spirit during the term of his earthly mission (a prominent focal point of any Spirit Christology) reveal a reciprocal procession of the Spirit that is both *to* and *from* the Son? In short, the answer is no. Ironically, such a claim fails to account adequately for the reality of Christ's humanity.¹⁰¹ Proponents of the traditional, unidirectional generation/procession model have always considered the Son's experience of the Spirit as pertaining only to his status as *incarnate* Son. That is, the Spirit descended upon and empowered the humanity of the Son, but this fact does not reveal the order of being in the immanent Godhead precisely because the anointing by the Holy Spirit pertains only to the human nature. The Son receives the Spirit as a man, but he does not receive the Spirit *qua* divinity.¹⁰² If this traditional understanding is correct, then Jesus'

¹⁰¹This is ironic because emphasizing the reality of Christ's humanity is a focal point of Spirit Christology of all kinds.

¹⁰²While this has been the traditional understanding, some proponents of Spirit Christology contend that the tradition has neglected to emphasize adequately the humanity of Christ, in part by failing to give the role of the Spirit in/on/through the incarnate Son the prominence that Scripture gives it. This, as

experience of the Spirit reveals more about the ideal way that God relates to man than it does about the way the persons of the Godhead relate eternally to one another.¹⁰³

Secondly, does the soteriological reality of man's ascent to God imply that there must be a reciprocity in the eternal generation and procession of the Son and Spirit, respectively? Again, the answer is no. This approach seems inadvertently to blur the Creator/creature distinction that is so fundamental to classical theism and to a biblical understanding of God and the world. By suggesting that the soteriological pathway of man back to God demands a reciprocal model of Trinitarian relations, Del Colle does not intend to be revisionist in his presentation of the God/world relationship.¹⁰⁴ He is no panentheist. However, when the soteriological ascent of man to God is given the same epistemic prominence as the missions of the Son and the Spirit toward man in terms of revealing the *ad intra* life of God, the line between Creator and creature is blurred. Furthermore, contra Del Colle, the traditional model of generation/procession does account for the soteriological ascent of man to God. In the traditional model, there is an inverse relationship between epistemology and ontology in the revelation of the triune

has been shown, is the burden of Hawthorne, Issler, and Ware in their Spirit-Christology proposals.

¹⁰³This is the approach of John Owen. See John Owen, ἸΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ, or *A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*, vol. 3, *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009). Owen's Spirit Christology will be the subject of the next chapter. For Owen, Jesus' experience of the Spirit demonstrates his identity as the antitype of Adam and the OT saints and archetype of the people of God in the New Covenant. Thus, the Son's incarnate experience of the Spirit reveals the way that God relates to man by his Spirit, and, more importantly, reveals the place of the incarnate Son as the ideal man, *exemplar* of humanity *par excellence*.

¹⁰⁴This particular critique is exclusive to Del Colle, as Habets does not appeal to soteriology as a basis for reconceiving immanent Trinitarian relations. That is not to say that Habets does not extend the implications of his Spirit Christology into soteriology. He does so by way of his carefully conceived concept of *theosis*. Habets argues that, just as the eternal divine personality of the Son is constituted by the Spirit, so the human nature of Jesus, anointed by the Spirit, is functionally divinized by that anointing. Thus, for Habets, there is something to the functional divinity so commonly affirmed by liberal theologians (including the revisionists discussed in chap. 2 of this dissertation). According to Habets, the problem with liberal "post-Trinitarian" theology is not its affirmation of a functional divinity of Christ based on his experience of the Spirit but the fact that liberal theologians replaced ontological deity and preexistence with functional divinity and experience of the Spirit. Habets contends that the human nature of Christ is functionally divinized by the Spirit *and* that the person of the Son is ontologically and eternally divine. Just as Christ was the quintessential divinized human, so his followers can be divinized functionally by their experience of the Spirit. For Habets' discussion of *theosis*, see *Anointed Son*, 248-53. See also, Myk Habets, "'Reformed Theosis?' A Response to Gannon Murphy," *Theology Today* 65 (2009): 489-98.

God. The immanent Trinity is the ontological ground for the outworking of God's purposes in the economy of redemption. God acts as he does in history in a manner that is consistent with who he is eternally. The economic *taxis* of the divine missions reveals the eternal *taxis* of the divine processions. In terms of epistemology, however, the relationship is inverted. The economic Trinity is the epistemological ground of the immanent Trinity. That is, it is through the economic Trinity (in particular, the divine missions) that people come to know anything at all about the immanent Trinity. Further, because God's working in the world corresponds to the eternal order of his being – Father → Son → Spirit – the soteriological experience of man follows the inverse of the order of God's being – Spirit → Son → Father. Through the grace of new birth by the Spirit, one's eyes are opened to see the glory of Jesus Christ and embrace him as Savior and Lord. Through faith in Christ, the believer experiences union with God and knows God the Father as "Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15, Gal 4:6).

Another problem with the reciprocal models of Del Colle and Habets is that it threatens to obscure the Christo-centric and Christo-exclusive soteriological impulse of the New Testament. According to the New Testament, the Son, as Savior of the world, comes forth from the Father as the supreme revelation of the being and identity of God the Father (John 1:1, 14:7-9; Heb 1:1-2; Col 1:15). The Spirit, sent forth from the Father and the Son exalts the person and work of Christ through the witness of disciples whose message is about the person and work of Jesus Christ (John 16:14-15; Acts 1:8). This does not diminish the person and work of the Spirit in the economy of salvation, but it does, quite clearly, demonstrate that the saving purposes of God center on the person and work of the Son. When the Spirit works in the world, he brings about faith in Christ and conformity to the image of Christ. According the reciprocal model of Del Colle and Habets, the filial relation of the Son to the Father in the immanent Trinity is logically posterior to (even if also logically prior to) the original procession of the Spirit from the Father. If this is the case, what prevents the

conclusion that, just as the eternal Son is constituted¹⁰⁵ as Son by the Spirit, so adopted sons in creation can become sons by the Spirit, even apart from explicit faith in Christ? The traditional immanent Trinitarian order of subsistence preserves the New Testament order that the Spirit's mission follows that of the Son and is impossible apart from it. In the traditional generation/procession model, the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son because, in the economy of salvation, the only pathway from one's experience of the Spirit to an adoptive filial relationship with the Father is through the Son (John 14:6). The reciprocal models potentially jeopardize that Christo-exclusive pathway. While neither Del Colle nor Habets presses their Spirit-Christology models for possible pathways into an inclusivist soteriology,¹⁰⁶ the discussion of Clark Pinnock and Amos Yong in the next section will reveal that any model of Trinitarian theology that dispenses with or modifies the traditional unidirectional understanding of the eternal processions (*filioque* included) opens the door for inclusivism, even pluralism, in Christian theology.

Spirit Christology for Global Theology

The emphases of the other two broad kinds of contemporary Trinitarian Spirit Christology – the humanity of Christ and the hypostatic prominence of the Holy Spirit in the immanent Trinity – also characterize the work of Clark Pinnock¹⁰⁷ and Amos Yong. For Yong and Pinnock, however, the *raison d'être* of Spirit Christology is found in its potential for developing a global theology in which the Spirit is understood to be active in

¹⁰⁵Habets prefers the word “personed” (*The Anointed Son*, 224.).

¹⁰⁶In the case of Habets, he explicitly rejects any inclusivist soteriological impulse that might characterize other Spirit-Christology proposals: “Union with Christ is the soteriological correlate to the christological notion of the hypostatic union. This makes the hypostatic union commensurate (distinct but inseparable) with the *unio mystica*. Only by means of the Incarnation does God join men and women to his Son in order for them to enjoy the benefits of salvation in Christ. The sole access to the Father is through Christ the Son, made possible by faith, which is the operation of the Spirit” (Habets, “*Reformed Theosis?*” 490).

¹⁰⁷Pinnock demands, “It is time for us to heed the East’s complaint that Western Christianity has confined the Spirit to the margins of the church and subordinated it to the mission of the Son” (Clark Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999], 109).

saving and revelatory ways through non-Christian faith traditions. While inclusivism has been gaining ground in Evangelical theology for some time, Todd Miles is right to point out that “pneumatological inclusivism” is “the most current and compelling of all inclusivist models.”¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, “Clark Pinnock and Amos Yong have provided the most developed investigations into the salvific role of the Holy Spirit outside the proclamation of the gospel.”¹⁰⁹ Pinnock and Yong are of particular interest for this study because their “pneumatological inclusivism” involves a well-developed Spirit-Christology paradigm.

Clark Pinnock

The late Clark Pinnock is perhaps best known for his advocacy for open theism, a view on the doctrine of divine providence that denies the foreknowledge of God.¹¹⁰ He is only slightly less famous (infamous?) for his work in the area of soteriology in which Pinnock defends an inclusivist understanding of salvation in a pluralistic world. Pinnock’s most sustained presentation of his inclusivism is found in the monograph, *A Wideness in God’s Mercy*.¹¹¹ Pinnock’s argument for inclusivism has always been pneumatological. He has seen in the global operations of the Holy Spirit the possibility of salvation through other faith traditions (and apart from any faith tradition), even while trying to maintain the ontological uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God

¹⁰⁸Todd Miles, *A God of Many Understandings? The Gospel and a Theology of Religions* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010), 211.

¹⁰⁹Miles, *A God of Many Understandings*, 212. Miles engages the work of Pinnock and Yong extensively. His focus is not on their development of Spirit Christology, *per se*, but his critique of their soteriological inclusivism engages many of the same issues discussed here.

¹¹⁰See Clark Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God’s Openness* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001).

¹¹¹Clark Pinnock, *A Wideness in God’s Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992). For a shorter presentation of his views, see Clark Pinnock, “An Inclusivist View,” in *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, ed. Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips, Counterpoints Series, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 93-123.

and second person of the Trinity. In *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, Pinnock's pneumatological approach to inclusivist soteriology stops far short of a full-fledged Spirit Christology. It is not until the publication of his later work, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, that the paradigm of Spirit Christology is mined for its potential as a boon to his pneumatological inclusivist soteriology.

In *Flame of Love*, Clark Pinnock attempts to approach all of the traditional loci of systematic theology from the perspective of the Holy Spirit.¹¹² Thus, Pinnock's Christology is *Spirit* Christology. Integral to properly understanding Pinnock's Spirit Christology is his view of the Spirit in creation. Pinnock emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in creation as the one brooding over the primordial earth, bringing it to fruition and completion according to the plan of God. He fears that the Spirit's role in creation has been neglected in much theology with devastating effects. Because the Creator Spirit has been ignored, the church has been able to confine the concepts of soteriology and communion with God to the realm of the church. If, however, the Spirit is the author of the creation of the whole world, then it is wrongheaded to limit his presence and activities to the sphere of the church. A recovery of the vision of Creator Spirit will help Christians to realize, with humility, that "the Spirit is present in all human experience and beyond it. There is no special sacred realm, no sacred-secular split."¹¹³ By acknowledging the role of the Spirit as Creator, one is able "to believe and hope that no one is beyond the reach of grace."¹¹⁴ Pinnock understands the Creator Spirit as the operative agent in biological evolution, guiding the process to the creation of man in the image of God. It is through the continual work of the Creator Spirit that rational, loving, social, creatures eventually

¹¹²Myk Habets identifies Pinnock's *Flame of Love* as the "first attempt at a systematic Third Article Theology," that is, a systematic theology in which every locus of dogma is approached from the perspective of the Holy Spirit ("Getting beyond the *Filioque* with Third Article Theology," 221).

¹¹³Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 62.

¹¹⁴Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 63.

emerged from the chaos of the primordial waters. By affirming the theory of evolution and the Spirit's superintendence over the process, Pinnock highlights his view that the creation of man as a communal agent who can fellowship with God and with others is the great goal of the Spirit in creation.¹¹⁵ Only against this backdrop of Spirit as Creator can one fully appreciate Pinnock's Spirit Christology.

Pinnock believes that "just as there has been a neglect of the Spirit as Creator, there has been a neglect concerning the work of the Spirit in relation to Christ."¹¹⁶ As a result, the Spirit has been subordinated to the Son such that the mission of the Spirit in the world has been conceived as an aspect of the mission of the Son. However, by a recovery of Spirit as Creator in conjunction with a model of Spirit Christology, Pinnock suggests that the mission of Christ is "an aspect of the Spirit's mission," rather than the other way around.¹¹⁷ In terms of biblical exegesis, Pinnock rehearses many of the observations made by Hawthorne concerning the scriptural emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the earthly life of Christ drawing heavily on the Lucan corpus. However, by framing his Spirit Christology in terms of the Spirit's mission of creating man in the image of God and by suggesting that the mission of the Son is an aspect of that mission, Pinnock is able to present the incarnation of the Son of God as the supreme exemplary event, marking the crowning achievement of the Spirit's work: "We begin by placing Christology in the context of the Spirit's global operations, of which incarnation is the culmination."¹¹⁸ This approach to Spirit Christology gives Pinnock the tools to articulate an inclusivist, nearly universalist, soteriology. While the incarnational mission of Christ on the earth is the culmination of the Spirit's mission, the earthly mission of Christ is not

¹¹⁵See Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 66-76 for Pinnock's view that the Spirit superintends biological evolution toward the goal of the creation of man in the image of God.

¹¹⁶Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 80.

¹¹⁷Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 80.

¹¹⁸Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 82.

the *only* aspect of the Spirit's mission. What the Spirit achieved supremely in the incarnation of Christ, he is achieving in a lesser way throughout all the world. In a later chapter in *Flame of Love*, "The Spirit and Universality," Pinnock argues that the Spirit is at work in all creation, including among the non-Christian religions, bringing about salvific communion with God, which is patterned after the ultimate communion between God and man that occurred in the person of Jesus Christ.¹¹⁹ Thus, for Pinnock, Jesus Christ is the archetype of the Spirit's work of salvation. Apart from the incarnation, therefore, there could be no salvation. However, explicit faith in Christ, while advantageous for those who have it, is by no means necessary for salvation in the economy of the Spirit. Thus, Pinnock's Spirit Christology is integral in the development of his inclusivist, almost universalist soteriology.

Amos Yong

Amos Yong is a Pentecostal theologian whose published works focus primarily on pneumatology and the potential that pentecostal pneumatology has for the development of a global theology. Yong develops his pneumatological global theology in a number of works,¹²⁰ but the most comprehensive treatment is in *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global theology*.¹²¹ For Yong, global theology is a Christian theology that is not only truly ecumenical (encompassing all Christian faith traditions) but also pluralistically inclusivistic.¹²² His proposal is

¹¹⁹Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 185-217.

¹²⁰Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003); Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions*, JPTSup 20 (Sheffield, Eng: Sheffield Academic, 2000).

¹²¹Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on all Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005). Yong admits that in his earlier work, *Beyond the Impasse*, he emphasized the mission of the Spirit in a way that improperly decentralized the mission of the Son. He views *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh* as a "return to a more centrist position" (111n81).

¹²²There is a distinction between inclusivism and pluralism, as traditionally understood. The term "pluralism" refers to the soteriological worldview that various religious traditions each contain elements of the truth and that one particular religious tradition cannot claim to offer the full and/or final revelation of ultimate truth. A fully pluralistic worldview denies the traditional Logos Christology of the

inclusivist in that the salvation of all people is grounded in the atoning work of Jesus Christ, but explicit faith in Christ is certainly not necessary for receiving Christ's saving benefits. Rather, a robust pneumatology must recognize the ubiquitous presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in the world's other religions so that the Spirit is saving persons through other faith traditions. The proposal goes beyond soteriological inclusivism, however, incorporating elements best described as pluralistic. That is, because of the Spirit's presence and activity in other faith traditions, the world's non-Christian religions receive revelation from God through the Spirit, perhaps, Yong suggests, even revelation that the Christian faith can learn only through dialogue with the other religions.

So, how does Spirit Christology in particular fit into Yong's broader pneumatological vision for global theology? For Yong, a global theology or "world pentecostal theology" must be both Christ-centered and Spirit-driven. This means that such a global theology must "feature both a Spirit christology and a Spirit soteriology."¹²³ For Yong, "Jesus is the revelation of God precisely as the man anointed by the Spirit of God to herald and usher in the reign of God."¹²⁴ He contends that the Spirit-anointed aspect of the messianic mission and identity of Jesus Christ ought to be paradigmatic for one's understanding of the person of Christ as presented in the gospels and the rest of the New Testament. That is, when one reads of the extraordinary words and works of Jesus, one should not read them as instances of the divine nature being manifest through the veil

ecumenical creeds because such a confession would inevitably lead to the conclusion that Jesus is utterly unique and that Christianity occupies a unique place among world religions. For an example of outright pluralism and the subsequent rejection of traditional Christology, see John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993). The term "inclusivism" refers to the soteriological worldview that Christianity is the superior religious tradition and the person of Christ the only Savior for anyone of any faith tradition, even though explicit personal faith in Christ is not necessary for the salvation of people from non-Christian faith traditions. By referring to Yong's proposal as pluralistically inclusivist, I am intentionally implying that he combines elements of both of these paradigms, thus blurring the traditional distinction.

¹²³Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 83.

¹²⁴Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 86.

of human flesh. Rather, one should read them as instances of the Spirit's anointing presence and power working in and through Jesus Christ to reveal the Triune God and to usher in his reign. To defend this view, Yong employs what he calls a "Lukan hermeneutical approach,"¹²⁵ in which Luke-Acts functions as "a lens through which to focus on these ideas in the rest of the New Testament."¹²⁶ Yong goes on to rehearse the key texts from Luke and Acts that demonstrate the fact that Jesus was indeed a man anointed by the Spirit and compelled by the Spirit to conduct his ministry and perform his miracles (Luke 3 – the baptism of Jesus; Luke 4 – the temptation in the wilderness under the direction of the Spirit, the return to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, the reading of the Isaiah scroll concerning the anointing of the Spirit; Acts 4:27 – the man anointed by God; Acts 10:38 – Jesus anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and power to heal and to do good). The Spirit Christology of Luke-Acts presents sufficient justification to view the rest of the New Testament statements about the words and works of Jesus as manifestations of the anointing of the Spirit upon him. Thus, Jesus is the quintessential, Spirit-anointed man and thereby reveals the goal of the saving work of God – to reproduce in the lives of others the kind of Spirit-anointed life lived by Jesus.

This opens the door for understanding what Yong means by "Spirit soteriology." Salvation is the experience of the Spirit by which one is progressively and increasingly conformed to the likeness of Christ. Yong writes,

[T]he Spirit's anointing of Jesus is promised to his followers (Luke 24:49). Hence the transition from Luke to Acts is the transition from Spirit christology to Spirit soteriology. For Luke, the gift of the Spirit to the followers of Jesus empowers them to overcome sin, temptation, and the devil; authorizes them to cast out demons and heal the sick; and enables them to do the works of the ministry on behalf of the poor, the captives, and the oppressed – all as Jesus did.¹²⁷

¹²⁵Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 27.

¹²⁶Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 83.

¹²⁷Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 88-89.

Thus, Jesus' experience of the Holy Spirit's presence and power is the paradigm for his followers' experience of the Spirit. By the Holy Spirit, Jesus did the works of God (Acts 10:38), and by the Holy Spirit, his followers will also. The net effect of salvation is the transformation of the individual so that he performs the works of God by the Spirit of God. The works of God can be summarized most succinctly, according to Jesus, as loving the Lord God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength and loving one's neighbor as oneself.

The link between Spirit Christology and what Yong refers to as Spirit soteriology lays the groundwork for Yong's pluralistically inclusivist global theology. Drawing on the Lukan account of the great commandments (Luke 10:25-29), Yong points out that the two greatest commandments, cited by the lawyer and affirmed by Jesus, are presented as the means of attaining eternal life (v. 25). Because the lawyer follows with a question designed to justify himself – "who is my neighbor" (v. 29) – Jesus tells the famous story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). Of course, it is the Samaritan who embodies the love of neighbor that Scripture requires. Yong spends considerable time surveying Samaritanism in order to argue that Samaritans had a deficient view of God, of Scripture, and of the Temple, among other things. To the Jews, they were rightly considered as apostate, even demonic. Following the logic of Luke 10:25-37, however, it is the adherent of the apostate and demonic religion who truly loves his neighbor and thereby is the heir of eternal life. Yong writes, "Clearly, there are parallels between contemporary Christian views of other religions and first-century Jewish views of the Samaritans: as apostates."¹²⁸ He goes on to say,

Jesus told the story of the good Samaritan in the context of the lawyer's question about how to inherit eternal life. From the preceding discussion it is possible that the Samaritan fulfilled both conditions in Jesus' initial response.... Insofar as the text then implies that the Samaritan satisfies the conditions for inheriting eternal life, is it

¹²⁸Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 243.

not also possible in today's religiously plural world that there are some in other faiths who might love God and their neighbor as did the Samaritan?¹²⁹

For Yong, Spirit Christology establishes the *exemplar extraordinaire*, the quintessential Spirit-anointed and empowered man. Spirit soteriology then establishes that the same Spirit at work in/upon/through Jesus is given to his followers so that the Spirit can convert them to spirit-anointed and empowered people. Just as the Spirit reproduces the life of Christ in his followers, so the Spirit can reproduce the life of Christ, the foundation of which is love of God and neighbor, in the lives of the "religious other," those who consciously adhere to a religious tradition that is seen as apostate according to Christian theological categories.

Yong identifies a number of desiderata behind his appeal to Spirit Christology. First, like others, he sees it as a way to strengthen Christian understanding and articulation of the full humanity of Jesus alongside his full ontological deity. After affirming the Nicene declaration of Jesus unity with the Father and the Chalcedonian formula of the two natures in one person, Yong avers, "Still, declaring Jesus unequivocally divine led to a diminished emphasis on his humanity in the later tradition, especially in the popular consciousness."¹³⁰ In response to this diminished emphasis, Spirit Christology "reengages the complex question Jesus posed through the entirety of the gospel witness, 'Who do you say that I am?'" and results in a new appreciation for his humanity."¹³¹ Second, affirming Spirit Christology allows Christian thinkers to participate constructively in "the renaissance of pneumatology in contemporary theology even as it contributes to the quest for a robustly Trinitarian theology."¹³² Throughout the volume, Yong expresses his concern for the Western tendency to subordinate the mission

¹²⁹Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 243.

¹³⁰Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 110.

¹³¹Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 110.

¹³²Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 111.

of the Spirit to the mission of the Son and fears that the traditional paradigm's neglect of Spirit Christology has led to this subordination. For Yong, the contentious *filioque* clause is a culprit in pneumatological neglect, but he has little time for lengthy discussions of the immanent Trinity. Rather, Yong is content to plead that the mission of the Spirit be taken out from under the umbrella of the mission of the Son in order for pneumatological soteriology to be fully realized. James Merrick rightly observes that Yong's project consists of "freeing pneumatology from the influence of Christology"¹³³ so that the Spirit replaces Christ as "the primary theological symbol for the presence and activity of God in the world."¹³⁴ Spirit Christology's focus on Jesus' experience of the Spirit of God assists in this project because it demonstrates, for Yong, that the Son's work is portrayed as contingent on the Spirit, no merely the other way around. Another desideratum for Yong's proposal is the appeal of Spirit Christology for drawing the connection between Christ's example and the lives of his followers. However, as the overall thesis of the book (and of Yong's life's work in academia) demonstrates, Yong's greatest motivating factor for the affirmation of Spirit Christology is the indispensable place it occupies in the logical chain that connects the life of Jesus to a pluralistically inclusivistic global theology.

Conclusion from Pinnock and Yong

It is not the purpose of this section to argue the merits of the traditional soteriological conviction that explicit faith in Jesus Christ is necessary to receive the saving benefits that come only from the finished work of Jesus Christ, which culminated in his cross and resurrection. The merits of such a Christo-centric and Christo-exclusive

¹³³James R. A. Merrick, "The Spirit of Truth as Agent in False Religions? A Critique of Amos Yong's Pneumatological Theology of Religions with Reference to Current Trends," *TrinJ* 29 (2008): 112.

¹³⁴Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 164, cited in James R. A. Merrick, "The Spirit of Truth in False Religions?" 112.

soteriological paradigm are being assumed here. With the Spirit-Christology models of De Colle and Habets in which the traditional *taxis* of the Trinitarian order of being is modified, it was argued that such modification opens the door for the loss of the Church's conviction that there is no salvation apart from Christ and explicit faith in Christ, even if Del Colle does not take it that direction and Habets explicitly rejects the notion of inclusivism. The proposals of Pinnock and Yong, however, confirm the suspicion that a reconceived emphasis on the Spirit in immanent Trinitarian relations can lead to a rejection of traditional Christian soteriology. For Pinnock and Yong, the driving concern to legitimize other faith traditions outside of Christianity has led, not to the utter rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity and classical Christology (as full-blown pluralism would require), but to significant modifications of traditional Trinitarian formulae.

Promise and Peril: The Advantages and Dangers of Spirit Christology

Each thinker surveyed in this chapter believes that the person and work of the Holy Spirit is paradigmatic for a proper understanding of traditional Christological categories. They are convinced that a renewed emphasis on the person and work of the Spirit (pneumatology) in the articulation of the person and work of the Son (Christology) provides a refreshing and much-needed enrichment to Christian theology. That is, each of these thinkers is convinced that Spirit Christology of one form or another offers a number of significant theological advantages that makes the pursuit of the paradigm indispensable. The author of this dissertation, in large part, agrees with this conviction. The advantages of a robust Spirit Christology make the difficult task of the faithful articulation of it worth the effort.

In this dissertation, however, it is being argued that the supposed advantages of Spirit Christology are often attended by dangerous theological aberrations when considered in light of the Nicene and Chalcedonian heritage of Christian theological discourse. These dangers are owing, in large part, to the fact that the classical tradition is

viewed as the culprit for the neglect of pneumatology and the of the humanity of Christ. The dangers would be avoided if the perceived neglect of pneumatology and the humanity of Christ were seen as areas in need of redoubled emphasis and fresh articulation within the bounds and by the use of the conceptual tools of the classical tradition. The theological dangers associated with contemporary Spirit Christology can extend also into the area of soteriology, as the traditional Christo-centric and Christo-exclusive impulses of an Evangelical understanding of the doctrine of salvation are sometimes abandoned in favor of soteriological inclusivism with hints of outright religious pluralism, all in the name of the Spirit Christology.

Having surveyed seven key proponents of Trinitarian Spirit Christology and having examined the offerings of four proponents of revisionist Spirit Christology (chap. 2), the groundwork has been laid to identify the advantages and dangers of Spirit Christology. The identification of these advantages and dangers is critical to the thesis of this dissertation because it sets the stage for the two final chapters. The next chapter will consist of an analysis of the Spirit Christology of John Owen as a model that achieves all of the advantages of Spirit Christology while avoiding its dangers, and the final chapter will consist of a positive appropriation of Owen's work for a contemporary Spirit Christology that holds out the promise of pneumatological enrichment for Evangelical Christology.

Advantages

The promise of Spirit Christology is located in four distinct advantages that the paradigmatic prominence of the Holy Spirit offers to Christological formulation.

Emphasis on the humanity of Christ. The first important theological advantage of Trinitarian Spirit Christology is that this approach does indeed highlight the genuineness of Christ's humanity and his solidarity with those he came to save. It is the conviction of this author that the Chalcedonian formula and the dyothelitism it entails

provides the only metaphysical framework within which the affirmations of Christ's full deity and full humanity can be coherently maintained. Further, to be a proponent of classical Christology is to confess and defend the Scriptural and traditional teaching of the church that the eternal Son was made like his brethren in all things; the Word became flesh. That is, classical Christology is an affirmation of the humanity of Christ. While many proponents of Spirit Christology problematically offer their proposals as a corrective to the tradition, demanding that the old metaphysical models must be revised, it is nevertheless true that a sustained appeal to the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the earthly life and ministry of Jesus does offer a profound enrichment to the classical confession that the Son possesses a full human nature and by that nature lived a fully human life.¹³⁵ If all the miraculous features of the earthly life of Jesus are ascribed immediately and without qualification to Jesus' personal exercise of the power of the divine nature through his human nature, it is quite difficult to conceive of his experience as being genuinely human. However, a sustained appeal to the Holy Spirit as the terminating subject of the divine power by which Jesus performed supernatural feats, so that Jesus' human experience of the presence and power of God was specifically an experience of the Holy Spirit, results in a paradigm in which Jesus' humanity is most richly appreciated.¹³⁶ The Holy Spirit is given by Christ to his followers, and his followers are imbued with the Holy Spirit for the completion of their mission in service

¹³⁵In the articulation of this advantage, I am carefully avoiding any use of the label of Docetism (contra Hawthorne) and painstakingly framing this advantage as being most helpful as a means of understanding the humanity of Christ in fresh ways within the classical tradition, rather than as a corrective to the tradition.

¹³⁶By referring to the Holy Spirit as the terminating subject of the divine operations in/toward/through the human nature of the Son, I am intentionally appealing to the classical tradition of appropriations by which divine operations may be ascribed to one divine person specifically while maintaining that all of the works of God *ad extra* are inseparable. Therefore, as will be made more clear in later chapters, the paradigm I will promote and defend in this dissertation does not deny that the Son is the acting subject of his own divine nature. Rather, it affirms that, in the incarnate state, the Son acts as subject of the divine nature in the way that he has always acted – from the Father and by the Spirit. Thus, as the Son lives in and through his human nature, his experience of God is an experience of the Holy Spirit as the terminating subject of divine operations but not as the exclusive subject of divine operations.

to Christ, just as Jesus Christ, according to his human nature, was imbued with the Holy Spirit for the completion of his mission in service to the Father. Therefore, the danger of conceiving of Jesus' human existence as some kind of a divine-human admixture is avoided, and Jesus' solidarity with the rest of humanity is helpfully emphasized. Not only does a robust portrait of Jesus' humanity in terms of his experience of the Spirit enhance the Christian theme of following the example of Jesus, but it solidifies the Christian conviction that the redeemer of mankind had to become like mankind in terms of flesh and blood and all things so that he might be the merciful and faithful high priest who comes to the aid of those who are tempted since he himself was tempted (Heb 2:14-18). While the proposals of Hawthorne and Issler have profound problems with respect to the Nicene and Chalcedonian heritage of the church, and while the Spirit-Christology proposal of Bruce Ware has not yet been presented in light of the potential pitfalls of his and similar proposals, they are right to recognize that the humanity of Christ is better understood if viewed in light of his experience of the Holy Spirit during his earthly life and ministry. It is not the intention of this dissertation to accuse the classical tradition of an implicit Docetism or anything of the sort. However, it is most certainly the case that Jesus' experience of the Holy Spirit in/on/through his human nature has been underdeveloped in the tradition, especially in systematic, academic monographs and articles in Christology. And this lack of development represents a lacuna in traditional affirmations of the humanity of Christ.

The imitation of Christ. A second theological advantage of Spirit Christology follows naturally from the first. Spirit Christology can serve to enhance Christian discipleship by making sense of the New Testament injunction to follow the example set by Christ (John 13:15; Phil 2:5; 1 Pet 2:21; 1 John 2:4-6). Of course, many have appealed to this motif as the *sumum bonum* of the incarnation and atonement, neglecting the far more prominent biblical theme of atonement by penal substitution. Nevertheless, danger

looms on the other side of this fence. If Jesus is God the Son incarnate, how can Christians follow his example at all? Once again, Spirit Christology as an enriching paradigm within the classical tradition is helpful here. If Jesus is empowered by the Holy Spirit to live his human life, then believers can follow in his example insofar as they also have the Spirit. Again, if care is taken to frame the presentation of Spirit Christology carefully as an enrichment to the Trinitarian and Christological heritage of the church, then it can be acknowledged that the proposals of Hawthorne, Issler, and Ware specifically and other proponents of Spirit Christology in general have raised a very important and beneficial feature of the biblical text to a place of greater emphasis and prominence in Christian theology and devotion.¹³⁷

Emphasis on the Holy Spirit. The third great advantage of Trinitarian Spirit Christology is that it corrects a perceived neglect of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in theology, especially in Western traditions. Many have claimed that the neglect of the Holy Spirit in Western theology has Jürgen Moltmann has observed that, for a long time, the Holy Spirit was the “Cinderella of Western theology.”¹³⁸ resulted from a Trinitarian theology and Christology in which the person and work of the Holy Spirit are subordinated to the person and work of the Son. I have indicated already that I believe this narrative has gone too far, in effect accusing the classical tradition of being inherently incapable of a robust pneumatology. Nevertheless, while many have gone too

¹³⁷It should be noted here that the very concept of following the example of Jesus can be quite complicated. Careful distinctions must be made. Boundaries must be identified within which the imitation of Christ is right and outside of which the imitation of Christ would be blasphemous. While Jesus was and is fully human, he also is eternally God the Son. Thus, he is utterly unique in the most profound sense. Therefore, Christians must not ever attempt to speak or act in ways that mimic Jesus’ affirmations of his own divine identity. Further, the office of Christ as Mediator is unique to the person of the Son. So, while Christians are to imitate the sufferings of Christ with respect to how he responded to his revilers and persecutors, they are not to imagine that the purpose of their suffering is the same as the purpose of his. Rather, just as the Spirit empowered the Son in and through his human nature to complete the mission on which the Father had sent him, so the Spirit empowers Christians to complete the mission on which the Father and Son send them (see John 20:21-22).

¹³⁸Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 1.

far in their attempts to ascribe a prominent place to the Holy Spirit in Christology and Trinitarian theology (see dangers below), there is certainly room for development of the pneumatological dimensions of Christology in classical traditions. Christians should not regret the church's early and utter rejection of the heresy of adoptionism, but they should be willing to acknowledge that the right and necessary focus on the centrality of the person and work of Christ in the ecumenical creeds has, in much of the tradition, resulted in a considerably less developed theological emphasis on the person and work of the Holy Spirit that is still evident, even if being remedied, today. As a theological proposal that highlights the prominence of the person and work of the Spirit in the very life and mission of the Son, Spirit Christology strikes at the very foundation of the perception of Western pneumatological neglect. In this way, Spirit Christology has opened the door for explorations of other loci of systematic theology from a pneumatological perspective.

The exegetical advantage. A fourth theological advantage of Spirit Christology is exegetical. There are a number of important gospel passages, which, if understood in terms of Trinitarian Spirit Christology, are far more meaningful and shed tremendous light on the identity and mission of God the Son. If those same passages are read without the motif of Spirit Christology, the tendency can be to overlook the pneumatological emphasis as an anomaly or to assign this feature of the gospel narratives a tangential place in Christological formulation. For example, in Luke's gospel, the string of pneumatologically rich passages, which dominate the text from 3:16 through 4:21, is integral to Luke's overall presentation of Jesus as the Spirit-anointed Messiah who is baptized with the Spirit and then baptizes with the Spirit, who bears the Spirit and then bestows the Spirit. Once a kind of Trinitarian Spirit Christology is embraced as faithful to the biblical witness, such passages take on new life.

Dangers

While the theological advantages of Trinitarian Spirit Christology hold out the promise of considerable pneumatological enrichment to Evangelical Christology, there are several attendant theological dangers lurking here as well. Unfortunately, these dangers are not mere hypothetical possibilities but represent positions actually taken by key proponents of Trinitarian Spirit Christology. It is undoubtedly these dangers of the paradigm, embodied by proponents, that have led many to be skeptical of Spirit Christology. Of the dangers discussed in this section, some are more serious than others, but each one, if embraced, represents a departure from the classical Trinitarian and Christological heritage of the church as taught in Scripture. If Trinitarian Spirit Christology does not explicitly avoid these perils, the resulting paradigm will impoverish rather than enrich traditional Evangelical Christology and spirituality, eliminating the advantages of the paradigm.

Diminished emphasis on the deity of Christ. First, the danger of diminished emphasis on the deity of Christ looms large. While all of the proponents of Trinitarian Spirit Christology discussed in this chapter would be quick to reject the adoptionistic Christology of James Dunn, Geoffrey Lampe, Paul Newman, and Roger Haight, all of whom deny the ontological deity of Jesus, there may be a more subtle danger, one to which even the Trinitarian models can succumb. Advocates of Spirit Christology are often scathing in their denunciation of the alleged neglect of the humanity of Christ evident in much classical Christology. In their opinion, the pendulum of Christological emphasis has swung too far in the direction of Christ's deity to the detriment of a full appreciation of his humanity. The result, it is argued, is an unintended neglect of Christ's humanity resulting from a one-sided emphasis on his deity. Even if this critique has merit, the proper corrective is to swing the pendulum back to the center so that neither emphasis, deity nor humanity, diminishes the proper emphasis upon the other. Some Trinitarian Spirit-Christology proposals, however, in their attempt to correct the under-

emphasis on the humanity of Christ evident in some Christological models have become guilty of allowing the pendulum between Christ's deity and humanity to swing too far in the other direction. The result is an unintended neglect of the ontological deity of Christ resulting from a one-sided emphasis on his humanity, especially his anointing by the Holy Spirit.

Not all proponents of Trinitarian Spirit Christology succumb to this critique. In *The Man Christ Jesus*, Bruce Ware recognizes the potential for neglecting the deity of Christ to emphasize his humanity:

Please understand that this is not a complete Christology. I do not in any manner intend to "slight" the importance of the deity of Christ for an understanding of who Jesus was and is, even though his deity is not our focus here.... My sense, though, is that evangelicals understand better Christ's deity than they do his humanity, and so my focus here will be on the latter.¹³⁹

This is not merely lip service for Ware, as he gives sustained and emphatic attention to the deity of Christ in his earlier work, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*.¹⁴⁰ The case could be made that both Ralph Del Colle and Myk Habets propose models of Spirit Christology that do not neglect the deity of Christ because their proposals give such profound attention to the eternal hypostatic identity of God the Son in the immanent Trinity.¹⁴¹ For others, however, a diminished emphasis on the deity of Christ is real and evident.

In *The Presence and the Power*, Hawthorne decries the Docetism of many traditional approaches. However, in his own work, the full deity of Jesus Christ is presented almost as more of a concession than a confession. For Hawthorne, none of the

¹³⁹Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, 12-13.

¹⁴⁰Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*. Ware devotes an entire chapter to defending a high Christology in which he presents numerous exegetical and theological arguments of the full deity of the Son: Ware, "Beholding the Wonder of the Son," 69-102.

¹⁴¹On the other hand, in their treatments of the earthly life and ministry of Christ as portrayed in the canonical gospels, the emphasis is almost entirely on the humanity of Christ as understood through the lens of his conception and anointing by the Spirit. In this way, they may succumb to this critique in that they fail to see any of the great works of Christ during his earthly life and ministry as intended to bear profound witness to his eternal identity as God the Son. For a sustained treatment of how one can interpret some of Jesus' miracles as giving testimony to his deity while still confessing that the divine power at work in such instances terminates on the Spirit, see chap. 5 of this dissertation.

miraculous and supernatural works of Jesus explicitly identify him as God the Son. Rather, all of Jesus' miraculous works are to be attributed to the Spirit of God and, as such, give testimony to the humanity of Jesus. For Hawthorne, the confession of Christ's full ontological deity is grounded in the *words* of Jesus and the apostles but not at all in the *works* of Jesus. This position, however, seems to diminish the biblical witness to Christ's deity. After the miraculous catch of fish, why did Peter bow and cry out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8)? Was it simply because Peter recognized in the miracle that he was in the presence of a great man? Surely not! After Jesus calms the sea, the disciples, astonished, asked, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" (Mark 4:41). What is the expected answer to this question? Is the reader's heart intended to meditate on the full humanity of Jesus without having any thought of his identity as fully God? Surely not!¹⁴²

Klaus Issler also seems to succumb to this danger in his treatment of Jesus' experience of the power of the Father and the Spirit. Issler acknowledges that Jesus, at times, acts out of his own power rather than the power of the Spirit.¹⁴³ However, most of Jesus' deeds, including his miracles, were performed by the power of the Spirit working through him. It is because of Jesus' experience of the Spirit that Christians are able to imitate Christ and pursue conformity to his image by the power of the Spirit. Lacking from Issler's treatment, however, is an emphasis on the fact that Christians bow the knee to Christ, not merely because he sets the example of godliness that we should follow, but also because he is, at the same time, utterly inimitable in ways that must be kept at the forefront of Christian reflection on the person and work of Christ. He is the incarnate Son

¹⁴²For an extended treatment of the miracle of calming the sea as well as other miracles that are intended to attest to Jesus' deity, see chap. 5 of this dissertation.

¹⁴³This language is highly problematic, but it is the way Issler prefers to speak. To speak of the power of the Son and the power of the Spirit as separate powers, as Issler does, creates profound problems for a coherent affirmation of divine unity, as was observed in the critique of Issler above. A better way to communicate this concept would be to say that, at times, the supernatural power on display in the works of Jesus terminate on the Son *qua* Son while at other times, the power on display terminates on the Spirit.

of God, so as Christians we confess him to be God. He is exalted Son, so as Christians we bow before his throne. As God the Son incarnate, he has a unique mission as Mediator, a mission we do not emulate because we do not occupy his office nor identify with his divine identity. While Christians are called to imitate the character of Christ by which he accomplished his mission (1 Pet 2:21-23) and the obedience of Christ with which he carried it out, there are aspects of the work of Christ that we must not attempt to emulate on pain of blasphemy because of his utter uniqueness as divine Son. For all of his emphasis on following the example of Jesus by the power of the Spirit, Issler's proposal does little to remind his readers of the profound uniqueness of the life of Jesus.

Clark Pinnock and Amos Yong also give pitifully little attention to the deity of Jesus Christ or the implications of that confession. This is especially troubling in the work of Pinnock because his *Flame of Love* purports to be a treatment of the whole spectrum of systematic theology through the lens of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁴ Pinnock's entire Christology chapter, however, does nothing to develop a robust understanding of the deity of Christ. For these proponents of Trinitarian Spirit Christology, the pendulum has swung too far. The danger, in Spirit-Christology paradigms of a diminished emphasis on the deity of Christ, therefore, looms large in Spirit Christology.

Incoherence of divine unity. A second danger attending proposals of Spirit Christology is the potential rejection of the conceptual framework that has enabled Christians to affirm the unity of the Godhead. I am referring here to the conviction that the three persons of the Godhead are eternally subsistent hypostases of identically the same nature/essence (*homoousios*). Therefore, any work of God outside of himself (*ad extra*), because it flows from the one divine nature as its principle, is a work of the entire Godhead. This is the historic doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity. The

¹⁴⁴Pinnock writes, in the introduction, "This is a systematic theology of the Spirit that examines the Christian vision from the vantage point of the Spirit" (*Flame of Love*, 18).

inherent danger of Spirit Christology is that the question of whether it is the Spirit or the Son who is the divine subject of the supernatural power on display in and through the life of Christ might obscure the fact that the three persons share in the same divine nature, so that the power on display is always the one undivided power of all three divine persons. A holistic model of Trinitarian Spirit Christology must be consistent with the doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity if a coherent understanding of divine unity is to be maintained. Of course, the New Testament ascribes works of God to particular divine persons, and so must theologians who purport to represent God well according to his own revelation of himself. The theological ascription of works to any particular divine person, however, must be done carefully, in a way that is consistent with the overwhelmingly clear biblical attestation that God is one. Apart from the traditional affirmation of divine unity and inseparable operations, it is difficult to avoid an implicit tri-theism. Therefore, for all their emphasis on Jesus' experience of the Spirit in/on/through his human nature, Spirit-Christology proposals are amiss if attention is not given to the fact that the Son himself as well as the Father must be identified as acting subjects of the undivided divine nature, even if the Holy Spirit is understood as the *terminating* subject of the divine acts in/on/through the human nature of the Son.¹⁴⁵

Ralph Del Colle, more than any other author considered in this chapter, as an adherent of neo-scholastic Catholic thought, attempts to frame his Spirit Christology in a manner that is consistent with the historic doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity. Myk Habets, too, for all of his concern to construct Spirit Christology in broad conversation with the Christian tradition, both East and West, is careful not to transgress the boundaries set by the concept of the inseparable operations of the one God *ad extra*. However, in the case of Gerald Hawthorne and Klaus Issler, it has been clearly

¹⁴⁵A much fuller treatment of inseparable operations of the Trinity *ad extra* and the classical affirmation of the *extra Calvinisticum* with respect to a coherent understanding of classical Trinitarian theology and Christology will come in chapters 4 and 5.

demonstrated that their proposals are not compatible with the historic affirmation of inseparable operations.

Any doctrinal paradigm emphasizing distinctions between the three persons that fails to account for the church's historic conceptual mechanism for affirming divine unity, namely the doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity, is doomed to misrepresent the Triune God who reveals himself to be one. Because of Spirit Christology's inherent tendency to emphasize the person and work of the Spirit as a distinct divine person, the danger of neglecting or contradicting the doctrine of inseparable operations is a real one. For Spirit Christology to be an enrichment of traditional Evangelical Christology and Trinitarian reflection, the doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity must be upheld. Otherwise, affirmations of divine unity are incoherent.

Incoherence of hypostatic union. A third danger of articulating a Trinitarian Spirit Christology pertains to the constitution of Jesus Christ as one person with two natures. All the proponents of Trinitarian Spirit Christology surveyed in this chapter heartily affirm the Chalcedonian Definition. The coherence of each proposal with the Definition, however, is another matter. The most common problem is a failure to observe Chalcedon's insistence that the two natures, though conjoined in one person, are not confused.¹⁴⁶ That is, each nature retains its own properties because an exchange of properties between the natures directly would result in a person who is neither fully God nor fully man. Rather, in the classical tradition, the communication of properties (*communication idiomatum*) is always via the person of the union. Thus, the properties of each nature may be rightly predicated of the person of the Son who has assumed a human nature in personal union with the divine. But the properties of one nature are not to be

¹⁴⁶This insistence is demanded by biblical fidelity.

predicated of the other nature directly.

It has been shown that Gerald Hawthorne explicitly affirms a functional version of kenotic Christology. The entire kenotic project, however, is unnecessary in light of the Chalcedonian insistence on the distinction of natures. The entire point of limiting the exercise of divine attributes is to preserve the fullness of Christ's humanity and the genuineness of his human experience. For Hawthorne, the Spirit supplies the supernatural power that Jesus must cease to access during his earthly state of humiliation. This represents a failure to maintain the proper distinction between the two natures of the one person of God the Son incarnate. This same failure to distinguish the natures in the person of Christ was seen in the proposal of Klaus Issler and his suggestion that the omniscience of Jesus had to be blocked by the Holy Spirit, who functions as a "divine firewall" for Jesus' consciousness. Again, observing a proper distinction between the two natures in the person of Christ and embracing the church's extension of that paradigm to insist on two minds/wills in Christ (dyothelitism, per Constantinople III, A.D. 681) completely eliminates the need to postulate the Holy Spirit as a firewall. More importantly, both Hawthorne and Issler jeopardize the conceptual coherence of both the full humanity and the full deity of Jesus by failing adequately to distinguish between the two natures in the hypostatic union.

Decentralizing Jesus. A fourth danger attending Trinitarian Spirit Christology is the possibility of overcorrecting the perceived neglect of pneumatology to the neglect of a healthy and robust emphasis on the person of Christ. Trinitarian Spirit Christology, on many occasions, has been too willing to forfeit the church's correct Christocentric soteriological impulse in an attempt to invite the Cinderella Spirit to the theological ball. It has already been observed that the traditional Trinitarian *taxis* of eternal relations of origin, including the much-disputed *filioque*, does not represent a desire to consign the Spirit to a lesser role in the Trinity. Nor is it simply vain speculation occurring in a

philosophical and theological vacuum. Rather, the traditionally conceived *taxis* of Trinitarian relations is the result of careful reflection on the economy of salvation.

Failing to understand, or at least embrace, the rootedness of the traditional model of eternal generation/procession, some major proponents of Trinitarian Spirit Christology have suggested that the traditional *taxis* is the culprit for the perceived theological neglect of the Spirit in Christian theology, especially Western traditions. The result is a reconceived notion of Trinitarian relations that eliminates the *taxis* of eternal divine subsistence (e.g. Del Colle and Habets). This is a serious move that should not be taken lightly, not only because of the implications for one's understanding of the revelation of the Triune God but also because it is the traditional *taxis* of immanent Trinitarian relations that grounds the Christocentric and Christo-exclusive soteriological paradigm of the New Testament. There is *a priority* given to Christ in the Trinitarian work of salvation that is not given to the other persons, not because his divine identity is more dignified, but because he is the divine person who is the supreme revelation (Word) of the Triune God and the divine person at the center of God's saving purposes as the incarnate, crucified, and risen Savior. Surely Fred Sanders is right that "there is no such thing in Christian life and thought as being too Christ-centered." It is possible to be "Father-forgetful and Spirit-ignoring."¹⁴⁷ However, as Sanders observes, to be properly mindful of the Father and the Spirit is to emphasize the Son. The fact that some theologians have exploited a modified account of immanent Trinitarian relations, specifically the rejection or reversal of the *filioque*, to propose an inclusivist soteriological model (e.g., Pinnock and Yong) illustrates the reality of this danger. Any emphasis on the person and work of the Spirit that results in the eclipse of the glory and honor of the Son has failed both the Spirit and the Son and dishonored the Father (John

¹⁴⁷Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 171.

5:23). Just as it is unwise to construct a model of Christology without due reference to the Holy Spirit – in this Spirit Christology is correct – so it is unwise to construct a pneumatological soteriology without due reference to the centrality of Christ.

Overemphasized ecumenical potential. A fifth inherent danger of Spirit Christology is the tendency to overemphasize the potential for ecumenical dialogue. Advancing ecumenical dialogue in pursuit of greater degrees of global ecumenical unity is one of the major desiderata for the Spirit-Christology proposals of Ralph Del Colle and Myk Habets. In fact, their works give the impression that the emphasis on correcting the neglect of the Holy Spirit in Christian theology really serves the greater end of ecumenism. Jesus, in his high priestly prayer, did indeed pray that his disciples would “all be one” (John 17:21). Thus, a certain ecumenical impulse among Christians is right and good. However, there is a tendency in much ecumenical dialogue to treat ecumenical unity as the *criterion* for truth rather than the *consequence* of it. Indeed, Habets even states that “the ecumenical ideal which... Spirit Christology is poised to facilitate”¹⁴⁸ is a “criterion for Christology.”¹⁴⁹ Setting ecumenical potential as a criterion for theological formulation, however, reverses the biblical paradigm of truth and unity. In his high priestly prayer, Jesus prayed that his people would be sanctified in the truth, which is God’s word (John 17:17). It is this people, sanctified in the truth of divine revelation, whom Jesus prays would be one (v. 21). That is, in Jesus’ high priestly prayer, unity is the consequence of truth, not the criterion for it (see also 1 John 1:7). If proponents of Spirit Christology are embracing the model because of its ecumenical potential and arguing from that starting point to its plausibility as a theological paradigm, then errors

¹⁴⁸Habets, *Anointed Son*, 9.

¹⁴⁹Habets, *Anointed Son*, 224.

are sure to abound. Ecumenism may be the welcome consequence of a healthy Spirit Christology, but it should not be motivation for it.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the critical works of seven key proponents of Trinitarian Spirit Christology have been considered. These seven thinkers represent three kinds of Trinitarian Spirit Christology: (1) emphasis on the humanity of Christ (Gerald Hawthorne, Klaus Issler, and Bruce Ware); (2) emphasis on the Spirit in the immanent Trinity and ecumenism (Ralph Del Colle and Myk Habets); and (3) emphasis on global theology (Clark Pinnock and Amos Yong). These thinkers embrace Spirit Christology as a paradigm that offers valuable enrichment to traditional Christian theology, a kind of enrichment that can only be achieved by the paradigmatic prominence of pneumatology in Christological formulation.

The chapter ended with a brief summary of the various advantages and dangers of Trinitarian Spirit Christology. It is the contention of this dissertation that none of the thinkers surveyed have yet articulated Spirit Christology in a way that explicitly and coherently communicates all of the advantages of Spirit Christology while explicitly and coherently avoiding all of the dangers at the same time. The next chapter will be devoted to the Spirit Christology of the Reformed divine, John Owen, as a proponent of a kind of Spirit Christology that effectively achieves all of the advantages of Spirit Christology while avoiding the dangers of the same. The final chapter of this dissertation, then, will be a constructive appropriation of John Owen's model for contemporary theology by answering questions and making application that reach beyond the scope of Owen's work on the subject.

CHAPTER 4
THE SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY OF JOHN OWEN

Introduction

In one of his most famous works, *IINEYMATOΛOΓIA, or A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*,¹ the seventeenth-century Reformed theologian, John Owen, presents the working of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus Christ in terms that are peculiar to the catholic/Reformed tradition of which he was proudly a part. Owen’s view has been labeled as a kind of “Spirit Christology,” and given the definition of Spirit Christology offered in chapter 1 of this dissertation, the moniker is fitting.²

In spite of its peculiarity to the tradition, Owen’s presentation of the working of the Spirit in/upon/through the Son is constrained by and even driven by three foundational theological concerns that he shares with virtually all of the major Reformed divines of the seventeenth century. First, in articulating his view of the working of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus Christ, Owen demonstrates a firm commitment to a pro-Nicene understanding of Trinitarian action in which the external (*ad extra*) operations of the one Triune God are inseparable because the works of God outside himself are always performed via the one divine essence shared equally by each Trinitarian person. However, an *ad extra* divine work can be legitimately ascribed to one person of the Trinity in distinction from the other two on the basis of the internal Trinitarian (*ad intra*) order of subsistence of each of the divine persons – the Father eternally generates or

¹John Owen, *IINEYMATOΛOΓIA, or A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*, vol. 3, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Gould (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009).

²Oliver Crisp refers to the presentation as “Owenite Spirit Christology.” See Oliver Crisp, “John Owen on Spirit Christology,” *JRT* 5 (2011): 7. This article is reproduced as a chapter in a later publication (Oliver Crisp, *Revisioning Christology* [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011], 91-110).

begets the Son, and the Father and the Son eternally spirate the Spirit within the essence of the one triune God.³ Second, Owen is fully committed to the catholic Christological categories of the Chalcedonian Definition, namely the conviction that the eternally begotten divine Word became incarnate without forfeiting his deity. The Incarnate Son of God, therefore, per Chalcedon, is to be understood as a union of two natures (divine and human) in one person. Furthermore, the two natures each maintain their respective properties without confusion, the communication of properties occurring only via the person of the union.⁴ Third, Owen demonstrates a consistent commitment to a Reformed covenantal reading of the canon of Scripture in which the progression of redemptive history unfolds according to a pre-Fall probationary covenant between God and Adam (Owen refers to this as the “old creation” in *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*) and a post-Fall covenant of grace (Owen refers to this as the “new creation” in *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*), which progresses through various administrations and culminates in the New Covenant in Christ.

In spite of his commitment to these foundational theological principles of the catholic/Reformed tradition, Owen’s Spirit Christology is peculiar to the tradition because of his application of these principles to the question of the role of the Holy Spirit toward the humanity of Christ. Indeed, some have argued that Owen’s Spirit Christology

³This conviction is commonly expressed by the Latin axiom, *opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*, meaning, “The external works of the Trinity are indivisible.” For a brief theological definition of this axiom as it was affirmed and understood in the theological context of Owen’s life, see Richard Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1995), 213.

⁴I have already demonstrated that this understanding of the hypostatic union is the classical model. In Owen’s day, the debate between Reformed and Lutheran traditions over the nature of the presence of Christ in communion had direct bearing on the church’s understanding of the hypostatic union. The Lutherans insisted on the bodily presence of Christ in, with, and under the elements of bread and wine. The Reformed believed that this insistence violated the distinction between the divine and human natures by insisting that the distinctly divine property of omnipresence was being ascribed to the physical body of Jesus. This is why the Reformed insisted on a “spiritual presence” as opposed to the Lutheran insistence on a bodily presence. Thus, some might be tempted to see Owen’s understanding of the communication of properties in the hypostatic union as distinctively Reformed. However, the Reformed understanding was not distinctive at all. It was, rather, a consistent affirmation of the classical Chalcedonian framework of one person with two natures, conjoined but not confused.

represents a significant (even if unintended) departure from the catholic/Reformed tradition in various ways.

In this chapter, I will argue that John Owen's Spirit Christology, though peculiar in its particulars, is actually a significant pneumatological enrichment of the catholic/Reformed tradition in all three areas identified above, rather than a departure from the tradition, as some have maintained. Furthermore, because of his consistent utilization of the theological tools bequeathed to him by the catholic/Reformed tradition, Owen's Spirit Christology holds out great promise for contemporary theological investigations into the relationship of pneumatology to Christology. Owen's proposal will prove especially fruitful in light of the concern that the contemporary interest in Spirit Christology runs the risk of jeopardizing many of the deeply held Trinitarian and Christological convictions of the classical tradition, as expressed in the dangers of Spirit Christology identified in the last chapter. This chapter will demonstrate that John Owen constructs a model of Spirit Christology that achieves all of the potential advantages of the paradigm while carefully and coherently avoiding the dangers.

The argument of this chapter will proceed as follows. First, Owen's Spirit Christology as contained in the *ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ* will be surveyed in order to demonstrate his commitment to the three foundational theological principles mentioned above and his application of those principles to the question of the role of the Holy Spirit toward the human nature of Christ. This discussion will include substantive interaction with two scholars, Alan Spence and Oliver Crisp, who have argued that Owen's Spirit Christology represents a departure from his tradition with respect to catholic Trinitarian theology and Chalcedonian Christology, respectively. It will be argued that these scholars are mistaken, and that Owen's proposal is soundly within the theological boundaries of the tradition. In fact, when considered alongside his application of Reformed Covenant Theology to the issue, Owen's Spirit Christology results in a pneumatological enrichment of the tradition. Second, following this presentation and defense of Owen's Spirit

Christology, his proposal will be assessed in light of the advantages and dangers of Spirit Christology identified in chapter 3. This will pave the way for chapter 5, which will present a contemporary model of Owenite Spirit Christology as a pneumatological enrichment of Evangelical Christology.

Owen's Catholic Spirit Christology

For John Owen, *all* divine operations upon/toward/through the human nature of Jesus Christ are to be attributed specifically to the person of the Holy Spirit. That is, rather than assuming that the divine operations working in and through the Son's human nature are to be appropriated to the Son by virtue of the personal union of his human nature with the divine nature, Owen argues that the Holy Spirit is the immediate peculiar divine person to whom such divine works should be appropriated. In the *IINEYMATOAOIYA*, Owen identifies nine "sundry instances" of "the especial actings of the Holy Ghost towards the head of the church, our Lord Jesus Christ."⁵ The nine instances include, among others, the creation of the human nature of Christ from the womb of the virgin Mary, the initial sanctification and ongoing spiritual formation of that human nature, the endowment of special gifts necessary for the discharge of his offices as prophet, priest and king, and the bestowal of power for the working of miracles.⁶ Indeed, for Owen, the only *divine operation* toward the human nature of the Son that should be properly appropriated to the person of the Son *qua* divinity, is the act of the assumption of the human nature into personal union with himself.⁷ Such a robust Spirit Christology as this certainly raises questions concerning its consistency with Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy. It is precisely with respect to those two categories, however,

⁵John Owen, *IINEYMATOAOIYA*, 162.

⁶See Owen, *IINEYMATOAOIYA*, 162-88.

⁷"The only singular immediate act of the person of the Son on the human nature was the assumption of it into personal subsistence with himself" (Owen, *IINEYMATOAOIYA*, 160).

that Owen's model is most refreshing. Owen labors to give the person and work of the Holy Spirit the full prominence that Scripture and the doctrine of the Trinity demand while also emphasizing the humanity of Christ as anointed by the Spirit. Owen does this, not by jettisoning the tradition in which such pneumatological emphases have been difficult but by utilizing the tools of the classical heritage of the church to great effect. In this section, Owen's Spirit Christology will be considered in light of two fundamental commitments: (1) commitment to the catholic account of Trinitarian agency and (2) commitment to the Chalcedonian account of the union of the divine and human natures in the one divine person of the Son. The next section will consider Owen's Spirit Christology in light of the Reformed Covenantal reading of the canonical unfolding of the storyline of Scripture.

Owen's Spirit Christology and Trinitarian Agency

Owen, along with the other Reformed divines of the 16th and 17th centuries, consciously adhered to the Trinitarian axiom, *opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* (the external works of the Trinity are undivided).⁸ As discussed previously, this principle in Trinitarian theology is understood as a necessary consequence of the catholic understanding of divine unity. If divine unity is explained in terms of numerically one divine essence that is simultaneously the essence of all three Trinitarian persons, then it follows that every divine action is performed by the exercise of the one will, power, mind, etc. of the one divine essence. Hence, regardless of the Trinitarian person to which

⁸The axiom receives a brief discussion in Owen's short treatise on the Trinity. After affirming that each person of the Godhead acts divisibly with respect to each other *ad intra*, Owen goes on to say, "Yet all their actings *ad extra* being the actings of God, they are undivided, and are all the works of one, of the self-same God" (John Owen, *A Brief Declaration and Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, in vol. 2, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Gould [Edinburgh, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009], 407). In *IINEYMATOAIOLA*, the axiom is given a great deal of attention throughout the work. Concerning the ubiquity of the acceptance of this axiom among other Reformed divines, see Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 4, *The Triunity of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 255-73.

an action of God is ascribed, it is an action performed *via* the one divine essence, which the other persons of the Trinity also share.⁹ This theological principle, commonly called the doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity, is a key component in all of Owen's theology, Spirit Christology notwithstanding.

Owen's purpose for writing the *IINEYMATOAOΓIA* is "to treat of the operations of the Holy Ghost, or those which are *peculiar* unto him."¹⁰ However, as Richard Daniels has observed, the doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity is a sort of "regulative principle in his theological thinking."¹¹ Therefore, in order to treat of the operations which are "peculiar"¹² to the Holy Spirit, Owen must first demonstrate how it is even possible to speak of the peculiar operations of one specific divine person in the economy of salvation given his commitment to the doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity.¹³ In other words, Owen must demonstrate that it is possible to speak of the peculiar works of each divine person distinctly while maintaining that all Trinitarian works are, in principle, works of all three persons because the works of the Trinity are undivided. How does Owen accomplish this in the *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*?

The Reformed divines distinguished between the essential works of God (*opera Dei essentialia*) and the personal works of God (*opera Dei personalia*).¹⁴ The

⁹Owen illustrates the concept: "If it were possible that three men might see by the same eye, the act of seeing would be but one, and it would be equally the act of all three" (Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 162).

¹⁰Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 92, emphasis added.

¹¹Richard Daniels, *The Christology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Press, 2004), 101.

¹²Owen uses the word "peculiar" often. In contemporary discourse, the word often means something like "strange" or "unusual." Not so for Owen. The definition in Owen's use is something like "specific" or "distinct." Some may find this use of the word to be *peculiar*, but it works for Owen and, in my opinion, should be revived today in the interests of lexical variety.

¹³Owen says, "Some things must be premised concerning the operation of the Godhead in general, and the manner thereof; and they are such as are needful to guide us in many passages of the Scripture, and to direct us aright in the things in particular which now lie before us" (Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 92-3). For Owen, the primary thing which must be premised is his explication of the principle of the inseparable operations of the Trinity.

¹⁴See Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms Drawn Principally from*

essential works of God are those actions performed *via* the one divine essence. All *ad extra* divine works are essential works and thus indivisible. All personal works, on the other hand, are performed *ad intra*. The personal works constitute the eternal persons by way of eternal relations of origin – paternity, filiation, and (passive) spiration – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This distinction forms the basis for Owen’s effort to identify the “peculiar works” of the Holy Spirit. While all of the external works of God are indivisible, per the one divine essence, it is also true that the external works of God reflect the intra-Trinitarian order of subsistence, i.e. the personal works *ad intra*. After noting that the doctrine of inseparable operations is a “regulative principle” for Owen, Richard Daniels goes on to observe that “equally obvious is the great emphasis he places upon the order of subsistence among the persons of the ontological Trinity as providing the pattern for their operations.”¹⁵ That is, for Owen, the *ad intra* order of subsistence is the ground of the *ad extra* order of operations; the external operations of the Trinity are always carried out *from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit*.¹⁶ This order of the undivided operations of the Godhead is critical for Owen’s attempt to ascribe “peculiar works” to the Holy Spirit in the *IINEYMATOAOIYA*:

The several persons are undivided in their operations, acting all by the same will, the same wisdom, the same power. Every person, therefore, is the author of every work of God, because each person is God, and the divine nature is the same undivided principle of all divine operations; and this ariseth from the unity of the persons in the same essence. *But as to the manner of subsistence therein, there is distinction, relation, and order between and among them; and hence there is no divine work but is distinctly assigned unto each person, and eminently unto one.*¹⁷

Protestant Scholastic Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1995), 211-13.

¹⁵Daniels, *The Christology of John Owen*, 102.

¹⁶Owen says, “In every divine act, the authority of the Father, the love and wisdom of the Son, with the immediate efficacy and power of the Holy Ghost, are to be considered” (*IINEYMATOAOIYA*, 162).

¹⁷Owen, *IINEYMATOAOIYA*, 93, emphasis mine.

The Scriptures often assign external works of God to one person or another because, according to Owen, “The *order of operation* among the distinct persons depends on *the order of their subsistence* in the blessed Trinity.”¹⁸ Thus, for the Reformed divines, as well as the Patristic and medieval divines before them, external works of God can be ascribed to one person or another because of the way a work corresponds to a particular Trinitarian person’s *ad intra* mode of subsistence. This strategy of ascribing divine action to particular persons of the Trinity is often referred to as the doctrine of appropriation.

While always carried out so as to show that the external work befits the internal mode of subsistence of one person, appropriation is by no means a monolithic strategy in the tradition of Trinitarian reflection. A thorough investigation of the various strategies of appropriation is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but a few brief observations are in order here.¹⁹ One approach to appropriation actually pertains to the way God’s people should speak of his attributes. On this approach, certain attributes of God, which are rightly predicated of the divine essence, and are thus the attributes of all three persons, are sometimes appropriated to one divine person in particular. A scriptural example of this is found in 1 Corinthians 1:24 where the apostle Paul refers to Christ specifically as the “wisdom of God” and “power of God.” Wisdom and power are divine essential attributes common to the three persons, but in this instance it was fitting for Paul to appropriate the attributes specifically to Christ. Keith Johnson, interacting with Thomas Aquinas’ use of this strategy, states, “Theological warrant for appropriation

¹⁸Owen, *IINEYMATOAOIYA*, 94, emphasis in citation. Owen is so concerned to demonstrate that he does not depart from the doctrine of inseparable operations that he feels the need to qualify his use of the phrase “order of operation.” By this phrase, he does not mean to suggest succession, in which one person does part of the work, “as though where one ceased and gave over a work, the other took it up.” Instead, by “order of operations,” he means, “On those divine works which outwardly are of God there is an especial impression of the order of the operation of each person with respect unto their natural and necessary subsistence” (*IINEYMATOAOIYA*, 94-5). This is just further evidence that Owen does not intend to modify the Reformed understanding of the doctrine of inseparable operations.

¹⁹For a thorough discussion of the doctrine of inseparable operations and various strategies of appropriation with respect to the incarnation of the Son, see Adonis Vidu, “Trinitarian Inseparable Operations and the Trinity,” *JAT* 4 (2016): 106-27.

depends on a ‘similitude’ that exists between an essential attribute and the personal property of a divine person.”²⁰ In other words, if the particular expression of a divine attribute is fittingly understood in terms of the place of a particular person in the eternal order of subsistence, that attribute can rightly be appropriated to that person specifically.²¹

A similar approach to appropriation can be utilized when speaking of divine action. An external work of God can, in one instance be appropriated to the Son and in another instance be appropriated to the Father or Spirit. An example of this is the work of creation. In Colossians 1:16, Paul ascribes the work of creation to the Son specifically. The Father, however, is also identified as Creator in passages like 1 Corinthians 8:6 and Romans 11:36 where “all things” are said to be “from him.” Thus, the work of creation is appropriated to the Son in one instance and to the Father in another. In the case of both of these strategies for appropriation, however, note that the attributes and works are appropriated to one person in particular but not in a manner that is exclusive of the other two persons.²² These approaches, therefore, are similar in the non-exclusivity of their appropriative ascriptions. Let us call this soft appropriation.

Soft appropriation cannot be the only means of appropriating works to particular persons because the orthodox have always affirmed – as Scripture so clearly affirms – that only the Son became incarnate, not the Father nor the Spirit. In other

²⁰Keith E. Johnson, “Who Does What? Trinitarian Appropriation” (paper presented for the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, San Antonio, TX, November 17, 2016), 9.

²¹In the context of 1 Cor 1:24, Paul is speaking about the word of the cross, which is foolishness to the Greeks who seek after wisdom and a stumbling block to the Jews who seek for a sign. The wisdom and power of God are manifest in the person of the Son through the cross. It is thus fitting, in this context for Paul to appropriate wisdom and power specifically to Christ even though the wisdom and power are properly the wisdom and power of all three.

²²When the broad divine action of creation is broken down, it is acknowledged that different aspects of the work of creation manifest each divine person’s eternal identity in specific ways. So, while we are right to say that Father, Son, and Spirit created the world, we would not be right to say that all things are “from the Son” or “through the Father.” This would represent a reversal in our description of divine operation that is inconsistent with the order of divine being.

words, there must be a strategy of appropriation that can ascribe external divine works to one person in an exclusive way without compromising divine essential unity. Thus, another approach to appropriation distinguishes between principle (*principium*) and term (*terminus*) with respect to a divine act. The principle of every external work of God is always the whole Trinity because the power for every divine action flows from the undivided divine essence of the three, i.e., every external work is considered under the heading of *opera dei essentialia*. The term of a particular work, however, refers to one particular person of the Trinity in a manner that excludes the other two.²³ Because of the inherent exclusivity of this approach, let us call it strong appropriation.

The precise distinction between the principle and term of a divine work in this strong approach to appropriation hails from Aquinas and the Thomistic tradition.²⁴ The principle of every external divine work is always the one undivided essence of the three. The term of a divine work, however, is its end purpose or result. The term of any external action can be predicated to a particular divine person exclusively. Adonis Vidu, in his helpful article, “Trinitarian Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation,” explains the concept: “One person is the terminus of the action in the sense that such a person, besides sharing in the common trinitarian causality (and thus agency) is also the passive recipient of this action, as this action necessarily involves an external term.”²⁵ Thus, when an external, indivisible work of God has one particular divine person as the passive recipient of the action, that particular person alone, to the exclusion of the other two persons, is the terminus. Vidu illustrates this sense of terminus with an analogy of a wealthy lord being

²³The other two persons are not excluded from the work entirely. They are excluded only insofar as the *terminus* of the action is concerned. That is, only one divine person can be the *terminus* of a divine work that is intended to terminate on one divine person.

²⁴This is not to say that Aquinas was the first to use this strategy. Aquinas believed that the strategy was used by at least Hilary of Poitiers and Augustine before him (see Keith Johnson, “Who Does What?” 9-10).

²⁵Vidu, “Trinitarian Inseparable Operations” 114.

dressed by his butler. In this instance, the lord is also helping to dress himself so that it can rightly be said that both the butler and the lord are participating actively in the work of dressing. But it can only be said of the lord (to the exclusion of the butler) that he is being dressed.²⁶ Thus, the terminus of a divine operation refers to the one divine person who is receiving the action, even though all divine persons perform the action. Vidu identifies this as the way that Aquinas accounts for the exclusive appropriation of the incarnation to the Son. All three persons inseparably cause the incarnation by the one undivided power of God (principle), but only the Son hypostatically experiences the union as the subject of that union. The Son alone is the passive recipient of the action, which involves an external term. A similar approach can be taken to appropriate the pentecostal presence of grace in the church to the person of the Holy Spirit.

This strategy of strong appropriation corresponds to the divine missions of the Son and the Spirit. Theologians can speak of the missions of the Son as incarnate mediator and the Spirit as gift of grace in exclusively particular ways because of the distinction between principle and term of a divine action. This strategy of appropriation, therefore, emphasizes the *ad intra* order of being as the ontological ground of the term of an external operation. For example, the appropriative term of the incarnation is the Son (i.e., the Son only became incarnate) because the Son is the only-begotten of the Father in the *ad intra* being of God. The Son's being sent with respect to the incarnation reveals his begottenness with respect to eternity.²⁷

²⁶Vidu, "Trinitarian Inseparable Operations," 112. Of course, the limitation of the analogy is apparent, as Vidu himself would certainly acknowledge. In the case of a butler and his lord, there are two distinct beings working in cooperation whereas in the case of the Godhead, there are three persons operating by the same undivided being. The illustration still makes its intended point.

²⁷As noted in chap. 3, Augustine articulated clearly the correspondence between the eternal order of the being of God and the revelation of the eternal order in the economic divine missions: "Just as being born means for the Son his being from the Father, so his being sent means his being known to be from him. And just as for the Holy Spirit his being the gift of God means his proceeding from the Father, so his being sent means his being known to proceed from him" (*The Trinity* [De Trinitate], ed. and trans. Edmund Hill, series 1, vol. 5 of *The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle [Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1991], 4.5.29, 181-2).

John Owen clearly avails himself of the distinction between principle and term in his affirmation that the Son alone became incarnate, as both Adonis Vidu²⁸ and Tyler R. Wittman²⁹ have ably demonstrated. Wittman points out that Owen even uses Aquinas's phrase, "term of the assumption" in his discussion of the incarnation.³⁰ For Owen however, the appropriation of a specific work to a particular person of the Godhead does not seem to hinge on the passive reception of the activity. Instead, Owen prefers active terms. He is more inclined to speak of the Son as the particular divine subject of the act of assuming than he is to speak of the Son passively as the recipient of the act. Owen avers, "The only singular immediate act of the person of the Son on the human nature was the assumption of it into personal subsistence with himself."³¹ For Owen, therefore, an external divine act can be appropriated to one particular person exclusively even by the use of active language. That is, Owen's strategy of strong appropriation based on the distinction between principle and term is not limited to cases where a particular divine person is the distinctive passive recipient of the undivided divine act.

Owen's strategy is very helpful if it can withstand the scrutiny of orthodox accounts of divine unity. It is helpful because it gives greater freedom in the appropriation of undivided external works to particular divine persons, allowing theologians to speak in a manner that more closely corresponds to the language of Scripture without compromising the scripturally revealed truth of divine unity. It is easy

²⁸Vidu, "Trinitarian Inseparable Operations."

²⁹Tyler R. Wittman, "The End of the Incarnation: John Owen, Trinitarian Agency, and Christology," *IJST* 15 (2013): 284-300.

³⁰After citing Owen's discussion, Wittman observes, "In this quotation, Owen's phrase, 'term of the assumption' immediately recalls Aquinas's language (*terminum assumptionis*) and is a clear affirmation of the *terminus operationis* principle: certain triune works *ad extra* terminate on one person" ("The End of the Incarnation," 298).

³¹Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 160. Vidu has an interesting discussion about whether assumption should be considered an action. See "Trinitarian Inseparable Operations," 110-14. Regardless of the conclusion of such an inquiry, it is clear that Owen viewed assuming as an act.

to see how the idea of passive receptivity is useful when speaking of the incarnation because the Son clearly was the divine person at the receiving end of the divine act as the one who became incarnate. The concept of passive receptivity as the ground of terminal appropriation, however, is far less clear, for example, in the case of the Father as the divine person who sends the Son. The Father specifically (not the Son nor the Spirit) is identified personally and exclusively in Scripture as the one who sends the Son.³² How is the Father the passive recipient of the divine act of sending the Son? He is not. The Son is the passive recipient such that we say the Son *was sent*. On what grounds, then, do we appropriate the sending to the Father if the *terminus* of an act can only ground appropriating the act to the passive recipient? Or, put in the terms of Spirit Christology, what ground is there for identifying the Spirit as the “peculiar” operator of divine actions in/on/through the human nature of Christ as Owen and any proponent of Spirit Christology wants to affirm? It is not clearly evident that the Spirit is the passive recipient of the divine works in/on/through the human nature of Christ. Rather, Owen, other proponents of Spirit Christology, and Scripture all appropriate such divine operations to the Spirit in *active* terms.

Owen’s strategy is not a rebuke to the classical distinction between principle and term, nor even an alternative to it. Rather, Owen’s strategy is an extension of classical Trinitarian theology in a fresh and new direction. This extended strategy of Owen is fully consistent with the classical Trinitarian understanding of divine essential unity and the orthodox rule of the inseparable operations of the Trinity. Wittman has

³²In the Gospel of John alone, Jesus identifies the Father as the one who “sent me” some forty times. This is to say nothing of the synoptic references to Jesus being sent. In the synoptics, the tendency is to speak generically of God, but John’s heavy use of “Father” should be seen as clarifying the divine hypostasis in view in the synoptics. In contrast, Jesus is never said to be “sent” by himself or the Spirit. At this point, someone could demur that the principle of inseparable operations demands that Jesus and the Spirit “sent” the Son because of essential unity. With this I wholly concur. But there must also be a way, within the principle of inseparable operations, to speak of the Father alone as sender, not with respect to the principle of the operation but with respect to the terminus. Scripture identifies the Father as the one sending the Son in a way that excludes the Son and Spirit.

observed that some have seen in John Owen’s Trinitarian theology the elements of a social model of the Trinity. Wittman warns, however, that applying the moniker of social Trinitarianism to Owen would be a mistake.³³ Owen would balk at the idea that the three persons of the Godhead are three distinct centers of will and consciousness. Rather, the Reformed divine affirms the classical understanding that there is one will in the Godhead predicated of the one undivided divine essence. In *A Brief Declaration and Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, Owen describes divine unity: “Now this *oneness* can respect nothing but the nature, being, substance, or essence of God. God is one in this respect.”³⁴ Later in *IINEYMATOΛOΓIA* he clarifies that of which this unity of essence consists:

The several persons are undivided in their operations, *acting all by the same will*, the same wisdom, the same power. Every person, therefore, is the author of every work of God, because each person is God, and the *divine nature is the same undivided principle of all divine operations*; and this ariseth from the unity of the persons in *the same essence*.³⁵

Wittman acknowledges, however, that the reason some have seen in Owen the elements of social Trinitarianism is because, while he affirms one undivided essence in the Godhead, he also speaks of the particular persons of the Godhead as willing subjects. For example, when discussing the economic procession of the Spirit, Owen writes,

There is an ἐκπόρευσις or “procession” of the Spirit, which is οἰκονομική or “dispensatory.” This is the egress of the Spirit in his application of himself unto his work. *A voluntary act it is of his will*, and not a necessary property of his person... but it is his own personal voluntary acting that is intended in the expression. And this is the general notation of the original of the Spirit’s acting in all that he doth:— He proceedeth or cometh forth from the Father. Had it been only said that he was *given and sent*, *it could not have been known that there was any thing of his own will* in what he did.³⁶

³³“Some find ‘obvious social elements’ in Owen, but such statements must be qualified so we do not interpret Owen as suggesting anything like modern social doctrines of the Trinity. Misreading Owen is a very real danger at this point” (Wittman, “The End of the Incarnation,” 291).

³⁴Owen, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ*, vol. 1, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Gould (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 407.

³⁵Owen, *IINEYMATOΛOΓIA*, 93, emphasis mine.

³⁶Owen, *IINEYMATOΛOΓIA*, 117, emphasis mine.

Later in the same volume, Owen says of the Holy Spirit specifically, “Whatever he doth, he acts, works, and distributes *according to his own will*.”³⁷ Owen is not equivocating here. Rather, he is making a very intentional Trinitarian theological move. Because the undivided divine essence is an ordered essence of the three persons, it follows that the properties of the divine essence are to be thought of in an ordered way. Therefore, the one will of God is an ordered, triune will.

The order of the one undivided divine will just is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.³⁸ For this reason, Owen speaks of the will of the Father as a way of identifying the exercise of the one undivided divine will of God in a manner that is fitting to the Father as first in the order of subsistence. Similarly, the will of the Son is just the one undivided will of God exercised in a manner fitting to the Son as second in the order of subsistence. Owen states, “Now, a divine person is nothing but *the divine essence, upon the account of an especial Property, subsisting in an especial manner*.”³⁹ Owen goes on to explain that each person possesses the whole divine nature, and thus exercises all of the properties of the undivided nature of God. From this, Owen reasons that each person acts according to the properties of the divine nature in a distinct way but because the nature is one and undivided, the works are still undivided:

The wisdom, the understanding of God, the will of God, the immensity of God, is in that person, not as that person, but as the person is God. The like is to be said of the persons of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Hereby each person having the understanding, the will, and power of God, becomes a distinct principle of operation; and yet all their actings *ad extra* being the actings of God, they are *undivided*, and are all the works of one, of the self-same God.⁴⁰

³⁷Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 201, emphasis in citation.

³⁸This is very similar to my argument about the ordering of the divine will in Kyle Claunch, “God is the Head of Christ: Does 1 Corinthians 11:3 Ground Gender Complementarity in the Immanent Trinity?” in *One God in Three Persons: Unity of Essence, Distinction of Persons, Implications for Life*, ed. John Starke and Bruce A. Ware (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 65-94.

³⁹Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 407.

⁴⁰Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 407.

Each person's exercise of the properties of the divine nature, including the one divine will, is sufficient for Owen to consider each person a distinct "principle of operation," but because the divine nature is one and undivided, it is also the case that "their actings *ad extra* being the actings of God, they are undivided."

Wittman refers to Owen's strategy as the "modal appropriation of the divine will (where modal is understood in terms of the 'mode' of subsistence)."⁴¹ This modal appropriation of the will allows Owen to speak of the peculiar persons of the Trinity as actors without compromising the historic and necessary affirmation that all the works of the Trinity are undivided. Given the classical understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity and divine simplicity, this strategy is *apropos*, not only with respect to the divine will, but with respect to all divine attributes. Thus, the one undivided power, wisdom, knowledge, etc. of God can be modally appropriated with respect to its exercise in external divine operations. Therefore, I submit that for Owen, the undivided principle of all external divine operations, as it is for all classical Trinitarian theologians, is the undivided essence of the three so that all external works of God are inseparable, being effected by the undivided will, power, etc. of all three persons of the Godhead. As the basis for ascribing external divine operations to particular divine persons, however, the *terminus* of such operations is understood by Owen as a kind of *modal appropriation of divine subjectivity*. In this nuanced way, Owen is able to appropriate works to one particular divine person exclusively (strong appropriation) even in cases where passive receptivity is not an obvious feature of the action.

In summary, for Owen's strategy of appropriation, the classical distinction between principle and term might accurately be called a distinction between principle and subject where subject is understood as modally appropriated on the basis of the *ad intra* order of subsistence. Divine essential unity ("God is one" – Deut 6:4) and, consequently,

⁴¹Wittman, "The End of the Incarnation," 292.

perichoretic co-inherence (“I am in the Father, and the Father is in me” – John 14:11) necessitate the axiom *opera trinitatis indivisa sunt* (the works of the Trinity are undivided). However, drawing on the resources of classical theology, Owen engages in a strategy of strong appropriation by which he ascribes undivided external divine operations to particular divine persons as modally acting subjects. It is according to this nuanced strategy that Owen is able to speak of the peculiar works of the Holy Spirit, in particular his peculiar works toward the human nature of the Son: “He is the immediate operator of all divine acts of the Son himself, even on his own human nature. Whatever the Son of God wrought in, by, or upon the human nature, he did it by the Holy Ghost, who is his Spirit, as he is the Spirit of the Father”⁴²

When considering the role of the Holy Spirit toward the human nature of Christ, Owen’s exegesis of Scripture and theological formulation are driven by this catholic understanding of Trinitarian action. In fact, in Owen’s thinking, identifying the Holy Spirit as the peculiar subject of *all* divine action toward the human nature of Christ is not only consistent with the catholic understanding of Trinitarian action but demanded by it. Because the Holy Spirit is the third and final person in the *ad intra* order of subsistence, so “in every great work of God, the *concluding, completing, perfecting acts* are ascribed unto the Holy Ghost.”⁴³ In other words, Owen explains, “The Holy Ghost... is the *immediate, peculiar, efficient cause* of all external divine operations: for God worketh by his Spirit, or in him immediately applies the power and efficacy of the divine excellencies unto their operation.”⁴⁴ Since all divine activity exercised toward the created order is always ascribed to the person of the Holy Spirit, Owen’s Spirit Christology is simply one particular application of his commitment to the catholic

⁴²Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 162.

⁴³Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 94, emphasis in citation.

⁴⁴Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 162, emphasis in citation.

understanding of Trinitarian action in general. If the Son is the terminating subject of the divine properties communicated toward and through his own human nature, then the catholic understanding of Trinitarian agency is compromised because it would mean that the Son is third in the order of operations and, by implication, third in the order of subsistence.⁴⁵ So, the catholic understanding of the inseparable operations of the Trinity and the ascription of divine works to particular persons of the Godhead truly is a regulative principle for Owen's Spirit Christology.

Exceptions to Inseparable Operations?

In his influential monograph, *Incarnation and Inspiration: John Owen and the Coherence of Christology*, Alan Spence explores in detail the way that Owen understands the role of the Holy Spirit toward the human nature of Christ. Spence's study is thorough and insightful in many respects, and many consider him to be a leading expert in the Christological thought of John Owen. In the course of his study, Spence rightly acknowledges that the historic orthodox doctrine of inseparable operations was "accepted by and large without criticism" by Owen.⁴⁶ Spence wonders, however, whether Owen's commitment to the doctrine of inseparable operations is "consistent with some of the major areas in his theology."⁴⁷ Two emphases in Owen's theology give Spence concern. First, as already seen, Owen argues at length in *ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ* that the Holy Spirit is a distinct personal subject who performs the actions of God. Spence asks critically,

⁴⁵It is important here to note that Owen still affirms that the Son is the subject of his own divine nature, even with respect to divine operations toward the human nature. But Owen, in truly classical Trinitarian fashion, is saying that the Son is subject of the divine operations toward his own human nature in the same way that he is always subject of all divine operations, from the Father and by the Spirit. Thus, the Spirit (not the Son) is the appropriative terminus, or the modally appropriated subject of divine operations toward the human nature of the Son such that the Son's human experience of God is an experience of the Spirit. I flesh this out a bit more in chapter 5 in connection with my discussion of the *extra calvinisticum*.

⁴⁶Alan Spence, *Incarnation and Inspiration: John Owen and the Coherence of Christology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 129.

⁴⁷Spence, *Incarnation and Inspiration*, 129.

“But does not an unqualified doctrine of the indivisibility of God’s external activity. . . preclude such an argument? How can an undivided activity demonstrate. . .” the distinct personal identity of the Holy Spirit?⁴⁸ The second of Owen’s emphases giving rise to Spence’s concern is the doctrine of the incarnation. While Owen contends that all three divine persons are operative in the event of the incarnation,⁴⁹ the key question for Spence is, “Who actually assumed the human nature, the Trinity or the Son?”⁵⁰ Owen’s answer, according to Spence, is clear. Owen states, “The Father did not assume the human nature, he was not incarnate; neither did the Holy Spirit do so; but this was the peculiar act and work of the Son.”⁵¹ For Spence, this statement appears to indicate that Owen’s theology demands that the external work of God in the incarnation is divided. So, how does Spence resolve this apparent conundrum in Owen’s theological argumentation?

Spence believes that Owen makes two *exceptions* to the doctrine of inseparable operations: the office of the Son as incarnate mediator and the office of the Spirit as gift to the church. Spence argues that Owen maintains consistency by holding to the doctrine of inseparable operations only insofar as the divine persons act absolutely (apart from their particular office in the economy of salvation). However, when they act in their peculiar office – the Spirit as the gift of God to the church and the Son as the incarnate mediator – they act divisibly from the other persons of the Trinity. Spence suggests:

[T]he incarnate Son, in his office as Mediator, is not considered without qualification as divine, but as subordinate to and dependent upon God. His activity in that office is that of an agent distinct from the Father. However, in the Son’s work, *asarkos*, he acts absolutely as God and his work is in reality indivisible from that of the Father and Spirit, even though it is ascribed as appropriate to the different persons.⁵²

⁴⁸Spence, *Incarnation and Inspiration*, 130.

⁴⁹See Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 225.

⁵⁰Spence, *Incarnation and Inspiration*, 130.

⁵¹Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 160, cited in Spence, *Incarnation and Inspiration*, 130.

⁵²Spence, *Incarnation and Inspiration*, 132-33.

He goes on to suggest that if Owen can make such a move with respect to the Son's condescension to his office, then he can make the same move with respect to the Holy Spirit.⁵³

If Spence is correct concerning how Owen resolves the apparent tension between his affirmation of inseparable operations and his commitment to ascribe peculiar works to one Trinitarian person, then the resolution is fraught with insurmountable difficulties. First, this solution turns the doctrine of inseparable operations on its head. The orthodox doctrine holds to the indivisibility of divine action *ad extra*. If the doctrine does not apply to economic action – the Son in his office as Mediator and the Spirit as gift to the church – we are left with the doctrine of inseparable operations *ad intra*. Secondly, this solution completely avoids the problem at its most basic level. It is the Son *asarkos* – considered absolutely as divine second person of the Godhead – who must condescend to assume a human nature, thus entering into his mediatorial office as the incarnate Son. The tension, with respect to the incarnation, comes at precisely this point. How can the Son, whose activity is always the undivided activity of the three persons, assume a human nature *alone*? If Spence is right, then Owen's theology of Trinitarian agency is no slight modification of the tradition but a radical break from it.

A careful reading of Owen, however, will reveal that Spence has misunderstood both Owen and the tradition of inseparable operations that Owen upholds.⁵⁴ Owen does not need to make an exception to the traditional doctrine of

⁵³See also Brian K. Kay, *John Owen and the Doctrine of God in Western Spirituality* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008). Kay's purpose, as the title suggests is to explore the Trinitarian theology of Owen and the manner in which the Reformed divine applied the rigors of rich theological reflection to spiritual growth and devotion. There is much to commend in Kay's work. Unfortunately, however, he has misunderstood the historic doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity and adopts a negative posture toward the doctrine. Kay sees the doctrine of inseparable operations as an "unfortunate" development (107) that came about as Athanasius and the Cappadocians sought to defend the *homoousion* of the Nicene Creed. He goes as far as to say that Gregory of Nyssa "backed himself into" the doctrine in "On 'Not Three gods'" (108). Kay, like Spence, is convinced that Owen represents at least a mild break and correction to the Augustinian tradition. The critique of Spence articulated here could rightly apply to the work of Kay as well.

⁵⁴Referring to Spence's argument, Wittman demurs, "This picture of Owen is not only inaccurate, but also premised on a misunderstanding of Augustine and the traditional doctrine of

inseparable operations to ascribe specific divine works to the Son and the Spirit in particular. Rather, the catholic tradition has always appealed to the divisibility of persons *ad intra* for ascribing divine operations *ad extra* to particular divine persons, even though the essential principle of all divine action is the one divine essence commonly shared by all three.

Spence is right that Owen has a magnificently robust understanding of the peculiar works of the Spirit as a divine personal subject. Owen's primary objective in writing the *IINEYMATOAOΓIA* is "to treat of the operations of the Holy Ghost, or those which are peculiar unto him."⁵⁵ Indeed, as already demonstrated, Owen's use of the tools of traditional Trinitarian theology extended the doctrine of appropriation in such a way as to allow a more robust appropriation of personal distinction with respect to divine operation than some others in his tradition achieved. Spence is also correct that Owen's approach to Trinitarian agency allowed him to construct a pneumatologically rich account of the humanity of Christ – one that is consonant with the portrait of the life of Jesus and his experience of the Spirit as given in the gospels and Acts – in the midst of a tradition that had found it difficult to do so. However, contra Spence, Owen's treatment of the peculiar operations of the Holy Spirit (or of the Son in the incarnation) is no *exception* to the doctrine of inseparable operations. Rather, before treating of the peculiar operations of the Spirit, Owen himself says, "Some things must be premised concerning the operation of the Godhead in general, and the manner thereof; and they are such as are needful to guide us in many passages of the Scripture, and to direct us aright in the things in particular which now lie before us."⁵⁶ The "things which must be premised" are the orthodox account of inseparable operations and the method for ascribing actions to

inseparable operations" ("The End of the Incarnation," 287). I could not agree more.

⁵⁵Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 92.

⁵⁶Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 92-3.

distinct Trinitarian persons.⁵⁷ Owen labors to show that his understanding of the peculiar works of the Holy Spirit is consistent with the doctrine of inseparable operations, not an exception to it. Owen's Spirit Christology is a specimen of conformity to classical Trinitarian orthodoxy and an example of the potential fruitfulness of reflecting on the tools of the inherited tradition as the means of solving theological problems rather than trading the birthright of a rich tradition for the porridge of novelty.

Owen's Spirit Christology and Chalcedonian Categories

It has been demonstrated that the Trinitarian theology upon which Owen builds his particular version of Spirit Christology is thoroughly consistent with catholic orthodoxy. But can the same be said for the specifically Christological implications of Owen's position? Indeed it can. In fact, Owen's account of Spirit Christology only makes sense in the context of a Chalcedonian understanding of the Person of Christ.

As Owen begins his formal discussion of the work of the Holy Spirit toward the human nature of Christ, he first dispenses with an objection that has been pressed by the Socinians: If Christ is the divine Son of God, what room is there for the ministry of the Holy Spirit to him?⁵⁸ Owen responds by pointing out that the Socinians have misunderstood the Chalcedonian doctrine of the incarnation: "The only singular immediate act of the person of the Son on the human nature was the assumption of it into subsistence with himself." He goes on to say that "the only necessary consequent of this assumption of the human nature, or the incarnation of the Son of God, is the personal

⁵⁷Owen says, "But as to the manner of subsistence therein [in the divine essence], there is distinction, relation, and order between and among them [the divine persons]; and *hence there is no divine work but is distinctly assigned unto each person, and eminently unto one*" (*IINEYMATOAOIYA*, 93, emphasis mine.).

⁵⁸Owen paraphrases their objection: "There doth not seem to be any need, nor indeed room, for any such operations of the Spirit; for could not the Son of God himself, in his own person, perform all things requisite both for the forming, supporting, sanctifying, and preserving of his own nature, without the expecial assistance of the Holy Ghost?" (*IINEYMATOAOIYA*, 160).

union of Christ, or the inseparable subsistence of the assumed nature in the person of the Son.”⁵⁹ In other words, the divine identity of Jesus Christ does not necessarily entail that he acted according to the properties of his divine nature as a man. Rather, Owen contends that “all other actings of God in the person of the Son towards the human nature were voluntary, and did not necessarily ensue on the union mentioned; for there was no transfusion of the properties of one nature into the other.”⁶⁰ Here Owen is appealing to the Chalcedonian understanding of the communication of properties (*communicatio idiomatum*) in the person of Christ. The human nature does not take on the attributes of the divine nature by virtue of the union. There is no “real physical communication of divine excellencies unto the humanity.”⁶¹ The properties of both natures can be predicated of the one person of the Son because of his full possession of both, but the properties of each nature cannot be predicated of the other nature. The natural and ordinary human actions of the Son, while the actions of a divine person, are actions performed according to the properties of the human nature only, even while he continues to act the properties of his divine nature simultaneously, per the well-known *extra-calvinisticum*. This Chalcedonian framework of the distinction of the two natures is the basis for Owen’s claim that any divine action in, on, or through the human nature of Christ is voluntary, not necessary. Since the Son of God does not necessarily execute any divine act toward his own human nature, it is plausible to posit that the Holy Spirit, not the Son of God, “is the immediate, peculiar, efficient cause” of all divine operations

⁵⁹Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 160.

⁶⁰Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 161.

⁶¹Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 161. This understanding is in contrast to the Lutheran understanding in which certain attributes of the divine nature can be actually communicated to the human nature. So, the body and blood of Christ (properties of his human nature) can be truly present in, with, and under the elements of the Lord’s table because the divine attribute of omnipresence has been communicated to the human nature of Christ in the state of exaltation.

toward the human nature of Christ.⁶² Therefore, Owen's understanding of the works of the Holy Spirit toward the human nature of Christ is not only compatible with Chalcedonian Christology, it is only possible in light of the Chalcedonian understanding of the distinction of natures and communication of attributes.⁶³

Another indication of Owen's commitment to Chalcedonian categories in the construction of his Spirit Christology can be seen in his affirmation of the principle that the human nature of Christ was *anhypostasia* (without a personal subject) apart from being assumed (*enhypostatized*) by the divine person of the Son. While discussing the creation of the human nature of the Son by the Holy Spirit, Owen describes the Son's assumption of the human nature:

It was an ineffable act of love and wisdom, taking the nature so formed by the Holy Ghost, so prepared for him, to be his own in the instant of its formation, and *thereby preventing the singular and individual subsistence of that nature in and by itself.*⁶⁴

The principle of the *anhypostasia* is of great importance to the Chalcedonian formula because if the human nature did indeed have its own "singular and individual subsistence... in and by itself," the result would be a Nestorian understanding of Christ as two persons. Thus Owen's explicit affirmation of this concept is another indicator that he intends to operate within Chalcedonian categories with his proposal.

A Cleavage between the Natures?

In spite of John Owen's obvious desire to operate within the boundaries of Chalcedonian Christological categories, Oliver Crisp has argued pointedly that Owen's

⁶²Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 161.

⁶³It is important to note that the Chalcedonian understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum* makes Owen's position possible, but not necessary. It would be perfectly consistent with the Chalcedonian understanding of the person of Christ to argue that the Son, as God, voluntarily exercised divine power in and on his own human nature, not by a transfusion of properties, but as God working in and on a man. Indeed, this has been the tendency in Reformed explanations of the significance of Christ's miracles. They were simply so many pieces of evidence that he possessed a divine nature.

⁶⁴Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 165, emphasis added.

Spirit Christology fails at precisely this point.⁶⁵ Crisp acknowledges, rightly, that “Owen’s Spirit Christology is a Reformed catholic alternative to the adoptionist Spirit-Christologies that may offer an important contribution to the recent resurgence of interest in the pneumatological dimension to Christology.”⁶⁶ He goes on, however, to raise an objection to Owen’s account, namely, “that it offers a theologically damaging cleavage between God the Son and his human nature.”⁶⁷ According to Crisp, in Owen’s account, the relationship between the divine person of the Son and the human nature he has assumed is not close enough to be considered consistent with Chalcedon, even given a minimalist understanding of the strength of the hypostatic union.⁶⁸ Crisp, however, seems to have misread Owen’s account of the relationship between the Son and his human nature as well as the role Owen ascribes to the Holy Spirit toward that human nature. While Owen did not offer his account with a view to the objections raised by Crisp, his Spirit Christology, nevertheless, is completely consistent with Chalcedonian orthodoxy.

Crisp’s concern with the Chalcedonian consistency of Owen’s Spirit Christology turns on his understanding of the way Owen conceives of the role of the

⁶⁵Crisp, “John Owen on Spirit Christology.”

⁶⁶Crisp, “John Owen on Spirit Christology,” 7.

⁶⁷Crisp, “John Owen on Spirit Christology,” 7.

⁶⁸Crisp compares a materialist anthropological account of the relation of the human soul and body to a Cartesian dualist account of that relationship. He demonstrates that the Cartesian account presents the minimalist understanding of the relation of the soul to the body that is possible while still maintaining Chalcedonian categories. Owen’s account, Crisp contends, cannot coherently sustain the intimacy between the divine person of the Son and the human nature required even by the Cartesian account (see “John Owen on Spirit Christology,” 19-20). Incidental to this essay, but interesting nonetheless (that’s what footnotes are for, right), Crisp may grant too much to Cartesian dualism here. It is difficult to see how a Cartesian account is consistent with Chalcedon, given the Cartesian understanding that the soul of a human is the “I” or the person which animates the human body. This seems to mean that the closest Cartesian dualism can come to Chalcedonian orthodoxy is some kind of Apollonianism in which the person of Christ takes the place normally occupied by the human soul. The result of this model, however, is that the person of Christ did not assume a human soul as part of the assumption of the human nature. This is one of the key issues discussed by Alloys Grillmeier in his magisterial work on the early development of Christological orthodoxy leading up to and including Chalcedon. Grillmeier discusses the difference between a *Logos-sarx* model of the incarnation in which the Son assumed only a human body or flesh and a *Logos-anthropos* model in which the Son assumed a full human nature, including a human immaterial soul (see Alloys Grillmeier S. J., *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, 2nd ed., trans. John Bowden [Atlanta: John Knox, 1975]).

person of the Son with respect to the human nature he assumed in the incarnation. Owen says,

The only singular immediate *act* of the person of the Son on the human nature was the *assumption* of it into subsistence with himself. . . . The only *necessary consequent* of this assumption of the human nature, or the incarnation of the Son of God, is the *personal union of Christ*, or the inseparable subsistence of the *assumed nature* in the person of the Son. . . . All other actings of God in the *person of the Son* towards the human nature were *voluntary*, and did not necessarily ensue on the union mentioned; for there was no transfusion of the properties of one nature into the other, nor real physical communication of divine essential excellencies unto the humanity.⁶⁹

Crisp interprets this to mean that, for Owen, every single action performed by the Son in the incarnate state is performed via the mediation of the Spirit. So, when Jesus lifts up his right foot to place it in front of his left as he walks down a dusty Palestinian road, the Holy Spirit is actually the divine person who is most immediately and directly responsible for the movement of the feet of the human body of the Son of God, and so on for every action of God the Son according to his human nature. If Crisp is right, then Owen proposes that God the Son is the subject of the incarnation, but the Holy Spirit is the divine person most directly acting through the human nature of the Son in all of his *human* activities while incarnate.

To illustrate what he believes Owen to be saying, Crisp uses the analogy of an astronaut in a spacesuit. Traditional Christological models conceive of the incarnation in a manner somewhat analogous to an astronaut wearing a special suit that enables him to live in an environment for which he is not otherwise fit. So, the person of God the Son is like the astronaut, and the human nature he assumes for the purposes of his earthly mission is like the space suit.⁷⁰ Crisp contends, however, that Owen's model of the incarnate life of God the Son is more like an astronaut in a ship controlling a robot, which is clothed in a spacesuit. The robot is the immediate cause of the movements of the

⁶⁹Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 160-61, emphasis in citation.

⁷⁰Crisp recognizes the shortcomings and limitations of such an analogy.

spacesuit. The astronaut might be able to don the suit himself, but instead he controls every move of the suit through the robot. The suit is the astronaut's suit, and the astronaut is ultimately responsible for the movement of the suit. Nevertheless he acts in and through it via the mediation of the robot. On this model, the person of the Son is still analogous to the astronaut, and the spacesuit is still analogous to the human nature. The robot, then, is analogous to the Holy Spirit. Thus, if Crisp's analogy is *apropos* as an explanation of Owen's Spirit Christology, then every motion of the human nature of Christ is the direct result of the action of the Holy Spirit. The human nature belongs to Christ as *his* nature, but he never acts immediately through it as the unmediated subject of the actions performed according to that nature. Rather, according to the order of the catholic understanding of Trinitarian action, the Son acts by the Spirit. If Oliver Crisp's reading of the model of the incarnation proposed by Owen is right, then his concerns are well-founded, and Owen's Spirit Christology is at least strange with respect to Chalcedon, if not altogether incompatible with it. Crisp, however, has not understood Owen's model rightly.

John Owen is not proposing that the *ordinary human actions* of Jesus of Nazareth are the effect of the Holy Spirit's immediate agency such that the Son is not the immediate operator in the actions performed *via* his human nature. Rather, when Owen says, "The only singular immediate *act* of the person of the Son on the human nature was the *assumption* of it into subsistence with himself," he is speaking of the *divine action* in which the properties of the divine nature are manifest upon, through, or toward the human nature of the Son. Owen's conviction that the Spirit is the immediate agent of all *divine activity* toward the human nature does not apply to the ordinary *human activity* performed according the human nature. Of the ordinary human actions of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God is the immediate operator, according to the properties of his human nature, but he is not the immediate operator (in the sense of modally appropriated subjectivity, as discussed earlier) of the manifestations of *divine properties* toward, upon,

or through his human nature. The Spirit, rather, is the immediate operator in those divine actions. That the communication of *divine properties* specifically upon/toward/through the human nature is what Owen has in mind when he attributes all actions to the Spirit may be demonstrated by several observations. First, in the passage quoted at length above, Owen grounds his case in the Chalcedonian concept of the communication of attributes to demonstrate that the divine nature does not immediately communicate properties to the human: “For there was no transfusion of the properties of one nature into the other, nor real physical communication of divine essential excellencies unto the humanity.”⁷¹ This statement alone should alert the reader to the fact that Owen is constructing a model for understanding the super-human and obviously divine actions performed through the human nature of the Son (i.e. Jesus’ miracles) as properly terminating on the Holy Spirit according to his place in the eternal Trinitarian order of subsistence; he is not constructing a model for understanding the ordinary human actions of Jesus as properly terminating on the Holy Spirit. Secondly, throughout his discussion of the role of the Spirit toward the human nature of Christ, Owen consistently and explicitly speaks of the role of the Holy Spirit as the immediate cause of the *divine* operations toward the human nature. Never does Owen use terminology that requires his readers to think that the Holy Spirit is the immediate cause of the *human* operations of God the Son. Consider the following from Owen:

The Holy Ghost, as we have proved before, is the immediate, peculiar, efficient cause of all external *divine operations*: for God worketh by his Spirit, or in him immediately applies the power and efficacy of the *divine excellencies* unto their operation. . . . Hence is he the immediate operator of *all divine acts* of the Son himself, even on his own human nature. Whatever the Son of God wrought in, by, or upon the human nature, he did it by the Holy Ghost, who is his Spirit, as he is the Spirit of the Father.⁷²

⁷¹Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 161.

⁷²Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 161-62, emphasis mine.

Thirdly, Owen states directly that Christ performs the ordinary actions of his human life by the exercise of the capacities of his own soul. This seems to refute Crisp's understanding of Owen's model:

[T]he Lord Christ, as man, did and was to exercise all grace *by the rational faculties and powers of his soul*, his understanding, will, and affections; for he acted grace as a man, "made of a woman, made under the law." His divine nature was not unto him in the place of a soul, nor did immediately operate the things which he performed, as some of old vainly imagined; but being a perfect man, *his rational soul was in him the immediate principle of all his moral operations, even as ours are in us.*⁷³

If Owen wished to communicate that the Spirit is the immediate and peculiar operator of the human actions of the Son, the above quotation is the perfect place to do so. After denying that the Son's divine nature "did immediately operate the things which he performed," Owen could easily have said, "Rather the Holy Spirit was the immediate principle of his moral actions," or something of the sort. Instead of this, however, Owen says, "His rational soul was in him the immediate principle of all his moral operations, even as ours are in us." So, for John Owen, the divine person of the Son is the immediate operator of the normal human actions performed through his human nature.

If I have represented Owen accurately up to this point, someone might well aver that Owen's model is still fraught with difficulty. After all, the Chalcedonian conception of the incarnation is such that the human nature of Christ was *anhypostatic* (without personhood) apart from being *enhyposatized* by the person of the Son. Thus, the Son who acts according to his own human nature in the performance of his ordinary human actions is a divine person. So, does it even make sense to conceive of a dichotomy between *human action* and *divine action* if the subject of the human action is a divine person? In response, it does seem that Owen lacks the terminological precision to withstand sustained critiques of this kind. It is at this point that Crisp's suggestion of the idea of divine *krypsis* (hiddenness) concerning Owen's Christology may actually be

⁷³Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 169, emphasis mine.

helpful. However, rather than correcting Owen's model of Spirit Christology as inconsistent with Chalcedonian categories, Crisp's suggestion is better put to use as a clarification of terms that aid to demonstrate the consistency of Owen's proposal with Chalcedonian Christology.

Crisp appeals to the idea of divine *krypsis*⁷⁴ to explain how it is possible that the divine person of the Son could act according to his human nature without manifesting the properties of his divine nature for the purposes of experiencing life as a man. While the Son performs his actions as a man, the properties of his own divine nature are hidden, or unmanifested, so that it is coherent to speak of the actions of the Son of God as human actions rather than divine actions, even though the actions are immediately effected by a divine person. Crisp believes that the appeal to divine *krypsis* would allow Owen to maintain a robust view of the role of the Spirit with respect to the human nature of Christ while not forfeiting the integrity of the hypostatic union by interposing a permanent mediator between the divine and human natures of the Son. In actuality, Crisp's suggestion represents a helpful terminological clarification rather than a theological modification. By appealing to divine *krypsis*, Owen could easily explain how all the *divine acts* (that is, actions performed according to the properties of the divine nature) toward the human nature of the Son terminate on the Holy Spirit as the immediate operator while all of the *human acts* (that is, actions performed according to the

⁷⁴The use of the term *krypsis*, hiddenness or veiling, may be confusing to some. According to Richard Muller, *krypsis* was the term advanced by post-reformation Lutheran theologians in their efforts to advance the doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ's human nature and the communication of properties between the natures. For the Lutherans, divine properties were communicated to the human nature but then hidden or latent only in the human nature during the state of humiliation. Thus, divine attributes were present and latent during the state of humiliation, but the latency applied only to the divine attribute according to the human nature. See Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, 170. The Reformed counterpart to this was the concept of *occultatio*, another term meaning veiling. For Reformed thinkers, the attributes of divinity could not be communicated directly to the human nature, or vice-versa. Rather, the Reformed, per the *extra-Calvinisticum*, posited that the divine attributes were always in operation according to the divine nature, but the exercise of them was hidden *by* the human nature or *behind* the human nature. That is, the human nature of the Son, because it did not possess divine properties, veiled the active manifestation of the divine properties, which the Son never ceased to perform, in the divine nature. See Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, 207. It would seem that Crisp's use of *krypsis* corresponds more to Muller's account of *occultatio* than to Muller's account of *krypsis*.

properties of the human nature) are immediately effected by the Son who has assumed the human nature as his own. That is precisely what Owen is trying to say in the *IINEYMATOAOITIA*, and it is fully compatible with Chalcedonian categories.

Contra Crisp, Owen's proposal is not only consistent with Chalcedonian Christology but is only possible in light of it. Furthermore, operating within the well-trying boundaries of Chalcedonian Christology, Owen is able to provide a pneumatological enrichment of a tradition that has been notorious for its forgetfulness of Spirit.

Owen's Spirit Christology and Covenant Theology

It has been shown that John Owen's Spirit Christology is thoroughly consistent with the Trinitarian and Christological categories of the catholic/Reformed tradition. What remains to be seen is the way Owen constructs his Spirit Christology from rigorous scriptural exegesis that is driven by a commitment to a Reformed Covenantal reading of the canon of Scripture. In this section, it will be shown that Owen's Spirit Christology does not neglect or jettison the Christocentric character of Scripture as a whole and the doctrine of salvation in particular, which the Reformed tradition has always championed. Rather, Owen strengthens this Christocentric impulse by examining it through a thoroughly pneumatological lens.⁷⁵

For Owen, all of the works of God *ad extra* can be considered under two heads: (1) the works of nature, i.e. the old creation, and (2) the works of grace, i.e. the new creation. The old creation refers to the created order in its original state prior to the Fall. The new creation refers to the restoration of all things in Christ.⁷⁶ The terminology

⁷⁵Given Jesus' promise that the Holy Spirit would glorify him, it should come as no surprise that a proper renewal of pneumatology should enhance the Christian conviction that Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of our faith (see John 16:14).

⁷⁶Owen says, "These things being premised, we proceed to consider what are the peculiar operations of the Holy Spirit, as revealed unto us in the Scripture. Now, all the works of God may be referred unto two heads: – 1. Those of *nature*; 2. Those of *grace*; – or the works of the old and new creation" (*IINEYMATOAOITIA*, 95).

of the pre-fall “old creation” and the post-fall “new creation” correspond to the “Covenant of works” and “Covenant of grace” of Reformed Covenant theology, respectively. In *IINEYMATOΛOΓIA*, Owen carefully and methodically presents the peculiar works of the Holy Spirit under these two heads in a way that significantly enhances one’s understanding of the person of Jesus Christ as *the antitype of Adam prior to the Fall, the antitype of the people of God under the Old Testament after the Fall, and the archetype of the people of God in the mystical body of Christ, the church.*

Christ as Antitype of Prelapsarian Adam

For Owen, the work of the Holy Spirit toward Adam as the head of the old creation typologically foreshadows the work of the Holy Spirit toward the human nature of Christ as the last Adam, the head of the new creation. Owen believes that the formation of Adam’s body from the dust of the ground was the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit. He appeals to Genesis 1:2 – the “Spirit of God hovered over the surface of the deep.” The movement of the Spirit of God gave to the earth its “form, order, beauty, and perfection.”⁷⁷ That is, the formless and void mass of the earth was made a suitable habitation for all living creatures by the work of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, by his movement on the earth, the Holy Spirit “communicated unto it a quickening and prolific virtue, inlaying it with the seeds of animal life unto all kinds of things.”⁷⁸ As the agent who formed all life out of the created matter of the earth, the Holy Spirit is the particular divine agent who formed Adam of the dust of the ground.⁷⁹

According to Owen, the Holy Spirit is also the particular divine agent who created the human body of Jesus in the womb of the virgin Mary. Here, Owen appeals to

⁷⁷Owen, *IINEYMATOΛOΓIA*, 98.

⁷⁸Owen, *IINEYMATOΛOΓIA*, 98.

⁷⁹“The creation of man is assigned unto the Holy Spirit, for man was the perfection of the inferior creation.” (Owen, *IINEYMATOΛOΓIA*, 101).

Matthew (1:18-20) and Luke (1:35) where the angel tells Joseph and Mary that the child in the womb is the direct product of the operation of the Holy Spirit. Owen so clearly describes the parallel between the creation of the body of Adam and the creation of the body of Christ that it is worth quoting him at length:

The act of the Holy Ghost in this matter was a creating act; not, indeed, like the first creating act, which produced the matter and substance of all things out of nothing, causing that to be which was not before, neither in matter, nor form, nor passive disposition; but like those subsequent acts of creation, whereby, out of matter before made and prepared, things were made that which before they were not, and which of themselves they had no active disposition unto nor concurrence in. *So man was created or formed of the dust of the earth, and woman of a rib taken from man.* There was a previous matter unto their creation, but such as gave no assistance nor had any active disposition to the production of that particular kind of creature whereinto they were formed by the creating power of God. *Such was this act of the Holy Ghost in forming the body of our Lord Jesus Christ; for although it was effected by an act of infinite creating power, yet it was formed or made of the substance of the blessed Virgin.*⁸⁰

The parallel work of the Holy Spirit in creating the bodies of Adam and Christ enhances one's understanding of the typological relationship of each as the heads of their respective creations, old and new.

Not only was the creation of Adam's body the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit, but the giving of the breath of life, which Owen understands as the imparting of the immaterial soul, was also the special operation of the Holy Spirit (Genesis 2:7).⁸¹ Because Adam was not yet marred by the Fall into sin, his soul was infused with a moral rectitude which made him fit for communion with God under the terms of the covenant of works. Therefore, as the one who bequeathed to Adam an upright soul, the Holy Spirit is the peculiar author of the image of God. Furthermore, it was the "peculiar effects" of the goodness and power of the Holy Spirit by which Adam continued to bear the unmarred divine image until, according to the terms of the covenant of works, Adam transgressed,

⁸⁰Owen, *IINEYMATOLOGIA*, 163-64.

⁸¹For Owen, the one breathing and the breath itself both refer to the Spirit of God: "the one expression is proper, the other metaphorical" (*IINEYMATOLOGIA*, 163-64).

and the Spirit no longer sustained the image of God in its original form. In this way Owen can assert, “Adam may be said to have had the Spirit of God in his innocence.”⁸² While discussing the image of God in Adam under the old creation, Owen reveals how significant this is for his overall pneumatological program. It is the Holy Spirit who works to restore the defaced image of God in the new creation. As the Spirit performs this work, he can be said to “restore his own work, and not take the work of another out of his hand” because “the original implantation” of the image of God was “his peculiar work”⁸³

Just as Adam was endowed by the Holy Spirit with moral rectitude and the ability to commune with God in a manner fitting to his nature, so the human nature of Christ, because directly created by the Holy Spirit, was endowed with a perfect moral rectitude and ability to commune with God. Concerning the human nature of Christ, Owen says, “His nature, therefore, as miraculously created in the manner described, was absolutely innocent, spotless, and free from sin, *as was Adam in the day wherein he was created.*”⁸⁴ Jesus’ human nature was not only created free from sin but endowed with the special grace of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, just as Adam had the Spirit from the moment of his creation, by whose power he continued to bear the unmarred image of God until the Fall, so Christ had the Spirit upon his human nature from the moment of its creation so that he could continue to bear the unmarred image of God, which in him was never defaced. The success of Christ in bearing the image of God unmarred to the end is attributed, not to the union of the human nature with the divine, nor to a greater human nature than that of Adam, but to the fullness of grace which resulted from the fact that the Father gave to him the Spirit “without measure” (John 3:34).⁸⁵ The role of the Holy

⁸²Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 102.

⁸³Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 102.

⁸⁴Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 168, emphasis mine.

⁸⁵Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 169. Concerning the grace of the Spirit by which Christ

Spirit in the creation of Christ's human nature, the immediate sanctification of that nature, and the sustaining of the image of God in Christ are major features of Owen's Spirit Christology.⁸⁶ As this discussion has demonstrated, Owen draws explicit parallels between these works of the Holy Spirit on the human nature of Christ and the Spirit's similar works in the creation and sanctification of Adam in order to enrich the Reformed understanding of Christ as the antitype of Adam (not to mention the Pauline theology of Christ as second Adam).

Christ as Antitype of OT People of God

For Owen, the work of the Holy Spirit toward the people of God under the Old Testament economy typologically foreshadows the work of the Holy Spirit toward the human nature of Christ, who is the antitype of the Old Testament people. As Owen discusses the works of the Holy Spirit under the new creation, he identifies two "sorts" of works. First, there are those works which are "preparatory unto [the new creation], under the Old Testament."⁸⁷ Secondly, there are those works which were "actually wrought about it under the new."⁸⁸ Thus, the post-Fall Old Testament economy is a part of the new creation by way of preparation for it.⁸⁹ As Owen begins his discussion of the works

successfully bore the unmarred image of God, Owen says, "Let the natural faculties of the soul, the mind, will, and affections, be created pure, innocent, undefiled, -- as they cannot be otherwise immediately created of God, -- yet there is not enough to enable any rational creature to live to God; much less was it all that was in Jesus Christ. There is, moreover, required hereunto supernatural endowments of grace, superadded unto the natural faculties of our souls. If we live unto God, there must be a principle of spiritual life in us, as well as of life natural. This was the image of God in Adam, and was wrought in Christ by the Holy Spirit" (*IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 168-69). Owen's expression of the manner in which Christ resisted temptation and continued to bear the image of God unmarred as a man is remarkably akin to Bruce Ware's treatment of Christ's impeccability (see discussion in Chapter Three). Though impeccable by virtue of his union with the divine nature, the reason for Christ's sinless perfection throughout his life is owing to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit at work in, upon, and through his human nature.

⁸⁶In his presentation of the role of the Holy Spirit toward the human nature of Christ, Owen identifies nine works of the Holy Spirit. The creation and sanctification of the human nature of Christ are numbers one and two in his list (*IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 159-88).

⁸⁷Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 125.

⁸⁸Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 126.

⁸⁹Again, Owen is demonstrating his consistency with his Reformed heritage in which all of God's post-Fall dealings with man, whether recorded in the Old or New Testament, are subsumed under the

of the Holy Spirit during this epoch of redemptive history, he makes plain his intention to present the Spirit's works in a way that highlights the person of Christ as the antitypical fulfillment of the Old Testament people of God: "Whatever the Holy Spirit wrought in an eminent manner under the *Old Testament*, it had generally and for the most part, if not absolutely and always, a respect unto our *Lord Jesus Christ* and the gospel; and so was *preparatory* unto the completing of the great work of the *new creation* in and by Him."⁹⁰

Owen recognizes three works of the Spirit toward the Old Testament people of God, which exceed "the whole compass of the abilities of nature, however improved and advanced."⁹¹ These are (1) prophecy, (2) writing of Scripture (which Owen sees as a special subset of prophecy), and (3) the working of miracles.⁹² Owen's discussion of prophecy in the Old Testament occupies the space of many pages. Most important for this discussion is the fact that all prophecy is the result of the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit. Appealing to 2 Peter 1:20-21, Owen observes that "prophecy was always the immediate effect of the operation of the Holy Spirit."⁹³ Just as the Spirit worked toward the prophets of the Old Testament, so he worked with respect to Jesus Christ, the last and greatest prophet. In Owen's discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit toward the human nature of Christ, he says, "The Holy Spirit, in a peculiar manner, anointed him with all those extraordinary powers and gifts which were necessary for the exercise and discharging of his office on the earth."⁹⁴ By Christ's "office on the earth," Owen has in mind primarily his prophetic office: "The whole course of his life and ministry was the

framework of the one covenant of grace.

⁹⁰Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 126, emphasis in citation.

⁹¹Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 126.

⁹²Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 126

⁹³Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 128.

⁹⁴Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 171. This is number four in Owen's list of nine works of the Holy Spirit performs toward the human nature of Christ.

discharge of his prophetic office unto the Jews. . . . Hereunto was he fitted by the unction of the Spirit.”⁹⁵ The fact that Christ’s prophetic office was carried out by the power and unction of the Holy Spirit strengthens the typological connection that exists between him and the Old Testament prophets of Israel.

Concerning miracles wrought through human instruments in the Old Testament, Owen says, “Now, these were all the immediate effects of the divine power of the Holy Ghost. He is the sole author of all real miraculous operations; for by ‘miracles’ we understand such effects as are really beyond and above the power of natural causes, however applied unto operation.”⁹⁶ Just as the Holy Spirit was the immediate divine subject of the miracles wrought through human instruments in the Old Testament, so was the Holy Spirit the immediate divine agent of the miracles wrought through the man Christ Jesus: “By the power of the Holy Spirit he wrought those great and miraculous works whereby his ministry was attested unto and confirmed.”⁹⁷ Here, Owen appeals to Acts 2:22, which says that “God wrought miracles by him.” For proof that the Holy Spirit is the particular divine person referred to, he examines Luke 11:20 and Matthew 12:28 in which Jesus casts out demons by the “finger of God” (Luke 11:20) or the “Spirit of God” (Matt 12:28). It is important to note that, for Owen, it is not enough to say that *some* of Jesus’ miracles were wrought via the direct agency of the Holy Spirit. Rather, *all* of Jesus miracles were wrought by the peculiar agency of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁸

⁹⁵Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 171. Owen believes that Christ only exercised his kingly office during the state of humiliation when he sent forth the apostles to preach with authority and when he instituted the Lord’s Supper. Furthermore, the only occasion in which Christ exercised his priestly office during his life on earth was in the moment of his death.

⁹⁶Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 145. Interestingly, one of Owen’s arguments that the Holy Spirit is the immediate divine agent of Old Testament miracles is an appeal to the earthly life of Christ, in which the Holy Spirit is the immediate divine agent active in the miracles of Christ: “Now it is said expressly that our Lord Jesus Christ wrought miracles (for instance, the casting out of devils from persons possessed) by the Holy Ghost; and if their immediate production were by him in the human nature of Jesus Christ, personally united unto the Son of God, how much more must it be granted that it was he alone by whose power they were wrought in those who had no such relation to the divine nature!”

⁹⁷Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 174.

⁹⁸“[The Holy Spirit] is the immediate operator of *all* divine acts of the Son himself, even on his

Concerning miraculous works, Owen enhances one's understanding and appreciation of Jesus Christ as the antitype of the people of God in the Old Testament by focusing on the role of the Holy Spirit as the immediate divine agent of Christ's miraculous works.

Christ as Archetype of NT Church

For Owen, the work of the Holy Spirit toward the members of the mystical body of Christ (the church) ektypologically reflects the work of the Holy Spirit toward the human nature of Christ, who is the archetypal *exemplar* of the members of his body, the church. Concerning this feature of Owen's Spirit Christology, Sinclair Ferguson has rightly observed,

Owen's understanding of the believer's experience of the Holy Spirit rests upon this foundation. Jesus Christ, who gives the Spirit to his people on the day of Pentecost, and who bestows the same gift on all those who trust him, does so as the one upon whom that Spirit was first and foremost bestowed.

Thus Owen understands that Jesus was the recipient and the bearer of the Spirit both prior to our becoming the recipients of the Spirit and also with a specific view to our reception of the Spirit. Furthermore, the relationship formed between the divine Spirit and the incarnate Mediator is determinative of the character of the ministry of the Holy Spirit to all believers.⁹⁹

Owen is clear that the reality of the correspondence between the work of the Spirit toward the human nature of Christ and the work of the Spirit toward members of the church is one of the reasons he has explored the issue. As he concludes his discussion of the works of the Holy Spirit toward the human nature of Christ, he contemplates what effect such knowledge should have upon the believer. He offers two answers. The

own human nature. Whatever the Son of God wrought in, by, or upon the human nature, he did it by the Holy Ghost" (*IINEYMATOAOIYA*, 162, emphasis mine.). This is a necessary consequence of Owen's commitment to an economic Trinitarian taxis in which the Holy Spirit is the immediate agent of all of the acts of God toward the created order.

⁹⁹ Sinclair Ferguson, "John Owen and the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," in *John Owen: The Man and His Theology*, ed. Robert W. Oliver (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 108. Ferguson understands Owen's pneumatology in two parts, the role of the Spirit in the life of Christ and the role of the Spirit in the lives of believers. Unfortunately, while Ferguson correctly observes the connection between these two parts, he does not even mention Owen's discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in the old creation or toward the Old Testament people of God after the Fall. Thus, while immensely helpful in his work on John Owen, does not do justice to the full significance of Owen's discussion of the role of the Spirit toward the human nature of Christ because he does not treat Owen's intention of presenting Christ as the antitype of Adam and the people of God under the Old Testament through a pneumatological lens.

second one is *apropos* here: “We are to know Christ so as to labor after conformity unto him.”¹⁰⁰ How is one to labor after such conformity? “We can, therefore, no other way regularly press after it, but by an acquaintance with and due consideration of the work of the Spirit of God upon his human nature; which is therefore worthy of our most diligent inquiry into.”¹⁰¹ As Owen then transitions to discuss the work of the Holy Spirit in the new creation toward the members of the church, he makes plain his conviction that the work of the Holy Spirit toward the human nature of Christ is the archetypal foundation for the work of the Holy Spirit toward believers in Christ: “And this belongs unto the establishment of our faith, that he who prepared, sanctified, and glorified the human nature, the natural body of Jesus Christ, the head of the church, hath undertaken to prepare, sanctify, and glorify his mystical body, or all the elect given unto him of the Father.”¹⁰²

By observing the works of the Holy Spirit toward the human nature of Christ in light of the works of the Holy Spirit toward Adam, the Old Testament saints, and the church, Owen greatly enriches the Reformed Covenantal understanding of Christ as the antitype of Adam and the people of God in the Old Testament and the archetype of the members of his mystical body, the church. In this way, by the use of the tools of the Reformed tradition, namely Covenant theology, the Christocentric impulse of all of Scripture is preserved by this pneumatological enrichment of Christology.

John Owen and the Promise of Spirit Christology

It has already been observed that the pneumatological refashioning of traditional theology has become an increasingly common motif in contemporary

¹⁰⁰Owen, *IINEYMATOLOGIA*, 188.

¹⁰¹Owen, *IINEYMATOLOGIA*, 188.

¹⁰²Owen, *IINEYMATOLOGIA*, 189.

theology, and the recasting of Christology as Spirit Christology is at the forefront of this trend. Some proposals, in their zeal to pursue the advantages of Spirit Christology, have modified or neglected some of the traditional Trinitarian and Christological convictions that have characterized orthodox Christianity for centuries. On this landscape of pneumatological reappraisal, Evangelicals can easily find themselves at an impasse. The advantages of Spirit Christology seem important, but the loss of traditional categories and the creating of new ones seems dangerous indeed. It is precisely for this reason that the Spirit Christology of John Owen holds out great promise for the future pneumatological enrichment of Evangelical Christology. Owen's proposal has all of the conceptual tools to achieve all of the theological advantages of Spirit Christology identified in the last chapter, and he develops his model without succumbing to any of the attendant theological dangers. The fact that Owen achieves this without jettisoning or even modifying any of the most precious theological treasures of the catholic/Reformed tradition should serve to inspire future theologians. When a perceived neglect is identified in the tradition, it may not represent an error in the tradition but a simple failure to appropriate the tools of the tradition in every possible way. Owen has demonstrated that the tools bequeathed to him by the catholic/Reformed tradition are more than sufficient to account for the robust role of the Holy Spirit toward the human nature of Christ demanded by his careful exegesis of Scripture.

Emphasis on the Humanity of Christ

The first advantage of Trinitarian Spirit Christology identified in the last chapter was its emphasis on the humanity of Christ. Gerald Hawthorne, Klaus Issler, and Bruce Ware all develop their Spirit-Christology proposals with this advantage as the chief desideratum, and the other proponents of Trinitarian Spirit Christology also value this aspect of the paradigm.¹⁰³ John Owen's Spirit Christology achieves this advantage in an

¹⁰³It should be noted that even the revisionist models appeal to this feature of Spirit

exegetically and theologically rich way. Owen develops the theme of Christ's humanity in much the same way that the Scriptures develop it – by presenting Christ as the fulfillment of the promise of God to raise up a human who would be his own suffering servant, who would succeed where Adam and Israel failed. Owen's presentation of Spirit Christology in the larger framework of Reformed Covenant Theology highlights the solidarity of Christ with those he came to save in a rich, redemptive-historical way.¹⁰⁴ Of particular significance is Owen's focus on the creation of Adam and the creation of the human nature of Christ. By emphasizing that God brought the human nature of the Son into existence in a manner that corresponds to the way he brought Adam into existence, namely by the peculiar working of the Holy Spirit in the formation of already created matter for the purpose that God intended, Owen adds a rich dimension to the scriptural confession that Christ was "made like his brethren in all things."

The Imitation of Christ

A second advantage to Spirit Christology as a paradigm is its usefulness in enhancing Christian devotion by making sense of the biblical commands to follow Christ's example. Owen's proposal certainly enriches Christian devotion in this way. Owen discusses the image of God in Adam, which was given to him and kept unmarred until the Fall by the peculiar working of the Holy Spirit so as to highlight that the image of God in the human nature of Christ was also sustained unmarred by the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ succeeded in living a perfectly sinless life, resisting all temptation and

Christology. The critique that incarnational models of Christology present God on earth rather than God's anointed servant, superman from far away rather than Messiah in whom God draws near is ubiquitous in the revisionist models. Of course, their answer to this critique is to abandon traditional biblical Christology and Trinitarian theology altogether.

¹⁰⁴One does not need to ascribe fully to a traditional Reformed account of covenant theology to appreciate what Owen is doing in *IINEYMATOAOIYA*. In fact, his emphasis on Christ as antitype of Adam and Old Testament people of God and archetype of the New Testament church could be re-appropriated and applied to any number of contemporary evangelical models of continuity and discontinuity between the covenantal epochs of redemptive history.

fulfilling the Father's will in all things, because of the constant presence and power of the Holy Spirit working in and through him according to his human nature. Thus, the scriptural call to follow in Christ's example is not a call to be superhuman. It is, rather, a call to live as Christ lived, filled with the Spirit of God unto obedience to the will of God.

Emphasis on the Holy Spirit

For many proponents of Spirit Christology, the Holy Spirit in Western Christian theology is perceived as the Cinderella whom everyone forgot to invite to the theological ball. Myk Habets and Ralph Del Colle frame their Spirit-Christology proposals explicitly in an attempt to remedy this supposed neglect of the Spirit. While Owen does not seek to emphasize the Spirit with the same methods employed by Del Colle and Habets, he nevertheless emphasizes the person and work of the Holy Spirit in a way that, even today, is garnering attention as a pneumatologically enriched approach to traditional theological questions. While Del Colle, Habets, and others inclined to see the neglect of Spirit as owing to traditional Trinitarian understanding of eternal processions will likely not be satisfied with Owen on this point, those with more traditional bearings who believe that the traditional model of Trinitarian being and agency is the only way to remain faithful to the contours of divine revelation will see Owen's manner of addressing pneumatological neglect as the way forward. For Owen, the recovery from neglect of Spirit, real or perceived, is not found by jettisoning the inherited tradition but by rediscovering it, mining the tradition for its pneumatological riches.

The Exegetical Advantage

Proponents of traditional Trinitarian theology and Christology have, at times, approached passages that deal explicitly with the role of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus with more of defensive posture than a constructive one. That is, the presence of the Spirit in and upon Jesus is seen more as a problem that needs solving in the defense of an incarnational Christology rather than a treasure of divine revelation to

enhance our understanding of both the person of Christ in his office as Mediator and the person of the Holy Spirit in his peculiar working in and through the human nature of Jesus. The descent of the Spirit upon Jesus, for example, is presented as only symbolic, identifying Jesus as Messiah rather than also being developed for its actual effect on the life and ministry Jesus as Messiah. Owen, however, treats the passages in which the Spirit is active in the life of Jesus with all of the theological rigor and excitement with which he defends the deity of Christ and pleads for the mortification of sin. His paradigm for understanding the role of the Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus provides the framework in which such exegetical riches can be safely mined with no danger of transgressing the sacred boundaries of Trinitarian Christological orthodoxy as rightly embraced by the church through the centuries.

John Owen and the Peril of Spirit Christology

John Owen's Spirit Christology achieves all of the advantages of Spirit Christology that hold out the promise of pneumatological enrichment to traditional Christology. As has been shown, however, the advantages of Spirit Christology are also attended by a number of theological dangers, some more serious than others, but all of which represent a detriment to traditional Christian theological categories. The Trinitarian Spirit-Christology proposals identified in the last chapter either explicitly succumbed to some or all of the dangers of Spirit Christology, implicitly succumbed to those dangers, or constructed their model in such a way that the door seemed to remain open to succumbing to the dangers. John Owen, on the other hand, presents his Spirit Christology in such a way that the potential dangers of the paradigm are avoided.

Diminished Emphasis on the Deity of Christ

The revisionist models of Spirit Christology represent a wholesale re-iteration of the heresy of adoptionism, even if they wish to avoid the label for obvious reasons. It

has been shown that even the Trinitarian models can be guilty an unintended neglect of Christ's deity resulting from a one-sided emphasis on his humanity as indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit. It has been suggested that Gerald Hawthorne, Klaus Issler, Clark Pinnock, and Amos Yong all succumb to this critique. How does John Owen fare here? One need not read Owen for long to see that his apprehension of and appreciation for the full ontological deity of God the Son and a traditional model of the incarnation is at the heart of his theology. Interestingly, it is only in a volume devoted explicitly to pneumatology that Owen develops the model that is here being labeled as Spirit Christology. A few years after the writing of *IINEYMATOΛOΓIA*, Owen wrote his tome on the glory of Christ, *XPICTOΛOΓIA*,¹⁰⁵ in which he presents and defends the glorious deity of God the Son incarnate with all the exegetical rigor and energy that he devotes to the person and work of the Holy Spirit in *IINEYMATOΛOΓIA*. Even in the *IINEYMATOΛOΓIA*, the entirety of the portions devoted to the work of the Holy Spirit toward the human nature of Christ, is characterized by the constant reminders that the human nature of Christ is hypostatically united to the divine nature in the person of the Son. That is, Owen constantly bears witness to the fact that the man Christ Jesus is none other than God the Son incarnate.

One possible weakness of Owen should be mentioned here. One of the critiques of Hawthorne was that for him, the *words* of Jesus and the apostles bear witness to the ontological deity of Jesus, but the *works* of Jesus do not. This is the consequence of Hawthorne's commitment to viewing all of the miraculous deeds of Jesus as owing to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and not to the direct exercise of the divine nature

¹⁰⁵See especially Owen, *XPICTOΛOΓIA*, 104-112 in which Owen extols the reasons for the honor due unto Christ, arguing by way of masterful exposition that the worship and adoration of the person of Jesus Christ is demanded of the church. If we worship him who is not God, we violate the first command of the Decalogue. If we do not worship him who is God, we violate the same commandment. Therefore, the various calls to worship and adore Christ are testimonies to his full deity as one in nature with the Father and the Spirit.

by the Son as peculiar subject. It has been shown that John Owen also¹⁰⁶ holds that the miraculous works of Jesus are to be ascribed, insofar as peculiar divine subject is concerned, to the person of the Holy Spirit. Is it possible to ascribe the miraculous works of Jesus to the divine person of the Holy Spirit rather than to the divine actings of the Son as “immediate, peculiar” divine subject and still contend that the works of Jesus display his deity? In other words, can the miracles of Jesus bear witness to his deity even if Owen’s model of Spirit Christology is embraced? Owen does not address this question, but it is an important one. It will be contended in the next chapter that the answer to the above question is yes.

Incoherence of Divine Unity

The second danger of Spirit Christology is the possible neglect of the church’s historic affirmation of divine unity of essence through the doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity. Some proponents of Spirit Christology, including some interpreters of John Owen, are critical of the inseparability rule. Others simply neglect to address the historically ubiquitous principle that has been seen as the inevitable consequence of the *homoousios* of the Nicene Creed since at least the time of Athanasius. The survey of Owen’s Spirit Christology in this chapter should make it abundantly clear that, in spite of the insistence of some, Owen’s Spirit Christology does not jettison the historic doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity. Rather, the ancient rule is, for Owen, a “regulative principle” of his theology.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶I use the word “also” here hesitantly. The entire Trinitarian theological and Chalcedonian Christological framework of Owen’s proposal is vastly different than Hawthorne’s. So, Owen’s insistence on the Spirit’s role and Hawthorne’s insistence are really not of the same variety. Both do, however, insist that the Spirit is the divine person to whom the miraculous power on display in the works of Jesus is to be appropriated.

¹⁰⁷Richard Daniels, *The Christology of John Owen*, 101.

Incoherence of Hypostatic Union

Some proponents of Trinitarian Spirit Christology have failed to utilize or observe the full Christological paradigm of the Chalcedonian formula of the hypostatic union. In particular, Spirit-Christology proponents like Hawthorne and Issler have not understood the extremely important Christological doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum* that is based on the distinction of the two natures such that the properties of one nature are not transferred to the other, but that the properties of each nature can be predicated of the one person by virtue of their union in the person of the Son. Embracing this principle of Chalcedonian Christology would have prevented Hawthorne from affirming a kenotic Christology and Issler from advocating what appears to be a monothelite understanding of the person of Christ.

This survey of Owen's Spirit Christology has made it abundantly clear that he does not make the same mistake as some contemporary thinkers. Not only does Owen affirm the distinction of natures, it is foundational to his model. It is precisely because of the Chalcedonian distinction of natures and a right apprehension of the *communicatio idiomatum* that Owen's model is coherent and consistent with an incarnational Logos Christology. Owen, it was seen, is able to do this while also avoiding the equally detrimental pitfall of Nestorianism. This is seen in Owen's robust affirmation of the principle that the human nature of Christ was *anhypostasia* apart from being *enhyposstatized* by the person of the Son.

Decentralizing Jesus

The desire to emphasize the person and work of the Holy Spirit with respect to traditional Christological categories has led some to jettison the Christocentric and Christo-exclusive soteriological paradigm of the New Testament. In particular, Clark Pinnock and Amos Yong have appealed to a strong account of Spirit Christology as integral to their program of advocating and inclusivist soteriological paradigm that

borders on universalism (Pinnock) and incorporates elements of *bona fide* pluralism (Yong).

The discussion of John Owen's Spirit Christology in this chapter has demonstrated that he does not succumb to this potential danger in any way. Because of the way Owen frames his understanding of Spirit Christology in terms of a covenantal unfolding of the epochs of redemptive history, the term Christocentric is a fitting description of the model. For Owen, the primacy of the person of Christ is not displaced for his emphasis on the Spirit. Rather, the Spirit is presented as always working, in every stage of redemptive history, to glorify Christ. Whether by way of preparation, working through the types of Christ in the Old Testament, or by way of empowering the person of Christ in his mission as mediator, or by way of reproducing the image of Christ in the church, which is Christ's body, the Holy Spirit is directing all the attention and affection of the entire cosmos to the person Jesus Christ.

Overemphasis on Ecumenical Potential

In the last chapter, it was observed that some proponents of Spirit Christology (Myk Habets and Ralph Del Colle) identify the potential for ecumenism as a criterion for truth rather than a consequence of it. This particular danger of Spirit Christology hardly enters the realm of concern with respect to John Owen. It is not as though Owen did not care for ecumenical unity. Indeed, as with the other Reformed orthodox divines, a firm commitment to Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy was part of an unwavering desire to remain within the ecumenical boundaries of the ancient church catholic with respect to the most fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, being Reformed, Owen and others in his theological camp were not willing to allow the hope of ecumenical unity to overshadow the pursuit of truth as revealed in Scripture. Thus, Owen was catholic but Reformed, conforming to the church catholic when truth led him to that commitment and reforming away from it when truth so compelled.

Conclusion

Through his proposal of a carefully constructed Trinitarian Spirit Christology, John Owen has offered a significant pneumatological enrichment to the catholic/Reformed tradition of which he was consciously a part, and his work holds out great promise for Evangelical theology as future thinkers seek to faithfully and carefully mine the rich material located at the intersection of pneumatology and Christology. In the next and final chapter of this dissertation, Owen's model of Spirit Christology will be embraced and advanced in laying a foundation for a contemporary articulation of a robust Spirit Christology. Two particular features of Owen's proposal will be improved upon, not by way of correction so much as extension. Owen does not directly address the question of the well-known *extra-Calvinisticum* and how that concept affects his understanding of the peculiar works of the Spirit in/on/through the human nature of Christ. Also, Owen does not address the question of how the mighty works of Jesus (not just his words and the apostolic testimony about him) testify to his deity. These issues will be addressed directly as part of the discussion in the fifth chapter.

CHAPTER 5
RETRIEVING AND ADVANCING AN OWENITE
SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY

Introduction

It is the final aim of this dissertation to advance the thesis that Trinitarian Spirit Christology – carefully conceived, articulated, and applied – offers the promise of considerable pneumatological enrichment to the traditional Evangelical Christology. The potential enrichment is articulated in terms of a number of advantages of Spirit-Christology, as identified in chapter 3 and revisited in chapter 4. It has been shown, however, that alongside the potential advantages of Trinitarian Spirit Christology, there are a number of attendant dangers that threaten to undermine some of the most cherished convictions of the Christian faith. These advantages and dangers are framed in light of the catholic heritage of the Christian church with respect to Nicene Trinitarian theology and Chalcedonian Christology. For Trinitarian Spirit Christology to offer an enrichment to traditional Christian theology, the identified advantages must be realized and advanced while the dangers are clearly, coherently, and consistently avoided.

Thus far in this study, various Spirit Christology proposals have been surveyed as occurring along a spectrum of consistency with the confessional Trinitarian and Christological heritage of the church. At one end of the spectrum are those models that have entirely jettisoned the Trinitarian dogma of historic Christianity and with it, the Christological dogma of the person of Christ. These proposals were surveyed in chapter 2. It was argued that these revisionist models, often referred to as “post-Trinitarian,”¹

¹Myk Habets, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, ed. K. C. Hanson, Charles M. Collier, and D. Christopher Spinks (Eugene, OR:

actually represent a return to the pre-Trinitarian Christological heresy of adoptionism. The adoptionistic paradigm of these revisionist models is evident by (1) a unitarian understanding of the being of God, (2) a rejection of the personal preexistence of the Son of God from eternity, and (3) a denial of the ontological deity of Jesus Christ.

Further along the spectrum are the proposals of *Trinitarian Spirit Christology*, models that purport to uphold the basic contours of Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy, as surveyed in chapter 3. These Trinitarian Spirit-Christology models all confess that God is one and that this one God exists eternally and simultaneously as three distinct persons. All Trinitarian models, further, hold to an incarnational model of Christology. That is, they all confess that the eternal and preexistent person of God the Son became incarnate at a particular point in history, taking to himself a complete human nature, living a fully human life that included suffering, temptation, and even death, all without relinquishing the properties that characterize deity. All of the Trinitarian models surveyed in chapter 3, however, either have entailments that undermine the Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy of the Christian faith or, at the least, have left critical questions unanswered in their articulation of Spirit Christology.

Continuing further along the spectrum, at the opposite end of the revisionist proposals, careful consideration was given to the Spirit Christology of the Reformed Orthodox theologian, John Owen. Owen has had his critics who claim that his proposals are not entirely consistent with the orthodox Trinitarian and Christological heritage of the church. It has been argued, however, that the Reformed theologian has been misunderstood by such critics and that his proposal is thoroughly within the bounds of classical heritage. Further, it has been argued that Owen enriched the theological tradition of which he was proudly a part by advancing a robust Spirit Christology. Owen's model of Spirit Christology achieves all of the advantages of Spirit Christology while clearly,

Pickwick, 2010), 5.

coherently, and consistently avoiding the dangers often associated with the paradigm. He does this, not by modifying or rejecting his tradition, but by utilizing the tools of his tradition to great effect. The result is a Spirit-Christology proposal born out of due time, as it were, appearing on the scene of Protestant theology nearly three hundred years before the renaissance in pneumatological studies of the last fifty years that has led to the rapidly increasing popularity of Spirit Christology in Western Christian traditions.

In this final chapter, I intend to make explicit my own embrace of an Owenite Trinitarian Spirit Christology as a legitimate and helpful Christological paradigm. The argument of the chapter will proceed as follows. First, a brief and clarifying review will be given of the classical account of Trinitarian agency, particularly the way that Owen articulated it. Owen's articulation, though consistent with classical Trinitarian agency, extends the logic of the traditional account to the person of the Holy Spirit in a way that naturally yields a kind of Trinitarian Spirit Christology. Second, it will be shown that the testimony of Scripture concerning the working of the Holy Spirit supports an Owenite understanding of the agency of the Holy Spirit, both with respect to the working of the Spirit toward creation and human agents in general and with respect to the human nature of the Son in particular. Third, this chapter will engage Christopher R. J. Holmes² and Stephen J. Wellum,³ who critique Spirit Christology as a whole paradigm from the vantage point of classical Trinitarian theology and Chalcedonian Christology respectively. It will be shown that their critiques are valid with respect to some species of Trinitarian Spirit Christology but that the Owenite variety answers these criticisms in a way that enriches classical sensibilities. Fourth, and stemming from Wellum's critique in particular, this chapter will address the question of whether Christ's miracles ever attest

²Christopher R. J. Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, New Studies in Dogmatics, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

³Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

directly to his deity if the divine operations are to be attributed to the person of the Holy Spirit. It will be shown that Christ’s miracles can and do attest to his full deity even within the framework of a robust Spirit Christology.

Trinitarian Agency and Operations of the Holy Spirit

It is the goal of this section to summarize the Owenite extension of the classical account of Trinitarian agency into the dogmatic expression of a robust Spirit Christology. It will be seen that an Owenite Spirit Christology is not merely an isolated proposal concerning the relationship of the Son and the Spirit in the state of the Son’s humiliation. Rather, Spirit Christology is the entailment of a particular understanding of the agency of the Holy Spirit in/on/through human agents, which is itself an entailment of the classical account of Trinitarian agency.

The Nicene Creed (Constantinople, AD 381) establishes the unity of the Godhead by stating that the Son is *homousios* with the Father. That is, God the Father and God the Son share in identically the same undivided divine nature. While the creed stopped short of declaring the Spirit to be *homoousios* with the Father and the Son, other expressions in the creed identified the Spirit as one in nature or essence with Father and Son.⁴ Thus, according to the creed and the historic expression of orthodoxy derived from it, God is one in nature or essence. Furthermore, the Nicene Creed states that the essentially unified persons of the Godhead are distinguished from one another by internal relations of origin or eternal processions – the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, and

⁴The creed identifies the Spirit as “Lord and Giver of life.” The notion of an infinite ontological gap (transcendence) between the one true God and all other beings was commonplace among fourth-century Nicene theologians. That gap consists of the difference between Creator and creature, between Giver of life and recipient of life. God is eternal Creator and giver of life, and all other beings are created. Thus, by referring to the Holy Spirit as Lord and Life Giver, the council of Constantinople made a statement just as strong as if it had said that the Holy Spirit is *homoousios* with the Father and the Son, and later orthodox theologians have not hesitated to make the claim explicit. For a brief discussion of the fourth century argument for transcendence, see Stephen Holmes, “Classical Trinity: Evangelical Perspective,” in *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. Jason Sexton, Counterpoints Bible and Theology Series, ed. Stanley Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 25-48.

the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son.⁵ This unity of being and distinction of hypostatic identity, as articulated in the Nicene Creed, has been embraced as the fundamental grammar of orthodox Trinitarian theology for the Christian church since that time.

This grammar of unity and distinction also established the orthodox ground for understanding the way that God acts in the world. Just as the very being of the one God subsists as three distinct persons according to an eternal and immutable order (*taxis*) – the Son is from the Father, the Spirit from the Father and the Son – so the one Triune God acts in the world according to the same order – from the Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit. Put differently, the *ad intra* order of being is the ground for the *ad extra* order of operation with respect to the Godhead.⁶

It is this traditional grammar of Trinitarian theology that gives rise to the historic doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity, already discussed in considerable detail in chapters 3 and 4. Because every divine action flows from the one undivided divine nature as its principle of operation, so every divine action is the undivided work of all three persons of the Godhead. However, it has been shown that the classical tradition has developed the doctrine of appropriations and terminations by which the undivided works of God may be distinguished with respect to particular persons. Owen pressed the tradition of appropriation and termination without transgressing its boundaries, in order to be able to speak of the distinct persons of the Godhead as modally appropriated willing subjects of divine action flowing through the undivided essence of the three. By this strategy, Owen ascribes specific divine operations to specific

⁵As already noted, the notion that the Spirit's process was from both the Father *and the Son* was not written into the original version of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. Rather, the notion was made explicit in the Latin version of the creed at the regional Council of Toledo in AD 589. The Latin term, *filioque*, meaning "and the Son," was added, and this was eventually the main bone of contention leading to the division of the church into East and West in AD 1054.

⁶This basic grammar of Trinitarian being and action has already been advocated in the critiques of theologians surveyed in chapter 3 and the defense of John Owen in chap. 4.

Trinitarian persons as distinct acting subjects, operating always from one undivided essence.

If the traditional Trinitarian order of operations is right and Owen's articulation of it is legitimate, then it follows that the Holy Spirit is the immediate divine (modally appropriated) subject upon whom the works of God toward the created order terminate. This is so because the Spirit is immutably third in the *ad-intra* order of subsistence. Therefore, his place in the *ad-extra* order of operations, being revelatory of his eternal subsistence, is always third. In the words of John Owen, "The Holy Ghost. . . is the *immediate, peculiar, efficient cause* of all external divine operations: for God worketh by his Spirit, or in him immediately applies the power and efficacy of the divine excellencies unto their operation."⁷ Thus, divine activity exercised directly in/on/through created material always terminates on the person of the Holy Spirit. It is vital to keep in mind the principle of inseparable operations and the immutability of Trinitarian relations here. While the Spirit is the terminating subject of divine operations toward the created order, it is also true that the Father and Son are subjects of the divine operations toward the created order, but the Father and Son are not *terminating* subjects in the way that the Spirit is. Thus, following the Owenite strategy of modally appropriated subjectivity, it is only the Holy Spirit who is the "immediate, peculiar, efficient" subject of divine operations toward created material. The Spirit, however, acts as he always does, from the Father and the Son. The Father and Son also, in such divine operations, act as they always do in Trinitarian relation. The Father acts through the Son and by the Spirit, and the Son acts from the Father and by the Spirit. By this strategy of modal appropriation, emphasis is given to the work of the Holy Spirit without excluding the other two divine persons or compromising divine unity.

⁷John Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA, or A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*, vol. 3, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Gould (Edinburgh, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 162, emphasis in citation.

We are now ready to apply this logic of the agency of the Holy Spirit in creation generally to the agency of the Holy Spirit in/on/through human agents specifically. It follows from the logic of Trinitarian agency toward creation that all direct divine agency in/on/through human agents in particular terminates upon the Holy Spirit as well because human agents are part of the created order, even the pinnacle of it. Thus, if this argument is sound, one can argue, by the dogmatic extension of Trinitarian logic, as follows: It is the Holy Spirit who is the immediate divine subject in the work of the formation of Adam from the dust of the ground. It is the Spirit of God who is the immediate divine subject of the revelation of supernatural knowledge to the mind of the prophets and apostles. It is the Spirit of God who is the immediate divine subject of special divine empowerment of specific people for specific purposes. It is the Spirit of God who is the immediate divine subject of the work of regeneration, leading to faith in Christ.

Applying a model of Trinitarian agency to the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God presents a great theological challenge. The Owenite model summarized here provides a theological framework for facing this challenge. In the incarnation, God the Son assumed a human nature and lived a human life according to the properties of that nature. Thus, for all of the complexities inherent in the uniqueness of Jesus as divine Son, the role of the Holy Spirit in his earthly life is nevertheless an instance of the Holy Spirit operative in/on/through created humanity, even though the subject of that particular human nature is God the Son. Given the humanity of the Son, we should expect to see some consistency between the Spirit's peculiar operations in/on/through the Son and the Spirit's operations in/on/through other human agents.⁸

⁸That is not to say there is nothing unique about the Son's experience of the Spirit in the incarnation. Indeed his experience is unique in many ways. As will be seen, his experience of the Spirit *qua* humanity is unique in terms of the degree to which he experiences the Spirit, and his experience of the Spirit *qua* hypostatic union with the divine nature as the person of the Son is utterly unique in a qualitative sense.

The default assumption of most orthodox Christians throughout the history of the church, however, has been quite different than this.⁹ It is ordinarily assumed that the Son *qua* Son is the immediate terminating subject of the *divine action* executed in/on/through his own human nature. This default assumption seems to imply that there is an exception to the normal rule of the Trinitarian order of operation that is grounded in the eternal Trinitarian order of being. Because the Spirit is third and final in the order of being, he is expected to be third and final in the order of terminal appropriation and the immediate, peculiar subject of the works of God toward created things. If the Son, however, is the terminating subject of *divine action* toward his own *created* human nature, rather than such action terminating on the Spirit, then the incarnation represents an exception to the orthodox grammar of Trinitarian agency. It might seem that such an exception is warranted by the unique situation of the incarnation. After all, the Son himself is the immediate, peculiar subject of the assumption of the human nature; the Son only became incarnate. However, the uniqueness of the hypostatic union notwithstanding, it is difficult to conceive of the human experience of Jesus corresponding in a real and imitable way to our own with respect to suffering, temptation, and other human limitations if the human nature of the Son is the one created exception to the normal order of Trinitarian operations as terminating on the Spirit. The Chalcedonian insistence on the distinction of the two natures in the one person of the Son, however, provides a metaphysical framework for affirming that the normal order of Trinitarian operations as

⁹Consider this sampling from just the Reformed tradition. Commenting on Jesus' miracle of turning water into wine, John Calvin says, "He then gave a striking and illustrious proof, by which it was ascertained that he was the Son of God; for all the miracles which he exhibited to the world were so many demonstrations of his divine power" (John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, vol. 17, Calvin's Commentaries [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003], 89). Commenting on Jesus' miracle of walking on the sea, J. C. Ryle says, "It was just as easy for Him to walk on the sea as to form the sea at the beginning – just as easy to suspend the common laws of nature as they are called, as to impose those laws at the first" (*Expository Thoughts on John*, vol. 1 [1874; repr., Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997], 339.). Charles Hodge, in his proofs of the deity of Jesus Christ, states that Christ "wrought miracles by his own inherent power. . . . Every miracle of Christ, therefore, was a visible manifestation of his divinity" (*Systematic Theology* [1872; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970], 2:504).

terminating on the Spirit applies to the human nature of the Son also. This allows for a more robust account of the human experience of Jesus and prevents the awkward theological conundrum of having to deal with an exception to the rule of Trinitarian agency.

Thus, it is neither surprising nor strange for Owen to argue that the Son's assumption of a human nature does not entail the conclusion that the divine operations in/on/through that nature terminate on the Son. Right after concluding that the Holy Spirit is "the immediate, peculiar, efficient cause of all external *divine operations*,"¹⁰ Owen applies this model to the question of the manifestation of divine excellencies in the human life of the Son. He contends that The Holy Spirit is "the immediate operator of *all divine acts* of the Son himself, even on his own human nature. Whatever the Son of God wrought in, by, or upon the human nature, he did it by the Holy Ghost, who is his Spirit, as he is the Spirit of the Father."¹¹ Notice again that Owen speaks of the Holy Spirit as "the immediate operator of the divine acts," but he does not exclude the Son and the Father from the operations entirely. Rather, he explicitly acknowledges that the Spirit acts by the Father and the Son, just as the Father and Son act by the Spirit. All three persons are operative in all divine acts in/on/through the human nature of the Son, but the Spirit is the modally appropriated terminating subject of those divine acts. This Spirit-Christology conclusion makes sense in light of the overall Owenite theology of the agency of the Holy Spirit being defended here. The question remains as to whether the scriptural testimony bears witness to the faithfulness of this model.

Owenite Spirit Christology and Biblical Support

Thus far, this discussion has been devoted to the dogmatic investigation of an

¹⁰Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 161.

¹¹Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 162.

Owenite account of the agency of the Holy Spirit and its implications for Spirit Christology. Nevertheless, however traditionally rendered or logically coherent a model may be, the ultimate test for any theological proposal is its faithfulness to Scripture. The argument of this chapter, of this entire dissertation even, stands or falls with the conviction that Scripture presents an overall picture of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the incarnate life of God the Son that is well honored by an Owenite species of Spirit Christology. This section will consider such biblical material. It will first be shown that the general Owenite account of the agency of the Holy Spirit being advanced here is supported by biblical testimony. It will then be shown that the particular extension of that account to the role of the Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus is consistent with a robust Spirit Christology in which the anointing of the human nature of the Son occupies a place of paradigmatic prominence in Christological formulation. Other thinkers, many of whom I have engaged in this study, have advanced extensive exegetical arguments for the paradigmatic prominence of the person and work of the Holy Spirit with respect to traditional Christological categories, and I find many of these exegetical arguments convincing, especially those pertaining to the anointing of the human nature of Christ, even while I am troubled by the way some of these exegetical conclusions have been applied theologically. In this section, therefore, I will restate favorably some of the observations and implications stated by other proponents of Spirit Christology models, offering some insights of my own along the way.

Biblical Support for Agency of the Holy Spirit

The Scriptures present the person of the Holy Spirit as the immediate, peculiar subject of divine operations toward the created order in general. This is best demonstrated by consideration of the actual creation narrative. The opening chapter of the Bible declares the one true God to be the Creator of all matter – “the heavens and the earth”

(Gen 1:1). This newly created matter is said to be “without form and void,” which likely means “uninhabitable” and “uninhabited” (v. 2).¹² The text reveals that the reason for the formless and void state of the created order is the presence of two obstacles, darkness and water, which are summarily subdued over the course of the first three days of creation week. The result is that, by the end of day three, there is a consistent pattern of day and night (darkness is no longer an obstacle to habitation) and vegetated dry land (water is no longer an obstacle).¹³ The “formless” (uninhabitable) earth is now formed (suitable for habitation). The stage is thus set for the inhabitation of the created order on days four through six, culminating in the creation of man in the image of God.¹⁴ So, while the initial act of God was a work of creation *ex-nihilo* (out of nothing), the majority of the six-day act of creation was a work of creation *per transmutare* (by transformation). The already existent matter of the heavens and the earth was transformed to create a suitable habitation for heavenly bodies and plant, animal, and human life.

¹²See Meredith G. Kline, *Genesis: A New Commentary*, ed. Jonathan G. Kline (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2016), 10-11. Kline describes the first three days of creation week as the unfolding of an “architectural goal of a habitable earth” because the inchoate earth, “lightless and landless,” was uninhabitable. See also John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, in vol. 1 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990). Sailhamer notes other uses of *tōhū* (“without form”) in the Hebrew Bible, arguing that “uninhabitable” is the only translation that makes sense in some cases. He goes on to argue that the trajectory of the Genesis account of creation is such that “uninhabitable” makes the best sense in light of the context of Genesis 1 as well (24-25).

¹³Day one addresses the problem of darkness by the creation of light and the separation of light from darkness to establish day and night. Day two addresses the obstacle of water by separating surface water from what might be called heavenly water (likely atmospheric water vapor, including cloud cover, etc.). Day three continues dealing with the obstacle of water by gathering the surface water into “one place” so that dry land appears.

¹⁴As Meredith Kline and others have shown, the filling of creation with inhabitants on days four through six corresponds to the preparation of the habitation on days one through three respectively. So, day one is the creation and organization of light and darkness while day four is the creation of the heavenly bodies to govern night and day. Day two is the separation of surface water from water above the earth and thus the creation of the atmospheric space we know as sky while day five is the creation of flying creatures to inhabit the sky and swimming creatures to inhabit the surface waters. Day three is the creation of dry land while day six is the creation of land-dwelling creatures, culminating in man created in God’s image. See Meredith Kline, *Genesis: A New Commentary*, 10-15. The literary framework method described here is not necessarily an alternative to a “literal” account of creation week (although Kline sees it that way) and actually works quite nicely as a theologically robust explanation of the reason that God created the heavens and the earth in the order and manner that he did when he could have hurled a perfectly formed and inhabited creation into existence out of nothing from the first instant of creation. The framework interpretation discussed here suggests that creation was carried out in such a way that the later Pentateuchal and biblical-theological themes of God’s land and God’s man would be given prominence.

How did God accomplish this work of creation by transformation that followed the initial act of creation out of nothing? Genesis 1:2 provides a clue. Not only are darkness and water present, rendering the earth “without form and void,” but in verse two, one also learns about the presence of “the Spirit of God” who, in the midst of the darkness, was “hovering over the face of the waters.” This reference to the Spirit of God precedes the entire narrative of creation by transformation that fills the rest of the opening chapter of Genesis. The resulting picture, which ought to occupy the reader’s mind throughout the narrative, is one in which God the Father utters forth his omnipotent divine speech (see the oft-repeated phrase, “And God said”), which directive is then fulfilled by the transforming work of the Spirit of God, who is there hovering, like an eagle brooding over a nest about to bring forth new life (see Deut 32:10-12),¹⁵ eager to complete the divine work of the transformation of created matter into its divinely intended form. If this reading is correct, then it stands to reason that all of the subsequent work of creation by transformation terminates most immediately on the Spirit of God. In other words, the divine intention (from the Father), issuing forth in the divine Word (through the Son), is brought to completion by immediately present breath hovering over the earth (by the Spirit).

At this point, some might object to the assumption that the “Spirit of God” in Genesis 1:2 is to be identified with the third person of the Godhead, per the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. After all, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity would not, could not, exist in its mature form apart from the revelation of Jesus Christ and the subsequent New Testament. So, is it not reading the NT back into the OT to assume that the “Spirit of God” in creation is the third hypostasis of the Trinity?¹⁶ In response, assuming the

¹⁵Meredith Kline observes that the word for “hover” in Gen 1:2 occurs in only one other place in the Pentateuch, Deut 32:11. Also, the word for “without form” in Gen 1:2 occurs in only one other place in the Pentateuch, Deut 32:10. In that place, Moses poetically states that God found Israel in a *tōhū* (“wasteland”) where he “hovered” over them as an Eagle stirring up its nest. He then led them forth to the land (Meredith Kline, *Images of Spirit* (1980; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 13.

¹⁶Sailhamer notes that “many modern interpreters have read the clause as ‘a mighty wind’”

truthfulness of the doctrine of the Trinity (as all Christians must), there are two scriptural factors that legitimize a Trinitarian reading of the identity of the “Spirit of God” in Genesis 1:2. First, the use of the plural pronoun in Genesis 1:26 – “Let *us* make man in *our* image” – indicates that the work of the one God in creation is not necessarily the work of a divine monad who is strictly one in all respects. Christian theologians throughout the history of the Christian church have seen in the plural pronoun of Genesis 1:26 the shadows of Trinitarian theology in the earliest revelation of God, the work of creation. Second, in the NT, the apostle John does not hesitate to give an explicitly Trinitarian reading of the creation account. In Genesis 1, the recurring phrase, “And God said” indicates that the instrument of creation is the word of God. In the prologue of John’s gospel, the apostle identifies this divine speech, the Word (Λόγος), as a person who is hypostatically distinct from and yet somehow one with God the Father – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). If John can identify the divine speech of Genesis 1 as the eternal personal Word, the Son of God, is it really a stretch for Christian theologians to identify the “Spirit of God” as the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead?¹⁷

One might object to this appeal to John’s gospel, especially in light of the argument being made here, because John ascribes the work of creation to the Word and

(Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 25). But cf. Kline, *Images of Spirit*, 13-16. Kline advances the view that the hovering presence of “Spirit” in Genesis 1:2 is the archetype of the “theophanic Glory-cloud” that led Israel through the wilderness and was later manifested in the tabernacle and temple. He goes on to argue that this Glory-cloud is identified with the Holy Spirit of Pentecost and the rest of the NT. Interestingly, Kline contends that Scripture presents the Son, divine Word, as proceeding *from* the Spirit as the means of establishing his eternal hypostatic distinctiveness from the Spirit as well as the economic manifestation of his distinct identity, rather than the other way around, thus breaking with the traditional linear reading of divine processions as represented by the *filioque* clause: “The Word of God who was in the beginning, thus proceeded forth from the Spirit of God – as did also the incarnate Word and the inscripturated Word. We are confronted again with this mystery of the Son’s identity with the Spirit and his personal distinctiveness” (Kline, *Images of Spirit*, 16-17).

¹⁷If, as Fred Sanders argues, the Trinity is “a mystery in the New Testament sense of the term: something always true, long concealed, now revealed,” then one should expect to find shadows of the “always true” reality in revelation that came even before the mystery was fully revealed. See Fred Sanders, *The Triune God*, New Studies in Dogmatics, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 37.

makes no mention in his prologue of the Spirit's role in creation. Consider, however, that the purpose of John's gospel is to convince his readers that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31). Thus, it is expected that the emphasis of his prologue would be on the eternal identity of the Creator *Son* who "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). That said, John's affirmation of the role of the Son in creation, as the personal Word of the Father, does not in any way negate the interpretation being proposed here, that the Spirit of God was the concluding and completing agent upon whom the Trinitarian work of creation by transformation terminates. In fact, the case could be made that John does understand the role of the Spirit in this way in the original creation, and that this understanding drives the way he frames his Trinitarian theology in the text of the fourth gospel. In John's gospel, the Father sends the Son into the world to provide atonement, and the Son's incarnate work of atonement is followed by the Spirit's work of convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment and consequently abiding in and with those who have personal faith in Jesus Christ, whose sins are atoned by the work of the Son (see John 3:1-16, 7:37-39, 14-16, 20:19-22). The Spirit accomplishes this work, often called the application of redemption, as the One sent from the Father and the Son (John 14:26, 15:26). Thus, for John, the case can be made that the Spirit is the author of the concluding, completing, and perfecting acts of the Triune God in the new creation in the same way that he is the author of the concluding, completing, and perfecting acts of the Triune God in the original creation: as the one who proceeds from the Father and the Son for the accomplishment of the works of God in the world.¹⁸

Not only does this reading present the person of the Holy Spirit as the peculiar

¹⁸It is true that the NT ascribes the work of creation most directly and most often to the Son. However, this fact only strengthens the parallel between the work of the Spirit in the creation and the work of the Spirit in new creation, as suggested by the Trinitarian arrangement of the narrative in John's gospel. The Spirit was the immediate, peculiar subject of the concluding, completing acts of creation in Gen 1, but these concluding acts were carried out from the Father and through the Word. In the same way, the Spirit is the immediate, peculiar subject of divine power in regeneration, but that regenerating power is enacted from the Father and through the Son. The Son is the focal centerpiece of divine activity, even when the Spirit is the immediate subject, understood in terms of modal appropriation.

subject of the final forming work of creation, but it establishes a framework for understanding the Holy Spirit as the peculiar subject of the formation of man from the dust of the ground. If a Trinitarian reading of Genesis 1 is permissible, then it is reasonable to conclude from the plural pronoun in Genesis 1:26 that all three persons of the Godhead are involved in the creation of man in the image of God – “Let *us* make man in our image.” For the purposes of this discussion, the question is whether it can be demonstrated that the Holy Spirit is the particular divine person upon which the creation of man terminates. The general description of the creation of man in Genesis 1:26-28 is unveiled in much greater detail in Genesis 2:7-25. According to that text, “The Lord God formed man of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (v. 7). There is nothing in the text of Genesis 2 ascribing this work immediately to the person of the Holy Spirit, but the picture of the Spirit hovering over the already created matter that pervades the entire portrait of creation in Genesis 1 should inform one’s reading of Genesis 2.¹⁹ The concluding, perfecting, completing work of creation by transformation of already created matter terminates on the Holy Spirit in Genesis 1. Therefore, it stands to reason that the transformation of dust into man terminates on the Holy Spirit in Genesis 2.

This reading of Genesis 2:7 is supported proleptically by the account of the creation of the human nature of Jesus in the womb of the virgin Mary. When Mary wonders how it is that she will conceive a son, the angel Gabriel answers her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you” (Luke

¹⁹It is popular in modern OT scholarship, based on the Documentary Hypothesis (JEPD), to view Gen 1 as a separate creation narrative from Gen 2, the former being produced by the Priestly writer (P) and the latter by the Yahwist (J). This approach is rejected a priori in this discussion. For arguments concerning the unity of the Pentateuch as a whole, see John Sailhamer, “Creation, Genesis 1-11, and the Canon,” *BBR*, 10 (2000), 89-106. Concerning the relationship of Gen 1 and 2, John Sailhamer says, “It is important to read chapter 2 as an integral part of the first chapter. . . . It seems apparent that the author intended the second chapter to be read closely with the first and that the events in each chapter be identified as part of the same event. . . . It is likely that the author’s central theological interests in chapter 1 would be continued in chapter 2 as well” (Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 40.).

1:35). It has already been observed that John Owen recognized this parallel. He is worth quoting at length again in this context:

The act of the Holy Ghost in this matter was a creating act; not, indeed, like the first creating act, which produced the matter and substance of all things out of nothing, causing that to be which was not before, neither in matter, nor form, nor passive disposition; but like those subsequent acts of creation, whereby, out of matter before made and prepared, things were made that which before they were not, and which of themselves they had no active disposition unto nor concurrence in. *So man was created or formed of the dust of the earth, and woman of a rib taken from man.* There was a previous matter unto their creation, but such as gave no assistance nor had any active disposition to the production of that particular kind of creature whereinto they were formed by the creating power of God. *Such was this act of the Holy Ghost in forming the body of our Lord Jesus Christ; for although it was effected by an act of infinite creating power, yet it was formed or made of the substance of the blessed Virgin.*²⁰

Just as the first Adam was made from the already created matter of the earth, by the immediate work of the Spirit of God, so the second Adam, Jesus Christ, was made from the already created matter of the womb of the virgin by the immediate work of the Spirit of God.

If this model of Trinitarian agency toward creation in general is correct, then one should expect to find a proliferation of scriptural evidence that divine action in/on/through human agents is appropriated to the work of the Holy Spirit. This is exactly what one finds in both the OT and the NT. In the OT, it is the Spirit of God who fills Bezalel to enhance his skill in craftsmanship for the construction of the temple furniture and garments (Exo 31:3; 35:31). In Numbers 11:16-30, when God commands Moses to appoint seventy elders to assist him in the governance of the people, God promises to take the *Spirit* who is upon Moses and place him on the elders for the purpose of carrying out their task. Verse 29 makes it clear that it is the “Spirit of the LORD,” not the spirit of Moses who is given to the elders. In the period of the Judges, God raised up specific individuals to lead his wayward people in both military endeavors and governance. These “Judges” were empowered by God to perform the tasks to which he had called them. This

²⁰Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 163-64.

empowerment is consistently articulated as the immediate work of “the Spirit of the LORD” (Judg 3:10, 6:34, 11:39, 13:25, 14:6, 14:19, 15:6). It was the Spirit of the LORD who came upon King Saul, causing him to prophesy (1 Sam 10:6); It was the Spirit of the LORD who came upon David to empower him first as a warrior king (1 Sam 16:13) and later as a prophet (2 Sam 23:2). It is the Spirit of the LORD who speaks through the prophets (Eze 11:5; Mic 3:8; 2 Pet 1:20-21) and the Spirit of the LORD whom the prophets said would rest upon the Messiah (Isa 11:1-2, 61:1-2). According to the prophet Ezekiel, it is by the Spirit of God within his people that God will sustain the everlasting relationship of the New Covenant (Eze 36:27, 37:14).

In the NT, it is the Spirit of God who anoints Jesus at his baptism, empowering him for his ministry in Israel (Luke 3:21-22; John 1:32-34). It is the Spirit who leads Jesus in the wilderness while he is tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1-13). Jesus himself, citing Isaiah 61:1, teaches that the Spirit of the LORD is upon him for the purpose of carrying out his messianic work (Luke 4:14-21). The performance of Jesus’ miracles was by the Spirit of God (Matt 12:28; Acts 10:38; Acts 2:22). Furthermore, the working of God in the lives of Christians after the ascension of Jesus Christ is ascribed specifically to the work of the Holy Spirit so many times in Acts and the epistles that it would be tedious and burdensome to list them all here.

It has been argued that the logical consequence of traditional Trinitarian theology is that the direct work of the Triune God in/upon/through created material in general and human agents in particular always terminates on the divine person of the Holy Spirit according to his immutable place in the *ad intra* order of subsistence. This theological conclusion is supported by the data of Scripture. It may be objected at this point that many instances could be cited in which the work of God is ascribed generically to God or to YHWH, without any indicator as to which divine person is specifically intended. This fact, however, is no evidence against the conclusion being advanced here. In such instances, the reader is left to examine the context or other clarifying passages to

shed light on which particular divine person is in view as the peculiar acting subject. When a particular divine person is not named as peculiar subject of a divine act, the proliferation of data suggesting that the Spirit is the author of the concluding, completing acts of God combined with the church's historic account of Trinitarian agency is sufficient to conclude that the Holy Spirit is the most immediate divine person upon whom the action *terminates*.

It may also be objected that Scripture specifically mentions the Father or the Son as the subject of a divine act toward human agents (e.g. John 6:44 – “The Father who sent me draws him;” Col 1:16 – “He [the Son] created all things”). However, in such cases, following the Trinitarian grammar of orthodoxy and the Trinitarian patterns of Scripture, Father and Son work, as always, *by* the Holy Spirit. Per the doctrine of inseparable operations and appropriations, discussed at length in chapter 4, all three persons are always acting subjects in every divine work, but each work terminates in an immediate way on a particular divine person. Thus, the drawing work of the Father (John 6:44) and the creating work of the Son (Col 1:16-17) are works carried out by the Spirit. As Owen says, “God worketh by his Spirit, or in him immediately applies the power and efficacy of the divine excellencies unto their operation.”²¹

An example of a work terminating specifically on the Spirit also being ascribed to the Father and Son can be found in John 14:16-23. As part of the farewell discourse, Jesus promises the Father will give the Holy Spirit to indwell those who love Jesus and keep his commandments. Jesus says, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for *he dwells with you and will be in you*” (vv. 16-17, emphasis mine). Thus, it is the Holy Spirit specifically, upon whom the work of indwelling believers as the New Covenant temple of God terminates

²¹Owen, *IINEYMATOAOΓIA*, 162.

(see 1 Cor 3:16, 6:19). After saying that it is the Holy Spirit who will dwell in the followers of Christ, in the immediate context of the same discourse, Jesus goes on to say, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and *we will come to him and make our abode with him*” (John 14:23, emphasis mine). While the work of indwelling terminates specifically on the person of the Holy Spirit, it is nevertheless appropriate to refer to both the Father and the Son as indwelling the believer. However, given the Trinitarian patterns of Scripture and the Trinitarian grammar of the church, it is understood that the Father and the Son indwell believers by the Spirit so that the Spirit is the immediate terminating subject of the indwelling. This example (and others could be given) demonstrates that divine operations that terminate on the Spirit can be ascribed to the Father and/or the Son without compromising the fact that the operation properly terminates on the Spirit.

Biblical Support for Spirit Christology

Is Owen’s extension of his pneumatologically emphatic account of Trinitarian agency into the unique situation of the incarnation warranted by Scripture? The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that it is. While I have serious misgivings concerning the way that Hawthorne applies his exegetical observations theologically, I am in agreement with him that the New Testament, especially the gospels and Acts, give testimony that “the Holy Spirit was indeed operative in every experience of Jesus so that the great moments of his life were indeed the result of the Spirit’s powerful presence within or upon him.”²² A survey of the role of the Holy Spirit in the various phases of Jesus’ life will demonstrate that this is so.

²²Gerald Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus* (1991. repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 114.

The Spirit in the conception and childhood of Jesus. As Gabriel announced the coming arrival of Messiah and stated in no uncertain terms to Mary that she would conceive and bear the child in her virgin womb, she responded with a natural question: “How can this be since I am a virgin?” The angel responded, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God” (Luke 1:34-35).²³ The first divine operation directed toward the human nature of the Son of God, the very creation of that anhypostatic nature in the womb of the virgin, is ascribed to the Holy Spirit by Luke. Gerald Hawthorne comments on the significance of this: “The Spirit of God who in the beginning was present in order to bring the first creation into existence (Gen. 1:2) is the same Spirit who comes once again to bring the new creation into being in the conception of Jesus.”²⁴

Not only does the Lukan account of the conception indicate that the human nature of the Son was *created* by the Holy Spirit, but the passage likely also tells us that the person of the Son was *filled* and *indwelt* by the Holy Spirit, insofar as his human nature is concerned, from the moment of the conception in Mary’s womb. Klaus Issler makes this point by way of inference from the account of John the Baptist, who is said to be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb. If the Baptist was so filled, how much more should we assume that Jesus, the very Son of God whose conception was the immediate work of the Spirit of God, would be filled and/or indwelt by the Holy Spirit?²⁵

²³The Gospel of Matthew also appropriates the work of conception, i.e. the creation of the human nature of the Son in Mary, to the Spirit particularly: “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child *from the Holy Spirit*. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is *from the Holy Spirit*’” (Matt 1:18-20, emphasis added).

²⁴Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 66. It has already been observed that John Owen makes much of the correspondence between the working of the Spirit in the old creation and the working of the Spirit in the New, especially the correspondence between the creation of Adam from the dust and the creation of the human nature of the Son from the womb of the virgin.

²⁵Klaus Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character* (Downers

Bruce Ware makes a more direct exegetical argument for the Son being indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit from the first moments of his subsistence in and through the human nature:

One clue that Luke intends us to understand the Spirit coming upon Jesus at his conception is the juxtaposition he gives in Luke 1:35 of the *Holy* Spirit coming upon Mary so that the child born of her is himself *holy*. Luke likely has in mind here not only the conception of Jesus as sinless but also the conception of Jesus as indwelt by the Holy Spirit.²⁶

The human nature of the Son is created by the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit. Subsequently, the Son of God, having assumed that nature into subsistence with himself as subject of the union, was filled and indwelt by the Spirit of God and thereby to be considered as “holy,” even with respect to his human nature. The fact that this very first operation of divine power in the incarnate mission of the Son is appropriated specifically to the Holy Spirit suggests that the Son’s specific mission is going to be characterized by the peculiar operations of the Spirit the rest of the way.

The next significant passage concerning the peculiar operations of the Holy Spirit in the earthly life and ministry of Jesus comes in the context of the Lukan account of Jesus being left at the temple. Immediately before and after the story, like bookends,²⁷ Luke tells us that Jesus’ childhood was characterized by the experience and increase of wisdom (σοφία; Luke 2:40, 52). Further, while Jesus is listening to the teachers in the temple and asking them questions, Luke reports that “all who heard him were amazed at his understanding (συνεσις; Luke 2:47).” These two descriptive characteristics of Jesus’ childhood – wisdom and understanding – are predicated of the “Spirit of the LORD,”

Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 124.

²⁶Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 50. Shortly after making this argument, Ware goes on to make the same argument from the lesser to the greater that Issler makes. If the John the Baptist was full of the Spirit from his mother’s womb, how much more would Jesus be?

²⁷Ware says, “Consider Luke 2:40 and 52, which function as bookends around this account of Jesus’ visit to Jerusalem” (*The Man Christ Jesus*, 49).

whom Isaiah prophesied would “rest upon” the Messiah. The Spirit is said to be The Spirit of “wisdom and understanding” (LXX, “σοφίας και συνεσεως”).²⁸ With the explicit identification of the role of the Holy Spirit in the conception of the human nature of the Son and with the identification of his role in the childhood of Jesus, Luke seems to be indicating that the mission of God the Son incarnate must be understood in light of the powerful working of the Spirit of God in/on/through his human nature.

The Spirit in the baptism and temptation of Jesus. The synoptic accounts of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist all make explicit reference to the Spirit of God descending upon Jesus as he comes up out of the water, even as the voice of the Father from heaven identifies Jesus as his beloved Son (Matt 3:16-17, Mark 1:10-11, Luke 3:21-22). The descent of the Spirit at Jesus’ baptism serves the purpose of identifying Jesus publicly, at the outset of his public ministry, as the one upon whom the Spirit of the LORD would rest, as foretold by the prophet Isaiah (11:1-2, 61:1). Immediately before Jesus is baptized, all three synoptic accounts report that John the Baptist spoke of the one coming after him as the one who was greater than John, the one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11-12, Mark 7-8, Luke 3:16-17). By the promise of a future baptism with the Spirit and the presentation of the descent of the Spirit on Jesus, the synoptic evangelists are communicating the fact that the Messiah of Israel whom we know to be God the Son incarnate, the very one who will one day *baptize* with the Holy Spirit, is first the one who *bears* the Spirit. In the fourth gospel, it is John the Baptist himself who makes explicit the pattern that the Son of God who baptizes with the Spirit first bears the Spirit:

And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with

²⁸Both Ware and Issler note the connection between Luke 2:40-52 and Isaiah 11:1-2. Ware focuses more directly on “wisdom” (*Man Christ Jesus*, 51) while Issler makes the connection to both wisdom and understanding more explicit (*Living into the Life of Jesus*, 123).

water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God (John 1:32-34).”

If the explicit mention of the Holy Spirit in connection with the virginal conception of the human nature of the Son and in connection with the childhood of the boy Jesus is significant because of its placement at the beginning stages of Jesus’ life, then the explicit mention of the Spirit’s descent at the baptism is significant because of its placement at the beginning of his public ministry. The gospel writers would have us understand that all the spectacular, divinely empowered events following Jesus’ baptism are to be understood as occurring in and through the Son of God in the form of a servant²⁹ by the power of God as exercised by the immediate, peculiar agency of the Holy Spirit who anointed him at his baptism.

This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that all three synoptic gospels follow the baptism of Jesus with the account of his temptation by the devil in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13).³⁰ All three accounts indicate that Jesus’ journey to and through the wilderness for temptation took place under the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit. Matthew states the case most generically, observing only that Jesus went *into* the wilderness at the direction of the Spirit: “Jesus was led up (ἀνήχθη) by the Spirit into (εἰς) the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (4:1). Mark states the matter more strongly, emphasizing the sense of compulsion by

²⁹The terminology of “form of a servant” calls to mind Philippians 2:6-8 in which Jesus is said to take the “form of a servant,” even though he exists eternally in the “form of God.” Drawing on that language, Augustine gave one of his famous hermeneutical “rules” for theological reasoning concerning the person of Christ. Some things in Scripture are spoken of Christ “in the form of God,” that is, according to his deity. Other things are spoken of him “in the form of a servant,” that is, according to his humanity (see Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, O. P. vol. 1, *The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, O. S. A. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2010). I propose, along with some other proponents of Spirit Christology (Hawthorne, Ware, Issler, Owen), that the anointing of the Spirit of God is spoken of Jesus “in the form of a servant” and thus accents his humanity. The anointing, therefore, is not itself revelatory of the eternal order of subsistence in the Godhead in the same way that the missions of the Son and the Spirit reveal the eternal order of subsistence.

³⁰Between the account of Jesus’ baptism and temptation, Luke gives the genealogy of Jesus in reverse order all the way back to Adam (Luke 3:23-38). This genealogical interlude, however, does not indicate a chronological separation between the baptism of Jesus and his temptation in the wilderness. Rather, the genealogy of Jesus is placed where it is by Luke for thematic reasons.

which Jesus was directed *into* the wilderness by the Spirit: “The Spirit immediately drove (ἐκβάλλει) him out into (εἰς) the wilderness” (1:12). Luke, for his part, is concerned that his readers understand that Jesus was not only directed *into* the wilderness by the Spirit, but he was actually led around *in* the wilderness by the Spirit: “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in (ἐν) the wilderness” (Luke 4:1). Two features of Luke’s wording press the point that Jesus was not only momentarily led *to* the wilderness but that this kind of leadership by the Spirit was a feature of his earthly ministry and the driving force by which he stayed in the wilderness and resisted the devil’s temptations. First, Luke indicates that Jesus was “full of the Holy Spirit” when he went out to the wilderness. Thus, the leadership of the Spirit is not an anomaly but the result of Jesus’ state of being as Messiah.³¹ Additionally, Luke’s use of the preposition ἐν, rather than εἰς, is likely significant. The preposition εἰς communicates that Jesus made his journey into the wilderness by the guidance of the Spirit, but the Preposition ἐν communicates the further idea that *while in the wilderness*, Jesus was being led by the Spirit. Noting this use of the preposition by Luke, Hawthorne avers, “Jesus met and conquered the usurping enemy of God not by his own power alone but aided in his victory by the power of the Holy Spirit.”³²

At the outset of Jesus’ life in human flesh, in the inaugural moments of his public identification to Israel, and in his temptation in the wilderness, the role of the Holy Spirit is both explicit and prominent in the presentation of the mission of God the Son

³¹Interestingly, the word for “full” (πλήρης) is the noun form of the participle used to describe Jesus’ experience of wisdom in Luke 2:40 (πληρούμενον), perhaps another indication in Luke that Jesus’ wisdom as a boy is indeed the result of the peculiar operation of the Spirit of God upon his human nature.

³²Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 139. Here, as in many other instances, Hawthorne’s language suggests an illegitimate contrast between the divine power of the Son and the divine power of the Spirit, as though there are two separate powers. As my critique of Hawthorne and Issler in chapter 3 indicates, I see such terminology as highly problematic. I appeal to Hawthorne here only to say he is right that Luke is emphasizing that Jesus was full of the Spirit and led by the Spirit for the duration of his temptation so that we are to understand Jesus’ resistance of sin as a man as a feature of the Spirit’s work in and through him according to his human nature.

incarnate. Such strategic positioning of this pneumatologically emphatic material surely communicates that readers of the canonical gospels are to understand the fulfillment of the mission of the Son through his human nature as being carried out by the working of the person of the Holy Spirit as the peculiar subject of divine fullness, wisdom, understanding, guidance, and power.

The Spirit in the Earliest Teaching of Jesus. All three synoptic gospels report that Jesus entered into Galilee immediately after the temptation in the wilderness of Judea, but Luke shows that the earliest moments of Jesus' public ministry of teaching and preaching were characterized by his experience of the power of God mediated to him as a man by the person of the Holy Spirit. Luke writes, "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all" (Luke 4:14-15). Luke wants his readers to know that when Jesus' entered into the region of his upbringing (Galilee) for the purpose of teaching the people of Israel, he did so as one experiencing the power of God by the Holy Spirit. His astonishing teaching that led to him being "glorified" by all was carried out under the power of the Holy Spirit.

Luke goes on to give a concrete example of Jesus' teaching in Galilee by recounting Jesus' visit to the synagogue of his hometown, Nazareth. As the featured teacher that day, Jesus was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, and he found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me..." (Luke 2:18, Isa 61:1). After reading the selected passage, Jesus returned the scroll, sat down, and began to speak: "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Commenting on this passage, Ware says, rightly,

The fact that we are told that Jesus "opened the book and found the place where it was written" and then quotes from Isaiah 61 indicates that Jesus chose this text! Think of it: he could have turned instead to Isaiah 53, but no, he turned here. Obviously this indicates something of the significance of Jesus's identity as the

Spirit-anointed Messiah. At the heart of who he is, we must see him as coming in the power of the Spirit.³³

Following immediately on the more general statement that Jesus entered into Galilee “in the power of the Spirit” when he came to teach in their synagogues, Luke’s inclusion of this account indicates that Jesus conducted his teaching ministry as a man empowered and anointed by the Spirit of God.

The Spirit in the miracles of Jesus. The question of Jesus’ miracles looms large on the landscape of Spirit Christology. Virtually every proponent of Spirit Christology is critical of the tendency of some Christian thinkers to associate Jesus’ miracles with his ontological deity as cause to effect. The logic of some seems to be, if Jesus performs works that only God can do – supernaturally multiplying food, healing the sick, casting out demons, calming the sea, etc. – it must be because he is God that he is able to perform these works. This logic, however, does not hold up when applied to other miracle workers in the Bible. Moses, Elijah, Elisha, the apostles, Stephen, etc. all performed great signs and wonders. Certainly, these miracle workers are not to be identified as ontologically divine because of the miracles they performed! Rather, they were all the human agents of divine power, and that power was manifested through them instrumentally as the work of the person of the Holy Spirit in particular. Is it plausible to understand the miracles of Jesus in the same way? Put differently, are proponents of Trinitarian Spirit Christology right to contend that the manifestation of divine power through the human nature of the Son is to be ascribed to the person of the Holy Spirit as the immediate, peculiar divine subject of the divine power at work?

At least three passages indicate that the miracles of Jesus are to be understood in terms of the instrumental working of the Holy Spirit through the human nature of the Son. Both of these passages are picked up by nearly all proponents of Spirit Christology

³³Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, 36.

as evidence for their position. The first such passage is Matthew 12:23-29. After Jesus heals a notorious demoniac, many are amazed, wondering if Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus' enemies accuse him of casting out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons. Jesus responds by pointing out the foolishness of this accusation, as it would imply that the kingdom of Satan is divided against itself. He then says, "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (v. 28). While it is true that Jesus is God and therefore has inherent authority over demons, he does not appeal to his own divine identity and hypostatic union with the divine nature as the reason he casts out demons. Rather, speaking as a man, Jesus points out that the power of God was exercised through him instrumentally by the person of the Holy Spirit.³⁴

Acts 10:38 is another text indicating that the miracles of Jesus are to be understood in terms of the instrumental working of the Holy Spirit through the human nature of Jesus. In Acts 10, Peter is called to Cornelius's home. In obedience to the vision God had just shown him, Peter goes to the home of this Gentile Roman centurion. Once there, Peter preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ in order that Cornelius and his household might believe and be saved. In v. 38, Peter summarizes in short order the entire public ministry of Jesus: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." Whereas Matthew 12:23-39 emphasizes the exorcism of demons specifically as the peculiar operation of the Holy Spirit, Acts 10:38 presents the supernatural features of Jesus' entire public ministry in terms of the anointing, empowering, and presence of the Holy Spirit toward the Son according to his human nature.

When Peter says that Jesus "went about doing good" and "healing all who

³⁴In the parallel passage in Luke 11:20, Jesus says, "If I cast out demons by the finger of God, the kingdom of God has come upon you." Concerning Luke's use of "finger" as compared to Matthew's use of "Spirit," Owen simply contends that the term "finger" is spoken with respect to the power of God at work most immediately in the world. Matthew recognizes that God's power at work in the world, his "finger," is the peculiar person of the Holy Spirit. See Owen, *ΙΙΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ*, 174.

were oppressed by the devil,” he seems to have in mind both the obedience of the Son to the Father’s will (doing good) and the miraculous works of the Son in healing all manner of sickness and disease, including but not limited to deliverance from demonic possession (“healing”). The reason Peter gives for this manifestation of divine power is explicit: “for God was *with him*” (ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἦν μετ’ αὐτοῦ). The use of ὅτι here carries causal force, as all the translations indicate. It is *because* God was *with Him* (μετ’ αὐτοῦ) that Jesus did good and healed. Importantly, Peter does not say Jesus did good and healed those oppressed *because he was God*, though he certainly knew Jesus to be fully God.³⁵ Rather, Peter is speaking of Jesus here “in the form of a servant.” As a man, Jesus’ perfect obedience as well as the signs and wonders by which he healed many people, were the result of the presence of God *with him*, not the result of the hypostatic union of his human nature with the divine nature. Put differently, Jesus’ miracles are not here described by Peter as the effect of which the ontological deity of Jesus is the cause. Rather, the miracles are described as the effect of which the presence of God *with Jesus*, mediated by the person of the Holy Spirit, by whom Jesus was anointed, is the cause.

Acts 2:22 is the third passage demonstrating that the divine power at work in the miracles of Jesus should be understood as terminating on the Spirit rather than the Son *qua* Son. This verse is best understood alongside Acts 10:38. While preaching at Pentecost, Peter declares, “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst as you yourselves know. . .” (Acts 2:22). As with Acts 10:38, the emphasis here is striking because of the way Peter ascribes the supernatural features of

³⁵Concerning Peter’s knowledge of the full deity of Jesus, Ware says, “Now, clearly Peter understood that Jesus was fully God. After all, Peter, with the other disciples had worshiped Jesus as God’s own Son when Jesus had come to them walking on the water, saving Peter from sinking as he attempted also to walk on the water toward Jesus (Matt 14:22-23). Peter was granted revelation from the Father that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt 16:16). And Peter likewise had been present with Thomas and the other disciples when Jesus appeared in the room, and the reluctant Thomas, now seeing Jesus’s pierced hands and side for himself, said to Jesus, ‘My Lord and my God!’ (John 20:26-29)” (Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, 37).

the life of Jesus to the power of God at work *through* Jesus. If Acts 10:38 is not explicit about miraculous deeds, *per se*, then Acts 2:22 (“mighty works and wonders and signs”) supplies the warrant for assuming that meaning in Acts 10:38. Similarly, if Acts 2:22 does not explicitly identify the Holy Spirit, using the generic term “God” instead, then Acts 10:38 (“anointed. . . with the Holy Spirit”) supplies the warrant for assuming the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:22.

Concerning the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ, John Owen says, “It was in an especial manner by the power of the Holy Spirit he wrought those great and *miraculous works* whereby his ministry was attested unto and confirmed. Hence it is said that God wrought miracles by him.”³⁶ Some have contended that only some (even most) of Jesus’ miraculous works are to be attributed specifically to the Holy Spirit while others are to be attributed to the Son’s subjective manifestation of divine power, such that the Son is understood to be the subject of the divine operation through his own human nature in such instances.³⁷ Owen’s insistence that all of the divine operations in/on/through the human nature of the Son are to be attributed to the Holy Spirit, however, is the preferable option because of its consistency with the theology of the agency of the Holy Spirit and human agents, as presented in this chapter. For Christ to switch back and forth, as it were, between acting as immediate subject of divine operations toward his own nature and experiencing those operations as terminating on the Spirit muddies the waters of the revelatory correspondence of Trinitarian being and operation and runs the risk of seeming arbitrary.³⁸

³⁶Owen, *Works*, 3:174. Owen then cites Acts 2:22 as proof of his statement (“Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him”).

³⁷For example, Klaus Issler rejects the option that the Son acted entirely out of his own human nature, depending always on the resources of the Father and the Spirit because there seem to be some instances in which his own divine identity is clearly on display. He opts instead for the view that the Son acted mostly out of his humanity, depending most of the time on the divine resources of the Father and the Spirit (*Living into the Life of Jesus*, 113-4).

³⁸I will deal with the miracles of Jesus that seem to attest his deity quite directly near the end

The Spirit and Jesus in the Gospel of John. Thus far, this biblical survey of the case for Spirit Christology has focused on the synoptic gospels and Acts. Is it the case that the Gospel of John presents a different, alternative, or balancing perspective? Does the paucity of statements about Jesus' experience of the Spirit in the Gospel of John and the strong emphasis on the ontological deity of Jesus and his relationship of oneness with the Father require Christian thinkers to modify or reject the conclusion, drawn largely from the synoptics, that Jesus' earthly life and ministry are characterized in large part by his experience of the Spirit of God specifically? In short, no. Explicit mention of the role of the Spirit in the life of Jesus is sparser in John than in the synoptics, but it is not absent.³⁹

There are at least two passages in the fourth gospel in which the motif of Spirit Christology is evident, even if not as prominent as in Acts and the synoptics. The first is John 1:31-34:

I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel. And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

While John the evangelist does not give a direct account of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist, it is clear that the event of Jesus baptism, as reported by the synoptists, is in view here. John the Baptist reports that he did not know Jesus as Messiah until he saw the Spirit of God descend as a dove at the baptism. On the basis of this descent of the Spirit, John the Baptist received confirmation that Jesus is the Son of God. As with the synoptic account, the descent of the Spirit onto Jesus at the baptism is associated with the

of this chapter.

³⁹It is worth noting here that I am not suggesting that the Son-Spirit relation is the most prominent feature of John's gospel. Rather, I concur with the vast majority of orthodox commentators and theologians that John emphasizes the Father-Son relation most prominently. However, this dissertation is focused on the Son-Spirit relation. I simply intend to show that there is an emphasis on the Son-Spirit relation in John's that is consistent with the Trinitarian Spirit Christology being advanced here.

identification of Jesus as Son of God. So, at the very least, John's gospel recognizes the identifying significance of the descent of the Spirit at the baptism of Jesus. But this is surely not as strong as the synoptic presentation of the Son going about empowered by the anointing Spirit. Or is it?

Interestingly, John's gospel is the only one to emphasize the fact that the Holy Spirit, who descended as a dove at the baptism of Jesus, "remained on him" (v. 32). The other evangelists simply report that the dove descended on him. It is clear from the synoptists that the Spirit did remain on Jesus because of the prominence of the Spirit in the pericopes that follow the baptism, as has been shown. John's gospel lacks the accounts of the temptation of Jesus in which he was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, the return to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and the declaration that he is anointed by the Spirit at Nazareth, but John's gospel alone is emphatic that the Spirit who descended on Jesus *remained* on him. Might it be that John's emphasis on the remaining of the Spirit is intended to give readers the same sense of the Son's earthly mission as that given by Matthew, Mark and Luke, namely that Jesus experiences the power and presence of God as mediated by the Spirit of God and that this is a direct consequence of the fact that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14)? In other words, the supernatural features of Jesus' life and ministry, as presented in the fourth gospel, are to be understood as manifestations of the power of God as terminating in a peculiar manner on the Spirit of God who is always at work in/on/through the human nature of the Word.

Another passage of great significance in John's gospel with respect to Jesus' experience of the Holy Spirit for the carrying out of his mission is John 3:34, "He whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure."

Grammatically, the phrase, "He gives the Spirit without measure" (οὐ γὰρ ἐκ μέτρου δίδωσιν τὸ πνεῦμα) is ambiguous as to both the subject and object, i.e. the identity of the giver and the receiver of the Spirit. The ESV is content to let the ambiguity remain in translation. Concerning the solution to this ambiguity, there seem to be three options.

Option A: The Son, Jesus, is the giver of the Spirit, and his followers are the recipients.

Option B: God the Father is the giver of the Spirit, and the followers of Jesus (those who receive the words of God spoken by Jesus) are the recipients.

Option C: God the Father is the giver of the Spirit, and Jesus himself is the recipient.

Option C is the best option here for three reasons. First, there is a *grammatical reason*. The postpositive $\gamma\alpha\rho$ is a grounding statement and demonstrates that the giving of the Spirit is the *reason* for what is described in the preceding clause, namely, “He whom God has sent utters the words of God.” Now, the gospel of John refers to Jesus as the one whom God sent some forty times.⁴⁰ Thus, there is no ambiguity with respect to the fact that the one in view, who is uttering the words of God, is Jesus himself, the one who was sent by God. The statement, “for he gives the Spirit without measure,” therefore, explains why it is that Jesus, as the one sent from God, speaks the words of God. He can be trusted completely and believed absolutely as the one who utters God’s words accurately and truthfully because He (the one who sent the Son) gives the Spirit without measure (to the Son whom he sent). Indeed, the entire context of this verse indicates that the main point of the passage is to establish that Jesus speaks the words of God and that to receive Jesus’ words is to receive God’s word as truth.⁴¹ The grounding force of $\gamma\alpha\rho$ in the phrase in question is difficult to explain if Jesus is the giver of the Spirit rather than the recipient (Option A). How does Jesus’ distribution of the Spirit to his followers ground the statement that he speaks the words of God? Further, if the Father is the giver of the Spirit here and the followers of Christ are the recipients (Option B), it is still difficult to see how the statement in question grounds the claim that Jesus speaks the words of God.

The second reason Option C is preferable is a *contextual reason*. Immediately

⁴⁰John 3:34; 4:34; 5:23-24, 30, 36-38; 6:29, 38-39, 44, 57; 7:16, 18, 28-29, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29, 42; 9:4; 10:36; 11:42; 12:44-45, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21.

⁴¹John 3:31-33 says, “He who comes from heaven is above all. He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true.”

following the statement, “for he gives the Spirit without measure,” John says, “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand” (v. 35). The most straightforward way to explain this passage is to see v. 35 as providing clarification on the meaning of the second clause in v. 34 by way of a more general statement. The Father gives the Spirit to the Son without measure (v. 34 – very specific statement); indeed, the Father gives all things to the Son (v. 35 – more general statement). Since John is explicit that the Father is the giver and the Son the recipient in the general statement of v. 35, the contextual proximity suggests that the Father is the giver and the Son is the recipient in the more specific and ambiguous v. 34.⁴²

The third reason that Option C is the preferable understanding of the statement in question in John 3:34 is a *theological reason*. John says that the recipient of the Spirit receives the Spirit “without measure.” This phrase is difficult to explain if the recipients are believers in Christ (Options A and B). Indeed, the apostle Paul says that believers in Christ, receive an allotment of “grace” according to “the measure of Christ’s gift” (Eph 4:7). Furthermore, as believers are sanctified and built up in the faith, they are progressively moving toward the goal of attaining to the “measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). Thus, the measure of Christ is described as “fullness.” And from that fullness (a phrase akin to “without measure”), believers receive the gift of grace and grow toward the fullness that is in Christ progressively. This Pauline expression sounds remarkably similar in content to the Johannine statement, “From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace” (John 1:16). Thus, it is only Jesus Christ, not his followers,

⁴²D. A. Carson considers this contextual reason as definitive: “The alternative is to construe the last clause of v. 34 as if Christ were the subject: Christ does not give the Spirit in merely measured fashion to his followers. That may be true, but it does not fit the context well, and it loses the close connection with v. 35, a connection nicely preserved on the assumption that God is the subject of this last clause in v. 34” (D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary Series [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 231n19). Additionally, if Jesus is the subject in John 3:34 who gives the Spirit without measure, this is a contextually odd place for John tell us as much, especially in light of the fact that three chapters later, John’s gloss on Jesus’ statement about living water states explicitly that “the Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:37-39).

who experience the fullness of the Spirit's anointing presence and power in the present age. Believers receive a measure of this fullness and progressively strive to attain fullness. Add to this the fact that classical Trinitarian theology has always viewed the identity of the Holy Spirit in his economic mission as the "gift" of God and as the "grace" of God distributed, and Option C is even more clearly attested as the best interpretation of the phrase, "for he gives the Spirit without measure."

Given John's earlier statement that the Spirit of God descended on Jesus and "remained" on him, this statement in John 3:34 should be viewed as filling out that same motif. The same Spirit who descended and remained on Jesus at his baptism works in and through him such that the words of Jesus are the very words God the Father desires him to speak.⁴³ In the incarnate state, as the personal subject of a limited human nature, God the Son receives from God the Father the fullness of the Spirit without measure so that he can speak the words of God without error in spite of the limitations of a human mind or human language. Commenting on John 3:34, D. A. Carson says,

Throughout redemptive history, God spoke to his people through many accredited messengers. Each received that measure of the Spirit that was required for his or her assigned task. Three centuries after John wrote, Rabbi Aha rightly commented that the Holy Spirit who rested on the prophets did so according to the measure (*b^e mišqal*) of each prophet's assignment (*Leviticus Rabbah* 15:2). Not so to Jesus: to him *God gives the Spirit without limit* (this is almost certainly the correct rendering). John the Baptist had already testified that he had seen the Spirit descend *and remain* on Jesus (1:32–33), in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (Is. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1); the same truth is repeated in new form.⁴⁴

I could not agree more. The motif of the Messiah as the Spirit-anointed Son whose human nature is empowered by the Spirit of God is strong in John's gospel, even if not abundant.

⁴³Of course, Matthew and Luke indicate that the work of the Spirit began in Jesus at his conception and continued through his childhood, even before his baptism. In John's gospel, however, only the baptism is in view since John has no account of the conception, birth, and childhood of Jesus.

⁴⁴Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 213.

Conclusion from the Biblical Material

This survey of biblical material has presented a strong case that Scripture presents a theology of the agency of the Holy Spirit toward creation in general and toward human agents in particular that is consistent with what one expects if the classical grammar of Trinitarian agency is correct. The Holy Spirit is, in the words of John Owen, “the *immediate, peculiar, efficient cause* of all external divine operations.”⁴⁵ This theology of the agency of the Holy Spirit toward creation and human agents was then applied to the incarnation of the Son of God, and it was argued that one should expect that the *divine* operations in/on/through the human nature of the Son would be modally appropriated as the peculiar works of the Holy Spirit. It was argued, as other proponents of Spirit Christology have already observed, that this is precisely what one finds in the gospels and Acts concerning the full life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Both the proliferation of biblical evidence and the classical grammar of Trinitarian agency communicate that the human life of the Son and the divine power on display in and through his humanity, be conceived in terms of the immediate operations of the Holy Spirit. That is, scriptural evidence supports an Owenite version of Spirit Christology.

Contemporary Critiques from Theologians of the Classical Tradition

The proliferation of biblical material concerning the person and work of the Spirit in/on/through the human nature of Christ, as surveyed above, explains in part the increase in popularity of Spirit-Christology models in contemporary theology. It has been demonstrated throughout this dissertation, by thorough interaction with eleven key proponents of Spirit Christology from a wide range of theological traditions, that Spirit Christology is by no means a monolithic theological paradigm. Even among the explicitly *Trinitarian* models, the variety is considerable. This fact makes the task of analyzing

⁴⁵John Owen, *IINEYMATOΛOΓIA*, 162, emphasis in citation.

Spirit Christology as a whole very difficult.

Unfortunately, the variegated character and broad spectrum of ideological commitments of Spirit Christology are not always given sufficient weight when critiques of various proposals are put forward. Two particular Evangelical theologians have recently published thorough scholarly monographs on the person of the Holy Spirit and the person of Christ respectively, and each monograph contains a sustained critique of Spirit Christology from the perspective of Trinitarian agency and Chalcedonian Christology respectively. In both cases, the entire paradigm of Trinitarian Spirit Christology is found wanting. Each theologian, however, critiques the paradigm of Spirit Christology through the lens of a small representative sample, and neither engages the nuances of Owen's proposal at all. To these critiques we now turn. It will be seen that the criticisms of these two theologians are not unwarranted. Nevertheless, the valid points made (points which I have also made in this dissertation) do not constitute grounds for rejecting the paradigm of Trinitarian Spirit Christology wholesale. Rather, the critiques only justify the rejection of certain kinds of Spirit Christology. It will be demonstrated that an Owenite Spirit Christology can answer criticisms such as those reviewed here and that, in fact, embracing this paradigm results in a more consistent affirmation of traditional Trinitarian and Christological theology than the rejection of it.

Starting with the Holy Spirit: A Critique from Christopher R. J. Holmes

In his insightful and thorough tome on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit,⁴⁶ Christopher R. J. Holmes explains how a model of Spirit Christology that reformulates the relations of origin in the immanent Trinity or tampers with the traditional order of operation in the economy is incompatible with the classical Christian understanding. In

⁴⁶Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*.

an excursus on Spirit Christology,⁴⁷ Holmes offers a negative critique of the Spirit Christology of Myk Habets. Unfortunately, Holmes takes Habets – and to a lesser extent Thomas Weinandy, upon whom Habets depends heavily for his own formulations – as representative of all Trinitarian Spirit Christology rather than seeing Habets as a specimen of only one *kind* of Trinitarian Spirit Christology.⁴⁸

Holmes laments the fact that Spirit Christology seems to be the outworking of an unfortunate intuition: “The intuition is that the unique personal identity of the Spirit in God’s inward and outward movements has been shortchanged. The tradition is to blame for this.”⁴⁹ Holmes questions Habets’ reading of the tradition, suggesting that he has painted with too broad of a brush and has therefore missed the emphasis on God’s Spirit that traditional accounts have offered. Holmes goes on to critique Habets’ model of immanent Trinitarian relations, especially on the grounds that the model yields a method of starting with the Holy Spirit in the consideration of all theological loci, Christology included. This approach, Holmes contends, winds up confusing God’s being with God’s economy and losing the basic revelatory correspondence between the order of God’s being, construed as eternal processions, and the order of God’s operations, especially considered in terms of the missions of the Son and Spirit. In Holmes’ own words, Spirit Christology seems to “confuse immanent processions and temporal missions,” or put differently, it confuses “the order of knowing and teaching and the order of being.”⁵⁰ The result of Habets’ Spirit Christology, which yields the theological methodology of starting

⁴⁷Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 123-30.

⁴⁸Holmes admits, indirectly, that there may be other kinds of Spirit Christology when he says things like “if one is to take Habets as one of its representative voices on the Protestant side” (*The Holy Spirit*, 127) and “at least insofar as Habets’s monograph is representative” (129). Unfortunately, though, Holmes does not engage any other representatives of Spirit Christology (besides Weinandy, whom Habets follows closely) in his brief excursus.

⁴⁹Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 123.

⁵⁰Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 127, 128.

with the Spirit as “prior to the Son in the economy,”⁵¹ is to “reverse how the persons of Son and Spirit – by virtue of their processions – are related to one another in God’s life.”⁵² Holmes’ critique of Habets is exactly right and could apply equally to Ralph Del Colle or anyone else engaged in reformulating the immanent Trinity in the name of Spirit Christology. Furthermore, while Holmes does not engage the likes of Clark Pinnock or Amos Yong for their application of Spirit Christology to soteriological inclusivism, his critique of Habets would apply fully to them as well, especially since their proposals depend on rescuing the doctrine of the Holy Spirit from its dependence on the person and work of the Son (and thus a reformulation of both immanent and economic Trinitarian categories).

Holmes is concerned that the deeply held and carefully thought-out patterns of Trinitarian being and operation, based on the revelation of God in Scripture and articulated with precision in the Christian theological tradition, are being rejected or modified in Spirit Christology with potentially disastrous effects. Indeed, concerning the Trinitarian Spirit Christology of Habets, Del Colle, Pinnock, and Yong, his concerns are well-founded. But a Spirit Christology that is conceived, not in terms of the eternal relations of origin but in terms of the anointing of the Son according to his human nature need not be rejected on these grounds, particularly if the model is articulated in a manner consistent with the Trinitarian and Chalcedonian heritage of the church.

An Owenite approach that understands Spirit Christology only in terms of the anointing of the human nature of the Son, however, is consistent with the traditional account of Trinitarian agency grounded in “the irreversible sequence in the immanent life of the Trinity”⁵³ that Holmes is rightly so concerned to preserve. It has been argued at

⁵¹Habets, *Anointed Son*, 227.

⁵²Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 128.

⁵³Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 128.

length already that the traditional account of Trinitarian agency can and should be extended (as Owen extends it) into a presentation of the person of the Holy Spirit as the immediate, peculiar subject of divine actions toward creation in general and human agents in particular. By focusing the paradigm of Spirit Christology on the human nature of Jesus, as Scripture does, this order of divine action is preserved in exactly the way expected. As Holmes critiques Habets, he acknowledges the role of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of the Son incarnate, and contra Habets, he avers,

In terms of the Trinity itself, the Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son as gift, which is key to the Spirit's identity. In the economy, the Spirit works, for example, to give rise in Mary's womb to the humanity of the Son, empowers the Son and rests on him throughout his ministry, and is said to raise him from the dead. Such temporal action rests on an irreversible sequence in the immanent life of the Holy Trinity.⁵⁴

With this I concur, and with this Owen's model comports perfectly. I would only add that the reality of the working of the Holy Spirit is such in the scriptural presentation of the life of the incarnate Son of God that it should occupy a place of paradigmatic prominence in Christological formulations, especially where the humanity of Christ is concerned.⁵⁵

The *Extra-Calvinisticum*: A Critique from Stephen Wellum

The Definition of Chalcedon is credited with weaving the Christological formula of one person with two natures deeply into the fabric of all Christian reflection on the person of Christ and the relationship of deity to humanity in him. While a Spirit Christology of anointing of the human nature of the Son comports well with traditional

⁵⁴Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 128.

⁵⁵See also Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 406-11. While Wellum's primary critique of Spirit Christology concerns Chalcedonian Christological categories, he also critiques Spirit Christology on the basis of its insufficient attention to classical accounts of Trinitarian being and action. While Holmes assumes that all contemporary Trinitarian Spirit Christologies are of the same variety as Habets, Wellum proceeds as though all contemporary Trinitarian Spirit Christologies are of the FKC variety of Hawthorne and Issler. Wellum's summary of Trinitarian being and action and his critique of the FKC models of Spirit Christology I find to be helpful and right. Unfortunately, Wellum does not engage the model of John Owen for whom his criticisms concerning Trinitarian agency do not apply.

Trinitarian agency, how does it fare with respect to Chalcedonian Christology? Stephen J. Wellum, in his exhaustive treatment of the doctrine of the person of Christ,⁵⁶ critiques the paradigm of Evangelical Spirit Christology as a species of functional kenotic Christology (FKC) on the grounds that the person-nature formula of Chalcedon is not rightly upheld by FKC proponents of Spirit Christology. Because Wellum's critique focuses on contemporary Evangelicals and comes in a larger evaluation of FKC, he does not deal with the nuances of John Owen's account.⁵⁷ Let us consider Wellum's critique of FKC models and see if the Owenite Spirit Christology being advocated here succumbs to the same pitfalls.

While FKC models claim to uphold Chalcedon's one person, two nature formula, Wellum contends that they have misrepresented the Chalcedonian definition of person and have therefore failed to distinguish adequately between the two natures of God the Son incarnate. By rejecting the classical definition of person, such as the one offered by Boethius,⁵⁸ and defining person instead as a distinct center of will and consciousness, the FKC proponents have embraced a monothelite understanding of the person of Christ. This is so because if will is a property of person rather than a property of nature, then there is only one will in Christ.⁵⁹ Concerning the monothelite metaphysics

⁵⁶Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*.

⁵⁷In a footnote, Wellum acknowledges that Spirit Christology occurs along a spectrum of a wide variety of theological traditions ranging from heretical to orthodox. Importantly, he identifies FKC versions of Spirit Christology as the model followed by Evangelicals, and he makes no mention of the nuanced work of John Owen (*God the Son Incarnate*, 382n45, 382n46). Interestingly, Wellum does cite Oliver Crisp's critique of Owen's Spirit Christology, but Wellum gives no indication that the Spirit Christology of Owen is of a different variety than FKC (*God the Son Incarnate*, 408nn46,47,48).

⁵⁸Boethius defined person as "a rational substance of an individual nature" (cited in Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 378). Wellum explains how the Boethian definition safeguards the distinction between person and nature necessary to orthodox Trinitarian theology and Christology.

⁵⁹In Chapter Three, I make this same critique of Hawthorne and Issler as representatives of FKC. Wellum says, rightly, "FKC theorists equate 'person' with 'soul' so that in the incarnation, the person of the Son (which includes a distinct will and mind) now acts and functions through the limits of a human body, with the divine person/soul of the Son *becoming* the soul of the human body. For FKC, this is the most distinctive departure from classical thought, since Chalcedonian Christology always placed the capacity of the will in the nature, not the person, hence its endorsement of dyothelitism" (*God the Son Incarnate*, 381). For Wellum's insightful discussion of the importance of the will debate in Christology, see

of a FKC account of the incarnation, Wellum engages extensively with Garrett Deweese, noting that other Evangelical proponents of FKC follow the same metaphysical commitment to a one-will Christology.⁶⁰ He points out that for Deweese, the one center of will and consciousness in the incarnation is the person of the eternal Word. Thus, in the incarnate state, the person of Christ has only one will and one mind, a divine will/mind, which must in some way be limited for Christ to experience humanity fully. Thus, the quintessential component of FKC is necessitated. Christ functionally ceased to exercise certain divine attributes that were inconsistent with human experience.

This redefinition of person entails a failure to distinguish properly between the two natures as well. Wellum rightly observes that in classical Christology, the distinction of natures made any notion of ceasing to exercise divine attributes in order to experience humanity superfluous. Given the classical definition of person and the classical understanding that will and mind are properties of nature, Chalcedon's insistence that the two natures conjoined in one person are "without confusion" allows Christians to speak of Jesus' exercise of the attributes of each nature without assuming that either nature has to be changed ontologically or functionally. In classical Christology, because of the distinction of natures, the church has been able to affirm what has come to be called the *Extra-Calvinisticum* (the *extra*), the theological principle that, while the Son lived a human life according to the properties of a complete human nature, he was not limited to the human nature and was able to live simultaneously outside of the human nature (Latin, *extra*) a fully divine life.⁶¹ The one person of Christ, being one and the same subject of

God the Son Incarnate, 339-48.

⁶⁰Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 383-84. See Garrett Deweese, "One Person, Two Natures: Two Metaphysical Models of the Incarnation," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Intermediate Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), 114-53.

⁶¹For Wellum's discussion of the *extra* in relation to Evangelical FKC Spirit Christology, see *God the Son Incarnate*, 382, 403, 406. For a more detailed discussion of the concept of the *extra* as an important feature of Chalcedonian Christology, see *God the Son Incarnate*, 332-38.

both natures, lives a divine life according to the properties of the divine nature – according to his subsistence in that nature as Son – and simultaneously lives a human life according to the properties of his human nature.⁶² It is the *extra* that allows classical theologians to affirm that Christ continues to exercise the so-called cosmic functions of providentially sustaining the universe: “In Him all things hold together” (Col 1:17) and “He upholds all things by the word of his power” (Heb 1:3).

Wellum rightly points out that the classical understanding of the *extra* “is not available to kenotic viewpoints, given their redefinition of person.”⁶³ Because there is in Christ only one divine will, which must be functionally limited for the sake of the fullness of human experience, it is impossible to conceive of the Son, operating with such self-imposed functional limitations, continuing to exercise the divine attributes for the sake of the cosmic functions that Scripture ascribes to the Son. Wellum observes that this is why Issler suggests that the Son, in a pre-incarnate decision, likely delegated the cosmic functions of Colossians 1:17 and Hebrews 1:3 to the Father and the Spirit for the purpose of the incarnation,⁶⁴ a proposal full of difficulties for Trinitarian theology.

Wellum is certainly right concerning FKC models of Spirit Christology and their inconsistency with Chalcedonian Christology because of their redefinition of person and consequent inadequate account of the distinction of the two natures in the one person of Christ. The inability of FKC to consistently affirm the *extra* makes the cosmic functions ascribed to the Son a major problem. It has been shown, however, that John Owen’s Spirit Christology is a far cry from any kind of kenotic Christology. Owen thoroughly and consistently embraces Chalcedonian Christology as classically

⁶²Wellum says, “Yet, as the *extra* affirms, because the Son subsists in two natures, he is *not* limited or completely circumscribed by his human nature. The incarnate Son, in relation to the Father and the Spirit, consistent with his mode of subsistence from eternity, continues to act *as the Son* and now as the Son incarnate” (*God the Son Incarnate*, 403).

⁶³Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 403.

⁶⁴Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus*, 125, cited in Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 382n44.

understood. The *extra*, therefore, is not incompatible with Owen's proposal.

The inability to affirm consistently the *extra* is what makes FKC Spirit Christology (like that of Hawthorne and Issler) susceptible to critiques from the vantage point of classical Chalcedonian Christology. However, it is its compatibility with the *extra* that makes Owen's model of Spirit Christology consistent with both Trinitarian agency and Chalcedonian categories. In an Owenite Spirit Christology, it can be maintained consistently that the Son, per the *extra*, continues to live in his eternal divine relationship with the other persons of the Trinity even while incarnate and in the state of humiliation. Thus, according to his divine life subsisting as the second person of the Trinity, the Son is the one, along with the Father, from whom the Spirit proceeds (immanently and economically) to his role as immediate divine subject of the power of God at work in/on/through the human nature of Jesus. In this way, in an Owenite Spirit Christology, one and the same Son is simultaneously the giver and receiver, bestower and bearer, of the Spirit for the purpose of the completion of his incarnate mission. The Son (according to his divine nature in perichoretic relation to the Father and the Spirit), is sending/giving the Spirit to his own human nature. One and the same divine Son lives a human life according to the properties of the human nature and thereby experiences the empowering presence and anointing of the Holy Spirit in and through that human nature. On this account, it is not as though the Son, according to his divine nature, is uninvolved in the divine operations in/on/through his own human nature. Rather, *he is involved exactly as he is always involved in divine operations – from the Father and by the Spirit.* Thus, Owen's conviction that the miracles of Jesus are to be understood as the immediate divine operations of the Spirit of God through him is not only a more consistent application of Trinitarian agency classically construed but is also completely compatible with a robust classical affirmation of Chalcedon's one-person, two-nature formula, including the *extra*. Indeed, Owen would have been well-served to appeal to the *extra* explicitly in defending his model, and I suspect that had he been defending his views

against Orthodox theologians, rather than advancing them against Socinians, he likely would have made the appeal explicit.

Wellum is also critical of FKC's ascription of the miraculous works of Christ to the divine agency of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁵ He observes, "FKC has difficulty accounting for how Scripture presents the deity of Christ in his life and ministry. . . . Jesus's inauguration of the kingdom, his teaching, and his miracles are not merely Spirit-empowered acts; they are ultimately acts identified with Yahweh. . . . The very works of the incarnate Son testify to who he is."⁶⁶ Per the metaphysical commitments of FKC, if the Son has limited his mind/will/power for the sake of living a human life, then he cannot simply exercise divine power for the sake of miracles. Thus, FKC's inability to affirm the *extra* in their construal of Christ's humanity results in their inability to ascribe the divine power at work in Jesus' miracles to the Son as immediate subject. Again, this critique is *apropos* with respect to kenotic models of Spirit Christology, but does it apply to an Owenite Spirit Christology?

The FKC Spirit Christology of Hawthorne holds in common with an Owenite Spirit Christology the conviction that *all* of the divine power on display in the life and ministry of Jesus terminates immediately on the person of the Holy Spirit. The metaphysical underpinning of this shared conviction, however, is radically different in the two models. Can an Owenite Spirit Christology, with its classical Chalcedonian understanding of the metaphysics of the hypostatic union ascribe all divine power in the miracles of Christ to the person of the Holy Spirit and somehow still affirm that Jesus' works bear witness to his deity? To this critical question we now turn.

⁶⁵Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 406-7.

⁶⁶Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 406.

The Works of Christ That Attest His Deity

Trinitarian Spirit Christology of all stripes must affirm the full ontological deity of God the Son incarnate. That is, Trinitarian Spirit Christology affirms that it is the very eternal Son of God, subsisting as the only begotten of the Father from all eternity, who took to himself a human nature and lived a human life on earth for us and for our salvation – “The Word became flesh” (John 1:14). Nevertheless, one of the most common ways that the deity of Christ has been defended is by an appeal to the miracles of Jesus. An Owenite Spirit Christology, however, argues that the Holy Spirit is the divine person upon whom the power of God at work in all of Jesus’ miracles terminates. Thus, it seems, *prima facie*, that the miracles of Christ, the *works* of Christ, do not attest to his deity in an Owenite Spirit Christology.

Certainly, a strong case can be made for the deity of Christ from his words and the apostolic witness of the NT apart from any appeal to Jesus’ miracles. Jesus’ famous Johannine statements alone could close the case (John 8:58, 10:30, 14:8-11). Add to these the high Pauline Christology of Colossians 1:8-10 and Colossians 1:15-17 or the argument of Hebrews 1, among other NT texts, and the deity of Christ can be attested apart from his miraculous works during the state of humiliation. However, to suggest that only words and not works attest the deity of Christ would be problematic biblically because of what Jesus himself said about his works. Consider John 14:10-11. Jesus says, “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but *the Father who dwells in me does his works*. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else *believe on account of the works themselves*.”⁶⁷ Here is one instance in which Jesus explicitly says that his followers are to believe that he is in the Father and the Father is in him (a profound statement of the deity of Christ based on the perichoretic union of Father and

⁶⁷Emphasis mine.

Son as subsisting in one essence) “on account of the works” that Jesus performs. It would seem that Scripture, indeed Jesus himself, demands that we understand the works of Jesus as bearing witness to his deity.

In addition to this direct statement concerning the works of Jesus, there are certain accounts of the miracles of Jesus which, when interpreted in light of the canonical unfolding of the redemptive storyline of Scripture, lead to the conclusion that Jesus did these particular works for the precise purpose of demonstrating his identity as God the Son by the miracle performed. For example, consider the account of Jesus walking on the water, which is recorded in three of the four canonical gospels (Matt 14:45-52; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:16-21). Most commentators recognize in this sign that Jesus is intentionally acting in a way that identifies him with YHWH of the OT. By walking on the sea, he does what only YHWH does.⁶⁸ By verbally identifying himself to his disciples, he claims the very name of YHWH for himself: “I am.”⁶⁹ By rescuing Peter as he sank in the sea, Jesus demonstrates that he not only tames the unruly sea but also saves from it, as Yahweh saved the psalmist from the waters that threatened to overwhelm him

⁶⁸Dale C. Allison, Jr., and W. D. Davies remark, “The crux to understanding the Christology of [this passage] is the fact that walking on the sea has its background in the OT, where Yahweh the omnipotent creator treads upon the waters. . . . By walking on the sea Jesus overcomes the powers of chaos and subdues them, like Yahweh in Job 9.8. And by crossing the sea so that his disciples may in turn cross safely, Jesus is again acting like Yahweh, who according to Ps 77.19 prepared the way for the Israelites to pass through the Sea of Reeds” (Dale C. Allison, Jr. and W. D. Davies, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary* [New York: T & T Clark, 2004], 241-42.).

⁶⁹Standard translations report Jesus as saying, “It is I.” Nevertheless, the Greek expression in all three accounts is ἐγώ εἰμι (“I am”). This is the name by which Yahweh identifies himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14 (LXX). Though commentators are somewhat divided on the significance of this designation, most agree that there is some degree of intentionality to Jesus’ use of this phrase in this context. R. T. France sees it as a common phrase in Matthew, though he admits that John may have intended it as an allusion to Exodus 3:14, given his use of “I am” on the lips of Jesus as a major unifying theme (R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 570n14). Commenting on John’s gospel, D. A. Carson argues that most readers would have understood it in the common way upon the first reading. However, he suggests that further readings, after John’s themes were detected, might lead readers to see an allusion to Exodus 3:14 (Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 275-76). Andreas Köstenberger is more forthcoming, seeing a very probable allusion to the divine name in John 6:20 (Andreas Köstenberger, “The Deity of Christ in John’s Gospel,” in *The Deity of Christ*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011], 106.). Allison and Davies understand the phrase as an intentional allusion to Exodus 3:14 in all accounts of the event (Allison and Davies, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary*, 242). Craig Blomberg also believes the allusion to Exodus 3:14 is intended (Craig Blomberg, “Matthew,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. D. A. Carson and G. K. Beale [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007], 50).

(cf. Psa 69:1-2). This miracle clearly attests to Jesus' full deity as God the Son incarnate.

Can an Owenite Spirit Christology be maintained alongside the conviction that some of Jesus' miracles served the express purpose of demonstrating his personal deity? Put differently, is the conviction that *all* of Jesus' miracles have the person of the Holy Spirit as the immediate divine subject of the divine power on display in the miracles consistent with the conviction that some miracles testify to Jesus' deity? In short, yes. How can this be? According to Jesus' own words, the chief end of the Spirit's work in the world is to glorify the Son (John 15:26, 16:14). It is therefore possible, even preferable, to interpret the primary purpose of Jesus' miraculous signs as testaments to his personal deity as God the Son incarnate while also affirming, with John Owen, that the divine operations at work through the human nature of the Son terminate on the Holy Spirit. The Spirit works signs and wonders *through* the incarnate Son in such a way that the signs and wonders testify to the glory of the Son as fully divine. In other words, *the immediate personal divine subject of the manifestation of divine power is not necessarily the same as the object of its revelatory significance*. The Spirit is the *subject* of divine operations through the Son, but the Son is the *object* of the revelatory significance of the divine operations. The manner of the Spirit's work in/on/through the Son is not altogether different than the manner of his working in/on/through other wonder-working human agents in Scripture (e.g. Moses, Elijah, apostles, Stephen, etc.), but one major difference is the purpose of the miracles. *In the case of others, the signs and wonders glorify God in juxtaposition to the human agent. In the case of Jesus, the signs and wonders glorify the person of Christ as God the Son incarnate.*

While this understanding of the miracles of Jesus as attesting his deity even though the divine operations terminate on the Holy Spirit is not something Owen himself addressed, this solution is consistent with Owen's presentation. Furthermore, this affirmation is critical to the contemporary re-iteration of the Owenite paradigm because of the importance Jesus himself places on the revelatory significance of his works with

respect to his identity.

Conclusion

Spirit Christology does indeed hold out the promise of pneumatological enrichment to Evangelical theology if the right care is taken in the faithful articulation of it. Revisionist re-iterations of adoptionistic models of Spirit Christology must be rejected and the impulse behind them recognized as destructive to the Christian faith. Concerning the Trinitarian models, there is much to commend in terms of the advantages that a Spirit-Christology paradigm brings to traditional theology. However, the advantages of Spirit Christology are attended by a number of significant dangers to which various models have succumb implicitly or explicitly. The kind of Spirit Christology that emphasizes the humanity of the Son by framing the Spirit-Christology paradigm as the anointing of the Son according to his human nature holds out the greatest promise. Even here, however, errors are prevalent, especially when a kenotic understanding of the person of Christ provides the metaphysical underpinning of Spirit Christology. John Owen, however, provides a better way. His Spirit Christology is thoroughly consistent with the tried Trinitarian and Chalcedonian heritage of the church and the extension of that heritage to a Christo-centric and Christo-exclusive soteriological paradigm. The model of Owen, retrieved and advanced here, achieves all of the advantages of Spirit Christology while avoiding the dangers and provides a considerable pneumatological enrichment to traditional Evangelical theology.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Recap of the Argument

Spirit Christology is any proposal in which the Holy Spirit is afforded paradigmatic prominence in the formulation of Christological dogma. Spirit Christology can occur along a broad spectrum with respect to orthodox Trinitarian theology and Christology. At one end of the spectrum, the revisionist models represent a radical departure from historic orthodoxy. Major proponents of revisionist Spirit Christology were surveyed in chapter 2. Further along the spectrum are the various species of Trinitarian models. These models were surveyed in chapter 3. While each of the models covered helpfully present ideas that achieve certain theological advantages, it was shown that none of them sufficiently avoided all of the dangers of Spirit Christology, as identified at the end of the chapter. Along the spectrum further still is the Trinitarian Spirit Christology of John Owen, whose model was surveyed at length in chapter 4. It was shown that Owen's proposal achieves all of the advantages that the other models achieve while consistently avoiding all of the dangers. In other words, Owen's Spirit Christology is thoroughly within the bounds of classical Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy, as embodied by the ecumenical creeds of the Christian church. In the final chapter, Owen's approach was defended as offering a pneumatological enrichment of evangelical Christology. The biblical support for a Spirit-Christology paradigm was surveyed in a concentrated effort to show that the person and work of the Holy Spirit is given paradigmatic prominence in the scriptural portrayal of the life of Jesus Christ. Additionally, important reservations of some contemporary theologians of the classical tradition were addressed in an effort to show that an Owenite Spirit Christology is not in

any way a departure from (or even a modification to) classical Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy. In this concluding chapter, I wish to revisit briefly each of the advantages of Spirit Christology and the dangers, demonstrating briefly how the Owenite model of Trinitarian Spirit Christology presented in chapter 5 achieves the final aim of this dissertation and represents a pneumatological enrichment of Western theological discourse in general and Evangelical Christology in particular.

The Promise of Spirit Christology

Trinitarian Spirit Christology – carefully conceived and thoughtfully articulated – holds out the promise of pneumatological enrichment to classical Evangelical Christology because of the four specific advantages it brings to the table. First, Trinitarian Spirit Christology accents the humanity of Christ and provides a framework for enriching one’s understanding of the fullness of Jesus’ human experience by appealing to his experience of the anointing of the Spirit and his dependence on that same Spirit for his life of obedience and the completion of his mission on earth. The model advanced in this dissertation, by appealing to the tried categories of classical Trinitarian theology and Christology, achieves the advantage of accenting the humanity of Christ without in any way compromising the right emphatic attention owed to his deity. Furthermore, because the model advanced here maintains the robust Chalcedonian distinction between the two natures of Christ, there is no sense in which the humanity of Christ is undermined metaphysically by the paradigm of Trinitarian Spirit Christology.

Second, Trinitarian Spirit Christology, because of its emphasis on the humanity of Christ and the fact that he experienced the same Spirit that other believers experience, enriches Christian devotion by making sense of the biblical injunctions to follow the example of Jesus, which are not uncommon in New Testament paraenesis. The *extra* of classical Christology helps one conceive of how the deity of Christ can be active during the incarnation without compromising the reality of his human experience and

solidarity with those he came to save. By appealing to this classical formulation as the framework within which to understand Jesus' life according to the properties of his human nature, including all of the limitations of such a nature, this model has made theological space for the affirmation that Jesus' supernatural deeds terminate on the Holy Spirit, just as the Holy Spirit is the divine person whom Jesus experienced as he carried out his Father's will, resisted temptation, and learned the truths of God throughout his human life. As such, Christians can better understand that the command to follow Jesus' example is genuine and achievable, by the Spirit. Just as Jesus had the Spirit for the completion of his mission, so his followers have the Spirit of God for the completion of their commission. Owenite Trinitarian Spirit Christology is thereby a boon to Christian devotion. Of course, it is important to maintain the uniqueness of Jesus' identity as divine Son and the uniqueness of his mission such that it is understood that each individual work of Jesus is not imitable. However, Jesus' humility when he suffered, his resistance to temptation, and his obedience to the Father are imitable by the power of the Spirit.

The third advantage of Trinitarian Spirit Christology is that there is an emphasis on the person and work of the Holy Spirit, something that many have alleged is lacking in much Western theological discourse. Even if Western theology has not relegated the Spirit to a Cinderella status, it is nevertheless a good thing for greater emphasis to be given to the third person of the Trinity if indeed such emphasis is biblically warranted and does not detract from worshipful reflection and theological emphasis directed to the persons of the Father and the Son. This proposal affords paradigmatic prominence to the Holy Spirit in Christological formulation, and in so doing invites worshipful theological reflection on the person and work of the Holy Spirit in all of Scripture, and if developed further will, I contend, even deepen Christian understanding of the working of the Holy Spirit in his proper mission as the one sent from the Father and the Son for the completion of redemption in the lives of the elect.

The fourth advantage of Trinitarian Spirit Christology identified in this dissertation is exegetical in nature. With proper care to safeguard the integrity of Christ's person and the distinction between his two natures once incarnate, a Trinitarian Spirit Christology opens the door for giving the pneumatologically emphatic passages in the gospels the kind of paradigmatic prominence that their placement in the gospel narratives demands without fear of jeopardizing the most treasured Christological convictions of the Christian church. Indeed, it is my hope that others will embrace an Owenite Trinitarian Spirit Christology and will build on the metaphysical framework of the classical Trinitarian and Christological heritage of the church to engage in deeper and more sustained exegesis of the key passages that this dissertation could only begin to investigate.

The Peril of Spirit Christology

While the advantages listed above make the paradigm of Trinitarian Spirit Christology worth pursuing, there are dangers that conceptually jeopardize some of the most cherished convictions of the Christian faith. These dangers must be avoided at all costs. Many of these dangers have been imbibed by various proponents of Spirit Christology. Others have left the issues unaddressed, leaving the door open that their proposals might succumb to one or more of the dangers discussed in this dissertation. The Owenite model defended in chapter 4 and advanced in chapter 5, however, consistently and coherently avoids all of the theological dangers of Spirit Christology.

The first danger identified in this dissertation has been called the danger of a diminished emphasis on the deity of Christ. In some Spirit-Christology proposals the pendulum of theological emphasis swings too far in the direction of Christ's humanity and thus away from his deity. The Owenite model avoids this danger completely in at least two ways. First, an Owenite model upholds the integrity of Christ's humanity by an appeal to the Chalcedonian distinction of the natures so that the proper emphasis on the human life of

Jesus does not entail a diminishing of the divine nature in any respect. Second, unlike some Spirit Christology models, the Owenite proposal of this dissertation makes theological space for the affirmation that the miracles of Jesus attest to his deity as eternal Son of the Father. Some Spirit-Christology proponents ascribe all of Jesus' miracles to the Spirit and have no mechanism for how the works of Jesus can attest to his own deity. Other proponents of Spirit Christology ascribe most of Jesus' miracles to the Spirit, allowing for some of the miraculous power to be ascribed to the Son qua Son, but this leaves one with the sense that the difference between when the Spirit is terminating subject as opposed to the Son, is merely arbitrary. It also makes Christian conviction that the order of God's operations reveals the order of his being difficult to embrace. How does the changing order of operations with respect to Jesus' miracles reveal the unchanging order of being in the Godhead? The Owenite model advanced here avoids the horns of this dilemma, offering a coherent way to articulate how the miracles of Jesus attest to his deity.

The second theological danger of Spirit Christology is the tendency to overemphasize the distinction of divine persons in the economy in a way that conceptually jeopardizes divine unity. Many Spirit-Christology proponents speak in a way that belies the traditional accounts of divine unity, as expressed in the historic doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity. Spirit Christology, by definition, emphasizes economic distinctions between the persons, but it must do so in a way that is consistent with divine unity and the historic doctrine of inseparable operations. It has been argued at length that the Owenite model presented in this dissertation is based on the classical affirmation of the inseparable operations of the Trinity. Owen pressed the tradition of appropriations to its full legitimate extent so that he conceived of the persons as modally appropriated subjects of the divine essence, a concept that allows freedom in expression of economic distinctions without jeopardizing divine unity and inseparable operations *ad extra*.

The third danger of Spirit Christology pertains to Christology proper and to one's understanding of the hypostatic union of two natures in the one divine person of the Son. It has been shown that some Spirit Christology proponents speak in a way that betrays the fundamental metaphysics of the hypostatic union as confessed and defended by the church in every era. The Owenite proposal of this dissertation, however, does not succumb to this danger. Rather, this model self-consciously embraces the classical Chalcedonian metaphysics of the hypostatic union, appealing to such categories as the only way to make sense of a coherent Spirit Christology of the anointing of the human nature of the Son. In the Owenite model advanced here, there is no latency or potentiality of divine attributes during the incarnation, nor any communication of the divine attributes to the human nature directly. Per the *extra* of the classical tradition, the Son continues to exercise the divine attributes unabated, even while incarnate. He upholds the universe by the word of his power and holds all things together in the cosmos. He subsists eternally as the one generated from the Father and as the spirator of the Spirit from the Father. Also, per the *extra*, Christ lives a fully divine life by the faculties of his rational soul. It is by appeal to the *extra* that the Owenite model of Spirit Christology is able to affirm that Jesus Christ is simultaneously giver of the Spirit (per the divine nature) and receiver of the Spirit (per the human nature), simultaneously the one who works by the Spirit (per the divine nature) and the one by whom the Spirit works (per the human nature). The Owenite model advanced here is by no means Nestorian because of the affirmation that one and the same Son who exists eternally as from the Father also assumed a human nature that was *anhypostatic* apart from its being *enhypostatized* by the one person of the Son. The distinction in consciousness is not a division of persons but a consistent application of the metaphysical principal that mind/will is a property of nature, not person.

A fourth danger associated with some models of Spirit Christology is the tendency to decentralize the person of Christ, especially in soteriology. It has been shown

that there is a misguided belief that the Western understanding of the order of subsistence is to blame for the tragic neglect of the Holy Spirit because the Spirit is allegedly subordinated to the Son by the *filioque* clause of the Western version of the Nicene Creed. The result is a rejection of the Western account of the order of subsistence in the Godhead. Consequently, some proponents of Spirit Christology argue for a saving role of the Holy Spirit in global religions apart from explicit faith in Christ. One of the strengths of an Owenite model is the exegetical analysis of the working of the Holy Spirit in the various epochs of salvation history such that the person and work of the Son is the focal point of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in every epoch. While Owen frames his analysis in terms of a traditional Covenant Theology framework, the approach he takes could easily be adapted to other nuanced models of continuity and discontinuity, all with the result that the Spirit's work of glorifying the Son (John 16:14) is true, not only in his proper mission after the mission of the Son but throughout all of his operations in the world. An Owenite Spirit Christology is fundamentally at odds with any attempt to decentralize the person of Christ and frame the saving work of the Spirit as outside the parameters of the saving mission of the Son.

The fifth and final danger of Spirit Christology identified in this dissertation is the danger of overemphasizing the potential for ecumenical unity. For some proponents of Spirit Christology, the advance of ecumenical dialogue in hopes of unity between Christian traditions, especially between Eastern and Western expressions of the faith, is paramount. The traditional account of the order of subsistence is thereby reconceived in such a way that the *filioque* controversy becomes obsolete because the procession of the Spirit is no longer third in a linear *taxis* but is rather just one of three in the eternal relations of origin that admit of no *taxis* at all. The critique of this tendency to pursue ecumenical unity as a criteria for theology has already been offered. In short, ecumenical unity is a welcome consequence of truth but not an adequate criterion for it. The Owenite model advanced in this dissertation, however, does not overemphasize ecumenical

potential but seeks rather to advocate for Spirit Christology out of the conviction that Scripture demands it, the traditional Trinitarian order of subsistence calls for it, and the classical understanding of the unity of deity and humanity in the person of the Son incarnate beautifully accommodates it.

The Owenite Trinitarian Spirit Christology defended and advanced in this dissertation achieves all of the advantages of Spirit Christology while consistently and coherently avoiding all of the dangers associated with the paradigm. It is built upon the teaching of Scripture and offers no modification or reformulation of classical Nicene Trinitarianism or Chalcedonian Christology. As such, this particular model of Spirit Christology offers a considerable pneumatological enrichment to Evangelical Christology and a boon to Christian devotion.

The Use of the Term “Spirit Christology”

Some may wonder whether the term “Spirit Christology” is really necessary. Do the connotations of heterodoxy and lingering questions of coherence with classical Trinitarian theology and Christology make the use of the term too problematic? With all of the effort expended in this dissertation to construct a model of Spirit Christology that is thoroughly classical and orthodox, does the term “Spirit Christology” really still carry any force? I advocate for the continued use of the terminology of Spirit Christology because most classical accounts of Christology do not give the person and work of the Holy Spirit paradigmatic prominence in their formulations. As has been shown, there is a detrimental way to afford paradigmatic prominence to the Holy Spirit, but the detrimental paths are not the only ones available. Most classical accounts of Christology discuss the humanity of Christ in terms of the church’s philosophical and metaphysical debates that safeguarded the confession of Christ’s humanity against grave error and in terms of the biblical proofs that Jesus is fully human, whether by his solidarity with Adam, Noah, and Abraham (e.g. Rom 5:12-20, 1 Cor 15:20-58); by direct statement of his humanity (e.g.

Heb 2:14-19); and/or by evidence of his human experience, as found in the gospels (hunger, thirst, temptation, ignorance, death, etc.). I am not aware of any exhaustive classical treatment of the full range of theological issues regarding the person of Christ that appeals to Jesus' experience of the Spirit of God as paradigmatic for the orthodox confession of Jesus as God the Son *incarnate*. Until the paradigmatic prominence of the Spirit is commonplace in Christology, especially in rich dogmatic treatments of the humanity of Christ, the term Spirit Christology is necessary as drawing attention to a neglected biblical resource for enriching the church's confession of Jesus as the God-man.

It is my hope that the retrieval, defense, and advance of the Spirit-Christology model of John Owen given in this dissertation will inspire others to engage in the articulation of classical Christology in a way that utilizes the wonderful biblical portrayal of the paradigmatic prominence of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ without hesitation or fear of recrimination by the gatekeepers of classical theism. I look forward to the day in which classical Christology and Spirit Christology are not viewed as competing paradigms or even as paradigms in tension. Rather, may the day come when Spirit Christology is understood as a tool providing for the enrichment of classical Christological reflection.

The Future of Spirit Christology

There is further work to be done to properly advance this model of Trinitarian Spirit Christology. The brief exegetical work offered in chapter 5 is but the surface of important exegesis that could stand to shed light on the nature of Christ's experience of the Spirit while incarnate. One area not even addressed in this dissertation is the question of the ongoing relationship of the Spirit to the human nature of the Son in the post-resurrection state of exaltation. Exegetical analysis of every genre of literature in the NT could potentially shed light on this question, and I suspect that the metaphysical

framework of classical Christology along with the insights of an Owenite Spirit Christology could shed great light on such a project. Furthermore, I have suggested that the biblical-theological presentation of the Spirit in every epoch of redemption history could be applied to models of continuity and discontinuity that are not developed in lock-step with classical Covenant Theology. The church would benefit to see work done on a Christocentric model of pneumatology in which the basic commitments of Owen's approach – the Spirit presents Jesus as antitype and archetype of various other Spirit-empowered persons and Spirit-infused institutions – were applied to a different covenantal framework than the one embraced by Owen himself. Finally, a great deal of beneficial literature could be written to enhance Christian devotion. This has been the *raison d'etre* of Klaus Issler's Spirit Christology, but Trinitarian and Christological problems of his proposal limit its effectiveness. The church would benefit if a similar motivation drove other authors to write literature concerning the imitation of Christ by appealing to the tools of an Owenite Spirit Christology.

As more work is done, and as the conclusions of this dissertation are subjected to criticism and revision, my primary objective is that the Lord Jesus Christ be exalted by this proposal that it might be an instrument, however imperfect, in the hands of the Spirit to advance worshipful theological reflection, increased devotion, and fervent work for the glory of God the Father.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Allen, Michael, and Scott R. Swain. *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015.
- Allison, Dale C., Jr., and W. D. Davies. *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary*. New York: T&T Clark, 2004.
- Allison, Gregg R. *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.
- Anatolios, Khaled. *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.
- Augustine. *The Trinity*. Translated by Edmund Hill. Vol. 1 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*. Edited by John E. Rotelle. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2010.
- Ayres, Lewis. *Augustine and the Trinity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- _____. *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth Century Trinitarian Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Badcock, Gary. *Light of Truth & Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.
- Barry, William. *Letting God Come Close*. Chicago: Jesuit Way, 2001.
- Bauckham, Richard. *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Bloesch, Donald. *The Holy Spirit: Works and Gifts*. Christian Foundations, 5. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000.
- Bryant, Herschel Odell. *Spirit Christology in the Christian Tradition: From the Patristic Period to the Rise of Pentacostalism in the Twentieth Century*. Cleveland, TN: CPT, 2014.
- Carson, D. A. *The Gospel According to John*. Pillar New Testament Commentary Series. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.
- Chan, Francis. *Forgotten God: Reversing our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009.

- Cole, Graham A. *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*. Foundations of Evangelical Theology Series. Edited by John S. Feinberg. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007.
- Congar, Yves. *The Word and the Spirit*. Translated by David Smith. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986.
- Crisp, Oliver. *Divinity and Humanity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- _____. *God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology*. New York: T & T Clark, 2009.
- _____. *Revisioning Christology*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011.
- Cross, F. L., and E. A. Livingstone, eds. *Dictionary of the Christian Church*. 3rd ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007.
- Daniels, Richard. *The Christology of John Owen*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Press, 2004.
- Del Colle, Ralph. *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Dunn, James D. G. *The Christ and the Spirit: Christology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- _____. *The Christ and the Spirit: Pneumatology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- _____. *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
- _____. *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975.
- Dunzl, Franz. *A Brief History of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Church*. New York: T & T Clark, 2007.
- Edmundson, Stephen. *Calvin's Christology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Elwell, Walter A., ed. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.
- Erickson, Millard. *Christian Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.
- Evans, C. Steven, ed. *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God*. Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2010.
- Ferguson, Sinclair B. *The Holy Spirit*. Contours of Christian Theology. Edited by Gerald Bray. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1996.
- _____. *John Owen on the Christian Life*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987.

- _____. *The Trinitarian Devotion of John Owen*. Long Line of Godly Men Profile Series. Edited by Steven J. Lawson. Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2014.
- France, R. T. *The Gospel of Matthew*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.
- Grenz, Stanley. *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004.
- Grillmeier, Alois. *Christ in Christian Tradition*. Vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*. 2nd ed. Translated by John Bowden. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.
- Habets, Myk. *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology*. Princeton Theological Monograph Series. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010.
- _____, ed. *The Spirit of Truth: Reading Scripture and Constructing Theology with the Holy Spirit*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010.
- Haight, Roger. *Jesus: Symbol of God*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000.
- Hamilton, James. *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments*. New American Commentaries Studies in Bible and Theology. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006.
- Harnack, Adolf von. *Outlines in the History of Dogma*. Translated by Edwin Knox Mitchell. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1893.
- Hawthorne, Gerald. *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus*. 1991. Reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003.
- Heppe, Heinrich. *Reformed Dogmatics*. Edited by Ernst Bizer. Translated by G. T. Thomson. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007.
- Hick, John. *The Metaphor of God Incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age*. 2nd ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.
- _____, ed. *The Myth of God Incarnate*. London: SCM, 1977.
- Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theology*. 3 vols. 1871-73. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.
- Holmes, Christopher R. J. *The Holy Spirit*. New Studies in Dogmatics. Edited by Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015.
- Holmes, Stephen R. *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History, and Modernity*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012.
- Issler, Klaus. *Living into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012.

- Johnson, Keith E. *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism: An Augustinian Assessment*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011.
- Kapic, Kelly M. *Communion with God: The Divine and the Human in the Theology of John Owen*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Kärkäinen, Veli-Matti. *Christology, A Global Introduction: An Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.
- _____. *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.
- Kay, Brian K. *Trinitarian Spirituality: John Owen and the Doctrine of God in Western Devotion*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008.
- Kelly, J. N. D. *Early Christian Doctrines*. 5th ed. 1977. Reprint, New York: Continuum, 2006.
- Kline, Meredith G. *Genesis: A New Commentary*. Edited by Jonathan G. Kline. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2016.
- _____. *Images of Spirit*. 1980. Reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999.
- Lampe, Geoffrey. *God as Spirit: The Bampton Lectures, 1976*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Letham, Robert. *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2004.
- Macleod, Donald. *The Person of Christ*. Contours of Christian Theology. Edited by Gerald Bray. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998.
- McCall, Thomas. *Which Trinity, Whose Monotheism? Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.
- McCready, He Came Down from Heaven: *The Preexistence of Christ and the Christian Faith*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2005.
- Miles, Todd L. *A God of Many Understandings? The Gospel and A Theology of Religions*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- _____. *The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997.
- _____. *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001.
- _____. *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

- _____. *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- Morris, Thomas V. *The Logic of God Incarnate*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001.
- Muller, Richard. *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms Drawn Principally From Protestant Scholastic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995.
- _____. *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*. Vol. 3, *The Divine Essence and Attributes*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.
- _____. *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*. Vol. 4, *The Triunity of God*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.
- Newman, Paul W. *A Spirit Christology: Recovering the Biblical Paradigm of Christian Faith*. 1987. Reprint, Paul Newman, 2014.
- O'Collins, Gerald, S. J. *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- _____. *Christology: Origins, Developments, Debates*. London: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Owen, John. *A Brief Declaration and Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity*. In vol. 2 of *The Works of John Owen*. Edited by William H. Goold, 365-439. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009.
- _____. *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ, or A Declaration of the Glorious Mystery of the Person of Christ*. In vol. 1 of *The Works of John Owen*. Edited by William H. Goold, 1-272. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009.
- _____. *Of Communion with God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, Each Person Distinctly, in Love, Grace, and Consolation; or, The Saints' Fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost Unfolded*. In vol. 2 of *The Works of John Owen*. Edited by William H. Goold, 1-274. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009.
- _____. *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*. In vol. 10 of *The Works of John Owen*. Edited by William H. Goold, 139-424. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009.
- _____. *Vindicae Evangelicae, or The Mystery of the Gospel Vindicated and Socinianism Examined*. In vol. 12 of *The Works of John Owen*. Edited by William H. Goold, 1-590. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009.
- _____. *The Works of John Owen*. Vol. 3, *ΙΙΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ, or A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*. Edited by William H. Goold. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*. Vol. 1, *The Christian Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

- Pinnock, Clark. *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996.
- _____. *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.
- _____. *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.
- Reeves, Michael. *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012.
- Rehman, Sebastian. *Divine Discourse: The Theological Methodology of John Owen*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.
- Ryle, J. C. *Expository Thoughts on John*. Vol. 1. 1874. Reprint, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997.
- Sanders, Fred. *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.
- _____. *The Triune God*. New Studies in Dogmatics Series. Edited by Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.
- Sailhamer, John H. *Genesis*. In vol. 2 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Edited by Frank E. Gæbelein, 3-284. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.
- Schaff, Philip. *The Creeds of Christendom*. 3 vols. Translated by Philip Schaff. 6th ed. Revised by David S. Schaff. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.
- _____. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- Sexton, Jason, ed. *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*. Counterpoints: Bible and Theology Series. Edited by Stanley N. Gundry. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *The Christian Faith*. Translated by H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart. 2nd ed. Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile, 2011.
- Spence, Alan J. *Christology: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York: T & T Clark, 2008.
- _____. *Incarnation and Inspiration: John Owen and the Coherence of Christology*. New York: T & T Clark, 2007.
- Taylor, Vincent. *The Person of Christ*. London: Macmillan, 1966.
- Tillich, Paul. *Systematic Theology*. 3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-63.
- Toon, Peter. *God's Statesman: The Life and Work of John Owen, Pastor, Educator, Theologian*. Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1971.
- Trueman, Carl. *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology*. London: Paternoster, 1998.

- _____. *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007.
- Ware, Bruce A. *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005.
- _____. *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Weinandy, Thomas. *The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity*. London: T&T Clark, 1995.
- Wellum, Stephen J. *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.
- Willis, E. David. *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-called Extra-Calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology*. London: E. J. Brill, 1966.
- Witherington, Ben. *Friendship and Finances in Philippi*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity International, 1994.
- Yong, Amos. *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014.
- _____. *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.
- _____. *Spirit, Word, Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Theological Perspective*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006.
- _____. *Who Is the Holy Spirit: A Walk with the Apostles*. A Paraclete Guide Series. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2011.

Articles

- Augustine. "Sermon 52." In vol. 3 of *Sermons 51-94*, edited by John E. Rotelle, translated by Edmund Hill, 50-65. Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1995.
- Ayres, Lewis. "'Remember That You Are Catholic' (serm. 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8, no. 1 (2000): 39-82.
- Barnes, Michel René. "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology." *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 237-50.
- _____. "One Nature, One Power: Consensus Doctrine in Pro-Nicene Polemic." In *Studia Patristica 29: Historica, Theologica et Philosophica, Critica et Philologica*, edited by Elizabeth A. Livingstone, 5-23. Louvain: Peeters, 1997.
- _____. "Rereading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity." In *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, edited by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, Gerald O'Collins, 145-76. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

- Blomberg, Craig. "Matthew." In *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, edited by D. A. Carson and G. K. Beale, 1-110. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Bray, Gerald. "The Deity of Christ in Church History." In *The Deity of Christ*, edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, 169-92. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011.
- Claunch, Kyle. "God is the Head of Christ: Does 1 Corinthians 11:3 Ground Gender Complementarity in the Immanent Trinity?" In *One God in Three Persons: Unity of Essence, Distinction of Persons, Implications for Life*, edited by John Starke and Bruce A. Ware, 65-94. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.
- _____. "The Son and the Spirit: The Promise and Peril of Spirit Christology." *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 19, no. 1 (2015): 91-112.
- _____. "What God Hath Done Together: Defending the Historic Doctrine of the Inseparable Operations of the Trinity." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56 (2013): 781-800.
- Coffey, David. "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 193-229.
- _____. "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ." *Theological Studies* 45 (1984): 466-80.
- _____. "A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit," *Theological Studies* 47 (1986): 227-50.
- Crisp, Oliver. "John Owen on Spirit Christology." *Journal of Reformed Theology* 5 (2011): 5-25.
- Del Colle, Ralph. "Holy Spirit: Presence, Power, Person." *Theological Studies* 62 (2001): 322-40.
- _____. "Reflections on the *Filioque*." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 34, no. 2 (1997): 202-17.
- Fairbairn, Donald. "The One Person Who Is Jesus Christ: The Patristic Perspective." In *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Intermediate Christology*, edited by Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler, 80-113. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007.
- Ferguson, Sinclair. "John Owen and the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit." In *John Owen: The Man and His Theology*, edited by Robert W. Oliver, 101-30. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002.
- _____. "John Owen and the Doctrine of the Person of Christ." In *John Owen: The Man and His Theology*, edited by Robert W. Oliver, 69-100. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002.
- Habets, Myk. "*Filioque? Nein*: A Proposal for Coherent Coinherence." In *Trinitarian Theology after Barth*, edited by Myk Habets and Phillip Tolliday, 161-202. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012.

- _____. “Getting beyond the *Filioque* with Third Article Theology.” In *Ecumenical Perspectives on the Filioque for the 21st Century*, edited by Myk Habets, 211-30. Huntingdon, UK: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014.
- _____. “‘Reformed Theosis?’ A Response to Gannon Murphy.” *Theology Today* 65 (2009): 489-98.
- _____. “Spirit Christology: Seeing in Stereo.” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 11 (2003): 199-234.
- _____. “Veni Cinderella Spiritus!” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 10 (2001): 65-80.
- Haight, Roger. “The Case for Spirit Christology.” *Theological Studies* 53 (1992): 257-87.
- Hansen, Olaf, “Spirit Christology: A Way Out of Our Dilemma?” In *The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church: From Biblical Times to the Present*, edited by Paul D. Opsahl, 172-203. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978.
- Hovorun, Cyril. “Christ’s Will and Freedom According to the Sixth Ecumenical Council.” *Lutheran Forum* (2010): 40-47.
- Hunter, Harold “Spirit Christology: Dilemma and Promise.” *Heythrop Journal* 24, no. 2 (1983): 127-40.
- Husbands, Mark. “The Trinity is Not Our Social Program: Volf, Gregory of Nyssa, and Barth.” In *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, and Worship*, edited by Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber, 120-41. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.
- Issler, Klaus. “Jesus’ Example: Prototype of the Dependent, Spirit-filled Life.” In *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Intermediate Christology*, edited by Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler, 189-225. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007.
- Johnson, Keith E. “Trinitarian Agency and the Eternal Subordination of the Son: An Augustinian Perspective.” *Themelios* 36, no. 1 (2011): 7-25.
- _____. “Who Does What? Trinitarian Appropriation.” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, San Antonio, TX, November 17, 2016.
- _____. “The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Ministry of Jesus Christ: A Trinitarian Perspective.” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, San Diego, CA, November 20, 2014.
- Köstenberger, Andreas. “The Deity of Christ in the Gospel of John.” In *The Deity of Christ*, edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, 91-114. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011.
- Lampe, Geoffrey. “The Holy Spirit and the Person of Christ.” In *Christ, Faith and History: Cambridge Studies in Christology*, edited by S. W. Sykes and J. P. Clayton, 111-30. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.

- McCready, Douglas. "He Came Down from Heaven: The Preexistence of Christ Revisited." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40 (1997): 419-32.
- Merrick, James R. A. "The Spirit of Truth as Agent in False Religions? A Critique of Amos Yong's Pneumatological Theology of Religions with Reference to Current Trends." *Trinity Journal* 29 (2008): 107-25.
- Pinnock, Clark. "An Inclusivist View." In *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, edited by Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips, 93-123. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.
- Rosato, Philip. "Spirit Christology: Ambiguity and Promise." *Theological Studies* 38 (1977): 423-49.
- Sailhamer, John H. "Creation, Genesis 1-11, and the Canon." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 10, no. 1 (2000): 89-106.
- Sanders, Fred. "Chalcedonian Categories for the Gospel Narrative." In *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Intermediate Christology*, edited by Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler, 1-41. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007.
- Schwöbel, Christoph. "Christology and Trinitarian Thought." In *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act*, edited by Christoph Schwöbel, 113-46. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995.
- Vidu, Adonis. "Trinitarian Inseparable Operations and the Trinity." *Journal of Analytic Theology* 4 (2016): 106-27.
- Ware, Bruce A. "Christ's Atonement: A Work of the Trinity." In *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Intermediate Christology*, edited by Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler, 156-88. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007.
- _____. "The Man Christ Jesus." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53 (2010): 5-18.
- Wellum, Stephen J. "The Deity of Christ in the Apostolic Witness." In *The Deity of Christ*, edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, 115-50. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011.
- _____. "The Deity of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels." In *The Deity of Christ*, edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, 61-90. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011.
- Wittman, Tyler. "The End of the Incarnation: John Owen, Trinitarian Agency, and Christology." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15 (2013): 284-300.

ABSTRACT

THE SON AND THE SPIRIT: THE PROMISE OF SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY IN TRADITIONAL TRINITARIAN AND CHRISTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Kyle David Claunch, Ph.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017
Chair: Dr. Bruce A. Ware

This dissertation evaluates various contemporary Spirit-Christology proposals. Herein, Spirit Christology is defined as an approach to Christology that affords paradigmatic prominence to the Holy Spirit for understanding traditional Christological categories. Contemporary Spirit-Christology proposals occur along a spectrum of faithfulness to Nicene Trinitarianism and Chalcedonian Christology. While modifications to traditional formulae (implicit or explicit) are commonplace in contemporary proposals of Spirit Christology, it is the thesis of this dissertation that such modifications are neither helpful nor necessary. Rather, Spirit Christology can and should offer a pneumatological enrichment of traditional Christology and a boon to Christian devotion. Such a model will not move Christians away from the traditional Christocentric soteriological impulse of the Christian tradition (as is the case with some proposals) but will rather affirm the strength and necessity of that impulse.

As an introduction, chapter 1 establishes the significance of this dissertation. Chapter 2 is a survey of the contemporary Spirit-Christology proposals that are furthest removed from the Trinitarian and Christological heritage of orthodoxy. These revisionist Spirit Christologies do not represent an advance in Christian doctrinal formation but a return to the early Christological heresy of adoptionism, which was soundly and rightly rejected by the church.

Chapter 3 is a survey of proposals that purport to be developed within the tried Trinitarian and Christological heritage of the church. These Trinitarian Spirit Christologies, however, often raise serious questions concerning the consistency of the proposals with traditional categories. This chapter also identifies a list of advantages to Spirit Christology that are to be commended and a list of inherent dangers that must carefully be avoided.

Chapters 4 and 5 seek to advance the discussion of Spirit Christology. Chapter 4 advances the discussion by means of retrieval, examining the Spirit Christology of John Owen as an example of a proposal that achieves the advantages and avoids the dangers of this approach. Chapter 5 advances the discussion by way of a constructive proposal of an “Owenite” Spirit Christology in conversation with contemporary Spirit-Christology proponents and its detractors.

VITA

Kyle David Claunch

EDUCATION

Diploma, Slidell High School, Slidell, Louisiana, 1999

B.A., University of Mobile, Mobile, Alabama, 2003

M.Div., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, 2011

PUBLICATIONS

“What God Hath Done Together: Defending the Historic Doctrine of the Inseparable Operations of the Trinity.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56 (2013): 781-800.

“God is the Head of Christ: Does 1 Corinthians 11:3 Ground Gender Complementarity in the Immanent Trinity?” In *One God in Three Persons: Unity of Essence, Distinction of Persons, Implications for Life*, edited by John Starke and Bruce Ware, 65-94. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.

“The Son and the Spirit: The Promise and Peril of Spirit Christology.” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 19 (2015): 91-112.

“Trinity.” In *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, edited by Chad Brand and Steve Bond. Nashville, TN: B&H, 2015.

ORGANIZATIONS

The Evangelical Theological Society

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Garrett Fellow, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011-2013

Adjunct Faculty, Boyce College, Fall 2013

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Interim Minister of Youth, First Baptist Church, Slidell, Louisiana, 2000

Associate Pastor of Youth and College Students, College Park Baptist Church, Mobile, Alabama, 2000-2005.

Senior Pastor, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Springfield, Kentucky, 2006-2013

Lead Pastor, Highland Park First Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, 2013-