

“LORD AND GIVER OF LIFE”: THE HOLY SPIRIT IN REDEMPTIVE HISTORY

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Abstract: *After mentioning three errors regarding the Spirit, this essay focuses on the Spirit’s specific activity in redemptive history of generating a body for the Son, seen in the preparation of both a natural, physical body, and also an ecclesial body of which he is the head and husband. The Spirit was essentially involved in the original creative act of forming humanity. Further, the Spirit was active in preparing a body, Israel, from which the world’s Messiah would come. The Old Testament prophets were energized by the Spirit as they laid the groundwork for the historical appearance of the Son among humanity. The Spirit united the eternal Son to human flesh in the incarnation. In preparing a body for the Son, the Spirit narrowed his work from humanity to Israel to Jesus of Nazareth, but then expanded his work to involve the church whom he indwells.*

Key words: *Holy Spirit, redemptive history, body, incarnation*

This paper focuses on the Spirit’s activity in redemptive history—specifically, in the generation of a body for the Son. By “body,” I intend both the *natural* body—the humanity assumed by the Son—and the *ecclesial* body entrusted to the Son as mediator by the Father before all ages and united to the Son by the Spirit in time.

Before launching into this survey, however, a few brief introductory remarks may be permitted. My interest in the person and work of the Holy Spirit over recent years has been provoked first and foremost by the joy of discovering the prominence of the third person throughout Scripture, beginning with the Bible’s second verse. And it has been spurred also by the concern to eschew certain errors that have weakened our view and experience of the Spirit.

I explore some aberrant formulations, academic and popular, in *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit*. Many of these problems are perennial temptations, ever since the ancient church struggled victoriously to amend the Nicene Creed at Constantinople to include the decisive clause concerning the Spirit: “who, together with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified.” The first problem is *depersonalizing* the Spirit, which appears most obviously in the use of the impersonal pronoun “it,” which of course would never be considered appropriate for referring to the Father or the Son. Such depersonalizing is evident also in reductions of the Spirit to a mere thing: the presence and power of God, for example, as if “it” were an electrical outlet to plug into for divine energy. Especially in some prominent academic

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theologies, pneumatology becomes assimilated to a panentheistic framework with the Holy Spirit as someone (or rather, *something*) akin to the Neoplatonist World Spirit or Hegelian Geist that animates nature and history rather than a distinct hypostasis of the Godhead who remains as qualitatively distinct from creation as the Father and the Son.

Second, there is a tendency to overlook the Spirit's role in the external operations of the Godhead from creation to consummation. Exaggerating the doctrine of appropriations, we may treat the works of the Godhead as a division of labor: The Father creates, the Son redeems, and the Spirit sanctifies. However, according to Scripture and our common catholic tradition, "the external works of the Trinity are undivided" (*opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*). Accordingly, the Spirit always shows up too late in the play, while in Scripture he appears in the opening act (Gen 1:2) all the way to the end. It is not that the divine persons perform different works but that they are engaged differently in every work. In creation, providence, redemption, revelation, the new creation, and the consummation, the Father is always the source; the Son is always the mediator, and the Spirit is always the agent who brings the project to completion. To put it differently, the Father speaks the creative, redeeming, and consummating word in the Son and by his Spirit. If we are expecting the Holy Spirit to make his appearance at Pentecost, we have already missed much of his action as he strides across the vast stretches of history.

If the second danger is to reduce the breadth of the Spirit's work in biblical history, the third mistake is to reduce the scope of the Spirit's work to the inner life of individuals or to external manifestations of an extraordinary kind. But Scripture sets us before an expansive canvas of the Spirit's work in creation and new creation that works *within* creation to bring it to its appointed telos *through* creaturely means rather than *against* creation and *apart from* such means. In the bargain, we miss much of the Spirit's important work. Furthermore, such reduction facilitates the tragic divorce settlement that awards the Holy Spirit to one group of Christians and the Word, the church and the sacraments to another.

Though beyond the focal interest of this paper, these interests and challenges will become legible at various points as we consider the Spirit's role in redemptive history.

PREPARING A BODY: ADAM TO ISRAEL

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,
 "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
 but a body have you prepared for me;
 in burnt offerings and sin offerings
 you have taken no pleasure.
 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,
 as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'"

When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away

with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Heb 10:5–10)

In the first five verses, he tells us that the bloody sacrifices of animals cannot take away guilt; on the contrary, they are perpetual reminders of transgressions. The conscience is never at peace, even if these sacrifices cover over guilt until the advent of the true Lamb of God. In the previous chapter, the writer adds that Christ offered his blood as a propitiatory sacrifice “through the eternal Spirit” precisely in order to “purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (9:14).

For the first time, Yahweh has a true and faithful servant-son. Not only in his death but in his *living* sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving did Jesus recapitulate the human vocation on behalf of his co-heirs. He came into the world not merely to bear sin but to fulfill all righteousness, not only to bring forgiveness but justification, and not only justification but, through union with him, a new society consisting not of guilt-offerings but of those who present their bodies as a living sacrifice of praise (Rom 12:1–2). So “when Christ came into the world” what was transcended was not only the typological economy but the debt-economy itself. Doing away entirely with the sacrifice for guilt by offering his own body unto death, Jesus inaugurates a new existence that is marked by a living gratitude. For this, nothing less than a *human* body had to be prepared for the eternal Son and for this incarnation, active obedience, death, and resurrection, nothing less than the Holy Spirit’s agency was needed. As the writer adds in chapter 9, “For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb 9:13–14).

This preparation of a body for the Son by the Spirit may be taken in two senses, referring first to the incarnation (the Son’s natural body) and, second, to his ecclesial body of which he is the head. For the realization of this glorious mystery, the Spirit must first of all unite the eternal Son to our humanity and then, after equipping, upholding, empowering, raising, and exalting the obedient Son, unite us to his glorified humanity. Consequently, out of the hearts of those now who are united to Christ flow “streams of living water.” Significantly, John adds, “Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39). Having stated this thesis, I turn to the broader redemptive drama in which it occurs—namely, the progression from Adam to Israel to Mary to Christ and then to his worldwide ecclesial body.

1. *The hovering life-giver.* As I have noted, the Holy Spirit’s debut occurs in the Bible’s second verse: “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” The formless cosmos *tohu wa-bohu* (תהו וָבוהו) is not a primordial chaos that existed prior to creation, as in pagan cosmogenic myths. Neither divine nor demonic, it is simply the natural world that has come into being by the Father’s *fiat*-word,

in the Son, but not yet formed into a habitable environment for communion with humanity. The chaos is not an evil lurking before and behind creation, like Tiamat in the Babylonian *Enûma Eliš*, but more like the artist's canvas that has yet to become a completed composition. As John Calvin describes it, the Spirit was hovering over the watery chaos, "cherishing the confused mass." There is no primordial violence, a war in which Yahweh subdues the sea monster that threatens to undo his creative work, but a Spirit of peace descending in an orderly fashion to make the waters fruitful with life.

Already as the "Lord and giver of life," the Spirit is preparing a body—both the natural humanity that the Son will assume as Mediator and the ecclesial body that he will make his own bride. There is no potential in the watery depths to generate this life, but the Spirit turns a barren womb into a fertile ocean teeming with the kind of life that the Father has "worded" it to be in his eternal Son. In Genesis 1 we find two types of speech-acts: a direct *fiat*, "Let there be *x*," with the immediate report, "And there was *x*," followed by a command to the creaturely realms to "bring forth" their own proper fruit: "Let the earth bring forth' And the earth brought forth" Yet both are the result of the sovereign speech of the triune God. The Spirit works within creaturely reality to bring the word of the Father, mediated by the Son, to completion.

Turning specifically to the creation of the human partner, we are told in Genesis 2:7 that God breathed the breath of life (*niš-maṭ ḥay-yîm*) into [Adam] and he became a living soul (*ne-ṗēš ḥay-yāh*). It expands outward to include the whole family of Adam and Eve, though already with Cain appears the first murderer of the prophets and persecutor of the church (see Luke 11:50–51). Replacing Abel, Seth and his line are distinguished by the announcement, "Then people began to call on the name of the LORD" (Gen 4:26).

Eventually, the world is filled with corruption as the Spirit is grieved. "Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years'" (Gen 6:3). A better rendering is the older KJV: "My Spirit shall not always *strive with* man" The Spirit's work in common grace is not to indwell the wicked but to restrain them and to fertilize the natural seeds of truth, goodness, and beauty that the Father has planted through his Son's mediation. Even after the flood, the dove returned with proof of life in its beak, just as the Spirit brings his people evidence of the age to come even in this present evil age. God called Abram and by his evangelical promise kept preparing a body from the patriarch's own loins and barren womb of aged Sarah.

Centuries later, God fulfilled his oath, leading his people out of Egypt toward the land of promise with the Spirit hovering above them to direct and to provide for their needs. With a canonical reading we recognize that there is a close association between the heavenly Cloud and the Holy Spirit (Neh 9:19–20; Isa 63:11–14; Hag 2:5; Acts 2), which may be implied already in Gen 1:2. Yet as the northern and southern kingdoms turned their back on Yahweh as king, the Spirit evacuated the sanctuary and raised up enemies to cart the divided people into captivity: Israel to Assyria and, later, Judah to Babylon. Through the prophets, however, the Holy

Spirit kept preparing a body. This is the end, to which the inspiration of Scripture and the preparation of the Body of Christ are means.

2. *Preparing a body: the Spirit of revelation.* The revelation of the triune mystery unfolds progressively through the history of the covenant of grace. The Father speaks, the Son is the message, and the Spirit brings this word to fulfillment. Gregory of Nazianzus explained, “The Old Testament proclaimed the Father openly, and the Son more obscurely. The New manifested the Son, and suggested the Deity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit Himself dwells among us, and supplies us with a clearer demonstration of Himself.”¹ Yet all along it was the Spirit hidden behind the scenes who kept the promise moving forward, over the deep trenches and barbed wire that human beings had placed in his path, preparing a body for his Son from the flesh of Israel.

Like redemption itself, revelation is a divine inbreaking into the nexus of natural causes while taking nature itself into its service. Scripture itself is the product of both types of speech acts that we find in Genesis 1. There is the objective *ex nihilo fiat*, “Let there be ...! And there was ...” (equivalent to “Thus says the LORD ...”). But there is also the subjective fruitbearing effect (“Let the earth bring forth ... And the earth brought forth ...”). Israel was waiting for its Spirit-anointed Deliverer because the Spirit had been spreading his wings of revelation over his people, fertilizing the seeds of hope.

The unbounded Spirit binds himself freely to creaturely means, separating and uniting. In creation, the Spirit was working with the medium of water, dividing it from the land to provide a hospitable environment for covenantal communion. In providence, he is sent forth from the Father to sustain creation and to “renew the face of the ground” (Ps 104:30). Thus, nothing in creation that he takes to hand as his instrument is alien to him; it is already the product of his perfecting agency. He not only knows how every created thing or person works; he is the one who makes it work. Of course, he could work immediately, without bothering with such creaturely means, but that is not his ordinary way.

It is the Spirit who overcame the tendency of prophets and apostles to suppress the truth and to quench his light not by sheer force but by liberating them from bondage and sweetly inclining their hearts to his will. There is a legitimate analogy between the Son’s humiliation in the incarnation and the Spirit’s in inspiration. Analogously, the Spirit was not ashamed to descend to our level by uniting his ineffable communication to the comparative poverty of human language and in the process created a work of simple and in some cases even rustic prose.

When we identify the Spirit exclusively with the direct, spontaneous, immediate, and extraordinary (“Let there be ...!”), we can miss some of his most important operations, empowering creatures—including human prophets and apostles—to “bring forth” their own contributions to the scriptural word. In the inspiration of Scripture, the Spirit acts not only *upon* the human writers, nor merely *with* them to bring to mind the central content (the Word in the words), but *within* them,

¹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 31, in *NPNF*² 7:325–26.

not subverting but rather sanctifying their speech, employing their ordinary linguistic, cultural, social and personal idiosyncrasies that he has himself brought forth in his providential activity throughout their life to that point.

Thus the Spirit employs many methods in the process of inspiring the sacred oracles, speaking “in many times and in many ways” (Heb 1:1). We do find direct divine discourse in places—even instances of dictation from God to humans. “Thus says the Lord, ‘...’” corresponds to the “Let there be ...” speech-act in creation. But the bulk of the Bible consists of no less inspired “Let the earth bring forth ...” types of revelation that point up the organic and natural aspects of the process. There is, for example, no reference to a vision or to any direct command from the Lord to Luke in either his Gospel or in Acts. Luke simply says that “it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus ...” (Luke 1:3; cf. Acts 1:1). There is hardly anything more creaturely—indeed, more ordinary—than interviewing eyewitnesses and compiling a composite report.

And yet this creaturely mediation takes nothing away from the fact that it is God who speaks: “for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit” (Mark 13:10–11); “all Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16). The Thessalonians are commended for having accepted the apostolic proclamation “not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers” (1 Thess 2:13). “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:21).

No doubt recalling Jesus’s discourse—that the Spirit will “teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26) and “he will lead you into all truth” (John 16:13), Peter writes:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. (1 Pet 1:10–12)

Paul explains that the apostles “impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory,” adding,

These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. (1 Cor 2:7–13)

It should not surprise us, then, that many if not most of the earliest patristic references to the Holy Spirit occur in the context of discussing the nature of Scripture and its inspiration. In the words of the Creed, “We believe in the Holy Spirit

it, ... who spoke by the prophets.” In fact, the inspiration of Scripture became an argument for the Spirit’s full divinity. Just as our salvation required no one less than God to regenerate, indwell, sanctify and glorify us, we could have no assurance that Scripture represents God’s word to us unless the one who inspired it is God himself. This inextricable bond between the Word and the Spirit challenges the metaphysical dualism of mystics and sects through the ages that set the internal, spontaneous, and direct work of the Spirit over against the external, organic, and mediated Word. Although he is not bound by the means he uses, as Calvin notes, the Spirit ordinarily binds himself to them.

3. *The promise of the Spirit in the Prophets.* The Spirit came upon Moses at signal moments to lead the covenant people toward the promise. There were others, too, who received this special anointing for their task. God singled out Bezalel of Judah as the supervisor of the artists and craftsmen in the building of the tabernacle. “I have filled him with the Spirit of God,” Yahweh says to Moses (Exod 31:3; cf. 35:31). It was this same Spirit who had led his people through the wilderness by cloud by day and fire by night. In fact, it was the same Spirit who had spread his wings over the confused mass in creation to turn a house into a home, erecting a terrestrial copy of the heavenly temple. Employing a cast of human characters, the Spirit builds and beautifies the homes that he indwells. Just as he was marking out boundaries and transforming chaos into an ordered cosmos in creation, he empowered Bezalel to build the tabernacle according to the Father’s word, the content of which was ultimately nothing less than Jesus Christ. Already the Lord was preparing a body for himself, a faithful covenant son whose obedience would be better than sacrifices, and the tabernacle directed faith to the one who “became flesh and tabernacled (*eskēnōsen*) among us” (John 1:14).

When the people brought suit against Moses (and ultimately Yahweh), instead of wiping out the camp, the Lord condescended by calling Moses to appoint seventy elders. There are three noteworthy points to be made in this passage (Num 11:16–29). First, the Spirit is not said here to indwell Moses or the elders but rather to be upon them for carrying out their office; second, a portion of the Spirit’s presence upon Moses is given to the elders, in contrast with Jesus, to whom the Spirit was given and in fact who himself “gives the Spirit without measure” (John 3:34). Third, Moses recognizes that the reason for the people’s obstinacy is their hard hearts: resisting the Holy Spirit (described as “grieving the Spirit” in Isa 63:10 and Ps 78:40). His longing for Pentecost—the outpouring of the Spirit on *all* the Lord’s people—points up the weakness of the old covenant in comparison to the new.

In the midst of Israel’s idolatry under Ahab and Jezebel, God raised up Elijah. Just before the Lord takes him to heaven in the whirlwind, Elijah tells Elisha, “‘Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you.’ And Elisha said, ‘Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.’” The chariots and horses of fire that defeated Ahab (1 Kings 22) now envelop Elijah. Tearing his own cloak in two, Elisha takes up Elijah’s clothes and immediately parts the Jordan as the inauguration of his Spirit-endowed mission and then crosses the river (2 Kgs 2:9–14). Such episodes anticipate Christ’s prophetic ministry. It is another exodus and conquest,

but also a “little Pentecost.” The Spirit is preparing a body, Israel, from which the world’s Messiah will come.

Besides prophecy, the Spirit is associated with kingship. God instructed Samuel to anoint David as king. “And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward” (1 Sam 16:13). By contrast, “The Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him” (v. 14). It is intriguing that Israel’s first king sought power by his own strength and became degraded, filled with hatred and violence toward the Lord’s anointed. By contrast, David faces Goliath armed only with a slingshot, “that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear.” “For the battle is the LORD’s,” he tells his menacing opponent, “and he will give you into our hand” (1 Sam 17:47). It was by the Spirit who had “rushed upon” David at his anointing that an ordinary, even unlikely, agent—a young shepherd—was given victory through the ordinary and unlikely means of a rock in a slingshot.

Yet not even David failed to quench the Spirit, as he confessed in Psalm 51 after his adultery and murder, pleading, “Do not take your Holy Spirit from me” (v. 11). And although they were not all equally bad, his heirs fall short of David’s heart for the Lord and we hear nothing about the Spirit “rushing upon” the kings of Judah.

As the focus of these office-bearers narrows, all concentration is upon one anointed servant in whom all three offices of prophet, priest, and king will be united. This becomes especially evident in the ministry of Isaiah. In his day, Judah itself had succumbed to unbelief, idolatry, unrighteousness, and injustice. Yet the deliverance will include a remnant of Judah along with that of every nation: “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit” (Isa 11:1). Wherever we encounter the promise of fruitbearing, we should expect to find the Spirit, and that is precisely what we find in the following verse: “And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.” Because the Spirit will be upon him, this Servant’s “delight shall be in the fear of the LORD,” and he will judge the earth with righteousness until the whole world is at peace (vv. 3–9).

In chapter 32 of Isaiah, the Holy Land is envisioned as desolate—like the Garden of Eden after the fall, barren, as cosmos returns to chaos. The women are to beat their breasts “for the soil of my people growing up in thorns and briars.”

For the palace is forsaken, the populous city deserted; the hill and the watchtower will become dens forever, a joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks; *until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high*, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the *fruitful field*. And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. (vv. 12–17)

The key Servant-Spirit passage is Isa 42:1, which Jesus appropriated to himself in Luke 4:18–19: “Behold, my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the

nations.” This association of the Anointer with the Anointed is carried forward throughout Isaiah’s prophecies. Yahweh pledges the outpouring of the Spirit in Isa 44:3: “For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.” Then again: “Draw near to me, hear this: from the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there.’ And now the Lord God has sent me, and his Spirit” (Isa 48:16). The unidentified speaker is the Spirit-endowed Servant, which means that all three persons of the Trinity are in this scene: the promise-making Father, the Servant-Son, and the Spirit who is also sent upon the new Shepherd-King: “And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,’ declares the LORD.” As a result of this covenant, God’s Spirit will ensure that his word will never depart from their mouth or that of their children and their children (Isa 59:20–21). On this basis, Israel is cheered with the vision of nations streaming to the light that has dawned in her midst (chap. 60). The Father is preparing a body for his Son and by his Spirit. Wherever the Spirit hovers, the barren waters teem with life and waterless deserts bloom.

The prophet recounts God’s faithfulness again in Isaiah 63, with multiple references to the Holy Spirit as both the offended party and the merciful God:

But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them. Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses and his people. Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit . . .? Like livestock that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. So you led your people, to make yourself a glorious name. (vv. 10–14)

Notice here that the central goal of the biblical drama—God dwelling in the midst of his people, giving them rest on all sides—is identified specifically with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit descends periodically from the everlasting Sabbath into the trial of the work week that lies under the grip of sin and death, to keep history moving toward the promise of his everlasting rest (Heb 4:1).

But the new covenant that the writer to the Hebrews has in mind is far greater than the old in its vision: God will not only dwell in the midst of his people through the typological ministry associated with the tabernacle and the temple; the eternal Son will be with us, indeed one of us, as the living temple. And yet, as great as this is, God’s presence still remains external to us, as a marvelous historical monument, until the Spirit is poured out. Then he will unite us to Christ, making us living stones with Christ as the cornerstone; members of his body, of which he is our head. The Spirit who was upon the prophets and upon the Servant Jesus “without measure” will *indwell* all of his people.

Nearly two centuries later, sharing the fate of Judah in exile, Ezekiel repeats the prophecies of the Spirit’s outpouring: “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules” (Ezek 36:26–27). Then there is the vision of the valley of dry bones, representing Israel. The prophet is

told to prophesy—or preach—to the dry bones, through which God himself commands life to enter them: “And I will put my Spirit within you and you shall live” (Ezek 37:14; cf. vv. 5–13). Later God pledges, “And I will not hide my face anymore from them ... when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD” (Ezek 39:29).

Ezekiel’s prophecies climax in the departure of the Spirit from the temple (10:18–11:23) and the Spirit’s return to the end-time sanctuary in chapter 43. In both cases, it is through the east-facing gate, just like the cherubim-guarded gate in Eden from which Adam and Eve were sent “east of the garden” (Gen 3:23–24). Ezekiel is shown a vision:

And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple. (Ezek 43:1–2, 4)

Here God promises to dwell forever in the midst of his people (vv. 7–9). From below the eastern threshold of the temple water gushed toward the east into a great river whose fresh water gives life to trees and the nets of fishermen break with their catch. The leaves on the trees “will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing” (47:1–12). The entire series of visions directs us back to Genesis 1–2 and forward to the glorious temple of Revelation 21–22, with the Spirit as the vivifying and fructifying presence of God in the capitol of the new creation. The Spirit who evacuated the temple will return to it, only it will be greater than Solomon’s temple in its glory days. After the exile, Nehemiah praises the Lord for not forsaking his people when they fashioned a golden calf. He led them by “the pillar of cloud,” he says, adding, “You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst” (Neh 9:18–20).

The prophets looked forward to a certain degree of restoration under Cyrus king of Persia, but far beyond it to a more glorious day. It will be a day not of restoring the geopolitical nation of Israel or the rebuilding of an earthly sanctuary, but the erection of the final end-time temple made without hands. In that vein, Joel delivered his famous prophecy:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants, in those days I will pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls. (Joel 2:28–32)

Only such apocalyptic imagery can convey the fact that the old age is passing away and, with Christ's resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, the new age is dawning.

Haggai prophesies the glory of the future temple: "My Spirit remains in your midst." How can this be? There is no evidence at all that this is true. The remnant has returned to rebuild the ruins and through Haggai God calls them to rebuild the temple. But how can the Spirit already be present "in the midst" of his people, even without the temple or even the restored theocracy, with Jewish independence, in the land?

My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not. For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in; and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts. (Hag 2:5–9)

4. *The incarnation.* No greater instance of the Spirit's working through creaturely media may be found than in the incarnation itself. Far from working above nature only through immaterial means, the Spirit works within complex mystery of genetics and gestation over which he has presided from the beginning, uniting the eternal Son to our flesh. Through the power of the Spirit, the Son assumes our humanity completely, not only in body but in soul. He is more than *adam*, but not less. As history moves toward the Messiah's appearing, the spotlight narrows from Israel generally to the tribe of Judah and from Judah to the line of David. The Spirit is preparing a body, but that body has actually been narrowed down to one literal person, the true Israel, in whom all the families of the earth will be blessed. Hence, the body narrows to one person but then grows from that person to include people "from every tribe and kindred and tongue and nation" as the true nation of "kings and priests" (Rev 5:9).

The angel explains to Mary in Luke's Gospel that "the Holy Spirit will come upon" and "overshadow" her (*ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σέ, καὶ δύναμις ὑψίστου ἐπισκιάσει*), ensuring that the fruit of her womb is no less than the Son of God (Luke 1:34–35, 38). We recall the Spirit moving upon *תַּרְחֻמֶיךָ*; LXX, *ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω*) the waters in creation (Gen 1:2), evoked again in the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32), where in verses 10–12 the Lord delivered Israel from the *tobu wabobu*:

He found him in a desert land,
and in the howling waste (*יְבוּנָה*) of the wilderness;
he encircled him, he cared for him,
he kept him as the apple of his eye.
Like an eagle that stirs up its nest,
that flutters over (*עַל־יִרְחָק*; LXX, *σκεπάσαι*) its young . . .

The Greek verb *σκεπάζω* used here is joined with *ἐπί* (on or upon) in Exod 40:34. In the wilderness, "the cloud *covered* the tent of meeting (*ἐπεσκίαζεν ἐπὶ τῇ*

σκηνήν ἢ νεφέλη) and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (Exod 40:34). All of these references echo Gen 1:2, with the Spirit hovering (LXX, ἐπεφέρετο) over the waters in a glorious cloud to bring to life that which has been called forth by God’s word.

The same Greek verb (ἐπισκιάζω) used in the LXX version of these passages is chosen by Luke to describe the annunciation. Like the *tobu wa-bobu* (“darkness and void”) of Gen 1:2, Mary’s womb lacked any inherent potential for generating life. The virgin herself acknowledges this (Luke 1:34). But the Spirit of God will “come upon” (ἐπελεύσεται ἐπί) Mary and “overshadow” (ἐπισκιάσει) the barren waters of her womb so that what she conceived was nothing less than “the Son of God” (v. 35b). The virgin replies, “Let it be done unto me according to your word,” because the same Spirit who was at work in her womb is already at work in her heart to bring about her “Amen!” to the word of promise. Even prior to the conception of the Word, the Spirit has conceived faith in Mary’s heart. Mary reflects the orientation of the faithful covenant servant to the Spirit. “Let it be done unto me according to your word,” she replies to Gabriel. Already, even before the “Let there be ...!” *fiat*-word of the incarnation itself, the Spirit has “brought forth” the fruit of a faith-filled openness to the Spirit who has prepared Mary herself for this momentous announcement of the gospel. This is the first miracle of the Christmas story: that a sinner would turn in faith to the word of promise through the power of the Spirit.

As confirmation of the announcement to Mary, “Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit” when she greeted Mary as blessed along with the fruit of her womb (Luke 1:42), as were Zechariah (v. 67) and Simeon (2:25–26). In each of these cases, mention of their being filled with the Spirit is the ground for the prophecy that they utter concerning the salvation that has dawned in Christ. After four centuries of no revelation there is a trickle of Spirit-inspired speech—yet a portentous trickle indeed. The Spirit is preparing a body by his word.

The conception of Jesus was of the *ex nihilo* variety: “Let there be light! ... And there was light” (Gen 1:3). But his gestation and delivery were normal, though no less dependent on the Word and Spirit, belonging to the “Let the earth bring forth. ... And the earth brought forth” (Gen 1:24) type of speech-act. Jesus was not a child prodigy: “And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom,” typical associations of the Spirit’s work in preparing OT prophets. “And the favor of God was upon him And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:40, 52). “Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered” (Heb 5:8). He was not born outside of time or our human nature but “in the fullness of time” (Gal 4:4).

Once more we see that the Holy Spirit’s work is not to be set in opposition to nature. Even when the Spirit’s operations transcend natural possibilities, they remain extraordinary acts within and through nature. Thus already in the incarnation Jesus begins to win our redemption. The Spirit will come upon Mary, the angel declares, and “therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). The Spirit’s preservation of “our Mediator” from original sin in “his holy conception” comforts us with the news that he “with his innocence and per-

fect holiness covers, in the sight of God, my sin, in which I was conceived and born” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 36). Jesus was not conceived under the headship of Adam, with original sin imputed, since he came to earth as the eternal Son to be a New Adam and the new head of his people.² Original sin is not essential but merely accidental to human nature; the Son could and did assume our humanity to the fullest extent without inheriting Adam’s guilt and corruption.

Whenever we downplay the true humanity of the Son, we also marginalize the role of the Holy Spirit in his recapitulation of Adam’s trial. I share Sinclair Ferguson’s verdict: “This aspect of the Spirit’s ministry has suffered considerable neglect in the history of theology, despite noteworthy exceptions. Abraham Kuyper was right when he wrote that ‘the Church has never sufficiently confessed the influence the Holy Spirit exerted upon the work of Christ.’ As early as the Isaianic portrait of the Messiah, he had been viewed as the Man of the Spirit *par excellence* (Is. 11:1, 42:11; 61:1).”³ Given the fact that the Spirit’s mission is to place the spotlight on Christ, it is not surprising that Christian theology has placed most of its weight on Christology. However, apart from a robust pneumatology, even Christology suffers, as the saving significance of Christ’s humanity is eclipsed by the entirely appropriate emphasis on his deity.

It is important to see that even from his conception, Jesus was endowed with extraordinary gifts that were due not specifically to his deity, whose glory he set aside, but to the rich bestowal of the Holy Spirit. It is certainly true that his miracles reveal his divinity, as the disciples recognize: “What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?” (Matt 8:27). Yet these wonders also identify Jesus as the Spirit-endowed Servant hailed by the prophets.

Not only the gifts, but the Giver himself, was given to Jesus by the Father, as our Lord himself divulged: “For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit *without measure*” (John 3:34). The prophets received the Spirit in varying measures. Elisha begged Elijah for “a double portion of your Spirit on me” (2 Kgs 2:9). Jesus, however, is given the Holy Spirit entirely. He is not only a prophet, of course, but he is a prophet: the prophet greater than Moses, and his bestowal with the Holy Spirit here is not to be conflated with the eternal relations of the immanent Trinity. It is a redemptive-historical event that equips Jesus as the Servant of the Lord to fulfill his earthly ministry on our behalf. Even as he set aside the glory owing to his deity, Jesus was already receiving endowments *upon his humanity* in order to enrich us all. Furthermore, Jesus exercised these gifts and increasingly won greater blessings by his obedience. He increased in wisdom and understanding, counsel, and the fear of the LORD—the very characteristics that would identify the Spirit-endowed Messiah according to Isa 11:2–3—and learned the Scriptures that spoke of him (Luke 2:52). “Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered” (Heb 5:8).

² Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 87.

³ Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Contours of Christian Theology; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997), 37.

At his baptism by John, Jesus was already beginning “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt 3:15)—not only for himself, but for those whom he represented.

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. (Matt 3:16–4:1; cf. Mark 1:12–13)

John Owen observes that in the beginning of the old creation,

The Holy Ghost came and fell on the waters, cherishing the whole, and communicating a prolific and vivific quality unto it, as a fowl or dove in particular gently moves itself upon its eggs until, with and by its generative warmth, it hath communicated vital heat unto them; so now, at the entrance of the new creation, he comes as a dove upon him who was the immediate author of it, and virtually comprised it in himself, carrying it on by virtue of his presence with him.

Owen appeals to an ancient Syrian baptismal liturgy that included this connection. Jesus’s baptism also echoes “the dove that brought tidings to Noah of the ceasing of the flood ... and proclaimed peace unto them that would return to God by him, the great peace-maker, Eph. ii. 14–17.”⁴

To this baptism of Jesus Luke’s Gospel adds, “And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit ... was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil” (Luke 4:1). The verb *anēchthē* translated here “led out” is actually stronger: “drove out” or “launched,” like a ship. The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness to recapitulate the trial of Adam and Israel for forty days and nights and upheld Jesus in this trial. Instead of demanding the food that he craved, he endured the test by invoking the word of God in the power of the Spirit (vv. 10–11; cf. Luke 4:8–13). The Spirit did not lead Jesus above natural life with its exposure to dangers, trials, temptation and suffering as well as joys, but deeper and deeper into it.

Old Testament kings were anointed as God’s designated servant with oil, symbolizing the Spirit. Yet the Messiah—Anointed One—would be anointed with the Spirit without measure. This prophecy is especially clear in Isa 61:1–2, as we have seen. The one who finally fulfills the promise of the Year of Jubilee will be identified by this Spirit-anointing. And it is precisely this text that Jesus reads in the synagogue at the beginning of his public ministry, announcing, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:16–21). Because his hearers understood clearly Jesus’s claim, he narrowly escaped being thrown down a cliff (vv. 29–30). It is as part of the gospel itself that Peter proclaims “how 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” (Acts 10:38).

⁴ John Owen, “Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit,” in vol. 3 of *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967), 75.

But the serpent will have none of it; all of his forces are focused on this Spirit-endowed Servant-Seed of the woman.

The answer lies not in downplaying Christ's deity, especially in the face of centuries now of Arian moralism, but in reintegrating the pneumatological and christological threads across the whole sweep of our theology, from anthropology to ecclesiology. When we attribute all of Jesus's miracles exclusively to Christ's deity, for example, a subtle Nestorianism presses us to imagine that Jesus switches from his divine nature to his human nature when he is tired, hungry, or lacks knowledge, and then flips the switch back again to his divine nature when he heals or performs other miracles. This does justice neither to the full humanity of Christ and the unity of his divine-human person nor to the Holy Spirit, "the Lord and giver of life" even in relation to Jesus Christ. The attributes of deity are never transferred to his humanity. And yet the *person* is fully divine and fully human.

With Jesus, we are dealing with *God* assuming the nature and commission of humanity in creation, so that he can shower his compatriots with the riches that he achieved in our nature, as our human representative, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is God, to be sure. But he is also the first human being who finally does not resist the Holy Spirit but obeys the word of the Father in full acquiescence to the Spirit's power—and he does all of this *for us*, in our name, as our new Adamic head. He gives the Spirit without measure because he first possesses the Spirit without measure and through union with him we too are anointed as prophets, priests, and kings.

Throughout the Gospels, the wonders that Jesus performs are not unlike many performed by prophets of old when the Spirit came upon them. He raises Jairus's daughter in Mark 5 in a scene reminiscent of Elisha's raising of the Shunammite's son in 2 Kings 4. Jesus is not only the covenant Lord who commands but the covenant Servant who obeys in the power of the Holy Spirit. He is more than the Spirit-filled prophet for whom Moses longed, but surely not less. In fact, Jesus himself says that attributing his miracles to Satan is blasphemy—not against his divinity, but against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:29; cf. Matt 12:31–32; Luke 12:10).

Our Lord's dependence on the Spirit for his mission is evident also in the Transfiguration scene. Just as the Spirit led the Hebrews through the Red Sea by the radiant Pillar of Cloud, he envelops Jesus and the disciples in the heavenly cloud [*nephelē*] with Moses and Elijah, discussing "his [Jesus'] departure [*exodus*], which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:34). The Cloud simply *is* the kingdom of heaven brought to earth, its glory emanating from the Spirit. The only other time this happens is in the ascension itself: "And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9). In both cases, the enveloping in the cloud occurs as Jesus is speaking his word.

Defending Christ's full humanity, Gregory of Nazianzus nonetheless stipulated, "What has not been assumed has not been healed; it is what is united to his divinity that is saved" (*Ep.* 101). Similarly, we can say that whatever he did not do, as the Spirit-dependent covenant servant, is left undone. In fact, it was "through the eternal Spirit" that Christ offered himself "without blemish to God" (Heb 9:14)

“and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1:4). “He was put to death in the flesh but was made alive by the Spirit” (1 Pet 3:18). And our being raised to heavenly glory in Christ is just as dependent on the same Spirit. “It was the Holy Spirit who glorified the human nature of Christ,” says Owen, “and made it every way meet for its eternal residence at the right hand of God, and a pattern of the glorification of the bodies of them that believe on him. He who first made his nature *holy* now made it *glorious*.”⁵ The Spirit is the Lord and Giver not only of biological but eschatological life (2 Cor 3:6).⁶ The same Spirit who raised Jesus will raise us on the last day (Rom 8:11).

Given this dependence of the incarnate Son on the Holy Spirit for his person and work, we may conclude with Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas that Christ’s earthly ministry was not only conditioned but constituted by the Spirit’s activity.⁷ To put it differently, the Spirit not only applies redemption but was a principal agent of it. He clothed the Redeemer in our humanity, led and upheld him in his ministry, and raised him from the dead as the eschatological first-fruits. Because of who Jesus is and what he did, in the power of the Spirit, and because by that same power we are united to his person and work, Christ is no longer for us merely an individual in the history of this passing age but is the representative *adam*; the head of his body, the church.⁸

How can a historical individual become for us this federal head of a new humanity? Origen and his theological heirs presuppose a cosmological map in which this question does not even arise. History, bodies, and federal heads all belong, in the line of thinking descending from Origen, to the lower world from which the deified soul seeks emancipation. The question does arise—again and again—in Irenaeus, with his emphasis on Christ’s recapitulation (“re-headshaping”) of humanity. It is the Spirit who creates this union: first of the Son’s deity with our humanity, and then of each believer with Christ. Jesus had to recapitulate the history of humanity (*adam*), fulfilling all righteousness and bearing all guilt as he was upheld by the Spirit. Yet he also had to have been raised, exalted, and glorified by the Spirit in

⁵ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁶ Basil’s prose verges on poetry as he summarizes this point. Where does life come from? “Is it Christ’s advent? The Spirit is forerunner. Working of miracles, and gifts of healing are through the Holy Spirit. Demons were driven out by the Spirit of God. The devil was brought to naught by the presence of the Spirit. Remission of sins was by the gift of the Spirit, for ‘ye were washed, ye were sanctified, . . . in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the holy Spirit of our God.’ There is close relationship with God through the Spirit, for ‘God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father.’ The resurrection from the dead is effected by the operation of the Spirit” (*On the Holy Spirit* 19.49, *NPNF*² 8:30–31).

⁷ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002), 110–11. Zizioulas explains, “Here the Holy Spirit is not one who *aids* us in bridging the distance between Christ and ourselves, but he is the person of the Trinity who actually realizes in history that which we call Christ, this absolutely relational entity, our Savior. In this case, our Christology is *essentially* conditioned by Pneumatology, not just secondarily as in the first case; in fact it is *constituted* pneumatologically.”

⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

order to become the human archetype of his brothers and sisters. “The Spirit had not yet been given,” John reminds us, “because [Jesus] had not yet been glorified” (John 7:39). Having prepared a body for the Son, he now prepares for him an ecclesial body, uniting us to Christ as our head.

Because the Father gives the Son to us in and by the Spirit, the Son brings us into a relation to the Father by which we too, and by that same Spirit, can cry out, “Abba, Father,” and address God as “Our Father in heaven.” Just as the Logos can only become flesh by the work of the Spirit, we cannot say “‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3). Not only is the Holy Spirit the gift of the Son; the incarnate Son is first of all the gift of the Spirit (together with the Father).

Even after spending three years at Jesus’s side, the disciples’ understanding of, much less testimony to, Christ’s person and work depended on the descent of another witness from heaven, the Holy Spirit. Because Jesus still has a history, so do we, and because he has a place, we will have one also—where he is. And he will come again to take us there. In the meantime, his departure opens a fissure in history where the Spirit—for the first time in redemptive history—will not only lead, guide, and light above or upon the temple-people but will permanently indwell them. “I will not leave you orphaned,” says Jesus, but “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever”—“the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16–18).