

The Never-Changing Christ For An Ever-Changing Culture

Daniel L. Akin

Daniel L. Akin is Vice President for Academic Administration and Dean of the School of Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is the author of several articles, and served as the New Testament editor for *The Believer's Study Bible*. Akin is currently preparing *1, 2, 3 John* for the *New American Commentary*.

From the first century to the present, Christians have declared that “Jesus Christ is Lord” (1 Co 12:3; Php 2:1; Rev 19:16) and that He is “the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb 13:8). His followers have proclaimed by faith what will one day be evident to all. Every earthly and temporal power will recognize and be subject to the majesty and sovereign Lordship of Jesus. James D.G. Dunn addresses the significance of Jesus for first-century believers and the decisive nature of his impact on their lives when he asserts that

Some movements have no dominant figure in the beginning; but Christianity began with Jesus. And it was *the meaning of Jesus*, of what he had said and done, together with what the first Christians understood him to be and to have been, to be doing and to have done, which was the most significant factor in the new sect's own developing self-understanding and developing sense of distinctiveness over against the other religions, sects and philosophies of the time.¹

As the community of faith, the Church remains the herald of *the meaning of Jesus*, proclaiming *who* He is and *what* He has done. In the midst of an ever-changing world, the Church must be faithful in its witness to Jesus and His gospel. Throughout history the “bride of Christ” has affirmed its faith through simple confessions like Romans 10:9 and through more developed creedal statements like the Nicene Creed (A.D. 325) where the Church confessed its belief in

ten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end...

and the Chalcedonian Creed (A.D. 451), where the Church affirmed that the Lord Jesus is

at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance [*homoousios*] with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance [*homoousios*] with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin. . . one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence [*hupostasis*], not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus

one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begot-

Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us...

It has been the conviction of faithful Christians from the inception of the Church that to neglect or compromise such orthodox confessions is tantamount to the betrayal of the Lord. Indeed there is no genuine Christianity other than that based upon the absolute truth of Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God. The Body of Christ, if it is to be the true Church of its Lord, must proclaim and embody the gospel of Christ and the Christ of the gospel to all people. It is called to evangelize men and women "out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev 5:9), embracing them in a loving community of faith and discipleship under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In obedience to this Christ-centered mandate, the Church extends itself to all who are in need, especially the disenfranchised, the poor, the oppressed, the despised, the abused and the hurting. Because its Savior is the Savior of the world (1 Ti 4:10; 1 Jn 4:14), the Church is called to be a family of diversity which includes people of every race, color, class and nation. We affirm that we are stronger and better together than we can ever be apart.

Unfortunately, something has gone terribly amiss. We live in a culture that has gone mad in its rebellion against God. Today the Church itself appears on the verge of insanity, having forsaken the exclusive claims of its Christ and the instruction of His Word. We have lost our way and abandoned our moorings. Tragically, the deadly virus of modernity has even infected Evangelicalism. R. Albert Mohler correctly asserts that

the theological unity that once

marked the movement has given way to a theological pluralism Indeed, by the late 1970's it was clear that basic theological fissures were forming Though the division originated in debates over the formal principle of Scripture, it soon spread to material doctrines including Christology, the Atonement, justification, and virtually every other major doctrine.²

My main concern is how Christology (the person and work of Jesus Christ) will be understood in the future. George Barna has noted that while most Americans believe good and positive things about Jesus, almost half believe that He sinned. Furthermore, pseudo-scholars continue to conjure up bizarre concoctions and fantasies about the historical Jesus that are popularized by a naive and sensationalist media which unfortunately results in significant confusion for the majority of indiscriminate Americans, most of whom are biblically and theologically illiterate. Such reinterpretations of Jesus fail to recognize His historical significance. Jaroslav Pelikan has said, "Regardless of what anyone may personally think or believe about him, Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure in the history of Western culture for almost twenty centuries. . . . It is from his birth that most of the human race dates its calendars, it is by his name that millions curse and in his name that millions pray."³

Christians believe that Jesus will continue to be the dominant figure of the twenty-first century, and of every future century. If the Church is to maintain fidelity to "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), however, the twenty-first century Jesus must be the Jesus of the first century. Our ever-changing culture needs the never-changing Christ who alone can provide both the foundation and direction for Christian

faith and practice as the Church faces the challenges of a new era. Four pillars from the New Testament can provide stability for the Church at the dawn of a new millennium, a time when the Church needs to be recalled to biblical authority, and when it needs to define and defend its faith clearly and fully. Drawn from the comprehensive revelation of the New Testament, these four key Christological texts show how to know and worship the One whom Augustine described as “beauty ever ancient, ever new.”⁴

I. Pillar One: *Logos* Christology (John 1:1-18)

Logos Christology is founded upon the Prologue to John’s Gospel (1:1-18), which has been a bulwark for reflection on a number of crucial theological themes by several significant thinkers. For example, Millard Erickson identifies five attributes and activities ascribed to the *Logos*: (1) Pre-existence, (2) Deity, (3) Creative work, (4) Incarnation and (5) Revelatory work.⁵ Bernard Ramm has written, “It has been standard teaching in historic Christology that the *Logos*, the Son, existed before the incarnation. . . pre-existence is part of the protology (‘first things’) or the theology of beginning.”⁶ D. A. Carson addressed the significance of the title *Logos* when he explained that “John’s summarizing title for Jesus is the ‘Word.’ It is a brilliant choice. In the beginning was the Word; in the beginning God expressed himself, if you will. And that Self-Expression, God’s own Word, identified with God yet distinguishable from him, has now become flesh, the culmination of the prophetic hope.”⁷

By using *Logos*, John takes a familiar first-century term and fills it with new meaning. The *Logos* existed in the beginning and is in some sense distinct from

the Father. Yet the *Logos* is God. He is the member of the trinitarian Godhead who is the agent of creation and the source of both life and light. He is the “only begotten” (*monogenes*) of God (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn 4:9)⁸ who took on flesh (*sarx*), human nature apart from sin, and entered history to reveal, literally to exegete (*exegesato*, v. 18) the invisible God. John’s use of *Logos* “seems to imply that the word he is speaking of is that prophetic word which goes forth from God’s mouth to accomplish creation, judgment, redemption and renewal. John uses *Logos* because it is the natural word for expressing the meaning of the Hebrew word *dabar* when the word was used in the context of God’s revelation.”⁹ Yet this Word is more than verbal expression. He is a person, and that person is the very Son of God. C. K. Barrett clarifies the issue when he remarks, “The deeds and words of Jesus are the deeds and words of God; if this be not true the book [John’s Gospel] is blasphemous.”¹⁰

Logos Christology is ontologically focused, for it addresses the person of Jesus Christ rather than His work. *Logos* Christology emphasizes how the Son of God is *different* from us. A focus on the incarnation, on the other hand, reveals how He has become *like* us. Both truths must be maintained in delicate balance.

The importance of the doctrine of the incarnation cannot be overstated. It is the vital and non-negotiable expression of historic orthodox Christianity. B. B. Warfield asserted the central character of this essential formula even as theological compromise was sweeping the late nineteenth century:

One of the most portentous symptoms of the decay of vital sympathy with historical Christianity which is observable in present-day academic circles is the widespread tendency in recent Christological discussion to

revolt from the doctrine of the Two Natures in the Person of Christ. The significance of this revolt becomes at once apparent, when we reflect that the doctrine of the Two Natures is only another way of stating the doctrine of the Incarnation; and the doctrine of the Incarnation is the hinge on which the Christian system turns. No Two Natures, no Incarnation; no Incarnation; no Christianity in any distinctive sense.¹¹

Warfield knew what was at stake. He realized that the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God permeated the New Testament, and could not be rejected without devastating results. Thus, he concluded that

the doctrine of the Two Natures of Christ is not merely the synthesis of the teaching of the New Testament, but the conception which underlies every one of the New Testament writings . . . it is not only the teaching of the New Testament as a whole but of the whole of the New Testament, part by part. Historically, this means that not only has the doctrine of the Two Natures been the invariable presupposition of the whole teaching of the church from the apostolic age down, but all the teaching of the apostolic age rests on it as its universal presupposition.¹²

James D. G. Dunn is led by the historical evidence to argue,

There was no question in my mind that the doctrine of incarnation comes to clear expression within the New Testament - certainly at least in a sense which clearly foreshadows the further growth or evolution to the full blown doctrine of the historic Christian creedal statements. On almost any reckoning, John 1:14 ranks as a classic formulation of the Christian belief in Jesus as incarnate God.¹³

To profess that Jesus of Nazareth was God become man is a staggering claim. Yet, the Church's experience of Jesus

drove a band of first-century Jews to this startling confession. Some modern critics deny this fundamental tenet of orthodox Christianity. The authors of *The Myth of God Incarnate*¹⁴ and the participants in the "Jesus Seminar" are just a few proponents of a movement that is already on the way to the fringe of Christian scholarship. Other experts may seek to redefine *Logos* and the incarnation. Those now enamored with "Spirit Christology"¹⁵ fit this description. Surely Carl F. H. Henry is correct when he claims that "more than any other century since Christian beginnings, our century seems confused over the identity of Jesus and unsure even of what the Nazarene thought of himself and of his role in the world . . . [But] for an orthodox Christian, the most important phrase in all intellectual history is that 'the Word became flesh' (John 1:14)."¹⁶ The identification of Jesus as the God-man must be affirmed at the onset of a new century.

II. Pillar Two: Servant Christology (Philippians 2:6-11)

The Christ-hymn of Philippians 2:6-11 has been called "a christological gem unparalleled in the New Testament."¹⁷ With language akin to the Servant Song of Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12 and the washing of the disciples' feet in John 13:3-17, Paul presents Jesus "as the supreme example of humble, self-sacrificing, self-denying, self-giving service. . . ."¹⁸ The hymn is rooted in ethical concern, but branches out to address Christology and soteriology as well. It is the ethical focus, however, that is the focal point in "servant Christology."

Verse five commands¹⁹ believers to have the mind of Christ. This mind is characterized by unity (v. 2), humility (v. 3), and sensitivity (v.4). The idea of humility is developed in the hymn as God's will-

ingness to be involved with humanity unfolds. Jesus is described in verse 6 as continually existing in the form (*morphe*) of God. Gerald Hawthorne points out that *morphe* expresses the manner in which a thing appears to human senses, and always identifies the form that completely expresses that thing's underlying being. Therefore, when applied to God the word refers to His essential being, to the actual nature and character of God.²⁰

Paul is clearly advancing the first-century Church's understanding of Jesus in a unique and powerful manner. Dunn asserts that "there was little or no good evidence from the period prior to Christianity's beginning that the Ancient Near East seriously entertained the idea of a god or son of god descending from heaven to become a human being in order to bring men salvation, except perhaps at the level of popular pagan superstition."²¹ Yet this is exactly what Paul is saying. Though himself brought up and trained in the strict monotheism of rabbinic Judaism, Paul is compelled by his own encounter with and personal reflection on the risen Lord to affirm the essential deity of Jesus.

Yet "equality with God" was not a right Christ felt He had to seize or acquire, since it was His by nature. So He emptied himself and took the *morphe* of a *doulou* (v. 7). The parallel of *morphe theou* and *morphen doulou* is too striking to be accidental. Images of both an ambitious Satan and Adam certainly come to mind as each in his own way attempted, albeit unsuccessfully and tragically, to seize equality with God. A servant Christology shows a better way, and the text itself adequately addresses what is involved in self-emptying (*kenoo*): (1) He took the form (*morphe*, "essential nature") of a slave (*doulos*); (2) He was made in the likeness (*homoioima*) and

fashion (*schema*) of a man; (3) He humbled Himself (cf. 2:3); (4) He became obedient unto death; and (5) He died on the cross.

These verses reveal something about the very nature and being of our God. They demonstrate that it is of the very essence of this deity to give and to serve. The Son of God did not seize status. Rather, He served. He did not surrender His deity, but He did add humanity. As Erickson notes, "The incarnation was more a gaining of human attributes than a giving up of divine attributes."²² Further, the type of humanity He added was not that of a sovereign, but that of a slave. He received not a crown, but a cross. Death is exactly what Christ endured. But it was not just any death, but death by means of an instrument that would move Cicero to write, "Let the very name of the cross be far away not only from the body of a Roman citizen, but even from his thoughts, his eyes, his ears" (*Pro Rabiro*, 5.10, 16).²³

Verses 9-11 express the divine economy and ordering of status. Theologically, "exaltation" grows out of humility and service. This is a principle of the kingdom, and one that is certainly neglected in American Christianity. Those who would be "super-exalted" (v.9) must first be super-abased. Believers are called to make themselves very low in humble, sacrificial service to others. Such servants embody what God intended humanity to be, because, as William Hendricks has noted, Jesus models "what humanity ought to be and not what it has become."²⁴ Jesus is our ultimate example (1 Co 1:11). As Erickson argues, "Jesus is not only human as we are; he is more than human. Our humanity is not a standard by which we are to measure his. His humanity, true and unadulterated, is the standard by which we are to be measured."²⁵

Christ humbled Himself, but was exalted by God. His acceptance of service unto death was His ultimate *yes* both to God and to a lost humanity. It was His ultimate act of obedience to His Father in self-giving, self-sacrificing, self-denying service to others.²⁶ Servant Christology calls us to serve others as our Lord has served us.

III. Pillar Three: Cosmic Christology (Colossians 1:15-20)

As God-man, Jesus Christ defies simplistic explanation. The incomparable Christ transcends human wisdom. As Ben Witherington has written, "No one descriptive term or title adequately encompasses the man who fits no one formula."²⁷ John calls Him the *Logos*. Philippians 2 identifies Him as the *morphe* of God. The hymn found in Colossians 1:15-20 introduces Cosmic Christianity through new, but related, concepts. Here Christ is the image (*eikon*) of God, the firstborn (*prototokos*) over the cosmos and the Church, the one in whom all the fullness (*pan pleroma*) of God dwells in a body (2:9-10). Of this text F. F. Bruce writes, "This is one of the great Christological passages of the New Testament, declaring as it does our Lord's divine essence, pre-existence, and creative agency."²⁸ Bruce links its themes to John 1:1-4, Hebrews 1:2-4, and the Divine Wisdom motif of Proverbs 8:22-31. Cosmic Christianity is mentioned often in theological circles, but is seldom defined adequately. Its biblical warrant originates in this text, so any developing theology along this path should be firmly rooted here.

Paul's thinking can be conceived as concentric circles of concern that began with the cosmic and the universal, but moved progressively inward first to the ecclesiastical, and finally to the personal. As the "image of the invisible God," Christ makes visible the God no one has

seen (cf. Jn 1:18). It could be said, "Christ is like God." It could also be said, "God is like Christ." That He is the visible manifestation of God is immediately and logically tied to His supremacy over three entities: (1) Creation (vv. 15-17), (2) the Church (vv. 18-20), and (3) the Christian (vv. 21-23). Christ is the Lord, the preeminent One, Whom each of these is to serve. His Lordship and supremacy is therefore cosmic, but it is equally personal. He is in no sense a part of creation, because He is its author in every detail. There is no room for pantheistic or panentheistic development. A finite theism is also clearly ruled out. The all-encompassing nature of His cosmic rule is made clear through the word "all," which is used eight times in verses 15-20. Nothing is outside or beyond His sovereign Lordship. All of reality has been created by Him and for Him. Furthermore, whether it is creation, the Church or the Christian, as Lord, Christ sustains and maintains the existence of each as well. Christ is origin and goal, principle of cohesion and center, master of the visible and the invisible. Without Christ there would be no reality. Without Christ nothing would be, nor would anything exist.²⁹ Yet through the Son whom the Father loves (v. 13), the cosmos (material creation), the Church (spiritual creation), and the Christian (personal creation) have been brought under the sovereign rule of God. In the old creation and in the new creation, the One and all-sufficient "head" (a distinctively Pauline formulation), the Lord Jesus reigns supreme.

For the Church on the threshold of a new millennium, the import of a Cosmic Christology is staggering. Christ is to have first place in all things. His theology is to be our theology. His ethic is to be our ethic. His mind is to be our mind. His heart is to

be our heart. Christ is to have sovereign control over His body, the Church, whether that body is manifested universally or locally. Its members, each one uniquely gifted for service (Ro 12, 1 Co 12, Eph 4, 1 Pe 4), are to be in absolute dependence upon and in complete surrender to Him for life, power, and mission. In all things, and in each individual, He and He alone is to be supreme.³⁰

IV. Pillar Four: Revelational Christology (Hebrews 1:1-3)

Revelational Christology has usually been identified with Wolhart Pannenberg and his *Jesus - God and Man*,³¹ where he argues that all of history is under God's direction and is therefore a revelation of God.³² It is important to examine Pannenberg's underlying methodology. His fundamental belief is that Jesus is at the center of every Christian theology, and that human knowledge of God is only made possible through God's revelation in Christ. Pannenberg asserts that "one can only speak about God himself in that at the same time one talks about Jesus."³³ This basic principle reflects the fact that God desires to reveal Himself and has done so in the person of Jesus Christ. History, therefore, is best conceived as the stage upon which the divine actor has played His role. A Revelational Christology, while cognizant of God's mighty acts in history, focuses on the God who invaded history, the God who brought eternity into space/time reality, the God who is the Lord of history. This emphasis on the God of history is the heart of Hebrews 1:1-3. Francis Schaeffer expresses the essence of this passage when he states "He [God] is there and He is not silent."³⁴ William Lane writes that the author of Hebrews brings us "face-to-face

with the God who speaks. He has repeatedly taken the initiative to disclose himself because he wants to be known."³⁵ But in these last days He has spoken and disclosed Himself decisively, climactically, even finally and for all time in the person of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of God's determination to be known, we can genuinely and "truly truthfully" know God. In a day when many people stress the *absence* of God and the *silence* of God, Hebrews 1 is a much needed corrective for those obsessed with *deus absconditus* ("the hidden God").

Lane underscores the important fact "that it was necessary for God and the human family to be able to speak the same language." In the person of His Son, the Lord spoke through one who is:

- 1) appointed heir of all things (v. 2);
- 2) through whom He made the universes (lit. "ages," v. 2);
- 3) the radiance of God's glory (v. 3);
- 4) the exact representation of His being (v. 3);
- 5) sustaining all things by His powerful word (v. 3);
- 6) the purification for our sins (v. 3); and
- 7) sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven (v. 3).

God has met our need to know Him "with our senses: to see him, listen to him, to touch him . . . Like the alternating patterns of a kaleidoscope as it is turned in the hand, we are asked to consider Jesus who is eternal Son, Jesus who is the incarnate Son, Jesus who is the exalted Son."³⁶

This information is what Christians in the turbulent first century needed to know. This is also what Christians in this anxious century need to know. Lane concludes, "The word that the Son spoke to them yesterday is the word that he speaks today. And the word that he speaks today is the word that he pledges tomorrow and

forever . . . His abiding, unchanging quality lends stability to men and women in a period marked by instability."³⁷

Conclusion

N. T. Wright has noted correctly, "The historian of the first century . . . cannot shrink from the question of Jesus."³⁸ Indeed, no one can shrink from the question of Jesus. What one thinks and believes about Jesus will impact any complete theological framework, any thoughtful worldview. As Wright comments, "If you see Jesus differently, everything changes."³⁹

Melanchthon criticized speculative probing and reflection about God and the Christ arguing, "We do better to adore the mysteries of Deity than to investigate them . . . since to know Christ means to know his benefits, and not as they teach, to reflect upon his natures and the modes of his incarnation."⁴⁰ But surely those who would give exclusive attention to such a dictum are destined for theological error. Clearly, the Spirit of God moved the authors of Holy Scripture to reflect upon the mystery of the incarnation. This fact is evident in the four pillars we have examined. They demonstrate that Jesus Christ is not only, "God for us," He is also "God with us" (Mt 1:23). Athanasius, and later Anselm, saw clearly that Jesus had to be both fully God and perfect humanity in order to redeem lost humanity.⁴¹ Christology and soteriology are forever wed. Christological investigation is no mere exercise in metaphysical musings. There is no access to the work of Christ apart from His person. One must know Christ to have access to His work.

Furthermore, the Jesus we so often read about today, one who is only a wise teacher, religious sage, political revolutionary, Jewish peasant, Cynic spinner of

proverbs, or spirit-inspired guru is a Jesus far removed from biblical revelation and one who is spiritually bankrupt and totally insufficient to meet the deepest needs of hurting humanity. Such is a vision of a Christ who is totally inadequate to energize and mobilize the Church to be salt and light (Mt 5:13-16) in a world immersed in darkness. I. Howard Marshall gets to the heart of the matter when he argues, "The Christian faith has as its object the Jesus whose earthly life is a matter for historical investigation, but this investigation cannot be carried on in independence of faith . . . always [bear] in mind . . . that the Jesus of Christian belief is more than a merely historical figure."⁴² Marshall also points out that the early Church's theological reflection was, in some sense, the inevitable outworking of its encounter with the risen Christ. He contends that upon careful examination the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith are one and the same. Marshall adds that

the object of . . . faith is . . . the Jesus whose existence and ministry have been confirmed and illuminated by historical research, but whose significance is only fully seen in the light of that experience of the risen Lord which had coloured the interpretation of Jesus offered in the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament and which continues to illuminate the mind of the believer. For as we have seen, ultimately the earthly Jesus is inadequate. Christian faith joyfully embraces the Jesus of the Bible, assured that the biblical accounts have a firm base in history, but knowing that 'the Jesus of the historians' is not enough; only the biblical Jesus Christ, the earthly and the heavenly Lord, is adequate as the object of faith.⁴³

This is the foundation of a Christology for the twenty-first century. This is the Lord who can provide the only truly sat-

isfying solutions for the cries and pains of a world at the precipice of destruction. This is the Lord of whom Dietrich Bonhoeffer could write,

They must come face to face with him. We may also have to come face to face with Goethe or Socrates. That is part of our culture and ethos. But far more depends upon our confronting Christ — life or death, salvation or damnation. . . it is seen that all rest upon the sentence, 'And there is salvation in no one else' (Acts 4:12). The encounter with Jesus is fundamentally different from that with Goethe or Socrates. One cannot avoid encounter with the person of Jesus because he is alive. With some care Goethe can be avoided, because he is dead. A thousandfold are the ways that men have used to resist or evade an encounter with Christ.⁴⁴

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb 13:8, NKJV). This is the eternal, never-changing Christ for an ever-changing culture. Those who call Jesus "Lord" must be faithful to who He is, what he has done, and the task which He has assigned. Alistair McGrath describes this relationship when he observes, "In its deepest sense, the love of God for man is that of a God who stoops down from heaven to enter into the world of men, with all of its agony and pain, culminating in the grim cross of Calvary."⁴⁵ Our great God and Savior has so loved us. Dare we love others any less? Dare we ignore the awesome responsibility that is ours? These four pillars, John 1:1-18, Philippians 2:6-11, Colossians 1:15-20 and Hebrews 1:1-3 form the solid foundation upon which any Christian orthodoxy must stand.

ENDNOTES

¹ James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980, 1989) ix.

² R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "'Evangelical': What's in a Name?" in *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, gen. ed. John H. Armstrong (Chicago: Moody, 1996) 33.

³ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries* (New Haven: Yale, 1985) 1.

⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, as quoted in Pelikan, 223.

⁵ Millard Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991) 26-27.

⁶ Bernard L. Ramm, *An Evangelical Christology* (Nashville: Nelson, 1985) 47.

⁷ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 96.

⁸ In the New Testament *monogenes* only appears in these five texts.

⁹ D. H. Johnson, "Logos," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds. Joel Green et al. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992) 484.

¹⁰ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1955, 1978) 156.

¹¹ B. B. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1950) 211.

¹² *Ibid*, 237.

¹³ Dunn, xiii.

¹⁴ John Hick, ed., *The Myth of God Incarnate* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977).

¹⁵ This particular Christology has representatives both in the liberal and neo-liberal tradition. For a representative of the former see Roger Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," *TS* 53 (1992) 257-287; and for the latter see Clark Pinnock, *Flame of Love* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996) 79-111. While it is clearly the case that a biblical Spirit Christology would yield significant fruit, it is sadly the case that theological aberrations tend to be the result. Such deflections may include (1) a denial of Christ's

- deity wherein He is viewed more as a Spirit-intoxicated man; (2) an inadequate view of the atonement with a questioning of penal substitution; (3) promotion of soteriological inclusivism with the utter uniqueness of Christ being denied or compromised; (4) a rejection of the functional subordination of the Spirit to the Son; (5) a tendency toward finite theism and an unbiblical free-willism; (6) an unfounded attack on Logos Christology as promoting “abstract thinking,” and that it is guilty of “strip[ping] the self-emptying of the Son of its radicalness and even put[ting] his true humanity in jeopardy” (Pinnock, 91). Since Pinnock never identifies those who are guilty of this imbalance, we are left in the dark as to their identity.
- ¹⁶ Carl F.H. Henry, *The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992) 63, 67.
- ¹⁷ Gerald Hawthorne, *Philippians* WBC (Waco: Word, 1983) 79.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ The phrase is governed by a present imperative.
- ²⁰ Ibid., 83-84.
- ²¹ Dunn, 251.
- ²² Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 734.
- ²³ Quoted in Hawthorne, 90.
- ²⁴ William Hendricks, *Who is Jesus Christ?* (Nashville: Broadman, 1985) 29.
- ²⁵ Erickson, 721.
- ²⁶ Hawthorne, 89, 91.
- ²⁷ Ben Witherington, *The Jesus Quest* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995) 244.
- ²⁸ F. F. Bruce, *Colossians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 192.
- ²⁹ David Wells, *The Person of Christ* (Westchester: Crossway, 1984) 62.
- ³⁰ Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1982) 50.
- ³¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus — God and Man*, trans. Lewis Wilkins and Duane Priebe, 2nd ed (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977).
- ³² Ramm, 189.
- ³³ Ibid., 19-20.
- ³⁴ Francis Schaeffer, *He is There and He is Not Silent*, in *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer: Vol. One* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1982).
- ³⁵ William Lane, *Call to Commitment* (Nashville: Nelson, 1985) 29.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 32.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 36.
- ³⁸ N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) xiii.
- ³⁹ Ibid., xiv.
- ⁴⁰ *Loci Communes*, in W. Pauck, ed., *Melanchthon and Bucer*, LCC 19 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969) 21-22.
- ⁴¹ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*; Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*.
- ⁴² I. Howard Marshall, *I Believe in the Historical Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 106.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 246.
- ⁴⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, trans. Edwin H. Robertson (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1960) 34.
- ⁴⁵ Alister McGrath, *Understanding Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987) 147.