

“We Believe in the Holy Spirit”: Revisiting the Deity of the Spirit

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INTRODUCTION

“We believe in the Holy Spirit.” This short, succinct affirmation of the Spirit in the Nicene Creed leaves the reader wanting much more. While the creed clearly and specifically confessed the deity of the Son against the onslaught of Arianism, nevertheless, a more extensive confessional statement on the deity of the Spirit awaited. Athanasius, so famously known for his defense of Christ’s divinity and equality with the Father, is less recognized for his defense of the Holy Spirit.

But without question Athanasius affirmed the deity of the Spirit as well, arguing that the Spirit is “one with the Godhead which is in the unoriginated Triad.”¹ The Spirit, said Athanasius, “has the same oneness with the Son as the Son has with the Father.”² Therefore, contra Arianism, the Spirit does not have a beginning nor is he created at some point in time. Rather, he is *consubstantial*

(i.e., *homoousios*) with the Father and the Son. And yet, at the same time, the Spirit is distinct from the Father and the Son. As Gregg Allison explains, “Although eternal and equal, the three are eternally and immutably distinct.”³ Athanasius’s contribution was pivotal. His *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit* (355–360) sought to refute the Tropici who affirmed the Son’s divinity while rejecting the Spirit’s divine equality, claiming instead that he is a created being.⁴

But Athanasius would not be alone in his affirmation of the Spirit’s deity. The Cappadocian fathers—Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus—would likewise defend the Spirit’s divinity. The Pneumatomachi (fighters against the Spirit; also called Macedonians) refused to worship the Spirit, arguing that the Spirit was not equal in deity to God. But in 376 Basil the Great (330–379) refuted the Pneumatomachians with *On the Holy Spirit*, where he argued for the full deity of the Spirit, and at the same time was clear that the Spirit is not to be confused with the Father and the Son but is a

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distinct *hypostasis*. Therefore, while there is one, undivided divine *ousia*, there are three, distinct divine *hypostaseis*.⁵

Gregory of Nazianzus would be more forthright still. While Basil and Gregory of Nyssa were hesitant to title the Spirit *homoousios* with the Father and the Son “for fear of alienating potential supporters,” Gregory of Nazianzus was not.⁶ Gregory writes in his *Orations*, “What then? Is the Spirit God? Most certainly. Well then, is he consubstantial (*homoousios*)? Yes, if he is God.”⁷ The Spirit’s deity was no abstract matter either. Worship and prayer, for Gregory, hinge on the matter. To worship or pray to one of the three (e.g., Spirit) is to adore all three persons given the equality of the three in deity.⁸

The issue progressed in 381 with the Council of Constantinople, which elaborated upon the Creed of Nicea resulting in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. We believe “in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, who proceeds from the Father, who is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son, who spoke by the prophets.” The Spirit is not a created being, nor subordinate in deity, but is the Lord and to be worshipped along with the Father and Son!⁹ And he is a *person*, one who speaks and gives life.

The debates of the fourth century over the deity of the Spirit seem so far removed from our twenty-first century context for a variety of reasons.¹⁰ With the birth of the Pentecostal movement the attention has shifted in pneumatology from the deity of the Spirit to the gifts of the Spirit; from his divine person to his work in “Spirit baptism” and the debate over whether he bestows extraordinary gifts on the church today (e.g., tongues, prophecy). The shift in pneumatology towards the work of the Spirit can also be seen in soteriological controversies. Religious pluralism and inclusivism have raised considerable debate over whether or not the Spirit works in other religions, even apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ. In short, the *work* of the Spirit has taken center stage, and understandably since how we define the Spirit’s work in salvation,

sanctification, and the church is central to Christian faith and living.

However, if we, as evangelicals, simply relegate the subject of the *person* of the Spirit to an ancient era, then we neglect to see the Spirit’s relevancy to Christian doctrine and doxology. In the twenty-first century, as Fred Sanders has observed, evangelicals face two dangers: (1) coldness toward the Trinity and (2) shallowness in regards to the Trinity.¹¹ And if this is the case with the Trinity at large, how much more so with the Holy Spirit in particular, who is often the forgotten member of the three? But as this study will demonstrate, not only is the person and deity of the Spirit biblically rooted, but it transforms how we think about the most important aspects of the Christian faith.¹²

Our purpose in what follows is to revisit the biblical doctrine of the person and deity of the Holy Spirit. In doing so we are seeking to put into practice a pneumatology *from above*, one that is faithfully grounded in the biblical text. In order to do so, three questions must be answered: (1) Is the Holy Spirit a person? (2) Is the Holy Spirit God? (3) What difference does the deity of the Spirit make?¹³

IS THE HOLY SPIRIT A PERSON?

Is the Holy Spirit a person, or is the Holy Spirit an impersonal force or power?¹⁴ Scripture does connect the Spirit with the *power* of God (Mic 3:8; Zech 4:6; Luke 1:17, 35; 4:14; Acts 1:8; 10:38; Rom 1:4; 15:13, 19; 1 Cor 2:4; 1 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 1:7).¹⁵ However, God’s power is never thought of in Scripture as impersonal. Rather, as John Frame asserts, “It is a power directed by God’s intelligent plan to accomplish his purposes.”¹⁶ Additionally, to substitute “power” for “Spirit” is exegetically problematic since there are many passages where “power” and “Spirit” are both used in distinction from one another (Acts 10:36-38; Rom 15:13; 1 Cor 2:3-5). In some of these passages “power” is attributed to the Spirit, demonstrating his personhood. In other words, the Spirit is a person who possesses divine power, as he does other attri-

butes such as wisdom, love, holiness, omniscience, omnipresence, etc. But perhaps the most significant reason why it is erroneous to conceive of the Spirit as an impersonal power or force is because there are many indicators that the biblical authors affirmed the full personhood of the Spirit.

THE SPIRIT PERFORMS ACTIONS THAT CAN ONLY BE ATTRIBUTED TO HIM IF HE IS A PERSON.

Consider two brief examples of personal actions that are credited to the Holy Spirit. First, the Holy Spirit *speaks*. In Acts 21 Paul is on his way to Jerusalem, but the prophet Agabus bound Paul's feet and hands with his own belt, saying, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles'" (Acts 21:11). Notice, in this instance the Spirit is *speaking* and Agabus is the prophetic messenger.¹⁷ Likewise, speech is credited to the Spirit in Galatians 4:6. Paul reassures the Galatian believers that though they used to be enslaved to the world, through Christ they have now been redeemed. Consequently, those in Christ are adopted as sons. "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" The Spirit speaks—no, cries out—within us, bearing testimony to the new reality that God is our Father.¹⁸

Second, the Holy Spirit *intercedes*. Not only does the Spirit come into our hearts so that we cry out "Abba! Father!" but the Spirit also mediates on our behalf. Paul writes, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom 8:26-27). When we struggle and are weak, unsure what to pray for, it is the Spirit who personally intercedes on our behalf.¹⁹ While we do not know the will of God, the Spirit knows God's will and therefore is able to mediate on our behalf before

the Father. Some may object that Paul is utilizing impersonal language to personify the Spirit as a type of energy. How then can Paul say in verses 26-27 that the Spirit prays on behalf of the believer who does not know what to pray for? Certainly prayer is not the act of an energy but of a person.

Scripture has much more to say concerning the Spirit. Not only does he speak and intercede, but he also performs miracles (Rom 15:19; 1 Cor 12:9-10; cf. Matt 12:28), constrains (Acts 20:21), testifies (Acts 20:21), appoints (Acts 20:28), bears witness (Acts 5:32; Rom 8:16), bestows spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:9-11; Heb 2:3), pours out divine love within us (Rom 5:5; 15:30), sends (Acts 10:19-20; 13:2), teaches (John 14:26), adopts (Rom 8:15), sanctifies (Rom 1:4), indwells (Rom 8:9-11; 1 Cor 3:16; 2 Tim 1:14), renews (Titus 3:5), leads (Gal 5:17-25), etc. The testimony of Scripture is overwhelming when looked at as a whole. In every way the Spirit functions not as an impersonal power or force, but as a person.²⁰

THE SPIRIT POSSESSES THE QUALITIES OF A PERSON.

Not only is the personhood of the Spirit evident in his divine works, but also in the personal qualities designated to him, including intelligence, will, and affections, which have historically been identified as three basic characteristics of personhood.²¹ To begin with, consider intelligence. If we return to Romans 8:27 we will notice that the Spirit is said to have a *mind*. Right after Paul affirms the intercessory role of the Spirit on behalf of the believer (8:26), he then explains that God, who searches hearts, "knows what is the mind of the Spirit [*to phronēma tou pneumatos*], because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (8:27). Here is a clear affirmation of the Spirit's intelligence. He is not a mere force, power, or energy. Rather, he is a person who has a mind and on this basis he is able to pray for believers in a manner that is consistent with the divine will.²² As Cole concludes, "Such a descriptor would be puzzling indeed if the Spirit

were simply divine energy.”²³

Additionally, the Spirit is said to have a *will* and to exercise his will. For example, in 1 Corinthians 12 Paul explains that there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit (12:4). “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (12:7). Paul goes on to identify some of these gifts of the Spirit as including wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, the ability to distinguish between spirits, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. Paul concludes, “All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills” (12:11). The Spirit is the personal agent of the Trinity who gives these divine gifts to different believers in Corinth. And notice, the Spirit gives these gifts to different individuals “as he wills.” In short, the Spirit is said to give, empower, and exercise his will as he wishes, all of which are descriptions of a personal agent, not a mere force. Or as Calvin asserts, “For if the Spirit were not an entity subsisting in God, choice and will would by no means be conceded to him. Paul, therefore, very clearly attributes to the Spirit divine power, and shows that He resides hypostatically in God.”²⁴

Finally, not only is intellect and will attributed to the Spirit, but so also are certain *affections*.²⁵ In Ephesians 4:25ff Paul exhorts the Ephesian believers to put away falsehood and instead live in a godly manner (e.g., speak the truth, do not steel, do not use corrupt talk). Paul then warns them, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (4:30). According to Paul, the Holy Spirit has sealed each believer for the day of redemption (cf. Eph 1:13) and therefore the Christian is not to grieve the Spirit by committing acts of wickedness, but to live in a way that is glorifying to God (cf. Isa 63:10-11). For our purposes it is crucial to observe the simple truth that the Spirit can be sorrowed, something that cannot be said of a mere force, power, or energy.²⁶

A similar text can be found in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 where Paul concludes his letter by command-

ing Christians not to “quench the Spirit.” Other biblical texts assert that the Spirit can be insulted by Christians as well (Heb 10:29). In relation to unbelievers, Stephen is clear in his martyrdom testimony that the Spirit is resisted by those who reject the Son of God (Acts 7:51). But perhaps the most serious offence against the Spirit is blasphemy (Matt 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-29). The sin of blasphemy against the Son is pardonable (Matt 12:32a). But if the Spirit is blasphemed, there is no forgiveness (Matt 12:32b). In regards to the personhood of the Spirit, James White puts the matter acutely, “We have no reason to believe that there would be any less personal element in their blasphemy when speaking of the Spirit than when speaking of the Son.”²⁷ In summary, each of these passages demonstrates that the Spirit possesses certain affections that are characteristic of personhood.

THE SPIRIT’S PERSONHOOD IS COMPARABLE TO THE PERSONHOOD OF THE FATHER AND THE SON.

That the Spirit is a person is especially evident in how Jesus articulates the Trinitarian economy in the life of his disciples. Several passages stand out in this regard. In John 14:16-17 Jesus promises his disciples, “And 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.” By assuring his disciples that the Father will send “another” (*allos*) Helper (*paraklētos*; “Counselor” in the NIV), the assumption is that Christ himself is the first Helper (cf. 1 John 2:1). Therefore, these two Helpers are comparable in their personhood.²⁸ As Letham observes,

Jesus’ comments here bring the Spirit into the closest possible conjunction with the Father and the Son. The Father will send the Spirit in response to the Son’s request (John 14:16, 26). Jesus identifies the Spirit’s coming with his, for it is as if Jesus himself is to come in person (John

14:18)... The Spirit's coming to those who love Jesus is the equivalent of the Father and the Son coming (John 14:21, 23). The Holy Spirit will bring to the disciples' minds all that Jesus has said to them (John 14:26). So close is the connection here that Jesus can say that the presence of the Holy Spirit is interchangeable with that of the Father and the Son.²⁹

Certainly we would not question the personhood of the first Helper, Christ. Nor should we then question the personhood of the second Helper, the Spirit, who is commissioned by the Father and the Son.

In John 15:26 Jesus makes a similar statement, "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me."³⁰ Once again the Spirit is sent from the Father and the Son, and he is one who directs our attention to Christ, fulfilling his role as the Spirit of truth.³¹

Or consider John 16:7 where the disciples are filled with sorrow upon hearing of Jesus' future departure. Jesus, however, comforts them, instructing them that it is actually to their advantage that he leaves. "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:7-8). Only if the Spirit's personhood (and divine status) is equal to the Father and the Son, can he then proceed from the Father and the Son in order to convict the world.³²

Likewise, in John 16:13-14 Jesus once again reiterates his promise to send the Spirit of truth. "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." Like John 15:26, Jesus attributes works to the Spirit that only a person can do. The Spirit will speak, declare, and glorify the Son.

IS THE HOLY SPIRIT GOD?

So far we have seen that in Scripture the Spirit is referred to in categories of personhood. But what about the personhood of the Spirit would lead us to conclude that he is more than a person, indeed, that he is a *divine* person, and not only a divine person but one who is *equal* to the Father and the Son in deity, sharing in the one divine essence of the triune God?³³

THE SPIRIT SHARES THE ONE DIVINE NAME.

Scripture is replete with triadic passages in which either two or all three of the divine persons are mentioned together as co-equal partners in divine status. Scripture also abounds with passages where the Spirit and "God" are used interchangeably. In both types of passages the implication is that the Spirit is equal in deity to the Father and the Son. Stated otherwise, those passages where the Spirit is mentioned either alongside the Father and the Son or is mentioned synonymously with God demonstrate that the third person of the Trinity fully shares in the one divine name and by inference in the one divine essence as well.

First, there are numerous triadic passages where the Spirit is mentioned (and in some cases made visible; cf. Matt 3:16) alongside the Father and the Son.³⁴

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heaven 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" (Matt 3:16-17; cf. Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22).

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19).

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities,

but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone (1 Cor 12:4-6).

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all (2 Cor 13:14).

For through him [Christ] we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Eph 2:18-22).

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Eph 4:4-6).

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess 2:13-14).

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you (1 Pet 1:1-2).

But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to

eternal life (Jude 1:20-21).

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood (Rev 1:4-5).³⁵

Similarly, there are also biblical texts where the Son and Spirit are mentioned together as equal partners.³⁶

For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ (Rom 15:18-19).

I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf (Rom 15:30). And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor 6:11).

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy (Phil 2:1).

For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh (Phil 3:3).

How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? (Heb 10:29).

Second, there are other passages where

“Spirit” is used interchangeably with “God.” One of the greatest examples is in Acts 5 at the inception of the NT church. We read that Ananias and Sapphira sold their property, kept back some of the proceeds, and then laid the rest of the proceeds at the apostles’ feet. Sin, however, enters into the picture.

But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.” When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last (Acts 5:3-4).

Three hours later Sapphira enters the same room, not knowing what had previously taken place. She also lies to Peter.

But Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last (Acts 5:9-10).

To lie to the Spirit, says Peter, is to lie to God! Furthermore, when Peter encounters Sapphira he states that she and her husband have tested “the Spirit of the Lord” (5:9), again affirming the divinity of the Spirit. In summary, not only does Acts 5 support the personhood of the Spirit—after all, how can one lie to a mere force, power, or energy?—but the deity of the Spirit as well.³⁷

Peter’s reference to the Spirit as the “Spirit of the Lord” in Acts 5:9 is similar to Romans 8:9, “You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.” Here Paul associates the Spirit not only with the Father (i.e., the Lord), but with the

Son as well (i.e., Christ). The divinity of the Spirit is further demonstrated in what Paul says next, “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom 8:11). Again the Spirit is tied to the Father. But the Spirit is also said to be the divine agent through whom the Father raised Christ from the dead. Certainly such a supernatural act is only the work of God and yet it is predicated of the Spirit.

Additionally, this same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead will one day give life to our mortal bodies. It is the Spirit, says Paul, who dwells within the believer (Rom 8:11b).

Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple (1 Cor 3:16-17).

And again,

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body (1 Cor 6:19-20).

In the OT the temple, the “house of the Lord” (2 Chron 3:1), was the dwelling place of God, where he manifested his presence and glory to his people (2 Chron 7:1-2). But with the advent of our great high priest, Jesus Christ—whose death has ushered the sinner into the holy of holies, justified and clothed in the righteousness of Christ (Eph 2:11-22)—God no longer dwells in a building made with stone, but with his children directly (2 Cor 6:16). And he does so through the Spirit, as Paul makes clear in Ephesians 2:11-22.³⁸ It is through the Spirit that we have access to the Father, no longer being aliens and strangers, but members of the household of God. In Christ believers are “being built together into a dwelling

place for God by the Spirit” (Eph 2:22). Therefore, we can rightly conclude that the indwelling presence of the Spirit is the indwelling presence of God himself. As Augustine, and later Turretin, observed, if it is idolatry and sacrilege to erect a temple to a mere creature, what blasphemy it would be for Paul to call our own bodies temples of one who is not God.³⁹

Finally, the deity of the Spirit is especially evident in Jesus’ teaching on the sin of blasphemy. In Matthew 12 Jesus heals a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute. While the people were amazed, asking themselves whether Jesus could be the Son of David, the Pharisees were infuriated. “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons” (Matt 12:24). Knowing their thoughts, Jesus responds that a kingdom cannot be divided against itself. How can Satan cast out Satan and stand? “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt 12:28). Jesus’ statement is telling. Notice, it is by the “Spirit of God” that Jesus expels demons. Surely the Spirit must be divine, otherwise it is difficult to explain (1) how he is titled the “Spirit of God,” (2) how it is that Jesus could cast out demons through him, and (3) how the Spirit is able to have dominion and power over the demonic realm. But Jesus is not finished.

Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come (Matt 12:31-32).

To blaspheme the Spirit is to blaspheme God himself. The Pharisees were attributing the work of the Spirit to Satan. In doing so they were not merely resisting Jesus, but the gospel call of the Spirit to salvation.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the deity of the Spirit is evident in the fact that the sin of blasphemy is unforgivable. Truly, only if the Spirit is God does this sin have such dire consequences.

THE SPIRIT POSSESSES DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.

Not only is the Spirit included in triadic passages and not only does he carry the full meaning of the divine name, but the Spirit also is said to possess divine attributes. For example, in Isaiah 11:2 the divine attributes of the Spirit are also ascribed to the Messiah. “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.” Three observations deserve our attention. First, the deity of the Spirit is evident in his name, “The Spirit of the Lord.” But second, the Spirit’s deity is also in plain sight given the divine attributes associated with him: the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and fear of the Lord. And third, to make the issue especially clear, it is the Spirit, in all of his glorious attributes, that then rests upon the Messiah, Christ Jesus. As Gregory of Nyssa argued, if the Spirit is not divine then he cannot anoint Jesus as Christ, as king, as our divine Mediator.⁴¹

But perhaps the most obvious divine attribute can be found in the traditional label itself, the *Holy Spirit*.⁴² The Spirit is the Spirit of holiness (Rom 1:4). Over one hundred times in Scripture the Spirit is said to be “holy” (e.g., Ps 51:11; Isa 63:10-11; Matt 1:18-20; 3:11; 12:32; 28:19). And rightly so since the Spirit is the very presence of God manifested within the believer, working within the holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14; cf. 2 Cor 7:1). Hence, Christians are called temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19-20).⁴³

The Spirit also possesses the divine attribute of *omniscience*.⁴⁴ In 1 Corinthians 2 Paul expounds upon the wisdom that comes from the Spirit. Paul is clear that he decided to know nothing among them but Christ crucified. Paul did not approach the Corinthians using “lofty speech or wisdom” to make know the testimony of God. Rather, he says, “I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in dem-

onstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Cor 2:3-4). Paul, however, does not dismiss “wisdom” altogether. No, he writes, “we do impart wisdom” among the mature. However, it is not the wisdom of this age for the rulers of this age crucified the “Lord of glory.” To the contrary, Paul imparts a “secret and hidden wisdom of God” (1 Cor 2:7). And how does Paul know this secret wisdom? The wisdom from God has been revealed to him “through the Spirit” (1 Cor 2:10). But what makes the Spirit qualified to be the agent through whom this secret and hidden wisdom of God comes? Paul answers: “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” (1 Cor 2:11). In other words, the Spirit is the one who knows the very thoughts of God for he is the “Spirit of God.” As Cole remarks, “Only God can know God in this way. Otherwise there would be two omniscient beings. Scripture allows no such metaphysical dualism.”⁴⁵

Paul goes on to then apply the Spirit’s divine knowledge to the individual believer. “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from 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 2:12-13). According to Paul, there is a clear antithesis between the spirit of the world and the Spirit of God. Those possessed by the former are doomed to pass away, for they have a wisdom of this age that is foolishness, leading to death. However, those who possess the latter have a wisdom that comes from God because the Spirit, who knows and searches the depths of God, has given them understanding (v. 13). The message of Christ crucified, which to the world appears to be foolishness (see 2:13, 14), is actually the secret and hidden wisdom of God that the Spirit makes known to believers.

Much more could be said about the work of the

Spirit in making the wisdom of God known to the sinner, turning him from a “natural” person into a “spiritual” person. But the present study draws our attention specifically to the knowledge of the Spirit. The Spirit’s deity is not only emphasized in his title, “Spirit of God,” but in his ability to comprehend the very depths of God. Unless the Spirit is fully God, not only would he be incapable of comprehending the thoughts of God (2:11), but he could not reveal to us the “things freely given us by God” (2:12). He is the divine interpreter, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual (2:13).

The omniscience of the Spirit is a biblical segue into the *omnipresence* of the Spirit. Psalm 139, for example, begins with David praising the Lord for his omniscience.

O Lord, you have searched me and known me!
 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
 you discern my thoughts from afar.
 You search out my path and my lying down
 and are acquainted with all my ways.
 Even before a word is on my tongue,
 behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.
 You hem me in, behind and before,
 and lay your hand upon me.
 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
 it is high; I cannot attain it (Ps 139:1-6; cf. vv.13-18).

What does David conclude from the piercing, penetrating, and all-encompassing knowledge of God?

Where shall I go from your Spirit?
 Or where shall I flee from your presence?
 If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
 If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!
 If I take the wings of the morning
 and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
 even there your hand shall lead me,
 and your right hand shall hold me (Ps 139:7-10).

Some have interpreted David negatively, as one who is frustrated, unable to escape the Spirit. But

quite the opposite is in view. David rejoices in the presence of the Spirit. It is precisely because the Spirit is everywhere (from heaven to Sheol) that David can rest assured that his God will lead him and that his “right hand shall hold” him secure.

The Spirit’s omniscience and omnipresence always assumes the Spirit’s *omnipotence*. Even in Psalm 139 the Spirit’s omnipresence is meant to display the power of God, whose works are wonderful (139:14), who determines our days before they begin (139:16), and whose thoughts are vast (139:17). Throughout Scripture the Spirit is referred to as the power of God (Mic 3:8; Luke 1:35; Acts 1:8; 10:38; 1 Cor 2:4; 1 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 1:7). As we have seen, such a reference does not negate the Spirit’s personhood. It does, however, highlight his attribute of omnipotence (e.g., Rom 15:13, 19).⁴⁶ In Luke’s birth narrative, for instance, the angel Gabriel appears to Mary with the incredible news that the child in her womb is the “Son of the Most High.” Mary responds, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” Gabriel answers, “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 1:33-35). What is physically impossible with man, is absolutely possible for God because of the Spirit who descends upon Mary with divine power. Therefore, the Spirit is often titled the *Spiritus Recreator*, for he creates not only physical life, but spiritual life as well. As we will see, the Spirit’s divine power takes the dead sinner and breaths new life into him, making him a new creature in Christ (John 3:5-8), exhibiting his divine omnipotence in salvation (cf. Matt 19:26).⁴⁷

Finally, the Spirit is *eternal*. In the book of Hebrews we read,

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means

of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. 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 9:11-14).

The entire ministry of Christ is characterized by the presence of the Holy Spirit. In Hebrews 9 Christ is spoken of as our great high priest who has entered into the holy place once for all by means of his own blood and in doing so has secured an eternal redemption (Heb 9:12). But the author goes on to specify that Christ offered himself up on the cross as a blood sacrifice without blemish “through the eternal Spirit.” Consequently, believers have a conscience that is purified from dead works and liberated to serve the living God (9:14). Two observations are in order: (1) Hebrews 9 is explicit in affirming that the Spirit is eternal, not created at some point in time (contra Arianism); and (2) Christ’s sacrifice secures an eternal redemption but this eternal redemption is only possible through an *eternal* Spirit. As O’Brien observes, “the Holy Spirit anointed Jesus as high priest for every aspect of his ministry, including his sacrificial death.”⁴⁸

Certainly many other divine attributes could be mentioned, but what has been seen with attributes like holiness, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, and eternity is that the Spirit is fully God, possessing the very attributes of God.⁴⁹

THE SPIRIT PERFORMS THE WORKS OF GOD.

One of the strongest pieces of evidence in support of the deity of the Spirit can be found in the *divine works* that Scripture attributes to the Spirit. If the Spirit shares in the one divine nature, being equal in deity to the Father and the Son, then we

would expect the Spirit to also perform the very works of God, thereby attesting to his divinity. When we examine the Scriptures, this is exactly what we find.

THE HOLY SPIRIT CREATES AND SUSTAINS THE UNIVERSE.

Scripture begins with the creation of the universe. From the very start we learn not only that God is the creator of the heavens and the earth, but the text hints that the Spirit is involved as well. Genesis 1:2 reads, “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.” Verse 2 is the launching pad for the rest of chapter 1, for it communicates that something supernatural is about to happen, namely, God is going to begin creating everything that exists. But it is the Spirit of God who is hovering over the waters in preparation for creation.⁵⁰ In other words, it is through the Spirit that God speaks into existence all of creation.⁵¹ As John Calvin remarks, Genesis 1:2 shows that “the beauty of the universe (which we now perceive) owes its strength and preservation to the power of the Spirit.”⁵²

The role of the Spirit in creation is elaborated upon in Psalm 104, which highlights the greatness of God in creation. The psalmist begins by praising the Lord who is “very great!” He is the one who stretches out the heavens like a tent (104:2), lays the beams of his chambers on the waters (104:3), makes the clouds his chariot, and rides on the wings of the wind (104:3). He “set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved” and “covered it with the deep as with a garment” (104:5-6). The psalmist proceeds, explaining that God sets the boundaries of the earth in place and is the creator and sustainer of all things (104:7-29). And then verse 30; “When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground” (cf. Ps 33:6; Job 26:13; 33:4, 14-15).⁵³ Surely this work of creation and renewal is the work of God

and only can be attributed to the Spirit if he is fully God. Calvin summarizes the matter well, “For it is the Spirit who, everywhere diffused, sustains all things, causes them to grow, and quickens them in heaven and in earth. Because he is circumscribed by no limits, he is excepted from the category of creatures; but in transfusing into all things his energy, and breathing into them essence, life, and movement, he is indeed plainly divine.”⁵⁴

THE HOLY SPIRIT BREATHES OUT SCRIPTURE.

It should not surprise us that the Spirit is the divine person by which the Scriptures are inspired. He is not only the Trinitarian agent through whom the heavens and the earth are created, but he is the one through whom the Scriptures are created by means of human authors. He is the *rûach* (OT) or *pneuma* (NT) of God. Therefore when the biblical authors say that the Scriptures are breathed out by God (*theopneustos*) they are affirming that the Scriptures are the product of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵ For example, in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we read, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” But in 2 Peter 1:21 we discover how exactly the Scriptures are “breathed out by God.” Peter writes, “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.” So Scripture is God-breathed (*theopneustos*) by means of the Holy Spirit who is said to have “carried along” the human authors so that what they wrote was not their own invention, but exactly what God intended (they “spoke from God”). In both of these texts it is evident that the inspiration of Scripture is the work of God. Therefore, it follows that if this work is attributed to the Spirit he must be God.

Other passages support the Spirit’s role in divine inspiration as well. Throughout the OT it is the Spirit who comes upon the prophets so that they speak the word of God (Num 11:25; 24:2; 1 Sam 10:10; 18:10; 19:23; 2 Kings 2:9; 2 Chron

18:23; 24:20; Isa 61:1; Ezek 2:2; Mic 3:8). And it is the Spirit whom Jesus promises to send for the Spirit is the one who will speak through the disciples (Matt 10:19-20; Mark 13:11) and teach them what they should say (Luke 12:12). One of the most persuasive passages, however, is Acts 28:25-26 where Paul quotes from Isaiah 6:9, saying, “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: ‘Go to this people, and say, You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive’” (Acts 28:25-26). But when we look at Isaiah 6:9 the text does not mention the Spirit but simply says that God spoke through Isaiah (“voice of the Lord” in 6:8). In other words, “Lord” and “Spirit” are used interchangeably by Paul. The Spirit is the divine person by whom the Lord speaks through his prophet. By substituting “Spirit” for “Lord” Paul is assuming the deity of the Spirit.⁵⁶

THE HOLY SPIRIT REGENERATES SINNERS.

The Spirit not only creates the universe and the Scriptures, but he also creates new life within dead sinners and therefore can be titled the *Spiritus Creator*.⁵⁷ To clarify, the work of redemption as a whole is by nature Trinitarian. All three persons of the Trinity work together (*opus commune*) to accomplish salvation and, as Robert Letham states, “not one of the persons works by himself in isolation from the others.”⁵⁸ Or as Augustine asserted, since the three persons are inseparable in their divine unity and essence, so also “do they work inseparably.”⁵⁹ Therefore, there is a triadic pattern to our redemption whereby the plan of salvation “is brought about from the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁰ Consequently, every act of redemption involves not just one but all three persons of the Trinity so that the *opera ad extra trinitatis indivisa sunt*. Or in the words of John Owen, “by whatsoever act we hold communion with any one person, there is an *influence* from every person to the putting forth of that act.”⁶¹ Such is the case in effectual calling, to take but one example. The Father calls (John 6:44, 65; 1

Cor 1:9; 1 Thess 2:12; 1 Pet 5:10), to and through his Son (Matt 11:28; Luke 5:32; John 6:44, 65; 7:37; Rom 1:6), by the power of the Spirit (Matt 10:20; John 15:26; Acts 5:31-32).⁶²

Nevertheless, while each act of redemption involves each person of the Trinity, one of the three persons may take on the central role as the focal agent in any one particular saving act. For example, while the Father *plans* salvation (Eph 1:4-5), the Son is sent by the Father to *accomplish* salvation (Eph 1:7), and the Father and the Son send the Spirit to *apply* salvation (Eph 1:13-14).⁶³ Or, in the words of Johannes van der Kemp, “the Father ordained grace for the elect, the Son purchased it, and the Holy Ghost applies and dispenses it to the favorites of God.”⁶⁴ As Augustine teaches, all three persons of the Trinity have a part in the work of each person and yet each work is attributed to one person in particular.⁶⁵ Such is the case in the application of salvation. It is the Holy Spirit in particular who takes on the focal role in Scripture as the one who makes the new birth effectual (John 3:3-5; Titus 3:5).⁶⁶ As the Nicene-Constantinople Creed states, the Holy Spirit is “the Lord and Giver of Life.” Likewise, John Calvin concludes, “To sum up, the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself.”⁶⁷ In other words, it is the Spirit who brings about our union with Christ (Rom 8:10-11, 15; Gal 4:6). Therefore, it is specifically the Spirit who is the efficient cause of the new birth.⁶⁸

For example, Jesus shocks Nicodemus when he says that he must be born again to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3). But notice, this new birth is of “the Spirit” (John 3:7).⁶⁹ Therefore, Jesus can compare the Spirit to the wind. “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). Likewise, Paul will attribute the new birth to the Spirit in Titus 3:5 where the “washing of regeneration” is connected to the “renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (cf. Ezek 36:25-27). Or consider 1 Corinthians 6:11, “You were washed

[i.e., regeneration], you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” Clearly Paul believed that regeneration was the work of the Holy Spirit. But who, other than God himself, has either the power or the right to take a condemned, dead, and corrupt sinner and breathe new spiritual life within him, so that he consequently repents and trusts in Christ? And yet this divine, sovereign, and supernatural work is credited to the Spirit!

THE HOLY SPIRIT JUSTIFIES AND SANCTIFIES.

We cannot ignore the fact that Paul, in 1 Corinthians 6:11, not only says regeneration is the work of the Spirit, but so also is justification. We rarely speak of justification in such terms, acknowledging that it is the Spirit that brings about our justification. But it is the Spirit who not only breathes new life into our spiritual dead corpse (regeneration), but then grants us faith and repentance (Acts 13:48; Eph 2:8-10; Phil 1:29-30; 2 Pet 1:1; 2 Tim 2:24-26; Acts 5:31; 11:18), faith being the instrumental cause of our justification.

But perhaps the Spirit receives the most attention in relation to sanctification (Gal 5:22-23). In Scripture it is the Spirit of holiness who is qualified and able to lead the believer in the pursuit of holiness. In his opening letter Peter addresses believers as elect exiles “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood” (1 Pet 1:1-2). Sanctification can be defined in two ways, as definite and progressive. Definite sanctification is not a life long process, but, as John Murray calls it, a “once-for-all definitive act” (1 Cor 1:2; 6:11; Rom 6:2, 6, 14, 17).⁷⁰ A decisive breach with sin has occurred and the believer has been irreversibly and decisively united with Christ (Eph 2:4-6; Col 3:1; Rom 6:4, 11; 2 Cor 5:17).⁷¹ On the other hand, progressive sanctification is an ongoing process where the Spirit is at work within the believer so that he grows in godliness, mortifies sin, becomes more like Christ, and seeks to do all things to the glory of God. Peter may have either in view.

But other passages speak specifically of the Spirit’s work in a progressive manner. For example, Paul writes to the Romans, stating that those in Christ have no condemnation for “the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:1). Grounding our confidence in the atoning death of Christ, Paul then moves to the Spirit, reminding us that since we are in Christ we are no longer to walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (8:4). While the mind set on the flesh leads to death, the mind set on the Spirit leads to life and peace (8:8). But how do we know we are not of the flesh but of the Spirit? You are in the Spirit “if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you” (8:9). It is this same indwelling Spirit who will one day give life to our mortal bodies and he is able to do it since he is the one who raised Christ from the dead (8:11; cf. 1 Pet 3:18). Only if the Spirit is fully God can he be attributed with sanctifying the believer and one day granting the believer resurrection life as he did Christ Jesus.

Paul highlights the Spirit’s work of sanctification in Ephesians as well. After discussing the mystery of the gospel Paul says,

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph 3:14-19).

According to Paul, Christ dwells in our hearts through faith when God strengthens believers through the Spirit. In doing so believers possess the strength they need to comprehend the love of Christ and be filled with God’s fullness. Surely the

Spirit is divine if he is the one who brings about the fullness of God within the believer, as he does wisdom and knowledge (Eph 1:17).⁷²

Paul's focus on the Spirit and Christ is reiterated in 2 Corinthians 3. Paul begins by emphasizing the newness of the new covenant. Those in the new covenant no longer have the law written on tablets of stone but rather on the tablets of their hearts (3:2; cf. Exod 24:12; 31:18; 32:15; 34:1; Deut 9:10), as promised in Jeremiah 31:33 (cf. Ezek 11:19; 36:26; Heb 8:10). God has written on the heart not with ink but with "the Spirit of the living God" (3:3). Therefore, says Paul, he is a minister of "a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit." The letter kills, but "the Spirit gives life" (3:6). Paul continues, arguing from the lesser to the greater, that if the ministry under Moses brought glory with it (a "ministry of condemnation" as he calls it), how much more "the ministry of the Spirit," which is a permanent ministry of righteousness (3:8)? Paul then concludes,

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Cor 3:12-18).

Christ has removed the "veil" over our hearts. How so? Paul explains that it is through the Spirit for the "Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." Therefore, because

the veil has been lifted, we are able to behold the glory of the Lord as we are being transformed into his likeness. But this can only take place if it is the Lord's doing, specifically the "Lord who is the Spirit." Paul's language, which connects "Lord" and "Spirit," in no way confuses the persons (i.e., modalism), but rather preserves their distinctiveness while at the same time highlighting their unity in purpose, namely, the salvation of the sinner.

One more point deserves attention. As those who are being transformed by the Spirit, we also can say that the Spirit dwells within us. Texts like 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 and 6:19-20 teach that we are temples of the Holy Spirit. And in Ephesians 5:18 Paul commands us to be filled with the Spirit (cf. Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9, 52). Clearly, in Paul's mind, if one is indwelt or filled with the Spirit one is indwelt or filled by God himself. As Paul makes evident in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple." Therefore, Erickson correctly states, "By equating the phrase 'God's temple' with the phrase 'a temple of the Holy Spirit,' Paul makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is God."⁷³

To conclude, many other divine works are accomplished by the Spirit. The Spirit is said to baptize the believer (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; 1 Cor 12:13), seal the believer (Eph 1:3), make the believer aware of his adoption (Rom 8:15), indwell the believer (John 14:17; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19), pour out God's love in our hearts (Rom 5:5), confer gifts on God's people (Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 1 Cor 12:4-11; Eph 4:11; Heb 2:4), intercede as an advocate on behalf of God's children (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; Rom 8:26), judge the wicked and the righteous (John 16:8-11), convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8), give physical life (Gen 2:7; Job 33:4; Ps 104:30; John 3:5-8; 6:63; Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:45; 2 Cor 3:6),

etc. Each and every one of these divine works only serves to verify the deity of the Spirit.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THE DEITY OF THE SPIRIT MAKE?

What difference does the deity of the Spirit make? According to Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), “The doctrine of the Trinity, taken literally, has no practical relevance at all, even if we think we understand it; and it is even more clearly irrelevant if we realize that it transcends all our concepts.”⁷⁴ Should Kant’s dismissal of the Trinity in all things pastoral and practical be adopted, then the deity of the Holy Spirit matters little, if at all, for the Christian life. But what we see in Scripture is a very different picture than the one Kant has painted. Indeed, we see the exact opposite. Everything hinges on the reality of the Trinity. And likewise with the Spirit; the divinity of the Spirit could not have greater practical relevance for Christian faith and living.

PNEUMATOLOGY AND SOTERIOLOGY

What would be lost if the deity of the Spirit is not true? Feinberg’s answer is sobering:

As to the Holy Spirit, if he is not fully God, the implications for salvation are again serious. Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit regenerates believers and indwells and fills them, but if the Holy Spirit is a lesser God or no God at all, how can we be sure that he can do any of these things? Moreover, unless he is coequal in being and purpose with the Father and the Son, what guarantees that even if he tried to do such things, the Father and the Son would recognize his actions as appropriate and relate to us accordingly?⁷⁵

Though this study has not focused on the Spirit’s essential role in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, it is certainly the case that apart from the Spirit we have no atonement for our salvation. As Fred Sanders observes, even the title “Christ” implies that Jesus is the “Son of David anointed

by the Spirit.” Therefore, “without the Spirit there could be no Christ to accomplish salvation.”⁷⁶ As Hebrews makes clear, the blood of Christ purifies our conscience from dead works because Christ offered himself to God without blemish “through the eternal Spirit” (Heb 9:14).

But not only is it through the Spirit that we have redemption accomplished, but redemption applied as well. As seen above, regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification, and perseverance are all the works of the Spirit. But if the Spirit is not divine, then each of these works are emptied of their salvific effect. Stated positively, it is the *deity* of the Spirit that is the very basis of the *work* of the Spirit. Athanasius and the Cappadocian fathers firmly established that if Christ is not fully God, then he has no power to save. Can we not say the same about the Spirit? If the Spirit is not fully God, then he has no power to save. Therefore, our salvation, from the moment of the new birth to our glorification, rests entirely upon the divinity of the Spirit.

Furthermore, if the Spirit is not divine, not only is it impossible for him to apply the work of salvation within us, but the work of the Father and the Son remain incomplete. In other words, what the Son has done *for us* means nothing if the Spirit’s work *in us* is incomplete due to a divine deficiency. Sanders, quoting Puritan John Flavel, explains, “The reason God’s work waits on the fulfillment of the Spirit is that the Spirit is God. It would be insulting to say that ‘all that the Father has done... and all that the Son has done’ is ineffectual until completed by some outside force. Flavel’s point is that the Spirit is not some outside force, but a force internal to the being of God, of the same substance as God the Father and God the Son.”⁷⁷

PNEUMATOLOGY AND DOXOLOGY

We opened this study by quoting the Nicene-Constantinople Creed: We believe “in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, who proceeds from the Father, who is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son, who spoke

by the prophets.” The Spirit is to be *worshipped and glorified* with the Father and Son. What is lost if the deity of the Spirit is not true? Answer: Christian worship.

Robert Letham argues that in the West the Trinity has been removed from the center of Christian worship and instead has been marginalized. However, says Letham, when we look down the halls of church history, we see a different story. Reformers like Calvin and Puritans like Owen not only argued for the deity of all three persons, but argued “forcibly for the distinct worship of the three.”⁷⁸ What distinguishes Christianity is its worship, which is distinctively and thoroughly Trinitarian. As John Owen writes,

The proper and peculiar object of divine worship and invocation is *the essence of God*, in its infinite excellency, dignity, majesty.... Now this is common to all three persons, and is proper to each of them; not formally as a person, but as God blessed for ever. All adoration respects that which is common to all; so that in each act of adoration and worship all are to be adored and worshipped.⁷⁹

Owen goes on to argue that our communion with God is a communion with the Trinity. How incomplete our communion with God is if the personhood and the deity of the Spirit are denied. Letham, relying on Calvin, observes that while our salvation comes down to us from the Father through the Son by the Spirit, in the church’s worship the “reverse movement” occurs—by the Holy Spirit through Christ to the Father.⁸⁰ But apart from the Spirit, our worship of and communion with the Father and the Son is impossible. It is the Spirit who grants us faith in Christ and ignites our affections for Christ. Should his personhood and divinity be abandoned, we no longer have a basis for our entire relationship with God, nor an ability to worship in “Spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24). May we not forget that when we call upon our Father, on the basis of his Son’s blood, we do so in the power of the Spirit.⁸¹

ENDNOTES

¹ Athanasius, Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit, 1.21, in *Letters of St. Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit* (trans. C. R. B. Shapland; New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), 121. Also see idem, Statement of Faith, 4, in *Nicene- and Post-Nicene Fathers* (ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, Philip Schaff et al., 2nd ser., 14 vols.; Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 1994), 4:84.

² Athanasius, Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit, 1.2, in *Letters of St. Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit*, 64-65.

³ Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 239.

⁴ Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 141; Joel C. Elowsky, “Introduction,” in *We Believe in the Holy Spirit, vol. 4 of Ancient Christian Doctrine*, (ed. Thomas C. Oden; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), xxiv-xxv.

⁵ For the pneumatological development at Nicea, see Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 133-48, 204-12, 287-88.

⁶ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 162.

⁷ As quoted in *ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ For the debate over why homoousios is not used by the creed, see *ibid.*, 172-83.

¹⁰ The exception to the rule would be Oneness Pentecostalism where not only the deity and person of the Spirit are compromised, but the entire Trinity is reconfigured in a heretical direction.

¹¹ Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 11-12.

¹² “Very often, believers assume that Jesus walks with them and the Father guides them but the Spirit has little practical relevance. The Spirit, however, is important and central to, and immanently involved in, his creation, the church, and individual believers—more often and more regularly, more intentionally and strategically, than most believers realize.” Keith Warrington, *The Message of the Holy Spirit* (Downers

Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 13.

¹³Space does not permit a detailed overview of the Spirit from OT to NT, but see Warrington, *Holy Spirit*, 15-244; Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 95-280; Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 431-508.

¹⁴In their *New World Translation*, Jehovah Witnesses translate “Holy Spirit” as “holy spirit,” refusing to include the article, all in an effort to deny the personhood and deity of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is a mere force or power (an “it” not a “he”). They also appeal to the use of the neuter gender in the Greek in reference to the “Holy Spirit.” However, as James White observes, “Inanimate things can have masculine and feminine genders, and personal things can have the neuter gender. We cannot automatically insert the pronoun ‘it’ when referring to every neuter noun any more than we should always insert the pronoun ‘she’ for ‘love,’ since love in Greek is feminine.” Additionally, while in Greek *pneuma* (spirit) is neuter, often times when the New Testament authors use the word they apply a masculine pronoun with it (e.g., John 14:17, 26; 16:14; 1 Cor 12:11). James White, *The Forgotten Trinity: Recovering the Heart of Christian Belief* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1998), 140. However, see footnote 31 for the debate over the masculine pronoun.

¹⁵Notice, however, that the “Spirit” is associated not only with “power” but with other qualities such as “wisdom” (Exod 28:3; 31:3; 35:31; Deut 34:9; Isa 11:2; Dan 5:11, 14; Luke 1:17; 2:40; Acts 6:10; 1 Cor 2:4; 12:8; Eph 1:17).

¹⁶John Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 691.

¹⁷The Spirit speaks directly to the church in Acts 13:2, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Or consider Acts 10:19-20, “And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, ‘Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them.’”

¹⁸Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians* (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rap-

ids: Zondervan, 2010), 271-72.

¹⁹Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 443, 446; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 523-24, 526-27.

²⁰Some may object that the Spirit is not a person because Scripture says we are baptized in the Spirit. After all, how can someone be baptized into another person? However, does Scripture not affirm our baptism into Christ (see Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27)? Consequently believers are said to be “in Christ.” If our baptism into Christ is not doubted, why would we question our baptism into the Spirit? See White, *The Forgotten Trinity*, 147.

²¹Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 878.

²²When I refer to the “mind” or “will” of the Spirit, I am using these terms to highlight and defend the personhood of the Spirit. However, it needs to be clarified that I am not arguing that the Spirit has a distinct or separate “mind” or “will” from the Father and the Son. Rather, I hold the view that there is one divine mind and one divine will in the Triune God, rather than three minds and three wills. In short, it is not as though the Father has his own mind and will, the Son has his own mind and will, and the Spirit has his own mind and will. To the contrary, there is one divine mind and one divine will in God that each person of the Trinity shares completely and fully. For debate on this issue, see Michael C. Rae, “The Trinity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology* (ed. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 403-29.

²³Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 68.

²⁴John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. John T. McNeil; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; vols. 20-21; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1.13.14.

²⁵Others may prefer the word “emotions.” I am avoiding this word due to the baggage that our postmodern era attaches to it.

²⁶Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids:

Eerdmans, 1999), 347-48; Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians* (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 306. Calvin also observes how in passages like Isa 63:10 “grieving” the Spirit demonstrates his divinity. “Again, where God complains that he was provoked to anger by the stubbornness of his people, Isaiah writes that ‘his Holy Spirit was grieved’ [Isa. 63:10 p.]” Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.13.15.

²⁷White, *The Forgotten Trinity*, 145.

²⁸Carson points out that “Helper” may not be the best word choice since it “has overtones of being subordinate or inferior, overtones clearly absent from John 14-16.” D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 499.

²⁹Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 58. Also see Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 436-38.

³⁰Many of the fathers appealed to the Spirit’s eternal procession (or spiration) from the Father and the Son as proof of the Spirit’s deity and personhood as well. See Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 205.

³¹There is debate as to whether or not the masculine pronoun *ekeinos* (“he”) in John 14:26; 15:26; and 16:8, 13-14 lends support to the personhood of the Spirit. Take John 14:26, for example. J. I. Packer, Milard Erickson, and many others make the argument that “Spirit” (*pneuma*) is neuter, but John intentionally uses the masculine pronoun “he” (*ekeinos*) instead of the neuter “it” (*ekeino*) in order to emphasize the personhood of the Spirit. J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1984), 61; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 876. However, Daniel Wallace argues that such a grammatical argument is erroneous and instead the case for the personality of the Spirit must be made on the basis of what Jesus says about the Spirit. Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 331-32. Also see Andrew Malone, “Essential Theology: The Personhood of the Holy Spirit and Masculine Pronouns in John’s Gospel,”

Essentials (Autumn 2005): 7-8; Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 69.

³²One qualification, however, is needed. In Scripture, the mission of the Spirit is so closely connected to the mission of the Son that Scripture can speak of the Spirit as the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9-10; 2 Cor 3:17-18). This does not mean that the Spirit is identical to the Son (or the Father) as a person. While the Spirit and the Son and the Father are one in being (essence; *ousia*), nevertheless they are distinct in personhood (i.e., three persons; *hypostaseis*). Such a qualification is essential if we are to avoid the trappings of both modalism and Tritheism.

³³By “share” I do not mean that the Spirit has one-third of the divine essence, as do the Father and the Son. Instead, I am using “share” to mean that the Spirit is fully, one-hundred percent God, completely possessing the one, undivided divine essence.

³⁴Also see, Rom 1:1-4; 5:1-5; 6:4; 8:1-17; 15:16, 30; 1 Cor 6:11; 8:6; 12:4-6; 2 Cor 1:21-22; 3:3-4; 5:5-8; 13:14; Gal 4:6; Eph 1:3-14; 2:18-22; 3:2-5, 14-17; 4:4-6; 5:18-20; Phil 3:3; Col 1:6-7; 3:16-17; 1 Thess 1:2-6; 5:18-19; 2 Thess 2:13-14; 1 Tim 3:15-16; Titus 3:4-6; Heb 2:3-4; 6:4-6; 9:14; 10:29-31; 1 Pet 1:2; 4:13-19; 1 John 4:2, 13-14; 5:6-12; Jude 20-21; Rev 1:4-5.

³⁵In my view, “seven spirits” is a reference to the Holy Spirit. See Rev 3:1; 4:5; etc. Seven represents perfection.

³⁶Other passages seem to reference only the Father and the Spirit (e.g., Acts 9:31).

³⁷Likewise, consider Acts 7:51 where Stephen says that the Jews, as did their Fathers, always resist the Holy Spirit. In looking back on the OT, however, it is evident that Israel resisted God. Again, the inference of deity is present.

³⁸See Hamilton, *God’s Indwelling Presence*. For a recent study of the Spirit in the OT, see David G. Firth and Paul D. Wegner, eds., *Presence, Power, and Promise: The Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011).

³⁹See Richard A. Muller, *The Triunity of God, vol. 4 of Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 368.

⁴⁰For the distinction between the gospel call and the effectual call, see Matthew Barrett, *Reclaiming Monergism: The Case for Sovereign Grace in Effectual Calling and Regeneration* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013), chapter 2.

⁴¹See Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 209.

⁴²Cole notes, "In Scripture, God's name is about identification. . . . Brevard S. Childs comments, 'God's identity has been made known through his name.' The name of God says something about his very nature. Charles H. H. Scobie goes so far as to argue that, ' . . . God's name is an expression of his essential nature.'" Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 70. See Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 371; Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 108, emphasis original.

⁴³Other names that are attached to the Spirit demonstrate his possession of divine attributes as well (e.g., "Spirit of truth" in John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; Eph 1:3; 1 John 4:6).

⁴⁴By omniscience I am referring to God's exhaustive, meticulous knowledge of the past, present, and future (contra open theism).

⁴⁵Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 71. Cole observes that this same point was made by Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, (trans. Joseph Rickaby; London: Burns & Oates, 1905), 4.17.7.

⁴⁶The omnipotence of the Spirit is a theme that can be traced throughout the pages of the Old and New Testaments. To take just one OT example, in Judges 14:6 "Spirit of the Lord" is said to have rushed upon Sampson empowering him to tear a roaring lion into pieces. And in Judges 14:19 the "Spirit of the Lord rushed upon" Sampson again, enabling him to strike down thirty men, and then once again in order to defeat the 1,000 Philistines with the jaw bone of a donkey (Judg 14:14-16; cf. 1 Sam 11:6-7).

⁴⁷See Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 874.

⁴⁸Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 325.

⁴⁹For example, the Holy Spirit is said to be the grace and

love of God given to believers for progress in godliness (Rom 5:5; 15:30; 2 Cor 6:6; Gal 5:16-17; Phil 2:1; Col 1:8). Elsewhere Scripture seems to say (or infer) the Spirit is incomprehensible (Isa 40:13), good (Ps 143:10), and possesses the divine glory (1 Pet 4:14).

⁵⁰Both the ESV and NIV translate *rûach* as "Spirit," but the NRSV translates the verse as "a wind from God swept over the face of the waters." But even evangelicals divide on the matter. Gordon J. Wenham offer yet another translation, capitalizing the "W" in wind: "And the Wind of God hovered over the waters." Wenham sees the "Wind of God" as a "concrete and vivid image of the Spirit of God." Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Word Biblical Commentary; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), comment on Gen 1:2. On the other hand, John H. Sailhamer argues that "Spirit" is a superior translation since hovering is a description of God's creation in the tabernacle (Exod 31:3), as well as Moses' description of God hovering like an eagle over its nest (Deut 32:11). John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *Genesis-Leviticus* (rev. ed.; Expositor's Biblical Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), comment on Gen 1:2. Cole agrees with Sailhamer. "I find it hard to imagine a wind that hovers (or a breath that hovers, for that matter). But I can imagine a hovering eagle and such a metaphor used of a living reality such as the Spirit of God." Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 99. Furthermore, to read Gen 1:2 through a Trinitarian lens (or as Christian Scripture) is, I believe, justified for it takes into consideration the dual authorship of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21), as well as the progressive nature of divine revelation from OT to NT. See Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 109. Also see Stephen G. Dempster, "Geography and Genealogy, Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible," in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (ed. Scott J. Hafemann, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 67-68.

⁵¹In Col 1:16 we discover that the Son is involved in creation as well ("For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible"), demonstrating that creation is a Trinitarian work through and through.

⁵²Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.13.14.

⁵³Calvin observes how many of the early church fathers also appealed to Psalm 33:6. “They [the Patristics] thought it justifiable to cite from David, ‘By the word of the Lord the heavens were established, and all their power by the spirit of his mouth’ [Ps 33:6 p.], to prove that the universe was no less the work of the Holy Spirit than the Son.” However, Calvin does not believe this is the best argument. “But since it is common practice in The Psalms to repeat the same thing twice, and since in Isaiah ‘spirit of his mouth’ means the same things as ‘the word’ [Isa. 11:4], that was a weak reason.” Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.13.15.

⁵⁴Ibid., 1.13.14. Also, see Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (trans. Henri De Vries; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 22-27.

⁵⁵Both terms can mean “wind,” “breath,” or “spirit.” Context is key in determining the meaning.

⁵⁶The same point can be seen in comparing: Heb 3:7-11 with Ps 95:7-11 (cf. Deut 9:24-25; 32:12); Heb 9:7-10 with Lev 16:1-34; Heb 10:15-17 with Jer 31:31-34; 1 Cor 3:16, 6:19, and 2 Cor 6:16 with Lev 26:11-13; Isa 63:10 with Ps 95:1, 8-9.

⁵⁷Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit to unite the elect sinner to Christ by breathing new life into that dead and depraved sinner so as to raise him from spiritual death to spiritual life, removing his heart of stone and giving him a heart of flesh, so that he is washed, born from above and now able to repent and trust in Christ as a new creation. Moreover, regeneration is the act of God alone and therefore it is monergistic in nature, accomplished by the sovereign act of the Spirit apart from and unconditioned upon man’s will to believe. In short, man’s faith does not cause regeneration but regeneration causes man’s faith. For an extensive treatment of the Spirit’s work in regeneration, see Barrett, *Reclaiming Monergism*, chapter 4.

⁵⁸Letham, *The Holy Trinity* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2004), 157. Here Letham is summarizing Gregory of Nyssa. Letham continues, “Every work of God originates from the Father, proceeds through the Son, and is perfected in the Holy Spirit. However, these are not three different things, but one and the same work of God.”

⁵⁹Augustine, *The Trinity: De Trinitate*, in *The Works of Saint Augustine* (ed. John E. Rotelle; trans. Edmund Hill; New York: New City, 1991), 70. Elsewhere Augustine states, “Therefore, as there is an equality and inseparability of the persons, not only of the Father and the Son, but also of the Holy Spirit, so also the works are inseparable.” *Tractates on the Gospel of John 11-27* (trans. John W. Rettig; The Fathers of the Church; Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 166. Also see Augustine, *Sermons: III (51-94) on the New Testament*, *The Works of Saint Augustine* (ed. John E. Rotelle; trans. Edmund Hill; New York: New City, 1991), 50-52.

⁶⁰Letham, *Holy Trinity*, 81, 95.

⁶¹John Owen, *Communion with the Triune God* (ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Justin Taylor; Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 105-06. Also see J. Van Genderen and W. H. Velema, *Reformed Dogmatics* (trans. Gerrit Bilkes and Ed M. van der Maas; Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008), 159.

⁶²Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2003), 57.

⁶³Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (ed. John Bolt; trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 3:570.

⁶⁴Johannes van der Kemp, *The Christian Entirely the Property of Christ, in Life and Death, Exhibited in Fifty-three Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism* (trans. John M. Harlingen; Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 1997), 5, quoted in Muller, *The Trinity of God*, 4:274.

⁶⁵Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John 11-27*, Tractate 20. Also see Letham, *Holy Trinity*, 187, 404-05; John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Foundations of Evangelical Theology; Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 488 (cf. 470); Genderen and Velema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 159-60.

⁶⁶“While the term ‘regeneration’ is not strictly associated with the work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, the idea of inauguration into the kingdom of God as a Spirit-wrought new birth is widespread and is in fact foundational in Johannine theology.” Sinclair Ferguson, *Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 118.

⁶⁷Calvin, *Institutes* 3.1.1. Calvin states in his commen-

tary on John 14:16, the role of the Spirit “is to make us partakers not only of Christ Himself, but of all his blessings.” Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* (trans. William Pringle; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 92-93. Also see “The Westminster Confession,” in *Creeds and Confessions of the Reformation Era, vol. 2 of Creeds & Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 24.3.

⁶⁸On the Spirit as the principal efficient cause, see Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (ed. James T. Dennison, Jr.; trans. George Musgrave Giger; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1994), 2:524.

⁶⁹John mentions “water” along with “Spirit,” which I take as symbolic language that conveys the Spirit’s ability to spiritually cleanse the sinner, building off the promise in Ezek 36:25-27. Paul will use similar language in Titus 3:5 and 1 Cor 6:11.

⁷⁰John Murray, “Definitive Sanctification,” in *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), 2:277.

⁷¹See Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 203-204.

⁷²O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 257-58.

⁷³Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 864.

⁷⁴Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties* (trans. Mary J. Gregory; New York: Abaris Books, 1979), 65. Similarly, see Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), 10-11. Thomas R. Thompson correctly concludes from Kant’s Trinitarian skepticism that in “modernity the Trinity’s practical and ethical significance has largely been lost on the Western church tradition.” Thomas R. Thompson, “Trinitarianism Today: Doctrinal Renaissance, Ethical Relevance, Social Redo-

lence,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 32 (1997): 10.

⁷⁵Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 440. Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 69, makes this point as well.

⁷⁶Sanders, *The Deep Things of God*, 148.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 144. Flavel’s words cannot be improved upon: “The Father has elected, and the Son has redeemed; but until the Spirit (who is the last cause) has wrought his part also, we cannot be saved. For he comes in the Father’s and in the Son’s name and authority, to complete the work of our salvation, by bringing all the fruits of election and redemption home to our souls in this work of effectual vocation.” John Flavel, *The Method of Grace: In the Holy Spirit’s Applying to the Souls of Men the Eternal Redemption Contrived by the Father and Accomplished by the Son* (New York: American Tract Society, 1845), 19.

⁷⁸Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 409. See Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.13; John Owen, *Of Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Each Person Distinctly in Love, Grace, and Consolation* (1657), in *The Works of John Owen* (ed. William H. Goold; reprint, London: Banner of Truth, 1965-68), 2:1-274.

⁷⁹Owen, *Of Communion*, 2:269.

⁸⁰Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 414. See Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.1.1.

⁸¹White also notes how the Spirit impacts Christian fellowship: “Believers have fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3). The fact that the Spirit indwells all believers, and provides the ground of our supernatural unity, results in true Christian fellowship—a sharing that knows no bounds. It is a divine fellowship, brought about by a divine person, the Holy Spirit of God, the eternal third person of the blessed Trinity.” White, *The Forgotten Trinity: Recovering the Heart of Christian Belief*, 151.

